



COL James A. Zanella
Deputy CDR/Chief of Staff
U.S. Army Operational Test Command

An infantryman, COL Zanella commissioned from West Point in 1999. At his first duty station, he led a Mechanized Platoon and Heavy Mortar Platoon with 1st Battalion, 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, Friedberg, Germany. He deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom from May until November of 2003 as the Heavy Mortar Platoon Leader. COL Zanella trained infantry platoon leaders as a Senior Platoon Trainer and Battalion S3 with 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, Infantry Basic Officer Leadership Course from May 2004 until June 2006. He commanded Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from September 2006 until April 2008. In that period, he led the company during 15 months of counterinsurgency operations as part of the Iraq Surge. COL Zanella then served as a Maneuver Observer Trainer and Chief of Exercise Control for Operations Group Charlie, United States Army Mission Command Training Program, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. After attending the Command and General Staff College and School for Advanced Military Studies, COL Zanella deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan in June 2012 as a Joint Operations Planner for United States Forces – Afghanistan, J5 Plans and Policy Directorate. In that capacity, he worked national contingency plans with U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, the Joint Staff, and other CENTCOM Component Commands. Upon redeployment, COL Zanella trained Ranger Students from June 2013 until June 2014 as the Battalion S3 with the 4th Ranger Training Battalion, Fort Benning, Georgia. Moving across post to the 199th Infantry Brigade (Leader Development), he served as the Brigade S3 and then as the Brigade Deputy Commander until March 2016. COL Zanella then moved to the Infantry School as the Executive Officer to the Infantry Commandant until December 2016. Next, he was the G3, Director of Operations, Maneuver Center of Excellence and Fort Benning, Georgia until June 2017. COL Zanella then commanded 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, Infantry Basic Officer Leadership Course from June 2017 until June 2019. Moving to Austin, Texas in June 2019, he joined Army Futures Command as the Deputy Director of Operations. In July 2020, COL Zanella attended Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas as a U.S. Army War College Fellow. Following the fellowship, he led the United States Army Military Assistance Group in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as the Program Manager until June 2022. Returning to Central Texas, he joined U.S. Army Operational Test Command in July 2022 as the G3, Director of Operations. Currently, he is the Deputy Commander / Chief of Staff for Operational Test Command, Fort Cavazos, Texas.

COL Zanella holds a Bachelor of Science in Military History from West Point (1999), a Master of Science in International Relations from Troy University (2006), and a Master of Military Art and Science in Theater Operations from the School of Advanced Military Studies (2012).

COL Zanella's military education includes Fellow, U.S. Army War College Texas A&M University; School of Advanced Military Studies; Command and General Staff College; Joint Operations Planner Course; Joint Firepower Course; the Infantry Officer's Advanced and Basic Courses; Infantry Mortar Leader's Course; Bradley Fighting Vehicle Commander's Course; Ranger School; Air Assault School; Airborne School; Army Combatives Instructor Levels I and II; the Army Instructor Trainers' Course, and the Master Fitness Trainers Course.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (3 Oak leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal (3 OLC), Army Achievement Medal, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Meritorious Unit Award, Army Superior Unit Award (1OLC), National Defense Service Medal (w/ Star), Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal (2 Campaign Stars), Global War On Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War On Terrorism Service Medal, Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon (Numeral 3), NATO Service Medal (ISAF), Ranger Tab, Airborne Wings, Air Assault Wings, Expert Infantryman's Badge, Combat Infantryman's Badge, and the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency in Gold and Bronze/ Battalion Pre-Command Course, Company Commanders / First Sergeant Course, Jumpmaster Course, Battle Staff, and Master Resilience.