

2017 Ammunition Hall of Fame Inductee

LTG (RET.) DENNIS BENCHOFF



Lieutenant General (LTG) Retired (Ret.) Dennis L. Benchoff was born in Pennsylvania in 1939. LTG Benchoff graduated from the U. S. Military Academy in 1962. He holds Masters Degrees from Michigan State University in Operations Research and Systems Analysis and from New York University in Economics Analysis. He held numerous commands, to include the 101st Airborne Division's 20th Chemical Detachment in Vietnam; the 707th Maintenance Battalion at Fort Ord, California; the 59th Ordnance Brigade in U.S. Army Europe; the Red River Army Depot at Texarkana, Texas; and the Industrial Operations Command at Rock Island, Illinois.

LTG Benchoff made a name for himself at the U.S. Military Academy, where he was known as the "Pennsylvania Flash" for his achievements on the varsity wrestling team. He gained a reputation as a man who thrived during a challenge. During his military career he excelled at decision-making under challenging conditions. In his early career, some of these challenges included commanding a convoy from the middle of California to Washington State. As a Colonel, he commanded the Army's largest depot, Red River Army Depot, which was the only depot with a maintenance, supply and ammunition mission. Later, as a Brigadier General, he was responsible for the safe removal of American chemical weapons from Germany. The German Government awarded him the Distinguished Service Cross with Gold Star in appreciation of his efforts. Also as a Brigadier General, he was assigned as the Deputy Commanding General of the Armaments Munitions and Chemical Command (AMCCOM). He later commanded the formation and establishment of the U.S. Army Industrial Operations Command (IOC) in the midst of its planning phase to the start of its execution phase. While commanding IOC he streamlined the management structure, established an ammunition tier structure for storage ammunition, and managed the transfer of the Army War Reserve mission to the IOC. In this position, he became responsible for managing all the Army War Reserve prepositioned materiel worldwide.

Brigadier General (BG) Benchoff executed the difficult assignment of closing the U.S. Army Depot Command, located in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, in his home county of Franklin. He kept the DESCOM command in a business-like process through its final days of operation as the workforce's morale sunk with the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision to establish the new IOC command's headquarters at Rock Island, Illinois, instead of at Chambersburg. This was personally an extremely difficult assignment since many employees at DESCOM looked upon his arrival as a sign that their jobs might be spared in the BRAC efforts. However, he worked with the workforce to ensure understanding of the business decisions behind the formation of IOC. He saw the move as a good business decision for the Army, despite the unpopularity.

Under his leadership, DESCOM consisted of eight depots and five depot activities throughout the U.S., collectively comprising one third of the U.S. Army Materiel Command's

(AMC) workforce. With an annual budget of \$2.3B in FY1993, the DESCOM depots overhauled, repaired, modified, converted, stored, and distributed assigned commodities, such as ammunition and missiles, as well as maintained prepositioned heavy combat equipment, supplies and ammunition on board ships during his command.

To deal with the BRAC transition, BG Benchhoff established a team to seek employment and/or training for new jobs for former DESCOM employees who did not want to transfer to Rock Island. He promised them that he would do everything possible to find them new positions and he kept that promise. Only a very few did not eventually have a new position to go to after DESCOM closed. Once in command of the newly formed IOC, Major General (MG) Benchhoff set to work to change the cultural environment. He saw promotion and growth opportunities for the DESCOM staff within the new HQ, IOC and encouraged employees to transfer to the new headquarters. Several of his innovations at HQ, IOC were variations of concepts he had adopted during his earlier commands. Major General Benchhoff established the Chief-of-Staff type structure at HQ, IOC that he used throughout his Army career. He met resistance at DESCOM from employees that did not want to move and resistance at AMCCOM from employees that did not want to change their corporate environment. MG Benchhoff instituted a HEARTS program, a team-building process to help smooth out the transition. He was among the earliest Commanding Generals to recognize and advocate cultural change within his major subordinate command to fit the downsizing, peacetime environment of the post-Cold War era. He encouraged partnering with private industry where possible as a means of the IOC accomplishing its mission, making the best use of resources. The two commands had more than 30,000 employees and 50 locations in the U.S. and overseas in FY1994. As the Commanding General, IOC, MG Benchhoff had enormous responsibility for his new command's missions which ranged from manufacturing bullets, to repairing tanks, to building howitzers, to outloading ammunition, to prepositioned war reserve stocks. This was the first time in many years that ammunition was managed under one command.

MG Benchhoff was responsible for streamlining ammunition operations of the IOC, with the establishment of an ammunition tiering structure for its storage depots and facilities. Three levels of ammunition storage or tiers were established. The first level - Tier I depots stored ammunition to be used to support immediate needs of training or mobilization. Tier I depots met the ammunition needs in the first 30 days of a conflict. The second level - Tier II depots stored additional war reserve stocks for mobilization and required items to supplement ammunition needs if a conflict extended beyond 30 days. The third tier - Tier III formed the caretaker depots that stored dormant, excess ammunition and stocks for demilitarization. Specific ammunition plants were also designated to focus on a particular technology in an asserted effort to eliminate duplication of technology and capability.

He concluded his military career at Headquarters, U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC), as Deputy Chief of Staff, Logistics and Operations on July 1, 1996, with a rank of Lieutenant General and finally as Deputy Commanding General (DCG) AMC. As the AMC DCG, he was the Executive Director, Conventional Ammunition. In that position, he improved inventory control procedures and visibility on in-transit cargo in the supply system. He oversaw stock-level reviews that led to improved repair parts availability in the field. He led the Army to reorganize pre-positioned equipment stocks to support rapid deployment. He also consolidated

AMC organizations, championed reform, and pursued international agreements with Allies for joint efforts on behalf of the Army. LTG Benchoff was a beacon and mentor to many depot commanders who strove to emulate his Soldier strong-mindedness. With analytical background, LTG Benchoff earned a reputation as a military leader who could make tough decisions on difficult and complex issues. A significant portion of his later career dealt with the successful merger of ammunition, weapons, and depot management. The successful transition earned LTG Benchoff respect within the ammunition community. LTG Benchoff was inducted into the Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame in 2000 and is now inducted into the Ammunition Hall of Fame in 2017.