



A10th Mountain Division soldier receives her Mountain tab during a New Soldiers Patching Ceremony 12 March 2024. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Lead Climbers

Noncommissioned Officers Drive Change in the 10th Mountain Division

Command Sgt. Maj. Alexander D. King, U.S. Army

In the heart of Fort Drum, New York, a ceremony unfolds that is as timeless as it is inspiring. Rows of new soldiers, their faces alight with pride and

anticipation, stand at attention. Each one proudly bears the powder keg patch of the 10th Mountain Division, a symbol of their entry into a lineage steeped in valor and

resilience, a lineage that has been shaped and guarded by the division's seasoned noncommissioned officers (NCO). From platoon sergeants to the command sergeants major and first sergeants, these NCOs have been the architects of the division's past, present, and future. They have sung the 10th Mountain Division song, a powerful anthem that bridges generations and cements a shared commitment to the Nation and to the division's alpine heritage. This moment encapsulates a profound truth: the NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division are not just participants in change but the architects, shaping the division's future with their focus and dedication, empowering and challenging each other under the guidance of their commanders.

The NCOs of the division embody the division's blue-collar, no-complaints ethos and rigorous discipline, ensuring that the legacy of its alpine roots continues to inspire and guide its future. Their investment in the unit's principles, their hand in a grounded and doctrinal approach to training and the mastery of the basics, and their unrelenting care for their soldiers and their families all demonstrate their deep appreciation and value for their comrades. This commitment is not just a duty but a privilege for the NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division, a privilege they uphold with unwavering dedication.

Purpose Built: Alpine Legacy and NCO Empowerment

The story of the 10th Mountain Division began on the high-altitude battlefields of World War II, where leaders quickly realized that conventional military tactics were inadequate against the formidable European mountains. The U.S. Army's response was the creation of the 10th Mountain Division, a unit conceived by visionary thinkers and composed of individuals uniquely skilled in skiing, climbing, and surviving in harsh environments.¹ This alpine heritage is not just a part of history but the essence of the division's identity and operational philosophy. Upholding this heritage is not just a duty but a privilege for the NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division.

NCOs in the division are not just participants in preserving the alpine heritage, they are its custodians. Entrusted with preserving the specialized skills and hardy spirit that defined the division's early days, they undergo rigorous training in alpine warfare, leading

excursions in challenging terrains across the globe, from the snowy expanses of Chile to the rugged peaks of Bulgaria and Romania. These experiences are about increasing physical endurance and honing leadership skills, tactical acumen, and the ability to make decisive, strategic decisions under pressure. The division command sergeant major (DCSM) monitors and guides these activities in the Quarterly Readiness Brief (QRB).

The DCSM Quarterly Readiness Brief

The DCSM QRB signifies a pivotal shift in the unit training and management approach, especially at the battalion level and higher within military structures. Unlike the conventional method, where a battalion commander presents the unit's training plan for approval two quarters in advance, the DCSM QRB adopts a more detailed and NCO-centric approach. This approach delves into the intricacies of training execution and management, focusing on the granular aspects of soldier readiness and development.

The traditional setting focuses on broad planning and strategic overview, often at a conceptual level. The DCSM QRB, however, transitions from this high-level overview to a detailed, ground-level perspective. Once the officers exit, NCOs take the forefront, meticulously planning the specifics of training regimens. This analysis includes determining the exact number of repetitions a soldier will perform on a particular weapon or training task and analyzing how these activities will enhance the unit's overall readiness. The brief aims to pinpoint the actions that will most effectively advance the unit's capabilities and positively impact the soldiers and their families.

The QRB also serves as a critical tool for battalion command sergeants major, offering them a clearer understanding of their unit's leader professional development. It nests

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Mountain troopers witness springtime in the Rocky Mountains on 8 May 1943 at thirteen thousand feet near the timberline at Camp Hale, Colorado, where the 10th Mountain Division trained for mountain warfare during World War II. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

the leader professional development with the unit's training trajectory in garrison and field environments, ensuring a coherent and effective development strategy that maximally benefits the soldiers. This alignment is crucial for preparing the unit to meet its operational requirements effectively and develop the next generation of NCO leaders.

