

# First-ever NCO commandant takes reigns of USASMA

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## First-ever NCO commandant takes reigns of Sergeants Major Academy

FORT BLISS, Texas (June 30, 2009) -- Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond Chandler became the 19th commandant of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, a first for an enlisted Soldier during a ceremony June 29, at East Fort Bliss. Previously Chandler was the academy's command sergeant major.

Col. Donald Gentry, the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy's 18th commandant, relinquished command of USASMA. Gentry took command of the academy in July 2007. With his time as commandant at USASMA complete, Gentry will be the last officer to be the academy's commandant. He will now take a position as the senior advisor to the Texas National Guard adjutant general.

"There is a tremendous amount of pride being the first commandant of the Sergeants Major Academy as a noncommissioned officer," Chandler said. "It's also a very humbling experience because we develop NCOs based on performance and potential."

Brig. Gen. Edward Cardon, deputy commandant of the Command and General Staff College, Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, Kan., said the time is right for a command sergeant major to take over the job as USASMA commandant due to the high level of leadership and responsibility given to NCOs.

"We have the greatest noncommissioned officers corps we've ever had," Cardon said. "You can look at how many people study our noncommissioned officer corps from all around the world, and it tells you we have something special."

USASMA was the only noncommissioned officer education system school that was led by a commissioned officer.

"Noncommissioned officers have become responsible for their own education system," Gentry said during his remarks.

Since the terrorist attacks in September 2001, Chandler said the role of the NCO has become more self-sustaining.

"Up until 9/11, the role of the noncommissioned officer was pretty much set," said Chandler. "Now, as the role of officers has become greater, the role of the noncommissioned officer has inherently become greater to fill that vacuum. I think the noncommissioned officers corps has gone through tremendous changes ... especially in the area of responsibility and working autonomously without an officer present."

The ceremony was attended by retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army William O. Wooldridge; the first sergeant major of the Army. Wooldridge lives in the El Paso area.

"He stops by to see us from time to time," Chandler said of Wooldridge. "It's an amazing perspective that he can give you on where we've come in about 45 years."

Chandler said noncommissioned officers such as Wooldridge have worked to make the NCO Corps the backbone of the Army and opened the door allowing him to become the first commandant of USASMA.

"Like Sergeant Major of the Army Wooldridge and others who have paved the way for noncommissioned officers to be where we are today, all I want to do is satisfy their legacy so that we can go even further," said Chandler.