

Clear The Way

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I am simply awed by the daily accomplishments of this Regiment of Engineers...the way our Soldiers serve our Army and Nation from the front and by their example. From our combat engineers clearing routes throughout Afghanistan; to our construction engineers cutting new roads, erecting bridges, and building force bed-down facilities; to our geospatial engineers ensuring that leaders from platoon- to theater-level can visualize the operating environment with the most current data. You support the fight with relentless resolve every day, understanding that the stakes are high; you never falter to accomplish what is asked. Never has there been a more exciting time to be an Army engineer, and never has the demand for engineer warriors been greater. Frankly, it is humbling to be a leader among such incredible engineer Soldiers—all of you sappers at heart!



Today, that is no longer the case...in fact, it hasn't been the case for 9 years! The most fertile and relevant ground for collecting lessons learned is the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan—albeit balanced by CTC experiences as we explore the challenges of full spectrum operations that we will face in the future. Units that recently return from combat are the new center of gravity of a learning and adaptive Army. And the former central clearing for lessons learned that would shape future doctrine, force design, and leader development has given way to a dispersed network of learning. Some examples of the new learning network

are warfighting forums; assessment teams that deploy to visit units in the fight; unit post deployment after action reviews (AARs) conducted by Active Army, United States Army Reserve, and Army National Guard units; SIPR and NIPR websites; and blogs. In many cases, it is the students who recently returned from the fight who bring the most relevant instruction to our officer/warrant officer/noncommissioned officer (NCO) professional development education.

What We Must Do. This new network of learning, the bottom-up nature of relevant lessons, and the need to rapidly turn those lessons into adaptive action with the speed and urgency of war, demand that we completely “rewire” our processes within the Regimental Headquarters to better serve our profession. Here are the steps we have taken within our Regimental Headquarters:

But I've always felt that we, at Fort Leonard Wood, could do more to directly support our units that are preparing for combat and also to learn from your experience and rapidly integrate those lessons into our doctrine and leader development. This was confirmed during the last ENFORCE when our senior commanders and command sergeants major asked that we modify our Regimental Campaign Plan to include a line of effort specifically focused on “Support to Current Operations.” During our recent Regimental Commander's Council, held at the Devil's Lake Regional Training Center in North Dakota, senior leaders approved our modification to the Regimental Campaign Plan to better support current operations. One of the major areas that commanders suggested we target for immediate improvement was our collection of unit lessons learned and rapid integration of those lessons into our training and leader development (Campaign Plan Decisive Point [DP] 3-10). Following is an update on this critical effort, along with a discussion of how you can do your part as members of this profession.

The Problem. In the past, unit training at our Combat Training Centers (CTCs)—predominantly by Active Army units—was the center of gravity for collecting lessons learned. The Combined Arms Lessons Learned (CALL) Office at Fort Leavenworth was the central repository and engine of change to our doctrine and leader development. CTC observer/trainers were highly sought to be instructors at our schools—and were managed that way.

- I've charged the Director of Training and Leader Development (DOTLD) with mission command for the “Support Current Operations” line of effort to put a single organization in charge of monitoring and orchestrating the learning network, align lessons learned with rapidly modifying doctrine and leader development, and give broad authority to alter professional military education (PME) course instruction based on lessons learned so that yesterday's combat experience is taught in tomorrow's classroom.
- We've increased the capacity of our Training Integration Office (TIO) to become the hub of adaptive education. Their job is to connect with field units, generate assessment teams, attend unit postdeployment AARs, collect the lessons learned in coordination with

Maneuver Support Center of Excellence efforts and CALL, and pass off the most relevant lessons to the Director of Instruction for integration into the classroom.

- I've moved the Counter Explosive Hazards Center (CEHC) under DOTLD so that we can begin to institutionalize counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) training into all facets of our PME and leverage CEHC's ability to track the latest enemy and friendly tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) in order to keep C-IED training highly relevant to the current fight.
- I've shifted the main effort of our education Quality Assurance Element (QAE) toward ensuring that classroom instruction remains relevant and incorporates the latest lessons learned from units.
- I've established a nominative program for the selection of instructors to ensure that we have the right leaders—with the most recent combat experience—training and educating the next generation of engineers with the added incentive that their follow-on assignment will be closely managed.

What Has Been Accomplished. These past few months, we have made significant gains in putting the programs in place to achieve the objectives set by field commanders in DP 3-1. CEHC is now under DOTLD, and integration of C-IED training into all aspects of officer, warrant officer, and NCO education is well underway. DOTLD has participated in the postdeployment AARs of the 372d Engineer Brigade, 412th Engineer Command, and 203d Engineer Battalion. We covered down on the full spectrum operations rotation of 3d Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division, and focused on fire support officer (FSO) lessons for the 46th Engineer Battalion. We also deployed an assessment team to Afghanistan in September to collect observations from units in the fight; the Initial Impression Report can be downloaded at <https://call2.army.mil/toc.aspx?document=6462>. Finally, we have begun a comprehensive relook at the program of instruction for our NCOs attending the Advanced Leader Course (ALC) and Senior Leader Course (SLC), as well as our young officers attending the Captains Career Course, to ensure that the training and education we provide is consistent with

combat observations, reflects the contemporary operating environment, and challenges the student to think adaptively. I'm pleased with the progress we are making, but we are far from being finished.

How You Can Help. If you are truly a member of this profession, you will agree that we have to do a better job of being a learning and adapting organization. And if you are truly a member of this profession...if you love this Regiment...you want to know how you can help achieve this vision. It's simple:

- Actively participate in the various forums where we discuss observations and lessons learned; help us understand where we need to improve our doctrine, organization, training, materiel, and leader development for the next fight.
- Give us visibility of your unit's postdeployment AAR session and report; demand that someone from the Regimental Headquarters attend.
- Take us up on the invitation to be part of critical task selection boards or course content reviews so we can ensure that what we are teaching tomorrow's leaders is relevant and current and that it produces the leaders you need to win.
- Encourage your best and brightest leaders to come to the Engineer School as instructors for our next generation of officers, warrant officers, and NCOs; nominate them so we can manage their assignment to Fort Leonard Wood and their follow-on assignment. One instructor touches hundreds of future leaders each year; only our best should be given that responsibility.

In the next "Clear the Way" article, I hope to report on progress that we are making on another vitally important decisive point of the Regimental Campaign Plan—DP 3-12: "Execute Functional Training for ARFORGEN"—which will establish a forum and process for commanders to tell us what specific training you need to prepare for your mission, when you need it, and how we can provide the necessary expertise at key events like mission rehearsal exercises (MRXs).

Lead to Serve. Essayons!

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Duty

Respect

Selfless Service

Honor

Integrity

Personal Courage



Army Values