Moreover, the DCSM QRB empowers the battalion command sergeants major by fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. It equips them with the necessary insights and understanding to guide their battalions with confidence and strategic foresight. By instilling this leadership quality, the DCSM ensures that NCOs can steer their units toward future challenges, preparing them for the complexities of the evolving battlefields.

In summary, the DCSM QRB represents a significant evolution in military training and management methodologies. Focusing on detailed, practical aspects of training and readiness ensures that units are better prepared, more adaptable, and thoroughly equipped to face future challenges. This approach not only enhances the operational effectiveness of the units but also contributes to the overall well-being and development of the soldiers and their families, thereby strengthening the military force as a whole.

Empowering NCOs in the 10th Mountain Division is a deliberate strategy guided by the Army's ethics and values and wedded to its commander's leadership philosophy and vision. These documents serve as a blueprint for NCO development, emphasizing the

importance of continuous learning, leadership, and mastery of technical and tactical skills. By aligning their professional growth with the division's alpine roots, NCOs become exemplars of adaptability and resilience, capable of leading their troops through the most daunting challenges. Essential to the outcome of the division's battles at home and abroad is the "can-do" attitude of the formation, a willingness to carry a heavier load longer and faster than others—its "blue-collar ethos."

The Blue-Collar Division: More than a Name

The 10th Mountain Division's moniker, "the blue-collar division," is more than a nickname; it's a testament to its pragmatism, resilience, and perseverance.² This title captures the spirit of a force known for its dedication, hard work, and a no-nonsense attitude toward getting the job done, qualities that the division's soldiers and, most notably, its NCOs embody to their core.

The "blue-collar" ethos is about making the most of what you have, not what you wish you had. This mindset is crucial in the field, where circumstances change rapidly, and the stakes are high. NCOs in the 10th Mountain Division are the embodiment of this ethos. They are the backbone of the division, translating strategic objectives into actionable tasks and ensuring their soldiers have the skills, motivation, and resources to execute them effectively. These leaders excel in making dynamic assessments of their operational environments, identifying available assets, and devising innovative strategies to accomplish complex missions with what they have on hand. They instill the importance of perseverance, ingenuity, and collective effort in their troops, reinforcing that success is achieved through hard work and determination, not just superior firepower or technology.

The blue-collar ethos also emphasizes the importance of hands-on leadership and direct involvement in accomplishing tasks. The division's NCOs do not just issue orders from a command post; they are on the ground with their soldiers, sharing in every operation's physical and mental challenges. This participatory leadership style boosts morale and ensures that NCOs directly understand their troops' conditions and challenges, allowing for more effective decision-making and problem solving.

Moreover, this approach cultivates a sense of ownership and pride in the work, reinforcing the division's identity and the collective commitment to its success. NCOs lead by example, leveraging their experience and knowledge to foster a culture that values every soldier's contribution, making every task seem vital to the mission's success, no matter how small.

The NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division: Forward into the Fight

The NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division embody the blue-collar ethos, characterized by their exceptional dedication and proficiency in their roles. This ethos is not merely a slogan but a lived reality, manifesting in their commitment to excellence and distinguishing the division as one of the most competent and respected units in the U.S. Army. The division's status as the most deployed in the Army speaks volumes about its operational importance and adaptability to various missions and theaters.

The 10th Mountain Division's deployment history is extensive and varied, stretching beyond Central Command and European Command to include a spectrum of global engagements. These missions range from contingency operations abroad to consistent support roles at combat training centers, demonstrating the division's integral role in the broader strategic objectives of the U.S. military.

At the heart of the division's success are its NCOs, who play a pivotal role in enhancing the lethality and effectiveness of the individual soldier. They focus on refining the skills of the infantryman, ensuring each member is a finely tuned participant in the division's operational endeavors. Being blue-collar within the division is synonymous with bringing maximal capability and flexibility to the battlefield, emphasizing the individual and collective proficiency of each "light fighter."

To translate this ethos into tangible results, the NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division spearheaded the establishment of the Mountain Training Group. This initiative has been crucial in systematizing a core curriculum, including the Alpine Operations Course that spans Basic and Advanced Military Mountaineering. This training enhances cold weather proficiency, physical endurance, and tactical acumen, equipping soldiers with the technical skills required to navigate and dominate in challenging alpine and mountain terrains.



