

Harvey gives Army strategic overview to USASMA students

MASTER SGT. KIMBERLY WILLIAMS

SMC Class 57 PAO, USASMA

The Secretary of the Army Francis J. Harvey, gave a strategic overview of the Army Jan. 10 to senior non-commissioned officers attending Class 57 at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy.

“My intention is to give you a greater understanding and insight into the overall direction the Army is taking,” said Harvey.

Harvey stated upfront that the Army’s noncommissioned officer corps is key to its success and is the envy of every army in the world.

But, he added, Army NCOs cannot rest on their laurels, as the Army must adapt to a changing world and continually improve to face the new challenges brought by the Global War on Terrorism.

Harvey acknowledged that more than 75 percent of the students in Sergeants Major Course Class 57 have served in key leadership positions in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

“I’d like to personally thank you for your selfless service to our nation and, on behalf of our nation, thank you for the sacrifices you have made,” he said.

He then showed students the Strategic Framework for the Army Plan, which addresses how the Army will continue to be relevant and ready in a complicated 21st century security environment.

“The 21st century security environment is charac-



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Secretary of the Army Francis J. Harvey addresses Class 57 of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy.

terized as an era of uncertainty, unpredictability, misinformation and misconceptions,” Harvey said.

The Army plans to implement the new strategy through a series of 19 key initiatives, he said. These initiatives will include building a modular force that will focus on brigade combat teams, increasing the size of the Army and creating Army leaders of the 21st century by training and educating officers, civilians and noncommissioned officers.

He called NCOs “pentathletes” under the new initiatives, who he defined as multi-skilled leaders personifying the warrior ethos in all aspects, from war fighting to statesmanship to enterprise management.

“It’s a way of life,” he said. “This is the Army’s largest transformation since World War II,” Harvey

said.

While acknowledging there will be growing pains during the process, Harvey said the end result will be an Army that is prepared to meet any challenge in any environment.

Another key result of the changes should be improved quality of life for Soldiers, including improvement of housing, predictability of deployment and longer dwell times at home.

Harvey said they owe all this and more to the greatest generation of Soldiers in the nation’s history.

“This Army is the best Army in the world because of Soldiers – confident, capable and dedicated Soldiers.”

USASMA student affirms Polish support of U.S. policy

MASTER SGT. TROY FALARDEAU

USASMA Public Affairs

Command Sgt. Maj. Piotr Smuga, one of three Polish USASMA students this year, is quick to tell others his country is one of America’s strongest allies. During World War II, for example, the Poles provided the fourth largest number of troops in the Allied effort – after the Americans, British and Soviets – and lost the highest percentage of its citizens – nearly 6 million.

That support continues today in the Global War on Terror. Since 9/11, the Poles have proven to be one of the United States’ strongest allies, said Smuga. His country, about the size of New Mexico with a population of about 39 million, has provided thousands of troops and asked their European neighbors to do likewise – “sometimes upsetting them a bit,” he added.

The level of support the United States receives from Poland has not changed in the recent past, but its military has.

“I think we are changing faster than any other European military,” said Smuga. “We have changed so much that soldiers who retired only three years ago cannot recognize it.”

The catalyst for most of that change was Poland’s transition to democracy. In 1989, the Polish people, led by Lech Walesa and Solidarity union protestors, rose up and demanded their freedom from the ruling Communists.

Less than a year later, Smuga joined the military to fulfill his year of mandatory service. By the end of that year, changes in Polish foreign policy required each member of the Polish military to repeat their oath of allegiance – removing mention of Russia and the Warsaw Pact alliance.



MASTER SGT. TROY FALARDEAU

From left: Polish USASMA students, Sgts. Maj. Grzegorz Janczak and Dariusz Sroka, and Command Sgt. Maj. Piotr Smuga, pose near the chevrons in the center courtyard of the academy. The three will return to Poland upon their graduation in May.

Changes like this were now coming quickly in his country and military. The changes from a strictly seniority-based to a merit-based military promotion system caused many soldiers to leave. Smuga decided to stay the course and lead the change. In 1991, he applied for and was accepted into a three-year warrant officer training program in aviation.

Smuga was invigorated by the challenge. After his graduation, he threw himself into his work, absorbing as much knowledge as he could. He participated in aviation training with the French and Americans abroad, and with the Italians at his country’s huge training area near Drawsko. He also attend-

ed leadership training in Germany and Switzerland. This commitment impressed his supervisors and he quickly rose through the ranks.

Smuga’s enthusiasm for the military is not surprising, however. His family has a proud tradition of service to country.

“I knew I was going to be a professional soldier. My father, my grandfather and many before them have served.” Like his father, he said he doesn’t want to push his son, now 8 years old, toward military service, but he would be proud if he did.

Today, Smuga is one of the youngest command sergeant majors in the Polish

military and the youngest in aviation. He serves in the 49th Attack Helicopter Regiment, headquartered near Gdansk, Poland.

“I am very fortunate to be a command sergeant major. I have worked hard, but it has also been good timing. I was in the right place with the right skills when the command sergeant major position was created in the 49th in 2004,” he said. He added he has no problem leading sergeants major older than him. “They are great warriors – and we make a great team.”

The 49th is one of the few fully professional regiments in the Polish Army, said Smuga, since it includes no conscripts; most other Polish Army commands do. This has made it one of the most responsive and most traveled commands. With its combat, search and rescue capabilities, members of the 49th have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Africa, the Balkans, and Pakistan.

Smuga said his military struggled for a few years in the 1990s. They had their independence, freedom and a desire among many of the younger soldiers to improve, but there was little money for the equipment and training necessary to meet those challenges. When Poland was granted membership in NATO in 1999, it turned a corner which provided new opportunities and a catalyst to jump start morale.

For example, in 2003 Command Sgt. Maj. Henryk Ostapski was a student in Class 53 at USASMA. During a visit by the commanding general of the Polish Army that year, he asked Ostapski about his experience at the academy. The answer impressed the general, and he

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