Army Signal chief visits CERDEC for a look ahead

U.S. Army

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. (Oct. 3, 2012) -- Army leaders from its research and development, and requirements communities met here, Sept. 25, to strengthen existing ties and discuss opportunities to leverage one another for future support.

Maj. Gen. LaWarren V. Patterson, U.S. Army chief, Signal Center of Excellence; several technology capability managers new to the Signal Center; and members of Patterson's Capability Development Integration Directorate visited the Research, Development and Engineering Command's communications-electronics center, or CERDEC.

Patterson was joined by William Lasher, the Army's Forces Command G-6, for an overview of CERDEC programs and facilities, and to get a glimpse at how emerging research and engineering developments might influence Soldiers' future capabilities and training. This was Patterson's first visit to CERDEC in his new role as the chief of sSignal.

"This time I [came] trying to look from a DOTMLPF (doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities) doctrinal standpoint -- what's out there and what is going to be involved as far as what is going into the hands of Soldiers," Patterson said. "How will that effect how we train at Fort Gordon? How will that effect what we spiral out of the Network Integration Evaluation out there at White Sands," he asked.

Jill H. Smith, CERDEC director, provided a scope of CERDEC's core competence from mission command to cyber operations and Soldier/mobile power to Soldier sensors and position, navigation and timing, and electronic warfare. She discussed the multifaceted ways the Army leverages CERDEC across the mission command networks and systems lifecycle.

"We are the network and knowledge fabric that integrates across platforms and to our Joint and Coalition partners. We tie everything together for the Army to communicate -- from the Soldier to the ground systems, to the air systems and across capabilities. We enable network-centric warfare. So whether it is evaluating a particular system for the CIO/G6 or the engineering effort for PEO IEW&S or PEO C3T, if you look beneath the surface, it's usually our folks," Smith said.

Smith discussed CERDEC's role in helping to define key Army initiatives such as the Common Operating Environment, or COE, and Network Integration Evaluations.

"Currently, we have a 'boxology' acquisition process. We have a requirement -- we build a box. Another requirement -- another box. This gets capability to the Soldier, but is not efficient nor is it easily upgraded," Smith said.

Likening the COE concept for integrating capability to that of the iPhone, Smith said that having a standard architecture allows industry to understand how they can "plug-in" new capabilities more rapidly and significantly reduce the cost of sustainment by decreasing duplicative components.

"We would like to system engineer similar capabilities into our vehicles or onto Soldiers, such as position navigation and timing, sensors, communications, etcetera, and define our developer kit so that we can integrate new capabilities for Soldiers faster," she said.

Laboratory tours featured select labs in two of CERDEC's six directorates -- S&TCD and the Intelligence and Information Warfare Directorate. The first stop on the tour was at the C4ISR Systems Integration Laboratory, or CSIL, the hub for all lab-based risk reduction for NIE. Engineers there explained CERDEC's technical support to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology) System of Systems Integration Directorate across the various phases of the Army's Agile Process.

"All systems come through here first, before going out to White Sands," said Scott Newman, program director, Systems Engineering and Integration CERDEC S&TCD.

It's in the CSIL that the various systems under evaluation/test are first integrated into the proposed NIE architecture allowing CERDEC engineers and partners to examine system performance in a laboratory environment instead of encountering those issues for the first time in the deserts of White Sands, N.M., said Newman.

"It pays dividends for the Soldiers who are not spending countless hours trying to figure out problems out there because you have already solved them here," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Edward Johnson, technical integration lead for the Signal Center, Capability Development Integration Directorate.

Remaining tours of CERDEC facilities acquainted Patterson and his party with CERDEC programs advancing antenna technology; cyber defense, information security, and cryptographic modernization; planning and managing spectrum; developing next generation capabilities in the TROJAN family of systems; and sustaining and engineering satellite communications at CERDEC's Joint Satellite Engineering Center.

"I am very pleased with what I see here happening at CERDEC. Very cutting edge, very much on par with things in industry, very partnered with industry -- extremely well partnered with industry, and that's important. You know, we tend to give industry pieces of what we want and then we blame industry for not delivering it, but what I learned here is that organizations like CERDEC sometimes have the same frustrations industry has with understanding the requirements of the Warfighter. But what's so nice about CERDEC is a lot of times they will help us get there."

Source URL (retrieved on *10/24/2014 - 6:32am*):

http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2012/10/army-signal-chief-visits-cerdec-look-ahead?qt-video_of_the_day=0&qt-most_popular=0