

Farewell to the Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Workforce

From the Army Acquisition Executive

I depart my position as Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology) [ASAALT] and Army Acquisition Executive on Jan. 2, 2008 — 6 years to the day from taking office. These years have been both challenging and rewarding. *Challenging* in addressing the complexities of providing Soldiers with the right product, at the right time and at the right place to meet their needs at a time when we are a Nation at war. *Rewarding* in that it was a wonderful time for me personally to work closely with a world-class team in the Army; in the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force; the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Congress; academia; and industry — both domestic and international. Together, we always did the right thing for our Soldiers.

As I look back on my first day on the job, I remember a brief meeting with then-Secretary of the Army Tom White. His advice was to do three things: (1) take care of programs; (2) take care of the acquisition workforce; and (3) take care of the industrial base. I had my mission and immediately turned my focus to programs, people, production and improvement. During my first year, my efforts were concentrated on programs. My second year was devoted to people and my third year was focused on the industrial base. I have continued to emphasize these areas of priority, and all along the way, we have seen improvements. I am equally as proud of the fact that we have also embedded and institutionalized those improvements for lasting change. Dedicating a share of ASAALT resources to strategic planning has been instrumental to effecting the lasting change. Let me briefly highlight some significant accomplishments.

During the early years, there were significant tactical challenges. For our brave men and women fighting the global war on terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere in the world, we surged to provide body armor, armored vehicles, Soldier equipment and training. We were able to meet these tactical challenges

in a very short period of time, and our success ensured that those in harm's way had what they needed to fight and win and, to the best of our ability, return home safely.

While meeting our short-term challenges, we learned to equip and field items quickly so our Soldiers had what they needed — from a rapid equipping standpoint — within hours to 90 days. In addition to the Rapid Equipping Force, the Rapid Fielding Initiative has become the largest equipment fielding effort since World War II and provides 50 mission-essential equipment and clothing items, including the Advanced Combat Helmet and accessories, weapons accessories, knee and elbow pads, and hydration systems. To meet urgent needs on the battlefield, we learned to do rapid acquisition very efficiently and effectively.

Early in combat operations, we experienced losses of aviation platforms and, most regrettably, our Soldier aviators. We moved quickly and with great success to install state-of-the-art survivability equipment on all Army rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft in theater for enhanced flight crew and platform protection.

Moving forward, Future Combat Systems [FCS] remain at the center of our broader modernization strategy. While large and complex, it is a model program that embraces the "Big A" approach to acquisition where all stakeholders, including the requirements community, the "little a" community, testers, the sustainment community, Soldiers and others work together toward a common goal. Now in the System Design and Development phase, FCS, after 50 months, is one percent below cost, on performance with some spin-outs downrange and only a few days behind schedule. It is an amazing accomplishment that involves first-rate teamwork among the Army and our sister services, the United Kingdom and 600 companies. FCS is truly a success story. Moreover, all Army programs — more than 550 of them from every program executive office

[PEO] — are doing well. In fact, they are in much better shape than when I arrived 6 years ago.

Our world-class science and technology [S&T] community — from our University Affiliated Research Centers to our scientists and engineers — is second to none. S&T has a pivotal role in pursuing technologies to maintain and enhance the Army's already advanced capabilities. Our dynamic and responsive S&T portfolio is focused to enable specific new capabilities in the Future Force while remaining agile to satisfy operational needs of the Current Force.

The United States remains the world's leader in safely destroying stockpiled chemical weapons covered by the Chemical Weapons Convention. In meeting our international treaty obligations 7 months early, 2007 turned out to be our most successful year ever. We are more than 50 percent finished with our task of destroying the remaining stockpile of chemical weapons.

Another significant accomplishment this year was the completion of work and closure of the Iraq Project and Contracting Office [PCO]. This follows 3 years of managing and coordinating the Iraq reconstruction program where we started some 4,000 projects and completed more than 3,000. These projects included water, electricity, sewage treatment plants, roads, schools, hospitals, fire stations, oil pipelines and other key infrastructure programs that are vital to enabling the people of Iraq to press ahead with the difficult task of establishing a viable government and defending it. The PCO was instrumental and its people remarkable. They worked incredible hours under dangerous and difficult conditions. Two PCO personnel made the ultimate sacrifice: Ms. Barbara C. Heald and LCDR Keith Taylor. Their dedication and sacrifice served to encourage us all to work harder for a free and democratic Iraq.

An extremely important concept — Life Cycle Management — was formalized in 2004 and presently we have four Life Cycle Management Commands [LCMCs]. During my recent visits to the Aviation and Missile LCMC in Huntsville, AL, and the Communications Electronics LCMC at Fort Monmouth, NJ, I saw firsthand that the leadership and workforce are taking this on as their own and working together to realize

the original goal: to provide products to the Soldier faster, make good products even better, minimize life-cycle costs and build a closer working relationship between the Army Materiel Command's major subordinate commands and our PEOs. The success we have seen so far is significant. When the war ends and the budget gets squeezed, concepts like Life Cycle Management will help our Army leaders and Soldiers prepare for the next war. Without this concept in place, I would have grave concerns about our ability to surge in the future and give our Soldiers what they will need to accomplish their mission and return home safely.

Finally, as we look at the successful work being done, I am pleased that Mine Resistant Ambush Protected [MRAP] vehicles are being delivered to our Soldiers in the field. These vehicles will not only protect them, but save their lives as well.

All the foregoing would not have been possible without a tremendous workforce and our industry partners. We are fortunate to have outstanding military and civilian leadership, well-trained and well-equipped Soldiers and a world-class acquisition workforce on duty 24/7. Our accomplishments as a team provide our new leadership with a strong foundation for continued success.

Thank you for allowing me the pleasure of being your leader during this historical time for the United States Army and our Nation. The hardest part, I am finding, is leaving such a great team that I truly regard as my family.

I wish you all the very best in 2008 and in the coming years. May God bless you. May God bless the great work that you do. And, may God bless America.

Thank you for 6 wonderful and memorable years. HOOAH!

Claude M. Bolton Jr.
Army Acquisition Executive