

## From the Army Acquisition Executive

# Maintaining a Decisive Edge



This is a great time for me to wish all of you a Happy New Year! It is my hope that 2011 is filled with good health and prosperity for you and your loved ones. This is also a great time for me to thank our superb editorial staff—Nelson McCouch III, Margaret C. (Peggy) Roth, Robert E. Coultas, Kellyn D. Ritter, Jaclyn Pitts, and Christina Sneed—for compiling and publishing this award-winning, quarterly *Army AL&T Magazine* and the monthly *Army AL&T Online*. They are a talented team, dedicated to keeping the acquisition and contracting community and our key stakeholders well-informed about our plans, programs, and significant accomplishments. Keep up the great work!

This issue of *Army AL&T* is focused on the “State of the U.S. Army Acquisition Corps.” I was the first director of the Army Acquisition Corps and now—two decades later—it is my privilege again, along with LTG Bill Phillips, to lead this well-educated, disciplined, talented, and success-oriented team, dedicated to meeting our Soldiers’ needs around the clock and around the world. While we are working to rebuild and rebalance the greater Army acquisition workforce, it is the Acquisition Corps that is charged with providing steady leadership at all levels to meet the many challenges that come our way.

When I came to this job, I knew the Army was strong, but as people said we need to keep the Army strong, I wondered, “How, exactly, do we define that?” The word that comes to my mind is “decisive.” We need to further ensure that the dismounted Soldier is a decisive weapon in his or her own right—not just when driving an Abrams or flying an Apache, but when closing with the enemy in combat on the ground. As is often said, “We don’t want our Soldiers in a fair fight; we want to give them an unfair advantage.”

In the Air Force, the F-22 Raptor is a decisive weapon. It is a multimillion-dollar fighter plane that cannot be matched by any known or projected fighter aircraft. It has a sophisticated sensor suite that allows the pilot to track, identify, shoot, and kill air-to-air threats before being detected. It brings stealth to protect itself and other assets. In the Navy, the nuclear-powered attack submarine is a decisive weapon. I was invited to be a guest on the USS Phoenix during maneuvers against a surface fleet near the Bermuda trenches where, in simulation, an entire enemy surface fleet was sunk—without the submarine being seen or heard. In the Army, the M-1 tank is a decisive weapon. It is the backbone of the armored forces, and its lethality and survivability are legendary.

Because the Soldier is our most precious asset, it is my hope that together—as a team with key stakeholders, including industry—we can make sure the dismounted Soldier is a decisive weapon on the battlefield. For the kinds of conflict projected in the near, mid, and far term, the Soldier on the ground is going to play a dominant role, and, as today, we want to protect our Soldiers and bring them home safely. You, as a member of the Army AL&T team, need to make this happen. I will do my job, but I need you to do your jobs, too.

Our acquisition focus is to maintain high quality in the equipment we have now and the equipment on the way, for example the Ground Combat Vehicle, which is decisive for mounted Soldiers. While bringing

greater focus to the dismounted Soldier, we will also maintain a focus on end-items that are critical to the mounted Soldier: the Apache, the CH-47, the M-1 tank, MRAP, M-ATV, and so on. We must also focus on the joint arena, especially our sister services. I know firsthand the power that Air Force and Navy jets provide, and the reassurance that comes with having Marines serving at your side. In the joint arena, we must draw on the strength of each service to support one another in the fight.

It is up to our science and technology community to provide the hardware that gives our Soldiers the decisive edge, just like the F-22 and the nuclear attack submarine. That is why I have put together a team that is leading DOD in scientific expertise. I have hired Dr. Marilyn Freeman, a visionary, as our Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research and Technology; Dr. Scott Fish as the Army’s Chief Scientist, the first in roughly 25 years; and Ms. Heidi Shyu from Raytheon Co. as my Principal Deputy. I met Ms. Shyu when she chaired the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, on which I served for several years. I told an audience at the Army Science Conference recently, “Don’t worry about getting into details with us. We are ready, able, and highly motivated to get into the technologies and science associated with ground combat.”

So, it is important to protect the entire Soldier, to make acquisition responsive to technological evolution, and to maintain a world-class science and technology foundation. Without it, we cannot maintain the decisive edge. It is also important to have a horizontal view of the acquisition process. You cannot worry about engines or transmissions alone. You need to look across the disciplines, have electrical engineers talking to mechanical engineers and both talking to software engineers, and, in the end, engage systems engineers to put the program together.

Of course, we need program funding stability, and in this austere budget environment, we need to be concerned about resources. As Secretary of Defense Gates warned recently, “Given America’s difficult economic circumstances and parlous fiscal condition, military spending on things large and small can and should expect closer, harsher scrutiny. The gusher has been turned off, and will stay off for a good period of time.” We truly need to do more without more, and we are making progress in this area.

The AL&T community is doing great things, but we have to do even better to ensure that our Soldiers are protected across the full spectrum of conflict so they can come home safely. As we move forward with our plans, I want you to have moral courage, to be able to be that person who says no when everyone else around the table says yes. It is perfectly acceptable to say, based on your expertise, education, and experience, that X is acceptable and Y is not. Believe me, I will back you all the way, as I make clear in my interview with *Army AL&T Magazine*, which starts on Page 3.

I hope you enjoy the many excellent articles in this issue, including an interview with LTG Phillips on the responsibilities, successes, and challenges of the Army Acquisition Corps, and that you will always seek the next level of excellence in your work.

**Dr. Malcolm Ross O’Neill**  
Army Acquisition Executive