

## Interview with LTG William N. Phillips, Principal Military Deputy to the ASAALT and Director, Army Acquisition Corps

LTG William N. Phillips speaks Oct. 26, 2010, at a forum titled "Modernizing the Army in an Era of Constrained Resources," at the 2010 Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Annual Meeting and Exposition. Phillips told *Army AL&T Magazine* that the execution of aviation modernization continues to be a tremendous success for the Army. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of AUSA.)



LTG PHILLIPS

**Army AL&T:** LTG Phillips, thank you for taking the time to speak with us. We'd like to focus on your leadership philosophy and specifically on fortifying certification requirements for the professional acquisition workforce. We'd also like to talk about your priorities.

**Phillips:** Every day, when I walk through this building, I think, "What can we, the Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology [AL&T] Team, do to help our Soldiers and all the service members who depend upon us get the mission done effectively and efficiently, especially so that those serving in harm's way today can someday return home safely to their Families and friends?" The programs, systems, and capabilities we provide are critically important to winning this fight, and the capabilities will save Soldiers' lives. So at the end of the day, I ask myself, "What have you done today, and what will you do tomorrow for Soldiers, as well as for their Families?"

Priority No. 1 is taking care of Soldiers! One of the greatest impacts our Army has had over the past several years was standing up Program Executive Office [PEO] Soldier. Before that, we didn't really have one acquisition organization focused on the most important war-fighting capability serving our Nation today, America's sons and daughters serving in uniform. Standing up PEO Soldier helped the Army focus in on what the Army is all about, Soldiers. I think singlehandedly, in a big way, PEO Soldier brought great focus toward supporting Soldiers as a system.

Let me add that all our other PEOs are aligned with our strategic partners within the Materiel Enterprise, the Life Cycle Management Commands [LCMCs], which are composed of AL&T experts who do tremendous work supporting our Soldiers and the joint warfighters. From aircraft to weapons, combat vehicles, communications, intelligence, tactical wheeled

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vehicles, chem/bio defense, and many others, the important task for our "team" and our partners is to field capability. In today's warfight, speed matters, and it truly does take a "partnership" of technology, acquisition, and logistics professionals to stay ahead of a very adaptive, determined enemy.

I also wanted to mention another PEO that was stood up at the same time as PEO Soldier, and that was PEO Ammunition. Soldiers don't operate or function very well without ammunition, and there was a time in our Army, before 2001, when ammunition was really broken. So, standing up PEO Ammunition and subsequently the Joint Munitions and Lethality LCMC brought leadership focus, energy, and resources to the munitions business. That's evident not only in making ammunition, but in bringing forth investments into the infrastructure that helped us build an "Ammunition Enterprise."

My next priority is rebuilding the acquisition workforce and taking care of our most precious resource within the Army Acquisition Corps, our people! It requires rebalance and growth across the workforce for us to be able to continue building a more capable, world-class, professional corps of civilians and military members focused on executing our AL&T mission, again in direct support of warfighters!

We're adding more than 1,600 contracting professionals—military and civilian—over the next several years to our contracting workforce. In my opinion, the Army essentially "broke" contracting a few years ago.

It happened over years; it didn't happen in one given timeframe. The Army simply took risk in acquisition, but most importantly, in contracting, and it was broken. The Army experienced exponential growth in its contracting workload—it increased by about 500 percent. At the same time as this unprecedented growth in workload, and corresponding in the opposite direction, there was a significant reduction of the contracting force structure across the Army.

We realized this in 2006 and 2007 when we began to discover that we did not have the talent or the number of personnel necessary to meet the Army's contracting requirements, and at about the same time, we discovered that some egregious violations had occurred. There were contracting personnel in Kuwait primarily, but also in other places in the Middle East, where fraud, waste, and ethical violations occurred within the contracting mission. I believe part of the reason these violations occurred is that we took much of our military force structure out of the contracting workforce. Bottom line, I believe it remains imperative that we complete the rebuilding of our contracting workforce, both military and civilian, from contingencies to construction to major systems acquisition, as well as other key acquisition skills critical to the AL&T mission. I intend to stay on point here.

