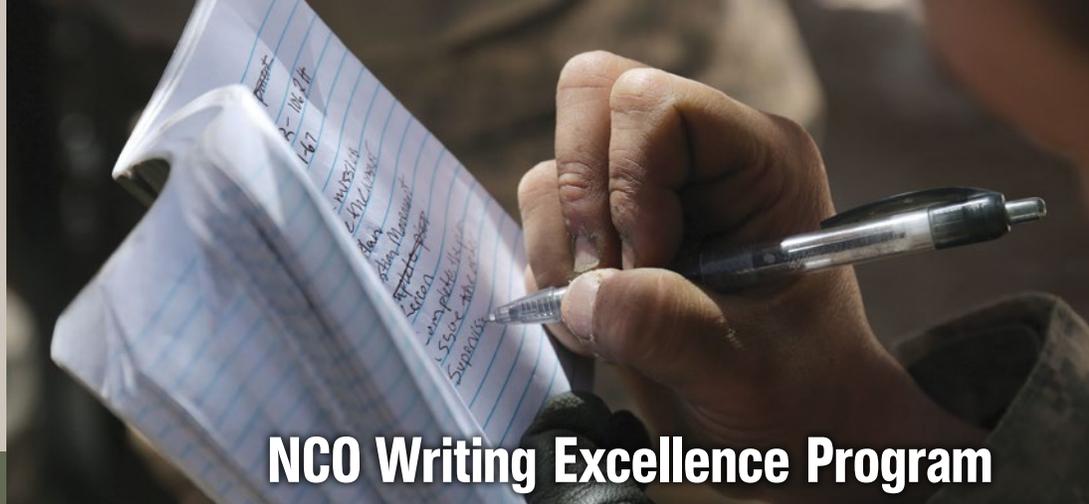


NCO UPDATE

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A Quarterly Report from AUSA for Noncommissioned Officers



NCO Writing Excellence Program

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The Army's evolving operating environment demands that noncommissioned officers (NCOs) hone their critical-thinking skills and be able to communicate clearly and effectively. This has led the Army to make writing a priority and to increase its importance in the Noncommissioned Officer Education System by integrating writing evaluations into the curriculum. The Army has also initiated programs to encourage writing among both commissioned and noncommissioned officers. The Army Press NCO Writing Excellence Program offers NCOs the opportunity to enhance their writing skills—and a chance to win an award.

Besides the demand for NCOs to possess solid communication skills in order to effectively do their job, their ability to demonstrate these attributes is a direct reflection on the NCO Corps. Moreover, this level of professionalism affects not only the present but also the future.

"As noncommissioned officers, we rarely put pen to paper to share our experiences—and it is a huge void in the

Army book. The NCO Writing Excellence Program is meant to help with this and drive our NCOs to build their credentials and reputation," said Army University Command Sergeant Major Michael H. Clowser.

The contest challenges all NCOs across the Regular Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve to communicate clearly and articulately about a thought-provoking theme. Besides enhancing their skills, NCOs could win an encased commemorative Army University coin designed specifically for the program as well as a personal note from the Army University Provost. The winning essay will also be published in the NCO Journal. Submission guidelines for the quarterly competition can be found at <http://armypress.dodlive.mil/nco-writing-excellence-program>. E-mail submissions to usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.army-press@mail.mil.

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Information for this article adapted from "NCO Writing Excellence Program aims to tune up communication skills" by Master Sergeant Gary Qualls with Defense Video Imagery & Distribution System.

Veterans Find Camaraderie at Annapolis Sailing Clinic

When Marine Corps veteran Hector Cardona heard about a sailing clinic designed to assist veterans as they transition to civilian life, he said he couldn't sign up quickly enough, even though he had never sailed. He was among eight veterans who participated in the nonprofit Valhalla Sailing Project's first two-day clinic, held on the

Chesapeake Bay in late June, that taught veterans the fundamentals of sailing and racing.

