

INCOPD: Developing Army NCOs

Sgt. 1st Class

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NCO Journal



INCOPD

Institute for Non-Commissioned
Officer Professional Development

At the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, located at Fort Eustis, Va., there is one organization whose only mission in the Army is to work to improve the skill set, education and readiness of the U.S. Army noncommissioned officer: the Institute for Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development.

INCOPD stood up in September 2009 to provide direction and oversight of the NCO Education System throughout the Army. It functions in three divisions: Learning Integration, Learning Execution and Evaluation and Learning Innovations and Initiatives Division.

In late July, INCOPD welcomed a new director, Aubrey Butts when the institute's previous, and first director, John Sparks retired.

Butts, a U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Class 46 graduate, retired as a command sergeant major in 2004 after 27 years on active duty. An infantryman for his entire career, he served 17 years in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C.

"My transition was really easy, because this is one of the most competent staffs I've ever seen assembled," Butts said. "Each one of them is uniquely qualified in their respective areas across the three divisions, and my deputy (Dan Hubbard) has just a wealth of history and knowledge that has guided me through the process and down the road of success."

The staff at INCOPD said their success will come from doing what they can to provide direction and oversight to NCOES across the entire Army.

"What we do is integrate all actions and activities that are related to NCO leader development into the Army leader development strategy," Sgt. Maj. Trefus Lee, INCOPD's sergeant major said. "We also serve as the subject-matter and NCO expert for Army leader development at [TRADOC]."

Though INCOPD is a part of TRADOC, it's unique in that it is the only organization focused strictly on NCOs and their professional development.

"There are not too many organizations that are fortunate enough to have a clear-focused lane to operate in," said Dan Hubbard, a retired sergeant major and INCOPD's deputy director. "We listen to the NCO

Corps, senior commanders and other stakeholders across the Army, as to what they visualize they need an NCO Corps to do."

Hubbard served in the Army for 30 years and retired as a sergeant major in 2003. He was a USASMA Class 35 graduate and was recently inducted into the USASMA Hall of Honor for his contributions to the advancement of the education and training of the NCO Corps during his service on active duty and as a Department of the Army civilian.

Although there are many initiatives for INCOPD, Butts said its core mission is working to provide the best education and opportunities for NCOs at all levels.

"If we look to the future and what we think warfare may be, I have heard that we will continue to fight in small units. At the center of those formations will be young lieutenants and NCOs in the ranks of staff sergeant and sergeant first class," Butts said. "However, at the strategic and operational levels, we have to make sure that we teach the skills needed for those NCOs who are master sergeants and sergeants major to be able to work in a joint environment and in multinational and interagency environments. We have to make sure we give those noncommissioned officers those skills to operate in volatile environments that are complex and ambiguous."

Having served as an NCO for most of his career, Butts said he was eager to, in his position as the INCOPD director, be a part of some of Army's NCO professional development, to include distance learning and Structured Self-Development.

"When I look at all the positions that I could possibly serve in, at any level, I don't think I could be more satisfied with being the person that will work with the sergeant major of the Army and command sergeants majors in the field to figure out the needs of the Army for the most valuable asset in the Army, the noncommissioned officer, the backbone," Butts said. "NCOs give the Army the framework and movement and all the muscle to make it move. And without that backbone, you really couldn't make things work. So I think I have, at this point in time—with formations that are coming out of

war, in a state of preparation—one of the most important jobs in the Army and one of the most important jobs is dealing with education. What we produce will determine how we will fight and what young men and women will endure on the battlefield for the next 50 years.” ■

Do you want input into the future education of NCOs? Well, INCOPD wants to hear from you. Check out the NCO Journal on Sept. 24 for instructions on how to complete INCOPD’s “NCOES 2020” survey so you can provide your experiences and help shape NCOES.



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