

History of the Croatian Noncommissioned Officers Corps

First (1918 – 1941), and second Yugoslavia (1945 – 1991) represent the only period of time in Croatia's fourteen hundred years long history when Croatia did not have its own Armed Forces. Instead, Croats served in the Yugoslav People Army YPA (Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija JNA) as conscripts for a year at minimum since it was mandatory. Not many Croats became professional NCOs or Officers in YPA because it required membership in Yugoslav Communist Party YCP, and Croats traditionally were religious. As a result, at the beginning of Homeland War (1991 – 1995), Croats were not only poorly equipped, but also lacked professional chain of command. To organize an Army able to defend Croatia against Serbs and YPA, Croats had to take the model they were familiar with. That was the model of YPA.

Similar to the YPA, the Croatian Army had NCOs only at the positions of squad leaders. The exceptions were some MOSs where NCOs served as staff members, mostly as administrative NCOs. During the Homeland War, Croatian NCOs learned leadership skills by leading their squads on the battlefields and fighting shoulder to shoulder with their soldiers. The authority they had was the authority they earned on the battlefield, not the ranks, since most of them didn't even have the rank until 1992. The procedure was simple: it took you just a few days to show your comrades what you were made of. There was no higher command that directed who would take leadership position. The Croatian Army was born as an Army of volunteers and soldiers, and then chose the best among them to be their leaders. Confirmation from higher command was just a formality, and the promotion was a matter of time, depending on administration in the unit. If you had been lucky enough, and had a good administrative office to write a letter of recommendation, you could have gotten the highest NCO rank as your very first rank. The

reason for this was that nobody really cared about ranks at that time; the most important thing was freedom of our beloved Croatia and respect of the soldiers one gained. Not many of us knew that he or she was going to stay in the Army after the war as a professional soldier. However, NCOs played the crucial role in Homeland War. Leading their squads or sections, they were taking over the control of key terrain, roads, infrastructure, objects etc. It was the war where the heroism of small groups of soldiers was deciding victory in the battle. Croatian NCOs didn't fail.

Being better and better organized during the war, the Croatian Army realized the need for a good NCO education and development system. After several short leadership courses had been conducted in the cities of Varazdin and Zagreb, in the autumn of 1993 an NCO Academy was founded in the city of Jastrebarsko and hosted the first generation of BNCOC. Until 1995 and the arrival of the US experts team (Military Professional Resources Incorporated - The Democracy Transition Assistance Program MPRI-DTAP), the NCO Academy had been teaching old Yugoslav doctrine and tactics. The old Yugoslav doctrine manuals were the only ones that NCO Academy had at its disposal. This had advantages and disadvantages. The bad thing was that this doctrine, which was basically the same as the Soviet Army doctrine, was old and proved as unsuccessful. The good thing was that we knew the way the enemy fought and were able to surprise our enemy on the battlefield.

The MPRI-DTAP team conducted numerous courses in different Croatian units. The focus of these courses was on transformation of Croatian NCO corps from the old one, based on ex-Yugoslav Army system, to the new one, compatible with NATO and the best Army in the world -- the US Army. The Croatian government and Croatian Army realized that not everything found in US Army FMs, ARTEPs, ARs etc. was applicable in Croatia simply because the

difference between the two armies in equipment used, resource availability and National Strategies. Nevertheless, leadership doctrine, NCO corps, training management and many other things were easily adopted in the Croatian Army. After MPRI-DTAP team conducted several courses at the NCO Academy, the General Staff of Croatian Armed Forces selected 1st Guards Brigade – Tigers as the first unit to implement and test feasibility of NCO corps in the Croatian Army.

In 1997, the best NCOs were selected for new positions and duties. Commanders selected the best NCOs in their units and they became platoon sergeants, company or battery first sergeants, staff NCOs, battalion sergeant majors etc. The requirements for selection depended on the commanders and sometimes varied from unit to unit, but usually included: participation in war and combat experience, NCO evaluation report, civilian and military education, military appearance and physical fitness. However, these positions remained experimental until 1999, and the official NCO assignments were still squad leaders. Soon after inspections in 1st Guards Brigade showed improvement in battle readiness, and especially interest that brigade's NCOs and officers showed for the new system, other Croatian units followed the 1st Bde. Official reorganization of the Croatian Army took place in October 1999, but only in 1st Guards Bde, 7th Guards Bde, and NCO Academy. Lack of finance caused delay in reorganization of the whole Army. The official regulations concerning service in the Armed Forces remain unchanged, causing problems with salaries for NCOs that assumed higher positions. Having special allowances for being in the chain of command, squad leaders have better salaries than platoon sergeants or NCOs in higher positions. The Croatian Army will not solve this problem until March 2003 with finishing reorganization of complete Armed Forces.

MPRI-DTAP team takes credentials for transforming not only the Croatian NCO corps in the units, but also the NCO Education System (NCOES). In December 1998, the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC) Class I graduated from the Croatian NCO Academy. In October 2002, the Croatian Sergeants Major Academy Class I has started and will graduate in May 2003.

