



CECOM DOTS and DASHES

- 10 Hail & Farewell
- 11 Wellness
- 14 Why I Serve
- 16 Community Salutes

APG SHARP Summit focuses on readiness and accountability

By Mary B. Grimes, CECOM Public Affairs Office

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Readiness and accountability set the tone for the third annual Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Summit held May 10, 2016 in Mallette Auditorium on Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), Maryland.

With the auditorium filled near capacity, Non-commissioned officers, Department of Defense (DoD) Civilians, Senior Army Officers, as well as members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) from locations across DoD

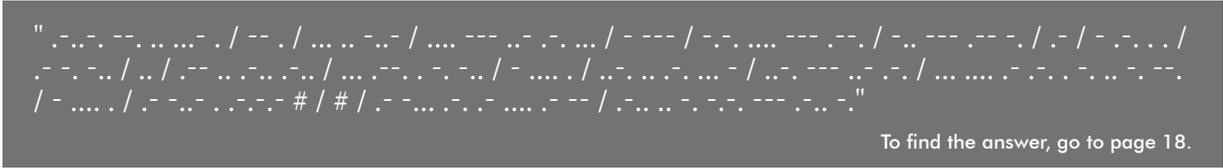
joined in day-long panel discussions aimed at promoting greater awareness, and gaining fresher insights into a myriad of SHARP-related topics and trends. The discussions were designed to support the program’s theme for this year, “Not In My Army – From Buy-In to Ownership.”

U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) Commanding General and APG Senior Installation Commander, Maj. Gen. Bruce T. Crawford welcomed attendees, as well as SHARP supporters and organizers, and extended his sincere appreciation to keynote speaker Lt. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, Jr., 59th Superintendent, U.S. Military Academy West Point for his participation in this high-profile SHARP initiative.

The early morning summit began with an introductory video consisting of a variety of SHARP-driven events and activities conducted over the past year. For many of those who were unable to attend the recently held APG

cover story continued on next page →

Can you decode what’s in this box?



To find the answer, go to page 18.



SHARP Poetry Slam, the summit allowed them an opportunity to hear several of the actual poets, present their artistic creations. Ranging from profound to sobering, each presentation seemed to represent the foundation upon which the summit could continue to build. It was clear that the APG SHARP Summit successfully fostered SHARP program ownership at every leadership level by providing the necessary tools and information.

In his opening remarks, Maj. Gen. Crawford said, "When I look across the footprint, and look at who's here today, I think we've got everybody well represented. So, as we think about the subject, and the overall importance of this subject, it's not about what only makes this community special, but the fact that you're here today, I believe in my heart of hearts, this is what makes our nation great."

Maj. Gen. Crawford went on to say that a lot of hard work and energy had gone into this SHARP effort, and given all that had gone into this particular subject, leadership chose to move from 'Buy-in' to 'Ownership'. "A lot of great work has gone into readying our formations, and readying our workforce, and our Army to include our civilian employees. I ask you to think, and put yourself beyond what we talk about here today, and I want you to think about tomorrow. Where do we go from here? The way I described moving from 'Buy-in' to 'Ownership', and some of you have heard me say this, but I think it is appropriate at this time, is 'buy-in' means I like what you're doing, but 'ownership', and what's going to be required to get us beyond where we are today, to really get at the root cause, for some of the challenges, means I'm willing to help you. That's where I believe we need to go. And that's when we ultimately win."

Saying that he was honored to be here, Lt. Gen. Caslen added, "I'm very passionate about the elimination of sexual harassment and sexual assault in our formations. I'm passionate about it at the United States Military Academy, and I'm passionate about leadership because that's what leaders do, and to see this assembled group, to have a summit like this, and to see so many leaders and so many other people that are here today, I give you a lot of credit and I'm very proud to be a part of it.

Lt. Gen. Caslen continued his presentation -- touching on the matter of unintended consequences and how they are something that every leader has to understand. He said, "Our actions and our words, regardless of what you think they mean, have consequences. The importance about leaders is that leaders build teams. Leaders edify. They build people up. Leaders unite. They take diverse elements and bring them together as one."

