

First four-star Signal Corps officer named Distinguished Member of the Signal Regiment

By Wilson A. Rivera

In the 152-year history of the Signal Corps, never has a member risen to the rank of four-star general...until now.

During a 12 Dec. 12, 2012 ceremony held at the U.S. Army Signal Corps Museum by the Chief of Signal, MG LaWarren V. Patterson, U.S. Army Signal Center of Excellence and Fort Gordon commanding general, appointed GEN Dennis L. Via as a new Distinguished Member of the Signal Regiment for his accomplishments over the course of a career.

A capacity crowd of distinguished guests and well-wishers packed the museum for the induction ceremony. The event coincided with the Signal Corps General Officer and Senior Enlisted Advisor Conference, held on post 11-13 Dec. Many of the attendees had served with or been mentored by GEN Via during their careers, and they filled the hall to see him be recognized.

Promoted 7 Aug. 2012, to his rank and current position as commanding general of the Army Materiel Command, GEN Via keeps military forces equipped with the latest technology and fields new equipment to meet the needs of warfighters on the battlefield.

"GEN Via has the responsibility to make the acquisition processes run smoothly and efficiently by analyzing costs, establishing credible benchmarks, and helping us understand where our money goes," said MG Patterson.

"In the age of shrinking fiscal resources, he has a huge task, coupled with the drawdown of troop strength and reduced funding. He has distinguished himself at every level of service," said MG Patterson during his introduction of the Regiment's 86th member.

"I can think of no better qualified individual to lead our continuing quest, to bring to the force, the resources we need today, and in the future."

GEN Via manages more than 70,000 employ-



(Photo by Marlene Thompson)

GEN Dennis L. Via, U.S. Army Materiel Command commanding general accepts a certificate recognizing his appointment to the Distinguished Member of the Signal Corps Regiment on 12 Dec. 2012 in the Signal Museum at Fort Gordon.

ees and an annual budget of \$49 billion, while controlling \$92 billion in contracts to support more than 1 million pieces of equipment.

Only 85 Signal Corps Soldiers have been appointed to the honor since the beginning of the regimental system in 1986.

In receiving the honor, GEN Via said, "Thank you for the distinct honor of being named a Distinguished Member of the Signal Regiment," said GEN Via.

"I am deeply honored and proud to join the company of many Distinguished Members in the Regiment."

Wilson Rivera is editor of the Signal Newspaper, the Fort Gordon post newspaper.



GEN Dennis L. Via, a native of Martinsville, Va., was commissioned on 18 May 1980 in the U.S. Army Signal Corps after graduating as a Distinguished Military Graduate from Virginia State University, Petersburg, Va. He later earned a Master's Degree from Boston University, and is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (class of 1991) and the U.S. Army War College (class of 1999).

GEN Via was nominated by the President of the United States for promotion to the rank of general in 2012. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and became the first Signal Officer to rise to the rank of general in the Regiment. He is currently assigned as the commander for U.S. Army Material Command where he served as deputy since May 2011.

Some of GEN Via's major accomplishments include command at all levels ensuring that the Soldiers being deployed were properly trained, equipped and ready to accomplish their mission and taking care of their Family members as well. He has served on the inaugural committee for the President George W. Bush first term.

He always modernized his units with the latest equipment, ensuring that combat teams being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan had equipment to track the locations of U.S. and enemy forces, jam improvised explosive devices, scan battle areas and see the enemy (for

Upon Regimental activation in 1986, the Signal Corps instituted a program for the recognition of personnel who have made a special contribution and distinguished themselves in their service to the Regiment.

The Distinguished Member selections are designed to recognize the individuals who are most notable and to promote and enhance the history of the Regiment and foster cohesion among its members.

example, night vision) and other equipment. He worked, as part of the Army's realignment and base closure; and directed and executed the relocation of Communications Electronic Command at Fort Monmouth, N.J., a 92-year-old base with over 7,000 employees (50 percent of the employees relocated) to a new facility at Aberdeen Proving Ground Base in Md.

The general's command assignments included: the 82nd Signal Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC; 3rd Signal Brigade, III Armored Corps, Fort Hood, TX; 5th Signal Command, U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army, Mannheim, Germany; and the U. S. Army Communications-Electronics Life Cycle Management Command and Fort Monmouth, Fort Monmouth, NJ.

His key staff assignments included Aide-de-Camp to the Chief of Staff, Allied Forces Southern Europe, Naples, Italy; Operations Officer, J-6, Armed Forces Inaugural Committee, Washington, DC; Chief Joint Requirements Oversight Council Division, Office of

the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-8, U.S. Army, Washington, DC; and Principal Director, Global Information Grid Operations/Commander, Defense Information Systems Agency Global Operations/Deputy Commander, Joint Task Force-Global Network Operations, Defense Information Systems Agency, Arlington, Va., and Deputy Commander U.S. Army Material Command, Huntsville, Ala.

GEN Via's awards include the Defense Distinguish Service Medal; the Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; Defense Superior Service Medal; Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster; Defense Meritorious Service Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters; Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; Joint Service Achievement Medal; and the Army Achievement Medal. He is authorized to wear the Master Parachutist Badge, the Joint Staff Identification Badge, and Army Staff Identification Badge.

GEN Via is married to the former Linda A. Brown of Warsaw, Va. They have two sons, Brian and