

As I Take Command

Lt. Gen. William G. Webster

Greetings to the Soldiers, NCOs and officers, men and women of the Third Army and USARCENT. I am proud and honored to be rejoining this command after my departure in 2003 as the Third Army's Deputy Commanding General. For those of you who have not met me yet, I'd like to introduce myself: I come from a family with a legacy of service: I am a soldier, the son of a soldier, the father of a soldier, and the uncle and father-in-law of soldiers. My wife Kimberly is the daughter, wife, and mother of a soldier. I have spent just under 40 years of my life in uniform and I am thankful for having had the privilege to do it, beginning my career as an Armor Officer and commanding at the company, battalion, brigade, division, and now the Army level.

Although a lot has changed in the world since my last posting to Third Army, many things have remained unchanged. The backbone of our Army, the NCO Corps, has maintained the highest standards of performance and behavior as we have moved our Operational Command Post (OCP) to Camp Arifjan, giving us a robust forward presence in the theater and enhancing our continuity of operations in Kuwait. Our soldiers and leaders have worked hard and our families and civilian team members have supported us all the way. As we continue the winning traditions of the command, sustaining our efforts in Southwest Asia and preparing for short-notice operations in the Area of Responsibility, we are going to focus on three critical areas: mission, people, and teamwork.

Mission

Having our forces in Kuwait allows us to do our several missions even more effectively: to build friendships and partnerships with allied nations through our Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) activities; to provide training, equipment, administrative and logistical support for US Central Command and the commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan to accomplish their missions; and to be prepared to deploy and fight anywhere, anytime, within our AOR.

Because we live in an era of persistent conflict, we cannot afford to remain static in our approach to operations, now and in the future. Future exercises such as LUCKY WARRIOR and BRIGHT STAR will be crucial to our continued training readiness. They will ensure that we are working effectively within our own command structure *and* within the joint and combined arena. These exercises are essential aspects of our preparation for future operations, and they are important for our Department of Defense and international partners, as well.

Soldiers and Families

Because of our backgrounds, Kimberly and I are well aware of the importance of family. In addition to maintaining our focus on preparing Soldiers for what they must do, it is equally important that we prepare families appropriately to support their Soldiers.

We must ensure that our families have what they need, when they need it, and we need to ensure that our strong team in the field is backed by a strong team at home. The idea of “taking care” of people does not simply refer to providing for their basic needs, though. “Taking care” of people is a leadership function: it means preparing them to complete their assigned tasks. JMETL training must be done frequently.

Teamwork

To be successful, we must act as a team of teams. Teams accomplish so much more than individuals or groups of individuals. From home to headquarters and from Atlanta to Kuwait, we will all work together to stay focused on our priority tasks, to prepare people to perform their assigned missions, and to remain united in our efforts. We are in the unique situation of preparing for war anywhere at any time while actually being at war right now. Our mission requires that we maintain a common focus and shared goals, so please allow me to cover our main lines of effort for the coming years: we must continue to train for combat and prepare our Soldiers, we must take the lead in the US’s responsible drawdown from Iraq, we must support the current US Central Command’s efforts in Southwest Asia, we must continuously re-set the Army in support of Department of the Army requirements, and we must continue to train and retain the best Soldiers in the world.

Beyond these tasks, we must also complete the BRAC-mandated move to Shaw Air Force Base by mid-2011. Moving our headquarters and our families to South Carolina is a point at which the Soldier and Family lines of effort will converge: it will affect *everyone* within the command and family team. We are going to put extra effort into planning and executing the BRAC move to ensure that it goes smoothly and has the least possible impact on our families.

This is a rather daunting set of missions, but working as a team we can accomplish all of them, and accomplish them *well*. I have always viewed myself as an “inclusive leader,” and I do not believe that anyone, at any rank or grade, has cornered the market on good ideas. I encourage everyone on this team to take an active role in meeting our challenges today, tomorrow, and into the future. We are going to assess all issues, consider all approaches, and act together to accomplish our missions. Again, I would like to restate my pride in being a member of this command. It is great to be back in Third Army again, and I look forward to the exciting and challenging opportunities that await us in coming years. Patton’s Own!