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Wrapping up his remarks, Lt. Gen. Caslen added, "My job is to build people up and to be inclusive. Leaders are in the business of being inclusive, and making everybody on that team, feel that they are a valued member of the team. Making everybody feel that they are respected. Making everybody feel that they can contribute, and making everybody feel that they are secure both emotionally and physically, and that's what leaders do. It is the leadership and command climate that we as leaders present in our organizations, so that there is not sexist behavior, there is not favoritism of one over another. Everybody in our group is treated properly and with respect, and that's what leaders do."

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While the summit clearly represented the APG leadership's commitment to positive and unwavering support of SHARP sensitivities and demands, it also drove home the point that they recognize there remains much work to be done. This awareness was perfectly demonstrated by the following group of survivors and panelists;

Panel 1 – (Innovation/Issues/Trends) -- Sgt. Maj. Stephen Bowens, HQDA SHARP Office; Ms. Samantha Ross, U.S. Military Academy; Chief Peter Anders, Millersville University Police Department; and Dr. Jessica Gallus, HQDA SHARP Office.

Panel 2 – (Civilian Lines of Effort) – Ms. Laura Crawford, HQDA SHARP Office; Mr. Dexter Brooks, Equal Opportunity Employment Commission; Lt. Col. Kyson Johnson, HQDA OTJAG; and Ms. Bette Stebbins-Inch, OSD SAPRO.

Panel 3 – (Leadership Focus) – Ms. Lauren Ishmael, JPEO-CBD; Col. James Davis, APG Garrison; Maj. Rheanna Felton, OSJA, JFHQ-NCR/MDW; and CSM Matthew McCoy, CECOM.

Survivors Telling Their Story – Col. Jack Usrey, Ms. Artenze Hall, and Ms. Melissa Myers.

Their topics addressed more in depth, the way ahead and the challenges confronting SHARP in today's environment. It is an environment that speaks to the continuous need for support of the Army's readiness and accountability efforts. Nowhere was this more evident than in the words of those survivors who used the SHARP Summit as an opportunity to share their personal stories and experiences with sexual assault and harassment. Their courage to speak out was met with tremendous audience admiration and applause.

Although this year's APG SHARP Summit draws to a close, the challenge to remain focused on readiness and accountability has no end. Said Maj. Gen. Crawford, "There is no point where we can get to where we can say, this is no longer a problem. So, I ask you to think beyond today, and think about what happens about 1700hrs this afternoon, when the summit is done. I want you to leave here with the mindset that there are 365 summits. In order for us to get ourselves to where we need to be—accountable to the nation—moving from 'buy-in' to 'ownership', this can't be treated as a one off event, and so that's my message to you all today."

By all accounts it was clear, the APG SHARP Summit successfully fostered ownership at every leadership level by providing the necessary tools and information, for everyone to be an effective bystander and intervene when confronted with inappropriate behavior.



Ms. Bette Stebbins-Inch from the Office of the Secretary of Defense Sexual Assault and Prevention Office, speaks during the Workforce Focus panel discussion at the 2016 APG SHARP Summit, held May 10, 2016, at the Mallette Auditorium. (U.S. Army Photo)



Communications-Electronics Command Commanding General and APG Senior Installation Commander, Maj. Gen. Bruce Crawford, addresses the audience to wrap up the 2016 APG SHARP Summit, held May 10, 2016, at the Mallette Auditorium. (U.S. Army Photo)



US Military Academy, West Point, Superintendent, Lt. Gen. Robert Caslen Jr. arrives at Mallette Auditorium on Aberdeen Proving Ground for the 2016 APG SHARP Summit. Greeting him is Shariese Demby, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, as Communications-Electronics Command Commanding General and APG Senior Installation Commander, Maj. Gen. Bruce Crawford, looks on. (U.S. Army Photo)

Message from THE COMMANDER



Maj. Gen. Bruce T. Crawford

CECOM Readiness Azimuth Check

To the CECOM Team,

Readiness of the Force is our Army's number one priority. As our Army's premier provider of C4ISR Readiness, it is key that we remain synchronized and on azimuth in training and developing resiliency in our workforce.

