

# Commandant's Note

MAJOR GENERAL PAUL D. EATON Chief of Infantry

---

## THE SOLDIER ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM A Paradigm for Transformation

The Army Transformation will succeed because of our commitment to fielding a force of greater lethality, survivability, deployability, and maneuverability. As we complete the transformation to the Objective Force, we will hone our ability to respond to the challenges we will face as we execute the war on terrorism, conduct peacekeeping and stability operations, and meet other—as yet unforeseen—future demands. The commitment to accomplish this exists at all levels within the infantry force, and must continue to guide our decisions and actions even as we undergo the ever-present personnel turbulence within our staff and command structures. The Army Transformation will ensure that we meet tomorrow's challenges with the best-trained, best-equipped, and most competently led infantrymen our nation has ever sent forth in her defense. No longer will we have to face the prospect of fighting solely with the weapons and techniques of an earlier century.

Perhaps nothing better symbolizes the benefits of this commitment to Transformation than the Soldier Enhancement Program (SEP), an initiative that has been quietly transforming soldiers' battlefield capabilities, their quality of life, and their weapons and equipment for more than 13 years. Few programs can claim that degree of longevity, and I want to tell you about the SEP.

This program began in 1989 and received Congressional funding "to enhance the effectiveness of foot soldiers." The Army expanded the scope of

SEP in 1992 to include all categories of soldiers, and today SEP is coordinated with the Marine Enhancement Program and is funded by Department of the Army. The impetus for SEP, which was the forerunner to later acquisition reform, came from the recognition that soldiers were purchasing for field use some commercial off-the-shelf items already available on the civilian market.

The SEP was not intended to be an incentive awards program or to fund lengthy development programs, nor was it intended to procure large numbers of major items for use. Rather, its intent is to evaluate, test, and type-classify selected commercial off-the-shelf items in 36 months or less with a view toward issuing them to soldiers. The purpose of SEP was—and still is—to increase the soldier's combat effectiveness through the fielding of lighter, more lethal weapons; command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence assets; and personal equipment. The emphasis continues to be on those types of items that are worn, carried, or consumed for individual use in a tactical environment.

Let me cite a few examples of SEP successes, and then tell you how to make use of this program. The present desert battle dress uniform (BDU), the hot-weather BDU, ration improvements, the flameless ration heater, the desert boot, the modular sleep system, knee and elbow pads, improved personal flotation devices, and the lightweight chemical/biological protective garment, all owe

their existence to the SEP, but it is not limited to personal comfort items. The M24 sniper optic, M4 carbine, M240B medium machinegun, the M16A4 rifle, the 5.56mm and 7.62mm armor piercing rounds now in service in Afghanistan, and the sniper night sight and accessory kit are among the more than 55 contributions the SEP has made to the lethality and survivability of the U.S. infantryman.

We are also looking at more than a dozen SEP programs being carried over into FY 03, with six new start programs for the year. The former include the M84 reloadable fuze, an M9 pistol aiming light module, a collapsible buttstock M249 machinegun, a tactical cartridge long-range sniper rifle, and an integrated laser/white-light pointer. Our soldiers committed to the MOUT fight will be aided by the launched grapnel hook and mid-sized riot control disperser—already in service as earlier SEP successes—and by the infantryman's wall breaching kit, an FY 03 new-start program. Our role in peacekeeping missions is supported by work on the 12-gauge peacekeeping round, the family of restraint systems, and the handheld irritant sprayer. I won't go into the many other important and useful items that are either already fielded or under consideration as SEP projects, but let me tell you that this is an ongoing program that owes its continuation and contributions to leaders who have recognized its value and committed themselves to its sustainment.

But how can you, the leaders of the 21st Century, have a voice in the selection process of the SEP? Commanders or soldiers at any level who are interested in participating in the program may obtain specific details on the program at [www.pmsoldiersystems.army.mil](http://www.pmsoldiersystems.army.mil), or by writing the TRADOC System Manager-Soldier (TSM-S), at: Commander, USAIC, ATTN: ATZB-TS, Fort Benning, Georgia, 31905-5405. Inquiries may be submitted by fax to TSM-S at (706) 545-1377, or DSN 835-1377. This is a superb program, and one that deserves our continued support because of its direct impact on soldiers.

Over the years, we have all seen programs evolve as a result of command emphasis, only to wither on the vine in the wake of key personnel changes, because those who remained lacked the commitment to sustain them. Fortunately, this has not been the case with the Soldier Enhancement Program, and we need to sustain it as a vital adjunct to the Army Transformation. The SEP is a paradigm for Transformation, and it will continue to improve the capabilities that will enhance the Objective Force. It is up to us to sustain the commitment that can best give us a fighting chance against the formidable adversaries who lie in wait, and whom—even now—we are systematically engaged in tracking down and killing or capturing by close combat, fire, and maneuver. And that, gentlemen, is the mission and purpose of the Infantry.

