



SEPTEMBER 2011

# Military Review

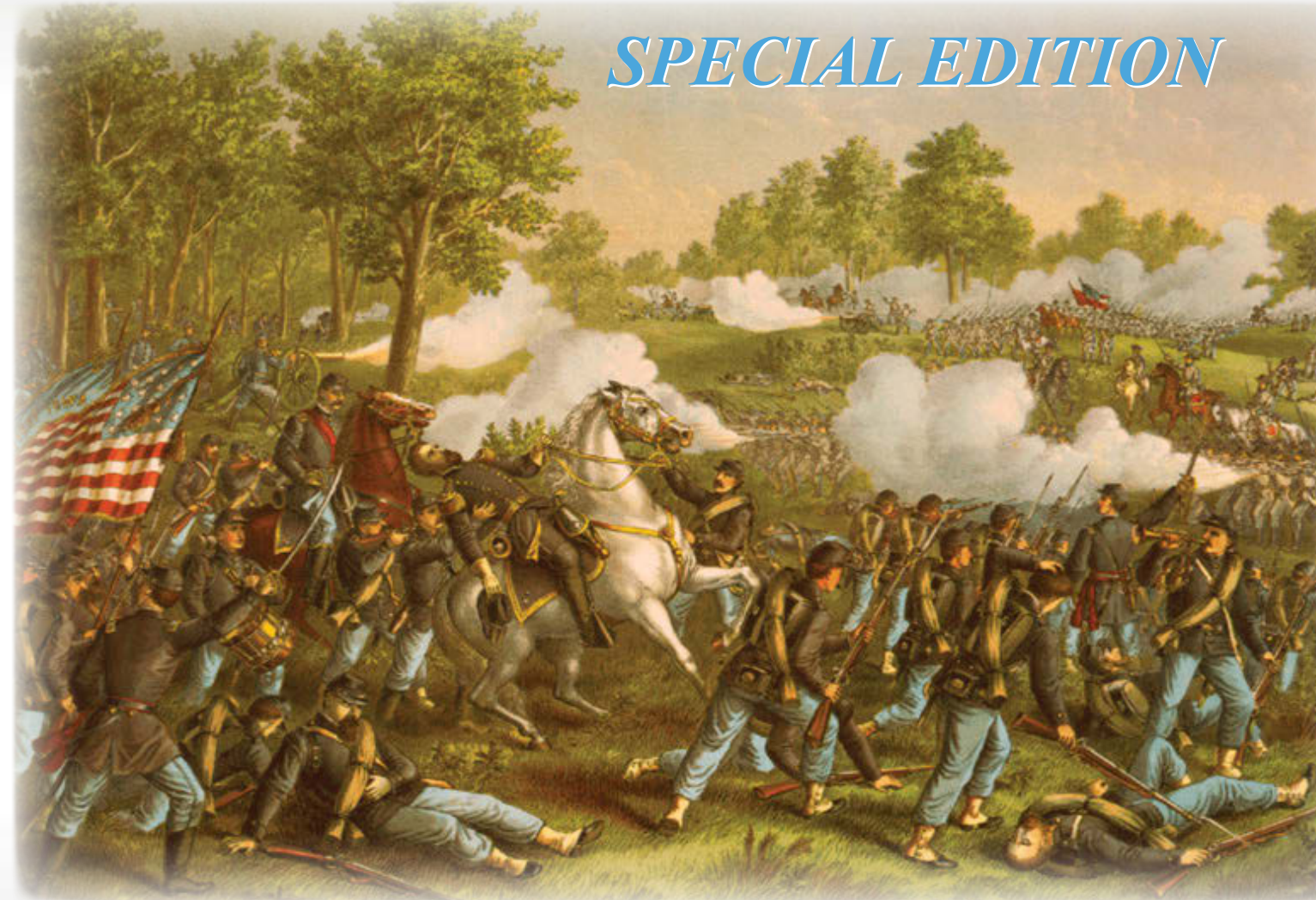
THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE U.S. ARMY

September 2011

<http://militaryreview.army.mil>



A U.S. soldier hands an Afghan girl a bottle of water during a mission in Khost Province, 29 July 2009. (U.S. Army, SPC Matthew Freire)



*SPECIAL EDITION*

Military Review

## The Profession of Arms

PB-100-11-SE  
Headquarters, Department of the Army  
PIN: 102255-000  
*Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited*

COMBINED ARMS CENTER, FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS



# Military Review

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The Secretary of the Army has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business as required by law of the department. Funds for printing this publication were approved by the Secretary of the Army in accordance with the provisions of Army Regulation 25-30.

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*Military Review* (US ISSN 0026-4148) (USPS 123-830) is published bimonthly by the U.S. Army, CAC, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1293. Paid subscriptions are available through the Superintendent of Documents for \$42 US/APO/FPO and \$58.80 foreign addresses per year. Periodical postage paid at Leavenworth, KS, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Military Review*, CAC, 290 Stimson Avenue, Unit 2, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1254.

# Foreword



**General Raymond T. Odierno, U.S. Army**

## The Profession of Arms

**O**VER THE LAST 10 years our Army has proven itself in some of the most difficult environments it has ever faced. Our leaders at every level have displayed unparalleled ingenuity, flexibility, and commitment. Our Soldiers have displayed mental and physical toughness and courage under fire. Our Department of the Army civilians have enabled our Soldiers in unprecedented fashion. Together, they have transformed the Army into the most versatile, agile, rapidly deployable, and sustainable strategic land force in the world. They have, in short, proven our Army again to be the Nation's force of decisive action.

In this time of transition, committed as we are to seeing our current conflicts through to successful conclusion for our Nation, conscious of the diversity of threats the future security environment will likely hold, and well aware of the fiscal challenges our Nation now confronts, it is entirely appropriate that we pause to take stock of our Profession of Arms. It is our professional character that has been the foundation of our strength and the basis of our success. As we look to an uncertain future, the Profession of Arms campaign is welcomed in its promise to deepen our understanding of ourselves and our sacred obligation to our Nation, our Army, and our American Soldiers.

The current volume provides an excellent account of the attributes, characteristics, and qualities that have sustained our profession, allowed it to endure during periods of hardship, and hold the promise for its future strength. As you read this special edition, you will note many important points, but I want to direct your attention to what I believe is their common thread and what is rightly the *sine qua non* of our Profession of Arms: Trust.

Trust is earned, not given, and is gained and maintained through deeds, not words. It is an implicit bond between individuals, organizations, the institution, and the Nation. It extends laterally and vertically, and it is two-way. Trust is also paramount to leadership regardless of one's leadership style, the operational environment, or the mission. Trust allows us to have a strong, respected profession. In other words, without trust we do not have a profession.

General Raymond T. Odierno has been selected to be the 38th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army.

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PHOTO: PHOTO: 1LT Brittany Clark, platoon leader with 535th Engineer Support Company, gives a route clearance briefing to her platoon, Zabul Province, Afghanistan, 12 May 2011.

Inherent trust enables empowerment, forges exacting individual and collective standards, and guides our leader development. It is the basis of our character as Soldiers and drives behavior in congruence with our Army values. As remarked by former Chief of Staff, General Creighton Abrams, “While we are guarding the country, we must accept being the guardian of the finest ethics; the country needs it and we must do it.” Our mutual trust comes in several forms—trust between Soldiers and their fellow Soldiers, trust between Soldiers and their leaders, trust between the Army and Soldiers, and trust between our Army and the American people.

### **Trust: Between Soldiers**

Forged in mutual privation and shared experience, the foundational trust between Soldiers has been an essential component of armies as far back as history can reach. Soldiers unconditionally trust each other with their lives. As they go into battle, they know that their flanks are covered at all times by their brothers and sisters. It is a universal trust extended to all that wear the military uniform, and allows Soldiers to focus on the mission. Trust between Soldiers is the very essence of our Warrior Ethos, an enduring bond of the American Army. Far from diminishing this bond, today’s decentralized operating environment makes it ever more important. It is right that our Profession of Arms Campaign pays careful attention to this very human aspect of our profession.

As General Franks so aptly points out in this volume, the professional military ethic is founded on a shared understanding of the norms and values of our profession. But of what does this shared understanding and common bond between Soldiers consist? First, we expect our Soldiers at all ranks to master the unique professional expertise required to perform their duties. Our units depend on it for mission success, and, in the most trying of times, our fellow Soldiers look to each other’s competence in these skills for their mutual survival. Next, our application of land combat power must never be divorced from the purpose for which it was intended. We know from Clausewitz that violence unconnected to political ends is pointless, and we know from our basic humanity that it is immoral. As Soldiers, we apply our expert knowledge in service to the Nation, protection of the American people, and in defense of the values enshrined in our Constitution. Finally, we

expect our fellow Soldiers to apply their expert skill in protection of the Nation according to our shared Army Values and ethical principles. Such shared values and principles must discipline our behavior and govern the way in which Soldiers accomplish their missions. This means chiefly that we expect our fellow Soldiers to have the strength of character to make the right decisions and stand by them under the most difficult of circumstances.

### **Trust: Soldiers and Leaders**

At all levels, leaders today must understand that their effectiveness relies on their ability to earn their status. Formal authority may come from their position and rank, but effective leadership requires much more. Effective leadership is foundational to the essential relationship between Soldiers and their leaders, and it is a sustaining feature of our Profession of Arms.

Current conflicts have taught us a few things about the kind of leader attributes and role-model qualities this requires. First, leaders are lifelong learners, who remain committed to understanding themselves and their environment. Leaders are adaptable, flexible, innovative, and inclusive. These attributes enable our leaders to forge trust and create unity of effort among diverse stakeholders inside and outside the military chain of command. Finally, good leaders are morally and ethically strong and physically and mentally tough.

These attributes will be required more than ever in the complex operational and strategic environments of the future, and our Soldiers will expect their leaders to be capable of successfully negotiating these environments. We need leaders who are not risk averse and can make sound timely decisions under stress, all while remaining morally and ethically strong. We must build this into our leader development systems, nurturing, broadening, and challenging our leaders at all levels, from our senior generals and command sergeants major to our company commanders and squad leaders.

### **Trust: Our Army and Our Soldiers**

Throughout my 35 years of service, the Army has encountered numerous challenges. When I entered the Army, we were just completing the transition to an All-Volunteer Force. I saw an Army that, in a matter of a few years, transformed

its leader development systems; invested in Soldiers and their professional military education; instituted revolutionary unit and individual training regimens; and charted a vision for integrated, Joint, and combined operations that became the benchmark for decisive military operations.

In making these reforms, the contemporary Army embarked on a new contract of trust between its Soldiers and the Army as a professional institution. We invested in their development and built our volunteer Army on the leaders they became and the systems that allowed them to excel, repaying their service and sacrifice with improved attention to programs that took better care of our Soldiers and their families. Recent years have only deepened our appreciation for the importance of this mutual faith between Soldiers and our Army.

Our current situation, however, is unique. We have seen our All Volunteer Army stressed in unprecedented ways over the past decade. Amidst the longest sustained period of combat in our history, we find ourselves confronting budgetary constraints in the context of our Nation's larger fiscal challenges. And, while we anticipate the opportunity to reset our Army, the future era of uncertainty will surely test our plans.

In the years ahead, we must once again demonstrate the adaptive spirit that has made our Army the most capable, sustainable, and decisive land force in the world. It is the innovativeness and flexibility of our volunteer Army and the initiative of its Soldiers and leaders that will make this possible. In our leader development, training systems, doctrine, and in the support we provide to Soldier soldiers and their families, we cannot break the mutual trust between the institution and our Soldiers upon which future success will necessarily be built.

## **Trust: Our Army and the American People**

We know that the essential feature of a profession is the bond of trust that unites professionals and the client for whom they perform their expert work. In this regard, the Army is not unlike other professions. The Army, however, is exceptional in that we are entrusted with a grave and unique responsibility to ethically employ land combat power on behalf of the American people. As this Profession of Arms Campaign has so clearly taught us, it is the American

people and not the Army who will ultimately decide the degree to which our professional claims ring true.

Today, the Army enjoys an unprecedented level of trust, confidence, and standing with the American people. By its actions in this past decade, our Army has again proven to the Nation the professional character of our force. The expert work of professionals being neither routine nor repetitive, our Soldiers and their leaders have demonstrated the ability to respond to new demands and solve original problems while facing changed and changing operational and strategic challenges.

If there is one thing that history has taught us, it is that the demands of today will not be easily forecasted into the requirements of tomorrow. In fact, it has often been said that our record of predicting the future has been poor, if not often unreliable. Our Nation will undoubtedly level new demands on our Army in the future, and our continued professional worth in the eyes of the American people will be judged on our ability to remain relevant, responding to unforeseen challenges with the same adaptable, inventive, and, indeed, professional character that has proven so essential to past success. In this way, our professional strength is not simply dependent on how we have responded and will continue to respond to current conflicts, but also in how we prepare to meet the demands of an uncertain future.

## **Conclusion**

The trust that our Army has established throughout our history and especially these past decades is the basis of our profession. It requires, in this era of budgetary uncertainty, that we keep faith with each other, our volunteer Soldiers, and our Nation as we pass this important cornerstone of our Republic to a new generation of Americans.

I want us to continue the dialogue on the profession, begun in late 2010 and extended by this volume. Our goal is to gain a fresh, relevant, Army-wide understanding of the Profession of Arms. This discussion must take place throughout the Army: from the Forward Operating Bases in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the squad bays at home station, to the classrooms in our education and training centers—among junior enlisted Soldiers, their unit leadership, to Soldiers like me.

Read these articles, discuss and debate them, and let me know what you think. I'm listening.



# Enduring Attributes of the Profession

Trust,  
Discipline,  
Fitness

General Robert W. Cone, U.S. Army

**T**HE PAST TEN years of conflict have had an enormous impact on our military. Personnel, equipment, families, and the institution as a whole have all been stressed and hastily adapted to support units as they deploy, return, rearm, reequip, retrain, and deploy again. Now is the time to recommit to our profession, take a hard look at the trends of individual and unit behaviors, our policies, doctrine, training, and supporting programs to ensure we can meet the challenges we will face as part of our post-war transition and preparation for an uncertain future.