As we approach Memorial Day and the summer months, I am directing a "tactical halt" with the intent of focusing on four key areas of importance to enhance our command's overall readiness posture at both the organizational and individual levels. To accomplish this, I have directed the execution of a "CECOM Readiness Azimuth Check" on 26 May 2016.

This tactical halt (stand-down) event will provide an opportunity for CECOM to improve its posture in four specific areas:

- a.** Safety and Occupational Health initiatives
- b.** Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information (PII)
- c.** Preventing Unauthorized Disclosure of Classified Information (UDCI)
- d.** Emergency Preparedness.

As part of the stand-down, CECOM employees at all levels and locations will participate in specified activities and complete required training outlined in CECOM Operations Order 16-12 (dated 6 May 2016). CECOM leaders at all levels are encouraged to leverage this opportunity to shape this training and provide real world examples so that it is most applicable to their specific work environments.

My point of contact for this action is Steven Hart, steven.c.hart.civ@mail.mil, 443-395-3780.

**Trusted Professionals,
Professionals Always!**

Respectfully,

**Bruce T. Crawford
Major General, USA
Commanding**

ARAT-PO Hosts Electronic Warfare Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division

Story by Mary B. Grimes, CECOM Public Affairs



Soldiers listen attentively as Mr. Will Simmons, Chief, ARAT Threat Analysis Activity, explains the ARAT mission. (U.S. Army Photo)

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. --The Army Reprogramming Analysis Team - Program Office (ARAT-PO), a key component of the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM), Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), Md., hosted 11 visiting 82nd Airborne Division Electronic Warfare (EW) Soldiers, May 2, 2016, highlighting a full day of discussions about the ARAT-PO and ground EW system demonstrations.

According to Mr. Jason M. Juliano, the ARAT Program Officer, the visit was designed to provide an in-depth understanding of ARAT-PO ground EW capabilities, as well as the system sustainment that the ARAT-PO provides to globally deployed Soldiers. More important, the day-long event helped to amplify the importance of a collaborative, mission-focused relationship between the ARAT-PO and the Soldiers it supports.

The visit to the ARAT-PO included briefings and demonstrations of capabilities that included the ARAT Warfighter Survivability Software Support Portal (AWSSSP), Spectral Analysis test capability, Automated Test Equipment (ATE), Automated Test Set (ATS), Counter Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Device Electronic Warfare (CREW) system performance improvements, and system event logs. ARAT-PO leadership and engineers answered various Soldier questions about system performance, especially in the Operational Environments in which they may deploy.

Summing up the importance of the discussions and demonstrations, Mr. Juliano stated, "Soldiers rely on Ground EW systems to protect them from Radio-Controlled Improvised Explosive Devices (RCIED). By collaborating with one another, the ARAT-PO will be better suited to provide immediate and high-fidelity software products to ensure ground EW systems protect against the latest enemy threats." He also said the visit by the members of the 82nd Airborne Division was the second of its kind since March of this year, concluding, "These visits have been unique as the ARAT doesn't often have groups of Soldiers, who directly use our products, come to our labs. In the past, we have gone to various Army Aviation units to educate their Soldiers and provide technical assistance, but I believe this and the previous visit by 82nd Airborne Soldiers are the first interactions of this kind for ground EW systems."

The Army Reprogramming Analysis Team (ARAT) is a rapid reprogramming infrastructure that develops, delivers, and sustains software for Electronic Warfare (EW) systems and other electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) capabilities to support commanders across the full range of military operations. Under the direction of AR 525-15, the ARAT provides software sustainment of Aviation Survivability Equipment and Counter Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Device Electronic Warfare (CREW) systems.

Tobyhanna develops grassroots suggestion program

By Ms. Jacqueline Boucher (CECOM)

TOBYHANNA ARMY DEPOT, Pa. -- Fed up with fumbling loose-fitting memory cards, Joseph Twardowski started using a small piece of tape to hold the micro-size components in place while he worked. The simple fix to a repetitive problem resulted in sustainable process improvement and better quality of life for his coworkers.

