



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

VON STEUBEN MONUMENT DEDICATION: “THE ROLE OF INSPECTORS GENERAL IN DEFENDING AMERICAN VALUES”

Remarks as Delivered by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the Department of Defense, Monmouth Battlefield, Monmouth, New Jersey, Saturday, May 15, 2004.

Mr. Rainer Kraft, Consul Wuelfing, Major General Green, honored guests, welcome to this Armed Forces Day celebration of the profound contributions of one Prussian-American soldier-patriot to the enduring success of the American experiment in representative government “of, by and for the people.”

Inspector General Friedrich Wilhelm Baron von Steuben’s contributions to the American revolutionary cause are already enshrined on a monument in Lafayette Park in Washington D.C., across from the White House, the face of which monument reads: [quote] “He gave military training and discipline to the citizen soldiers who achieved the independence of the United States.” [close quote] ¹

George Washington held his Inspector General in such high esteem that Washington’s last official correspondence as General was addressed to the Baron. I will read a short excerpt from General Washington’s last official letter:

[quote] “Altho’ I have taken frequent opportunities in both public and private of acknowledging your great Zeal, Attention and Abilities in performing the duties of your office; yet I wish to make use of this last moment of my public life to signify in the strongest terms my intire Approbation of your Conduct and to express my sense of obligations the public is under for your faithful, and meritorious services.”
[close quote] ²

For those of you that have worked so hard on this Steuben monument project, you may find interesting some facts about the Von Steuben monument in Washington D.C. The US Congress appropriated \$50,000 for its construction in February 1903. The Secretary of War served on the memorial commission which, in July 1905, held a competition for the design of that monument. The winning sculptor was one

¹ 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).

² *Id.* at 6.

Albert Jaegers of New York (born, by the way, in Elberfeld, Germany). Jaegers did not receive his contract until January 1907. The U.S. Congress finally appropriated funds through what was called the “sundry civil act,” approved June 25, 1910, and the monument was officially dedicated on December 7th, 1910.

As an Inspector General, I might be tempted to audit the speed and efficiency of this contracting process, but compared with the overall state of government contracting today, I will pass.

As an additional item of interest, the United States Congress also authorized an exact replica of the 1910 Statue of Baron Von Steuben as a gift to the German Emperor and to the German Nation, dedicated in Potsdam on September 2nd, 1911.

By description of the sculptor himself, 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] ³

As the functional equivalent of the Chief Executive Officer for the largest military organization on the planet today, Secretary Rumsfeld must grapple with systems, programs, and issues that are much more complex and vast in scope than those faced by General Washington. However, the bedrock principles of the role of the Inspector General established by Von Steuben remain in tact today, and we all rely on his precedent and his wisdom to provide a compass for leadership within the Pentagon -- to help find our way when things appear convoluted and distorted, as often is the case in large bureaucratic organizations, particularly in the heat of battle.

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 newest graduates: LT COL 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.

³ *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] ⁴

The battle of Monmouth provides an appropriate setting for this discussion, for the results of his efforts with the American colonial militia at Valley Forge were most dramatically apparent here.

First, I would like to say a few words about the set of Germanic values von Steuben brought with him when he was recruited by Benjamin Franklin to come from a small Prussian principality in what is now southern Germany to America, in order to help train the new volunteer militia. These values included a sense of order and discipline, hard work, precision, and integrity. The Army he 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 component, 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

⁴ Joseph E. Schmitz, “*The Enduring Legacy of Inspector General Von Steuben*,” Journal of Public Inquiry, (Fall/Winter Edition 2002).

back to the “Von Steuben Model,” focusing on integrity, accountability, training and discipline.