There are three critical and enduring attributes that underpin the profession and the professional. They are trust, discipline, and fitness. The Army as an institution earns its trust from the people, and as a profession, we must earn that trust daily. Discipline is embodied in our faithful adherence to the oath we have taken, as members of the profession to protect and defend our Nation and its values. Our fitness prepares us mentally and physically to meet the demands of our profession.

When you say it aloud, you think: “that’s a no brainer.” Yet as I review the initial results of the Profession of Arms Interim Report, I am not so sure. The Army has a cohort of young soldiers and future leaders who define those three traits through the prism of their experiences in combat operations, when they return from a deployment, and even when they are away from their duty. Interestingly, their definition changes and their application of those traits change or are inconsistent. So let me discuss those enduring attributes, discuss why they are important, why we need to ensure we maintain these attributes with the highest of standards, and talk to their impact on the Army’s move to the future.

## Trust

*Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly, and they will show themselves great.* —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Trust can be considered the lifeblood of our profession. Our Nation puts its trust in the military, relying on our ethic, integrity, and professionalism.

General Robert W. Cone is the commander of Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, VA. He has a B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy, an M.A. from the University of Texas at Austin, and an M.A. from the Naval War College. He has served in various command and staff positions in the continental United States, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

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Art: *The Oath of the Horatii*, Jacques-Louis David, oil on canvas, 1784, Louvre, Paris.

*The subject of the painting is the oath taken by three brothers to defend Rome in battle, knowing that they have to sacrifice their lives. The painting depicts the brothers swearing upon their swords as they take their oath.*



(DOD, Sandra Arnold)

**A U.S. soldier holds hands with an Afghan boy at the Nawabad School in Deh Dadi district, Afghanistan, 30 September 2010.**

The people entrust to its leaders the lives of their children to soldier in our ranks. They trust that the Army will not waste those precious resources. The people also put their trust in the profession to apply the lethal force the Army is empowered to use within the ethical boundaries of international law and our national values. This *sacred trust* defines the bond between our Nation and its soldiers. As a profession, it is our responsibility to ensure that bond is continuously nurtured, strengthened, and matured.

As soldiers, we entrust ourselves to others, a trust that can easily be broken if it were ever betrayed. When I looked at my junior leaders, I trusted that they would do what was right to accomplish the operational mission. Trust was vital between soldier and leader; it ensured the bond among professional soldiers and units and enabled them to accomplish their mission. Yet when we returned from that operational environment, I sensed junior leaders did not always perceive their senior leaders would tell it like it really was and that micromanagement was a display of a lack of trust.

Trust is a tenuous line with the expectation that our leaders, our peers, and our subordinates will adhere to basic standards of truth and integrity. It can be built or destroyed based on how an individual behaves, how they communicate (with their subordinates, peers, and leaders), and how they demonstrate their military skills.

A leader's number one virtue is trust. Without it, soldiers will not follow his lead. Trust requires evidence from the leaders. Evidence that leaders will act fairly, will help others to achieve their goals, and will act on moral and ethical principles. Leaders who display questionable characteristics, such as double standards, evidence of unfaithfulness, or even disregard for law, can create an environment of mistrust.

There can be no equivocation of trust; it either exists or it does not. As an institution, we can work with individuals to correct faults that weaken trust. If our trust is lost with the American people, the repercussions on the institution will take years to overcome. If our trust as leaders is lost with our subordinates, we cannot effectively lead and will ultimately fail in our mission.



## Discipline

*Nothing is more harmful to the service than the neglect of discipline; for that discipline, more than numbers, gives one army superiority over another.*

—George Washington

I remember, in the late '70s and early '80s, the all-volunteer Army began to reestablish standards in training and performance for individuals and units based on specific metrics. Performance-based training required soldiers and units to meet a set of clearly articulated standards, and failure to maintain those standards was cause for enforcing discipline. We expedited the process for eliminating substandard soldiers and officers who failed to maintain the established standards of discipline. We learned from our mistakes as an institution, and soon the Army's relationship with the American people improved as did the Army's expertise, leadership, training, tactical and operational skills, and most importantly, its professionalism. Then we proved ourselves to the American public, starting with Urgent Fury in Grenada, followed later in the decade with Just Cause in Panama, and then Desert Shield and Desert Storm

where we demonstrated that the Nation could trust the Army to effectively and efficiently accomplish the mission. These successes were the result of years of hard work to reemphasize training and doctrine and years of individuals seeking to professionally improve themselves and the profession. Many of the leaders and soldiers that helped to reestablish the Army's discipline never fought in combat. However, their discipline and dedication to the profession rebuilt the Army to adapt to the transition from the Cold War to the War on Terror.

We as individual soldiers and leaders must embody the values we have taken an oath to defend. The character of the individual, their values, ideals, and beliefs dictate that members of the profession must be disciplined to meet the demands of the profession at all times. Military discipline is the responsibility of the profession and its leaders, including equitable punishment, and orderly conduct. Punishment, though a last resort, is designed to control and enforce obedience. Without the control and demand for correct performance of duty, there would be no order.



(U.S. Army)

The concepts of trust, discipline, and fitness are often difficult to convey to a society in which only one percent have served in uniform. Here, *Comedy Central* political pundit Steven Colbert undergoes mock basic training in his effort to understand the Profession of Arms, Fort Jackson, SC, 8 May 2009.



(U.S. Army)

**SGT Derek Williams (left), B Company 229th Military Intelligence Battalion, leads squad members on a sprint around the Price Fitness Center running track, Monterey, CA, 17 August 2011.**

However, today, discipline is at risk as a basic Army competency. The gains made from our combat experiences are being lost because of leader failures to enforce standards while in garrison, their tolerance of substandard soldiers, poor subordinate leaders, and nonaccountability are beginning to erode the high standards of discipline and self-discipline that the Army must maintain. It appears that many young leaders have varied expectations between deployed and garrison operations, the vital balance between Army life and family life has become uncertain. Even the development of junior leaders outside the combat environment has become overwhelming.

Self-discipline is as important as discipline. Taking the initiative to take action, possessing the character and integrity to do what is right, even when no one is watching, is paramount. The Army provides its future leaders the values and ethics of the institution. Then, as part of basic officer and noncommissioned officer training, soldiers are taught technical and tactical skills, they learn their

core leadership attributes, and then enhance their ability to apply the fundamentals of leadership in small unit environments. Learning, like discipline, is a lifelong endeavor; soldiers must understand the responsibilities for self-development (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, technical, and tactical) outside of the institution and the organization. They need to have the self-discipline to improve themselves.

Information is a click away; leaders should be even closer to assist and mentor the future of our Army, guiding soldiers as they strive to expand their capabilities.

## **Fitness**

*[Fitness] is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity.* —John F. Kennedy

Being physically and mentally prepared is an individual and unit sacrifice of time and effort, a commitment that allows the Army to be prepared and ready when needed. No matter where we are,

at home or deployed, we must maintain our physical condition. Physical fitness is an attribute required for service in the Army, and soldiers and leaders have to be focused on rigorous physical fitness training. It is a basic foundation to a competent professional that allows soldiers to function efficiently and effectively and fulfill the mission and tasks assigned.

Combat affects every service member, both physically and mentally. The survey employed as part of the Profession of Arms review noted that professional competence in the area of physical fitness received lower ratings and indicated that many leaders and subordinates appeared to be failing to meet standards or doing little to try to exceed them. The survey also noted that these initial results on fitness need further review because of the potential impact of multiple deployments. Regardless, the signals indicate that, should our fitness decline, then so shall our professional competence. In war there can be significant mental fitness challenges for the service men and women protecting our country. The demands and stresses soldiers are facing today in Iraq and Afghanistan are affecting their mental fitness. Unfortunately, there is an increasing number of Army personnel who return from deployment with conditions such as post-traumatic stress and substance abuse disorders.

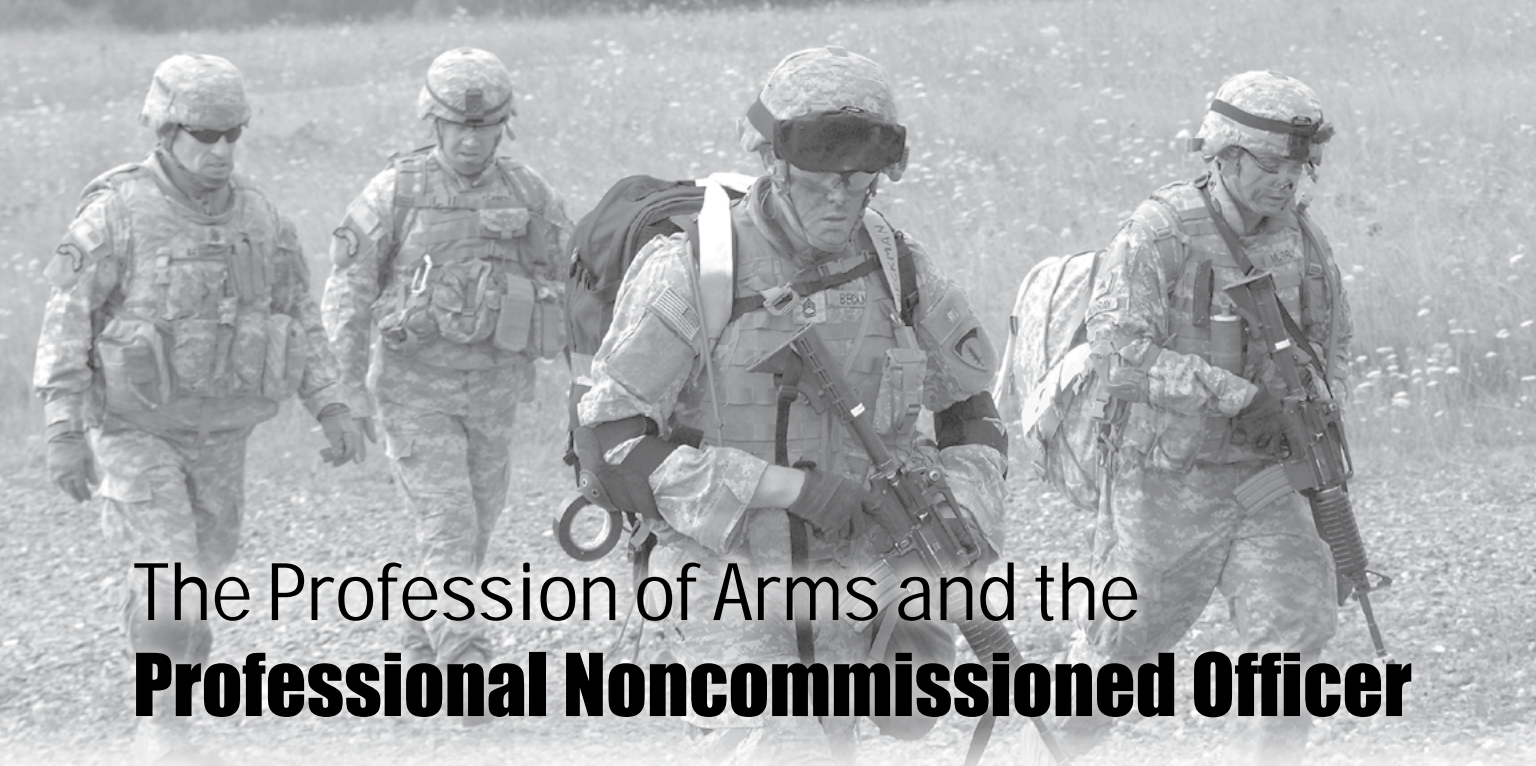
Resiliency training, or being able to bounce back from adversity, focuses on the physical, spiritual, familial, emotional, and social needs of the soldier. Becoming mentally strong is just as important, if not more important, than physical strength to overcome obstacles and setbacks and to maintain positive thoughts during times of adversity and challenge. For the individual soldier, turning to family, friends, a chaplain, counselor, or talking about issues with

associates is the best way to confront, understand, and cope with those issues. Leaders must attune themselves to their soldiers to identify problems, provide an environment of trust and support for their soldiers, and lead them to find the help they need to face their fears. The outcome will only enhance the Army's readiness.

Clearly, we do not want to revisit the post-war conditions of the "hollow Army" we experienced at the end of Vietnam. The Army reshaped itself, focused on new doctrine, on the implementation of a new operational strategy, and on training techniques to accomplish that strategy; it then proved itself as a viable institution to the American people. However, in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, we as a profession began to lose the art of leadership. We began to manage our profession through statistics rather than by leading our soldiers.

This war has made us better by giving us opportunities. We have great combat leaders. The Profession of Arms campaign is going to allow each of us the opportunity to identify the competencies of the profession. It will help us understand how to make our young sergeants and our young lieutenants understand what it truly means to be in the profession, to sustain the art of leadership, and to be a professional, while avoiding the pitfalls we have experienced in the past.

We can expect resources for the future to be more focused. Therefore, we want to ensure that our resource strategy (for both human and fiscal resources) is capable of procuring a viable force able to respond to a wide range of mission sets. We want to ensure the enduring traits of the profession remain intact and serve as that foundation to help us in our transition and in our preparation for the future. **MR**



# The Profession of Arms and the Professional Noncommissioned Officer

Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond F. Chandler, III

“None is more professional than I.” This first phrase from the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Creed has been the motto of our corps ever since a group of senior NCOs struggled to put into words the desired core values of an NCO back in 1973.

Now, almost half a century later, we struggle to understand how 10 years of war has changed our Army and our NCO Corps. There is no question we are a more versatile, adaptable and resilient force. Our soldiers have changed after years of facing unique stressors. We must take a hard look at ourselves to truly understand what it means to be a part of the Army profession.

According to the 2011 Army Posture Statement, the American professional soldier is an expert and a volunteer, certified in the Profession of Arms and bonded with comrades in a shared identity and culture of sacrifice and service to the Nation and the Constitution. A soldier adheres to the highest ethical standards and is a steward of the future of the profession.

There is no question that our soldiers are professionals. The very definition of professional is found in our Warrior Ethos, the NCO Creed, and the Army Values. To me, a professional performs all tasks to a high standard of skill, competence, and character. However, some still question whether a soldier is a professional or belongs to a profession.