The electronics mechanic said submitting his ideas for evaluation is easier and faster now that Tobyhanna Army Depot has revamped its Army Suggestion Program (ASP).

"Any time I have an idea, I use the program," Twardowski said, noting that two of his ideas have been adopted and two are pending. "I've submitted multiple suggestions during my career hoping to improve morale or help the depot."

Process improvement officials here dusted off the dormant Army program to establish an in-house option for employees interested in developing better ways of doing business. It was mandated that personnel and budgetary resources required to correct programmatic deficiencies should be managed at the local level.

Individual organizations were authorized to develop grassroots programs in light of the service-wide suspension, according to Danielle Weinschenk, a management assistant in the Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) Directorate. Her goal was to revive the depot's program during a 120-day assignment as its administrator. Amanda Spock, CPI management analyst, assumed the responsibilities of ASP administrator a few weeks ago.

During its glory days, Tobyhanna's ASP boasted hundreds of suggestions per year. The process was convoluted and time consuming. Some suggestions took years to resolve.

"We've made some dramatic changes to expedite the processing of suggestions," Weinschenk said. "The biggest improvement is communication between the individual who submitted the idea and the team tasked with evaluating the suggestion."

Participants meet frequently to share ideas, ask questions and clarify points. Weinschenk emphasized that it's important for people to fully flesh out their ideas prior to submitting them.

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"Our focus will be on more tangible suggestions that save money or make the depot more competitive," she said, adding that submissions that don't meet the criteria will be routed to the appropriate organization for action. "For instance Installation Services would be better equipped to deal with someone's idea to install pocket doors around the depot."

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Electronics Mechanic Shannon Kuhn said it's rewarding knowing his idea for removing a coating from the Simple Key Loader shaved time off the repair and reclamation process.

He works in the C4ISR Directorate's C4 Division. Kuhn recommends employees act on their ideas by doing their homework and submitting the proper paperwork.

"I'm trying to eliminate a step in a process," said Christopher Valenza, sheet metal mechanic in the Systems Integration and Support Directorate, while waiting to hear if another of his suggestions has been adopted. "My documentation illustrates how a simple cleaning process can be accomplished with fewer shops and employees."

Monetary awards are based on the value of the suggestion.

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"If you have an idea, submit it. Someone else with the same idea could beat you to the punch," Twardowski said. "Do the research and take a chance."

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Tobyhanna Army Depot is a recognized leader in providing world-class logistics support for command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems across the Department of Defense. Tobyhanna's Corporate Philosophy, dedicated work force and electronics expertise ensure the depot is the Joint C4ISR provider of choice for all branches of the Armed Forces and industry partners.

Tobyhanna's unparalleled capabilities include full-spectrum logistics support for sustainment, overhaul and repair, fabrication and manufacturing, engineering design and development, systems integration, post production software support, technology insertion, modification, foreign military sales and global field support to our Joint Warfighters.

About 3,100 personnel are employed at Tobyhanna, which is located in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. Tobyhanna Army Depot is part of the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command. Headquartered at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, the command's mission is to research, develop, acquire, field and sustain communications, command, control computer, intelligence, electronic warfare and sensors capabilities for the Armed Forces.



Process improvement officials at Tobyhanna Army Depot used a former Army program to establish an in-house option for employees interested in developing better ways of doing business. (U.S. Army Photo)

CECOM 2016 Readiness “Azimuth Check”

Is the CECOM Team Safe? Is Our Data Secure?
Are We Prepared for An Emergency? ARE WE READY?

DATE:

May 26, 2016



TOPICS:

Safety and Occupational
Health
Safeguarding PII
Preventing UDCI
Emergency Preparedness

To ensure CECOM Team READINESS by providing guidance for CECOM Soldiers, Civilians, and Contractors regarding the requirements to protect our personnel, property, and mission data.

For more information contact:

Cynthia Massengale, 443-395-3569

Neil Gilcrest, 443-861-6497

Howard High, 443-861-6969

Alice Surette, 443-861-6634

Electrical Shock Kills!



We rely on electrical power to keep our workplaces and our homes operating day and night. Electricity provides heat, light and energy to do many kinds of work. As useful as electricity is, we must never forget it is also dangerous. Electrical shock kills. Electricity can also cause fires and explosions.

