

# The NCO Corps and The NCO Creed

By Master Sgt. Maria FerrandJohnson

Published in From One Leader to Another Volume II by the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in 2015

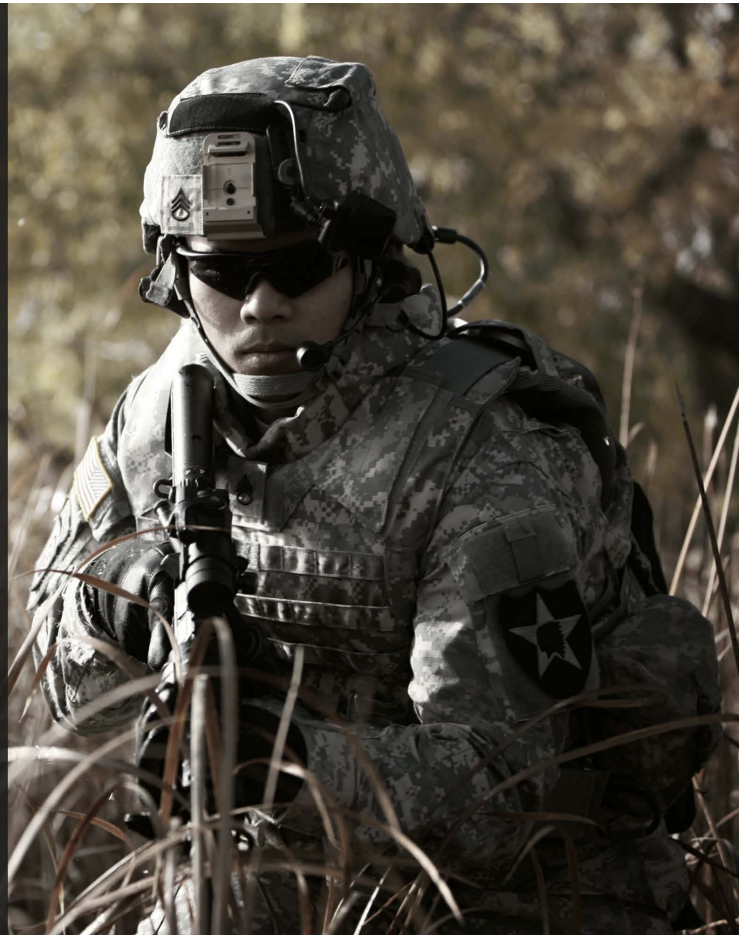
Nov. 6, 2017

## NCO CREED

No one is more professional than I. I am a noncommissioned officer, a leader of Soldiers. As a noncommissioned officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as "The Backbone of the Army". I am proud of the Corps of noncommissioned officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the military service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as a noncommissioned officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my Soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my Soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, noncommissioned officers, leaders!



The NCO Creed (Army.mil)

When someone asks you, "What does the noncommissioned officer Corps mean to you?" How do you respond? Is there a long silent pause or do you know beyond the rank on your chest what the Corps means to you? What about the NCO Creed? Can you, without having a cheat sheet, recite the creed verbatim?

All too often as NCOs, those questions and responses are forgotten. As I navigate through another chapter of my military career as a senior NCO, I have found young NCOs who cannot answer those questions nor explain exactly what the NCO Creed means to them. Unfortunately, for the Corps, that means somewhere in these young NCO's careers, we as senior NCOs have failed them and the Corps.

According to former Sergeant Major of the Army Jack L. Tilley, "Noncommissioned officers are the backbone of the Army and the reason our Army is the best trained, most professional, and most respected in the world. First-line supervisors execute day-to-day operations with precision whenever and wherever duty calls....Living, implementing and teaching the NCO Creed in your duties will further instill and develop those critical leadership skills that our Army and our Nation require and desire as we train Soldiers and grow leaders."

The following is a short excerpt taken from "The History of the NCO Creed" prepared by the Association of the United States Army:

By 1973, the Army (and the noncommissioned officer corps) was in turmoil. Of all the post-Vietnam developments in American military police, the most influential in shaping the Army was the coming of the Modern Volunteer Army. With the inception of the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course, many young sergeants were not the skilled trainers of the past and were only trained to perform a specific job, squad leaders in Vietnam. The Noncommissioned Officer Education System was under development, and the army was rewriting its Field Manual 22-100, *Leadership*, to set a road map for leaders to follow.

Of those working on the challenges at hand, one of the only NCO pure instructional departments at the U.S. Army Infantry

School at Fort Benning, Georgia, was the NCO Subcommittee, of the Command and Leadership Committee, Leadership Department. Besides training Soldiers at the Noncommissioned Officers Academy, these NCOs also developed instructional material and worked as part of the team developing model leadership programs of instruction.

It is reported that during one brain-storming session, Sergeant First Class Earle Brigham recalls writing three letters on a plain white sheet of paper...NCO. From those three letters they began to build the creed. The idea behind developing a creed was to give noncommissioned officers a "yardstick by which to measure themselves."

When it was ultimately approved, the Creed was printed on the inside cover of the special texts issued to students attending the noncommissioned officer courses at Fort Benning, beginning in 1974. Though the Creed was submitted higher for approval and distribution Army-wide, it was not formalized by an official army publication until 11 years later.

Though rewritten many different ways, today the Creed still begins its paragraphs with those three letters...NCO. It continues to guide and reinforce the values of the new generation of noncommissioned officers.

Some would suggest that the heartbeat of our NCO Corps has suffered a major heart attack and is on life support. Fortunately, for us, to save it we already possess all of the tools necessary in order to survive. NCOs...correction... **ALL NCOs** must take responsibility to start acting and behaving as real noncommissioned officers while grooming young NCOs and future leaders.

NCOs, we must stop looking out for our own self-interest; even in the midst of transitioning, we must teach, coach, and mentor our enlisted Soldiers so that they will become great leaders. They are our successors and it is imperative that we hand them a Corps that is vital, thriving, and at its best. This will enable them to continue to defend this great Nation and its citizens who trust us with their safety and warfare.

The NCO Creed is the essence of our Corps. The Creed spells out what all great NCOs will do, must do, to ensure our Army of warrior fighters are prepared and that they will trust the actions, direction, and leadership of their NCOs. Get back to basics. Help heal the Corps and breathe life back into the leadership all Soldiers are entitled. Take your place amongst your peers and hold each other accountable to the BE, KNOW and DO of leadership. Regain the trust of your superiors, so you can get back to doing the business of NCOs without being micro-managed because your work demonstrates otherwise.

The late Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." It is time to be silent no more. Find the passion inside of yourself for the Corps; embrace the NCO Creed and all it embodies. Ask yourselves, how does a body stand if the backbone is severed? Body = Army, Backbone = NCO Corps!

Noncommissioned officers old and new, it is important that we take charge of our Corps, which we have ignored for far too long, and make a commitment to reestablish its greatness. Our enlisted ranks and their development depend on it. "I will not forget nor will I allow my comrades to forget...that we are professionals, noncommissioned officers, LEADERS!"

If you would like to learn more about this topic I recommend you read Field Manual 7-22.7, ([http://www.apd.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/tc7\\_22x7.pdf](http://www.apd.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/tc7_22x7.pdf)) *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide* ([http://www.apd.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/tc7\\_22x7.pdf](http://www.apd.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/tc7_22x7.pdf)), and the History of the NCO Creed (<http://www.ausa.org/resources/nco/training/armytraditions/creeds/Pages/TheHistoryoftheNCOCreed.aspx>).