Lead the Way

Command Sergeant Major Arthur Laughlin
U.S. Army Engineer School

I recently went to a conference at Fort Monroe, Virginia, on the transition of TRADOC. The conference was a planning/brainstorming meeting. It dealt with everything in TRADOC from how the schools are organized to how the Army grows and trains leaders, what is taught during Initial Entry Training (IET), and what the school requirements will be for soldiers in their careers. There were a lot of ideas with no final decisions being made. Change, however, is not far off.

I consider this one of the most important times in our Army and our branch. Everything is on the verge of change, and not since the elimination of the horse has there been such dramatic turbulence in the structure of the Army. You may well have to serve in three types of force structure: the legacy force, the interim force, and the objective force. These are all going to be around at the same time until the transition is finished and, for many of you, that will take until the end of your career. Each structure may give you a different relationship with the maneuver force and the logistic chain and a different mix of soldiers and equipment. The training requirements will be different from unit to unit, and the OPTEMPO will vary.

The Chief of Staff of the Army tasked the EPMS XXI Task Force to conduct a comprehensive study of the Enlisted Personnel Management System and recommend changes to ensure continued readiness into the twenty-first century. The idea is to create better ways of managing the force so that soldiers are not stranded in their careers with no way to progress. The different force structures may require you to have different skills for the same MOS. The equipment will be different, the soldier mix will be different, and the support relationship will be different. Therefore, your skills will also have to be different. These changes mean that each of you has to be ready to change. These changes mean that you will have to learn new concepts and new ways of getting the mission accomplished. This will be an Army for people who are serious about soldiering and fearless in the face of the unknown. This will be an Army for engineers.

What will not change are the values that we live by and the requirement for leadership. The force will still be made of people expected to come together to accomplish the mission of defending the nation. Engineers will still be a vital part of that mission, and each one of you will be expected to carry more than your share of the load, just like engineers have always had to do when the Army was changing. I know that the easy thing to do is to say enough is enough and go do something else before the wave of change washes over you. But before you decide that enough is enough, remember that your leaders will stay and help mold this new force. Your leaders will embrace the change and make a difference.

This will be my last article to the Regiment and *Engineer*. I will be replaced by a very capable Command Sergeant Major–Robert R. Robinson II, who is coming from HHC 555th Combat Engineer Group, Fort Lewis, Washington. I know that you will provide the same outstanding support to him that I have experienced while serving as your Command Sergeant Major.

In leaving I would like to thank all of you, the soldiers and noncommissioned officers, for all you have done. By giving me your concerns and feedback, we have been able to continue doing something very important—making a difference.

NCOs, you must continue to lead and train our soldiers as we have done for so long. Do not be afraid of change; embrace and master it. You and your subordinates will be better for it. If called upon to assume a position of greater responsibility, do so gladly. Someone has faith in your abilities—be proud of that fact.

Take care; I will not soon forget the adventures so many of us have lived.