

INSCOM Journal



Spring 2009

This issue is dedicated to the outstanding noncommissioned officers of the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, who are one of the major reasons the command is able to support the warfighter worldwide. (Army photo)

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Raising the bar

Summer 2009

BY Brian Murphy

INSCOM Public Affairs



Sgt. Cole Joines, of the 500th MI Brigade, beat out more than 3,600 eligible Soldiers to earn the title of INSCOM's NCO of the Year. (photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Cauley)

Sgt. Cole Joines is the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, although, to be fair, this comes as no surprise to those who've crossed paths with him.

That's because Joines, who is assigned to the 732nd Military Intelligence Battalion, 500th MI Brigade, has been turning heads since he began his military career in 2006.

Even during basic training, when seemingly every Soldier faces a culture shock, Joines rose above the rest – earning such honors as 'Soldier Leader of the Cycle' and 'Highest PT Award' while at Fort Jackson, S.C.

During advanced individual training at the Defense Language Institute, in Monterey, Calif., Joines earned honor graduate while completing an associate's degree in Chinese.

And prior to joining the Army, Joines earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics from Texas A&M University.

Basically, Joines is simply incapable of flying under the radar. So while INSCOM was still required to hold the NCO of the Year competition, it's no surprise the Wharton, Texas, native took home top honors this year.

"We have 3,615 Soldiers between the ranks of sergeant and sergeant first class," said Maj. Gen. David B. Lacquement, then INSCOM's commanding general, of Joines during the NCO of the Year ceremony. "You see here, standing before us, the best of the best."

Lacquement went on to say, "You've inspired all of us – both officers and NCOs alike – by setting the bar just a little bit

higher.”

Changing gears

After graduating from Texas A&M in 2004, Joines briefly worked at a chemical manufacturing plant, but he didn’t stay there very long. That’s because Joines had always liked the idea of enlisting in the Army and following in the footsteps of many of his family members.

“I decided before I started my family, before I got married and had kids, that I’d go ahead and serve my country,’ he said.

That’s all well and good, but how does a guy with an agricultural economics degree decide to forgo his education and learn Mandarin Chinese?

“At the time, I didn’t know if I wanted to make a career out of the Army, so I wanted to select a job that could transfer to the civilian world, if needed,” Joines said.

Sure, Joines could have settled for an easier language, such as Spanish, but that’s not how he’s programmed. Naturally, the most challenging language he could think of was the most appealing.

“Chinese Mandarin is one of the hardest languages to learn,” he said. “Not only did we have to learn it at language school, but we also have to stay proficient in it because we get tested every year. That’s the most challenging aspect of my job, but it’s also the most rewarding – to be able to communicate with people of a different ethnicity and talk to them on their level and in their language.”

After completing all of his training, Joines was stationed with the 500th MI Brigade at Schofield Barracks, in Hawaii. Shortly after his arrival, Joines decided to go for his battalion’s NCO of the Year competition.

“I’m a man of faith and I didn’t know how far the Lord wanted me to go,” he said. “But I figured I’d keep trying and give it my best effort.”

That mindset enabled Joines to blow by his competitors, and each time he won, he moved on to the next level of competition until the 27-year-old was finally named INSCOM’s top NCO.

“I think the biggest thing the Army has taught me is perseverance,” he said. “That plays a huge part in a competition like this, in getting to the end and giving it my full effort the whole time.”

One might be tempted to think that these competitions would become a breeze by the time Joines got to the command level. That, he said, couldn’t be further from the truth.

“It started out kind of slow,” he said of INSCOM’s NCO of the Year competition. “But the last two days were very challenging. All of the Warrior Tasks and the mission we had to do on the final day were tough – both physically and mentally. They were just draining. And even the board, it was different from anything I’ve been a part of. They had rapid-fire questions. They asked two questions at a time from any one of 27 different categories. The biggest challenge was staying mentally sharp the entire time.”

Knowing how tough the experience was, how much does this mean to Joines?

“I just feel humbled to represent what I feel and what I know are the best Soldiers in the Army – military intelligence and INSCOM Soldiers,” he said. “We are the most well-rounded Soldiers that the Army has to offer. Being as the Army’s

greatest resource is its Soldiers, I truly feel we're the best. So to represent those Soldiers, it is a great honor."

Decision time

Joines now finds himself at a crossroads as he contemplates his next career move. Does he make the commitment to remain in the Army until retirement or should he hang up the uniform and tackle the next great challenge to come his way?

It's a decision that weighs heavily on Joines, who admits he's undecided. But one thing is for sure – whatever route he goes, he'll have the love and support of his family.

"My parents have always pushed me, no matter what I do, to give my best," Joines said. "As long as I do that, I know they'll support me. Wherever I end up, I'll strive to do my best and go from there."

But in the meantime, Joines intends to capitalize on every moment he has in Hawaii.