Let me add, on a personal note, that I have worked beside some of the greatest contracting warriors, serving alongside our warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they are remarkable

in their support for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and our coalition partners. Within our Army, we just need more contracting warriors!

Part of my leadership philosophy that I want to emphasize, that is so important, is ensuring clear and consistent communications in your daily actions. In our Army, and in this warfight, “speed matters,” and nowhere is that more apparent than in the need to field the best products and systems to allow our warriors to be effective on the field of battle in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in other operations in over 80 countries where more than 240,000 Soldiers serve. It remains important that we in acquisition effectively communicate with all of our partners, from requirements to resources to execution

of the AL&T mission. We owe it to our Soldiers to do so, or we could fall short in supporting them! Also, by doing so we can learn from the knowledge and experiences of others, better understand their issues and concerns, and collectively achieve greater synergy.

Let me follow up on this point and address another that is more critically important today than ever in executing programs, and I’m focusing on system-of-systems integration. When you have a PEO or PM executing a particular program or building a product that’s going to Soldiers, it can no longer be viewed in isolation, which just a few years ago was probably true for many programs—but not all, as I believe some of our very best PMs look to ensure integration and synchronization

of their programs with other systems. Today, almost every program is inter-related. To look at it in isolation will lead to sub-optimization. For example, we just fielded a new 5.56mm round referred to as the Enhanced Performance Round. It provides a significant increase in capability, but it was optimized by viewing this new “round” as a system-of-systems, which resulted in mapping its performance and actually [allowing] the powder that’s within the round to be optimized for the M4 Carbine—a systems approach. So, I expect PMs to look outside of their programs and seek to integrate capabilities and maximize the effectiveness of our systems in order to maximize capability!

Another example is aircraft. A PM for an aircraft program shouldn’t look at that system as just, “I’m building this aircraft,” but must also consider the missile warning systems that can go on it. The questions should be, “How do I integrate the right communications structure inside my platform? Are there other systems that I need, that I should think about incorporating onboard the aircraft?” Looking outside to maximize capability is incredibly important. Also, think about the aviators who are going to fly this system. What will they be wearing, and what systems do they need in the cockpit at their fingertips? That brings into play systems that are being developed by Air Warrior—communication systems, kneeboards, the mission-planning systems, and many others. It’s not just the program you’re building, it’s a system that provides warfighting capability. There are many other external influences today on a single program. It’s important that we think through that as we build our programs.

Let me make one very important point here as well. Often in the past, I think that we have looked at the life cycle of a program in sequential order. In my view, that’s really a mistake in today’s environment, where “speed



During a recent visit to PEO Soldier, Phillips had the opportunity to try, among other emerging technologies, the new Mark VIII laser target locator. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PEO Soldier.)

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matters” along with ensuring that we field the best capability possible. We must have continuous communications among these communities: requirements, resourcing, acquisition (program management as well as science and technology), and sustainment. I strongly believe that they are all inherently linked, and that all leaders and key decision makers within each area must effectively communicate and synchronize efforts. For example, just recently we released the Ground Combat Vehicle Request for Proposal. The rewrite of the RFP involved the collective efforts of the Army Materiel Command [AMC], Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC], our science and technology leaders, ASAALT, G-3, G-4, G-8, Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD], and a few others, collectively working to ensure that this RFP truly reflected the Army’s requirements in order to achieve an executable, affordable program. The Army did the right thing by canceling the original RFP and getting the new RFP right. It was a true team effort and partnership!

