

# LIVING THE ARMY VALUES



*Photo courtesy Department of the Army*

**By CSM Ralph Borja**

**O**ver the past years, the Department of the Army, hosted by the Sergeant Major of the Army, has conducted the Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year Warrior Competition -- an annual, traditional event. It's important that we as Noncommissioned Officers and our Soldiers know that competing in this type of competition really sets the bar for our Soldiers and Noncommissioned Officers in career progression and career enhancement.

As long as I've been in the Army, every Soldier has been an infantryman and warrior. I don't want to focus on the Space warrior because our Soldiers are warriors as a whole, regardless of their military occupational specialty. In our organization, it's important we represent not just U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/U.S. Army Forces Strategic Command, but our higher command being the Department of Army. By continuing to conduct these types of competitions, we set the tone for our Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers, and ensure they are being taken care of and are being set on the right track for success.

For this year's SMDC/ARSTRAT competition, the ball was already rolling with my predecessor, CSM David Lady. Once I was selected as the SMDC/ARSTRAT Sergeant Major, my job was to come in and pick up the ball where he

left off. That included this competition, but there were sergeants' major, senior Noncommissioned Officers, as well as junior enlisted Soldiers, that were behind the scenes making things happen. These key personnel conducted in-progress reviews, and ensured the resources, the support and the equipment needed to conduct this event was there, allowing the competitors to focus on the overall event without any worries.

This year's competition went exceptionally well. The candidates were highly motivated, determined and had exceptional drive. They maintained the Warrior Ethos; upheld the Soldier's creed and lived, and continue to live, the Army values.

Throughout my career, from battalion to brigade to division, and now the MACOM level, it has always been important to make changes in an effort to improve ourselves and our operations. In this tradition, the Department of Army and the Sergeant Major of the Army guidance is to have a change to the overall Warrior Competition each year. Changing one thing such as assemble and disassemble of weapons systems to maneuvering through STX (situational training exercise) lanes makes a difference as we continue in the Global War on Terror. We want to have a focus with our Warrior Competitors to relate to what our warfighters are actually doing on the ground in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

Based on the guidance from higher up, this year's SMDC/ARSTRAT competition involved the Army Physical Fitness Test followed by the written exam, the urban warfare orienteering course, followed by weapons qualification, the STX lanes, which covered the warriors tasks and drills as they maneuvered through the lanes, and ended with the formal portion of the board.

During the competition, every competitor had

a mind set of his or her own, but they all wanted to achieve a higher expectation as a candidate and represent their organization well. They all wanted to continue competing here and then move onto the Department of Army Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year board. Out of the two Noncommissioned Officer candidates, SGT Patrick Mann competed and won as a Soldier at last year's competition. Because of this, he may have had a slight edge against the other noncommissioned officer SSG David Engelhardt, but they both contributed and went head to head throughout the entire competition. For the Soldiers, with this being their first time competing at this level, it was different; it was a challenge to them. They did not know the unknown.

As leaders we must continue encouraging, our Officers, Noncommissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, as well as our Soldiers. We need to make sure there's an incentive that we put out to our Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers. At the awards presentation, the incentives and tokens the winners received from corporate sponsors were tremendous. That alone was a motivating factor, but at the same time, knowing that our Soldiers and Noncommissioned Officers are scattered not just in the U.S. but abroad, we need to influence and definitely encourage the subordinate senior enlisted leaders, as well as the commanders, to push their Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers to strive for excellence. As the Space and Missile Defense Command Sergeant Major, I expect that we are going to have Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers that will continue to reach for their goals and be more successful.

This year's competition took place in Colorado Springs, but an assessment will be made to see if it will be feasible to move the competition to Huntsville, Ala., Redstone Arsenal, for next year. Everything's pending right now, but this is the second or third time the competition has been conducted in Colorado Springs and through

talks with Noncommissioned Officers, as well as Soldiers, they'd like to compete in a different environment, a different installation, which is a legitimate comment. Every year, the Department of Army event is conducted in Virginia. Having our Soldiers move and conduct this competition at a different installation raises the bar and builds their motivation.

SGT Patrick Mann and SGT Martin Jensen won the SMDC/ARSTRAT Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year titles, respectively. (Jensen was promoted after earning the title of the European Region Soldier of the Year and continued the competition for that title.) They went on to Fort Lee, Va., to compete in the Department of the Army Warrior Competition in early October and proudly represented our command. The Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston, as well as Department of Army, tried to equally balance all of the tasks throughout the competition. Every warrior is a shooter and when it comes to this type of competition, we basically look at details, standards, basic standards at certain levels, but I believe the Department of Army tried to level the playing field whether the Soldiers have deployed or not deployed, the latter being the case for SMDC/ARSTRAT's two competitors.

In closing, I would like to thank and recognize a few people for their unwavering support for this year's event: the commanders, the sergeants major as well as our staff members. I look forward to the same for next year's event. And of course, we could not have done this without the support of our corporate sponsors. I personally appreciate their overall sponsorship and support for our Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year, as well as the support of our civilian and Department of Defense contractors in this organization of ours, so again thank you. I look forward to continuing to serve with each of you over the next several years.



## Secure the High Ground!

Command Sergeant Major,  
U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/  
U.S. Army Forces Strategic Command