10th Mountain Division soldiers trek through the snow 19 January 2024 after they were transported to the landing zone at Division Hill during the D-Series XXIV winter challenge on Fort Drum, New York. D-Series builds combat-capable teams at the lowest level by promoting a spirit of healthy competition, unit cohesion, and mastery of alpine tactics, techniques, and procedures. (Photo by Spc. Salvador Castro, U.S. Army)

The NCOs of the division leave no stone unturned, actively collaborating with a gamut of alpinists from world-class athletes, including high-altitude mountaineers and Olympians, to partner nations abroad to enhance their training regimens and ensure a holistic and adaptable approach to remain on the cutting edge of emerging alpine techniques and practices. By partnering with organizations like the National Ski Patrol, they honor their alpine roots and weaponize the best practices of moving over restricted terrain. Additionally, the division's adaptation of the advanced cold-weather survival techniques from Alaska units prepares its soldiers for extreme arctic conditions. Furthermore, they explore innovative rough-terrain evacuation methods with civilian rescue organizations nationwide, capitalizing on gains in a forever-evolving

field. Participation in the Slovenian Mountain Warfare School has allowed light fighters from the division to integrate learned lessons from its partner nations into their operational practices. These initiatives enrich the division's collective tactical knowledge, improving soldiers' speed, endurance, durability, and combat effectiveness in challenging environments.

The 10th Mountain Division's NCOs are central to the division's identity and operational prowess, reflecting a blue-collar ethos prioritizing skill, dedication, and adaptability. Their efforts in maximizing soldier lethality, fostering flexibility in operations, and pioneering specialized training programs like the Mountain Training Group underline the division's commitment to maintaining its edge in military operations. This holistic approach ensures that the

10th Mountain Division remains at the forefront of the U.S. Army's strategic capabilities, ready to tackle the multifaceted challenges of modern warfare. The division consistently achieves excellence at an exceptional operational tempo, showcasing its capabilities and leadership in every mission. A relentless pursuit of improvement in light infantry warfighting and large-scale combat operations drives this operational

division's readiness and effectiveness in facing the challenges of modern warfare.

In summary, the blue-collar ethos of the 10th Mountain Division is not just a slogan; it's a living, breathing aspect of its identity, deeply ingrained in the actions and attitudes of its NCOs. Their ability to maximize available resources and a steadfast, hands-on approach to problem-solving and mission

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success. The division actively aligns its light infantry formations with the Army's future trajectory, preparing its soldiers for the complexities of modern warfare. To achieve this, meticulously honing the spear's edge is essential; small-unit tactical mastery forms the foundation of the light infantry's continued victory on the battlefield.

Active engagement and interoperability with other specialized training entities further bolster the division's alpine proficiency. The NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division foster robust communication and collaboration with the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, California, and sustain a strong working relationship with the Army's Mountain Warfare School in Camp Ethan Allen, Vermont. These interactions facilitate rich knowledge exchange and tactics, enhancing the division's operational effectiveness in mountainous terrains.

The 10th Mountain Division's embodiment of the blue-collar ethos, manifested in its NCOs today, is central to its identity and operational success. The division's extensive deployment history, commitment to continuous improvement, innovative approaches, and maintenance of alpine capabilities are critical to its standing as a premier unit in the Army. At the heart of its achievements is the unwavering dedication of its NCOs, whose leadership and engagement ensure the

completion exemplify the division's self-reliant and determined nature, making it a formidable force in any operational environment. Critical to the success of its mission is its mastery of the fundamentals of close combat—skills that are hard-won at the edge of a blade—but skills that can only be realized by capturing the total intellectual and creative capacity of its leaders across every echelon, tempered by an instinctual application of doctrinal practices in training and training philosophy.

NCOs Supported by the Training Philosophy of the 10th Mountain Division

As articulated by the commander, the 10th Mountain Division's training philosophy underscores a structured and holistic approach to enhancing the division's combat readiness and operational capabilities.³ Central to this philosophy are the three foundational pillars: building solid teams, developing confident and critical-thinking leaders, and mastering basic skills. These elements are not isolated objectives but are interwoven into the fabric of the division's training regimen, reflecting a comprehensive strategy designed to prepare soldiers for the complexities of modern warfare.

