Clear the Way

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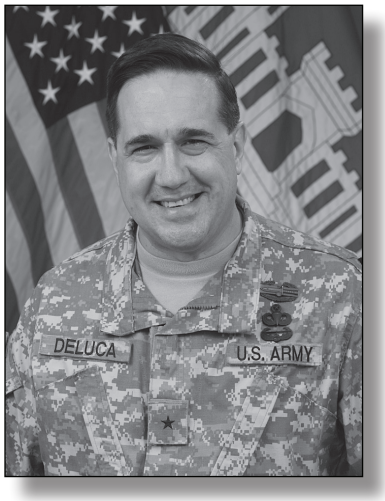

It is not possible for me to briefly convey the honor, pride, excitement, and enthusiasm that I feel on being selected as the commandant of the U.S. Army Engineer School. I will work very hard every day to live up to this special trust and responsibility. This column is one way that I hope to communicate with the Engineer Regiment and the larger Army and joint engineer communities. There will be other mechanisms to make sure of this interaction so that the Engineer School is acting in real time on the most important engineer issues and challenges of the day. Let me emphasize that the views in this column are my own and do not necessarily express the official policy of the Army or Department of Defense. I am convinced that the health and vigor of our community require blunt and open talk, disciplined by careful thought and analysis. I hope to enable and encourage the wider joint engineer community to make *Engineer* a forum for lively debate on the possible solutions to our many challenges, welcoming ideas from all sources.

The demands of war have already put the Engineer Regiment through a period of tremendous transformation and transition, and this will continue due to the continuing conflicts we will wage and the need to adjust to a more affordable military strategy and posture. We have some extraordinary opportunities to influence the changes needed in our Army and its support to the joint and coalition forces that will remain in contact as far into the future as we can see, executing a unique blend of war-waging activities unlike any era in the past.

I believe that the primary strategic task is to prevent the emergence of any coalition of factions and nations that threaten our Nation's survival and prosperity. The primacy of that task and the global environment will cause us to wage continuous irregular wars in cyberspace and on the electromagnetic spectrum. These will be accompanied by global counterterrorism efforts and deep economic, political, and sociocultural competition. Periodic military expeditions will be mounted globally to shape conditions in a more favorable way for our Nation and its interests and to maintain our ability to use the global maritime and aerospace commons with total freedom and security.

This primary task, conditions around the world, and our actual and potential adversaries and competitors allow us to know several of the "Five Ws and One H" (who, what, when, where, why, and how) of our threats. While we do not know the *who*, *when,* and *why* with certainty, we can see the *what* and *how* of our threats. This allows us to focus better on the capabilities that we need in the Engineer Regiment, across all components in the Army. The tactics, techniques, and strategies that we have faced in our two most recent wars show us the direction. Our most powerful emerging peer competitor and other potential adversaries have developed strategies that do not involve fighting the United States in the open, which is a fool's errand guaranteeing massive destruction and defeat. Instead, they are fighting asymmetrically in real physical space and in cyberspace, comprising a hybrid threat. The conflicts we are fighting—and will fight over the next generation—share a number of characteristics that have significant meaning for how we must continue to change our Engineer Regiment. I call our persistent conflicts of the coming generation "these kinds of wars," for lack of a better name and in homage to former engineer platoon sergeant and author T.R. Fehrenbach.

These kinds of wars have certain characteristics in which engineers play a central role. There are many implications to our doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities; I will expand on those implications in future *Clear the Way* columns and other articles.

First, our expeditions must win three important campaigns, or battles, simultaneously:

- The Battle for Roads and Bridges.
- The Battle for the Population.
- The Battle for Sovereignty.

Engineers are central to each of them. Second, we will be engaged in continuous contact in quasi war on the electromagnetic spectrum and in cyberspace. Third, we will conduct continuous global counterterrorism operations using special operations and other forces. Are our engineer forces adapted sufficiently to support these contingencies?

