

USAWOCC Welcomes New Commandant

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The United States Army Warrant Officer Career College (USAWOCC) recently welcomed its ninth Commandant, COL Garry L. Thompson. COL Thompson assumed command from COL Stanley O. Smith on 2 May 2014, during a change of command ceremony at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum. Practically the first thing he said when he stepped to the podium, after assuming command, was that he was having a hard time containing his excitement about this great leadership opportunity. As he continued his remarks, it became obvious to everyone in the audience that they were listening to a genuine, caring, and charismatic leader who unabashedly wears his feelings on his sleeve.

As he spoke of his enormous appreciation for the Warrant Officer Cohort, COL Thompson shared his admiration for two Warrant Officers who had tremendously impacted his career and inspired him to want to lead: retired CW5 Stephen Knowles, who was inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame in 2007, and CW4 Willie Ruf, now deceased, who has a street named in his honor, here at Fort Rucker, AL.

Thompson said, "I think it more than appropriate today to acknowledge these two legendary Warrant Officers, who have both impacted my life. CW5 (Ret) Steve Knowles was the first Chief Warrant Officer of the Aviation Branch. He was like my brother when I was a lieutenant, and he showed me exactly what being a quiet professional meant. And although Willie is no longer with us, I'm sure he's up there looking down, and he's not at a loss for words!" COL Thompson continued, "For those of you who knew Steve and Willie, they are what I think of as the epitome of what a Warrant Officer should be. I truly don't think I would be here today without the impact both of them had on my life."

COL Thompson closed with, "Lastly, to the officers and soldiers of this fantastic organization: I truly believe that to lead is to serve. My promise to you is to serve you, and together we are going to make this organization even better than it is today."

In the two short weeks that COL Thompson has been here, we, the USAWOCC cadre members, have become very optimistic that he will not only continue to ensure that the College provides exceptionally effective candidate training and professional military education for our Cohort, but that he will also lead the way in making it even better. His change of command biography, quoted below, lists his credentials to lead this fine academic institution in its quest to not just sustain, but to improve the level of excellence with which it carries out its mission.

Biography of COL Gary L. Thompson



Colonel Garry L. Thompson is a native of Chillicothe, Ohio. He was a Distinguished Military Graduate, University of Rio Grande, and commissioned as a 2LT in 1989. Following commissioning and the Officer Basic Course he was assigned to Fort Bragg, NC, where he served as a platoon leader, company executive officer, and battalion assistant S3. Colonel Thompson transferred to the Aviation Branch in 1993 and attended Initial Entry Rotary Wing (IERW) training, the Aviation Officer Basic Course, and the AH-64 Aircraft Qualification Course (AQC). Upon completion he spent 18 months in Korea, where he commanded C Company, 1-2 Aviation Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division.

Following this command, he attended the Armor Officer Advanced Course and was subsequently assigned as the Assistant Brigade S-3, 101st Aviation Brigade, Fort Campbell, KY, and Commander, HHC, 101st Aviation Brigade. He then served as an Attack/Cav company trainer/observer controller at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA.

Following completion of the Command and General Staff College, COL Thompson commanded D Company, 1-145th and was later the 1st Aviation Brigade Executive Officer at Fort Rucker, AL. He then served as Current Operations Officer aboard the National Airborne Operations Center Offutt Air Force Base, NE. From 2008 to 2010 he commanded 1-11th Aviation Regiment and was subsequently the Deputy Chief of Staff for U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker.

COL Thompson attended the Naval War College in Newport, RI, from 2011 to 2012 and deployed to Baghdad as the senior advisor to the Iraqi Army Aviation Chief, from 2012 to 2013. He was the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence G3 from July 2013 until he assumed responsibility, in May 2014, as Commandant of the USAWOCC.

COL Thompson's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Army Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Aerial Achievement Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Combat Readiness Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal with three bronze stars, the Korea Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Overseas Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), the Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), the Joint Meritorious Unit Award and the Army Superior Unit Award. He has been awarded the Parachutist Badge, the Air Assault Badge, the German Armed Forces efficiency badge, and the Senior Aviator Badge.

COL Thompson has been married for 24 years to the former Mary L. Dowler of Jackson, Ohio. They have two children: Jeb, 16, and Addy 12.