Here are some reminders about electrical safety at work and at home:

- Keep electricity and moisture away from each other. Never touch electrical equipment with wet hands or when standing on a damp surface. Do not work around electricity when your tools or clothing are wet.
- Report any indications of electrical malfunction. Watch for these signs: flickering lights, radio or television interference when another electrical device is in operation, buzzing sounds in electrical panels, switches or outlets hot to the touch, damaged or worn insulation, loose switches and electrical equipment which works sometimes and doesn't work the next time.
- Never attempt electrical repairs unless you are qualified and authorized to do so. Do not use electrical equipment altered with makeshift repairs.
- Do not alter plugs by removing the third prong so it can fit into a two-prong outlet. This defeats the safety feature of a ground wire.
- Only use extension cords temporarily. Have wiring upgraded to accommodate new equipment.
- Use a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) whenever you use electrical tools and appliances around moisture or outdoors. These devices can detect leakage of electricity from a circuit before you are harmed by electrical shock.
- Wear the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when working around electrical hazards. This may include leather gloves covered by rubber gloves, non-conductive footwear, arc flash protective gear, and safety eyewear. Do not wear metal jewelry which can accidentally contact the electrical circuit, causing shock.

- Heed all warning signs about electrical hazards. Stay away from high voltage installations and other posted areas.
- Beware of overhead electrical hazards. Watch for power lines and ceiling fixtures when moving items such as ladders or pipes, or operating equipment such as cranes or lifting devices.
- Use your electrical safety sense off the job too. Inspect your home for possible electrical hazards, including overloaded circuits and defective electrical equipment. Have a qualified electrician repair or improve wiring as necessary. Have GFCIs installed in bathrooms, basements, kitchens, and areas outdoors where you use electrical equipment.

Obtain training in what to do in case of an accident involving electricity:

- Before you attempt to rescue a victim of electric shock, make sure you are not putting yourself in similar danger. Do not touch the person and do not use a tool to reach the person unless you are sure the power has been disconnected. Check for a heartbeat and if necessary start CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) if you are trained to do so. Get medical help immediately.
- If fire occurs in energized electrical equipment, use only a "C" fire extinguisher, or a combination "ABC" or "BC" extinguisher. Never put water on an electrical fire; the result can be a deadly shock.

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Caution must be used around all electrical circuits and equipment. Never underestimate the potential for electrical shock.

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HAIL & Farewell

After years of dedicated federal service, some of our beloved CECOM family members are heading into the wonderful world of retirement. It is sad to see them go, but let us all wish the following employees a happy and healthy retirement!

LTC Matthew C. Lorenz
ISEC, Ft Huachuca, AZ
31 July 2016

Eric V. Hinson
LRC, Ft. Belvoir, VA
30 April 2016

Barbara I. Colon-Mateo
ISEC, Ft. Huachuca, AZ
30 April 2016

Robert V. Price
ISEC, Ft. Detrick, MD
27 May 2016

Paul D. Bedard
SEC, Ft. Lee, VA
31 May 2016

Terry Price Grissett
LRC, Huntsville, AL
31 May 2016

Walter L. Sims
ISEC, Ft. Huachuca, AZ
31 May 2016

The CECOM family would like to welcome our new Military service members that have come on board. Let us greet them with open arms and warm smiles!

SFC Saldana, Ivan – LRC- CSLA
CW4 Keys, Donnell – LRC- CSLA
CPT Terrell, Eric – CTSE
CH (COL) Mueller, Peter – HQ
MAJ Becker, Richard – HQ

Awards ★★

Civilian Awards

Superior Civilian Service Award:

Laurence Langan, LRC, APG, MD
Vicki Papia, SEC, APG, MD

Commander's Award for Civilian Service:

Phillip Greer, G3, APG, MD
Neal Jarrett, G3, APG, MD
Kathryn Raney, G3, APG, MD

Achievement Award for Civilian Service:

Jelisa Scotton, LRC, APG, MD



Wellness

Men's Health Informational Session:

02 JUNE 2016 (1130-1230) Myer Auditorium, Building 6000, VTC available. The C4ISR Wellness Committee invites you to attend our Men's Health Informational Session where Dr. Sean P. VanZijl from Chesapeake Urology will provide an anatomy overview of the prostate, as well as, define signs, symptoms, and treatment options for an enlarged prostate (BPH), Low Testosterone (Low T), and Erectile Dysfunction (ED).



