

Redstone's commanding general recalls hectic first year

Outpouring of support, patriotism since 9/11 'everyday business' in this community

By SKIP VAUGHN
Rocket editor
skip.vaughn@redstone.army.mil

Here's the text of an interview Thursday with Maj. Gen. Larry Dodgen, who became commander of the Aviation and Missile Command and Redstone Arsenal Sept. 10, 2001, the day before the terrorist attacks on America:

What are your thoughts on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks Sept. 11?

Dodgen: "I guess my thoughts now are to the response of the American people, the soldiers, the firefighters, the policemen, everybody coming together wanting to do something and supporting each other. I guess the one thing I remember is that feeling as a nation. There are few things that drive our diverse society together and 9/11 was one of them. What I remember the most is the giving of the people for the people who have suffered, the support of our armed forces and realizing that the defense of this nation resides in those forces. I just gained an overwhelming confidence in our civil liberties and institutions such as our police officers and firefighters, and an understanding now more than ever that we all have to come together and work together if we're going to truly keep America safe."

How did the attacks impact the initial days of your tour at Redstone?

Dodgen: "The initial impact was a complete rearranging of the priorities. Normally when a commanding general comes in, you want to understand the institution and the people's priorities. In the aftermath of 9/11, it focuses you on security. It focuses you on a certain aspect of the command. So it's certainly taken me longer to get to know the institution. Also after 9/11, you just gain a tremendous respect for the dedication of the soldier and this work force to the security of



Photo by Skip Vaughn

TAKING CHARGE— Maj. Gen. Larry Dodgen assumes command of Redstone Arsenal last Sept. 10, the day before the terrorist attacks on this nation.

this nation and to assuring that the soldiers in the field have everything they need in order to move forward."

How would you describe your first year as the commanding general?

Dodgen: "I would say very hectic because of the adjustments to 9/11 and hectic because of all the reorganizations that the military has initiated."

How has the security posture changed in the past year?

Dodgen: "In the aftermath of 9/11, we sent all the workers home and we went to the highest security posture to assure we knew every person on the Arsenal. So we established a security posture I haven't seen short of war, Threatcon (force protection condition) Delta. And since then we have gradually adjusted our security posture to bringing things back as much

as we could to a normal state. The posture is to continue to do the mission of Redstone Arsenal as well as safeguard our well-being. At the same time, routine security and monotony tend to undermine stability. We have continued to make adjustments to our posture to increase our security and keep our guard force alert. The caution is still there and the caution needs to stay there."

What is that posture now?

Dodgen: "If you go to the front of the gates, you see Threatcon Bravo. We're still in a state where we're cautious about people that enter on the Arsenal and we safeguard against unauthorized entry in certain areas. So we're still at a very high state of security compared to before Sept. 11."

What are your goals for the next year?

Dodgen: "I think the No. 1 goal would be the safety and well-being of every individual that works and lives on the Arsenal. At the same time I want to maintain the great support we've given to the soldier. So wherever the soldier is assigned, the aviation and missile support is as responsive as ever. At the same time since next year is the last year of our QDR (Quadrennial Defense Review) cuts, I want to begin to revitalize our work force, to bring

in young people to work on the Arsenal and position the work force for the future."

How secure is Redstone Arsenal?

Dodgen: "I'd have to answer that by saying I'm confident we're looking at the right things, we're monitoring the right things, trying to predict threats of the future. We're doing what we need to do to say the Arsenal is secure and we'll continue to do that. A good part of that is the 100 soldiers of Charlie Company 1st/167th, the job they've done the past year. Which is why we had such a great (farewell) ceremony today to thank Capt. Pugh and 1st Sgt. Haigler and the rest of Charlie Company. I'd say the Arsenal is secure. And I say that because we're recognizing the threats of the past and keeping our eye on the potential threats of the future."

What have you learned about the Redstone Arsenal community since Sept. 11?

Dodgen: "The thing I've learned is that the outpouring of support to the Arsenal and to every person in uniform in the aftermath of 9/11 is everyday business in this community. It involves community support, it involves patriotism. I've learned it's just a natural feeling of a great community and I'd say a special commu-

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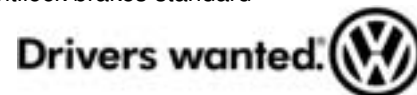
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