First, to be a professional, you must have specialized knowledge. Our soldiers receive this knowledge throughout their Army career in the form of professional military education. Secondly, professionals live by a code of ethics, which soldiers have in our ethos and Army Values. Finally, a professional puts his or her service before their income. I am sure each of you can attest that our service in the Army has nothing to do with a paycheck. Therefore, there is no question that our soldiers belong to the Army profession, just as doctors, lawyers, and accountants belong to theirs.

Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond F. Chandler, III, was sworn in as the 14th Sergeant Major of the Army on 1 March 2011.

PHOTO: U.S. Army SFC Aaron Beckman, assigned to the 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command (JMTC) NCO Academy, and SGT Robert Murray, assigned to JMTC, walk toward the next task, Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, 12 August 2009. (U.S. Army, Gertrud Zach)

Nevertheless, our profession is unlike any other in the world. Our soldiers are asked to uphold and defend the ideals and values of the United States. They are the standard-bearers for the Nation and the tip of the spear in combat. Our professionalism is based on a relationship of trust between our Army and the American people. You don't have to look too far back in history to see what happens when we lose our professionalism and, with it, the trust of the American people.

This professionalism and trust is part of our Army culture. This culture is a system of shared attitudes and values and is the spirit and soul of our institution and part of our Army ethic. The Army Blue Book best sums up our ethic:

“Being a Soldier means conducting yourself at all times so as to bring credit upon you and the Nation—this is the core of our Army culture. Our Army is a unique society. We have military customs and time-honored traditions and values that represent years of Army history. Our leaders conduct operations in accordance with laws and principles set by the U.S. Government and those laws together with Army traditions and values require honorable behavior and the highest level of individual moral character . . .”

Our NCOs play a vital role in our Army ethic. NCOs are the best soldiers in the formation and always lead from the front. A unit without a strong NCO loses the ability to fight and win our Nation's wars. Today's professional NCOs are more important than ever, as they are routinely asked to accomplish more now than any time in the past.

The NCO Corps continues to be the envy of all other armies in the world. Personal courage, integrity, loyalty, and devotion to duty have long been the hallmark of our corps. Our NCOs have done an exceptional job as members of the Profession of Arms, being adaptive, agile, and creative on the battlefield.

A great example of our professional NCOs is Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester, a Military Police (MP) soldier from the Kentucky National Guard. Hester became the first female soldier awarded the Silver Star since World War II for her actions in Iraq in 2005. During a firefight, Sergeant Hester and a few of her fellow soldiers from the 617th MP Company fought off more than 30 insurgents armed with assault rifles, machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenades, killing 27 and capturing 7 more.



(U.S. Navy, MC2 Matthew D. Leistkow)

**U.S. Army SPC Dylan Clarke stands guard outside the Taza council building during the Iraqi Adopt an NCO Program, Taza, Iraq, 23 March 2010.**

After 10 years of combat, we are well versed in combat operations, but we have allowed our garrison skills to suffer. I am sure everyone has read Chapter 3 of the *Army Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention Report*. This chapter discusses “The Lost Art of Leadership in Garrison” and talks about our lack of accountability and discipline. This is NCO business.

I know that our Army has been strained and stressed by 10-plus years of war. With 12- and 15-month deployments and little time between to reintegrate with family, it was inevitable that some skills would degenerate. In addition, many of our platoon sergeants joined the Army after 9/11, and they only know an Army at war, which makes for a dangerous recipe. However, now, as we begin to spend more time in garrison, our NCOs must again become the standard-bearer in the unit. We must instill a sense of pride, discipline, and accountability in our soldiers. This will not come during the normal duty hours. Our NCOs must remember that being a leader is a 24-hour job.

Being an NCO also means a total embodiment of the Warrior Ethos and the Army Ethic. Our soldiers need uncompromising and unwavering leaders. We cannot expect our soldiers to live by an ethic when their leaders and mentors are not upholding the standard. These values form the framework of our profession and are nonnegotiable. Values, plus the Warrior Ethos, guides the way we conduct ourselves as professionals. We must be the uncompromising standard-bearer for our soldiers.

As we continue through this year, I want each of you to think about what it means to be a professional NCO and how we fit into the Profession of Arms. What lessons have we learned in the last 10 years?

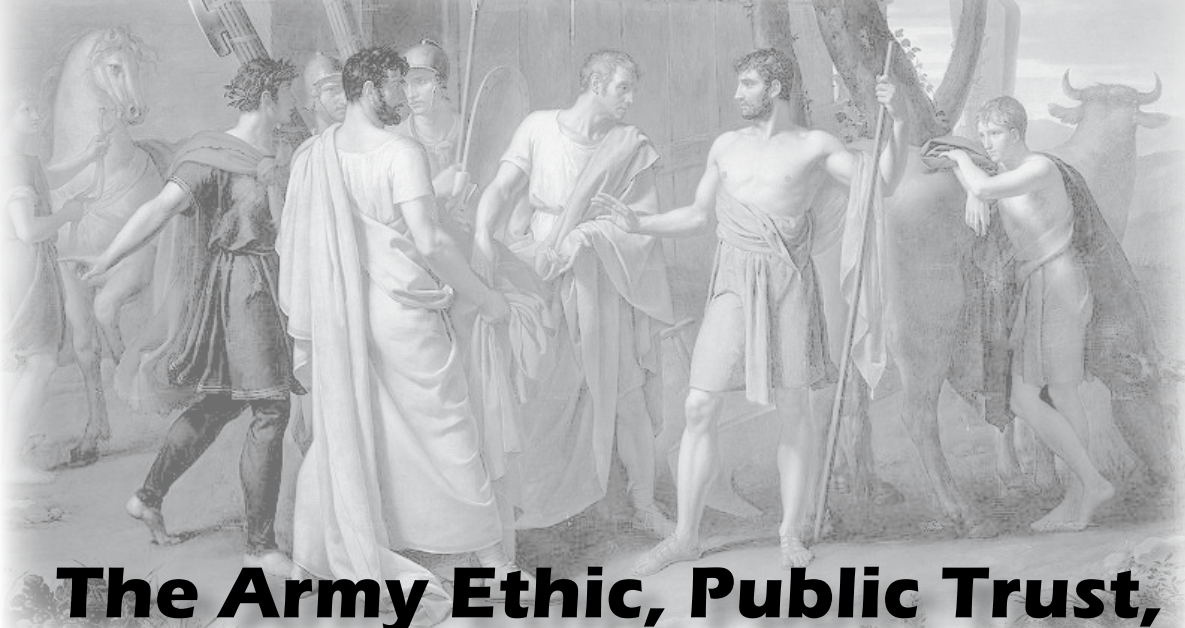
How has the Army and the NCO Corps changed since 9/11? What do we, as NCOs, need to do to fix our skills while in the garrison environment. Your answers will form the foundation of our corps as we move into the future.

“I am proud of the Corps of noncommissioned officers.” We owe it to our soldiers to continue setting high standards and instilling discipline in our units. We do this so our Army professionals stay strong and our legacy is never tarnished. We have learned from the mistakes of the past and have now set our sights on the future. Our soldiers, our Army, and our Nation rely on us to protect our profession and with it, our way of life. **MR**



(U.S. Army, Markus Rauchenberger)

**U.S. Army SFC Aaron Beckman from Charlie Company, 7th Army NCO Academy, assembles a weapon during the 7th U.S. Army Joint Multinational Training Command 2009 Soldier of the Year and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Competitions, 15-19 June, Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany.**



# The Army Ethic, Public Trust, and the Profession of Arms

Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen, Jr., U.S. Army,  
with Captain Nathan K. Finney, U.S. Army

*Professions are not professions simply because they say they are. Their clients, society as a whole, have to accept their claims and trust the professions with jurisdiction over important areas of human endeavor.<sup>1</sup>*

— Colonel Matthew Moten

Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen, Jr., is currently commander of the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, KS. He commanded the 25th Infantry Division and was the Multinational Division-North commander in northern Iraq. LTG Caslen holds a B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy, an M.B.A. from Long Island University, and an M.S. from Kansas State University.

Captain Nathan K. Finney is a strategist currently serving as a speech writer for General Caslen.

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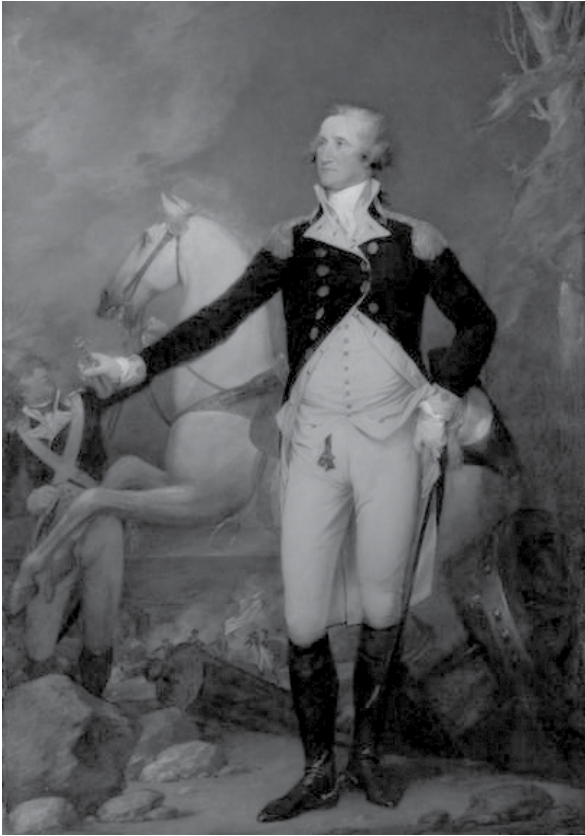
ART: *Cincinnatus leaves the plow for the Roman dictatorship*. c.1806 de Juan Antonio Ribera. Oil on Canvas, Royal Collection of Museo del Prado. George Washington is often compared with the Roman general and dictator Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, famed because he relinquished the power of the dictatorship to return to private life. He is one of the “fathers” of the Roman Republic symbolizing selfless service to his country.

**I**N ADAPTING TO the demands of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to the new strategic realities of the 21st century, our Army has been so busy that we have not consistently thought through how those challenges, and our solutions to them, have affected the institution as a profession.<sup>2</sup> To address this issue, our Army’s senior leadership began a campaign of learning in order to understand what impact the last 10 years of war have had on the profession of arms. This campaign will identify where we need to bolster professional successes and where we need to address deficiencies evident from the last decade of war. This effort has only just begun, but what is clear is that the three key concepts tying all aspects of the Profession of Arms together are our professional ethic, our professional standards, and trust.

To be a professional is to understand, embrace, and competently practice the specific ethic and expertise of the profession and to abide by the profession’s standards.<sup>3</sup>

## The Professional Ethic

Like all professions, the military is an expert group, charged by its client to conduct work governed by a professional ethic. One finds an example of a professional ethic in the Hippocratic Oath (i.e., “Do no harm.”), the ethic of physicians around the globe. So one of our objectives in this campaign is to ensure we have the right definition for the ethic of our profession. Although difficult to define because of the type of work that soldiers conduct, as well



**General George Washington at Trenton, oil on canvas, by the American artist John Trumbull, 1792.**

as the conditions under which they work is so varied and complex, we believe, as a minimum, that the definition should involve three key concepts:

- The ethical application of land power.
- Willing subordination to civilian authority.
- Defending the Constitution and the rights and interests of the American people.

In his farewell address, President George Washington stated that “The Constitution . . . is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.” This is even truer for us as members of the Profession of Arms. When we take our oath of service, we do not swear allegiance to the commander in chief or the Army chief of staff but rather to our Constitution. And it is in the Constitution that we find the military in a relationship subordinate to our civil authorities who, incidentally, are elected by the American people. So ultimately, it is the American people who are our clients and to whom we are subservient. To truly be

professionals and discharge our duty to serve the American people, we must develop a relationship of trust with them.

Furthermore, a profession requires the development and application of an expertise, one that is unique and that is used in service to the profession’s client. So what unique expertise does our client, the American people, expect of us? There are many thoughts on this topic, but I would maintain that our clients expect us to stand in the gap between the evil that is out there and our Nation’s values and our citizens themselves, and to do so with the ethical application of lethal force. What is further unique is that our client also expects us to be willing to sacrifice our lives in the application of this lethal force for their protection. This is a high expectation for sure.

So it is through this ethical application of lethal force that we enter into a relationship with the American people, our client. This relationship is one that can only be earned by trust. One need only to look back in history 40 years ago, when our military lost the trust relationship with the American people. I recall those days when I was a cadet and a new lieutenant, and whenever I would walk out in public, I would never even think of wearing my uniform. I would grow my hair as long as possible in order not to stand out, thereby avoiding the possibility of being ridiculed, criticized, or even spit upon. Thankfully, this is not the case today and regardless of how they feel about the on-going conflicts in the Middle East or Southwest Asia, the American people routinely go out of their way to thank American service members for their service.

So our relationship is strong, but, I would argue, it is also very fragile. Which leads to the question, what is different today from 40 years ago? What would it take to lose this trust and catapult us back into the doldrums we found ourselves in after the Vietnam War? The answers to both questions, we’ll find, bring us back to the three key concepts of our professional ethic.

It all begins with the oath of office. The ethical implications of the oath of office that the members of the Profession of Arms take overwhelm every other aspect of what it means to be a professional soldier. Although we talk of the “profession and ethic” as distinct, they are inseparable. The oath clearly brings this out. In swearing to defend the



Constitution, military professionals incur moral responsibilities, including adherence to treaties governing the ethical application of land power and respecting the rights of persons. When we take this oath we are making a public statement of personal commitment to abide by the values and interests of the American people. In truth, we are pledging ourselves to the ethical foundation of our profession and that of the Nation.

