

# 1st Armored Division *command sergeant major* emphasizes *return to basics*



Command Sgt. Maj. Michael D. Bush  
1AD Division command sergeant major

Story by  
Master Sgt. Lisa M. Hunter  
1st Armored Division PAO

For 1st Armored Division's new division command sergeant major, getting back to the training basics is the top priority for soldiers and NCOs.

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael D. Bush joined the division June 22, having previously served as the Fort Polk and Joint Readiness Training Center command sergeant major at Fort Polk, La. But he is no stranger to the division.

"I grew up as a command sergeant major in the 1st Armored Division, so it's like coming home," Bush said. From 1992 to 1995, Bush served as the 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, command sergeant major, what is now the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment. From 1995 to 1998, Bush served as the 2nd Brigade command sergeant major.

Bush joined the Army in 1971. After a year's break in service, he came back in the Army in 1975. With a collective 29 years of experience, Bush brings with him a wealth of experience, but he still emphasizes the tried and true methods of training.

"We've got to get back to the basics," Bush said. "We're doing well at taking care of soldiers with the [operations tempo] that we had during SFOR and Kosovo," Bush said. "But, SFOR and Kosovo are over.

"We move so fast as an Army today that we think we have to do all this good high-speed stuff. Well, time to put the brakes on a little and really figure out what the basics are that we are weak in and retrain them to standard.

"We've got some organizations that aren't doing well on some tasks. When you peel the onion back, you find out they didn't think the basics were important," Bush explained. "They wanted to go to high-level stuff and start running real fast, but they found out they've got to tie their boots first – correctly. They need to know when to loosen them up during the road march and when to retighten them."

Bush realizes that now, with the force protection measures heightened, individual NCOs have to be more creative in their approach to training.

"We have to be more innovative in our training than we ever have been in the past," said the Covington, Ky., native. "We have to figure out how to get the same level of training accomplished and make sure we're doing force protection correctly. We're going to gunnery the same amount of time. We are going to [the Combined Maneuver Training Center] the same amount of time. But, we have to be more innovative with our training time.

"If you're on guard for 24 hours and pulling shifts, what do you do in

the daytime? That's what those young sergeants have to figure out is how to maximize some of that time to train the soldiers on whatever we used to put on the training schedule, whether you call it hip-pocket training or opportunity training," he explained.

Bush also emphasized the commitment that NCOs must have to the soldiers and the mission.

"We, as an NCO Corps, need to spend more time coaching, teaching and mentoring soldiers to prepare them to be better," he said. "We have to make sure we don't have a nine-to-five attitude. It extends way beyond that; 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we are responsible for these soldiers."

Checking on soldiers while they're on guard duty, walking into the single soldier quarters and just knocking on the door and seeing how they are doing are among the basics that NCOs should focus on, according to Bush.

"In the old Army, that used to be a requirement. The platoon sergeant had a list of everything. You need to know where they're going to be if

they're going away for the weekend. 'Where are you going? How can I reach you?'" Bush explained. "We need to go beyond the standard safety briefing. Especially now, this is not a safe place to be."

While Bush wouldn't speculate about any plans for 1st Armored

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Division's involvement in Operation Enduring Freedom, he did emphasize the need for every soldier to be proficient in all of his combat skills.

"Do we need to be ready? Yes," said Bush. "If you listen to what the president, the secretary of defense and the secretary of the army have said, it's going to be a long war. We have got to be ready. The time to learn your mission in combat is not on that plane ride to wherever you're going.

"Did the 10th Mountain Division soldiers know they were going to be in a former Soviet republic on a moment's notice? They probably didn't," he said. "We've got to stay ready to go all the time. We've got to get that mentality back into this division.

"I work for the soldiers in this division. My job is to try to make their job a little bit easier," he explained. "That doesn't mean giving them a bunch of days off. It means making better conditions for them to train.

"Sometimes, we look at going to the field as a bad thing, time away from our families. As a professional, what you learn in the field is the training that makes you better at what you do and gives you the ability to come back alive if you deploy."

But even while working in garrison, Bush emphasizes the importance of combat readiness.

"As a noncommissioned officer, you should never go home at night unless you have all the confidence in the world that you have done everything in your power that day to prepare your soldiers for combat," he said. "There may not be a massive train-up to get ready to go."

Despite the challenges the division faces of maintaining combat proficiency and maintaining good force protection measures, Bush said it's a privilege to return to the division.

"I'd like to thank all the soldiers that are working hard and I'd ask those that aren't working hard to reevaluate themselves," Bush said. "We've got to make sure we're at the same high level of proficiency. Their buddies are counting on them. And, that all starts with getting back to the basics."