**Army AL&T:** Sir, I take it from your comments that you are referring to the Soldier as a system?

**Phillips:** You bet, like Nett Warrior. Looking at our warfighters through the lens of a “system” is important, and Nett Warrior is certainly an important part of a Soldier system. You’ve got to think about weapons, sensors, night vision goggles, body armor, radios, and how that Soldier is going to communicate with leaders in small units, and how the system is integrated and used by our Soldiers. Also, what “systems” can we provide to small tactical leaders

to ensure that they never walk into a “fair” fight? I’m reminded of the story of our most recent Medal of Honor recipient, SSG Sal Giunta, whom I had the pleasure to meet. His story of heroism and absolute disregard for his own safety is beyond service and sacrifice. I’m reminded of how he charged into an “L”-shaped ambush to save his squad leader and in an attempt to save his friend SGT Joshua Brennan. So what do we take from SSG Giunta’s experience and those of many other warriors on the front lines? One action we can take is to design, develop, and field greater capability to small tactical unit leaders that provides them with the eyes and ears (intel) so that they won’t be guessing what’s over the next hill! So,

the Soldier is a system, and I’ll take it one step further—what we can do for small tactical unit leaders via a systems approach is important.

I think it took the Army a while to figure out to treat the Soldier-as-a-system. I remember in the early days of my time in acquisition, there was the Troop Support Command in St. Louis, off Goodfellow Boulevard. Troop Support Command essentially provided our troops with systems like generators, small unit equipment, and other things that Soldiers might use, but not Soldier-as-a-system. Now we’ve got it right. The AL&T community just needs to continue improving our ability to field “systems” faster. Speed matters!

While I’m thinking about our support for Soldiers, I am reminded of the movie “Restrepo.” The movie is named after PFC Juan Restrepo, who was a medic for a platoon in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. It’s a National Geographic movie and is the story about Soldiers



Phillips thanks the Redstone Arsenal and Huntsville, AL, communities for their work in supplying equipment and technology to the warfighter in Iraq and Afghanistan, during the Armed Forces Celebration Week’s Salute Luncheon on June 16, 2010. Phillips affirmed in his interview with *Army AL&T* Magazine that it takes a “partnership” of technology, acquisition, and logistics professionals in today’s warfight to stay ahead of a very adaptive, determined enemy. (U.S. Army photo by Kari Hawkins, U.S. Army Garrison Redstone.)

in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan, who in 2007 experienced extraordinary action against a very determined enemy. Over a period of about 15 months, the filmmakers took about 150 hours of film and boiled it down to a 90-minute movie. PFC Restrepo was killed within the first couple of months of the deployment, and the Soldiers named a Forward Operating Base deeper into the valley “Restrepo.” The movie is incredibly moving. I highly recommend it—just be ready for the language, as it very adequately captures Soldiers doing what Soldiers do, and you’ll see them using many of the systems that we provide!

**Army AL&T:** What are some of the successes of the Acquisition Corps?

**Phillips:** I have already mentioned Soldier-as-a-system, what we have done with ammunition, and the Ground Combat Vehicle program, and another one that comes to mind is what the Army has done with aviation. Upfront, I think it is extraordinary what the Acquisition Corps has done, and I’m very proud of our acquisition professionals. The Army made a decision early in the 2004 timeframe to terminate the Comanche program, which essentially resulted in immediately putting about \$14.2 million back into aviation modernization. So that was a conscious decision by the Army, supported by OSD and Congress. The execution of aviation modernization continues to be a tremendous success for our Army, and our Soldiers benefit from this decision every day on the front lines of freedom. The execution of this, again, was done in complete partnership with TRADOC, AMC, G-3, G-4, G-8, PEOs, and PMs, a focused team that didn’t care about credit but rather about what needed to be done to help our aviators and our warfighters!