## Professional Standards

Discipline is the cornerstone of our Army and is best exemplified by the establishment and enforcement of personal and professional standards. However, our Army has not always displayed the discipline we see today. When I assumed responsibilities as an Infantry platoon leader 35 years ago, in a unit that had recently returned from Vietnam some 18 or so months earlier, it was clear my platoon experienced the degradation of a number of institutions, one of which was the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Corps itself. At the time, we had two of 13 authorized NCOs in the platoon: my Sergeant First Class platoon sergeant and an E-5 Sergeant squad leader. After leading the platoon for about six weeks, my platoon sergeant was arrested, leaving me with the only other recognized leader to depend upon, the other NCO, our Sergeant E-5. We temporarily promoted our E-4 Specialist squad leaders to Corporals in order to provide some positional legitimacy and authority as junior NCOs. While they all did the best they could, they possessed limited knowledge of appropriate standards, and even less experience with enforcing them. We all lacked the requisite expertise to meaningfully develop our subordinates.

This was the post-Vietnam army, an army that witnessed the degradation of many of its institutions as a result, as most historians would write, of a degradation and compromise of standards over time.

Thanks to our Army's senior leaders who recognized the condition our Army was in and committed to its rebuilding in the 1980s and 1990s, our NCO Corps is in much better shape today. The fact that our NCO Corps is as strong as it is today, despite 10 grueling years of protracted combat, is an indication of its strength.

But this strength is fragile, as is demonstrated in the challenges highlighted by the Vice Chief of Staff

of the Army's recent study on mental health.<sup>4</sup> This report provides early warning for the appearance of many of the same trends that emerged in the Vietnam era and immediately following, including the degradation of standards over time. Together with soldiers that are more used to combat deployments than life at home, the lack of understanding or willingness to enforce standards has led to a tremendous increase in high-risk behavior. Programs to keep our men and women, our professional soldiers, healthy in mind and body "were fragmented and unbalanced and leader accountability had atrophied. There were too many gaps and seams in programs and processes that allowed high risk behavior to continue undetected and seemingly unchecked."<sup>5</sup>

It will be hard to revert from an enemy-centric, mission-first focus to one that emphasizes the return to home life, to include the reduction of high-risk behaviors, training management, family events, and more limited resources. However, our leaders' stewardship of soldiers and their families is as much a necessity of our Profession of Arms as the operational leadership needed to defeat the enemy. The force cannot fight effectively without being a healthy organization.

## Trust in the Profession

To understand and represent the people of the United States with dignity and honor, we must earn their trust. This concept of trust is both the



Tech. Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby, US Air Force

A Vietnam veteran holds a flag near the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC, 29 May 2005.

fuel that drives the Army and the glue that holds it together, the first of the three building blocks the 37th Chief of Staff of the Army, General Martin Dempsey, articulated in his “Thoughts on the Future of the Army.” This vision statement from the most senior leader in our Army sets the bar high, stating that, “Every day we should ask ourselves if we are doing enough to contribute to a climate of trust.”<sup>6</sup> We must always remember that, as Colonel Moten observed in this article’s epigraph, it is our client, the American people, as represented by their elected representatives who determine our status as a profession. In this way “The people will determine the course that the military steers, the skills we perfect, the wars that we fight. The people reign supreme. We answer to *them*. We are therefore—and must remain—a neutral instrument of the state, accountable to our civilian leaders.”<sup>7</sup>

In order to develop the trust integral to the health of this relationship, we must always uphold the values and principles of our Nation, our Constitution, and the American people. Through our

actions we will earn and communicate this trust. This relationship begins when we take the oath of office and must continue to be drilled into the minds of Army leaders at every stage of their education.

We have not always done a great job maintaining and nurturing this trust relationship. Take for example the abuse of detainees by a small number of our soldiers at Abu Ghraib back in 2003 and 2004 or the young soldiers from the 101st Airborne that raped, killed, and burned an Iraqi family in Yusufiya, a village outside Baghdad, in 2006. Because this behavior is outside our Nation’s and Army’s values, both of these examples have been viewed as a failure of our leaders, our institutions, *our profession*. While despicable in their own right, they inherently corrode the trust relationship between our profession and the American people. The cumulative effects of these actions over time will, if unchecked, threaten to eclipse the good work our soldiers do every day.

Equally important in this trust relationship is the incredible performance of our most junior



Rob McElvaine

Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Martin E. Dempsey outlines his nine focus areas for the Army of 2020 at the Association of the U.S. Army Institute of Land Warfare breakfast, 5 May 2011.



U.S. Army, PVT Jared N. Gehmann

**SSG Richard Grimsley greets a young Iraqi girl during a checkpoint patrol in the Ma'dain region, located outside eastern Baghdad, 19 August 2009.**

soldiers in the most remote locations, operating in decentralized operations at the tactical edge. Today's hybrid threats seek complex environments, where the actions of leaders at all levels could and do have strategic consequences. These men and women are the "strategic corporals," making life or death decisions every day that, if done wrongly, will not only affect our relationship with the indigenous population, but also the trust and confidence our client holds in each of us.

Out in the middle of some barren valley on a distant combat outpost, where the closest adjacent unit is an hour's helicopter flight away, what is it that guides a leader to make the right decision? What helps the young leader to define and understand the parameters of acceptable behavior, or not? I submit that these young leaders are guided by the values of our Army, which are themselves derived from the values of our Nation, imbued through the leadership of great officers and NCOs to create a culture of dignity and respect among those they interact with every day.

Any profession worthy of the name espouses an ethic of accountability and self-regulation, so that when an infraction like Abu Ghraib occurs, the profession takes it upon itself to conduct an investigation and hold appropriate soldiers and leaders accountable. If we fail to meet this expectation of our clients, we can be assured our clients themselves will intervene and take charge of our discipline and accountability—something I would argue would be an indictment of us as professionals.

### **Subordinate Relationship with our Civil Authorities**

As stated above, our oath of office that swears allegiance to the Constitution places us in a subordinate relationship with our elected officials who are our civil authorities. And it is in this relationship that our responsibility is to provide military advice to our elected officials. There has been much written over the years about how to

apply this military advice and how well, or poorly, our most senior military leaders have done over the years. Since this relationship is one of the hallmarks of the Profession of Arms, it is worth examining what has worked well in the past and what has not.

Bob Woodward, in his recent book, *Obama's Wars*, describes discussions at the most senior levels in our government concerning the strategy to surge American troops into Afghanistan. An interesting observation Woodward made concerned the Obama Administration's perception that the Department of Defense boxed them into a corner, pushing them toward supporting a certain strategy:

[President Obama's] assessment of the choices was not reassuring. "We don't have two options yet," he said directly. "We have 40,000 and nothing." . . . "This is not what I'm looking for," the president said. "I'm not doing 10 years. I'm not doing a long-term nation-building effort. I'm not spending a trillion dollars. I've been pressing you guys on this."<sup>8</sup>

Woodward notes the administration felt they were being led to the military's preferred decision, causing the president and senior civilian leaders to lose confidence and trust in the military advice they were receiving.

It goes without saying that our most senior military leaders have a huge responsibility when providing advice to our civilian leadership. While this advice may or may not be accepted, it is through providing unvarnished and viable alternatives that the military builds trust with our civilian leaders. This said, the responsibility of the decision and its consequences is certainly born by our civilian leaders. Our job is to provide advice; our civilian leadership's job is to weigh it with all other factors and make a decision.

I would maintain that for us to be effective, regardless of the advice provided, our advice must be based on an established relationship built on trust. If there is no trust in the relationship, then it will not matter how accurate or effective is our advice. If we cannot establish a trust relationship first, we risk our civilian leaders disregarding our advice, throwing the baby out with the bath water as it were, simply because of who is carrying the message.

## Education in Support of Our Ethic, Standards, and Trust

Professions also invest in the development of their future, and do not contract it out to someone else. In the Profession of Arms, we develop our future leaders through training, experience, and our Professional Military Education system. From Initial Military Training through the Warrior Leader Course, the Warrant Officer Basic Course to the Officer Basic Courses, and even our Army Management Staff College for our civilians, the Army refines the soldiers' embrace of the professional ethic through education, training, and development.

As retired General Fred Franks, a cherished exemplar of the Profession of Arms, said in a keynote address to senior leaders of the Army:

There is abundant evidence that right from our very beginnings as a Nation fighting for our independence, General George Washington as well as his Chief of Artillery, Henry Knox, recognized the need for a school or schools to educate soldiers in the Profession of Arms to serve the Nation. Indeed, Washington's continuing insistence [up through] his eighth address to Congress on 7 December 1796 led to the eventual opening of the United States Military Academy in 1802.<sup>9</sup>

Education, training, and development are affected by, and affect, our professional ethic. To understand and acquire the skills to be recognized as a member of the Profession of Arms requires years of study and practice. As General Dempsey has repeatedly stated, our Army, our profession, is made up of people. Even if we get the equipment and force structure a little wrong, we cannot afford failure when developing our people. "People are our competitive edge. That's only true if we continue to invest in them and to challenge them."<sup>10</sup>

***Even if we get the equipment and force structure a little wrong, we cannot afford failure when developing our people.***

Since the Army profession is principally made up of practitioners—soldiers, NCOs, warrant officers, civilians, and commissioned officers—these men and women execute the art and science of land warfare to accomplish missions consistent with who we are as a people, and they are faithful to the Constitution.

## The Army Values

To reenergize our professional ethic after a decade of war, we must inculcate a deep appreciation for and understanding of the moral expectations embodied in the Army Values. The positive news is that a decade of war, and all of the positive and negative consequences that have come with it, have not degraded our institution's adherence to, and our soldiers' belief in, our Army Values. In fact, interim results from the Profession of Arms Campaign have validated across all cohorts (from our junior enlisted all the way up to our senior leaders) that the Army is a values-based profession and that Army Values are central to that profession.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, the vast majority of our soldiers and leaders (93 percent) feel there is a strong alignment between their personal values and the Army Values.<sup>12</sup> The majority of all cohorts believe the Army Values are demonstrated in overall performance and conduct by their peer group.<sup>13</sup> Most important to the continuation of the Army as an institution of the Profession of Arms, focus groups across the cohorts agree that the Army Values have sustained our institution through some of our most difficult years and will continue to be the foundation of our profession.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, enough evidence surfaced in the survey and focus groups to consider the addition of an eighth Army Value—*candor*. At the unit level, survey data confirms the importance of candor in terms of its contribution to a unit/organization climate of trust. A large majority of all cohorts agreed that their units are truthful and do not hide bad news and instead view honesty and forthrightness as extremely important attributes to our profession.<sup>15</sup>

Candor applies inside and outside the Army, up and down the chain of command. A climate of trust between subordinates and superiors is required for us as soldiers, legally and ethically beholden to the officers appointed over us, and to our clients the

***“Candor is an important value that is not captured well enough in our current formulation of the Army Values...”***

American people, to create a culture where frank, informed discussion is expected and encouraged.

This is particularly important with regard to the relationship at the civilian-military level between our senior leaders and the civilians appointed over them. Only through candor can we build the trust with our civilian leaders and through them the American people. However, at the present time “Candor is an important value that is not captured well enough in our current formulation of the Army Values and is important to this relationship.”<sup>16</sup>

As the Profession of Arms Campaign continues, we will refine our professional ethic, the attributes that define the ethic, and the Army Values that define our profession and its professionals. All of these elements must be tied to building trust with the American people and continuing to improve and develop our Army as a profession.

## Professional Philosophy

Right from the beginning, our Nation saw the need for the Army to be composed of experts in the art and science of war, leaders possessing both character and professional expertise. This is why the profession devotes itself to education, training, and development. Such investment in our profession cannot be contracted out. By definition, the contractor is a “businessman,” with all that name entails. Even when directed toward the benefit of all, business does not suggest sacrifice, and professional soldiers—by definition—are bound to sacrifice. As aforementioned, soldiers have to give their lives in defense of our Nation's freedoms. This fact is what makes the profession unique.

The Nation has an “Army of young men and women . . . who signed up willingly to face danger and to risk their lives for something greater than those lives.”<sup>17</sup> Regardless of other reasons one embraces a military profession, this reality is always in mind. I am inspired every day by the current generation of

young leaders in the Army, a group of young men and women I refer to as the 9/11 generation. They represent the very best of America. They saw our Nation brutally attacked, yet volunteered to serve, knowing full well that they would confront the enemies of our Nation on battlefields across the world. They have never wavered or questioned their duty to the Nation. They are a generation that reflects our profession's client, the people of the Republic. They are an all-volunteer force, comprised of citizens and people seeking citizenship from all walks of life throughout the Nation, a microcosm of our society where all our country's races, religions, and creeds equally share in the task of defending our Nation and its Constitution.

As this generation turns its focus away from a decade of war and toward reshaping and developing the Army, their sacrifice for the Profession of Arms will be no less. To rebuild the Army, as it draws down from Operations New Dawn and Enduring Freedom, and reorient it on mastery of its core competencies—combined arms maneuver and wide area security—will be just as challenging as the last decade of effort. This will not only require difficult work and long hours from us all, but also it will require intense analysis, a clear vision, and a unified effort to posture our profession for future contingencies.

I am confident we can and will meet the needs of our profession. I have never seen our Army more focused or well led. Our senior leaders truly do get it. They understand what we must do. They have recognized that what the profession requires now, more than anything, is a frank discussion of where we are today and where we need to go. They know that, as professionals, we must recommit ourselves to

a culture of service to the American people, refine our understanding of our professional ethic, and focus our forces on recapturing our core competencies as experts in the Profession of Arms.

## Remaining Relevant

This year marks our service's 236th birthday. The Army birthday usually passes without much public notice, and such is the nature of service. Largely unknown and far from public view, the Army Profession has executed its duties well and faithfully and at great sacrifice to its members, as well as their families. That selflessness, adherence to duty, and pride in serving the Nation comes from the professional ethic created in our educational institutions, imbued by our individual and collective training, and codified by our professional development. This ethic has been etched in our consciousness by the heroic deeds and selfless actions of those who have gone before us and by those soldiers who inspire us daily with their courage, skill, and commitment to duty.

If we, as a force, intend to remain relevant in the second decade of the 21st century as the dominant land power, we must reconnect with our roots through a reemphasis on and internalization of the Army's ethic. Our aim will be to retain our professional character, improve our ethically based decision making among our leaders, and maintain legitimacy and trust in the eyes of the society we serve. This is what true professions do if they are to self-regulate and continuously improve. Doing so ensures we will remain a professional military force striving for unmatched capability and unbounded connection to the American people in the years ahead. **MR**

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## NOTES

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2. TRADOC, "An Army White Paper: The Profession of Arms," 8 December 2010, 1.