It is difficult for veterans to reenter the civilian sector when the one relationship they crave is missing: the brotherhood of their battle buddies. Valhalla assists military veterans by filling the need for a squad atmosphere through formations

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Continued from front

of four-person crews to sail and race as teams, said Marine Corps combat veteran Mike Wood, Valhalla's executive director. He noted that the organization is operated by combat veterans who are sailboat racers.

Learning to sail and race as a crew member prompts emotions similar to those experienced by servicemembers in the military's brotherhood in arms. "You rely on each other [in battle]," Wood said. "With sailing, everyone has a job . . . and you have to know everyone's job if you have to step in as needed. And you learn to excel."

"It also gives them [someone] to call" when something in life goes awry, Wood added. The organization is developing crews to keep veterans together to build the core structure and camaraderie that they are used to.

As new members are introduced to the clinic, the veteran-sailor crews will mentor them. Sailing is a year-round activity, and racing begins in the fall when the wind picks up.

Wood said he is proud of what veterans can accomplish in just two days, adding that the bonding, camaraderie and skill they display are astounding. According to him, veterans who have completed the clinic "want to continue building their skills and become one of the premier racing crews in the area."

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Information for this article adapted from "Veterans Find Camaraderie at Annapolis Sailing Clinic" by Terri Moon Cronk with DoD News, Defense Media Activity.

Lifeliners Bolster NCOs through Professional Development

Command Sergeant Major Michael Perry, senior enlisted leader advisor for the 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and senior NCOs in the brigade conducted their quarterly leader professional development training at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, on 15 June.

The daylong event kicked off with a four-mile run, followed by leader development meetings. Senior NCOs learned what courses are available to them and their Soldiers and how to reserve certain classes for leaders to provide informative sergeants'-time training for their Soldiers. They also learned about the newly released Army directive involving retention control point changes. Perry stated that these changes target many of the senior NCOs in the formations, as they will not be given the opportunity to serve as many years as they had planned.

"I am glad that we have a command sergeant major that passes down information to his NCOs once he receives it," said Master Sergeant Rachel W. Terrell, operations sergeant major for the 101st

Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade. "The Army is changing so much that it is crucial that as leaders, we need to stay informed because it affects our Soldiers and ourselves."

During some of the day's events, leaders had the opportunity to interact with NCOs from other companies and battalions. Perry's intent was to have junior and senior NCOs in one room in order to provide mentorship in an informal way.

Perry said that "Backbone Day" was a phenomenal success and he was pleased with the turnout: "What we are trying to do is impart some of the traditions in these leader developments. . . . These sessions are not only put in place to develop leaders here and make them better in the sustainment brigade but also for when they go on into their next unit. It won't only benefit our unit—it will also benefit the larger Army."

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Information for this article adapted from "Lifeliners Bolster NCOs through Professional Development" by Sergeant Neysa Canfield with Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System.





Army Cyber Events Attract New Technologies

Seeking to attract cutting-edge technologies from the public and private sectors as it equips a growing cyber force that is more agile and informed, the Army has established a series of events—Cyber Blitz, Cyber Quest and Cyber Innovation Challenge—to evaluate, integrate and, in some cases, purchase cyber capabilities.

Set in field and laboratory environments, the three events share the goals of assessing prototypes, validating concepts and informing future requirements for capabilities that will allow commanders and Soldiers to understand, detect and counter cyber threats. Where they differ is in the operational context, specific focus areas and maturity levels of the technologies under evaluation, as well as the immediate outcomes for industry and government participants. Together, they form a broad net that allows the Army to put cyber capabilities under the microscope and in the hands of Soldiers to influence integrated acquisition and technology approaches.

CyberBlitz, which held its inaugural event in April at Fort Dix, New Jersey, is executed by the Army science and technology community, specifically the Communications–Electronics Research, Development and Engineering Center (CERDEC) Space and Terrestrial Communications Directorate. Combining CERDEC’s integrated

modeling and simulation environment with its lab- and field-based risk reduction processes, Cyber Blitz looked to address how the Army is adapting the physical construct of the main command post and interactions among different staff functions to execute cyber and electromagnetic activities. Future Cyber Blitz events, taking place twice a year, will expand to include pre-Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6 materiel solutions focused on broad capability gaps affecting cyber and electromagnetic operations at the tactical level.

