

From the Office of the Sheriff:

As many of you are enjoying the greatest county fair in the state, I have been on my own tilt-a-whirl the past two weeks. I am referring to the offer by our state to be a last minute addition to attend the prestigious National War College at Fort McNair, Washington D.C. That call came on August 4th with 20-minutes to make a decision to accept the invitation, and pledge to reporting by noon the following Friday, August 7th. The 10-month Masters Program in National Strategy and Security is the most academically rigorous of the services schools. This was far from a planned event, evident by the dozens of appointments that had to be cancelled in the days ahead.

And then there is my family and what my military and civilian careers have put them thru the past 31-years. The call to my wife and two sons' was difficult, but I appreciated their support of my decision to attend. I was looking forward to taking my son Taylor to college in two weeks, a responsibility that now rests upon his mother.

I would never ask you to fully understand my decision making process, but I owe it to you to explain how I saw it. First and foremost, it is the military that provided me much of my education as well as my organizational and leadership skills. I continually use these resources to run, what I believe is one of the best Sheriff's Dept.'s in the state. Those with military experience understand Duty-Honor-Country. The last seven years as your Sheriff has been that, as well as Duty, Honor, County. I take my position very seriously and have given unselfishly of my time and dedication.

Secondly, understanding the complexities of government, maintaining that edge, and adapting to change requires constant learning. I recognize that I know what I know, and I also know what I don't know. I have used what I know to advance the Sheriff's Dept. to a level of proficiency we are very proud of. The last seven years meant a lot of work, and the managers and employees have undergone significant changes on how we do business to get us where we are today. The easy part was getting there, the hard part is maintaining. So the question becomes, what is next? The answer is filling the void of what I don't know.

My current academic course will place me in seminars, lectures, and courses, facilitated by the greatest strategic thinkers/leaders, military and civilian, that our country has to offer. On Monday, I had a chance to meet the other 220 students. About one-half are military, 31 are officers from other countries, the balance representing all the three letter agencies here in Washington, NSA, FBI, CIA, DHS, DOJ, DOA, Dept. of State, to name just a few. The relationships I will establish will fill a rolodex for others to envy – connections for that time of need.

I soon discovered that my purpose for being here is as much about being your Sheriff as it is a military officer. My role here is to share my experiences as an elected official, working in a "home rule" state, and talk about our multi-agency relationships, how they work and the changes needed. On my first day alone, I had a one-on-one conversation with the second in command of our nation's Dept. of Homeland Security. We spoke of FEMA, the Midwest flooding and the professionalism and efficiency of our volunteers and first responders. What an opportunity!

Upon completion, I will know more and have a greater understanding of our governmental systems. I would not leave my family for ten months and put myself thru such rigors if I thought it would not make me a better Sheriff, a better military officer, and a better person. I seek your understanding and approval. Thanks for listening, tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.