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Tennessee National Guard State Command Sergeant Major retires

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – After more than 36 years of military service, State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Gentry retired at Smyrna’s Event Center, July 8.

Gentry, a Rockvale native who was the senior enlisted leader responsible for nearly 10,000 Soldiers throughout Tennessee, began his career in 1980 by enlisting in the Marine Corps. He then served with the Army Reserve and a Tennessee Air National Guard security police squadron before joining the Tennessee Army National Guard.

He was appointed as the eighth State Command Sergeant Major in October 2015.

“Gentry devoted the majority of his life to leading Soldiers of the Tennessee National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, Tennessee’s Adjutant General. “His commitment to the development of Guardsmen in Tennessee was superb and his efforts to foster our relationship with our Bulgarian allies, a key strategic partner, will reap rewards for years to come. I am forever thankful for his sacrifices.”

As the State Command Sergeant Major, Gentry represented and advised senior leaders on policies and actions that affect enlisted Soldiers. He served in that role for five years before Command Sgt. Maj. James Crockett became the ninth state command sergeant major in January 2021.

Gentry also served as the state operations sergeant major, the operations sergeant major for the 30th Troop Command, headquartered in Tullahoma, and the command sergeant major for the 168th Military Police Battalion, headquartered in Dyersburg.

While with the 168th, Gentry deployed to Iraq twice as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, in 2003 and 2008. He also deployed to Kosovo in 2001 with the 130th Rear Area Operations Center, which was headquartered in Smyrna. His awards include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal and the Tennessee National Guard Distinguished Service Medal.

“Without the guidance and leadership of everyone that came before me I wouldn’t be the man I am today,” said Gentry. “I thank my fellow Soldiers and my parents, and especially my kids for supporting me for the last 36 years. You all mean so much to me.”

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Brig. Gen. Jimmie Cole, Tennessee's Land Component Commander, presents Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Gentry with an American flag at Gentry's retirement ceremony, July 8, at Smyrna's Event Center. Gentry served for more than 36 years and was the State Command Sergeant Major from October 2015 until he retired this year.

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