

NEWS RELEASE

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Division Commander to retire

VICKSBURG, Miss., January 8, 2008 – Brigadier General Robert Crear, Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and President of the Mississippi River Commission, has announced his intention to retire after more than 32 years of service with the United States Army. Crear is the first African American, and the first Vicksburg native, to serve in these positions.

Crear reflected on his career with these thoughts: “Reatha and I have made the decision to transition out of the Army and begin our ‘second age.’ Who could have guessed that we would be able to end our military career at the same place it began for both of us, in our hometown of Vicksburg. First, as commander of the Corps’ Vicksburg District, and now as Commander of the Corps’ Mississippi Valley Division and President of the Mississippi River Commission. I am honored to have given this time of my life to the Army. Given the opportunity, I wouldn’t change a thing. It has been an incredible career”

Crear graduated from Jackson State University in 1975 where he earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and a Regular Army commission as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. He also earned a master’s degree in national resource strategy from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. His military education includes U.S. Army Airborne School, the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the Ordnance Officer Advanced Course, Command and General Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

As division commander, Brig. Gen. Crear is responsible for a \$7.5 billion civil works program. In addition, he plays a vital role in for the Corps' water resources program in the Mississippi River valley. The boundary of the Mississippi Valley Division extends from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, includes portions of 12 states and encompasses 370,000 square miles. As commission president, he is also responsible for the Mississippi River and Tributaries project – the vast, comprehensive flood control and navigation system for the alluvial valley from Cape Girardeau, Mo., to the Gulf of Mexico that is arguably one of the most successful civil works projects ever initiated. The programs and activities overseen by the MVD and MRC are conducted by district offices located in St. Paul, Minn., Rock Island, Ill., St. Louis, Mo., Memphis, Tenn., Vicksburg, Miss., and New Orleans, La.

Joining the Army is a little like becoming a member of the biggest family in the country. It is like joining a club whose members are so diverse but who are all united by one cause. That cause, the defense of our country and our rights, is one that is unshakable and unmovable.

Gen. Crear's career as a Soldier has been exemplary. As an officer, he has left no stone unturned in his dedication to his command and his duty. Crear has served with distinction in circumstances that have been, at times, difficult and challenging. In fact, he has faced two unprecedented challenges during his career.

Following landfall of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, Crear established and served as Commander of Task Force Hope. TF Hope is the name given to the Corps' effort in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's national response plan to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Mississippi and Louisiana. Engaging more than 3,800 personnel at its peak, TF Hope was among the largest disaster recovery operations in the history of the Corps of Engineers.

Crear oversaw the removal of more than 732,000 acre feet, or 224 billion gallons of water, from the greater New Orleans area; this equates to water 18 feet deep over an area the size of Washington, D.C. In addition, 170 million pounds of ice and more than 5,500 truckloads of bottled water were delivered to the affected areas (one ice truck = 40,000 lbs. of ice which can serve 5,000 people for one day. One water truck = 4,800 gallons. At three-quarters of a gallon per person, one water truck can serve 6,400 people for one day.), more than 131,000 blue roofs were installed, 1,036 temporary public structures built and 50 million cubic yards of debris removed. TF Hope completed its mission in Mississippi and is now focused on a consolidated effort to construct a comprehensive hurricane protection system in south Louisiana. This effort to provide 100-year level of protection by 2011 is estimated to cost more than \$15 billion.

Crear faced another major challenge during his tour of duty in Iraq. From January 2003 to November 2003 he served as Commander of Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil (RIO) during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. TF RIO's first-of-its-kind mission for the Department of Defense was first to extinguish all oil fires, then to restore the oil infrastructure, production, export capability, and the internal distribution system, in addition to importing fuel for humanitarian purposes. The TF RIO team, 120+ Corps volunteers, more than 500 contractors and 60,000 Iraqi oil workers, all worked together to safely and effectively help ensure the economic recovery of Iraq.

As difficult and challenging as his career has been, Gen. Crear is equally tenacious and determined in his duty and belief. He has been the model of a true Soldier and officer for the entire duration of his career. He has inspired many and brought out the best in those who have served with him.

Always an avid supporter of small business, while at the division Crear advocated awarding contracts, with budgets ranging from one to 15 billion dollars, to small and disadvantaged businesses, to include Historical Black Colleges and Minority Institutions. Both the Vicksburg District and the Mississippi Valley Division small business programs received recognition for being best in the Army while under Crear's command.

In spite of his incredibly busy schedule, he has also been very involved in the community – as a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, the United Way of Central Mississippi, by serving on the Southern Cultural Heritage Center Board of Directors, as a Board Member of Central Mississippi Prevention Services, on the Board of Advisors for Jackson State University Engineering School and as a member of the Society of American Military Engineers. Additionally, he made it a point to speak to local organizations, civic clubs and local schools, as often as his schedule allowed. He felt it was important to tell the Corps' story, but more importantly to be a part of the community by actively participating.

“This is my way of giving back,” commented Crear. “I will be forever grateful to the Vicksburg community for my upbringing. My mother, grandmother and neighborhood family instilled in me at an early age the values I still live by today, such as: respect your elders, always say yes ma’am or no ma’am and to treat everyone with respect and dignity.”

Like any club or family, if you are outside the military, you might have spent some time wondering what it takes to get in. Once you have that established, it takes a further calculation: have you got what it takes to join? A few years ago now, Crear made that calculation. In doing so, he began a memorable career that would prove not only did he have what it took, but that he had the drive, determination and the sensibility to become an officer who would become respected and admired.

Throughout his 32-year career, Crear had the responsibility of leading Soldiers in organizations around the world. However, for the past 10 years his workforce has been 98% Army civilians. “I have a profound respect for our service men and women, as well as the Corps’ civilian workforce,” Crear said. “This has been reinforced having served with both on the battlefield and in disaster response.”

Part of the challenge that makes up a career in the Army is that you realize, quite soon, that you are a part of a long and unbroken chain. That chain represents many things. It may represent, for example, the fine traditions of honor and of sacrifice that Soldiers are so proud of. It may be the chain of command that dictates how Soldiers can function so well in even the most adverse of conditions. It is also something far more personal. It is the direct link that your command forms with your predecessors and those who will come after you. It is your record of achievement and also your legacy. It is the baton you hand on.

The excellence of Gen. Crear’s work and the good will and the respect in which he is held, means that he hands on that baton admirably. He has performed his duty to an exemplary level.

Chief of Engineers, Lieutenant General Robert VanAntwerp, had this to say about Crear’s retirement: “Bob and Reatha have raised the bar for professionalism, devotion to God and Country and selfless service. They have loved the Soldiers and Civilians under their charge - and it shows. They help everyone around them reach their potential and make everyone better. They leave a legacy of excellence.

“Bob, as you have taught us all, ‘HOOAH’ has many meanings. In your case, it means WELL DONE! On behalf of the entire U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Hooah!”

Gen. Crear will officially transition out of the Army February 20, 2008, when he transfers command of the Mississippi Valley Division to Brig. Gen. Michael J. Walsh in a formal change of command and retirement ceremony. Gen. Walsh comes from Baghdad, Iraq, where he served as Division Engineer for the Gulf Region Division. The ceremony will take place at 10:00 a.m. in the Vicksburg Convention Center, 1600 Mulberry Street. The public is invited.

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