



**Colonel John Lanier Ward, U.S. Army
Director, Rapid Equipping Force
Fort Belvoir, Virginia**



Colonel Lanier Ward became the sixth Director of the U.S. Army Rapid Equipping Force (REF) in March 2016. Reporting directly to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, the REF provides rapid material solutions to Soldiers for urgent combat requirements by harnessing current and emerging technologies. The Department of the Army first formed the REF in 2002 to support Soldiers in Afghanistan. The organization has met challenges as diverse as improving force protection, providing ISR in austere locations, improving operational energy sources and enhancing communications. The REF maintains a forward presence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait and routinely coordinates with forces deployed globally.

COL Ward brings a broad background of deployment and operational experience to the REF. He served as a Tank Company Commander during Operation Able Sentry in Macedonia and has three deployments to Iraq as 4-37 Armor's Scout Platoon Leader in Operation Desert Storm; the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment's RS3 in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 1, where he was wounded in Baghdad and spent a year recovering at Brooke Army Medical Center; and as the 1st Armored Division's Assistant Chief of Staff G3 during OIF 10-11/Operation New Dawn. Additional operational assignments include serving as a Scout, and Support Platoon Leader; a Training/Plans and Exercise Officer at the Brigade, Regiment, Division and 3d Army levels; the Commander of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the "Blackhorse"; and the Chief of Staff for Fort Bliss and the 1st Armored Division.

In addition to these deployments and assignments, COL Ward has served as a National Defense University Senior Military Fellow; the Commander of 2/16th Cavalry Squadron and a Warrior Transition Battalion; the Director of Academic Operations for the Command and General Staff College; and, most recently, as a Fellow with the Chief of Staff of the Army's Strategic Studies Group.

COL Ward has received numerous awards including the Legion of Merit (two oak leaf clusters), the Bronze Star Medal (two oak leaf clusters), the Purple Heart, the Joint Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (three oak leaf clusters), the Army Commendation Medal (with "Valor" device and two oak leaf clusters), and the Joint Commendation Medal; the Combat Action Badge and the Air Assault Badge.

He was commissioned as an Armor/Cavalry officer from the United States Military Academy in 1988. COL Ward received a Master's of Arts in Administration from Central Michigan University and later was awarded a Master's of Strategic Studies from the Air War College in 2012.

He is the proud father of a daughter, Allie, age 16.