

Clear The Way

By Major General R.L. Van Antwerp
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Greetings once again from Fort Leonard Wood. Our stay here was extended a few months, and Paula and I are thankful for the extra time with the Soldiers here at the home of the Engineer Regiment. We will give it our best for as long as the Army wants us to be here. We talk often about Soldiers needing to be agile and adaptive, and now we get a chance to model it. Major General Randy Castro and his wife Judy are ready to go as soon as our change-of-command date is approved. Randy is assigned as Acting Commander of Accessions Command until the changeover.

Congratulations to all you sappers now authorized to wear the tab and to our Regimental Command Sergeant Major for this great achievement in recognition. I'll let him tell you the details, but I couldn't be prouder.

For you new commanders who haven't had a chance to hear me talk about priorities, here goes: support for the war; initial-entry training—the top priority in training (meet the standards, and fully resource it); training and leader development—all initial military training; recruiting and retaining the force; transformation; and joint relationships.

If you have any questions about these or other areas within the Regiment, send your requests and questions here, and we will work the issues. You will see some new names on the Fort Leonard Wood team in this issue, and they come ready to contribute to the fight. My philosophy is that we need to continually work the mission and resources to find the balance and to get the “walnuts” done first and well. Where we have resource issues, we will make decisions in light of the priorities. I would rather “do less with less, but do it much better” than “do more with less.” Sticking to excellence in basic fundamentals proves its worth in our training base as well as it does in our units.

The Army is changing, and many of you are in the midst of this change. I want to share some of my thoughts with you about this time in our Regiment. It's clear that this is the right time to change our Army and get positioned for the future—the resources, the focus, and the support enabling change are all in place. The sense is that it will take the next couple of years to get the big pieces in place. At the same time, we are incorporating as much as we can from the Future Force template into today's force.



It's exciting to see the direction the Army is going. We are well on our way to increasing the number of Brigade Combat Teams to 43 in the Active Component. We are on our way toward growing the active force by 30,000 Soldiers, a job that will require all of us to be recruiters and retainers—a very important job. The Army is moving in the right direction to make today's force more ready for tomorrow's challenges. We are growing the Army and paying for it out of go-to-war dollars. If we have to increase the end strength even more we will, but that means we have to recruit it and train it.

Dr. Lenny Wong has written an article on “agile and adaptive” leaders and what the war has done to build these characteristics into our junior leaders. You can find a link to it on the Engineer School Web site at <http://www.wood.army.mil/eschool/>. Our challenge here at Fort Leonard Wood is to make sure our young leaders and Soldiers don't lose sight of what's key to success. We are looking at ways to empower them and allow them to retain ownership for their education and actions.

We are also working to build the “go-to-war and sustain-ourselves-during-war” mentality. In our initial-entry training environment, we need to get rid of administrative time-outs when we are going to the field and practice what our Soldiers are experiencing when deployed. We will work improvised explosive devices (IEDs) into the field scenarios as much as possible. Convoys need to train like combat patrols because that is what they have become. Every movement on the battlefield is a combat operation. I ask you to remember this in your training exercises at home station and our combat training centers as well. As we incorporate the 40 warrior tasks and 9 battle drills into our standardized training here, we keep one statistic in mind: approximately half of the casualties in Operation Iraqi Freedom are 21 years old or younger. Many were Soldiers trained in initial-entry training last year. We need to constantly reinforce what right looks like, incorporating “values” into training.

VOTE! The Army voice is important, so please work hard to get everyone in a position to vote—either in person or by absentee ballot.

As I close, I am honored to remember the engineer Soldiers we have lost. God bless you all.

Specialist Joshua Bunch

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Private First Class Samuel Brown

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Private First Class Ryan Martin

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