Since that time, we’ve seen an exponential growth in Unmanned Aerial Systems, from Raven to Shadow to Gray Eagle. The Black Hawk “M” program



Phillips participated in an Army logistics forum Oct. 27, 2010, at the 2010 Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Annual Meeting and Exposition. (Photo courtesy of AUSA.)

is in production, and we have not only fielded this system to our Army, but recently provided aircraft to Mexico. It is an incredible capability. The Light Utility Helicopter that is being deployed throughout the Army (Active, Guard, and Reserve) today is doing remarkable work. The world’s greatest attack helicopter, the Apache, has achieved a Milestone C and will soon enter production. So the world’s greatest attack helicopter just got better. I’ve had the privilege of flying the CH-47F Chinook, which is a true workhorse today in the mountains of Afghanistan, as well as in Iraq and many other places around the world. We just accepted our 100th Chinook “F” model a while back, and the demand for this extraordinary capability continues to grow.

These aircraft are performing incredibly well in support of our warriors in theater right now, with more than 600 aircraft operating today. Although we can’t talk about specifics in terms of readiness, I can assure you that in my time in aviation, I’ve never seen the aviation fleet at a higher readiness rate than they are today, while they fly in the harshest environment. Another aircraft that’s been around for a while is the OH-58D. Some airframes fly in excess of 90 hours a month. Yet they’re flying at historically high readiness rates, and that’s

for two reasons. First, we made that investment back in the aviation modernization program, and in my view, it’s been extraordinarily successful. The second reason is that we have incredible maintainers, mechanics, and aviation crew chiefs, who sustain those aircraft and keep them in flyable condition and safe. So the Army made a decision on Comanche a few years ago, and our Acquisition Corps in partnership with many others executed the mission!

Another program that is a tremendous success by any measure is the MRAP [Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle] program. From the time we were given the mission to execute an MRAP, 12 months later we had MRAP vehicles in the hands of Soldiers and Marines in support of the warfight in Iraq, and soon in Afghanistan. Speed matters, and our industry partners delivered. As a result, we have saved many lives! Next, the Army executed the MRAP All-Terrain Vehicle, another incredible success with well over 5,000 vehicles in theater now. The first vehicles arrived in about 15 months from the start of the competitive award process. So a takeaway from this experience, in my view, is that we do deliberate acquisition well, and we do rapid acquisition well. We must learn from both processes and

improve—speed matters! We should seek help from OSD and Congress when it makes sense to waive requirements to get capability downrange.

I strongly believe that our body armor programs are an incredible success story. There has not been a failure of a piece of body armor against a system that it was designed to defeat. This has saved many lives as well.

Stryker is a terrific success story. In October 1999, GEN [Eric K.] Shinseki, then Chief of Staff of the Army, stated that he wanted to field an Interim Brigade Combat Team within 4 years. The Army executed his vision with great precision, and in just over 3 years, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division achieved Initial Operational Capability and soon after deployed to Iraq. Stryker Brigade Combat Teams have performed magnificently in combat, and today have achieved over 12 million miles of combat operations across two theaters. Today we are seeking significant improvements to the Stryker platform.

I think the Ammunition Enterprise as a whole has been a great success story.

I think the work we did since *Operation Desert Storm* to improve situational awareness and to eliminate fratricide has been a success story. The development and fielding of FBCB2 [Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below], Blue Force Tracking, and other Army Battle Command Systems that provide communications and situational

awareness, as well as Soldier identification systems on uniforms, etc., has been a major factor in seeking complete elimination of fratricide. We aren't there yet, and we can't rest on our laurels!

**Army AL&T:** What are some of our challenges?

**Phillips:** I gave you a number of successes. It's sometimes good to reflect upon what we've done and how it was done, but we must learn from our past actions, improve what we do, and do it better today and tomorrow. So here are some thoughts.

