Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

SMA Grinston discusses leadership with Soldiers, addresses quality-of-life issues during Fort Drum visit

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston met with Soldiers across the 10th Mountain Division (LI), DoD civilians and family members during a visit to Fort Drum on June 2-3.

Grinston discussed topics ranging from physical and mental fitness, unit discipline and the People First initiative at a professional development session for noncommissioned officers inside the Multipurpose Auditorium. The People First initiative acknowledges that the strength of the Army is in its people, and that caring for them and treating each other with respect and dignity is a top priority.

“People First equals readiness,” Grinston said. “When you’re not worried about your house, you are a more ready Soldier. If you don’t have to worry about child care, you are a more ready Soldier. But it doesn’t mean you don’t do tough training when it’s really cold outside. You build a better, stronger bond with your people when you challenge them with that tough training and you give them tasks and the right equipment to do them.”

At the 10th Mountain Division Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Grinston led a discussion about leadership and This is My Squad, an initiative he launched to build cohesive teams across Army units by asking leaders to focus on better understanding their Soldiers and building trust. He said this was particularly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing and smaller formations.

“We really, as an Army, need to get back together,” he said. “We need to interact with one another – to look people in the eye, talk to them, say ‘How are you doing?’ and really mean it.”

Grinston also led a roundtable discussion with Exceptional Family Member Program staff and spouses to hear their concerns and help to improve the program.

At the Chapel Drive Child Development Center, Grinston met with Child and Youth Services staff members to thank them for their support to community members and to discuss child care issues on post. This included the challenge facing CYS to offer competitive entry-level wages for program assistants that are in line with job opportunities off post, and the need for an additional facility to meet the installation’s child care requirement.

Grinston said that when the Army Chief of Staff laid out his quality-of-life priorities two years ago, on top were housing, health care and child care.

“That’s why I’m here, looking to see how we are doing with child care and what are the problems,” he said. “And I’m going to do my absolute best to address those priorities.”

Child care was a critical quality-of-life service during the global health crisis, and part of the Fort Drum COVID-19 response plan was to maintain child development center operations while complying with all safety guidelines. That allowed mission-essential personnel to continue working without the stress of finding alternative child care options.

“At the end of the day, our job of caring for military children and keeping them safe has remained our top priority,” said Robin Banks, CYS chief. “We ask a lot of our program assistants, and they can’t be thanked enough. It meant a lot to us that Sgt. Maj. of the Army Grinston took the time to meet with our staff and ask us how we can better support our community.”

Grinston had previously served in the 10th Mountain Division (LI) as command sergeant major of 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, but this was his first time back as the Army’s top enlisted leader.

Photos from the SMA visit can be viewed at [www.flickr.com/photos/drum10thmountain/albums/72157719346060167](http://www.flickr.com/photos/drum10thmountain/albums/72157719346060167)

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