

Lieutenant Colonel Leon E. Pennington, U.S. Army
Commander/Professor of Military Science
Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, Louisiana

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Leon E. Pennington was born March 21, 1959, in Corpus Christi, Texas. He graduated from Milford High School, near Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1977. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Troy University, Troy, Alabama in 1993 and a Master of Arts in West European Studies from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana in 2000.

LTC Pennington enlisted in the Marine Corps at age 17. A car accident injury prevented him from going to boot camp so his military service was temporarily postponed. He later joined the Ohio Army National Guard as a Private and served two years as a Helicopter Repairer. He applied for active duty as a Warrant Officer Candidate (Flight) and completed his training as an Honor Graduate, becoming a UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopter Pilot. After serving with the 4/7 Cavalry in South Korea, the 7th Infantry Division (Light) in Fort Ord, California, and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Group (Airborne) in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, LTC Pennington was selected to attend Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. After graduating as a Distinguished Military Graduate in 1989, LTC Pennington returned to the 160th SOAR (ABN) where he served as a Company Executive Officer and Platoon Leader. While with the 160th SOAR (ABN) he participated in two combat tours: Operation Just Cause in Panama and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Southwest Asia.

LTC Pennington completed the Aviation Officer Advanced Course and was assigned to the 2-24th Aviation Regiment at Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia. His duties included Assistant Operations Officer, Air Planning Officer for the United Nations Mission to Haiti, and Battalion Intelligence Officer. The 2-24th Aviation Regiment was designated as 2-3rd Aviation Regiment and LTC Pennington took command of A Company in 1996. His mission included mechanized infantry support for the 3rd Infantry Division, and Operation Bahamas, Turks, and Caicos (OPBAT), a counter-drug interdiction mission with the Bahamian Police and Drug Enforcement Agency. His company also participated in Bright Star in Egypt in 1997.

LTC Pennington was then selected for training as a Foreign Area Officer (FAO), Western Europe and attended the Defense Language Institute for French in Fort Ord, California. After completing a Master of Arts degree he was assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Paris, France, with duty at the Ecole Éat-major in Compiègne. He was selected for the Command General Staff College with resident study in Paris at the Ecole Militaire. At the completion of his studies, LTC Pennington was assigned as the Executive Officer of the 1-212th Aviation Regiment at Fort Rucker, Alabama. While there he completed the UH-60 Blackhawk Instructor Pilot course and served as an Instructor Pilot for flight school students. His duties included performing as the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems Officer for the Unit of Action Maneuver Battle Lab at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He was later assigned to the Combat Readiness Center, Fort Rucker, Alabama, as Chief, Attack Division with duty as a Board President for Centralized Accident Investigations and completed five Class A and B accidents in Alabama, Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom and Hawaii.

LTC Pennington's awards and decorations include: Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with V device, Joint Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters, Army Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, National Defense Service Medal with bronze star, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with bronze star and bronze arrowhead, Southwest Asia Service Medal with bronze star, Global War on Terror Service Medal, Korea Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, United Nations Service Medal, Saudi Arabia Kuwait Liberation Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal, Army Senior Aviator badge, and the Parachutist badge.