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Secretary of the Army John McHugh and Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey, Jr. announced today that Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond F. Chandler, III will become the Sergeant Major of the Army March 1.

"We have the utmost confidence in Command Sgt. Maj. Chandler and look forward to having him join our leadership team," said McHugh. "He has the right qualities and credentials to assume this vitally important duty that Sgt. Maj. of the Army Preston has skillfully and adeptly performed for the last seven years."

Chandler is currently the commandant of the U. S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. He will succeed Kenneth Preston, who has served since January 2004.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Chandler is the right Soldier to lead our NCO Corps," Casey said. "He has demonstrated excellence in every position, and has the depth of experiences required to help us lead our Army."

Chandler will be sworn into the new position March 1 in a ceremony at the Pentagon.

"Being named the 14th Sergeant Major of the Army is truly an honor," Chandler said. "I am humbled, yet excited by the opportunity to serve our soldiers and their families in light of the challenges ahead."

In June 2009, Chandler became the first enlisted commandant of the U. S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

In his new position, Chandler will serve as the Army Chief of Staff's personal adviser on matters affecting the enlisted force. The role involves extensive travel and focuses on Soldier training, noncommissioned officer development and the well-being of families.

The Sergeant Major of the Army recommends quality-of-life improvements to Army leadership and often sits on councils that make decisions affecting enlisted Soldiers and their families. He also routinely testifies before Congress on these issues.

Preston leaves the position as the longest serving SMA after being selected by previous Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker.

"Many of the great CSMs and SGMs serving around the Army today are a product of CSM Chandler's leadership and development efforts," Preston said. "He brings a broad breadth of experience and I have no doubt he will provide the strategic vision and professionalism long associated with this position."

A native of Bridgewater, Mass., Chandler joined the Army in 1981 and has served in every enlisted leadership position from tank commander to command sergeant major. Before his assignment as the commandant of the Sergeants Major Academy, Chandler served as the command sergeant major for the U. S. Army Armor School.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, eight Meritorious Service medals, eight Army Commendation medals, two Army Achievement medals, Korea Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal, the Army Superior Unit Award and Meritorious Unit Commendation and the Combat Action Badge. He is also a recipient of the Order of Saint George (Bronze Medallion), the Distinguished Order of Saint Martin and the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara.