2017 will be a great year for our Army and will also a great year to be in the Field Artillery! I am excited with the direction we are taking the branch, and want to make sure we carry the momentum we gained in 2016 into 2017.

2016 was a significant year for the Field Artillery (FA) branch and the United States Army Field Artillery School (USAFAS). During the past year we’ve made a significant impact improving our core competencies. Several developments and initiatives came to fruition; at the heart of which was the publication of our Field Artillery Vision.

“Be the world’s premier Field Artillery force; modernized, organized, trained, and ready to integrate and employ Army, Joint, and Multinational Fires, across multiple domains, enabling victory through Unified Land Operations.”

To name all the FA and USAFAS programs that had a successful start or met significant milestones in 2016 would take up too much space, but some highlights include inserting Joint Fires Observer (JFO) training into our professional military education, building a foundation for a more robust Master Gunner Course, embracing the Joint Air Ground Integration Cell (JAGIC) concept, bringing back and securing funding for the Joint Operational Fires and Effects Course (JOFEC), and developing the Brigade Combat Team Fires Orientation Course.

Also in 2016, the CSA approved the designation of the Fires Targeting Center as the Army Targeting Center (ATC). The ATC is now the Army’s proponent for targeting with a primary focus of Joint training policy, doctrine, and integration. The ATC provides significant outreach to operational units by assisting them in implementing and sustaining Joint targeting accreditation and certification programs. Creating the ATC is great news, as it now gives the FA branch a voice in the Joint Targeting Enterprise. It also gives us representation in Joint, Interagency, and Multinational commands.

In 2016, the role of our Field Artillery Warrant Officers has once again expanded. As our premiere targeting technicians, they will have a comprehensive knowledge of all the technical data and resources available on the battlefield and how to pull it all together in the targeting process. As our newly defined Mission Command Targeting Systems and Sensors integrators, our 131As will be experts with the newly fielded Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS) v6.8.1.1. and all supporting ABCS systems to provide a remarkable 3-D COP for targeting and the permissive employment of Cross Domain Fires.

This initiative will give us increased capabilities to dramatically improve integration of organic and joint targeting sensors and effective data sharing of Army and Joint Mission Command systems. This will further enable the targeting process and fire support planning to deliver accurate and timely fires in support of the Commander’s scheme of maneuver.

Additionally, we have witnessed the sustained impact the Division Artilleries have made on the fires and maneuver forces. They are invaluable to divisions as Force Field Artillery headquarters, and in aiding BCT commanders with the training, certification, and talent management of our Redlegs in BCT formations.

We continue to make progress in our transition back to a greater need and focus on our Decisive Action skill sets. Integrating fires with maneuver is hard work and the center of what makes us a true profession. We are seeing tremendous effort by units regain-
ing our field artillery core skills. It is imperative we share our lessons learned and best practices to accelerate growth across the force.

The art and science of our profession is synchronizing fire support and the supporting arms in the maneuver command post. We effectively design battlefield geometries, Fire Support and Air Space Control Measures, and the electromagnetic spectrum that enable permissive cannon and rocket fires AND air support at critical times and locations to allow the maneuver commander to bring all assets to bear simultaneously and win decisively.

In order to achieve this, we will train – hard and repetitively to rebuild muscle memory. Our Redlegs must get the repetitions under their belts to inherently know how to do routine things routinely.

We are starting to see the rewards of our re-focused training at the Combat Training Centers, during Warfighter exercises, and training at home station. Our leaders and Soldiers are beginning to get the repetitions needed to build our fires profession muscle memory.

For example, in this edition of the Redleg Update, there is a great lessons learned article from 101st Division Artillery (DIVARTY) regarding what they learned during two, division-level warfighting exercises (WFXs) about battlefield geometry, the division counterfire fight, unmanned aircraft system (USA) integration, and fires planning. [See Page 12, “Reinventing the Wheel: Operational Lessons Learned by the 101st Division during Two Warfighter Exercises”].

The ability to manage ACMs and FSCMs is a point of either success or failure for many units at the National Training Center (NTC). Additionally, in this edition there is another good lessons learned article from the leaders of 2-17 Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division (DIVARTY) about what they encountered during their NTC rotation. [See Page 18, “Winning at the NTC: A Fire Support Perspective”].

Both articles note that, although we have seen visible improvements across our force in getting back to core competencies, essential habits need to be re-formed and new procedures developed to improve on our collective fires skills.

Sharing opportunities for improvement, the lessons we’ve learned, and how we’ve applied them is important, and I encourage other units going through CTCs, WFXs, through the MCTP, or home station training to distribute what they have learned with us here at the USAFAS and across the force.

These lessons in turn will allow us to put together solid training strategies and unit training programs that will ensure we are able to meet the demands placed on our Soldiers and on the FA branch – throughout 2017 and beyond.

In closing, I would like to say that ultimately the Field Artillery branch is about our people.

No matter how technical our operations become or how wide our global missions expand, our people continue to be our most treasured resource. I am excited about the future and about where we as a branch are headed. The Field Artillery has never been more needed or more relevant than it is today.

All of our Redlegs should be proud of what they have accomplished in 2016, and where they are headed in 2017. We are and will continue to build trust and confidence in the hearts of our maneuver brethren.

24/7/365.

Regardless of weather.

In any terrain.

Quickly, and accurately, and Danger Close.

King of Battle!

Redleg 6

COL Stephen J. Maranian