

Staff Ride Highlights Adaptation to Changing PEO C3T Landscape

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In choosing to cross the Delaware River during a Nor'easter rather than retreat to winter quarters in 1776, Gen. George Washington exhibited his willingness to adapt and change his battle strategy to accomplish his mission. His principles of war can still be applied to the current force, specifically to the changing environment of the Program Executive Office Command, Control, Communications-Tactical (PEO C3T).

"A lot of what we're going through right now is adapting to change," said Brig. Gen. N. Lee S. Price, PEO for C3T. "We have about 1500 positions that are moving down to Aberdeen, and we're not just moving, but the organization is changing as well."

Successful adaptation to change was the theme and central lesson of PEO C3T's staff ride which reenacted the battles of Trenton and Princeton, N.J.

Like Washington's Continental Army in December of 1776, PEO C3T is facing geographical, political, structural and personnel changes. The organization is restructuring and transitioning from Fort Monmouth, N.J. to its new headquarters at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

"There are a lot of parallels in this Christmas campaign to what you're facing," said Col. (Ret.) Jim Johnson, who coordinated the June 17th staff ride. "Insights you gain from this staff ride are going to help you think better about your day-to-day job and the future of PEO C3T," Johnson, the Executive Director of the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College, spoke to approximately 3 dozen members of PEO C3T.

The intent of a staff ride is to study a historical battle and visit the battlefield in order to gain insights of past leaders and



enhance present operations. Staff rides help to build a cohesive, integrated PEO C3T team that operates with a shared vision, strategy and plan. They provide time away from operational demands while giving both new employees and senior leaders the chance to plan strategically and focus on how to increase value to the Army using historical lessons.

The changes and adaptations that the Continental Army went through in the Christmas Campaign of 1776-1777 are still studied as a turning point of the Revolution, Johnson explained. The Army had been defeated many times in New York by the British Army and the Hessians and had entered New Jersey in retreat in the winter of 1776. The Revolution seemed doomed to failure, and Soldiers were getting ready to leave the Army as their enlistments expired. But Washington did not give up the cause of American independence.

He planned a daring surprise offensive, to take place at night, at Trenton while the Hessians were preparing their winter quarters. He placed one of his artillery offi-

cers, Colonel Henry Knox, in charge of the dangerous crossing of the Delaware River, which took hours. Using a thorough mission analysis, the proper systems, and bold plans, Washington and his Army killed and captured more than 1,000 Hessians at Trenton, Johnson said. Days later, the British Generals Cornwallis and Mawhood attempted retaliation at the battles of Assunpink Creek and Princeton, But Washington was victorious both times. These victories solidified Washington's capable leadership and encouraged many Continentals to renew their enlistments.

This campaign "completely changed the course of American history, because Washington was able to keep the Revolution alive," said Johnson.

The participants of the staff ride visited key locations of the Christmas Campaign of 1776-1777, including the Old Trenton Barracks, the banks of the Delaware River, the Trenton War Memorial and the grass battlefield of Princeton. Given parts to portray, they were asked to reflect on their counterpart's decisions and rationale. The

historian also prompted members of the staff to read from primary sources, such as Washington's letters and others' commentary in order to gain a better perspective of the motivation and reasoning of the battles.

"They can now start to think differently about the battle or campaign, drawing inspiration from 'their' commander's actions or decisions as they face their own challenges," Johnson said. "Combat is still a test of human will, decisions and actions."

Though the fundamentals of war have not changed from the American Revolution, Johnson said that the networked battle command solutions that PEO C3T provides to Warfighters give the current force an advantage.

"The communications and weapons systems that its program managers develop allow combat commanders to combine their will and their Soldiers' skill to achieve victory. On this front, PEO C3T will continue to make a difference for the U.S Army," Johnson said.

Price discussed PEO C3T's mission in relation to the organization's necessary changes. "It's about adapting to an enemy that's quick to change," she said. "We're looking at new technology and seeing how we go from what we provide to the current force to how we start to incorporate future technology."

Though they face complex times ahead, the staff of PEO C3T can take inspiration from General Washington and his courageous adaptation to change during the Christmas campaign. "They need to contribute to the fulfillment of General Price's vision for adaptation and mission accomplishment," Johnson said. "Difficult circumstances call for clear directions, teamwork, and optimism. Following General Washington's lead, the staff should have positive attitudes, enthusiasm, and the faith that they can prevail."

