

**World War II and the
Noncommissioned Officer**

**by
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NCO History Briefing Outline

1. Introduction.

Greeting:

Good morning SGM Murphy and R06. I am MSG Smith.

Type and Classification of Briefing:

This is an UNCLASSIFIED information briefing.

Purpose and Scope:

The purpose of this briefing is to provide the background history of World War II (WWII) and explain some of the weapons used by the United States (U.S.) Soldiers during that period.

Outline or Procedure:

During my briefing, I will explain the situation via a timeline leading up to the United States entry into WWII. I will explain the importance of training by Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), description of some of the weapons used (via PowerPoint slides) during that period.

2. Body.

- a. Explain the situation prior to our entry into WWII.
- b. Explain the importance of training by NCOs.
- c. Describe some of the weapons (small arms, machine guns, artillery, and armor) used during that period.
- d. Describe the accomplishments of NCOs during WWII.

3. Closing.

In summary, I have explained the background leading up to the United States entry into World War II. Additionally, I explained the roles and duties of WWII NCOs in regards to training Soldiers on weapons and then I described some of the weapons used by the U.S. Soldiers.

What are your questions?

In conclusion, WWII was a challenging and demanding time for our country and our military. However, NCOs answered the call, prepared our Soldiers, and ensured victory. Thank you. I will be followed by...

World War II is an event in history when the Noncommissioned Officer made significant advances with contributions to the United States military's efforts. In this document I will present event leading up to the war and the conflict and the role of the NCO during World War II.

World War II, also known as the Second World War, was a mid-20th Century conflict that engulfed much of the globe and is accepted as the largest and deadliest continuous war in human history. It was the first time that a number of newly developed technologies, including nuclear weapons, were used against either military or civilian targets. World War II resulted in the direct or indirect death of anywhere from 50 to 60 million or more people, over 3% of the world population at that time. It is estimated to have cost more money and resources than all other wars combined: about 1 trillion US dollars in 1945 (adjusted for inflation; roughly 10.5 trillion in 2005), not including subsequent reconstruction. The outcomes of the war, including new technology and changes to the world's geopolitical, cultural and economic arrangement, were unprecedented.

The conflict began by most Western accounts on September 1, 1939 with the German invasion of Poland (the Pacific war is taken to have started on July 7, 1937 with the Japanese attack on China) and lasted until mid-1945, involving many of the world's countries. Virtually all countries that participated in World War I were involved in World War II. Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939 and Canada followed on September 10, 1939. The United States entered the conflict in December of 1941 after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The causes of World War II are to the expansion desires of Germany and Japan. Germany had lost wealth, power and status following the First World War and the expansion was to make Germany great again. The German Socialist party blamed the

Jews for their lost of wealth, power, land and status from the First World War.

In Germany there was a strong desire to escape the bonds of the World War I Treaty of Versailles, and eventually, Hitler and the Nazis assumed control of the country. They led Germany through a chain of events: rearmament, reoccupation of the Rhineland, a merger with Austria (Anschluss), incorporation of Czechoslovakia and finally the invasion of Poland.

In Asia, Japan's efforts to become a world power and the rise of militarist leadership (in the 1930s the government in Japan was undermined as militarists rose to power and de facto gained totalitarian control) led to conflicts with first China and later the United States. Japan also sought to secure additional natural resources, such as oil and iron ore, due in part to the lack of natural resources on Japan's own home islands.

The war was fought between the Axis Powers and the Allies. The Axis initially consisted of an alliance between Germany and Italy, which later expanded to include Japan and Eastern European countries such as Romania and Bulgaria. Some of the nations that Germany conquered sent military forces, particularly to the Eastern front. Among the expeditionary forces that joined Germany were forces from Vichy France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain (though Spain was itself a neutral country) and armies of Russians and Ukrainians under the command of the general Andrey Vlasov. The Allies initially consisted of the United Kingdom, including the Commonwealth, France and Poland, later joined by the USSR, the United States of America and China.

Fighting occurred across the Atlantic Ocean, in Western and Eastern Europe, in the Mediterranean Sea, Africa, the Middle East, in the Pacific and South East Asia, and it continued in China. In Europe, the war ended with the surrender of Germany on 8 May 1945 (V-E and Victory Days), but continued in Asia until Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945 (V-J Day).

The NCO Corps experienced growing pains and faced many challenges prior to and during the war because of the huge increase in manpower and the organizational

restructures that were taking place. The Army required thousands of new technical specialists to handle the more sophisticated weaponry of World War II. So, the Army introduced the military occupational specialty (MOS) system, which was a tool to identify and classify personnel according to specific skills. Although a good system, it was not without defects. The success of the war began with outstanding training and discipline by determined and expert noncommissioned officers.