Cyber Quest, which conducted its first annual event in July at Fort Gordon, Georgia, is executed by the Army’s training and doctrine community, specifically the Cyber Center of Excellence (CoE). Cyber Quest aims to provide a rigorous, integrated operational setting—with a near-peer threat that reaches from the brigade to the squad level—in order to evaluate technology solutions that have achieved TRL 6/7 status. Driven by the Army’s priority cyber requirements, Cyber Quest 2016 will focus on integrating situational understanding tools for cyber and electronic warfare, as well as demonstrating tactical radios as electronic warfare solutions at the tactical edge. Cyber Quest 2017 will address other capability areas including forensics and malware detection, insider threat detection,

defensive cyber operations mission planning and various tactical electronic warfare sensors.

The Cyber Innovation Challenge, which launched in 2015 and kicked off its fourth iteration in July, is executed by the Army’s acquisition community, specifically the Cyber Focal Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, in partnership with the Army Cyber Command and the Cyber CoE. Through a vendor consortium and a flexible acquisition method known as Other Transaction Authority, the Cyber Innovation Challenge taps into small and nontraditional defense contractors to rapidly evaluate, procure and deliver limited-quantity prototypes to cyber Soldiers. The Army has already conducted three formal Innovation Challenge events focused on Deployable Defensive Cyberspace Operations Infrastructure (DDI), cyberspace analytics and micro-cloud management solutions. The first DDI prototype kits, purchased from two vendors, were delivered in April to the Cyber Protection Brigade at Fort Gordon, Georgia. The Army’s goal is to hold three to four Innovation Challenges per year.

Information for this article adapted from “Army cyber events tag-team to attract new technologies” by Claire Heinger with Army News Service.

Nine-month Army Central Rotation Proves Total Force Concept

After a nine-month deployment to Jordan, Colonel John L. Rafferty, Jr., commander of the 18th Field Artillery Brigade out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, said he was sold on the total force concept.

Starting in August 2015, he commanded the Combined Force Land Component Commander's Force Field Artillery Headquarters (FFA HQ), which included about 650 Soldiers manning 24 High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) in five locations throughout the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR). These Soldiers came in battalion-sized units from the New Hampshire and Michigan Army National Guard, along with battery-sized units from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

"It was my first experience as an officer commanding a mixed force of active and reserve component troops," Rafferty said. Now, "I can honestly say that I'm a believer in the total force concept, and really believe that we are one Army. In many cases our forces are interchangeable. And in some cases our skills complement one another, which makes for a very strong and effective team. It really was a thrill

to command that force, and I did learn an enormous amount as a brigade commander with that new force."

Rafferty said he was impressed not only with the relationships he saw with partner nations in the CENTCOM AOR but also with the impact of having worked with U.S. forces from outside the Regular Army. Working with the National Guard was much as he expected it to be—especially at the lowest levels: "I expected almost exactly what we found: that the platoons and squad level would be extremely good, and in some cases maybe better." He described them as "crews [who had been] together for a long period of time, [with] really entrenched and tight teams."

Now, coming back from the CENTCOM AOR, Rafferty has plans for the future. Among other things, he wants to create more training opportunities with reserve component units. He was also impressed with the communications capabilities he experienced in theater; he wants to sustain at home what the Soldiers learned there.

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Information for this article adapted from "Nine-month Army Central rotation proves total force concept" by C. Todd Lopez with Army News Service.

Sleeves Can Now Be Rolled Up

Effective immediately, commanders may authorize Soldiers to roll up the sleeves on Army combat uniforms (ACUs), according to a memorandum signed by Lieutenant General James C. McConville, deputy chief of staff, G-1, on 28 June 2016.

The new policy pertains to the universal camouflage pattern, operational camouflage pattern and Operation Enduring Freedom camouflage pattern ACUs.

"We're going sleeves up, camo out," said Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey, adding that these authorizations apply only when not precluded by safety concerns.

The sleeves will be rolled above the elbow, right-side out with the camouflage pattern showing. They should be rolled no more than three inches above the elbow, according to the memo. This method will be used primarily in garrison.

