



## TODD TOWNSEND

**COMMAND/ORGANIZATION:** Joint Program Executive Office for Armaments and Ammunition; Project Manager Maneuver Ammunition Systems; Product Manager Small Caliber Ammunition

**TITLE:** Ammunition branch chief, 6.8 mm Next Generation Squad Weapons

**YEARS OF SERVICE IN WORKFORCE:** 22

**DAWIA CERTIFICATIONS:** Advanced in pro-gram management, Practitioner in engineering and technical management

**EDUCATION:** M.S. in management, Florida Institute of Technology; B.S. in electrical engineering, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; B.S. in physics, Roberts Wesleyan College

**AWARDS:** Certificate of Achievement (2024); Civilian Service Commendation Medal (2023); Superior Civilian Service Award (2014)

## BE ADAPTABLE

Being adaptable is crucial in today's rapidly changing world. Whether in professional or personal lives, unexpected challenges and opportunities frequently arise—adaptability allows individuals to adjust their approaches, learn new skills and respond effectively to changes.

Todd Townsend, ammunition branch chief for 6.8 mm Next Generation Squad Weapons (NGSW), within the Joint Program Executive Office for Armaments and Ammunition, Project Manager Maneuver Ammunition Systems, believes this flexibility fosters resilience, innovation and continuous growth, making it a vital trait for success in any endeavor.

"Being adaptable is key," he said. "My job is about risk management and managing resources to meet an ever-fluctuating requirement. While the goal does not change, the path to get there is not a straight line; if I am not flexible or able to navigate the terrain, then it will be increasingly stressful."

Townsend leads a developmental program that is fielding a new caliber of ammunition to the Close Combat Force—the first time a new caliber, 6.8 mm has been introduced to the Army in over 40 years. "This is a part of a much bigger effort involving many stakeholders to successfully field a new rifle, automatic rifle, fire control and advanced ammunition," Townsend said. "This ammunition, common to both weapons employed by the Close Combat Force, will fill a capability gap that requires increased energy on target at range to defeat current and emerging peer and near peer threats."

Prior to his role as the 6.8 mm branch chief, Townsend was the branch chief for the entire Small Caliber Research and Development (R&D) team. As NGSW Ammunition became a larger effort, he said he focused his efforts on 6.8 mm ammunition. Based on his experience with the legacy caliber R&D (5.56 mm, 7.62 mm and .50 cal), he was able to leverage many of the capabilities being developed.

"I enjoy the combination of pushing technical maturation, developing and executing programs to move from development into qualification and production, all with the goal of delivering new capability to the U.S. Soldier," he said. "It's rewarding, working side by side with Soldiers and industry, while leading a team of highly capable teammates."

Townsend said what most people find surprising is the length of time it takes to go from concept to fielding. "Even fast programs can take many years due to the high bar of meeting technical requirements and safety," he said. But he's been lucky to work on multiple programs that have been successfully fielded, including 155 mm Excalibur and M80A1 7.62 mm Enhanced Performance Ammunition.

In 2003, Townsend began his career in Quality Engineering and System Assurance for the 155 mm Excalibur program in a role where he was able to work quality, overall programmatic, requirements, test and evaluation and risk management.

“I enjoyed gaining and developing broad expertise while supporting the Excalibur program and continue to expand my acquisition knowledge in my current role,” he said. “There is never a dull moment as each program has its own unique challenges that require new and adaptive ways to overcome and meet the mission—delivering ammunition to the warfighter.”

The most important points in his career, Townsend said, have been engagements with industry; much of the work he and his team does is made possible through collaboration and cooperation with industry partners.

“Early in my career, I was able to spend 18 months at the Raytheon facility working on the Excalibur project. Being a part of the daily engineering discussions helped me better understand the challenges that industry faces meeting their contract and program obligations. I was a part of engineering, configuration management, daily staff calls and leadership level discussions,” he said. “I wish I had taken an opportunity much earlier to do a rotation at the Pentagon as I imagine it would have provided a breadth of opportunity to participate in efforts at a much different level.”

An Insights course, in 2018, provided Townsend and others from his leadership with valuable instruction about different communication styles. The focus, he said, was to understand his own style, but just as importantly, to identify and understand the style of others so he can adapt to communicate with them efficiently and effectively.

“My boss was in the course with me, and I think we both left with a greater sense of how to better communicate with each other,” he said. “I learned that I need to approach him with more detail and supporting data for ideas and to expect probing questions to understand a recommendation or path the program is taking.”

His advice for junior acquisition personnel is to regularly develop their communication skills, with the right level of detail for the audience based on written and oral communication. “The level of detail you give to the product manager is different than the program manager, which is different than a general officer,” he said. “Additionally, learn how to create presentations that clearly provide the message without unnecessary detail. This is something I strive to work on for myself and with my team.”

Outside of work, Townsend is an avid DIYer who likes to build, fix and create. In 2022, he and several partners turned their interest in homebrewing into co-owning a commercial brewery



#### 6.8 DAY

Townsend, middle, with Art Fiorellini, left, Project Manager Soldier Lethality, and John Conway, right, DEVCOM AC, at a team picnic celebrating “6.8 Day” in honor of fielding the 6.8 mm NGSW and Ammunition at Picatinny Arsenal. The event scheduled for June 8 was held on June 13, 2024, due to the weekend. (Photo courtesy of Todd Townsend)

called Double Tap Brewing in Whippany, New Jersey. “I think the commonality with work is that big projects are achievable if you have the right team. The partners in the brewery are multi-disciplined—engineering and program management, a lawyer, an electrician—and all of us were avid homebrewers,” he said. “By taking a team approach across disciplines, we were able to achieve the momentous task of opening a brewery. Similarly to working for the Army, there were many challenges along the way we had to overcome.”

He said in addition to being adaptable, “It’s all about teamwork.”

“At home it’s a team effort with my wife and family. At the brewery, it’s ensuring my partners and I function as a team. At Picatinny, it’s about building a team culture within my office, the users [Soldier Lethality Cross Functional Team] and industry partners to accomplish our mission.”

—**CHERYL MARINO**