3. *Ibid.*, 4. See also COL Sean Hannah, "Information Paper on the Army Profession Campaign," Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY, 30 July 2010.

4. Department of the Army, "Army Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention Report 2010," 29 July 2010.

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9. GEN Frederick Franks, speech at *Unified Quest*, 12 January 2011.

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11. TRADOC, "US Army Profession of Arms Campaign 2011 Interim Report," June 2011, 67-72.

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16. *Ibid.*, 244.

17. Mullen.



# *Intrepidity* and Character Development Within the Army Profession

Don M. Snider, Ph.D.

**H**OW MANY ARMY soldiers, particularly leaders, who just read the title of this article, knew the meaning of the first word; how many brought to their reading an accurate understanding of the term? More importantly, how many Army leaders could place a true meaning of the word into the context of the Army as a unique profession producing, for the security of the American people, fighting forces for effective land combat? Where does intrepidity fit in what the Army produces and how does the profession develop such a thing?

I ask this question for two reasons. First, I ask it because it is a subject little understood and little discussed in public discourses today within American society. Extended cultural wars will do that. This means that most members of Generation Y being accessed into the Army, whether to be soldiers or leaders, know little of it. And, that means the developmental tasks for the Army are much greater than in earlier periods. Second, I ask this question because without a right understanding of intrepidity and a capability to develop it within its Generation Y soldiers, the Army has little chance of being an effective fighting force. In contrast, as we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, where it is found there is not, nor will there be, any peer to the American Army in particular battles.

To refresh our understanding, the summary of action of 28 June 2005, Operation Redwing, Afghanistan, describes the battlefield deeds of Navy SEAL Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy: “By his undaunted courage, *intrepid fighting spirit*, and inspirational devotion to his men in the face of certain death, Lieutenant Murphy was able to relay the position of his unit, an act that ultimately led to the rescue of [Hospital Corpsman 2d Class] Luttrell and the recovery of the remains of the three who were killed in the battle.” As the Medal of Honor citation makes clear, Murphy was able to choose, in the face of certain death, to expose himself in open terrain for better communications in the chance that his teammates might be reinforced and rescued. He was able to do that because within his “fighting spirit” he had developed

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PHOTO: From left to right, Sonar Technician (Surface) 2nd Class Matthew G. Axelson, Cupertino, CA; Senior Chief Information Systems Technician Daniel R. Healy, Exeter, NH; Quartermaster 2nd Class James Suh, Deerfield Beach, FL.; Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Marcus Luttrell; Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Eric S. Patton, Boulder City, NV; and LT Michael P. Murphy, Patchogue, NY. With the exception of Luttrell, all were killed 28 June 2005 by enemy forces while supporting Operation Redwing. (U.S. Navy)

intrepidity —“a resolute fearlessness, fortitude, and endurance” according to the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary.

So the issue we speak of in this article is the soldier’s fighting spirit, his or her individual spirituality or character, and the Army’s ability to understand it and to develop it in its soldiers and leaders. This is not a new subject for the Army. Many older soldiers will remember that for the post-World War II generation for example, General George Marshall spoke matter-of-factly about the common understanding within the U.S. Army:

The soldiers’ heart, the soldier’s spirit, the soldier’s soul are everything. Unless the soldier’s soul sustains him, he cannot be relied on and he will fail himself, his commander, and his country in the end. It is not enough to fight. It is the spirit that wins the victory.

Marshall and his colleagues in uniform were not the only Americans who understood and were comfortable to speak openly and publicly about the importance of the individual spirituality of our soldiers. At the new WWII Memorial on the Mall, Washington, D.C. is inscribed:

They had no right to win. Yet they did, and in doing so they changed the course of a war...even against the greatest of odds, there is something in the human spirit—a magic blend of skill, faith, and valor—that can lift men from certain defeat to incredible victory.

The American public understands and, appropriately, has memorialized the role of the human spirit in mortal combat.

Turning to the Army profession, then, how does it understand and talk about the spirituality of individual soldiers and its influence on their behavior, particularly in combat? The Army’s approach centers on the Warrior Ethos, which has been promulgated as a four-sentence portion of the Soldier’s Creed: “I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade.” However, while concluding that it is crucial for “all soldiers [to] truly understand and embody this warrior ethos,” the doctrine is almost silent on how such an element of character is “embodied”—developed and sustained. There is little language, no developmental model, no suggested pedagogy. Even more unhelpful, the



(U.S. Navy)

**Navy SEAL Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy, killed in action on 28 June 2005.**

doctrine states: “While individuals are responsible for their own character development, leaders are responsible for encouraging, supporting and assessing the efforts of their people.”<sup>11</sup>

So how are Army leaders to fulfill this critical leadership role if, as individuals, the Army dismisses character development as “their own responsibility?”

This failure has evolved from the politically correct fear abiding for some time within Army leaders that they cannot approach the issue of individual soldier spirituality for fear of crossing some undiscovered boundary having to do with “religion.” “And you know, don’t you, that we can’t go there?”

So how can the Army get beyond the culture wars raging within our society, beyond having its tongue tied by political correctness, and get back to articulating its expert knowledge of human development? Once it does that, it can move on to its expert work of developing leaders of character who can, in turn, develop soldiers of character and, thus, intrepidity in combat.



**...elevate the understanding and discussion of human spirituality to where it belongs and where it exists in current university research programs, to a position above religion...**

I offer two suggestions. First, is to update the profession's knowledge of human development with language and developmental models that elevate the understanding and discussion of human spirituality to where it belongs and where it exists in current university research programs, to a position above religion (see, for example <http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu/>). Simply stated, this means that the Army understands and accepts that the spirituality of its soldiers and leaders—their worldview that shapes character—can be informed by many sources only one of which might, at the choice of the individual, be religion.

Fortunately this work has already been on-going, first with a text at the Army's university, West Point,

*Forging the Warrior's Character*, which proposes that, if the human spirit is “the animating force within living beings; the part of a human associated with mind, will, and feelings; and the essential nature of a person,” then the development of that spirit should form the cornerstone of any leader development program for the Profession.<sup>2</sup>

Something deeper motivates leaders of character who are more than merely the sum of their educational parts. Such is the concern of, the dynamic quest of reflective people who search for truth and the strength of will to live according to it. Throughout human history, this dynamism has found expression not only in the truths of the great religious and philosophical traditions but also in the worlds of literature, art, music, and other forms of creative expression. However diverse their sensibilities, however varied their answers, these traditions address the perennial concerns of human beings:

- What is real?
- What kind of life is worth living?



(U.S. Army, Susame Keppler)

**GEN George W. Casey speaks with Master Resilience Training School students, Fort Jackson, SC, 12 April 2010.**

- How am I to treat others?
- How do I distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, justice from injustice?
- How do I develop the strength of will to act upon my beliefs and convictions and to meet my responsibilities?”

Surely the Army seeks soldiers and leaders who are so grounded and matured in their individual beliefs and convictions. Application of these ideas has already occurred in the Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, a deliberate approach to equipping soldiers with the psychological tools—emotional, social, spiritual, and familial—to unlock their potential in this era of sustained deployments.<sup>3</sup> More broad developmental application should logically follow as that program demonstrates efficacy.

My second suggestion is that the Army adopt the position that its institutional role and responsibility in the realm of the soldier’s character development is to facilitate the individual’s search for the moral meaning that defines a leader’s character. This means the Army will have to move beyond its “we don’t do that” approach to the character development of its soldiers and leaders. And well it should, since research from Iraq continues to show that authentically moral leaders better earn their follower’s trust and thus a greater ability to exercise high-impact leadership.<sup>4</sup> And, in a CONUS setting this means leaders who are better able

subsequently to turn to garrison duties, to mentor soldiers and junior leaders, and the developmental process is sustained, and so on.

Please note carefully what I suggest here. I am not suggesting that the Army decrease in any manner its emphasis on developing the tactical competence of its soldiers or leaders. I am suggesting, however, that the Profession restore appropriate balance to the development of both competence and character. Both remain, as operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have repeatedly shown, essential to soldiers and leaders in effective fighting forces.

In sum, the result of implementing these two suggestions over time should be two very salutary developmental outcomes for the Army as a Profession of Arms. Soldiers and leaders will be better grounded individually in what they believe and in their strength of will to act on those beliefs, and the dissonance between what they believe and hold dear and what the institution declares is “right” via the professional military ethic (e.g., oaths, creeds, the seven Army Values, etc.) would be reduced. Both outcomes move the profession in the direction of a more cohesive and effective fighting force.

Both are available by updating and revamping how the profession understands and learns from the intrepidity of the new generation of heroes such as Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy, U.S. Navy.

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#### NOTES

1. Field Manual 6-22, *Army leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 2006), 4-12.

2. The author of this article served as project director, chapter author, and co-editor for *Forging the Warrior’s Character* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

3. For a public statement of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, see

“Building Resilience: Comprehensive Soldier Fitness” (Washington, DC: Association of the United States Army, April 2010).

4. Patrick J. Sweeney and Sean T. Hannah, “High-Impact Military Leadership: The Positive Effects of Authentic Moral Leadership on Followers,” *Forging the Warrior’s Character*, op.cit, 65-90.



# The Army Profession of Arms

General Frederick Franks, U.S. Army, Retired

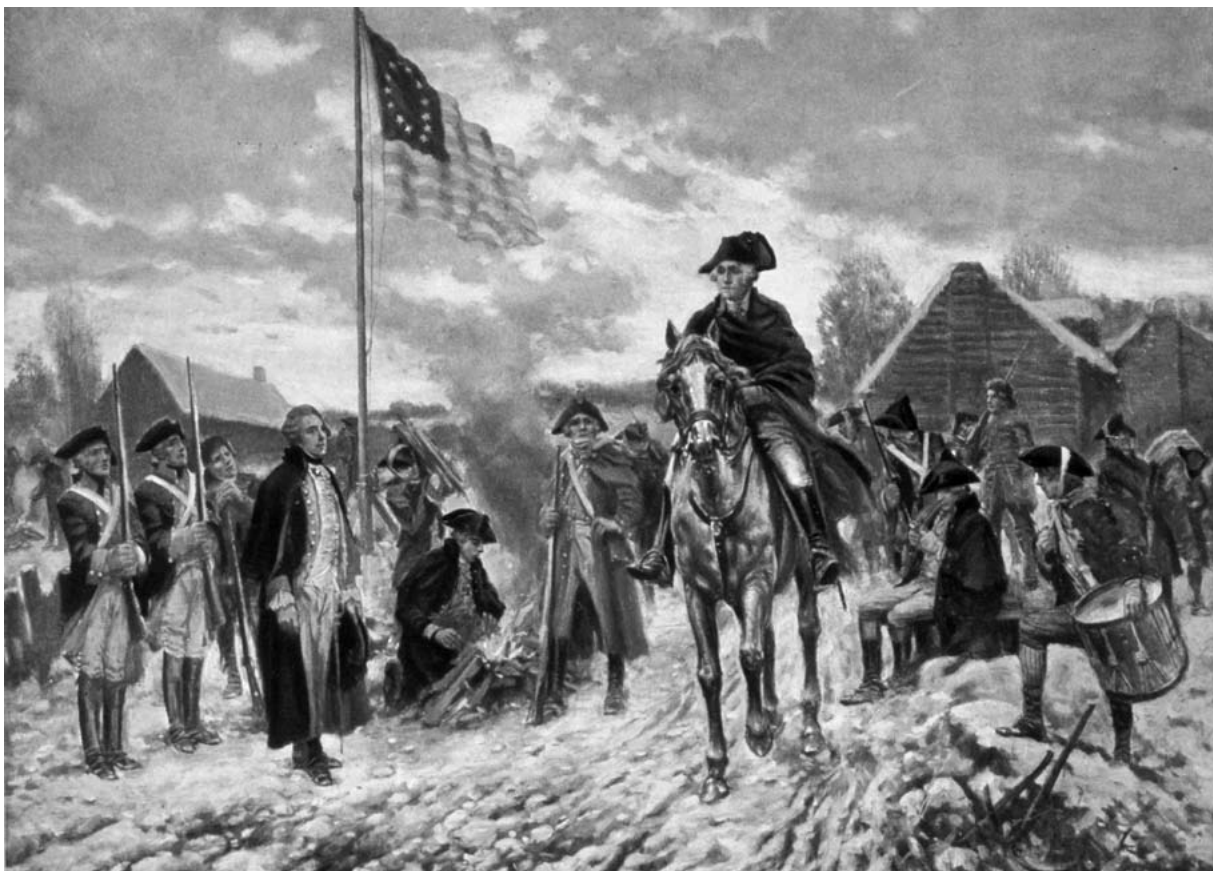
**T**HE ARMY PROFESSION of Arms serves our Nation and accomplishes missions at least cost to the members of the Profession, those volunteers entrusted to the profession by our Nation. The Army is made up of skilled and reliable practitioners, soldiers, noncommissioned officers, warrant officers, civilians, and commissioned officers, all collaborating in the application of the art and science of operations on land to get those missions accomplished in ways consistent with who we are as a people and faithful to our Constitution.

The history of our Army profession is intertwined with the history of our Nation, despite what some scholars and historians peg as the latter part of the 19th century as the beginnings of professionalism in the U.S. Army. I would insist there is abundant evidence that right from our Nation's very beginnings fighting for our independence, there were beginnings of professionalism. General Washington's continuing insistence on more professionalism led to longer enlistments for the Continental Army. At Valley Forge, Baron von Steuben undertook to create a more professional Army, training soldiers, noncommissioned officers and officers on the discipline and competencies required for land warfare in those Revolutionary War set of conditions. General George Washington as well as his chief of artillery, Henry Knox, recognized the need for a school or schools to educate soldiers in the Profession of Arms to serve the Nation. Indeed, Washington's continuing emphasis on professional study of the art of war again as president, in his eighth address to Congress on 7 December 1796, led to the eventual opening of the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1802 under the Jefferson administration:

The Institution of a Military Academy, is also recommended by cogent reasons... Whatever argument may be drawn from particular examples, superficially viewed, a thorough examination of the subject will evince, that the Art of War, is at once comprehensive and complicated; that it demands much previous study; and that the possession of it, in its most improved and perfect state, is always of great moment to the

General Frederick Franks was formerly the commander of Training and Doctrine Command. Although seriously wounded in Vietnam, he continued to serve in the Army on Active Duty. He commanded VII Corps during the First Gulf War. He is currently the Class of 1966 Chair in the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic at West Point.

