



Command Sgt. Maj. Dana S. Mason Jr., command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command, takes a quick tour of the Panama Canal during a visit to the U.S. Army's Technical Assistance Field Team in Panama.

NCOJOURNAL

AUTHOR: **Jones**

SECTION: **Features**

RUN DATE: **August**

Professional advice from USASAC's command sergeant major

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NCO Journal

Command Sgt. Maj. Dana S. Mason Jr., the command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command, offers advice on:

On professional development

"Noncommission Officer (NCO) Professional Military Education (PME) serves as the foundation and cornerstone of every NCO's professional development. As the Army continues to transition into a more deployable and responsive force capable of fighting and winning our country's wars in any environment, it is essential that NCOs become the subject matter experts of their fields particularly at the sergeant to sergeant first class level. That is where the rubber meets the road.

"I think it's critical for NCOs to get together in small groups, and get together and train and talk together."

He recommends these get-togethers occur four times a month at the company level; monthly at the battalion level; and quarterly at the brigade level and higher.¹

On up-and-coming NCOs

"These young NCOs play a critical role in the development of our future force because they are the leaders most responsible for small unit training. Right now, our PME system is the best in the world, and I believe we will continue to hold that position as long as we continue to evolve as a Corps as the need arises."

Like many senior leaders, Mason sees a need for the U.S. Army to get away from expecting to have the forward operating base and to be prepared for more austere, rugged settings.

"Soldiers coming [to the Army] are more adaptive and willing to do that type of training than some of my seniors who have been deployed three or four times to Afghanistan and Iraq. [Some of the senior leaders] don't like the fact that they have to go live on the ground, or in a

tent. They're not quite used to it. But the younger soldiers say, 'Hey, this is what the Army should be; this is what I joined for.'"2

'Secrets' to success

"There are no secrets to success in the Army. It is a relatively simple equation: Stay physically fit, be on time, follow orders that are not illegal or immoral, treat others how you want others to treat you, and uphold standards and discipline.

"Physical fitness is essential and is the most important way a soldier can start their day. Having a strong fitness foundation carries over into other areas, such as mental toughness and recovery from injuries. Serving in the military can be a very demanding job, and injuries are going to happen. Maintaining your physical fitness could play a fundamental role in lessening a soldier's recovery time.

"I have always remained true to who I am as a person. I often tell soldiers it is OK to emulate another leader, but never try to imitate that person. As I have grown as a leader and moved up through the ranks, I have taken the undesirable and desirable actions of some of my former leaders and placed them in my 'kit-bag.' The intent is to use the positive attributes of your leadership style, and the not-so-desirable qualities are in your bag as a reminder of the path you do not want to go on.

"Remain humble as you continue to grow in the military. It is not uncommon for leaders to forget where they came from and what it was like climbing through the ranks. If it were not for the successes of the soldiers in your charge, you would never have gotten the opportunity to assume greater responsibilities. No matter what station you climb to, it is important to remain approachable, available and accessible to your soldiers."3

References

1. Mason, Dana S. Jr., command sergeant major of U.S. Army Security Assistance Command, in discussion with the author, May 2016.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.