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Sergeant Major of the Army addresses area servicemembers during Year of the NCO event in Kaiserslautern

By Sgt. Fay Conroy

21st Theater Sustainment Command Public Affairs Office

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany -- As the Year of the NCO gains momentum across the Army, the 21st Theater Sustainment Command wasted no time getting the Army's highest-ranking noncommissioned officer speak with servicemembers in the the Kaiserslautern Military Community.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston spoke to about 1,500 servicemembers from the KMC, Bamberg, Mannheim, Baumholder and Heidelberg communities at Rhine Ordnance Barracks here March 4.

During his briefing, Preston highlighted the importance of the NCO Corps and the significance of the Year of the NCO.



SPC JASON NOLTE

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston addresses a crowd of approximately 1,500 servicemembers during a Year of the NCO event at Rhine Ordnance Barracks in Kaiserslautern, Germany, March 4.

“(Chief of Staff of the Army) General (George) Casey has said that our noncommissioned officers are really the glue that has held our force together over the last seven-plus years in the Global War on Terror,” said Preston. The Army owes much of its success in that war to NCOs in “thousands and thousands of locations around the world having success in small, little missions,” he added.

“In turn, we want to recognize their contributions for all they’ve done for our units

and organizations throughout the Global War on Terror,” said Preston.

Preston talked about his recent trip to Ukraine with U.S. Army Europe Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Beam to see the progress of the Ukrainian army’s newly formed NCO corps and to speak at the first graduation of senior NCOs in the Ukrainian army.

“It is the noncommissioned officer corps of America’s Army that is emulated by armies all over the world,” he said.

During his remarks here Preston also addressed the state of current Army initiatives such as transformation and retention.

“We are about 85 percent complete in the largest transformation in our Army since World War II,” he said.

Despite the multiple deployments Soldiers have been enduring, Preston said the first quarter of fiscal year 2009 has been a great one for retention.

“The first quarter of FY09 has been the most successful retention quarter for reenlistment in the Army’s history. I’m very proud of what our Soldiers are doing to stay with the team, and I’m very proud of our leaders out there and all they’re doing to create that command climate where Soldiers want to continue to serve and want to continue to be a part of their organization,” he said.

After Preston’s speech, many Soldiers lined up to meet Preston and have their pictures taken with the 13th Sergeant Major of the Army. Spc. John Avery, a rear detachment personnel and administration center clerk for the 66th Transportation Company, said he appreciated Preston’s visit and remarks.

“I thought it was very informative,” Avery said. “It’s nice to hear someone tell the enlisted side of the story.”



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