Building strong teams is the first pillar, which focuses on nurturing trust, confidence, and cohesion among



More than six hundred soldiers gathered at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, Louisiana, for comprehensive E3B training to earn an Expert Infantryman's Badge, Expert Soldier's Badge, or Expert Field Medical Badge. Soldiers from multiple installations honed their skills in day and night land navigation, field medicine, warrior skills, and communication, to name a few. Testing followed, and soldiers who passed earned their badges May 2022. (Photo courtesy of the *Fort Polk Guardian*)

soldiers. The commanding general emphasizes the significance of training designs that foster these attributes, ensuring that units can operate seamlessly and effectively under the multifaceted challenges of the battlefield. This team-building effort features predictable and progressive training schedules, integrates various units and functions, and cultivates a robust group identity. Such an approach enhances unit resilience and adaptability and ensures that soldiers can rely on each other in adverse conditions, creating a united and formidable fighting force.

The NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division are instrumental in building a culture of unity and cohesion, where lived experiences of soldiers and their leaders are deeply intertwined. Living, training, eating, and facing challenges together, they share the hardships and triumphs of military life, forging a bond that transcends the professional environment. This close-knit interaction is not just about camaraderie; it galvanizes

the units, creating a synergistic effect that enhances operational effectiveness.

The commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division strategically decided to maintain fully manned and equipped small units to enhance operational effectiveness and cohesion. This approach allows for the doctrinal learning of fire and movement at the lowest echelons, empowering NCOs to make critical decisions and experience authentic combat dynamics. Despite significant manning shortages, the decision to maintain minimum squad-level strength was resolute, prioritizing the retention of critical combat power within the principal military occupational specialty of the division, the infantry. The commander consciously assumed risk in other areas, including critical military occupational specialty shortages, by deliberately avoiding the placement of infantry in noninfantry roles. This deliberate choice has increased tactical flexibility, preparedness, and lethality with a notable return on investment.

This strategy underscores the division's commitment to operational excellence and ensures the maintenance of essential combat capabilities in the face of logistical challenges. The resultant well-equipped, cohesive units demonstrate improved performance and readiness, proving the immense value of cohesion in driving through adversity and mastering doctrinal operations.

For every team in the 10th Mountain Division, the everyday interactions—from shared physical training sessions to communal meals and joint problem-solving—foster mutual understanding and trust. Soldiers

interaction. This leadership development is integral to empowering leaders to challenge assumptions, learn rapidly, and execute their roles with conviction and inspiration, thereby driving the overall success of the division. NCOs shape this success in various ways, notably in executing the division's Alpine Lanes.

The Alpine Lanes

The 10th Mountain Division Alpine Lanes stand out as a significant medium for improvement, deeply embedded in the challenging and historic terrain

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and their NCO leaders develop an intuitive sense of each other's capabilities and tendencies, allowing them to anticipate actions and decisions in battle. This unit cohesion and trust level is crucial for the 10th Mountain Division, ensuring that each team member is a competent individual soldier and a reliable component of a more significant, unified fighting force. Such a comprehensive approach to unit integrity and operational readiness underscores the division's commitment to excellence and the pivotal role of NCOs in achieving it.

The second pillar involves cultivating leaders who are confident in their abilities and possess the acumen for critical thinking. The training philosophy advocates for a regimen that sharpens leaders' decision-making skills, enabling them to assess situations swiftly and act decisively. The commander's vision is to have a leadership cadre that is proactive, insightful, and capable of guiding their formations through the unpredictable terrains of combat.⁴ Every step and every interaction between an NCO and a soldier reinforces this relationship and responsibility. For instance, the morning parade and physical training, as the most regular and culturally grounded activities, are rooted in preparation, rehearsal, inspection, and ownership. NCOs program, plan, resource, develop, and execute the edge-sharpening physical training that sets the tone for everyday

of the Adirondack Mountains. This expansive area, stretching through the northern region of New York State, provides an ideal training ground characterized by its daunting rock faces, perilous ascents, and erratic weather conditions. Such an environment offers a perfect arena for leader development, particularly emphasizing the NCO corps.

The Alpine Lanes in the rugged and unforgiving landscape of the Adirondacks serve as an intense training ground for NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division, where the natural elements act as stern instructors in resilience, strategy, and adaptability. Here, unpredictable weather, from blinding snowstorms to sudden clearings, mimics real-world combat's dynamic and often chaotic nature, compelling leaders to make swift and informed decisions under pressure. This harsh environment is a test of physical endurance and a crucible for honing mental understanding and decision-making skills.

