



CMSAF James A. Roy speaks to USASMDC/ARSTRAT Senior Enlisted Leaders during the 2011 SELTC.

Photos by Dottie White

AIR FORCE VIEW

The Word from the Top

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Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, CMSAF James A. Roy was invited to the USASMDC/ARSTRAT senior enlisted leaders training conference to offer his perspective on the joint-service environment. His main points understanding the capabilities of other military services and the culture in which the capabilities – along with the actual Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines – were developed.

Roy agreed to an ASJ interview.

The questions and answers follow. —>



CMSAF James A. Roy speaks to SELTC attendees about the importance of resiliency in the military.

★ Our mission in the military is increasingly joint. What is your basic message to the other services who are working alongside your Airmen?

ROY Joint coalition operations are the way we do things today and will be the way we do it in the future. What I would say, what I would ask of our joint partners as they work alongside our Airmen, is to understand what their capabilities are and use them to that capability. We train our Airmen to be multidimensional, and sometimes you just need to tap into that. They're very, very educated, highly trained, and motivated. They want to do the best mission they can do to the best capability they have, and they will give 100 percent each and every time.

★ What do you see as the biggest challenge?

ROY I would say the largest challenge that we have – and this comes from my years of having spent time in joint communities – is understanding the capabilities of the other services. You have to understand that service first of all. You have to understand that service culture a little bit to understand how those Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen were developed. Once you understand that, you overcome a lot of those obstacles that we've got to work through in order to have what I always call a joint service solution. And that's the key to it. It's not an individual service, it's a joint service solution.

★ Being able to not think like the other service but bring its own culture into that – can you expand on that?

ROY It's something that all of us senior enlisted leaders, advisers for the services, agree to is that our service has its own culture, its own identity, in fact. I've traveled quite a bit around the world and have for the past few years. Even when I was working in a joint community I'd go visiting an army in another country, that army had the same type of identity as our Army did. Even when I visited smaller air

forces, they had that same type of culture. And it's up to us to understand what those are, not to try to change them, but to understand those capabilities that the individual service member brings to the fight.

★ The Army is focusing on the Profession of Arms throughout its force this year. How do you see this from your perspective?

ROY The Profession of Arms is the foundation to what we do as a military service. It's what our nation wants from us and expects from us and quite frankly, that's what they pay us to do, is to be professional at the Profession of Arms. And by doing that it covers a very broad topic. It covers everything from what it is, and as I put it, what kind of experiences we bring to fight, what kind of education we bring to the fight, what kind of training. It also adds in a factor of what I'll call resiliency – being able to work through those tough situations and also bounce back and also grow from it. It's kind of multidimensional.

★ When it comes to Space and Missile Defense, which has a lot of young Soldiers, these issues can easily go from tactical to strategic in a very short time. That's a lot of responsibility to have on these men and women in these technical fields. What are your thoughts?

ROY It's one that again kind of goes back to the Profession of Arms. I believe that our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen are professionals when they graduate from basic training and they go through their MOS training. This idea of strategic corporal, strategic Airman, it can go from a very tactical level decision having strategic value across the world. Our people understand that, and it's up to us, as the senior NCOs, to help mature them in a way that they do understand what decisions they make, how high that will go, and what's the repercussions of those decisions. Not everyone can make that level of decision every day, again



CSMAF James A. Roy discusses the importance of understanding the joint environment.

because of the strategic value of that. Sometimes these decisions get made at the platoon level, at the squadron level and up – you know, the commander in chief. It is a strategic-level consequence to us.



These are not only joint efforts but the interagency as well, as are the overall operations in Iraq. What do you see as the mind-set the enlisted service members need to adopt as we continue in Afghanistan and Iraq to be able to meet these needs?

ROY The foundation of it is being able to work with our joint, coalition, interagency, nongovernmental agency partners, if you will, and that's why they're labeled as partners, because it's a pretty broad spectrum. We've got to be able to work with those partners and understand the capabilities they provide to the overall mission, and how when we all come together we may be working for another agency at certain given times. We need them to understand what kind of capabilities our force brings to it as well.



How would you characterize the caliber of today's women and men in terms of meeting the challenges?

ROY Just as I described earlier, our service members who come to us are very, very highly educated. They come through the training. They're experienced in what we call on-the-job training kinds of thing but beyond that they're also very mature and very motivated. They have capabilities that many of us did not have when we came through. Along with that comes the continual focus on the Profession of Arms. As I say again, it's the idea that those things don't change. It's

the foundation, the fundamentals of the way we do things, that we have to continue to focus on. First-line supervisor or NCO responsibility hasn't changed over the decades, and it will not change. You're still responsible for the mission, you're still responsible for these people who work for you, and that will not change.



You talk about resilience, about the challenges, the stress, even if you're not deployed, you're deployed. Would you say those factors in the resilience part of it are an antidote to protect you from the psychological damages of it?

ROY The best kind of analogy I can give is if you have a rubber ball, sometimes in life, you get squeezed a little bit, but when you let that ball come back, when you release the pressure, that ball bounces back. It's that resiliency we need to make sure our people have. It's also the fact that we need people to continue to grow through those tough times. I think that's what we're all looking for, that's the desired end-state. We know both the service members and their families are stretched. We've been at war for many, many years now. There's a lot of stress on the members and on their families, but it's how we work through that and how we grow through it that matters the most. 