

IN RECOGNITION

Col. Thompson takes charge

30-year veteran commander takes control of small but powerful DCE

FEMA Region IV's Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) has a new commanding officer following the retirement of former commander Col. Jan Apo.

Col. John "JT" Thompson brings nearly 30 years of military experience and leadership to the helm of FEMA's Region IV DCE.

A helicopter pilot by trade, Col. Thompson has had a distinguished career within the U.S. Army aviation and Special Operations communities. He has commanded Army formations at every level up to brigade, with over 10 years command experience.

Thompson relies on those people skills to guide the Region IV DCE. The unit's mission, to coordinate DOD assets, covers a wide spectrum of support—everything from response to natural disasters, terrorist attacks, Presidential inaugurations, and high visibility sporting events like the Super Bowl. In other words, the 10-member unit swings into action when



state and local authorities have maxed out their capacity and request federal assistance to carry out the life-saving and life-sustaining missions.

"When you ask for the DOD's assistance, you can bet we're going to come with the right tools," explained Col. Thompson.

Although the DCE is small in numbers, it comes with a very large punch because we come with the entire Department of Defense behind it, he said.

Col. Thompson's leadership was tested during the

historic flooding in South Carolina. With flooding widespread throughout the Palmetto State search and rescue teams worked around the clock to save lives. With so many ongoing rescues, resources were often maxed out. Through foresight and collaborative planning, Col. Thompson's team placed rescue teams on standby from Moody Air force, Ft. Bragg, and Norfolk to assist. Although, the rescue teams ultimately were not needed, the DCE's "never-be-late" planning re-affirmed DOD's critical role in the DSCA.

"Its best to be ready and not needed than caught flat footed when a real world event occurs" said Thompson.



Region IV's Defense Coordinating Element may be small in number but they have the "punch" of the entire Department of Defense behind them, says Col. Thompson.