



## CSM Ralph Borja

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# Training to Standard



CSM Ralph Borja addresses a candidate as CSM James Ross, 1st Space Brigade watches, during the Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year Competition. *Photo by Carrie David Ford*

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**We must train to an extremely high standard, and once we've achieved it we must exercise constantly in order to maintain proficiency – to reach the point where we “can't get it wrong.”**

**T**his issue of Army Space Journal focuses on “Army Space – Sharpening Our Edge.” What exactly does it mean to sharpen our edge? One definition of sharpen reads: make more intense, stronger, or more marked, while edge can be defined as: a margin of superiority; an advantage. So, you can infer that sharpening our edge means strengthening our superiority or advantage.

A few years back, the NFL Network ran an ad centered around the quote “Amateurs practice until they get it right ... Professionals practice until they can't get it wrong.” The ad shows NFL players practicing a play over and over and over again so that on game day the play runs perfectly.

While the message centered on professional football, I feel it is very much relevant to the world of the space and missile defense professional. Our mission is to provide the Warfighter with space enablers and to warn the Warfighter of impending missile threats on the battlefield. We are also given the responsibility for defending the United States from ballistic missile attack by rogue nations.

Our missions are fast-paced, often requiring immediate response. When the time comes to respond to a missile threat, or to correct an anomaly on a satellite communications system, we must act – we must respond based upon our training. We will not have time to ask; did I prepare enough, train enough, practice enough to do it right? We must rely on our training and respond.

That's why professionals work until things become habit or automatic. Professionals also strive to develop error proof processes, constantly working to refine the process so things don't go wrong when time is short and response is critical.

In our profession, the profession of arms, centuries of experience has shown us that you get better through training and carrying out exercises. Within the split-second world of space and missile defense, this axiom is doubly true. We must train to an extremely high standard, and once we've achieved it we must exercise constantly in order to maintain proficiency – to reach the point where we “can't get it wrong.”

Having spent most of my career in foxholes and trenches as a light fighter and special operations, I learned to appreciate the importance of maintaining continual situational awareness, of precisely striking an intended target, and of having reach-back communications capabilities. Three years at USASMDC/ARSTRAT has helped me understand the process of obtaining these capabilities and providing them to the Warfighter. I've also learned to appreciate the tremendous effort required to persistently and consistently provide these capabilities to the Warfighter.

As I end my tour of duty and relinquish my responsibilities as USASMDC/ARSTRAT Command Sergeant Major, I want to thank our civilians who contribute and work tirelessly in our research, development and acquisition areas to develop new systems and find new ways to assist the Warfighter. I now understand that you can't solve the problem of “looking around the corner or into caves” by shopping at Wal-Mart. What you do is of enormous consequence to our Warfighters. You have my respect and support in your continuous endeavor.

I also want to thank the Soldiers who work tirelessly to provide space enablers and missile warning to the Warfighter and missile defense to our nation and to the families that support them. Your sacrifice and efforts make a difference. Serving as your Command Sergeant Major has been a privilege and an honor.

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