



SMA Chandler: More Will Be Expected of Senior NCOs as We Move Toward Army 2020

By Meghan Portillo

NCO Journal

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III encouraged about 530 new Sergeant Major Course students to concentrate on their own development for the next 10 months, because the new Army will be in their hands soon enough.

“Understand that you are here to be the leader of the future,” Chandler said during the opening ceremony Aug. 23 at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas. “Your leap from the organizational level of leadership to the strategic level is one that’s going to be predicated on your commitment to what this course provides. You are going to have to lead the Army into the future. ... You will have the Army in your hands, and

you are going to have to decide: What type of Army do you want? It’s going to be on your shoulders.”

Sergeants major are the standard-bearers of the Army, and this role will not change, Chandler said. But as the force moves toward the Army 2020 plan, commanders will require more of their senior enlisted advisors. Sergeants major will be expected to use their influence and critical thinking skills more effectively and efficiently, Chandler said.

He described the financial challenges the Army faces today, and warned students that they must find a way to accomplish more with less. Additional sequestration cuts in October may reduce the Army’s number of active

duty Soldiers by another 70,000, he said. In addition, the National Guard could be reduced by 50,000, and the Reserve by 15,000.

“The entire executive branch, including the Department of Defense, has to contribute to reduce that debt,” Chandler said. “You are going to learn that impact here while you are in this course, and you’ve got to be able to carry that forward to explain to your Soldiers why they may have to do training a little bit differently than the way they have for the last 12 years. We are in service to the nation, and when the American people say we have to reduce the size of the armed forces in order to generate revenue for other things, we have an obligation to then move forward and execute. And we’ll take the responsibility to figure out what it’s going to take to maintain our readiness.”

Chandler told the students that, even in the face of these challenges, their leadership can make the Army better than it is today. He said they need to build on the strong foundation and reputation the NCO Corps has established, and he asked them to reflect on the trust general officers have placed in the NCO Corps. When USASMA was founded in 1973, half of the instructors were officers from the Command and General Staff College. Now, the course is completely facilitated by NCOs.

“Think about that,” Chandler said. “I’m not slighting any of our partner nations here, but no other nation in the world — no other army in the world — has that much trust in a noncommissioned officer corps.”

Even when compared to other educational institutions within the Army, NCOs set the example, he said. Not only is USASMA looking to revolutionize the way the Army facilitates training, the academy is able to do with \$15 million what other field-grade and general officer schools do with \$70 million. Chandler said those at the academy need to continue to be agile and adaptive with a “get it done” attitude, because NCO education is going to shape the Army’s future.

“So where do we go from here?” Chandler asked. “We now will build the intellectual capacity within our NCOs at more junior levels. ... We want to have an individual training plan before a Soldier comes to school so that we can tailor the educational outcome to their needs. That way, you’re not in a classroom learning something you already know. You are getting focused, directed training and education based off of your weaknesses.”

The proposed changes for the NCO Evaluation Report are meant to support this goal and provide a better tool for commanders to measure the performance and potential of all NCOs.

“For sergeants major, the use of narratives rather than bullet statements will give raters the ability to better explain how an individual can influence change within that organization. The use of a rater profile will also let sergeants major know how they are doing in relation to their peers. This will also stop the rating inflation that has crept into evaluations over the past few years.”

Chandler asked the students to keep these points in mind as they concentrate on their education at the academy. He asked them to challenge themselves and to always act honorably. They represent more than their unit, more than USASMA, he said. They represent every NCO; they represent the Army Profession. Chandler emphasized that, in everything that they do, they can build upon the trust placed in them as senior NCOs.

“Soldiers need to know that our profession is built on a foundation of trust,” Chandler said. “That includes the trust between Soldiers, the trust between Soldiers and their leaders, and the trust between the Army and the American public. And everything we say and do can impact that trust.

“We’ve made promises to defend the Constitution, to accomplish the mission, and to look out for our Soldiers. If we don’t keep those promises, we have broken trust. Senior NCOs must ensure this message is heard, understood and followed.” ■

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