PHOTO: Marines riding atop an M-48 tank, covering their ears, Vietnam, 3 April 1968. (National Archives, 530617)



**Washington at Valley Forge, Edward P. Moran, c. 1911.**

security of a Nation. This, therefore, ought to be a serious care of every Government: and for this purpose, an Academy, where a regular course of Instruction is given, is an obvious expedient, which different Nations have successfully employed.

The establishment of the first Army school, the Artillery School of Practice, in 1824 at Fort Monroe, Virginia, demonstrates that early on the U.S. Army and our Profession of Arms has recognized the need for expert knowledge in the art and science of war to serve our Nation. Others followed. That expert knowledge requirement, competence, was coupled with General Washington's earlier insistence, indeed demand, that character and leadership methods be consistent with who we wanted to be as a people and a Nation. Today, in this tenth year of war, our Army Profession's continuing devotion to development of expert knowledge for the missions of the Nation and service executed with the character and leadership methods reflecting the values of our Constitution

remains faithful to the practices of those beginning times.

I am inspired every day by this "next greatest generation," by what those of you in the profession serving today are doing for our Nation in this now tenth year of war. You have done so with great courage, skill, results in Iraq and increasingly now in Afghanistan, and yes, at painful sacrifice to you and your families in conditions as tough as any the Nation has ever sent its Army into.

When things got really tough in the mission in Iraq, soldiers and their battle commanders stayed with it, true to your ethos, "I will never quit." You went back, and then went back again and again. You sacrificed. You did not quit even when others did. You taught yourselves how to fight an insurgency on the ground while writing new doctrine at home, and while simultaneously growing an Iraqi security force, promoting local and national governance and promoting the public good locally and nationally in the economy and in public works. When fighting was

called for, you did that. When nation creating and building was called for, you did that too. Most of the time, you were doing both, alternatively and simultaneously. And, you are still at it, in Iraq in New Dawn, and now in Afghanistan in a transformed regional campaign.

Tough missions. No quit. Resilient. Battle commanders and soldiers of character. An Army profession of character. I have never seen the U.S. Army so focused, so hard, so tough, and so resilient as you are now, yet going on and continuing to serve and achieve remarkable results for our Nation.

## The Army Today

In 2007, General Casey established an Army Center for the Professional Military Ethic, first in Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic (SCPME) at West Point, then as a separate center devoted to all members of the Army Profession of Arms. This past year the Center was renamed “CAPE,” or Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, and placed in TRADOC under the direction of Colonel Sean Hannah, and assigned Army-wide proponentcy for the Army profession, our ethic, and character development, but remaining at West Point.

Many other things happened in the past 30 years to shape the collective view of the Army’s Profession of Arms. Several studies were done in the late 1960s and 1970s that shaped how the profession would train and educate itself. Noncommissioned officers, using their own initiative at Fort Benning, Georgia, compiled a creed in 1974 soon after the Sergeants Major Academy was founded and what became the Noncommissioned Officers Education System was started. There were the four “C’s” written about and lived: courage, competence, candor, and commitment. Officer education was strengthened and transformed by the beginnings of the School of Advanced Military Studies in 1982. The Combined Arms Services Staff School (CAS3) for captains was begun in 1982. CAS3 was closed in 2004 when the demand for company grade officers in the current wars became overwhelming. The School of Advanced Leadership and Tactics (SALT) has since been created to fill this void.

As part of the recovery from the war in Vietnam, the Army profession devoted itself with all its strength to being trained and ready. “Combat

Training Centers” were established at Fort Irwin, California, and at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, which then moved to Fort Polk, Louisiana, and another was established in Germany at Hohenfels. The Battle Command Training Program was begun in 1997. A whole generation of professionals was developed with a fierce devotion to a professional ethos of being trained and ready, to be ready to fight and win the first battle of the next war.

The Army began extending education to families because of the unique demand on families of the Army Profession of Arms. First there were command team seminars, then with organizations formed out of operational necessity in 1989 and 1990 because of Operations Just Cause and Desert Storm and recorded in Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-100-4; and now so well matured, structured, and resourced because of the demands of this current war.

Beginning in the 1980s, successive editions of Army Field Manual (FM) 1 as well as capstone doctrine FM 100-5 then 3.0 also strengthened discussions about the profession. The Army published lectures by British Field Marshal Sir John Hackett in a pamphlet called *The Profession of Arms*. Army values were reshaped in 1997 to the seven practiced today and given renewed meaning by actions in combat by this generation on today’s battlefields.

The Soldiers Creed and the Warrior Ethos were codified and published in 2003 and lived so magnificently by this current generation of professionals. Army studies begun in the early 2000s called for continuing education in the professional military ethic. A recent “civilian creed” was established. In 2006, the *Armed Forces Officer* was rewritten by a Joint team led by Colonel (Retired) Rick Swain, then professor of officership in the SCPME at West Point. This was the first rewrite since 1988. It was sponsored by the Joint Staff, J-7, based on the original 1950 edition by General S.L.A. Marshall with current descriptions of each of the subordinate professions of all our armed forces.

## Thinking About the Profession of Arms

The year 2011 marks the 236th anniversary of the beginnings of the U.S. Army. June 14 is a day that usually passes without much public notice. Such is the nature of service and duty. Largely

unknown and largely away from public view, the Army profession, except in unusual circumstances or moments of national survival, has executed its duties faithfully and sometimes at great sacrifice to members of the profession and families as now with repeated deployments in this war. That selfless service, that largely unheralded performance of duty, that pride that comes from knowing you did your duty to the best of your abilities and did it honorably, has largely defined the professional ethic of the Army in peace and war. Such behavior has been etched in our consciousness by the deeds and actions of those who have gone before us in both the glare of the spotlight and the shadows of anonymity, and by those who serve now and inspire us daily with their courage, skill, and tenacious no-quit, mission-focused performance.

From 2001 to 2009, I was privileged to serve, at the appointment of the president, on the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and as

chairman from 2005 to 2009. The mission of ABMC is to care for the cemeteries containing the honored dead of our overseas wars and to tell their inspiring story in visitor centers and map displays. These 23 cemeteries are all on foreign soil. Americans came to liberate those lands. Then, as is the character of our service, we left or in time turned control over to the governments now free. Americans wanted no land, to control no government, only enough land in which to bury our dead who had come to liberate their people. Selfless service by the members of the Army Profession of Arms with our other sister services.

From the early Continental Army's repeated defeats, from the retreat to the western shores of the Delaware River in 1776, to the inspiring no-quit and successful attack on Trenton at Christmas, to the cruel days of the winter at Valley Forge, to the selfless service of those who served to preserve the Nation from 1861 to 1865, to those who got off the



(U.S. Air Force, A 1C Jamie Nicley)

**U.S. Army soldiers with the 173rd Cavalry Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron, Fort Bragg, NC, set up a perimeter during a Mobility Air Forces Exercise at the Nevada Test and Training Range in the desert of southern Nevada, 18 November 2009.**

Higgins boats in the face of intense enemy direct and indirect fire when the ramp went down off the Normandy, France, coast on 6 June 1944, or to those in other intense combat and amphibious assaults in the Pacific from Guadalcanal in 1942 to Iwo Jima and Okinawa in 1945, to those who recovered from initial defeats to soldier on successfully under tough conditions in Korea from 1950 to 1953, to my own generation who answered our Nations call with courage, skill, and great personal sacrifice in Vietnam, to recent conflicts in Panama, Iraq, Somalia, and the Balkans, to those who do their duty to the highest standards of honor and courage in the difficult environment of Afghanistan and in securing the victory in Iraq today. As the Army song goes, “It wasn’t always easy and it wasn’t always fair, but when freedom called we answered, we were there.” Core attributes of selfless service and sacrifice for country, honorable duty expertly performed with missions accomplished—those are the core attributes of the Army Profession

## What Makes the Profession Unique?

I would also urge that there are some unique aspects of the Army Profession of Arms that makes it different from any other professions.

First, like others, it is a profession that has a set of values and an ethos of expected behaviors. Yet it is in the necessity of those values that makes our profession different, from say, medicine or law. There is what Army FM 1 describes as the *unlimited liability*: “they assume in their oaths of office. While members of some professions engage in dangerous tasks daily, only members of the Armed Forces can be ordered to place their lives in peril anywhere at any time.” Moreover, British officer Sir John Hackett, in his lectures in that Army pamphlet *Profession of Arms*, reminds us that in other occupations, our values are admirable qualities. But, in the Army profession, they are absolutely necessary for accomplishment of our missions. In other words, they are not optional behaviors for individuals or units. They have a utility and have become over the past 10 years professional norms because of actions in combat that have defined them. The indispensable nature of those seven Army Values as well as the Soldiers Creed and Warrior Ethos have been galvanized into the profession’s behavior and by the

daily examples of them in action on the battlefield, toward mission accomplishment in this war.

Second, it is also a volunteer profession that depends on and has enormous good will and generosity among the American people. Such a volunteer profession openly, and with candor, communicates to the American people and is open to visits and comments from those outside the profession. While other professions are also voluntary, the profession of Arms also prides itself on its transparency, uniquely so as to sustain the trust of the public it serves. It takes time and extends itself to continue to connect with and explain the profession to include operations and preparations to a population and body politic largely without any military service. The Army profession must reflect on the character of its relationship with the American people, faithfulness to the Constitution and our values as a Nation, now and as the profession moves into the future continuing to serve in this era of protracted conflict and enormous resource pressures. The profession must consider in that context, frankly, how to respectfully inform and remind others of the unique demands of the profession when discussing pay, retirement, and medical care.

Third, unlike most other professions, ours asks much of our family members. It is a profession where military families see their professionals off to do their duty never knowing with any certainty about their safe return home. It is a profession where duty in war, most often changes their loved ones, sometimes physically through visible wounds, and sometimes in invisible wounds hard to detect that manifest themselves in hard to understand behaviors because of post-traumatic stress (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) or both. Families of active duty members often reside overseas in posts, camps, and stations, distant from extended family support. Reserve Components families, on the other hand, live all over America but often lack the community of others with similar experiences and separations.

Military families continue to see the duty demands of selfless service to Nation in placing that duty over family and indeed life itself. Families share grief and band together in ways unique to the Army profession. Families share with each other the idea of service to something larger than self or family or wealth creation and form an unbreakable and unique bond my

***The Army profession is unique because it has professions within the profession...***

own wife, Denise, calls “forever friends.” Military families inspire all of America in their forbearance and courage and remarkable ingenuity and creative ways they also serve, and bear the constant pain of loss of their loved ones.

The Army profession is unique because it has professions within the profession, such as law, medicine, and clergy, and because it draws its members from other professions from our society as the following two points illustrate.

Fourth, The Army profession is now a profession including Army Reserve and Army National Guard operating now as an operational reserve where active and Reserve Component soldiers serve shoulder to shoulder in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous fight. This employment, because of operational necessity, of over 80,000 members of the Reserve and National Guard annually as part of Army Force Generation, is a seismic shift from the previous strategic reserve employment of the USAR and ARNG from World War II until 2001. While the profession has made great strides in seamlessly operating in combat theaters of war, urgent action is in order to realize fully the integration of forces at home in the United States, especially those members of the profession in the Reserve Component who are released from active duty but have continuing medical issues connected to their active duty service.

Fifth, it is a profession that right from the beginning and out of mission necessity created its own medical profession nested within the Army profession, often leading the way for the nation in discovery of new cures and rehabilitation techniques. From inoculations against small pox begun by General Washington in the Revolutionary War, to extensive attention to rehabilitation beginning in the Civil War until today for limb loss, to malaria and yellow fever cures, to wide scale use of antibiotics, to pioneering research and treatment, to leading the way in our Nation of research and

treatment for PTSD and TBI, the Army medical profession within the Army Profession of Arms has performed magnificently.

For any of us on the battlefield, the difference between life and death is the skill of a junior enlisted combat medic or fellow soldier skilled in combat life saving, backed by rapid evacuation to skilled military medical practitioners in evacuation hospitals in theater, to continuing intensive care by Air Force Critical Care Air Transport Teams on flights, to life saving trauma care at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, then to the United States, and to continued healing and rehabilitation within the professional family at major treatment facilities.

This current war has seen miraculous life saving methods employed from battlefield to rehabilitation. You save lives, heal your own, help those grievously wounded heal, recover, and rehab all within the professional family. You allow many to continue on active duty to continue to serve, to continue in the Army professional family, as you did me after my leg was amputated below the knee. You do all this because such medical expertise is there to do that, but just as importantly, you do all that keeping the professional within the professional family. This keeping our soldiers within the professional family is both right and a life saving professional decision, a decision that studies and clinical observations have proven not only aids physical healing from visible and invisible wounds, but also in gaining emotional balance to go on and continue to serve or go on to other paths in life. That is a professional choice and the right one for members of the profession who have voluntarily served and who have become wounded, ill, or injured serving something larger than themselves. The profession needs to continue to care for its own.

Other professionals with the Army profession, legal and clergy, continue their own remarkably inspiring service in this current war. Both came into being in our early Army out of necessity and choice, and both bring unique professional skills necessarily different from their civilian counterpart professions because of the unique duties of the Army profession as noted above, and because of the unique set of laws Congress has applied to our armed forces.



Sixth, it is a profession that asks more of new members right away, new soldiers, new noncommissioned officers, and new officers than other professions. The Army is deliberately structured to ask these newest members of the profession to shoulder the toughest set of duties to get missions accomplished. Because of those expected duties as well as sacrifice right away, I believe all uniformed members become professionals as soon as they take the oath to protect and defend the Constitution as they are expected to do their duties accordingly. The profession needs to continue its proactive adjustments for training and education in individual and units, in all arms, and in counterinsurgency (COIN), to include interagency competencies as well as looking at hybrid threats at national training centers to increase competencies across the spectrum of conflict. What does it mean for education right away after joining the profession in the expected character of service, for value internalization, and for how to ensure character in action?

