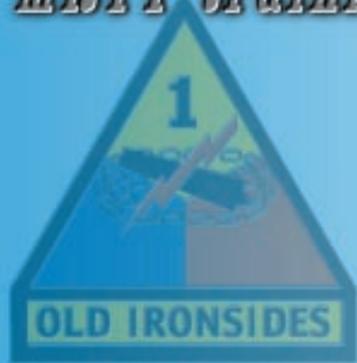


MRTT training teaches retention NCOs, career counselors to take care of soldiers

IAD NCOS TRAIN TO RETAIN



Story and photos by
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WILLIGEN, Germany – Nearly 200 1st Armored Division noncommissioned officers journeyed to Willigen, Germany, the last week of July with one mission in mind: to learn how to better take care of the division's soldiers.

Career counselors and retention NCOs from throughout the division descended to the Sauerland Stern Hotel for annual retention training. During the training, two instructors from the Army's Mobile Retention Training Team conducted briefs, team-building exercises and classes.

While the attendees enjoyed the benefits of staying in a five-star hotel, the trip was anything but a relaxing vacation, according to Sgt. Maj. George W. Stapleton Jr., the IAD Command Career Counselor. The soldiers participated in 40 hours of classroom training that Stapleton said could have taken twice that long if not for the secluded location.

"It has been really great having our training in such a luxurious hotel," Stapleton said. "We wanted to have the training in a centralized location that was also isolated from the daily duties and distractions of

the soldiers' units. The whole point of having it at a place like this was if these soldiers aren't happy, how are they going to convince other soldiers to stay in the Army."

The classes and exercises covered a variety of subjects from calculating a reenlistment bonus to conducting a reenlistment ceremony. The instructors disseminated vital information that retention NCOs and career counselors need when counseling soldiers on reenlistment options.

"One of the biggest things that I gained from this training was a better idea of the opportunities and options that are available to soldiers when they reenlist," said Sgt. Erin A. Rhodes, Retention NCO for Company D, 501st Military Intelligence Battalion.



Husband and wife and fellow retention NCOs, Sgt. Trave C. Rhodes, Retention NCO for Company C, 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, and Sgt. Erin A. Rhodes, Retention NCO for Company D, 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, attend a workshop on counseling soldiers at the MRTT training conference.

"We talked a lot about morale. I think morale is very important. If the morale of the company or unit is at a high level then, reenlistment is going to seem like a good option. On the other hand, if soldiers are not happy, they are not stuck. They have options and can make changes."

The classes provided an opportunity for those who work at different levels of the reenlistment process to train to the same standard. During the conference, everyone from part-time company-level retention NCOs to full-time battalion-level career counselors interacted and exchanged ideas.

Sgt. 1st Class Roger Davis, an MRTT instructor who is also an



Preaching with gospel intensity, Sgt. 1st Class Roger Davis, an MRTT instructor, imparts the importance of taking care of soldiers to IAD retention NCOs and career counselors. Davis is also an ordained minister.

ordained minister, motivated and inspired the retention NCOs and career counselors with his gospel sermon-style delivery. The NCOs boisterously echoed and responded to the messages Davis called out.

"My main goal, after 20 years in the Army, is to empower leaders to impact soldiers," said Davis. "The feedback has been very positive. We put out so much information. The soldiers have no idea how much is really involved until they go through the training. It can be a rewarding experience supporting soldiers that actually do believe the

Army way of life is good."

The NCOs left the training with a better understanding of the mission at hand and the resources at their disposal, according to Rhodes.

"I learned a lot from this training and interacting with my peers," said Rhodes. "This is an important job. Taking care of soldiers should be at the center of every NCO's mission, but even more so for retention NCOs and career counselors."

The 1st Armored Division was the top division in the Army in retention during the last two fiscal years. The division command team considers

retention a high priority, according to Stapleton.

"When I first got on the job last July, I asked the commanding general and the [division] command sergeant major what their expectations were of me," said Stapleton. "I expected some kind of drawn out, complicated answer. They told me to take care of our nation's most prized possessions. That is exactly what we have done. We give them the cold, hard facts and just tell them the truth. Regardless of what they do, whether they decide to reenlist or separate from the Army, we treat them with dignity and respect."