

# RDECOM'S NCOS Use Expertise to Assist in Army Product Development

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NCO Journal

December 23, 2015



It wasn't the detailed overview of the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command or even the staff ride to John F. Kennedy Space Center that particularly motivated the noncommissioned officers. It was the valuable connections made for future project collaborations that would prove the most gratifying during the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System training sessions in October at the Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ray Smith Simulation and Training Technology Center.

Sgt. Maj. James P. Snyder, command sergeant major and senior enlisted advisor of RDECOM, urged the 54 NCOs who attended to capitalize on their shared link to RDECOM and make those connections at the training sessions.

“Start thinking, ‘How do I better work with others out there to leverage the product that we are building in design, so that way we can give the benefit to the Soldiers in the Army?’” Snyder said. “Because that’s what it’s about. It’s about the Soldiers; it’s not about us. It’s about the unit, it’s about the Soldier in the field and the product that we provide them, and the best product that we can give them.”



## Exercising skills

The 54 NCOs are part of RDECOM’s vast enterprise and are assigned to either Headquarters, Army Research Laboratory or the six research, development and engineering centers — Aviation and Missile Research, Development and Engineering Center or AMRDEC; Armaments Research, Development and Engineering Center or ARDEC; Communications-Electronics Research, Development and Engineering Center or CERDEC; Edgewood Chemical Biological Center or ECBC, Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center or NSRDEC; and Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center or TARDEC.

The NCOs provide military expertise throughout RDECOM. They work closely with a large civilian workforce of scientists and engineers to develop products and technologies.

“Why you are here is to provide user-level input to our scientists and engineers so they can develop the best product they can develop, to get to our Soldiers the first time,” Snyder told the NCOs during the training sessions. “We cannot afford to keep providing a product quickly, that we have to continue to go back and to modernize and revamp. We just can’t afford it.”



Because most of the NCOs come from the operational side of the Army to RDECOM, working with civilians may prove to be a little tricky in the beginning.

“Sometimes our civilians are a little bit intimidated by a Soldier coming into the process because they are not used to working with a Soldier,” Snyder told the NCOs. “You have to show them the benefit that you can be to them in that process. The rank you wear does not matter. They can’t associate rank with anything. What they can associate with though is your technical expertise, and until you show them the technical expertise you provide, you will not gain that trust and they will not come to you seeking that advice.”

## Organizational roles

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NCOs at the training sessions were eager to ask Snyder, who assumed his position in March, about his job at RDECOM.

“Sergeant Major, how long did it take you to get comfortable in your position, coming out of an operational brigade sergeant major position?” asked Sgt. 1st Class Ralph Zito, senior NCO advisor to AMRDEC.

“I am more comfortable than when I first took the seat because I try to embed myself in the process,” Snyder said. “I ask questions. There are plenty of things out there that I do not know yet. That just makes me want to know and ask more questions. I need all of you to do the same thing. The folks in this room know a lot more about how that piece of equipment is going to be utilized in the field than our scientists and engineers do.”



All of the information helped put NCOs at ease, especially in helping them to figure out their organizational roles.

“That RDECOM brief was pretty amazing,” said Sgt. 1st Class Tyler D. Hardy, Satellite Communications Terminal chief, Space and Terrestrial Communications Division, CERDEC. “I have been here for about three years. I wish I had heard it two years ago. That would have helped immensely, because RDECOM is so complex. That helped me understand where we fit in to the grand scheme of things. I’m getting ready to leave RDECOM, and it will help me brief the new NCOs who are coming in. Now, I have a better understanding.”

## On display

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A group of ARL scientists and engineers treated NCOs to technology demonstrations, which included the virtual 3D platform Enhanced Dynamic Geo-Social Environment using virtual puppeteering, as well as technological advances in tactical combat casualty care using medical simulation.

The NCOs also heard a variety of topics discussed, including guidance on professional development, the updated noncommissioned officer evaluation report and the Army’s new Select, Train, Educate, Promote policy.

“I thought the professional development piece was very helpful,” Zito said. “I thought that was really interesting [advice] to further my career and longevity in the military. It was very helpful on what to look for within myself and how to help Soldiers when I get back into the fight and be more productive as a leader.”

Snyder also told the NCOs about the effort to put the word out on RDECOM within the operational Army.

“I’ve been working with Army Training and Doctrine Command to get a block of instruction about RDECOM into the Basic Leaders Course,” Snyder said. “We’re trying to embed a block of training, not just about RDECOM but Army Materiel Command in general, because AMC is misunderstood. We’re trying to embed it in BLC so that our young leaders, who are the ones who are going to find the problems in equipment, have reachback capability to us.”

For Sgt. Maj. Todd Galindo, RDECOM G3, operations sergeant major, the NCOPDS training sessions offered a valuable opportunity to keep all NCOs up to date. Galindo is a new addition to the organization.

“Being a part of RDECOM really completes everything for me and what I’ve done on the operational side of the house,” Galindo said. “It’s a shame that I didn’t know this before, but now that I do I want to share it with everybody else. I know a lot of folks out in the force and hopefully I can make my rounds to explain what RDECOM does. That way, Soldiers can come in and be a part of it.”