The Profession of Arms has many outlines of expected individual and unit behavior from oath sworn, to various creeds, to the Warrior Ethos and Army Values. They have been defined magnificently in action by this generation with examples of such action daily in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In COIN and the profession's newest concept of "mission command," it would appear that such trends of expectations of initiative, creativity, and small unit mission focused actions from the newest and youngest members of the profession within broad guidelines will continue to be the norm.

Already in recognition of this expectation vested on the Army's newest soldiers, Initial Military Training has been recently transformed rapidly. Officer initial education to include precommissioning rigor has also undergone changes in recognition of the profession's expectations of new officer leaders. Noncommissioned officer leader courses have also changed in recognition of this reality. What else is necessary to sustain and improve on this professional load shouldered by the newest members of the profession? How to continue to encourage initiative especially in combat conditions like today that demand that at small unit level for mission accomplishment? I always like what British Field Marshal Wavell said:

The pious Greek, when he had set up altars to all the great gods by name, added one more



(U.S. Army, SSG Alfred Johnson)

**U.S. and Iraqi soldiers run to get aboard a CH-47 Chinook to be transported back to Forward Operation Base Brassfield-Mora after completing their mission during Operation Katrina, 27 February 2006.**

altar, "To the Unknown God." So whenever we speak and think of the great captains and set up our military altars to Hannibal and Napoleon and Marlborough and such-like, let us add one more altar, "To the Unknown Leader," that is, to the good company, platoon, or section leader who carries forward his men or holds his post and often falls unknown. It is these who in the end do most to win wars. The British have been a free people and are still a comparatively free people; and though we are not, thank Heaven, a military nation, this tradition of freedom gives to our junior leaders in war a priceless gift of initiative. So long as this initiative is not cramped by too many regulations, by too much formalism, we shall, I trust, continue to win our battles—sometimes in spite of our higher commanders.

How does the profession continue to allow that initiative and not smother it by directives while simultaneously recreating what the recent study on suicide prevention has called, "the lost art of garrison leadership" within a profession where up to half the members have known only war?

Seven, it is a profession that allows wide discretion in the judgment of officers who are commanding soldiers and units in operations during war. That is a huge strength, but it comes with huge responsibilities for the profession. No parent or family member checks certification of a commander in the Army profession before they entrust their sons and daughters or wives or husbands to the command of an American officer. The American people trust the profession will get it right and that the commander is both qualified and competent and a leader of character. The existence of such trust is a huge strength because it allows creative and imaginative activities to go on in pursuit of tough missions as is going on now.

Discretion is required for the profession to fulfill its duties to the Nation, the Constitution, and the American people, especially now in this complex set of counterinsurgency conditions. But, being trusted with such discretion also comes with enormous responsibilities. The responsibility lies on each to see that we are all worthy of such trust in our character, have the full range of competencies required of our operational environment, and the leadership practices consistent with who we are as a Nation. The profession should be mindful of the old saying that “power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” The profession, now as always as was true when I served actively, but especially now, given 10 years of war, must be ever vigilant as it continues to be to toxic command climates and abuses of power and intervene when required to maintain expected professional standards. The Army profession must reinforce the necessity for, tolerate, and indeed encourage mutual candor, even as it allows wide discretion in command. It seems to me the American people trust the profession to do just that. How you do it is of course the profession’s business. But, it seems to me it must be done or the profession hazards losing the trust of the American people, and the trust of junior noncommissioned officers and officer leaders and soldiers.

Eighth, it is a profession that gets to decide absolutes. I might also suggest care in declaring those absolutes about the profession although there are many. There are four stated in the Warrior Ethos, lived so well in combat over 10 years they are now embedded in the profession. They are now norms. The profession gets its norms by demonstrated behavior. The Army profession is a concrete, pragmatic one

because of the deadly arena it operates in. It is not a philosophy, or a science, not even a social science, however much the insights of philosophy and the various sciences might inform the profession. Every generation gets to make those choices about professional norms. Sometimes what are absolutes for one generation turn out not to be so for the next. While expected professional behaviors in selfless service to our Nation seem to endure across generations, other areas like doctrine, equipment and weapons requirements, and even training methods do not. For example, my generation had some doctrinal absolutes no longer applicable now, had some weapon systems requirement absolutes no longer valid now, had some combat training center absolutes in opposition forces structuring no longer valid now.

Ninth, it is a profession that has a duty to advise our elected and appointed civilian leadership on the use and commitment of our Armed Forces in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous situations tactically and strategically with candor and deference consistent with our Constitution in this era of persistent conflict and amidst changing fiscal and political conditions.

Finally, the Army profession gets to distinguish enduring realities from situation specifics about the nature of war and how that affects the profession. During General Washington’s crossing of the Delaware River and the Continental Army’s successful attack on Trenton, then two weeks later another successful attack on British forces at Princeton, there were in evidence enduring truths of battle command: character, competence, and leadership. They are as true today as they were then.

There were also characteristics peculiar to that time and place, especially in tactics, weapons, various arms, and services required. Such a phenomenon exists today in this war. The Army profession must sort those out for the profession in the future just as my generation was required to do. Each generation gets

***The Army profession must reinforce the necessity for... candor, even as it allows wide discretion in command.***

to make those choices for the next generation—easy to do when we look back at Washington’s time or even now the Cold War—but not so easy when making such choices in the moment of ambiguity of contemporary times and enormous resource pressures. Those choices are difficult to make, but the choices must be made, and professionals should make them.

## Concluding Observations

Finally, I have two personal observations.

The first is that I was permitted to remain on active duty and continue to serve with soldiers after having my left leg amputated below the knee from wounds in action in Cambodia was my life’s great privilege. The profession for me personally always resembled a calling and a privilege.

I said in my Kermit Roosevelt speeches in the United Kingdom, in 1992 (long ago now), that I believe soldiering is a matter of the mind and heart. There is much passion, love for our soldiers, and emotion in what professional soldiers do. It is a hard and demanding profession, never so evident as in the past 10 years. Professionals have to feel it all, I believe, to know what to do to accomplish our missions while also putting our soldiers at the best possible advantage and keeping them that way in any kind of operation, anywhere on the spectrum of conflict, to accomplish the mission at least cost to them. That takes character, competence, and leadership and continuous development in a profession that demands and encourages that continuing growth.

In September 2010, I was talking at West Point with Professor Elizabeth Samet who wrote *Soldier’s Heart*. She asked me what is the one enduring truth about being a professional. I had to pause a few minutes to think that one over. I told her *trust*. I wrote in a letter to my wife, Denise, in 1991, “soldiers are great and are my best friends. One said to me the other day ‘We trust you.’ . . . Must do what is right and confident I can do that.”

Twenty years ago a noncommissioned officer in the 3rd Armored Division in 1991 just before our attack into Iraq stopped me talking about our maneuver plan and said, “don’t worry, general we trust you.” That noncommissioned officer captured, as noncommissioned officers frequently do, the embodiment of what we are doing as professionals, and in adapting our profession over time to the requirements of selfless service to our republic to

gain the mission at least cost in the deadly arena of land warfare—gain and maintain the trust of the American people, our civilian superiors, our fellow soldiers and those men and women entrusted to us. *Trust*, I believe means to lead and also to serve, and in so doing, carrying out our duties as professionals; in that way we earn that trust. We serve as my grandson’s class of 2012 at West Point has chosen as their motto, “for more than ourselves.”

My second observation comes from what I said to cadets at West Point in January 2000. At the close of my remarks, I offered this:

Sometime after graduation and I cannot predict when, the Nation will look to you to accomplish a mission of extreme difficulty and importance, and one that only you and your soldiers can do. I do not know the conditions, nor part of the world, nor even how long after graduation, but I know you will be on the spot to deliver mission accomplished at least cost to the soldiers the Nation has entrusted to your command. You must be ready for that and have your soldiers ready whether you are a new lieutenant or Chief of Staff of the Army... You will remember. On that day when our Nation needs you to accomplish that difficult and important mission, you will do your duty, honor yourself and your soldiers, and our country. I know you will.

That was the West Point Class of 2003. From that class until the present, 34 of those former cadets have given their lives doing just that along with over 6,000 of their fellow members of our armed forces. It is a stunning and reflective thought.

All those who have given their lives in this current war serve as a constant reminder to us all and especially to their families who bear the pain of that loss, just how unique our Army Profession of Arms is in the character of its service to our Nation. It is unlike any other profession. That uniqueness certainly propels the Army profession, indeed demands that it continue to examine itself honestly and with candor and renew its commitment to that selfless service and its faithfulness to the Constitution and the American people who entrust their sons and daughters to it just as you are doing. Continuing assessment and refinement of the profession is indeed a noble and necessary duty. **MR**



# Growing Military Professionalism Across Generations

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PHOTO: U.S. soldiers on a search-and-destroy patrol in Phuoc Tuy province, South Vietnam, June 1966. (U.S. Army)

**T**HE ARMY'S EXPERT knowledge can be broadly categorized into four capacities: military-technical, moral-ethical, political-cultural, and human development. Of the four, the human development capacity sets the Army apart as a profession. As officers enter, develop, lead, and eventually retire, they have a profound impact on the institution as a cohort. This impact stems from generational influences on the organization and its leadership. This article examines how generational differences help and hamper the human development capacity that the Army must have to socialize, train, educate, and develop the Army officer corps to be good stewards of the profession.

Three generations of current Army leaders coexist at any given moment, bringing with them different formative experiences and views on professionalism. The procession of these three groups of people will profoundly shape the operation and legacy of the institution long after their respective tenures. The manner in which each group of leaders shapes the Army will have much to do with their own formative experiences rising through the ranks. In the halls of the Pentagon today, these generations are called, "Gulf War Generals, Bosnia/Kosovo Colonels, and Iraq/Afghanistan Captains and Majors." A closer look at these three populations reveals much about the formative experiences that shaped their professional view:

**Boomers.** Born between 1946 and 1964, this group of around 77.3 million individuals came of age during a period of significant social and political transition.<sup>1</sup> The generation itself straddles two distinctly different periods: the 1950s, when society was still deeply rooted in traditional values of stability and responsibility, and the 1960s and 1970s, a time of significant social and political turmoil in our society. From the Civil Rights Movement to the Vietnam War, this generation witnessed and experienced the effects of the rebellious counterculture lashing back at authority. Within the officer corps, the Boomers make up most of the senior general officers, with the youngest of this generation reaching 30 years of service by 2012. While the oldest

members of this cohort were commissioned during the Vietnam era, most of the Boomers' careers as officers started in the 1980s at the beginning of the Reagan administration's new military build-up. They experienced the post-Vietnam professionalization of the Army with large investments in new technology and equipment. As lieutenants and captains, they trained and prepared for the Soviet invasion through the Fulda Gap, only to see their adversary collapse without a shot fired. Instead of the Soviet armored columns, this generation of officers fought in the desert against Saddam Hussein during the Persian Gulf War as senior captains and majors. Their careers continued as lieutenant colonels and colonels with some of the older members promoted to the general officer ranks during the periods of operations in Somalia and Kosovo and before 9/11.

**Generation X.** Born between 1965 and 1980, this group of 46 million individuals is sometimes known as the "MTV generation."<sup>22</sup> While the Boomer generation came of age during a period

of dramatic social change, Generation X came of age during a time of dramatic technological change. New innovations in technology such as faxes, copiers, and computers fundamentally changed the way people lived and worked. Within the officer corps, Generation X currently makes up most of the field grade officers with some of the older members starting to become general officers. Mostly commissioned after the Cold War, the Persian Gulf War was the first testing ground for some of the older members while "Military Operations Other Than War" (MOOTW) became the norm, somewhat reluctantly, for the younger ones. Unlike the Boomers and other generations, this population of officers did not share a common experience of war in the traditional sense of having a monolithic adversary. While experiencing an increase in operational tempo, they were engaged in variety of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and humanitarian missions. This changed after 9/11 when this generation of officers provided the bulk of tactical leaders in Afghanistan and Iraq. Almost



U.S. Army

Military personnel examine a Scud missile shot down during Operation Desert Storm by a Patriot tactical air defense missile, 26 May 1992.

all have served multiple combat tours by the time they reached the rank of field grade officer.

**Generation Y.** Also known as “Echo Boomers,” “Millennials,” and “Generation Next,” this group of individuals were born between 1980 and 1994. Most are just beginning to enter the work force. At approximately 76 million, they constitute one of the largest generations since the “Greatest Generation” of World War II.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the previous two generations were digital newcomers who had to learn and adapt in the information age, the Millennials are digital natives. They do not remember a time without computers, the Internet, cable TV, and cell phones. For the Millennials, multitasking is the norm and they feel perfectly comfortable simultaneously watching YouTube, reading an email, chatting on instant messenger, and updating a Facebook status, all while listening to music on an iPod. Most do not remember a world before 9/11 when people did not have to take their shoes off before boarding a plane. Most Millennials joined the Army at war and have little concept of a peace-time Army. Making up almost the entire

population of lieutenants and captains, Millennials bear the brunt of the tactical fight in Iraq and Afghanistan. They do not understand when older generation officers talk about a “normal” rotation through the national training centers. For the Millennials, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism are the norm. Generation Y officers are highly tactically competent, battle-hardened, and confident in their ability to conduct operations independently of higher level command and control. Because of this, they are understandably “irreverent” to hierarchical command and control. They are tactically talented as battlists but often immature in their understanding of and appreciation for the operational and strategic level.

One difference between the Boomers and Generation Y is highlighted above—the degree of autonomy that each generation is comfortable with. Boomers grew up in an Army where the platoons and companies often moved with the brigades and divisions as a whole. Generation Y is comfortable working autonomously even apart from their own battalions; they see that as the



(DOD, SSgt. Adam Mancini)

**SGT Edward Westfield from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army Europe, leads his fire team back to base after a dismounted patrol mission near Forward Operating Base Baylough in Zabul Province, Afghanistan, 20 March 2009.**



**CSM Anthony Mahoney, U.S. Corps of Cadets Sergeant Major, talks with the cadets about responsibilities of the NCO, Camp Buckner, NY, 1 July 2009.**

norm. As a result, Generation Y feels even more “distanced” from the senior leadership than previous generations.