The reorganization of the Croatian Armed Forces and NCOES represents crucial step forward in accomplishing the goal of the Croatian government -- to become a member of NATO. In the future, Croatian NCOs will be well trained, equipped, highly motivated, and able to participate in peacekeeping operations all around the world.

Even though the Croatian Noncommissioned Officers Corps is relatively young, existing officially for only three years, it has progressed drastically. It will continue to develop in accordance to NATO standards, using the senior NCOs that have finished US Army NCO schools as primary instructors. This is the biggest advantage that the Croatian Armed Forces have, young, but well trained NCOs with combat experiences.

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OUTLINE FORMAT

I. Introduction.

Good morning SGM Baker and Group L12. My name is MSG Joe Velez and for the fifteen minutes, I will present an unclassified Information Briefing on the History of United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy.

A. References.

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. History of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, 1 January 1980 – 31 December 1989. El Paso, TX: The Academy, 1976.

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. History of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, 1 January 1986 – 31 December 1986. El Paso, TX: The Academy, 1977.

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United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. History of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, 1 July 1972 – 31 December 1974. El Paso, TX: The Academy, 1990.

Gillespie, Mark F., Glen R. Hawkins, Michael B. Kelly, and Preston E. Pierce. The Sergeant Major of the Army. Washington, D.C: Center of Military History, 1995.

B. We have walked the corridors of this time-honored and historic institution. We have looked at previous Sergeants Major's pictures and acknowledge their individual accomplishments throughout their career. They have set standards for the noncommissioned officers and soldiers

of the Armed Forces. Since class started, we have all talked, admired, and even reflected on the previous Sergeant Majors who attended this institution before us. We often wonder if their time was spent just as ours.

The majority of my three to five minute briefings have focused on different Sergeant Majors that have attended this academy. My briefing will now focus more on this institution known as the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy. My briefing takes you back to the past; brings you up to the present, and looks into the future.

II. Body.

A. Development and establishment of the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy.

B. The First Class of the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy.

C. The Expansion Phase of the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy.

D. The Present Day within the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy, which includes a comparison and contrast.

E. The Future of the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy.

III. Closing.

A. In summary, during the past ten minutes I have talked about the development, the First Class, the Expansion, the Present (comparison and contrast), and the Future plans of the United States Army Sergeant majors Academy.

B. Are there any questions?

C. In closing, since the beginning of this course, I have become better acquainted with the Sergeant Majors Academy. From the first time that we have walked the halls of the academy, we have felt the presence of those great soldiers before us. I pay tribute to all of those soldiers that have contributed to make this academy one of the best Noncommissioned Officers Schools

in the Armed forces. Their dedication to NCO professional has enhanced my life with a better understanding of the Army and what I can provide to the future. My fellow classmates and I have learned and grown from the academy's rich heritage and cannot wait to become future Sergeant Majors of this great nation. Thank you.

History of the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy

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During this briefing, I am going to talk about an institution that was built on their beliefs and concerns for establishing an academy that Noncommissioned Officers could call their own. The Sergeant Majors Academy is an institution that was built for us, the future leaders of this nation. My briefing takes you back to the past; brings you up to the present, and shows you where the academy is going.

DEVELOPMENT

The Noncommissioned Officer Development System was instituted in 1971. The initial plan developed by the Armor Center proposed a course for senior SFCs and junior MSG/1SGs (1972-74 pg. 1). The length of the course was to be approximately five months at a frequency of twice per annum. Studies were to be general in nature, not branch oriented, and would prepare students for key positions in higher headquarters, both joint and unilateral. The initial facilities were a prime concern, specifically, the Academy's need for a lecture center, for both classified and unclassified information presentations, and a library (1972-74 pg. 1-2). The consensus was that temporary facilities would suffice until the phase out of The Defense Language Institute, Southwest (DLISW), particularly Biggs Army Airfield. Also, Biggs Army Airfield had the land needed for the future academy (1972-74 pg. 1-3). Originally it was thought to have the academy placed under the direct control of the US

Army Air Defense Center and Fort Bliss. However, this plan did not happen to avoid branch connotation with the Air Defense School. The United States Army Air Defense School agreed to provide general support.

In 1972, General Westmoreland, then the Army Chief of Staff (CSA), approved the establishment of a senior level course for noncommissioned officers. This new institution, the facilities, and faculty would take the name of "The Sergeant Majors Academy." On 18 July 1972, the Continental Army Command issued General Order 98, which gave the academy its name. However, some opposed this title because of the Army-wide connotation of "spit and polish" associated with the word "Academy" (1972-74 pg.1-4). Some personnel believed this did not contribute to the feeling of a "war college" for senior NCOs. Nevertheless, on 18 July 1972, CONARC, having received DA authority and a unit identification code, issued General Order 98, officially creating the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy, effective 1 July 1972. The first class started in November 1973 (1972-74 pg. 3).