The concept of "full spectrum operations" began to approach the mind-set that we need, but it is still tied to the old, irredeemably incorrect idea of war as a spectrum—it isn't. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations,*[1] now reflects the fact that operations are executed through decisive action—offense, defense, and stability and defense support to civil authorities—by means of the Army's core competencies of combined arms maneuver and wide-area security, guided by mission command. Decisive action does not mean continuing to plan, train, and develop a force to fight Krasnovians in the Whale Gap at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California.

There is one additional battle that is critical to victory in all wars—the reconnaissance-counterreconnaissance battle. Throughout history, the force that wins this battle wins the actual battle. Counter improvised explosive device operations—as well as geospatial information systems and intelligence, engineer preparation of the theater, and new skills in theater of operation base camp and combat outpost development—are part of the reconnaissance-counterreconnaissance battle.

The Army has grappled with this challenge in a less-than-focused way over the past decade. The concepts of "network-centric warfare" and "information dominance" were incomplete and disorganized attempts to deal with this challenge. Other things reflecting a widespread need to address this (but in an uncoordinated and unsynchronized effort) are seen in—

- The migration of signal intelligence, measurement and signatures intelligence, human intelligence, and geospatial intelligence capabilities from their previous perch at the strategic level into the tactical force.
- The new capabilities of Task Force ODIN (observe, detect, identify, and neutralize), still inappropriately organized and embedded in the force.
- The migration of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities from strategic control to tactical formations.
- The introduction of biometric collection and databases available to tactical units for querying and analysis.
- The migration of electronic warfare into the most basic tactical units and operations.
- The introduction of new tools for tactical access to strategic intelligence and operations databases.

Have we adapted the Engineer Regiment adequately to win this battle?

Obviously, I have some strong views on the nature of war and our threats; but everyone must know up front that I am open-minded and enjoy debate. Out of debate comes increased understanding and more comprehensive and disciplined analysis. I look forward to the interaction, creativity, and debate within the team at the Engineer School and in the Engineer Regiment.

I am forever grateful to join the talented Engineer School team and grateful that I follow Brigadier General Bryan G. Watson into the commandant's role. He completed a difficult task and set the conditions to move the Engineer Regiment to meet the demands of the Army of 2020. I commend his phenomenal leadership and strategic outlook. I'll aggressively work to meet our objectives and will build on the excellent plan and momentum that he and the team have established.

A word on one of these achievements—the brigade engineer battalion: Many of you have seen the effects of modularity on our force: command and control issues, insufficient engineer forces at the brigade combat team level, the wrong mix of capabilities. Brigadier General Watson kept this as his Number 1 priority and worked it for more than 2 years through the force design update process. This issue has been worked at the Department of the Army level, and it is embedded in the Army Campaign Plan. The brigade engineer battalion is heavily endorsed by Army senior leaders, who have felt the absence of the right engineers, organized and embedded correctly in their deployed forces. I expect a favorable final decision at the conclusion of the Total Army Analysis 14-18 process.

My last thought for this article is that the training audience we have in the Engineer School has changed dramatically over the past decade. This is due to the slightly different learning styles of the first truly digital generation and to the tremendous experience in the current force as a result of a decade of war. Have we changed our methods enough in the Engineer School and the Army to exploit and address these changes? In recognition of this need to adapt, we will make changes in how we operate. The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command is also embarking on a process called The Army Learning Concept 2015, a learnercentric, university approach to initial military training such as the Engineer Basic Officer Leader Course, Warrant Officer Basic Course, and professional military education, such as the Engineer Captains Career Course and Warrant Officer Advanced Course. More on this in the future.

Recently, Brigadier General (Promotable) Mark W. Yenter assumed command of the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence here at Fort Leonard Wood. He has returned from Afghanistan, where he served as our senior engineer. He has my congratulations and will have my dedicated support as he shapes the future of the combat enablers. I'm humbled and extremely proud to be your new commandant. I look forward to serving all three components of our "One Army" and offering the best engineer support to our forces, particularly those forces that will remain in contact for the next generation. Together we will add to the greatness and rich history of the Engineer Regiment that has led the way in war and peace for this Nation.

Essayons!

Endnote:

[1]ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operation*, 10 October 2011.