

Clear The Way

By Major General Randal R. Castro
Commandant, US Army Engineer School



Greetings from Fort Leonard Wood, home of the Engineer Regiment! I want to personally thank all of you for your steadfast and honorable service to our Nation. Right now, across the world, engineer Soldiers are serving with great distinction. With our unwavering efforts in the war against terror, our support to disaster relief, and our rapidly transforming Army, it is clear that the Regiment will be needed even more in the future. Here at the Engineer School, we have made steady progress in a number of areas to Train, Transform, and Take Care of our Regiment. Our updated mission and vision statements, as well as a more comprehensive letter to the Regiment, are posted on the Engineer School Web site. Our focus is on providing the skills and tools the Regiment needs to Support the War, Conduct Initial Military Training and Leader Development, and Transform our Regiment. I'll highlight some of our initiatives in these areas.



To **Support the War**, we have deployed a variety of **Mobile Training Teams**. They provided instruction on subjects from equipment to leader training. If you identify a need for a mobile training team, contact us so we can ensure that units preparing for operations know what information, products, and training are available to make their preparation as current as possible. We also represent the engineer perspective in the Army's continuous **Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leader Development, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) Gap Analysis**. We have conducted or participated in DOTMLPF analysis for improvised explosive device (IED) defeat, the Army's counter rocket artillery and mortar effort, geospatial systems, construction equipment, and gap crossing capabilities. Our focus is on ensuring a thoroughly integrated assured mobility concept, leading the Army team in IED defeat, developing and implementing a strategic construction equipment acquisition approach, implementing and assessing the reorganization of the Regiment, and completely analyzing all aspects of the sapper as the expert in urban and complex terrain.

The most recent change to **Initial Military Training** is the implementation of **Warrior Tasks and Drills**. A major effort was placed on getting skilled junior engineer Soldiers and leaders with an even stronger Warrior Ethos into their first unit. You should see Soldiers coming into your formations with enhanced, more in-depth training in the proven fundamentals of shoot, move, communicate, and survive.

For our new lieutenants' **Training and Leader Development**, we have implemented the **Small-Group Instructor** program in our Engineer Officer Basic Course (EOBC) with

seasoned first lieutenants (P)/captains staying after graduation from the Engineer Command and Staff Course (ECSC) to teach and lead junior lieutenants in a small-group setting. Our emphasis continues to be on teaching crucial engineer skills to junior leaders—but through the lens of current operations. The multifaceted, maneuver-oriented skills of the engineer officer have served us well and serve as a model for the Chief of Staff's vision of a future Army leader: a decathlete with a broad understanding of operations, armed with in-depth skills to support the Joint Warfighter. Our goal is digitization of the School's environment so it is comparable to our digitized units in the

field, with greater emphasis on the use of digital tools—from geospatial to battle command.

We added recent lessons learned and fundamental observations from current operations to our **Engineer NCO Training**. We removed common core from the Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course (ANCOC) to allow more time to teach relevant critical skills to our sergeants first class, while the Basic Noncommissioned Officers Course (BNCOC) replaced 43 hours of new material to stand-alone common core. I request your emphasis in sending your NCOs to these courses. While attendance at ANCOC has been at 95 percent in FY04, attendance at BNCOC was only 65 percent. As leaders, we must show our commitment to developing our NCOs by letting them attend these critical schools at the earliest opportunity in their careers. I ask for your commitment to send your soldiers to school.

We have added more than 15 courses to teach **Specialty Skills for our Engineer Soldiers and Leaders**. We partnered with the Marine Corps to train Soldiers at the Urban Mobility Breaching Course, at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. The School also led the Army's effort in search dog training—a skill which is highly sought by maneuver commanders. We have added an Explosive Ordnance Clearance Agent (EOCA) Course to the specialty skills available for training. The pilot Unit Search and Unit Search Advisor Courses took off successfully, training 46 searchers and 23 search advisors. The courses span in-person, vehicle checkpoint, survey, route, occupied and unoccupied building, and elements of venue searches (Urban Engineer Scout Operations). We also fence 15 Sapper Leader Course slots per EOBC to ensure that lieutenants arrive at their first unit of assignment as well-trained as possible. Continue to request slots so we can show the Army our need to grow even more.

I am especially excited to tell you about the **Future Engineer Force**. We continue the massive efforts associated with transforming the Total Engineer Force into a more responsive and more effective organization for our Army. We do not see the engineer force structure reducing in size, as many had thought. The future engineer structure will provide as many, if not more, leadership and professional development opportunities for our Soldiers and leaders as we have in the past. The resonating message I send to you is that the senior leadership of our Army sees the need for a strong Engineer Regiment, and the future is very bright. **“We’re Coming Back!”**

Solving the IED challenge is a top priority for the Engineer School. I see the need for our Soldiers to quickly and remotely detect and neutralize any IED threat. To accomplish this, we must spiral cutting-edge equipment from industry into our engineer formations using innovative acquisition methods. The Army’s **Counter Explosive Hazards Center (CEHC)** at the Engineer School is leading this endeavor, teaming with our Regiment and many elements within the Army, the Department of Defense, our allies, and industry to spiral capabilities into our formations as quickly as possible to defeat IEDs. Much work has been done, but we are far from reaching our goal. We will partner with the National Training Center to have a **Leaders’ Council on IED Defeat in June at Fort Irwin, California**.

Another new capability is **the 67th Mine Dog Detachment**. It has mine dog squads deployed to Afghanistan and specialized search dogs (SSD) deployed to Iraq. Furthermore, mine dog training in the United Kingdom is going very well.

Much work is being done to **spiral equipment into the field force** faster than the current procedures. Equipment such

as Tactical Fire Fighting Trucks, Handheld Standoff Mine-Detection Systems (HSTAMIDS), Buffaloes, Meerkats, and Skid Steer Loaders are some examples. While the Mongoose (an improved version of the mine-clearing line charge [MICLIC]) contract was put on the shelf, significant strides were made in the decision to shift money to procurement of the AN/PSS-14 mine detector. We are very close to replacing our armored-vehicle-launched bridges (AVLBs), buying all our DTSS requirements, and getting the money needed to modernize our construction equipment.

The Engineer Regiment is a **“Team of Teams,”** a diverse organization comprised of the leadership within the Total Engineer Force (Active Army, Reserve, and National Guard), the US Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer leaders within our major commands (MACOMs), our Joint Commands, our combat training centers, industry, Department of Defense civilians, engineers in our Allied forces, and our sister service engineers. We are now establishing an Army Knowledge Online Collaborative Web site in order to get information out to the field faster! (See article on page 7.) The collaborative Web site is only the short-term goal. The long-term goal is for everyone in the Engineer School to be connected digitally with the field with “interactive” tools. This collaborative method will greatly enhance our abilities to develop innovative solutions.

Let me conclude by again thanking you for all you do for our Army and our Engineer Regiment. We see our mission at the Engineer School as ensuring that we set the conditions for your units to do this for years to come. On that, we are fully committed, and together we will succeed. You are our Nation’s greatest treasure, and we are proud of you. Stand tall and Carry On!

Essayons!