Family Fun, Fitness, and Nutrition Informational Session:

09 JUNE 2016 (1130-1230) Myer Auditorium, Building 6000, VTC available. The C4ISR Wellness Committee invites you to attend our Family Fun, Fitness and Nutrition Informational Session. This session will discuss how to make eating healthy and exercising fun for the whole family. You will learn tips on how to create healthy meals and fun activities the whole family can participate in, which will allow you to spend quality time together, as well as get or stay fit.



Healthy Eating for the Summer Informational Session:

21 JUNE 2016 (1130-1230) ACC Training Room, Building 6001, Floor 2, Room 224 (Enter Room 120), VTC available. The C4ISR Wellness Committee invites you to attend our Healthy Eating for the Summer Informational Session. Summer brings an abundance of fresh, delicious, and healthy food choices. In this session, you will learn the secret health benefits of some of summer's fruits and vegetables.



OPEN TO CIVILIANS, CONTRACTORS, AND MILITARY

NON CAC CARD HOLDERS Must Return a Visitors' Form to the G1 POC by 16 JUNE 2016

ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

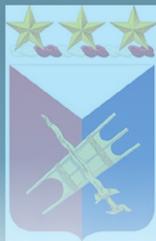
26 May 2016

**APG Recreation Center
1130-1300**

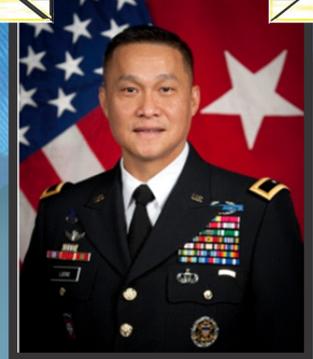
**WALK TOGETHER
EMBRACE DIFFERENCES
BUILD LEGACIES**

**Food Sampling,
Educational
Performances,
Exhibits**

Guest Speaker



1st Filipino Battalion



BG Viet Luong

Director, Joint and Integration
Office of the U.S. Chief of Staff,
G-8

**POCs: SFC Twana Burrow, ATEC-443-861-9251
SFC April Marinakes, 20th CBRNE CMD-410-436-0321
MSG Jay Shearer, USAPHC-410-436-0291
Dominique Davis, CHPC/PHC, 410-278-1266
Burena Smith, RDECOM, 410-306-2903
Wing Fong, CERDEC, SED, 443-395-5218
Yu Xin, CECOM, SEC, 443-861-8274**

Hosted by:



NOTE: For disability related accommodations please call (443) 861-4366

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Quiz

To find out how much you know, take the quiz below then check the Answer Key to see how well you did.

- 1. What is the theme for the 2016 Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month?**
 - a. "Strive to Improve. Seek to Excel."
 - b. "Walk Together, Embrace Differences, Build Legacies"
 - c. "Carving out a better tomorrow today"
 - d. None of the above
- 2. How many different Pacific Island Languages are spoken as a second language in the American household?**
 - a. 22
 - b. 17
 - c. 39
 - d. 41
- 3. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he was in 2009 sworn in as the nation's Secretary of Veteran's Affairs.**
 - a. Park, Hui-Shin
 - b. Mansfield Luc Tong
 - c. Roger N. Stewart
 - d. Eric K. Shinseki
- 4. Which U.S. President designated May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month?**
 - a. Calvin Coolidge
 - b. Jimmy Carter
 - c. George H. W. Bush
 - d. Ronald Reagan
- 5. Each year, the National Cherry Blossom Festival commemorates the 1912 gift of 3,000 cherry trees from what country?**
 - a. Thailand
 - b. South Korea
 - c. New Zealand
 - d. Japan
- 6. Asian/Pacific American women first entered military service during...**
 - a. World War I
 - b. World War II
 - c. The Vietnam Conflict
 - d. The Korean War
- 7. For Hawaiians, aloha is more than a greeting. Aloha literally means to...**
 - a. "Enjoy each day to the fullest."
 - b. "Share the breath of life."
 - c. "Belong to each other in a common humanity."
 - d. B and C
- 8. In 1898, this country officially became a U.S. colony when the U.S. defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War:**
 - a. Philippines
 - b. Guam
 - c. Thailand
 - d. None of the above
- 9. Who was sworn in as the 12th Secretary of Energy on January 21, 2009?**
 - a. The Honorable Marshall Kim
 - b. Dr. Steven Chu
 - c. Dr. Harriett E. Wong
 - d. The Honorable Emanuel Lee
- 10. The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act ...**
 - a. Gave Asian-Americans the right to vote.
 - b. Provided jobs to children of prominent government leaders
 - c. Repealed laws that excluded Asians from the U.S., and from becoming American citizens.
 - d. Eliminated the need for visas for Asians entering the U.S. from friendly countries.

