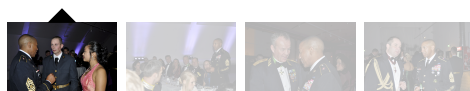


# U.S. Army Europe command sergeant major addresses first graduates of Swedish NCO Academy

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By [U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs](#)



HEIDELBERG, Germany -- U.S. Army Europe's senior enlisted advisor witnessed an historic event for the Swedish Land Forces, Nov. 19, during the Swedish Land Forces first noncommissioned officer course graduation in more than 30 years.

Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel was the distinguished guest at a banquet honoring the 56 graduating Swedish Army and Air Force noncommissioned officers, held in Vadstena, Sweden.

The Swedish military disbanded its NCO Corps in early 1980s. In 2008, the Land Forces established a "specialist officer corps," made up of lower-ranking commissioned officers. In May 2010, Sweden ended military conscription and decided to reestablish its NCO Corps. The 56 soldiers and airmen who graduated Saturday are the first to complete the intense 18-month noncommissioned officer education course and revive the centuries-old tradition of an NCO Corps in Sweden.

Since the 1980s, the role of the Swedish Army has transformed from territorial defense to units available for deployment, both domestically and internationally. Currently, Sweden has 550 soldiers currently deployed to Afghanistan in support of ISAF and 68 soldiers deployed in Kosovo in support of KFOR.

As part of rebuilding their NCO Corps, the Swedish Land Forces are studying various NCO corps models. Capel met with the Col. Michael Claesson, the Commanding Officer of the Land Warfare Center, this weekend to discuss how USAREUR can assist with Sweden's transition to an all-volunteer force and the development of the Swedish Land Forces NCO Corps. It was their second meeting in two months.

In September, USAREUR Commander, Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling, and Capel traveled to Sweden to further relations and to thank Sweden for their contributions in ISAF and KFOR. Hertling's visit marked the first time a U.S. Army general had paid an official visit to the country since retired Chief of Staff of the Army. Gen. Dennis Reimer, visited in 1996.

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During his most recent visit, Capel attended the graduation banquet as the guest of Swedish Army Inspector and Commander of the Land Forces, Maj. Gen. Berndt Grundevik. At the banquet, USAREUR's top NCO addressed the graduating cadets.

"After meeting with your officers, I know you already have one major factor going for you: Your officers believe in you and support you as noncommissioned officers," Capel said. "Your officers, and especially your commanders, are investing authority, power and -- most of all -- responsibility in you as noncommissioned officers. You must be there when they need you." Capel explained that U.S. Army noncommissioned officers have two documents that guide them: The Army Values and the Noncommissioned Officer Creed.

"The Army values are an overarching guidance for who we are as Soldiers, no matter if we are officers, noncommissioned officers or Soldiers," he explained. "They are traits that I expect all noncommissioned officers to demonstrate, because noncommissioned officers must do the right thing whether anyone is watching or not."

Capel went on to explain the U.S. Army's Noncommissioned Officer Creed.

"This creed is the code that we as noncommissioned officers live by. I think you will find excerpts of this creed will mean the same to you cadets sitting here tonight," he said. "The creed starts with 'No one is more professional as I. I am a noncommissioned officer, leader of Soldiers.' In our Army, the noncommissioned officers are known as the backbone of the Army. I know that your officers will expect no less of you."

Capel summed it up by reciting an excerpt from the last paragraph of the creed. "'Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence, as well as that of my Soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve...'

"That is your charter," Capel told the cadets. "You noncommissioned officers sitting here tonight are among the first in your Army in 30 years. You are making history for yourselves, your country and all the Soldiers you will lead who will aspire to be noncommissioned officers just like you."

Grundevik closed out the evening with his advice to the newly minted NCOs: "Lead by example. We need you to ensure that our Army remains strong," the general said. "But, always remember to be a proud and simple Soldier."