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As the new director of Army safety and commanding general of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center (USACRC), I am proud to have the opportunity to lead this team of dedicated professionals who strive every day to protect our Soldiers, Families and Civilians.

The transformation of the Army's safety culture has developed into a comprehensive and proactive approach to accident prevention. Leaders at every echelon have led this transformation in making the Army – both on and off duty – a proactive, prevention-based and accountable fighting force.

Brig. Gen. Bill Forrester has done an incredible job the past two years in focusing the efforts of the USACRC and helping Army Leaders understand that it takes a comprehensive approach to promote safety. The key to these efforts has been ensuring Leader engagement at every level of our Army.

At the Soldier level, by incorporating composite risk management into their decision-making process, our Soldiers have clearly taken greater responsibility for their personal safety, as well as mission success. While I'm not a fan of statistics, it is evident Soldiers and Leaders "get it" by the 46-percent decrease in on-duty fatalities across our Army in fiscal 2008 (compared to fiscal 2007).

While the Army closed this fiscal year with an overall 16-percent decrease in Soldier fatalities, there is still much that must be done to prevent off-duty losses (which have increased 6 percent and account for almost 75 percent of our losses). The many on-duty safety programs and policies that protect our Soldiers, our "Band of Brothers," in both combat and in garrison (on duty), must also be applied in our approach to off-duty safety. We must remember that our "Band of Brothers" does not dissolve when the day ends and we head home, nor is it limited to those who wear a uniform. It encompasses all the members of our Army team, 24/7.

Safety is not a destination; it is a journey and, as such, must continually be adapted to an ever-changing environment. Leaders must help their Soldiers navigate and manage risk, both on and off duty; it is our responsibility and our mission. Composite risk management must be inherent in every decision, and we, as Leaders, must remain vigilant to protect against risk and prevent accidents in order to sustain our "Band of Brothers."

Finally, communication is critical to the success of our safety programs and initiatives. We must continue to take advantage of information-gathering and sharing resources such as the Army Readiness Assessment Program and Battle Command Knowledge System. These tools provide Leaders valuable insight into the safety climate of their command and facilitate the flow of knowledge.

Promoting safety is a constantly evolving mission and Leaders must continue to employ outside-the-box thinking to communicate with our Soldiers, Families and Civilians. Your input provides us valuable information on areas we can improve in order to raise awareness and prevent accidents and fatalities. I ask Soldiers, Family members and Civilian employees to share with the USACRC ways we can improve the Army safety programs and join us in the journey to a safe, Army Strong team.

Again, I am proud and humbled to be serving as the director of Army safety and the commander of the USACRC. I look forward to visiting our formations and Soldiers across our Army. I thank you all for your efforts over the past year and ask for your continued help in protecting our most vital resource, our Soldiers, both on and off duty, in combat and back home, and preserving our

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Commanding