



INSPECTOR GENERAL  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
400 ARMY NAVY DRIVE  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22202-4704

## **STEBEN SOCIETY OF AMERICA FOUNDER'S DAY DINNER: "HE GAVE MILITARY TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE TO THE CITIZEN SOLDIERS WHO ACHIEVED THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES"**

*Remarks as Delivered by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the Department of Defense, Brooklyn, New York, Sunday, May 23, 2004.*

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Thank you for that introduction, Randall [Ratje]. Commissioner Brian Anderson, Denise Lartin, honored guests. The contributions of Inspector General Friedrich Wilhelm Baron von Steuben to the American revolutionary cause are well known to this Society; they are enshrined on a monument in Lafayette Park in Washington D.C., across from the White House, the face of which reads: [quote] "He gave military training and discipline to the citizen soldiers who achieved the independence of the United States." [close quote] <sup>1</sup>

Last week I had the honor of participating in the unveiling of a new Von Steuben Monument at Monmouth Battlefield in New Jersey. How many of you were there? Isn't this new monument at Monmouth a fitting tribute to the man who personifies integrity, good order, and discipline in the American Armed Forces today?

By description of the sculptor of the Washington D.C. Monument – one Albert Jaegers of New York (born, by the way, in Elberfeld, Germany) -- the two engravings at the base of the Washington D.C. statue depict: [quote] "Steuben's life work, for which this nation honors and remembers him – the drilling and training of the American Army," and "America teaching youth to honor the memory of her heroes . . . . She welds to her heart the foreigner who has cast his life and fortune with the weal and woe of her people, embodying the idea of unity and fraternity of all nationalities under the guidance of a great republic." [close quote] <sup>2</sup>

The Army still teaches the Von Steuben model to all of its more than 1,000 full time and assistant Inspectors General. The Army IG Course even teaches the students to pronounce his name correctly – as substantiated recently by one its recent graduates: LTC Richard von Steuben, a distant blood relative of the old Baron, now serving in Washington as an Inspector General on the National Guard Bureau staff.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Congress, "Unveiling of the Statue of Baron Von Steuben, Washington, DC, December 7, 1910," Compiled by George H. Carter and printed under the Direction of the Joint Committee on Printing, flyleaf photograph of monument (1911).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 11.

I would like to share with you today a few observations about the enduring legacy of Inspector General von Steuben – his contributions to the values of the American Armed Forces, the methods used by Inspectors General to “teach and train” our soldiers with respect to both proficiency and exemplary conduct, and how this “Von Steuben model” continues to influence the proper exercise of leadership within the American Armed Forces today.

According to one Army historian, [quote] “The military services of two men, and two men alone, can be regarded as indispensable to the achievement of American Independence. These two men were Washington and Steuben. . . . Washington was the indispensable Commander. Steuben was his indispensable Staff Officer.” [close quote]<sup>3</sup>

When Benjamin Franklin recruited Baron von Steuben from his post as *Hofmarshal* of a small Prussian principality in what is now southern Germany in order to help train the American militia in 1778, the Baron brought with him a set of Germanic values that are still to this date “core values” of the American military. These values included a sense of order and discipline, hard work, precision, and integrity. The so-called “Army” General von Steuben found when he reached Valley Forge was seriously lacking in many of these attributes, being an all-volunteer militia with few uniform standards of military operations, decorum, and organization.

Today, the core values of our Armed Forces are stated somewhat differently by the various service components, but they are all basically the same. The Navy, for example, focuses on “Duty, Honor, Commitment,” while the Army breaks it down further to, “Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.” We recognize these core values of our Armed Forces as core American values as well, which trace back to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that every American service member swears a solemn oath to support and defend against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

As the Armed Forces face challenges to their value systems today, such as but not limited to the highly publicized prison abuses in Iraq, we Inspectors General hearken back to the “Von Steuben Model,” focusing on integrity, accountability, training and discipline.

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph E. Schmitz, “*The Enduring Legacy of Inspector General Von Steuben*,” Journal of Public Inquiry, (Fall/Winter Edition 2002).

In an open and transparent society such as ours, abuses and breakdowns will be exposed, those who betray our core values will be held accountable, and integrity will ultimately prevail.

Secretary Rumsfeld likes to say that “you get what you inspect, not what you expect.” His recent comments about the prison abuse scandal being “a body blow” to the thousands of courageous Americans in uniform who remain true to our core values even in the midst of bloody warfare against an enemy that knows no rules,<sup>4</sup> remind me of Teddy Roosevelt’s famous speech in April 1910 – the same year the Washington D.C. Steuben statue was dedicated – words of one former Commander-in-Chief that still inspire us today: [pause]

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; [the credit belongs to the man] who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”<sup>5</sup>

[pause] This too is part of the legacy of Inspector General von Steuben, whose “place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

At Valley Forge, Von Steuben was initially hindered by both cultural and language barriers, but creatively overcame these obstacles. According to multiple historical accounts, “He trained the soldiers, who at th[at] point were greatly lacking in proper clothing themselves, in full (Prussian[-style]) military dress uniform, swearing and yelling at them up and down in German and French. When that was no longer successful, he recruited . . . his French [and English] speaking aide to curse at them FOR HIM in English.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Transcript of Pentagon Town Hall Meeting, May 11, 2004 ([www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040511-secdef0745.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040511-secdef0745.html)).