In addition, during field training exercises or operations, upon approval of the commander, sleeves may be opened and cuffed inward above the wrist on the forearm. Dailey emphasized that this second method of staying cool is specifically for Soldiers in a field or deployed environment.

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Information for this article adapted from "Sleeves Can Now Be Rolled Up" by David Vergun with Army News Service.

Civil Affairs Association Writing Contest

The Civil Affairs Association and its partners are sponsoring a writing contest to address the following questions:

How can Civil Affairs' (CA's) most important customers—the geographic combatant commands and the Special Operations Command—best leverage CA's full range of capabilities? How can they use the inherent and comparative advantages of this diverse force to facilitate desired regional strategic and operational outcomes? What capabilities do these commands need most in CA and other engagement forces and how can CA forces be best developed, maintained and generated? What policy,

legal, institutional, organizational or program and funding issues most encumber fully leveraging CA and what are the solutions?

The Civil Affairs Association is reaching out to experienced civil-military operators to contribute to this discussion, asking them to send an originally written Civil Affairs Issue Paper. The top five Issue Papers will appear in the 2016–17 Civil Affairs Issue Papers at the spring 2017 Roundtable in Washington, DC. The association will also select the top three papers—likewise based on response to the call, originality of thought, clarity of presentation and feasibility of recommendations—for presentation and final

voting by participants at the Civil Affairs Symposium in Mountain View, California, 17–19 November 2016.

The deadline for submission of papers is Friday, 16 September 2016. For more information on submission guidelines and cash prizes, please visit: <http://www.civilaffairsassoc.org/#!CA-Call-for-Papers/hfj2h/578cfab50cf2779eabef7994>.

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Information for this article adapted from "CA Call for Papers" on the Civil Affairs Association news page.



Soldiers Allowed to Wear Headphones in Gym

Soldiers jogging or lifting in the gym may now be allowed to listen to music through small headphones or ear buds, according to Army Directive 2016-20, released 6 May.

Acting Secretary of the Army Patrick J. Murphy signed a memo that authorizes Soldiers to listen to music on a variety of devices and earpieces while doing personal physical training inside gyms, though the memo does give the final word on the new policy to installation or unit commanders.

The headphones cannot be more than 1.5 inches in diameter and the memo states violators may be subject to administrative or disciplinary action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. To play music through “conservative and discrete” earpieces, Soldiers are also permitted to “wear electronic devices, such as music players or cell phones” on their waistbands, in accordance with AR 670-1. That regulation says the color of the carrying case for such a device must be black.

The directive also permits Soldiers to wear a “solid black armband” to hold their electronic devices, but only while in the gym or fitness center. When Soldiers leave the gym or fitness center, the arm bands, the music devices and the headphones must be put away. The memo applies to Regular Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers.

Information for this article adapted from “Army allows Soldiers to wear headphones in gym” by C. Todd Lopez with Army News Service.

Skeletal Advisory Brigades Could Regenerate Force

Five brigades in the future might consist of only officers and NCOs with no junior Soldiers. Army Chief of Staff General Mark A. Milley calls these “train, advise and assist” brigades, explaining how they would work during a 23 June forum hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Each brigade would deploy to a different combatant command area to help train allies and partners. Their mission would be similar to what units have been doing in Iraq and Afghanistan. The structure of the new units would be similar to that of a current infantry brigade’s chain of command, but without the privates and specialists. In the case of a national emergency, newly-trained Soldiers could be added to stand up full units quickly.

“You get a day-to-day engagement that the combatant commanders want in order to train, advise and assist. And

then in time of national emergency, you have at least four or five brigades with standing chains of command that can marry Soldiers up like the old COHORT [Cohesion, Operational Readiness and Training] units.”

Milley served with a COHORT battalion when they existed in the 1980s, where the whole idea was cohesion. “If the unit chain of command trains together for three or four months, they’re very cohesive. And then all of the Soldiers go through basic training together; they all go through Advanced Individual Training together at Fort Benning. . . . Then when you marry them to the chains of command, the amount of time it will take to build a cohesive unit will be shortened. And it was. And those were incredible battalions.”