We have much more to do here to successfully execute programs! Some might consider that we haven't had as great a success with programs that have been canceled, for example, major programs like Non-Line-of-Sight-Cannon, Crusader, and Future Combat Systems. One takeaway from these experiences, I believe, is ensuring that there is a partnership within the Army and outside the Army when it comes to supporting programs. It's also important to ensure affordability, which ties directly to the requirements documents and how requirements are captured within the RFP. We have to do better now and in the future, and again I think the Ground Combat Vehicle was a great step in the right direction. Our "partners" will look to us and want to ensure that we have an "affordable" program that can deliver production vehicles at a cost that the Army can afford. We are doing that now for the Ground Combat Vehicle,

and following through with Paladin and the new Improved Carbine as well.

If you were to talk to Army leadership, I think they'd tell you that the most important and highest-priority program that the Army has today is the "network" and synchronization of all the systems that comprise the network. Now this gets back to my earlier comments. The network is made up of various programs that come together. We did a network demonstration on July 15 for senior leaders at White Sands Missile Range, NM, and Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. There were six PEOs who came together and were able to execute this network. It was a ground layer, a terrestrial layer, an aerial layer, and infantry, vehicles, radios, and other systems that came together to demonstrate that we could build the Army's network of the future.

So I think the challenge that we in acquisition will face quickly is building the Army's network and fielding it in a timeline that provides capability for Soldiers operating in Afghanistan and potentially Iraq and other places around the world. That's probably one of the most important missions that we will have. The acquisition challenge is integrating and synchronizing all the programs that align with building the Army's network.

It's also important to lighten the load on our Soldiers—protecting them, giving the systems they need to be successful on the field of battle, but also lightening the load so they can execute the mission and so they're not hindered by the system that they have to carry with them. We look hard, and we will every day, at not just adding capability, but lightening the load.

Next are efficiencies and transformation, and some of the challenges we face are in executing the mission of building capability and achieving efficiencies inside our programs, so we can either

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COL William E. Cole (left), Project Manager Soldier Protection and Individual Equipment, PEO Soldier, and Program Executive Officer Soldier BG Peter N. Fuller show Dr. Malcolm Ross O'Neill (right), ASAALT, and Phillips the new *Operation Enduring Freedom* Camouflage Pattern. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of PEO Soldier.)

buy more product or use those dollars in another way to buy more capability that we need.

**Army AL&T:** Can you share more thoughts on acquisition workforce training and certification?

**Phillips:** Regarding certifications, it's important to put it in the context of a professional Acquisition Corps. If you're a member of my Acquisition Corps, you'd best be on the path to certification. If you are not, or cannot become certified in our profession, then you should seek another career field. I don't know a politically correct way to say this, other than I'm serious about certification of our acquisition workforce, and we have a lot of work to do in this area.

To get there, you have to do certain things. One is that every person should absolutely have an IDP [Individual

Development Plan], because if you aren't certified, or even if you are, you need an IDP that lays out how you're going to continue to learn the skills that are necessary in our Army to execute the acquisition mission. It's absolutely critical. If you aren't certified, that lays the path for you to *become* certified in Army acquisition, whatever the field of study that you're working in. That will lead also to meeting the intent of Continuous Learning Points (CLPs), whereby we're required to have 80 CLPs every 2 years.

I want all of our workforce to know how important I consider certification to be, and I intend to put significant energy into helping our professional corps improve in this area. It's the responsibility of every teammate.

In the end, I look at it like this: Would you go to a doctor who doesn't have on his or her wall a validation that they've

been to a school and have been certified as a doctor? Would you go to a lawyer who is going to represent you in a court of law who hasn't been certified to practice law, or a graduate from law school? I would not! So, for acquisition professionals, certification is important!

**Army AL&T:** Sir, any closing thoughts?

**Phillips:** First, I am so proud of what our Acquisition Corps has done and will do in the future! I am very thankful that we have such talented, dedicated teammates who work so hard for Soldiers. Their work remains remarkable, and it's an honor to be a part of a mission that is supporting Soldiers, service members, and our allies to save lives!

Second, I ask everyone in our Acquisition Corps this question: So what are you doing today, and what will you do tomorrow, to help our Soldiers be successful on the field of battle?