

# STATE OF THE REGIMENT

## ONE TEAM – RELEVANT, READY, RESPONSIVE, RELIABLE

By Mr. Rick Brunk

Lieutenant General Robert L. Van Antwerp became Chief of Engineers and Commander of the United States Army Corps of Engineers on 18 May 2007, taking charge of the nation's leading public engineering agency. His previous assignment was as Commanding General, United States Army Accessions Command and Deputy Commanding General for Initial Military Training at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Other assignments include Commanding General, United States Army Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood/Commandant, United States Army Engineer School; United States Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District; the United States Army Division, South Atlantic, Atlanta, Georgia; and the 326th Engineer Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Just days after assuming duties as the 52d Chief of Engineers and commander of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, LTG Robert L. Van Antwerp spoke to senior engineer leaders at ENFORCE 2007 at Fort Leonard Wood about the State of the Regiment, focusing more on how to improve for the future than on the Regiment's current state.

"Continuity and change: There will be both," he said, "so get ready for them. We're going to recalibrate this organization. We're going to see if we've got it right. And if we've got it right, we're going to drive on." He introduced two acronyms to explain how that would happen: SIW (share ideas willingly) and SIS (steal ideas shamelessly). He said that if we're willing to share division to division, district to district, training battalion to training battalion, and company to company, we won't have to invent everything ourselves. He said that almost every good idea has already been thought of and that this was one area where we can steal shamelessly.

LTG Van Antwerp talked about working on the *Army Strong* campaign. He said that a New York advertising firm sent some of their personnel to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to basic training to help develop a new slogan for the Army. For four and a half days, they did everything that the basic trainees did during that time. At the graduation ceremony, they remarked that they thought they were pretty strong when they got there but that now they were *Army Strong*. Thus, the slogan was born. LTG Van Antwerp has taken it a step further by asking "What does *Army Strong* mean to engineers?" The answer—

*Army Strong, Engineer Ready*—was depicted in a short video with the following definitions of the motto: <sup>1</sup>

Webster defines *ready*  
As being prepared mentally or physically  
For some experience or action;  
Prepared for immediate use.  
But with all due respect to Webster,  
There's ready,  
And then there's *Engineer Ready*.  
It is a physical readiness.  
It is an emotional readiness.  
It is a readiness of character  
And a readiness of purpose.  
It is a readiness to do good today  
And a readiness to do well tomorrow.  
It is a readiness to obey  
And a readiness to command.  
It is a readiness to build  
And a readiness to tear down.  
It is a readiness to get yourself over  
And a readiness to get over yourself.  
There is nothing on this green earth  
That is more ready  
Than the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.  
Because there is nothing on this green earth  
That is more ready  
Than the Soldiers and Civilians  
Of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.  
*Army Strong, Engineer Ready!*

LTG Van Antwerp said that the nearly four months between his nomination for the post and final Congressional confirmation helped prepare him for his new job. "The first thing it did was build a passion in my heart for what we do. I don't think that just liking something inspires. I think you have to love it." The delay also helped him solidify the following top priorities for the Regiment, which are not necessarily listed in order of their importance.

- Support the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and expeditionary missions.
- Enhance the quality of support to Soldiers, Civilians, Families, and the public.
- Complete the transformation of the Theater Engineer Commands.
- Effectively prepare for and respond to disasters.
- Enable Gulf Coast recovery.
- Deliver military, civil works, research and development (R&D), and regulatory programs and projects.

In addition, there are three tenets which are inherent in each of the priorities. They are—

- Communicate transparently. “This means that if I’m at risk, you tell me about it. You don’t keep that from me, because I have a right to know, whether I’m a citizen, a stakeholder, or whatever.”
- Focus on your mission. “You have to think about relationships—the people, the center of gravity—to get the mission done.”
- Team with industry. “I’m going to use a different word from ‘partnering.’ I think we have to *team* with industry,” he said, and he used a sports metaphor to compare the relationship between the Regiment and industry. “What is partnering, and what does being on the same team mean? If you had a basketball team, you’d look at every team member, and every team member has to contribute. But what about when you have a project and you’re counting on part of that industry team to deliver that project on time. Are they not part of your team? Are they just another partner, or are they really a part of the team? I think they’re a part of the team. We have about 35,000 employees in the Corps of Engineers, and there are about 300,000 under contract to us,” he said. He explained that the team concept will be important during his tenure as Chief of Engineers.

“The priorities are *what to do*. This is my philosophy of *how to do it*,” he said, pointing to the word *T.E.A.M.* on a slide. “If you think about a team, what do you think about? For one thing, you think about teammates. I depend on you, and you depend on me. We’ve got to do our jobs separately to do it together. In the ultimate game, it’s not about any individual. I love it when a player gets up and says, ‘I did it for the team.’”

“**T** – stands for *trust*. How are we viewed out there? Do you think they trust us? Are we trusted internally? Are we trusted externally? In one sense, I mean trust in your communications. When we talk about strategic communications, it means that what you say is true. There’s a sort of contract in trust, that when you say you’re going to do something, you deliver it on time. My gut feeling is that there are a lot of people out there who don’t trust us, not like they should. Not for an organization as dependable and incredible as we are. So we’ve got to work on that trust.”



**LTG Robert L. Van Antwerp, Chief of Engineers and Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, gave the “State of the Regiment” address during ENFORCE 2007.**

“**E** – stands for *excellence*. What goes into excellence? It’s measured in a lot of different ways. You know it when you see it. It’s not an ordinary way of doing things; it’s an extraordinary way of doing things. When we do excellent work and they say thanks, we’re going to say, ‘It’s been our pleasure.’ Not just ‘You’re welcome,’ but ‘It’s been our pleasure,’ because it is our pleasure to serve.”

“**A** – stands for *It’s all about people*. When you get to know me well, you’ll know that’s where it is for me. That’s why I’m still in. That’s why I want to stay and do this.”

“**M** – stands for *motivating*. A lot of it is your personal example. When you get the right talent and they set the right example, it’s motivating.”

“When you do all these ‘team’ things, you’ll leave a legacy. And don’t we want to leave what’s right for the next generation? What we’re doing today is going to make a difference tomorrow.”

LTG Van Antwerp ended by saying, “I’m thrilled to be your Chief of Engineers. I’m honored. It’s a privilege. I didn’t request it or even aspire to it. But when offered, I was willing, and I’m passionate about doing it—for 4 years or 10 years or whatever. I thank you for what you’re doing; I commend you for what you’ve done. ... I want to be with you when we do what we’re going to do. I think we have a bright future. Not only that, we’ve got the leaders and the people to get it done. So let’s go out and do it.”



*Mr. Brunk is the editor of the Engineer Professional Bulletin. Previously, he edited the Fort Leonard Wood newspaper, Guidon.*

#### Endnote

<sup>1</sup>The *Army Strong, Engineer Ready* video shown during the Chief of Engineers address was put together by Major Dawn Conniff, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.