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. I will share with you the words of Secretary Rumsfeld last Tuesday at a Town Hall meeting in the Pentagon, the day before he left to be with our troops in Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld said:

[quote] “it is a body blow when we find that we have, as we have within the last week or seven days, a few who have betrayed our values by their conduct. (We were) absolutely stunned that any Americans wearing the uniform could do what they did. We are heartsick at what they did, for the people they did it to. We are heartsick for the (damage to the) really well-earned reputation as a force for good in the world that all of us -- military, civilians and those Americans who support us -- will pay. And I know I speak to everyone listening when I say that the -- those acts ought not to be allowed to define us -- either in the eyes of the world or our own eyes. We know who we are. We know what our standards are. You know what you're taught. And the terrible actions of a few, don't change that.” [close quote]⁵

Secretary Rumsfeld likes to say that “you get what you inspect, not what you expect.” His comments this week 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; but 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.”⁶

⁵ Transcript of Pentagon Town Hall Meeting, May 11, 2004 (www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040511-secdef0745.html).

⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, “The Man in the Arena,” Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, France, April 23, 1910. (www.theodore-roosevelt.com).

[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.”

Next, let us take a look at Von Steuben’s influence on the methods by which Inspectors General accomplish their work. When the Continental Congress created the Office of the Inspector General in 1777, the functions of the office, according to Congress, were:

[quote] “To review, from time to time, the troops, and to see that every officer and soldier be instructed in the exercise and manoeuvres which may be established by the Board of War: that the rules of discipline are strictly observed, and that the officers command their soldiers properly, and do them justice.” [close quote] ⁷

Accordingly, Von Steuben immediately set about the business of setting up standard procedures for accountability of arms, and for drilling the troops. He began by training a cadre of about a hundred of the best soldiers he could find, and then deploying them to train the others. Von Steuben was initially hindered in this effort 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.” ⁸

Ultimately, Von Steuben’s perseverance (some might call it Prussian “stubbornness”) and 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.

⁷ Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, Saturday, December 13, 1777 at 1024 (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwjclink.html>).

⁸ National Center for the American Revolution/Valley Forge Historical Society (www.ushistory.org/valleyforge); see also, M. Boatner, “Encyclopedia of the American Revolution” (Stackpole Books: Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1966); 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).

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 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.

Finally, let us imagine ourselves present at the Battle of Monmouth during the summer of 1778, and consider how Von Steuben’s influence was felt in this very place. George Washington initially gives command of the troops to General Charles Lee. Although the troops are well trained and proficient, leadership soon becomes an issue.

“Washington orders Lee to attack - Lee does nothing to prepare for it. He tells his generals he will . . . make plans as he encounters the enemy and learns their situation. . . . He does not gather information or look at maps. When he hears conflicting reports that the British are moving out and that they are preparing an attack, he is annoyed by the lack of intelligence about the enemy-which he has failed to order gathered. When the battle begins, the American officers leading the troops have no idea of the strategy [General] Lee has in mind, and the engagement soon turns into a disorganized retreat. Seeing that leadership [is] lacking, a subordinate of Lee, General LaFayette, summon[s] Washington and apprise[s] him of the situation.”

We might think of General LaFayette as the first effective American whistleblower.

“When Washington confronts Lee about why he is retreating, Lee stammers some excuses about his orders not being followed, then says again that Americans are not able to stand against the British. Enraged, Washington says "Sir, they are able, and by God they shall do it!"”⁹

General Washington, with a high confidence in the proficiency of the troops trained by Baron Von Steuben, assumes command himself and takes initiative in the fight. Given a second chance with new leadership, the troops perform well and show that they can, in fact, stand against the British. Thus are Washington, Lafayette, and Von Steuben accorded credit for turning the tide at Monmouth in what many consider the pivotal point of the Revolutionary War.

Today, we are also at a pivotal point, on many fronts. 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.

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]¹⁰

Thank you for your part in celebrating today the enduring legacy of Inspector General von Steuben. 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.*”

⁹ Account of the Battle of Monmouth, American Revolution History (<http://www.theamericanrevolution.org>).

¹⁰ 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.