

## **Missile Ranger, Nov. 8, 2002 -- Commander addresses work force**

By Donna Braun, Editor

Range Commander Brig. Gen. William Engel addressed concerns about a proposal that would reduce the Army's workforce by more than 200,000 jobs, and he praised the WSMR workforce for its accomplishments during two Commander's Calls on Wednesday at the Post Theater.

At his 10 a.m. Commander's Call session, Engel said little was known about the force reduction proposal outside of what had been reported in the media since Oct. 4 but characterized it as a challenge the workforce must face.

According to newspaper accounts published over the weekend, Secretary of the Army Thomas White wants to study privatizing 154,910 civilian and 58,727 military jobs in areas such as financial, legal, communications and maintenance. The reports said commanders will provide input on the process by Dec. 20, and implementation could begin as early as March 2003.

Engel said that as of that morning, no Army guidance of the matter had filtered down the chain of command, but that he had made phone calls and sent e-mails to try to determine what effect the proposal would have on WSMR.

At his 1 p.m. Commander's Call session, Engel said that he had received an e-mail reply during the break between sessions, but that the information was sent in a number of e-mail attachments that amounted to several inches of paperwork when it was printed. He said he did not have enough time to read through the guidance prior to the afternoon Commander's Call to be able to judge what the impact would be on WSMR, but he did say it appeared to address "15 functional areas."

Engel said upon receiving the information, he immediately assembled a task force to address the guidance and work on minimizing any effects it might have on range operations. Members of the task force are Workforce Operations Director Liz Ybarra, Resource Management Directorate Chief Herb Carter, Deputy Garrison Commander Ron Hickok and White Sands Test Center Deputy Director Vickie Reynolds, Engel said. Engel pledged his full support in retaining Army civilian and military positions at WSMR and promised to keep the workforce informed on developments about the proposed privatization. "We are going to work this issue the best we know how to protect the integrity of this workforce," Engel said. "That's my pledge to you."

While characterizing the proposal as bad news, he said it is much too early to judge its true impact. He referred to media reports that indicated some of the proposed actions would require Congressional approval to implement.

"In situations like this, some days you get good news, some days you get bad news and some days you just aren't sure what the news means," Engel said. "At this point, I would suggest what I call 'tactical patience' on the part of the workforce.

"I come to work each day and am amazed at what this workforce accomplishes, whether it be a PAC-3 mission or an MRW function. It is your hard work that gets the job done, and I will work just as hard to support you," Engel said.

Prior to discussing the privatization proposal, Engel reviewed topics discussed at the previous Commander's Call in March, reviewed range accomplishments from the past year and outlined future goals.

A major change to the range during the past year has been the arrival of Texas National Guard personnel to provide additional security for the installation.

“That has been a big boon to us,” Engel said. “They are key to our ability to perform our mission. They allow me to sleep at night, and that is the highest compliment I as a commander can pay them.”

He also had words of praise for the Commissary Staff. He said that when he arrived at White Sands a little more than a year ago, the Defense Commissary Agency wanted to scale back the store’s operations to 40 hours a week. He said through negotiations, DeCA agreed to standardize the store’s hours.

“They are open in excess of 54 hours a week. That has required a great individual effort on the part of the Commissary Staff, and they are to be commended for that,” Engel said. Engel also said that he has asked for a special exemption that would give all members of the workforce shopping privileges at the WSMR Commissary.

“I have gone in for a special exemption twice, but both times it was denied. I am going to try again,” Engel said.

He spoke of the PAC-3 operational tests conducted here in February and March that involved multiple missiles and targets operating simultaneously. “They were the most complicated military operations I have ever seen. They are incredibly complex and technical in nature, and I got the greatest appreciation of what you do on a day-in and day-out basis by watching them. It was phenomenal. You folks are doing miraculous work. My hat’s off to everyone involved with that,” Engel said.

