

Bailey Reaffirms Oath as DEVCOM CBC Director

Leader shares perspective on new role, future of organization

By Dr. Brian B. Feeney



Major General Edmond 'Miles' Brown administers the Oath of Office to Michael Bailey as his wife, Deborah Bailey, holds the Bible during the Assumption of Responsibility Ceremony held at the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC) on May 18, 2023. (U.S. Army photo by Ellie White)

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD

– Michael Bailey reaffirmed his oath of office in a May 18 ceremony recognizing him as the director of the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC). The oath was administered by DEVCOM Commanding General Maj. Gen. Edmond “Miles” Brown in a ceremony at Aberdeen Proving Ground. The position elevates Bailey to Senior Executive Service Tier 2 and follows his tenure as acting director of the Center, which he held since November 10, 2022. Deborah

Bailey held the Bible as her husband affirmed his oath, and their two children and Mr. Bailey’s parents looked on from the front row.

Bailey has been involved in chemical biological defense as a scientist and leader, holding varied positions for more than 23 years. He was the deputy joint project manager for CBRN sensors at the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense from 2019 to 2021. There he was responsible for the management and execution of a CBRN portfolio of sensor development and procurement programs, and platform integration programs.

He served as senior strategist at the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical and Biological Defense (JPEO-CBD) from 2017 to 2019. Before that, he spent a year as a student at Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource at National Defense University after having served as a strategic planner at JPEO-CBD from 2014 to 2016.

From 2012 to 2014, he contributed to the Army’s Strategic Studies Group as a strategic planner working for the Chief of Staff of the Army. There, he played a critical role in helping the Army’s most senior leaders understand global urbanization trends and what they mean for future force structure and capability requirements.



Michael Bailey talks about the future of DEVCOM CBC during the Assumption of Responsibility Ceremony. (U.S. Army photo by Ellie White)

Bailey has experience as a bench scientist, too. He was a microbiologist at National Institutes of Health from 2005 to 2008. He worked as a scientist at the U.S. Army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases from 2001 to 2005. This work included time in a biosafety level 4 laboratory, which is the highest level of containment for biological threat agents. There, he worked on vaccines against biological warfare agents.

Just prior to his swearing in, Bailey shared his thoughts on his new position and on the Center's unique capabilities and mission. Those questions and answers follow:

Q. What was your immediate reaction when you learned that you had been selected to be the permanent director of the Center?

A. As I wrote in a recent message to the workforce, it felt very good when Maj. Gen. Brown called me to let me know. It's intimidating knowing how many exceptional people came before me in this job, and it's somewhat daunting knowing how important the Center's mission is. But I also feel very excited knowing how many great people we have and knowing how much we're capable of.

Q. What does the position of permanent director allow you to do that "acting" did not?

A. "Acting" means that a director is keeping the Center on an even keel, but not necessarily setting a new course. I have definite ideas on how we can improve as a Center to better accomplish our mission. As permanent director I have already started sharing these ideas with everyone through workforce messages, and together, we will begin executing them. It also gives our partners, customers, chain of command and other CDBP organizations some comfort knowing that we have a stable leadership team in place.

Q. Before coming to the Center, you held a leadership position at CBRN Sensors at JPEO-CBRND and served as a strategic planner for the Chief of Staff of the Army's Strategic Studies Group. Going further back, you were a microbiologist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID). How did those

experiences shape your approach to managing the Center?

- A. When I was with the Chief of Staff of the Army's Strategic Studies Group I saw how a large, complex organization with many missions assesses current and emerging threats, prioritizes them and creates short-term, mid-term and long-term plans to address them. That is what I strive to do here at the Center. The threats that we face here are primarily focused on chemical and biological agents, but the method of assessing, prioritizing and executing is a crucial skill set. I was able to learn how to do that from some of the best at the Department of the Army level.

My time at CBRN Sensors at JPEO-CBRND gave me a solid technical foundation in leading large organizations, and it gave me a good perspective of the Chemical Biological Defense Program enterprise and how CBRN organizations share in the mission. The strength of the CBDP is that it is a hub with many spokes. JPEO-CBRND and its program management shops, and the Joint Science and Technology Office provide the direction, the resources and the oversight, and as CBC supporting those missions we get to do what we do best – innovate. Having been on all sides of this, I feel like I have a good perspective on how to make it all work more effectively.

And, of course, my time as a microbiologist at USAMRIID and then NIH taught me how to be analytical, and gave me a reasonable understanding of the commodity space that we work in. The bench scientist and the engineer in this enterprise are absolutely critical factors in making it all work. The innovation we always talk about comes from their daily work, tackling problems and finding better ways to do things. Having experienced that, I know that the best thing I can do for our scientists, our engineers and our technicians is to be an advocate for them, make it easier for them to do their jobs, and let them do what they do best. I feel a tremendous sense of pride in what they enable the Center and help the enterprise to accomplish.

