



Senior NCOs LEAD BY EXAMPLE

By Sharon L. Hartman, USASMDC/ARSTRAT

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — Noncommissioned Officers have long been regarded as the “Backbone of the Army.” The history of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps is filled with a rich tradition of pomp and ceremony still observed today. With 2009 dubbed the “Year of the Noncommissioned Officer,” it was only fitting for U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command’s Senior Noncommissioned Officer, CSM Ralph Borja to begin the command’s Senior Enlisted Leaders Training Conference with a bit of traditional pomp and ceremony as he conducted a cake-cutting to mark the prestigious declaration.

“This (the Year of the Noncommissioned Officer) has been kicked off since January 2009 all the way up to the present,” said Borja, “but I want us as SMDC/ARSTRAT to officially cut the cake, so we can continue recognizing our noncommissioned officers for their commitment, their dedication, their sacrifice.”

The cake-cutting took place during the evening icebreaker social which was part of the weeklong conference conducted on Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., Mar. 23-26. USASMDC/ARSTRAT Deputy Commanding General for Operations, BG Kurt S. Story took a few moments at the icebreaker to give some advice to the attendees for the week.

“What I’d like you to do is take that big rheostat that’s standing in front of you that you might not necessarily see,” said Story. “Right now that rheostat on a daily basis is about looking after your Soldiers, looking after your equipment, preparing for war, etc. I want you to dial that rheostat in kind of a selfish direction if you will, and I know this is foreign to most of you, but dial that rheostat toward yourself, and spend the next couple of days enjoying yourself and allowing yourself to grow. Gather some experience and some knowledge (here). Use your intellect. It’s rare that you have the time to slow down and do that. Use your intellect to build yourself and make yourself a better professional.”

Earlier in the day, many attendees had already begun to enjoy themselves as they participated in the Command Sergeants Major Golf Scramble at Marshallia Ranch Golf Course. Fifteen teams

participated in the event with a beginner, SSG David Rogers, winning the putting contest.

The next morning it was time to get down to business as the official portion of the conference kicked off with welcome remarks from Borja, and Commanding General, LTG Kevin T. Campbell. Following their opening remarks, Borja and Campbell proudly inducted SFC Samuel R. Jackson, SSG Benjamin L. Sharp, SSG Christopher L. Barber, and SSG Mark E. Bagwell into the prestigious Sergeant Audie Murphy Club. Sgt. Matthew Funk was also accepted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club but was unable to attend the induction ceremony.

The conference drew in senior noncommissioned officers from far-reaching locations of the command including Germany, Japan, Korea, Kuwait and Alaska to name a few. The purpose of the annual event was to carry out a professional forum providing Senior Noncommissioned Officers the education, knowledge and information about new Army/Space Programs as well as build esprit de corps within the command for all Active, National Guard and Reserve components.

To accomplish this task, presenters from various areas of professional development interest for Noncommissioned Officers were brought in to brief attendees, and a panel with former USASMDC/ARSTRAT command sergeants major was conducted. The distinguished panel included SMA (retired), Jack Tilley, CSM (retired) Wilbur Adams, CSM (retired) Reginald Ficklin and CSM (retired) David Lady.

One of the many distinguished presenters at the conference was Command Chief Master Sergeant Thomas S. Narofsky, U.S. Strategic Command, who gave an overview of USSTRATCOM and the role of USASMDC/ARSTRAT within it.

Other highlights of the week included a trip to the Reagan Memorial launch viewing site and the 100th Missile Defense Brigade facility both on Vandenberg, as well as a visit from Army Astronaut, LTC Shane Kimbrough, who recently returned from a stint in Space as a part of the crew of STS-126 Endeavour (November 14-30, 2008).



Chief Master Sergeant Thomas Narofsky, U.S. Strategic Command's Senior Enlisted Leader, speaks to a group of Senior Noncommissioned Officers during U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command's 2009 Senior Enlisted Leaders Training Conference. The event was conducted at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., March 23-26.

BELOW FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: BG Kurt S. Story, 1SG Eric Blount, SSG Carmen Cupitt-Marcussen, CSM Ralph Borja, 1SG William Ray ceremoniously cut a cake to celebrate the Year of the Noncommissioned Officer. *Photos by Sharon L. Hartman, USASMDC/ARSTRAT.*