FIRST CLASS

In early November 1972, the pilot class started with 100 students. The criteria used by the Department of the Army Board for student selection followed the guidance of the Chief of Staff of the Army (1972-74 pg. 10). Those selected were potential First Sergeants and Master Sergeants with between 15 to 23 years of service who possessed a PMOS evaluation score of 100, a GT score of 100, and demonstrated through past performance the highest standards of professionalism and personal character. In addition, 50 percent of the attendees must have served as a First Sergeant. The Academy divided the students into seven academic groups and started instruction (1972-74 pg. 10).

Class One students experienced some initial difficulty when placed in the group environment, as have all Academy students hereafter. Most students were unfamiliar with the group concept of instruction and, therefore, entered academics with a fear of the unknown. Just as we do today, Class one experienced anguish and was reluctant to change groups. They too had met the enemy together and had conquered it as a team. The academy learned that the group process was a great leadership instructional vehicle (1972-74 pg. 11).

EXPANSION

Since the pilot course, a new building housing the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy was considered to meet further demands of academic requirements. The academy's role in the NCOES and senior NCO educational program grew substantially in the 1980's. What was originally intended to be a senior NCOES for Sergeant Majors grew to encompass all common core elements of the Noncommissioned Officer Education System. In 1981, the academy also operated the Noncommissioned Officer Museum that depicted the history of the noncommissioned officer from 1771 to the present (1980-89 pg. 7).

During the early 1980s some staffers talked about adding academies to Fort Knox, Fort Sill, Europe and Korea. In 1979, COL Ostrowidski was the USASMA Commandant. He is considered the "Father of the Academy" because of the impetus on planning for the new building (1980-89 pg.19). COL Ostrowidski convinced the TRADOC DCST and the TRADOC CG that United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy should be located only at Fort Bliss. COL Ostrowidski and his staff used as a planning figure of 325 students per class for the Sergeant Majors Course, 180 for the First Sergeants Course, and 125 for the Operations and Intelligence Course. Out of the three designs considered, COL Ostrowidski

avored the most non-traditional of the three even though he feared the Corps of Engineers would not approve it (1985 pg 6).

The ground breaking for the new academy and the graduation of the “Silver Anniversary Class” were significant milestones for the academy and the noncommissioned officers in 1985. The new design was in a “starburst” pattern and allowed for separation of functions. COL Ostrowidski credited the NCOs with the common sense ideas that went into the design. The building of the new academy, slated for completion in 1986, continued to be a major concern of senior leadership. Academy personnel involved themselves with the architect and other factors that would allow the building to fully meet the needs of the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy. With 170,131 square feet, the new building had classrooms for 768 resident students, two auditoriums, an administrative wing, and a Learning Resource Center (LRC). The final cost for the academy was \$17.8 million (1980-89 pg 8-14).

A multitude of distinguished visitors attended the Opening Ceremony held on 12 November 1987. The ceremony received much praise from the high-ranking dignitaries that attended. In attendance were Chief of Staff of the Army, General Vouno; Sergeant Major of the Army, CSM Gates; Sergeant Major of the Army, CSM Bainbridge (Retired). Class 30 was the first class to complete training in the new facility (1980-89 pg. 16-20).

PRESENT

The Sergeant Majors Academy has placed highly qualified senior NCOs back into the field since 1973. Through Class 52, 16,090 students have graduated the resident course and through Class 28, 7,434 students have graduated from the non-residents course.

FUTURE PLANS FOR THE ACADEMY

Many changes and developments have occurred over the history of the Sergeant Majors Academy. As with anything else in the Army, the future has several changes that impact future students. Some planners have talked about moving the Sergeant Majors Academy to Fort Leonardwood. This rumor is not confirmed, and if it did happen, it would be sometime in the year 2010. However, the Command Sergeant Majors Designees are scheduled to move their two-week course to Fort Leonardwood to better facilitate the interaction between Battalion and Brigade Commanders. The future may see another senior leadership class that will focus on Sergeants First Class (P) and Master Sergeants. SNCOC would combine the Battle Staff Course and the First Sergeants Course. This course would serve as an intermediate course between ANCOC and the First Sergeants Course. Course development is still ongoing. The academy is currently working with numerous universities that would allow more college credits for the Sergeant Majors Course.

IN CLOSING

In summary, during the past ten minutes, I have talked about the Development, the First Class, the Expansion, the Present (comparison and contrast), and the Future Plans of the United States Army Sergeant Majors Academy.

QUESTIONS

In closing, since the beginning of this course, I have become better acquainted with the Sergeant Majors Academy. From the first time that we walked the halls of the academy, we have felt the presence of those great soldiers before us. I pay tribute to all of those soldiers that have contributed to make this academy one of the best Noncommissioned Officer Schools in the Armed forces.

Their dedication to NCO professionalism has enhanced my life with a better understanding of the Army and what I can provide to the future. My fellow classmates and I have learned and grown from the academy's rich heritage and cannot wait to become future Sergeant Majors of this great nation.

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