- Q. The Center has a broad chemical biological portfolio pursued by people with many different scientific, engineering, and technical backgrounds. What synergies do you see there?**

- A. We touch every aspect of the acquisition lifecycle: basic and applied research, design, prototyping, testing, fielding and sustainment. That means that our subject matter experts (SMEs) at each point along the way can engage with any other SME at any other point along that path and innovate. This allows us to be full partners within the chemical and biological defense community. Working together in teams, our people can see the complete picture. We have a number of efforts going on right now that bridge the "valley of death" that everyone talks about. By providing that end-to-end look at a capability we can anticipate challenges and capitalize on opportunities in ways that we couldn't if we only did scientific research or only did advanced engineering. Innovation happens at the intersections of different fields. We're getting good at creating those opportunities to innovate, and our challenge moving forward will be partnering with more organizations and creating more opportunities.



Q. New technologies can emerge suddenly, such as artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML) and now AI chatbots. They are empowering the development of entirely new algorithms. Is the Center exploring this technology?

A. In fact, we had a team here at the Center who placed third in an Army-wide AI/ML competition. Their work involved teaching unmanned ground vehicles to navigate obstacles over land. Also, we are currently working with the Army Research Laboratory and Ground Vehicle Systems Center to develop an autonomous decontamination system that will include an AI/ML capability. It detects and maps contamination on a combat vehicle then directs a robotic arm to perform decontamination.

We also have the legacy of our most recent Grand Challenge, the STEWARD lecture series on AI/ML and seed money competitions for AI/ML-based research projects. STEWARD, which stands for Software Tools and Educating the Workforce to use Artificial Intelligence for Research and Development, did a lot to raise awareness of this technology across the workforce and I believe we will increasingly see AI/ML woven into our research methods.

Q. The Center has a long history of supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This includes our science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) outreach to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), minority internship opportunities and affirmative hiring. Now we have a DEI office. How do you see us continually improving in this area?

A. Fundamentally I believe that diversity is a strength for the nation, and it is a strength for the Center. As I mentioned before, innovation happens at the intersections of things, when different viewpoints or capabilities are brought together to form something new. Diversity enables innovation by bringing different things together to create something new. Diversity includes elements like race, religion, and gender, but it is not limited to those things. Diversity of abilities, education, skill sets and viewpoints are also important. If you're trying to innovate in a really technical area, even something like chemistry or biology, you're not going to get there if your team only consists of Ph.D.s from Harvard. Those folks are super smart for sure and have a tremendous amount to add to the discussion, but they alone are not sufficient to really innovate in our space.

Therefore, we seek to achieve diversity through equity and inclusion of as many people with as many skillsets and with as diverse a set of backgrounds as we can find. We have researchers, engineers, and support personnel from ivy league schools, HBCUs, MSIs, colleges/universities of every variety. We also have an incredible part of the workforce that are technicians, skilled in the trades like mechanics, and electricians. They do some of the best and most important work at the whole Center. I'm proud that we have created an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It ensures that the Center has a welcoming work environment for people of all genders, races, cultures, ages, and abilities. Our DEI officer also actively recruits interns at HBCUs

across the country.

Q. What is your advice to members of the workforce on how to excel at the Center and how can they best make a difference in serving the mission?

A. Be really good at what you do and be proud of what you do. It doesn't matter what your role is at the Center, you're contributing to a important mission. Take pride in that. We are continuing a long legacy of excellence, take pride in that, too. Learn from the world-class experts around you. If you are early in your career with us, seek mentors. If you are more senior, be a mentor. We have a vital mission and a unique set of capabilities and infrastructure. Everyone here is part of a force for good. Be proud of that and constantly look for ways to serve our mission better, for your own career, but more importantly, for the nation and the world.

Q. Is there anything I haven't covered that you would like to share?

A. Only to say "Thank You" to my family, friends, colleagues, and so many people I've met along the way.

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For more information about the DEVCOM Chemical Biological Center, visit <https://cbc.DEVCOM.army.mil>

The U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Chemical Biological Center (CBC) is aligned under the U.S. Army Futures Command (AFC) and U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM.)

AFC provides Army modernization solutions (integrated concepts, organizational designs, and technologies) in order to allow the Joint Force, employing Army capabilities, to achieve overmatch in the future operation environment. DEVCOM is a major subordinate command of AFC. DEVCOM leads in the discovery, development, and delivery of technology-based capabilities to enable Soldiers to win our nation's wars and come home safely. DEVCOM CBC is the Army's principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering, and field operations. DEVCOM CBC is headquartered at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.