



SMA Dailey Defends Uniform Changes at Solarium II

NCO Journal staff report

Dozens of NCOs applauded when one asked Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey to try to “hold off making any more uniform changes for a while.”

Dailey replied to the NCOs — half of whom were wearing Operational Camouflage Patterns, or OCPs, the other Army Combat Uniforms, or ACUs — “I don’t want to make any more changes.”

He then qualified the remark: “I’m working hard to minimize changes, but I’d be lying if I promised you there’d be no more changes.”

He joked that he’s becoming known as the “black socks and tattoo” sergeant major.

The exchange came as Dailey fielded questions on the fourth and final day of the chief of staff of the Army-sponsored NCO Solarium II on Nov. 20 at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The Noncommissioned Officer Solarium II 2015 is an effort by the sergeant major of the Army to inform and

shape the future direction of the U.S. Army. The on-site session at Fort Leavenworth ran from Tuesday through Friday and brought together 60 sergeants first class. In addition to Dailey’s address, the NCOs in attendance identified issues that will have an impact on the Army into the foreseeable future and provided recommendations to Dailey, who will brief that “unfiltered feedback” to the chief of staff of the Army.

As part of the uniform changes discussion, Dailey reminded participants that at least enlisted Soldiers are fortunate to have a clothing allowance that will completely pay for the new uniforms over the phase-in period. Officers bear that expense on their own.

When changes are made, Dailey said, it’s normally by consensus. As a rule of thumb, a consensus is roughly 60 percent, he said. He gets that percentage by surveying Soldiers and then is able to inform leadership from the bottom up.

Dailey referred to a uniform survey conducted in August as an example of consensus building. Soldiers

were surveyed about making the blue service cap be the required headgear with the Army Service Uniform for senior NCOs, officers and warrant officers, instead of the beret.

Just over half of the respondents favored the change, but the 60 percent threshold wasn't met. One Solarium II participant told Dailey that she was passionate about the need for one cap for all.

Dailey said he'd heard from others who agreed with her, but some who just as passionately disagreed.

For example, he said, one Soldier he spoke with said she appreciates the two versions because she likes the men and women to be differentiated by their apparel.

There could be times in the future when changes will be made without survey or convention, Dailey said — for instance, a change to the uniform that provides Soldiers a greater level of protection.

Dailey said he and the Army chief of staff are both fond of period uniforms, such as those worn during World War II. They were both happy to see the return of the Ike jacket, he said. However, he said, their preferences will not have much of a bearing on future changes.

Lastly, Dailey advised having an open mind to changes in general to avoid a stagnating force.

Combat in Syria?

One NCO wondered whether Soldiers would be battling the Islamic State in Syria or elsewhere within the next 18 months. Dailey responded that that would be hard to predict and that he didn't have any inside knowledge about forces in Syria.

He did, however, offer his personal assessment: With the recent attacks in Paris and elsewhere, Dailey said there's a growing concern globally the severity of the IS threat is setting in.

He said he believes one of the main reasons another attack hasn't yet happened on the homeland is because of worldwide involvement of the United States and others, including the some 190,000 Soldiers serving abroad in 90 countries.

He harkened back to the Army chief of staff's main focus of being deployable and ready at all times to fight and win the nation's wars.

"The only certainty is uncertainty for the future," he said.

On Leadership

"We own the world's intellectual capital. We have the most intelligent NCOs, officers and Army civilians," Dailey said of Army leaders. But there's always room for growth, he added.

Lt. Gen. Robert B. Brown, commander of the Combined Arms Center, followed Dailey's closing remarks about leadership with his own.

"A sergeant in the Army does what a colonel or brigadier general does in the Chinese army," he said. "We have mission command empowering leaders like you."

NCOs at the small-unit level are making strategic decisions.

"You are the Army's 'trusted professionals,'" he added, recalling a previous Solarium in which that phrase was suggested and adopted by the Army.

On Schools

Brown hailed the new Army University as the most revolutionary step in education that the Army has taken since 1881, when Army Chief of Staff Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman first established Army school houses at Leavenworth and elsewhere.

Brown said Army University was created not to compete with but to collaborate with other excellent American universities.

At one time, all of the Army schools were stove-piped, he said. Now they're synchronized as they must be, because the Army no longer has the luxury of infusing good ideas across the school houses over a long period of time. The world has changed and good ideas need to flow faster, he said.

At one time, Brown said, there were 100 doctors of philosophy at Fort Leavenworth, helping only students at the Army Command and General Staff College. Now, he said, they're helping everyone across the force.

The other thing the Army is doing is working to provide Soldiers college credit for Army education courses and certifying Soldiers for job-related training.

For instance, when a Soldier separates from the force and goes into welding in the private sector, the difference between having welding certification and not can add up to more than \$50,000 per year. Certified welders earn an average of \$80,000 annually, and those who are not certified average \$30,000. ■



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