I am pleased to introduce this special issue of The Journal of the US Army Medical Department dealing with Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I am proud of the excellent work done during this contingency by each member of the Medical Department--those that were deployed and those that stayed behind to provide much-needed support.

This event was another landmark in the illustrious history of the US Army Medical Department. Never before have the armed forces moved such a large force over such a great distance in such a short time. I am delighted with our part in the victory of the coalition forces. Disease and non-battle injury rates were the lowest of any previous combat. We moved 44 DEPMEDS to SWA, and for the first time since their development, tested them in a real-life scenario. We once more proved that US medicine probably has one of the highest standards of care in the world and that we are willing to provide that excellence of care to our soldiers and, in this case, even to our enemies. We are all grateful that chemical and biological warfare agents were never used and that the war was over before we had more casualties; however, we were prepared for both of these possibilities.

This conflict also showed that many nations can fight side-by-side for a common cause. The cooperation among the coalition forces was unique and outstanding. We learned to be flexible and inventive. Cooperation with our sister services was also superb and contributed much to our success.

Although our mission was successful, we did have some problems. We need to discuss them openly and thoroughly so that we can learn from them. However, we do not want to "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory" by overemphasizing our problems in relation to our many, many accomplishments.

This special issue focuses on our successes, failures and lessons learned during Desert Shield/Storm. It provides a record and a relook. Each writer offers a different perspective, and we sought to bring together many different points of view. I encourage everyone to read this issue carefully to see how it could benefit you in your practice of medicine during peace and war.

I feel honored to have been The Surgeon General during this time, and want to thank every member of the AMEDD, the Reserves, the National Guard and civilians for the part you played.

Frank F. Ledford Jr.

FRANK F. LEDFORD, JR.
Lieutenant General
The Surgeon General