The first of the new brigades should be operational by 2018 or 2019. After the first advisory brigade is tested in theater, Milley said the design could

be “tweaked.” Within five years, there should be five of the brigades—one for each combatant commander.

Milley believes that the new brigade structure could manage risks associated with a shrinking Army. By 2018, the total Army—Regular Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve—is projected to drop to 980,000. That’s still a large force, but it might not be large enough to fight two major contingency operations at once. For instance, taking on potential adversaries such as Russia and North Korea at the same time could pose a risk. Additional forces might be needed quickly, and the “train, advise and assist” brigades could be filled out within months, making it easier for the nation to respond to crises effectively.

Information for this article adapted from “CSA explains how skeletal advisory brigades could regenerate force” by Gary Sheftick with Army News Service.

PTSD Veteran Finds Coping Skills Through “Dot” Art

When Army veteran Greg Mullen developed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) while stationed in the Middle East during the first Gulf War, his symptoms were severe enough after a six-month deployment for him to transition out of his 12-year military career. Mullen’s disorder would only later be identified as PTSD, a signature wound of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Mullen’s doctor told him at the time that he had a personality disorder and prescribed drug therapy. But the medication did not help his severe anxiety, panic and migraines.

With assistance eventually provided by a psychologist, Mullen realized he had an aptitude for art. He found himself doodling on paper one day, making small circles within circles, within more circles. The more he repeated the pattern, the less anxious he became.

Little did Mullen know as he doodled those patterns that his life would dramatically change for the better. Gradually, as he transitioned from pencil and

paper to paint, overlaying a series of dots onto objects, he felt the entrapment of PTSD’s chains begin to fall away.

“It gives me peace of mind and calms me down,” Mullen said of his art.

As his collection of art has grown, Mullen has begun showing his wares at military installations around the country. He is able to interact with other veterans and show those who also suffer from PTSD that an alternative to medicine might exist for them, too. He receives e-mails from inspired veterans who have found coping skills through activities such as yoga, meditation and art.

Seeing Mullen’s work helps other veterans challenge themselves. According to his husband, Edward, the art displays at military bases “get him out there in front of other people who need to hear his story from him. . . . There are other veterans who are going through the same thing.”

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Information for this article adapted from “Veteran with Post-Traumatic Stress Finds Coping Skills Through ‘Dot’ Art” with DoD News, Defense Media Activity.



Sergeant Embraces Role as Army Mentor

After training hundreds of Soldiers as a cadre, Sergeant Samnith Thy says that without a doubt, he has learned how to be a more effective leader from his students: “Every class I go through I learn something different. . . . The students don’t realize that but I learn how to be a better instructor, a better NCO.”

Thy is an Air Assault School instructor at the 25th Infantry Division’s Lightning Academy, where his abilities as a mentor and teacher serve Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and Sailors in learning the details, precautions and finesse it takes to be an Air Assault Soldier. Even while he is shouting instructions from inside a UH-60 Black Hawk or the top of a rappel tower, he says he is still growing as a Soldier himself. He takes what he learns and pays it forward through

the mentoring and instruction that he provides to Soldiers, a form of coaching where he brings back the basics and instills in them the foundation of air assault skills.

Staff Sergeant Donald Castelow, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment and Air Assault School graduate, says that the quality of training given by instructors like Sergeant Thy makes the experience one that he will take to heart and bring back to his unit: “The instructors . . . are some of the most professional NCOs that I’ve actually seen. . . . Everything they do goes by NCOES [Non-Commissioned Officer Education System]—it’s right by the book.”

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Information for this article adapted from “Sergeant embraces role as Army mentor” by Staff Sergeant Chris Hubenthal with Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System.

Letters to the Editor

NCO Update would like to hear from you. We want to know your opinions and possibly publish them in future issues. Please send your letters to Editor, NCO Update, AUSA, 2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201. Letters are also accepted via e-mail at etoner@ausa.org with the subject line “Letters to the Editor.”

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