"I grew up in the country, so in my free time I liked to go hunting and fishing," Joines said. "In Hawaii it's a little bit different. There's so much to do, but I like to spend my free time camping and hiking. Getting out there and seeing all of the beautiful scenery that Hawaii has to offer ... makes it all worth it."

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Staff Sgt. Obama

Summer 2009

BY Staff Sgt. J. TaShun Joyce'

704th MI Brigade



Staff Sgt. Derrick Brooks, 741st Military Intelligence Battalion, 704th MI Brigade, stands in for President-elect Barack Obama during rehearsals for the presidential inauguration, Jan. 11. (photo by Tech. Sgt. Suzanne M. Day)

On January 11, Staff Sgt. Derrick Brooks was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States.

Brooks, a 26-year-old supply sergeant with the 741st Military Intelligence Battalion, 704th MI Brigade, was selected to stand in for then President-Elect Barack Obama, the nation's first African-American president, during the dry run of the 2009 Presidential Inauguration due to their similarities in height, weight and complexion.

Although the inauguration was still one week away, the morning's activities provided a preview of what the festivities would look like Jan. 20.

"It was the highest honor I have ever received in my life," Brooks said. "It was a wonderful experience and a great opportunity."

The Fayetteville, N.C., native and his fellow role players arrived at the Capitol early to ensure that all movements were in line with the music announcer and everything else was ready to go for inauguration day.

"A lot of changes were made during the rehearsal based on what we thought would actually happen," Brooks said. "Afterwards everyone needed to work twice as hard since the real thing was only a week away."

Serving a one-year assignment to the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee Ceremonies Staff standing in for the president was a dramatic change of pace for Brooks. Prior to rehearsals, he arranged coordination with Defense Department and Civilian agencies for various movements, feeding plans, and ceremonial support. Though his normal duties may pale in comparison to being president for a day, Brooks enjoyed his regular post.

“It was a lot of fun,” Brooks said. “Being on the committee involved long days, weekends, and all holidays leading up to the event. Getting to meet the president made me feel like it was all worth it. I will remember it for the rest of my life.”

It turned out that looks aren’t the only thing Brooks has in common with Obama. Both have daughters with the same first name (although spelled differently). They also share a common interest in basketball.

“He’s definitely someone that the people can relate to,” Brooks said. “I’m sure everyone can see that he’s a great person.”

During their conversation Brooks received personal thanks from the president for his service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“He told me to continue doing a good job and wished me luck during rehearsals,” Brooks said.

In addition to meeting the president, Brooks was featured on a number of major TV news shows, TV channels, Web sites and newspapers.

“I was interviewed by MSNBC, Fox News, Fox and Friends, Time Magazine, Spiegel Magazine, Afro Magazine, Inside Edition and CBS,” Brooks said. “I was very nervous during my first interview but then I felt good and things began to flow from there. I enjoyed the Fox and Friends interview the most. It was more relaxed.”

Brooks insists that his moment of fame didn’t go to his head and that things soon returned to normal.

“My parents are extremely proud of me and have pictures all over their house now,” he said. “Sometimes people call me Staff Sergeant Obama.”

Brooks is grateful for the once-in-a-lifetime experience and believes President Obama will do great things. Even after having played the role, Brooks still has no secret ambitions for being commander-in-chief himself, just a deeper respect for the nation’s highest office.

“I’m sure there is more to the job than what everyone sees,” Brooks said. “The president has tons of responsibilities and headaches.”

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And Biden too

Summer 2009
BY Tina Miles
902nd MI Group



Spc. Nicholas Ruppel, of the 902nd MI Group, was selected to play the role of Vice President-elect Joe Biden for the presidential inauguration, Jan. 11. (photo by Tech. Sgt. Suzanne M. Day)

An estimated 1.8 million people swarmed downtown for a chance to be a part of history during the 2009 Presidential Inauguration. And while people from across the country flocked to our nation's capital for the monumental occasion, a select few Soldiers from the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command got a chance to actually be a part of the festivities.

Staff Sgt. Derrick Brooks received the highest honor – being selected to stand in for President-elect Barack Obama, but he wasn't the only INSCOM Soldier involved.

During rehearsals, Spc. Nicholas Ruppel, who is assigned to the 308th Military Intelligence Battalion, 902nd MI Group, was selected to play the role of Vice President-elect Joe Biden because of a similarity in physique.

“Being selected to act as Vice President Joe Biden's stand-in for the 2009 Inauguration Rehearsal had to have been the most significant event of my life,” Ruppel said. “Being able to take part in such an important moment of history couldn't have been more of an honor and privilege.”

He added, “Making it on the front page of the Washington Post wasn't bad either.”