In the challenging terrains of the Alpine Lanes, NCOs immerse themselves in scenarios that demand navigation through complex landscapes, efficient management of resources, and leadership of teams under strenuous conditions. This experience transcends mere physical conquest; it is about mastering leadership amid uncertainty. NCOs must plan meticulously and later execute these plans in small teams, often

without direct supervision, mirroring the autonomy and responsibility faced in combat situations. This setting forces them to engage in critical thinking and decisive leadership, pushing them to overcome human limitations, surpass perceived weaknesses, and achieve physical and spiritual endurance synthesis.

Through these rigorous experiences, NCOs gain a deep understanding of their capabilities and limitations, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability. The Alpine Lanes test their fortitude and instill in them the essence of resilient leadership,

and Expert Field Medical Badge.⁶ This comprehensive initiative extends beyond the conventional brigade-level effort, involving the entire division in a concerted endeavor to elevate soldier proficiency and operational readiness. E3B is a three-week event that includes a physical fitness assessment, day and night land navigation course, written test, and lanes that test candidates on thirty warrior tasks and skills. The culminating event is a twelve-mile ruck march, and includes disassembly and reassembly of an M4 carbine.

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equipping them with the skills to navigate the complexities of natural and combat environments. This holistic approach to training ensures that NCOs prepare for the physical demands of their roles and lead with confidence and foresight through the multifaceted challenges of military operations. Mastering basic skills forms the third pillar of the training philosophy, emphasizing soldiers' need to perform their tasks instinctively and proficiently. NCOs are highlighted as critical in achieving this goal, as they ensure soldiers reach a high level of expertise in their respective roles. The commander stresses the importance of providing ample preparation time for NCOs to train soldiers, ensuring that foundational competencies are deeply ingrained.⁵ This focus on basic skills is paramount for establishing a versatile and competent force capable of executing a wide range of missions effectively and precisely. When it comes to mastery of the basics, there is no activity with a higher payoff than E3B training and testing.

E3B Training and Testing: Shattering the Paradigm

The 10th Mountain Division has revolutionized soldier readiness and skill development by piloting the “E3B” program, which amalgamates the training and testing for the Army’s “big three” expert skill badges: the Expert Infantryman’s Badge, Expert Soldier’s Badge,

and Expert Field Medical Badge.⁶ This comprehensive initiative extends beyond the conventional brigade-level effort, involving the entire division in a concerted endeavor to elevate soldier proficiency and operational readiness. E3B is a three-week event that includes a physical fitness assessment, day and night land navigation course, written test, and lanes that test candidates on thirty warrior tasks and skills. The culminating event is a twelve-mile ruck march, and includes disassembly and reassembly of an M4 carbine.

Each task is timed and graded by NCOs. If a candidate receives two “no-gos” on a task, they are ineligible to earn their badge and must retry at the next opportunity. The E3B program, characterized by its rigorous and detailed approach, necessitates significant investment in planning, resourcing, and synchronization across the division’s various echelons and units, aligning with the expert standards set by the offices of each proponent’s badge. A central facet of the E3B is the primacy of NCO ownership, an initiative driven entirely by the NCOs of the division.

E3B training and testing are events comprehensively orchestrated by NCOs, who manage everything from planning to execution. In their dual roles as trainers and evaluators, NCOs ensure the events are well-resourced and rehearsed, solidifying the individual task readiness crucial for advancing through the training cycles. This hands-on management by NCOs boosts the proficiency of each soldier, offering small-unit leaders precise insights into the overall task readiness of their units. The NCO-driven E3B training and testing process is instrumental in enhancing the combat efficacy and preparedness of the force, epitomizing the significance of NCO leadership in training operations.

The execution of the E3B program represents a strategic investment in the division’s human capital. The intensive training period allows soldiers to refine and master their skills through repeated practice, even

if they do not ultimately earn a badge. This process ensures that every participating soldier, irrespective of the outcome, gains valuable experience and enhanced capabilities that contribute to their overall effectiveness and readiness throughout the training cycle.

