



Lead the Way



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Competence, Confidence, and Dedication to Duty

Command Sergeant Major Riddle, 9th Engineer Battalion, stepped out of his HMMWV in Kosovo and deliberately unfurled his battalion colors. As he did this, he simply stated, "I want everyone here to know we are going to make a difference!" His statement reflects the attitude of our Engineer Regiment—officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers alike. It's a true reflection of our regiment today. Engineers from across the world bring that same attitude to Kosovo every day. These engineers, who are part of Task Force Falcon, are transforming a one-time wheat field and grassy plain into a forward-deployed operating base.

Underlying CSM Riddle's statement is an understanding of the keys to engineer success: competence, confidence, and dedication to duty. Members of our regiment demonstrate their skills in these areas every day, and Task Force Falcon is an excellent example. This arena gives us an opportunity to show our fellow comrades-in-arms what engineers can do. Peacekeeping missions by our sappers and construction work by our combat heavy soldiers assist the local populace in building a new way of life and enable us to provide an environment from which to sustain Task Force Falcon at Camp Bondsteel. (See article, page 8.)

Competence starts with the willing desire of our soldiers to want to be the very best at what they do. This desire reflects directly on the NCOs who lead these soldiers every day—on the leaders who teach, train, and motivate them. Competence means that soldiers know what to do and how to do it. Competence means that NCOs know how to use those competent soldiers to enable units to complete the myriad of tasks required to get the mission accomplished.

Confidence comes to a soldier who is competent in all he or she does. A unit becomes confident when it performs to standard in all it is required to do. The regiment's confidence also comes from the demonstrated performance of units in training and operations. CSM Riddle unfurling his battalion's colors and making his statement was no boast. Instead, he expressed the confidence he has in the regiment and in those with him in Kosovo.

Dedication to duty is a trait of the American soldier. Our soldiers will accomplish what needs to be done in spite of

challenges. This trait is particularly evident in engineers. I recently saw the dedication shown by sappers of the 9th Engineer Battalion as they performed peacekeeping operations while working with the local population in Kosovo. I lived this sense of duty with the 94th Engineer Battalion; A Company, 864th Engineers; and the 568th Combat Support Equipment Company while construction efforts were ongoing in Camp Bondsteel. Our dedication to duty is obvious in this operation.

As the Engineer School's command sergeant major, I have the job to keep our regiment competent, confident, and dedicated. Now, more than ever before, we must be the masters of our trade. We must make time available to do self-study. We must refresh ourselves with knowledge so we can guarantee success the first time. I once heard a sergeant remark that it seemed as though we always have enough time to do it right the second time. Why not take the time to do it right the first time?

It is my sincere desire to continue serving the regiment whenever and wherever necessary. I will seek your expertise across the field to ensure that we in the schoolhouse are in touch with your needs. Together we will build on individual competence and unit confidence. Together we will be better able to support our Army into the future. As your concerns or needs arise, feel free to contact me at the following e-mail: Laughlia@wood.army.mil. Or, call commercial (573) 563-6192.

In closing, I remind all engineers of the importance of integrating risk assessments in all that we do. Too often a proper risk assessment is overlooked or forgotten. When that happens, our soldiers' safety is put in jeopardy. Perhaps we need to think about the pain that fellow soldiers go through when we forget a risk assessment. Every one of us in the Army must look out for one another. It is our business as NCOs and officers to be sure that we protect America's most precious resource—her sons and daughters. I challenge each of you to be continually vigilant in safeguarding one another. Don't allow a shortsighted moment to become a lingering bad memory. This is a lead-from-the-front responsibility only. There is no room for a second chance. Stay safe!

I am honored to serve the regiment as the Engineer School's command sergeant major. I accept the duties willingly because of my great confidence in our regiment and my desire to build upon the outstanding legacy of CSM Dils.