

Detroit District



US Army Corps of Engineers

Soundings



*District
Change of
Command*

Soundings

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On the cover: Lt. Col. Richard J. Polo, Jr. takes command of the Detroit District as he receives the Corps flag from Brig. Gen. Robert H. Griffin. (Photo by Col. Richard J. Polo, Sr. (ret.), the commander's father.)

Commander's Statement

by Lt. Col. Richard J. Polo, Jr.,
District Engineer

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Detroit District for the extremely warm welcome given to my family. As for myself, it is simply an honor and a privilege to be given the opportunity to work with such a large group of dedicated professionals. Let me share with you that prior to my arrival to the district, many people outside the district took the time and trouble to give their opinions about the district. Virtually, without exception, all the feedback I received was positive; this is a wonderful tribute for your hard work and explains the excellent reputation you have already established.

All change of command ceremonies represent both change and continuity at the same time. The change part clearly involves the arrival of a new commander and the departure of the former commander. But more importantly, continuity is represented by the fact that the organization endures. As Brig. Gen. Griffin noted in his remarks at the change of command ceremony, a peaceful transition of command is an accomplishment in and of itself. It is not necessarily

commonplace in the rest of the world.

In many ways, nothing of great significance has changed since the change of command ceremony. The district must still accomplish its mission in support of the Corps's vision which states that we are to be "the Engineer team of choice - responding to our nation's needs in peace and war."

The last four years particularly have seen tremendous change in the Corps, both organizationally and in mission outlook. It's fair to say that we are still in the process of cementing and institutionalizing many of these initiatives and goals. But as we prepare to change Chiefs of Engineers, the three goals — revolutionize effectiveness, seek growth opportunities, and invest in people — are not expected to change in any significant way. The district has already had many successes in this area and we are simply charged to continue to build on this record.

Teamwork is critical to our success. The days of solitary individuals and inventors is almost gone. As society has advanced and become more complex, new discoveries and scientific



breakthroughs are increasingly being made by teams of people. Corporations also use integrated teams to bring new products to market. It is no different in the Detroit District. The Project Management Business Process is our doctrine for marshalling resources across a district in order to deliver products to a customer. The end result — serving the nation, while simultaneously satisfying customers - is the only way to ensure that they continue to select us as the engineer team of choice. No single individual in the district can succeed or fully accomplish their job without backing by a Team!

My immediate goals are to get out and meet everyone, whether you work in the district headquarters or in one of the many area offices. And secondly, meeting our stakeholders, customers, and other state and local partners will also require an investment in time. Ultimately, with your help and assistance, the Detroit District Team will continue to prosper and garner new successes.

Lastly, let us all bid farewell to Lt. Col. Robert Davis and his family. They will be missed and we wish them the very best as they continue to serve the Nation in new and challenging assignments. 



Detroit District new commander Lt. Col. Richard J. Polo, far right, greets his new command with family members (L to R)—dad, Col. Richard Polo (ret.); daughters Michelle and Danielle; and wife, Gabriele. (Photo by Jennifer Thomas)

Detroit District changes commanders

On a sunny day in July overlooking the westward view of the Detroit River skyline, the Detroit District changed commanders. Lt. Col. Richard J. Polo, Jr. became Detroit's 48th commander before an audience of many well wishers and supporters at the newly updated 15th floor conference hall in the Patrick V. McNamara Building.

Brig. Gen. Robert H. Griffin, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division commander, led the ceremony as Lt. Col. Robert J. Davis passed the reigns to Polo for him to forward the district through the beginning of the new millennium.

Prior to coming to Detroit, Polo served three years in Washington D.C. as chief of the Commander's Planning Group and special assistant to the Chief of Engineers.

Born in Ft. Hood, Texas, Polo, attended the United States Military Academy in 1980 graduating with a bachelor's of science degree. Commissioned into the Corps of Engineers, soon after graduation, he later earned a master's degree in civil engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). His professional military education includes the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Courses and the Command and General Staff College.

Polo served three troop tours in the 1st and 2nd Armored Divisions, located in Texas and Germany. He worked as a platoon leader, battalion adjutant, brigade engineer, company commander, and battalion executive officer in 16th, 17th, and 40th Combat Engineer Battalions. When the Army

deployed the 1st Armored Division (1AD) as part of Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR, LTC Polo deployed to Croatia and then Bosnia as the engineer brigade operations officer for Task Force Eagle and 1AD / Multinational Division (North).

Polo functioned in staff assignments as a project engineer in the Kuwait Emergency Recovery Office (KERO) during Operation DESERT STORM; as the Operations Officer in the Directorate of Engineering and Housing in Bad Kreuznach, Germany; and as an assistant professor and the dept. executive officer in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at West Point, New York.

Polo's military awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal (four awards), the Army Commendation Medal (four awards), the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and the NATO and Humanitarian Service Medals. He has been awarded the Parachutist Badge and the Ranger Tab.

Polo is a native of Coral Gables, Florida and is married to the former Gabriele Blasek of Weinsheim, Ger-

many. They have two daughters, Michelle and Danielle.

Immediately following the ceremony the Polo family greeted district employees, stakeholders and friends, and invited everyone to a lovely reception featuring colorful desserts and appetizing finger foods with classical music selections by Ryan Luff, Collette and Dave Luff's son, playing in the background. The reception food was prepared by Judy Jackson and Jackie Boettcher, Maj. Scott Jackson's mother and her friend. 



Above: Lt. Col. Richard J. Polo addresses his new command for the first time. (Photo by Jennifer Thomas)



Left: Brig. Gen. Griffin listens as Ryan Luff plays classical selections for the Polo reception. (Photo by Colette Luff)



Bottom left: The new commander's wife is greeted and welcomed by the district with a fresh bouquet of flowers, presented by Barbara Butler, Administrative Employee of the Years for 2000. (Photo by Col. (ret.) Richard Polo, Sr.)



Bottom right: The Polos receive a warm welcome from guests and district team members. (Photo by Jennifer Thomas)

Good Bye Thoughts:

My family and I thank you for your hospitality over the last two years. We are sad to depart. You are dedicated, professional, and passionately committed to public service, and often make personal sacrifices in the accomplishment of our mission.

Your future in our district is bright. We are successfully completing many projects; our in-house operations at

Area Offices are lean, efficient, and very responsive; and in the not-so-distant future, we will be leading Great Lakes planning initiatives, constructing a new lock at the Soo, planning and constructing numerous Continuing Authorities Program projects, and will begin the process of turning over the Fox River locks back to the State of Wisconsin. Your leadership, consideration for others, men-

toring, special emphasis, and emerging developmental programs are the envy of other districts in the Corps. Your new commander is a top-notch individual and will be leading you into this bright future.

It has been an honor to serve with all of you. My family and I wish all of you well. God Bless!



—Lt. Col. Bob Davis



Lt. Col. Davis receiving his Army Commendation Medal from Brig. Gen. Robert Griffin, Division commander. (Photo by Col. (ret.) Richard Polo, Sr.)



Lt. Col. Robert Davis and his wife say good-bye to family and friends as they prepare to go back to the Washington D.C. area. Davis is carrying the flowers presented to his wife by Charlie Uhlarik, Engineer/Scientist of the Year, on behalf of the district. (Photo by Jennifer Thomas)



Brig. Gen. Robert Griffin, center, takes the floor after the formal ceremony to award Lt. Col. Robert Davis, former DE, and to welcome Lt. Col. Richard Polo, new DE. (Photo by Jennifer Thomas)



Right: The Polos invited everyone to a colorful and festive reception, where everyone filled their plates and socialized, following the ceremony. (Photo by Jennifer Thomas)