



ARMY RESERVE UPDATE

By Colonel Jose E. Cepeda

These are exciting times to be a United States Army Reserve engineer. The Army Reserve grew as an organization to a record-breaking strength exceeding 208,000. Of that number, more than 16,000 Army Reservists proudly serve the Regiment in 2 theater engineer commands (TECs), 4 engineer brigades, 2 maneuver enhancement brigades (MEBs), and 26 engineer battalions. We comprise 25 percent of the total Army engineer force. Since 2001, the Army Reserve has downsized from 298 to 248 engineer units. Yet, it continues to support the full spectrum of operations from engineer units in 41 states and territories. Since 2002, 94 percent of all Army Reserve engineer units have deployed. Since 11 September 2001, more than 13,000 Army Reserve engineers have answered the call to duty.

We welcomed the return of the 416th TEC's deployable command post (DCP), the 926th Engineer Brigade from Iraq, and the 420th Engineer Brigade from Afghanistan in 2009. The United States Army Engineer School started a new initiative to include all returning engineer brigades in its lessons learned program and dispatched a team to the 926th Engineer Brigade in May 2009 and again in August 2009. In addition, the Engineer School sent an assistance team to the 412th TEC's DCP at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in August 2009. The 412th TEC's DCP, the 372d Engineer Brigade, and the 411th Engineer Brigade were also preparing for 2009–2010 deployments.

The Army Reserve is riding the winds of change as it transforms from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve. The United States Army Reserve Command (USARC) is moving from Fort McPherson, Georgia, to Fort Bragg, North Carolina; the Office of the Chief of Army Reserves will move from Washington, D.C., to Fort Belvoir, Virginia; and the United States Army Human Resources Command will move from Saint Louis, Missouri, to Fort Knox, Kentucky. The Army Reserve engineer community saw four new commanders at major units in 2009:

- 416th TEC (Major General Paul E. Crandall)
- 411th Engineer Brigade (Brigadier General David L. Weeks)

- 420th Engineer Brigade (Brigadier General James H. Doty Jr.)
- 926th Engineer Brigade (Brigadier General Bud R. Jameson Jr.)

Five Army Reserve engineers—the four officers named above and Brigadier General Eddie Chesnut, deputy commander of the 416th TEC—received general officer promotions.

The commandant and command group of the Engineer School attended many of the major Army Reserve engineer training conferences and exercises throughout the year, including the 416th TEC Senior Leader Conference in April and the 412th TEC Warfighter Conference in June. Major 2009 Army Reserve exercises included Operation Essayons at Fort Hunter Liggett, California, in May; Operation Sand Castle at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, in July; and Operation River Assault at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, in July.

This year, Engineer School personnel will see Army Reserve engineers in action again, including:

- 412th TEC's Operation River Assault at Fort Chaffee, from 10–24 July
- Army Reserve engineer battalion rotations at NTC, from May to August
- Operation Essayons at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, in July
- Castle Installation-Related Construction at Fort Dix, New Jersey, in July

In 2009, the Engineer School trained more than 2,500 Army Reserve officers, warrant officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and enlisted Soldiers at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. This number does not include the 250 mobilized Individual Ready Reserve engineers the school trained. The Army mobilizes four multirole bridge companies per year—two of them Army Reserve units—which are trained and evaluated at Fort Leonard Wood. We have a strong Army Reserve NCO liaison team serving at Fort Leonard Wood to help retain Soldiers. In 2009, they exceeded United States

Army Training and Doctrine Command standards by keeping the Army Reserve attrition rate to a low 3 percent.

The Army Reserve will benefit from increased resident instruction time at Engineer School courses. The Basic Officer Leader Course increased to 17 weeks and, with the addition of the 201A construction engineering technician course, the Basic Warrant Officer Course increased to 26 weeks. We strongly recommend that new brigade and battalion commanders attend our premier course, the Engineer Precommand Course. The Engineer School is considering including new command sergeants major, as well. In addition, the Engineer School hosts an annual engineer Total Army School System trainer workshop and conducts critical skill review boards requiring active Army Reserve participation.

For 2009, the Army Reserve nominated candidates for all appropriate regimental award categories, as outlined in Fort Leonard Wood Pamphlet 672-1, *Itchner and Grizzly Awards*, *Sturgis Medal*, and *Van Austreve Award*.¹ Army Reserve regimental award nominations are sent to USARC in January and submitted to the Engineer School, and awards are presented at the annual ENFORCE Conference. The 2009 winners were as follows:

- *Itchner Award*: 955th Engineer Company, 489th Engineer Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri
- *Outstanding Engineer Platoon Leader (Grizzly) Award*: First Lieutenant Christopher G. Smiley, 955th Engineer Company, 489th Engineer Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri
- *Outstanding Engineer Warrant Officer Award*: Warrant Officer Three Nathan P.D. Harvel, 321st Engineer Detachment, 844th Engineer Battalion, Bethlehem, Georgia
- *Sturgis Medal*: Staff Sergeant Jay L. Kochuga, 336th Engineer Company, 463d Engineer Battalion, Youngwood, Pennsylvania
- *Van Austreve Award*: Specialist Ricky L. Weissend, 375th Engineer Company, 844th Engineer Battalion, Eva, Alabama

It has been a great honor and privilege to serve at the Engineer School. In February, my replacement, Colonel Aaron Walter, became the new Engineer School Deputy Assistant Commandant—Army Reserve. Colonel Walter will help support and carry the Army Reserve engineer community to the next level. Essayons!



Colonel Cepeda was Deputy Assistant Commandant—Army Reserve when he wrote this article.

Endnote

¹Fort Leonard Wood Pamphlet 672-1 was revised on 18 November 2009. The new title is *The Itchner, The Outstanding Engineer Platoon Leader, The Outstanding Engineer Warrant Officer, The Van Austreve, and the Morris Outstanding Civilian Award and the Sturgis Medal*.