



U.S. Army graphic by Dale Cordes

Rearview Mirror

By Retired Sgt. Maj. Wascar A. Diaz

Department of Professional Studies, Sergeants Major Academy

As I look back through my rearview mirror, my wife quietly sits beside me, lost in thought. I can see my kids restlessly trying to find comfortable ways to fall asleep. I can't help but wonder: Would they have chosen this life if given the chance? This nomadic existence we military families must endure?

I can't help but ponder: If I'd given them the choice, would they have willingly accepted such lives and their challenges? To leave the routine and all they came to know, their friends and school, for this new journey and adventure? I can only hope that what I chose for us is what they would've wanted me to choose.

As I look through my rearview mirror, I can't help but feel a twinge of sadness. Perhaps it's the same grief they feel as we leave a part of our lives behind. For me, it's a bit different. I chose this. I chose this life and grew accustomed to it. Sometimes, I find myself wishing for a change of atmosphere.

Through my rearview mirror, I can see in the

distance what moments earlier seemed like tall sentinels and guardians of a sleeping city. These buildings now seem like no more than a Lego skyline my son could have built. That same city watched my kids grow. That same city welcomed us a little over four years ago. That same city allowed me to say goodbye to friends from a military career spanning more than 20 years. That same city united us for one more laugh before a brief goodbye. That same city gave us friends we came to regard deeply, friends we made part of our family. It's the same city, now awake, I see far behind us through my rearview mirror.

As we bid farewell to our friends and this wonderful city, I know this isn't goodbye but a "see you later." As our paths will, one day, cross again. And as the city grows even smaller in my rearview mirror, I know I must keep moving and keep my eyes on the road. I must stay focused on the mission ahead and the journey to come. ■

Retired Sgt, Maj. Wascar A. Diaz is a civilian instructor in the Department of Professional Studies at the Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. He previously served as an instructor in the academy's Department of Distance Education and with Field Artillery Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Vilseck, Germany. Diaz deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003 to 2004, 2006 to 2007, and 2009 to 2010. He holds a Master of Science in Leadership from Trident University International.



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