Engel said the most significant accomplishment during the past year was the support the range provided to the Japanese Chu-SAM program.

“That was a tremendous success for White Sands Missile Range. I asked many of you to work every Saturday for the past six months and many Sundays also. All that hard work has paid off,” Engel said.

He explained that revenues from the Chu-SAM support mission in fiscal year 2002 exceeded predictions. Because of that, Engel said, expenses for fiscal year 2003 that must be paid so that the range can function have been covered.

On another budget matter, he said diligent reporting efforts by Resource Management personnel about the work done at WSMR resulted in minimizing a budget cut for the coming fiscal year. “The Developmental Test Command’s budget was cut by \$8 million. We make up 40 percent of DTC, so our fair share of that would have been \$3.2 million. But because of our reporting efforts, we only received a \$1 million reduction,” Engel said. He said that was further offset by the Chu-SAM testing revenues.

Engel then focused on upcoming issues, including the Transformation of Installation Management process. “At this time, there is no change in the organization of White Sands Missile Range as a result of TMA. It is business as usual,” he said.

He added that he expects that to stay the case with one exception. He said the Army has mandated that Resource Management functions will be divided into two groups – one to support garrison functions and one to support operational functions.

A good news situation for the range would arise, Engel said, as a result of any future base realignment or closure activity. He said if other installations close, WSMR is in a prime position to receive activities that would be required to relocate.

“I am positive that White Sands would be a receptor in any BRAC activity,” he said. “We have a number of things going for us. We control our own air space, we have 22 percent

of the land that the Army owns in the continental United States, and we don't have encroachment issues like other military bases have," Engel said.

He said White Sands would have to be smart about the way it approaches this so that incoming activities would not impact the range's mission of rocket and missile testing, but charged personnel to be "receptive to change" and to be flexible.

He said this would go a long way to securing the range's future. To help accomplish this, Engel said he will host a meeting in December of the Alliance for Regional Military Support. The meeting will include the commanders of Fort Bliss and Holloman Air Force Base as well as the mayors of El Paso, Las Cruces and Alamogordo. They will discuss a regional strategy for continued military operations and growth.

Also coming in December is a new directorate at White Sands – the Strategic Planning and Marketing Directorate or SPAM-D. The directorate will be headed by Dan Hicks and will be responsible for strategic planning, strategic marketing, business development and internal management.

"We are one of 22 Major Range Test Facility Bases who are competing for similar work. I have charged SPAM-D with staying in the hunt for those testing dollars," Engel said. As an example, he said the Missile Defense Agency has a \$7.4 billion budget in fiscal year 2003.

"What we need to do is figure out how to get a piece of that pie. We must add to the customer base because less downtime and continued work leads to lower costs to the customers."

However, the most important thing that will happen on the range during the next year, Engel said, is the completion of the move from the old range control facility to the Cox Range Control Center. The final move will occur between Dec. 1 and Jan. 15. He said customers have been told that Range Control would not be available to support missions during that time and emphasized that this must be completed by Jan. 15 because tests requiring the facility will resume then.

Other significant events in the next six months, Engel said, include the retirement of Garrison Commander Col. Vicki Warren early in 2003, a Department of the Army Inspector General's inspection in June and the Baatan Memorial Death March on March 30. While the march saw a record 4,200 people last year, Engel said he made the decision to cap the number of participants for this year at 4,000 because "bigger is not better; better is better. A lot of hard work has gone into making improvements for this year's event."

The commanding general then talked about areas of continued focus for the range. He said we must continue to work as a team, one entity – Team WSMR. Engel emphasized that this is a Tri-Service environment where each service is equally important.

Engel then spoke of about how national events may impact the range, referring to the situation with Iraq. "The President is not playing tiddlywinks," Engel said. "Missions may arrive on short notice. We must be open to change and stay flexible. We must be able to provide our usual great service on short notice."

Engel concluded by extending his heartfelt thanks to the entire WSMR community for all its hard work.