Moreover, the division-wide focus on the E3B program fosters a culture of excellence and commitment, with leadership actively engaged in the training processes. This leader involvement is crucial, as it not only motivates soldiers but also reinforces the importance of continuous skill development and readiness. The success of the 10th Mountain Division's E3B initiative has resonated across the Army, with other posts and units adopting this model, recognizing its effectiveness in improving soldier competencies and operational preparedness.⁷ The widespread adoption and acknowledgment of the E3B program affirm its significant impact and value to the Army's training and readiness objectives, marking it as a benchmark for excellence in soldier development and performance enhancement. But with all this training, there must be a methodology, and the 10th Mountain Division is firmly nested with the Army's preeminent training methodology, which aligns leaders, resources, and soldiers with process-bound surety—the 8-Step Training Model.⁸

The Army's Preeminent Training Method, the 8-Step Training Model

Within the 8-Step Training Model, the NCO plays a crucial role in driving the success of the unit's training and readiness efforts. These seasoned leaders start by identifying their units' specific training needs, considering both immediate operational requirements and long-term competency development. They then plan and arrange the necessary resources, ensuring that the training environment is conducive to learning and that all materials and equipment are prepared and available.

NCOs lead the execution of the training, guide soldiers through each exercise, and ensure that they meet the objectives precisely and efficiently. Their hands-on approach in conducting and supervising training activities allows them to influence the quality and effectiveness of the training process directly. Throughout this model, NCOs focus on safety and discipline, fostering an environment where soldiers can learn and thrive without undue risk.

The evaluation phase, led by NCOs, is critical for assessing the training's impact and identifying areas for improvement. They analyze the outcomes, gather feedback, and adjust to enhance future training sessions. This continuous cycle of assessment and adjustment ensures that the training remains relevant and aligned with the unit's goals.

In essence, NCOs are the backbone of the 8-Step Training Model, orchestrating each phase to develop well-trained, capable, and mission-ready soldiers. Their leadership and expertise are pivotal in translating training initiatives into operational success and readiness.

In conclusion, the training philosophy of the 10th Mountain Division, as championed by the commander, is a strategic and comprehensive approach to building a combat-ready force.⁹ The division maintains its legacy as a robust and agile force by instilling strong team dynamics, nurturing decisive and adaptive leaders, and perfecting basic skills. The integral role of NCOs within the 8-Step Training Model underscores their importance in achieving the division's training objectives, ensuring that the division remains prepared to confront and overcome the challenges of modern warfare. This philosophy enhances the division's operational capabilities and reinforces its commitment to excellence and readiness to fulfill its mission. However, even a ready force, cunning and confident, can be brought low if its leaders fail to know, support, and care for their soldiers. The role and impact of the NCOs, coupled with the division's inception of the Mountain CARES program, offset this risk.

NCO Ownership and the Mountain CARES Program

The Mountain CARES program, a core initiative within the 10th Mountain Division, exemplifies the proactive role of NCOs in their soldiers' personal and professional development, especially in the wake of duress.¹⁰ CARES—Critical Assistance with Resources for Environmental Stressors—is a program designed to support the tactical leader during moments of crisis instead of outsourcing solutions to equities and echelons outside their unit. This program empowers NCOs to engage more deeply with their soldiers, fostering an environment prioritizing everyone's well-being and growth.

At the heart of the Mountain CARES program, NCO ownership and engagement play a central role,

with leaders taking on significant responsibilities to guide and mentor soldiers. They act as advocates, counselors, and leaders who train soldiers in their professional tasks and support their personal development and well-being. NCOs are encouraged to own the problems their soldiers face, challenges like suicidal ideations, stress at home, and financial duress, and importantly, every echelon empowers them with trust. This powerful commitment ensures NCOs get to know their soldiers and address potential corrosives head-on and early, promoting a healthy and supportive unit environment.

The program emphasizes building relationships based on trust, respect, and understanding, especially in adversity. Through regular and meaningful interactions, NCOs get to know their soldiers beyond the surface level, gaining insights into their aspirations, challenges, and personal circumstances. This knowledge enables NCOs to tailor their approach to each soldier's needs, fostering a sense of belonging and investment in the unit's collective success.

