



A leader in deed

Dave Irwin inspires excellence by example

By Stacey Holloway

The unit had been conducting its annual training and team-building classes for two days at Missouri's Camp Crowder. The training concluded with the unit's soldiers told to rappel from a 30-foot (9-meter) tower. Many of the soldiers nervously questioned the rope's strength and the tower's stability.

David Irwin, then colonel and brigade commander and highest-ranking officer on the installation, didn't hesitate. "He climbed to the top, strapped up and went off first," said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles E. Jones, U.S. Army. "Next came a round of cheers followed by a rally of the troops eager to be next up the tower."

"Normally field officers expect non-commission officers to take care of everything," said retired Sgt. 1st Class Jim Snyder, recalling his impression of then-2nd Lt. Irwin during their first field exercise. "Irwin was different. I instructed the troops in their mission and dispersed them. When Irwin arrived, he asked where the troops were and said he felt it was his responsibility to perform what he expected of the soldiers."

Irwin's ability to chart the course has earned him an outstanding reputation with Army peers and Boeing teammates. Last summer he became commander of the 35th Engineer Brigade in the U.S. National Guard and was promoted to brigadier general. In addition to his part-time service in the Guard, he's supporting the growth activities of Integrated Defense Systems' Global Services & Support business by leading its Training Systems & Services organization in efforts to grow into a new market. As program manager for the new TSS subdivision known as Ground Forces Training, Irwin has responsibilities including leadership, growth and execution of Ground Forces Training programs. When asked about his role, Irwin spoke to GS&S' aggressive growth goal over the next five years and TSS playing a part. "We are good at what we do, providing quality training products and services to aviation customers, but we need to expand into ground forces training," he said.

Examples of ground forces include armor, infantry, field artillery, logisticians and medics in the Army and Marine Corps, all of which are new areas of interest for the IDS training business.

"The customer has expressed a need for a training environment for ground forces that is equivalent in sophistication to the same

immersive environments used to train aviators," said Irwin. "By using our existing technology and leveraging the rest of Boeing, whether through Future Combat Systems or previous work with the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, we believe Boeing can meet the customer's needs for ground forces training."

Under Irwin's leadership, Boeing last year received its first ground-based training contract, the Fires Center of Excellence Integration contract. Boeing and teammate Creative Technologies Inc. provided independent recommendations for a new organization structure and developed a training strategy and supporting technology roadmap for this Army air defense and field artillery training center. The contract was completed in February.

Irwin's next step is to use Boeing's great capabilities to improve ground forces training. Meanwhile, according to Jones: "Soldiers still talk about how Irwin led the way that day in the training exercise up the tower, and how they would follow his leadership anywhere." ■

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PHOTO: Dave Irwin's ability to chart the course has earned him an outstanding reputation with both U.S. Army peers and Boeing teammates. U.S. ARMY

Rules to live by

What makes for a good leader? Here are some basic rules, according to David Irwin, program manager for the Ground Forces Training subdivision at Boeing.

- "Never ask your people to do something you would not do yourself."
- "Care about your people. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."
- "Be willing to admit when you don't know something. My dad was the smartest man I've ever known, and he liked to say, 'The smartest man I ever met knew what he didn't know.'"