Noncommissioned Officers enforced the standards and provided the discipline that new recruits needed during their indoctrination and integration into the Army. During this time of the recruit's life, the NCO was his mother, father, sister, and brother. Even long after the recruits left their training camp, many of them remembered the experience and the care they received from their NCOs.

The M-1 Garand was the standard weapon of the U.S. infantry soldier. It is a .30-caliber, semi-automatic, gas operated, and self-loading shoulder weapon. It is 43 inches long and weighs 8.94 pounds. The Garand has a muzzle velocity of 2,760 feet per second, and a maximum range of 5,500 yards. A bayonet can be attached to the M-1, giving it a reach of about five feet. The M-1 Carbine, another weapon used by the infantry soldier, is a .30-caliber, semi-automatic, gas operated shoulder weapon with an effective range up to 200 yards. The length is 36 inches and it weighs 5 pounds including magazine and sling. Officers, noncommissioned officers, and certain enlisted specialists carried a Colt .45 pistol, which has an effective range of about 50 yards. They are typically semi-automatics with a seven-round magazine plus one in the chamber.

A machine gun is an automatic weapon using small arms ammunition for rapid, continuous firing. Two .30 caliber light machine guns were part of each weapons platoon. Eight heavy machine guns were part of each heavy weapons platoon. The fully automatic, Thompson Machine Gun (Tommy Gun) is an all-around field weapon of .45 caliber. It weighs 12.5 pounds when fully loaded with a 30-round magazine and is 33 inches long. The M1928 Thompson fires between 600 and 700 rounds per minute. The

Browning Automatic Rifle (B.A.R.) is .30 caliber, gas operated, and air-cooled. It may be fired from the shoulder or from the hip. It is 47 inches long, weighs 15.5 pounds, and can fire 450 shots per minute. The M2 105mm Howitzer was the standard field artillery piece used by the U.S. during World War II. It is based on the M1 105mm howitzer designed in 1927, the M1 was not adopted but the ammunition and several other features were. The carriage of the M2 is designed for high travel speeds and includes a gun shield to protect the crew. It weighs 4,980 pounds, has a maximum range of 12,200 yards, and the rate of fire is 4 rounds per minute in bursts and 2 rounds prolonged fire.

The Light Tank M3, produced by the thousands starting from 1941, became the most important American light tank. It saw action almost everywhere and was adopted by the British Army (where, in addition to the official name "Stuart", the nickname Honey was widely used). Its service life continued well after 1945.

Staff Sergeant Edward A. Carter, Jr. (African American) assigned to the 7th Army Infantry Company Number 1 (Provisional), 56th Armored Infantry Battalion, 12th Armored Division received his Medal of Honor posthumously on 13 January 1997. The citation reads: For extraordinary heroism in action on 23 March 1945, near Speyer, Germany. When the tank on which he was riding received heavy bazooka and small arms fire, Sergeant Carter voluntarily attempted to lead a three-man group across an open field. Within a short time, two of his men were killed and the third seriously wounded. Continuing on alone, he was wounded five times and finally forced to take cover. As eight enemy riflemen attempted to capture him, Sergeant Carter killed six of them and captured the remaining two. He then crossed the field using as a shield his two prisoners from which he obtained valuable information concerning the disposition of enemy troops. Staff Sergeant Carter's extraordinary heroism was an inspiration to the officers and men of the Seventh Army Infantry Company Number 1 and exemplify the highest traditions of the Armed Forces.

Sergeant William L. Nelson (American) assigned to the 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division received his Medal of Honor posthumously on 17 December 1943. The citation reads: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty in action involving actual conflict. On the morning of 24 April 1943, Sgt. Nelson led his section of heavy mortars to a forward position where he placed his guns and men. Under intense enemy artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire, he advanced alone to a chosen observation position from which he directed the laying of a concentrated mortar barrage which successfully halted an initial enemy counterattack. Although mortally wounded in the accomplishment of his mission, and with his duty clearly completed, Sgt. Nelson crawled to a still more advanced observation point and continued to direct the fire of his section. Dying of hand grenade wounds and only 50 yards from the enemy, Sgt. Nelson encouraged his section to continue their fire and by doing so they took a heavy toll of enemy lives. The skill which Sgt. Nelson displayed in this engagement, his courage, and self-sacrificing devotion to duty and heroism resulting in the loss of his life, was a priceless inspiration to our Armed Forces and were in keeping with the highest tradition of the U.S. Army.

In conclusion, our history is important to our future. The United States Military learned a great many lessons during World War II that enabled us to get where we are today. Never forget the sacrifices of the NCOs who went before us as the backbone of the military to secure the freedom we enjoy today.

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