The Mountain CARES program within the 10th Mountain Division exemplifies how structured support and resources significantly improve unit cohesion, morale, and problem-solving. This initiative has strengthened the sense of unity and camaraderie among soldiers, countering the strains of the division's high operational tempo. As the most deployed division in the Army, with extensive commitments across global commands, the 10th Mountain Division faces challenges that could potentially impact unit cohesion and soldier well-being.

The success of Mountain CARES in reducing incidents such as petty and violent crimes, domestic abuse, and suicidal ideations highlights its critical role in maintaining the division's operational integrity. This reduction in harmful behavior allows for a greater focus on duty proficiency and cohesion and enhances the quality of life for soldiers and their families. Despite the high demands of diverse and tumultuous missions, the program has continuously decreased corrosive behaviors, sustaining the division's capability to advance its operations.

A key feature of Mountain CARES is its facilitation of informed NCO involvement at early stages, where interventions can be most effective. This proactive engagement addresses issues promptly, maximizes the potential for positive outcomes, and preserves the division's quality of life and operational effectiveness.

By enabling NCOs to act swiftly and knowledgeably, Mountain CARES not only safeguards the well-being of soldiers but also bolsters the overall resilience and readiness of the 10th Mountain Division, proving itself as an essential element in the division's strategy to maintain excellence in the face of continuous operational challenges. The Mountain CARES program has proven to be an asset in enhancing the operational effectiveness of the 10th Mountain Division. The program improves individual and unit performance by empowering NCOs to take active roles in their soldiers' development and reinforces the division's ethos and values. The collective focus on speeding access and providing decision-making tools to vital equities across two geographically disparate posts, Fort Drum, New York, and Fort Johnson, Louisiana, ensures that the 10th Mountain Division remains a cohesive, resilient, and capable force, ready to face the demands of modern military operations.

Conclusion: NCOs Are the Architects of Tomorrow's Alpine Division

The 10th Mountain Division's NCOs are indispensable in upholding the division's esteemed standards and traditions. As the division's backbone, NCOs embody the ethos and values that have long defined this storied unit. Their commitment to excellence and dedication to the welfare and development of their soldiers ensures that the division remains at the forefront of military readiness and effectiveness.

The commander's vision for the 10th Mountain Division emphasizes leadership and transformation, with NCO empowerment as a central tenet. This vision acknowledges the critical influence of NCOs in shaping the division's future, recognizing their ability to inspire, guide, and mentor soldiers. The division fosters a culture of proactive leadership and continuous improvement by entrusting NCOs with greater responsibilities and encouraging active involvement in decision-making processes.

NCOs are instrumental in translating the commander's strategic objectives into actionable outcomes, driving change from the ground up. Their hands-on approach to leadership ensures that training, operations, and soldier development are conducted to the highest standards, reflecting the division's commitment to operational excellence. The Mountain CARES

program and adherence to the 8-Step Training Model further illustrate NCOs' pivotal role in enhancing unit cohesion, morale, and problem-solving capabilities.

In conclusion, the NCOs of the 10th Mountain Division are central to the division's identity and achievements. Their active role in upholding the division's standards and traditions and their commitment

to the commander's vision of empowered leadership and change underscores the division's ongoing dedication to excellence and service. Through their unwavering dedication and proactive leadership, NCOs ensure that the 10th Mountain Division continues to exemplify the highest ideals of the United States Army, ready to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. ■

Notes

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New from Army University Films



Army University Films presents *D-Day: Planning the Impossible*, which examines the planning, strategic analysis, and logistical challenges encountered by Allied planners in preparation for the 6 November 1944 Allied invasion of Normandy, France.

Created in collaboration with the Combined Arms Support Command, the film highlights the legacy impact of the planning and preparation effort on such key Army doctrinal tools as the military decision-making process, intelligence preparation of the battlefield, and the sustainment preparation of the operational environment.

Allied planners spent years analyzing changing tides, perilous terrain, and German fortifications along the Atlantic Wall to identify the best time and place to make an amphibious landing. The documentary goes on to highlight the almost unfathomable complexity and attention to detail required to overcome the challenges associated with planning an invasion that involved transporting, sustaining, and training over a million service members, made more complicated by tensions and personality conflicts among the Allied leadership.

Watch *D-Day: Planning the Impossible* at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Films/D-Day-Planning-the-Impossible/>.