Answer Key: 1 (B), 2(A), 3(D), 4(C), 5(D), 6(B), 7(D), 8(A), 9(B), 10(C)

Why I Serve

Story by Gregory Mahall, CECOM Public Affairs

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – You've likely been to the events. APG's "Why We Serve," version 2015 or version 2016. You've seen the Facebook posts. Individuals explaining why they serve in the federal government. Maybe you've asked yourself the same question. Multiple times with maybe multiple different answers.

Service makes an appropriate tie here given that it's Armed Forces Week on APG. Officially, the event is a day, established in 1949, combining the various individual service-oriented days into one. Only the Marine Corps still has its own "day" but supports the national day just the same. The day now stretches over a week in many places in order to accommodate conflicts associated with training schedules unique to those the day intends to honor for the jobs they perform in keeping the country safe.

Maria Layton, Chief of the Human Resource Development branch of the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command G-1, knows exactly why she serves. Simply put, she serves the soldier. A nice, short, sound bite kind of answer. But the road to that sound bite is a complex journey, passing through normal; living through fire, brimstone and chaos; facing fear and confusion; seeing light through the haze and eventually realizing where her service should be rendered.

Normal. "I was living in central New Jersey back then," Layton said. "I was commuting to Manhattan. I had been a teacher and also had a background in finance so that when my employer went through a reorganization, my skills got combined so that I ended up working down on Wall Street teaching strategies and methods for handling securities. Each morning I made the drive from home to the ferry at Belford, New Jersey, and took the ferry across the Lower Bay, under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, through the Upper Bay, past the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and to dock at Manhattan. Then the short walk to the office."

September 11, 2001.

Fire, brimstone and chaos. Layton had debarked the arriving ferry shortly after the first plane hit the World Trade Center that fateful morning. "I didn't know --- no one knew – what exactly was happening," Layton said. "Our offices were a short three or four blocks from what was later called 'Ground Zero.' As we got off the ferry, we all noticed the growing number of sirens and police calls. We thought it was a big fire. Then we were surrounded by millions and millions of pieces of paper floating down from the sky. And they were burned around the edges. I picked one up and saw that the watermark was from an office in the World Trade Center.

"I didn't comprehend – my mind didn't comprehend – what was going on just yet. Just another day in the big city. I was focused on my morning task – I had to teach a class at 10 that morning in the North Tower.

"That plane hits an hour later than it did and we are not having this conversation today."

Layton said she arrived at the office and began getting the first foggy reports of the war zone lower Manhattan had become. "The first explanations were something about a commuter plane striking the North Tower," she said. "We were all kind of shuttered in the office. No one knew what was really going on. So I walked outside to the corner and looked up and saw the black smoke coming out of the first tower. Remember, we were told it was a commuter plane at this point. So I went back to the office and we were watching TV and then the second plane hit. I FELT it.

"At this point, folks were told to start evacuating. People were coming into our office. Remember, (Mayor) Giuliani had moved to shut the island down. At this same time, we were expecting a person for an employment interview. This woman came in, who I had never met and was hysterical. She had come up off the subway and walked right into people jumping from the towers.