<sup>5</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “The Man in the Arena,” Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, France, April 23, 1910. ([www.theodore-roosevelt.com](http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com)).

<sup>6</sup> National Center for the American Revolution/Valley Forge Historical Society ([www.ushistory.org/valleyforge](http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge)); see also, M. Boatner, “Encyclopedia of the American Revolution” (Stackpole Books: Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1966);

Ultimately, Von Steuben's perseverance (some might call it Prussian "stubbornness") and his force of will prevailed, and the fledgling Colonial militia learned to operate with precision, and could load, maneuver, and reload with an efficiency rivaling or exceeding their British (and Hessian) opponents.

Today, as you can imagine, the mechanisms of the Office of Inspector General are a bit more specialized. Each Service branch has its own Inspector General system. The Department of Defense Office of Inspector General also operates a global hotline, which members of the Armed Forces can use at any time to report what they believe to be fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, or breaches of security and integrity. We also have an office which deals with reprisals against the "whistleblowers" who notify us of such problems. I could go on and on. Suffice it to say that, for all the complexity of mechanisms and specialization today, we still follow the Von Steuben Model of an Inspector General who serves as an independent extension of the eyes, ears, and conscience of his commander.

As a reminder of Von Steuben's heritage and values, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense has done two things. First, as many of you know, we are in the business of national defense like to decorate our offices with models of ships, tanks, airplanes, and other tools of the trade we employ to defend the nation. Immediately after my appointment, in light of my former experience teaching Constitutional Law, I sought out and was very proud to display a glass-cased model of the U.S.S. Constitution, which is still the centerpiece of my front office. Shortly thereafter, however, a visiting Admiral reminded me that there was a submarine named the U.S.S. Von Steuben.

Although my search for a model of the U.S.S. Von Steuben was unsuccessful – because submarines of the same class all look alike, the Navy only commissioned models for the lead submarine of each class – I did discover an original oil portrait of Inspector General von Steuben, which had been commissioned for and had hung in the officers' wardroom of the U.S.S. Von Steuben until that submarine was decommissioned. That portrait is currently hanging in my Executive Conference Room, as a constant reminder to me and to my staff of the enduring legacy of our first Effective Inspector General.

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F. Wilkins, "Steuben Screamed but Things Happened And an Army Was Born at Valley Forge Just One Hundred and Seventy Years Ago," *The Picket Post*, January 1948 (republished by The Valley Forge Historical Society).

Second, my Office of Inspector General adopted the Steuben family motto, “*Sub Tutela Altissimi Semper*,” as part of our official seal on September 11, 2002. Translated from the Latin, this motto reads, “Under the Protection of the Almighty Always.” Our overarching vision is to serve the Secretary of Defense as “One Professional Team of Inspectors, Auditors, and Investigators, Inspiring by Paradigm a Culture of Integrity, Accountability, and Intelligent Risk-Taking throughout the Department of Defense.” These ideals of teamwork, integrity, accountability, and intelligent risk-taking are reflective of Von Steuben’s character, and connote a courageous warrior of character’s approach to what could otherwise become a bureaucratic or legalistic function.

Today, our Armed Services are engaged in a protracted war against an enemy that does not play by the rules. Only by maintaining our core values, and maintaining a steady purpose through training and discipline will we ultimately prevail.

Thanks to Baron von Steuben, military Inspectors General today are very much “part of the solution” to the challenges facing the Department of Defense and the nation.

I could not conclude my remarks today any better than by recalling the words of President William Howard Taft at the 1910 Steuben statue dedication:

[quote] “The effect of Steuben’s instruction in the American Army teaches us a lesson that is well for us to keep in mind, and that is that no people, no matter how warlike in spirit and ambition, in natural courage and self-confidence, can be made at once, by uniforms and guns, a military force. Until they learn drill and discipline, they are a mob, and the theory that they can be made an army overnight has cost this nation billions of dollars and thousands of lives.” [close quote] <sup>7</sup>

Whether we are in the day-to-day business of military training and discipline, or we simply pay taxes in support of these efforts, may we all continue to serve “always under the protection of the Almighty,” or as the old Baron himself would have said, “*Sub Tutela Altissimi Semper*.”

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<sup>7</sup> William Howard Taft, “Address of the President of the United States” reproduced in “Unveiling of the Statue of Baron Von Steuben, Washington, DC, December 7, 1910,” *supra* at 50.