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The standard

Summer 2009
BY Tina Miles
902nd MI Group



Staff Sgt. Matthew D. Kuznia (far right) served on the unit Color Guard during the 310th MI Battalion change of command ceremony at Fort George G. Meade, Md., in June. (photo by Tina Miles)

There isn't anything particularly flashy about Staff Sgt. Matthew D. Kuznia. At first glance he looks like any other Soldier, with nothing about him particularly standing out as different or extraordinary.

Yet, those who know him all agree – Kuznia is exactly the kind of noncommissioned officer people dream of working with. Whether you're sharing an office space or a foxhole with him, he's a Soldier who will always have your back and always get the job done right the first time.

"In my long military career I have seen and worked with a lot of good NCOs. However, very few stood out like Kuznia," said Command Sgt. Maj. Walid Gabr, 310th Military Intelligence Battalion, 902nd MI Group.

"As a junior staff sergeant he took charge in the absence of his first sergeant, and always provides the right answer and the right advice to his commander and fellow Soldiers," Gabr continued. "He is tactically sound, knows his stuff and always gives guidance on the standards that need to be met. He leads by example and sets the example for all Soldiers to follow."

Kuznia, 26, a native of Syracuse, New York, joined the Army as a counterintelligence specialist in April 2005. After completing basic and advanced individual training, Kuznia arrived at the 902nd MI Group that November. The following year, Kuznia was deployed with a Special Forces unit to Afghanistan until he returned home in October 2007. Since then, he has served as the noncommissioned officer in charge for the Incident Response Team-1, Company A, 310th MI Battalion.

Considered to be one of the best forensics investigators in the unit, Kuznia's superiors said he also has the uncanny knack to lead in any situation, at any time.

In IRT-1, a computer forensics investigations team, Kuznia is known as the go-to-guy. His dependability and talents were instrumental to the success of three very special, and very intricate, missions.

“Kuznia exemplifies what a leader in today’s Army should be,” said 1st Sgt. Jill Agront, Company A’s first sergeant. “He is one of the best noncommissioned officers I have worked with over my almost two decades of service. He inspires those around him to exceed the standard, not only in the company, but in the entire battalion. Because just achieving the standard is not good enough.”

It’s comments like this that mean the most to Kuznia.

“I am most proud of my reputation for being reliable to others,” he said. “People know they can count on me, even at the last minute.” Kuznia steps-in anytime an unexpected vacancy arises. He has served as the acting first sergeant, a last-hour fill-in for a battalion field training exercise, a training NCO, and has performed countless other battalion and company-level duties whenever called upon.

“He’s a behind-the-scenes NCO that gets it all done – not for the glory,” said 1st Sgt. Mark Teal, first sergeant, Company B, 310th MI Battalion. Kuznia’s company commander went one step further in her praise of him.

“Kuznia is the epitome of an NCO,” said Capt. Krista Gueller. “He is a leader and trainer that will accomplish the mission no matter how large or small, all while taking care of the Soldier.”

When asked why someone would be motivated to consistently go above and beyond, regardless of the mission at hand, Kuznia didn’t hesitate to answer.

“I love being an NCO,” he said. “I plan on making the Army my career, moving as far up the chain as possible.”

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Simply the best

Summer 2009

BY Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Fincham

706th MI Group



Staff Sgt. Mathew Magallanez works to stabilize a “casualty” and prevent shock while being evaluated on his ability to perform the Army Warrior Tasks, May 19. (photo by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Fincham)

Soldiers and noncommissioned officers from the 706th Military Intelligence Group faced off against one another during the annual Warrior of the Year Competition at Fort Gordon, Ga., May 18-21.

The unit’s best and brightest Soldiers and noncommissioned officers confronted a wide array of challenges throughout the multi-day event. Army Warrior Tasks including day and night land navigation, reacting to an improvised explosive device, zeroing and qualifying on their assigned weapon as well as a standard Army Physical Fitness Test, challenged everyone’s mental and physical endurance, according to the competitors.

“The most challenging part of the competition for me was definitely the long day in the field followed up by the PT test,” explained Spc. Joshua Solois, a linguist with the 706th MI Group. “I don’t think I’ve had that much mental and physical pain and fatigue wracking my body ever.”

“All you know is that you are out there tired, but you have to give it your all,” said Spc. Alicia Lyman, a 206th MI Battalion paralegal.

The most surprising challenge during the competition may have been the highly secretive mystery event. This year’s secret obstacle challenged the competitors to a drill and ceremony course. Each Soldier and NCO had to organize an eight-Soldier element and navigate them throughout a course marked with various points. The movements and commands were required to be precise and executed directly on each point.

“I was expecting a bear fight,” said Sgt. Brittany Staley, a linguist with the 706th MI Group. “And frankly, I would have preferred it.”

When the dust settled, one NCO and one Soldier were left standing as the top NCO and Soldier in the 706th MI Group – Staff Sgt. Mathew Magallanez and Spc. Alicia Lyman.

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