"So people are coming into our building ---- there are no working cellphones, there is no internet, there is nothing," Layton continued. "And my family knows I am teaching a class in the World Trade Center that day. I couldn't tell them anything."

With people congregating and confined to the office location, Layton decides to go to the local Panera to get some sort of food for the folks confined within.

“Again, the magnitude of the situation was somewhat lost on me. I placed the order and I’m waiting for the food when I look outside,” Layton said. “And people are starting to run. I went outside and asked someone ‘why? Why are we running?’ And the person said ‘I don’t know, the cops are just screaming for everyone to run.’ That was exactly when the first tower started to fall. But I didn’t know that. But I decided I’d better run too.”

Layton ran back the short distance that now seemed like miles. Before reaching the office, she had to cross a small cross street between blocks. “At the cross street, where you should look both ways, right, I looked up. The debris cloud from the collapsing building was about 30 feet away and closing. Now I really ran. I didn’t know what it was but it was terrifying. I made our building and the door man was waiting for me. He grabbed me and pulled me in. No sooner did the door close when the debris cloud went ‘swoosh’ and the whole street was engulfed in it.” It was only then that the doorman informed her the first building had fallen.

Eventually the second tower suffered the same fate. The day ended, not quite of course as it began, back on the ferries now shuttling people out of the scarred island of Manhattan.

“We are back on the ferry now,” Layton said. “The ferries are packed, people on them don’t even know where the ferries are going. They didn’t care. They just wanted to get off Manhattan. When we got off at Belford, the Fort Monmouth fire trucks were there. And we were pretty dirty, walking through the stuff we had been walking through. The Monmouth guys were there to give us water, hose us off. And that’s the one point I remembered from that particular moment of the day – the Army from Fort Monmouth was there.”

Fear and confusion. Layton did not return to work in Manhattan for the next two weeks. Many know the stories of the herculean efforts that surrounded ‘Ground Zero’ recovery and restoration for the days, weeks and months in the aftermath. “Everyone was very uncomfortable,” Layton said. “This (9/11) had happened unknowingly and we were all very frightened. Would it, could it happen again? The terror, and the threat of more terror was real.”

Seeing the light. What gave Layton and others the peace of mind to persevere and survive the situation? “The Soldiers. They were there,” Layton said. “Always and everywhere. They were on the docks. They were on the ferries. They were outside my building. Everywhere. The National Guard was there. And they were there for a long, long, long time. They helped clean up ‘Ground Zero.’ They helped us return to a sense of normal.”

Why I Serve. After about another year on Manhattan, Layton realized she didn’t want to be there anymore. She took her fond observations of the Army and its conduct in the 9/11 crisis and decided with Forts Monmouth and Dix within her central Jersey locale, she wanted to work for the Army. “I realized the Army made me feel safe,” Layton said.

After two long years, Layton was hired at Fort Monmouth, eventually making the BRAC move to APG. She admits to reflecting back on that decision point in her life, the moment she figured out who she was going to serve and why. She admits to flashbacks even today on her experience at ‘Ground Zero’ on that fateful day in 2001.

“I love what I do. I feel honored and privileged to do what I do and serve who I serve,” expressed Layton. “While the missions we do here at APG are all tied back to the Soldier, all the missions the Soldiers do today are all tied back to 9/11 in one way or another. And everyone who works here and even though they don’t directly deal with the Soldier, works for that Soldier. I’d like to think I am more in sync with that for having been directly protected by a Soldier.”



“I’m giving back, absolutely. I think about the Soldier every day. When I have a bad day, I think about the Soldier on the front lines, doing what they are doing for us, what they put on the line for us every day. My day is not so bad, in that context.”



Community Salutes

Scenes from the 2016 Aberdeen Proving Ground "Community Salutes" event, highlighted by Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) Commanding General and Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) Senior Commander, Maj. Gen. Bruce T. Crawford, administering the oath of enlistment for more than 50 Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force recruits from the northern Maryland area; May 17, 2016, in the APG-North Recreation Center. (Photos by Phil Molter, CECOM Public Affairs)