**Transitions.** One’s generational perspective profoundly influences future decision making and leadership style. The promotion from company grade officer to field grade officer is one of the more difficult transitions one must make during an Army officer’s professional career. Some never quite make the transition and continue to operate with perspectives stuck at the tactical level. The Army’s promotion and command selection system reinforces this behavior by (over) relying on tactical performance as key indicators for strategic potential. It should not be surprising then, that field grade officers look back and rely on their tactical experiences, consciously or subconsciously, to help them analyze new situations. This world view, formed early in the career progression, provides professional perspective on different courses of action. As such, while difficult—and in some cases counterproductive—to label individual officers based on their generational background, understanding the formative milestones for these different populations can help us better understand aggregate behavior and interactions among the various levels of the officer corps.

In the face of the coexistence of these three vastly different generations under the aegis of the “current Army leadership,” how do we communicate and

develop a single contemporary professional ethos? As an organization, the Army must maximize the transmission of each cohort’s expertise among the other generations. For example, the senior leadership brings years of experience that it must relay in a top-down fashion to the younger cohorts, while the junior leadership brings knowledge of the current fighting force that is of use to its superiors. How is this knowledge best communicated as a means of shaping the current and future Army profession?

## **The Importance of Teaching, Learning, and Mentorship**

Dialogue and discourse among the generations are the keys to shaping a cohesive professional ethos within the Army. Generally speaking, institutions must allow for generations to teach and learn from each other in formal and informal settings. Moreover, this teaching and learning must occur from the top down, the bottom up, and from peer to peer.

These relationships and communication styles must take on a *mentorship*, as opposed to *coaching*, model. Coaching involves the passing of knowledge from previous generations to the next under the assumption of a stagnant environment in which there exists a known and finite answer that can be imparted to the next generation. Such coaching is usually undertaken by those no longer in the profession. In contrast, mentorship involves the distillation of an approach to incorporating knowledge and cultivating a way of thinking as one adapts to a changing environment. Here, there is no known or finite answer, but there is a right way to think about problem solving and the cultivation of ethics to shape behavior. Such mentorship is usually undertaken by active but senior players in the profession.

## **Case Studies of Interwar Periods**

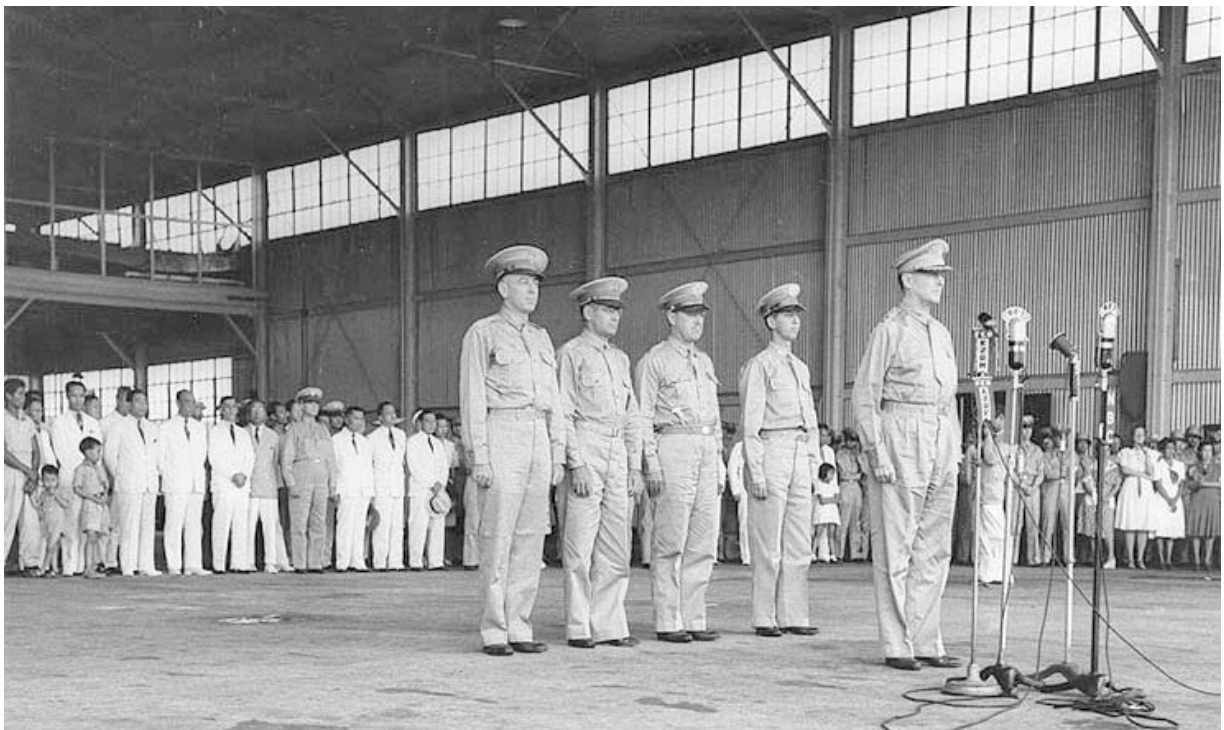
To emphasize the importance of mentorship and dialogue across and within coexisting generations, we present short examinations of the key advances in the cultivation of Army professionalism during three interwar periods. Interwar periods allow time for self-reflection and collection of lessons learned from the most recent conflict. Interestingly, leaders cannot obtain an adequate assessment of these lessons unless there is communication between and among the different generations of officers—fighting forces

on the battlefield, midlevel officers commanding on the ground, and key leaders strategizing from a certain distance. These vignettes highlight what we can learn about the importance of teaching, mentorship, and dialogue in the cultivation of the professional ethos from each of these formative periods.

**Post-World War I to World War II.** Budget cuts made the Army a hollow shell throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The National Defense Act of 1920 authorized a force of 18,000 officers and 280,000 men, but the actual strength of the Army was less than half this number. It was common for a rifle company to have only seven or eight men available for duty. In 1932 the chief of staff, Douglas MacArthur, reported that both Belgium and Portugal had larger armies than the United States.<sup>4</sup> Forced to do more with less, the officer corps renewed its focus on professionalism, building on the reforms of Secretary Elihu Root in the days following the Spanish-American War. Mentorship from above played a key role in officer development. Junior and mid-level officers, many of whom were veterans of the recent conflict,

were encouraged to research and publish articles in military journals, which flourished during this time. In two famous examples, both George Patton and Dwight Eisenhower were encouraged by Brigadier General Fox Conner to publish articles in the *Infantry Journal* in 1920.<sup>5</sup>

The War Plans Division of the General Staff undertook a review of the Army's officer education system, based on input from Newton Baker, the Secretary of War. Reflecting on the American experience in World War I, Secretary Baker wanted officers for the General Staff who possessed a "broader knowledge, not only of their purely military duties, but also a full comprehension of all agencies, governmental as well as industrial, necessarily involved in a nation at war."<sup>6</sup> At every level, officers were encouraged to question basic assumptions and develop critical thinking skills through the Army's educational institutions. During this time, at the U.S. Military Academy, under the leadership of Herman Beukema—a professor of economics, government, and history—cadets began to study international relations for the first time, using a comparative methodology.<sup>7</sup>



(DOD)

**Ceremony at Camp Murphy, Rizal, marking the induction of the Philippine Army Air Corps. Behind LTG Douglas MacArthur, from left to right, are LTC Richard K. Sutherland, COL Harold H. George, LTC William F. Marquat, and MAJ LeGrande A. Diller, 15 August 1941.**



The Army War College was separated from the General Staff and two schools for junior officers were reestablished at Fort Leavenworth. All three schools emphasized the need for effective staff planning to collaboratively solve a hypothetical military problem, culminating in a war game exercise. Not all officers were prepared for such a curriculum. Of the 78 officers in the Army War College class of 1920, 10 did not complete the course and did not receive credit for their attendance. Three others completed the course but were not recommended for either command or duties on the General Staff.<sup>8</sup>

During this interwar period, budget constraints and the organization of the Army's institutions provided a space for the different generations in the officer corps to teach and learn from each other in both formal and informal settings. The mentorship approach, which is distinctly different from a coaching communication style, facilitated and reinforced bonds of camaraderie and trust that would establish a cadre of professional officers as World War II began.

**Post-Vietnam through the Gulf War.** The period immediately following the Vietnam War was a tumultuous time for not only the U.S. Army but also the entire Nation. Racial tension, rampant drug use, and growing disillusionment of the political system following high profile assassinations and political scandals, all served to undermine the institutional foundation of our society. It was during this turbulent and chaotic time that the Army shifted to an "all volunteer force" (AVF). This began a series of reforms within the U.S. Army that significantly altered the future of the force and necessitated a reliance on mentorship and education of its ranks.

Increasing reliance on women to fill the ranks of the AVF became an emerging trend resulting from the end of the draft on 1 July 1973.<sup>9</sup> The initial recruits in the AVF failed to meet expectations in quality and quantity, with a record number

of category IV recruits (the lowest category of enlistment on the Armed Forces Qualification Test). Integrating women into the ranks brought in highly qualified recruits, most with high school diplomas. Women made up for the shortages in qualified male recruits.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the best efforts of the Army, the 1970s became known as the lost decade. An internal report by BDM Corporation for the Pentagon stated in 1973 that the Army was "close to losing its pride, heart, and soul and therefore [its] combat effectiveness."<sup>11</sup> In 1979, General Shy Meyer, Chief of Staff of the Army, informed President Carter, "Mr. President, basically what we have is a hollow Army," as he had neither the divisions nor the lift capability to reinforce U.S. forces in Europe in case of a Soviet attack.<sup>12</sup> Only four of the ten active divisions in the U.S. were capable of deploying overseas in an emergency, and the force was plagued by chronic drug and alcohol abuse as the number of recruits with a high school diploma fell to its lowest point since transitioning away from the draft.<sup>13</sup>

The impact of this stress on the force in this transition period opened lines of communication between midlevel officers and their superiors. With their recent combat experiences fresh in their minds, midcareer officers became increasingly vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with senior Army leaders and the bureaucracy. Some of this feedback made its way to a select number of senior officers who saw the need for extensive reforms and were willing to listen to the suggestions of their subordinates. One such officer was General William DePuy, who oversaw a drastic reorganization of the Army in which the Continental Army Command was divided into Forces Command and Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). Breaking TRADOC away into a more independent center for learning and development allowed it to flourish. New doctrine and radical new ideas on training emerged including

***With their recent combat experiences fresh in their minds, midcareer officers became increasingly vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with senior Army leaders and the bureaucracy.***

the development of National Training Centers that incorporated realistic war games using high-tech training aids like MILES (Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System). This was a drastic departure from the traditional training model of ranges and classroom instructions.

Leaders also reacted to changes in the Army by creating new loci for study and reflection and by trying to reshape the identity of the youngest members of the force. Key leaders were empowered by the chief of staff of the Army to spearhead the effort to reinvigorate the study on leadership and professionalism. One was Lieutenant General Walter Ulmer, who risked his career with a scathing rebuke of the Army in *Study on Military Professionalism*. To boost the number of quality recruits joining the Army under the AVF, General Max Thurman better aligned recruiting strategies and tactics with the motivations and interests of younger generations with a new marketing message, “Be All You Can Be.”<sup>14</sup> These leaders acted as champions for new and progressive ideas emerging within the ranks. They invested time and energy in listening and building upon the advice of their subordinates and, in some cases, risked their careers to shift the culture of the Army profession. Ultimately, they were successful in establishing a new framework from which to remake the Army, and they paved the way for younger generations.

**Post-Gulf War to 9/11.** On 28 February 1991, coalition forces led by the U.S. defeated Saddam Hussein and the world’s fifth largest Army in just 100 hours after the start of the ground invasion.<sup>15</sup> In many ways, it validated the strategic shift and the investments made over the previous two decades. Doctrine, training, equipment, personnel, and leadership all came together to signify the rebirth of the U.S. Army from the shadows of the Vietnam War. The stunning success reinforced the traditional view of war as conventional threats requiring advanced technology and overwhelming use of force. Development of unconventional capabilities to meet asymmetric threats was largely marginalized even as the Army deployed on an increasing number of MOOTW missions.

The domestic political landscape in the immediate aftermath of the first Gulf War was challenging and reflected the typical American postwar reaction—a dramatic downsizing of the force in



(U.S. Army)

**General Maxwell R. Thurman.**

expectation of a cost-saving peace dividend that could be applied to pressing domestic needs as the economy emerged from recession. Indeed, given the overwhelming military success, America’s leaders and citizens considered the armed forces to be overly capable for the perceived future security environment.

The absence of any clearly recognizable threat during this period of time encouraged the perception that it was prudent to reduce the armed forces. Thus, budget constraints forced the military to balance its efforts between maintaining readiness and fielding new capabilities to deal with the growing array of unknown, but suspected, threats. These conditions compelled the Army to man, equip, and train a military force capable of providing for the common defense, but “on the cheap” and in a traditional mechanized force-design fashion.

During this interwar period, the Boomer generation served as field grade officers and members of Generation X served as platoon leaders and company commanders. Training, education, and mentoring was robust, with most units conducting Officer Professional Development and Non-Commissioned

Officer Professional Development sessions on a regular basis. Almost all of this training, however, was within the context of the success the Army enjoyed in Operation Desert Storm. As units increasingly became involved in MOOTW, the prevailing mentality continued to view these operations as a sideshow to the main event, a major regional war.

## The Road Ahead

A review of Army introspection during three key interwar periods highlights the necessity of education and intergenerational communication as the military reacts to an ever-changing landscape.

Moreover, the vignettes emphasize the importance of focusing teaching, training, and mentorship on the internal dynamics of the institution, especially concerning the creation and maintenance of a professional organization.

The Army will enter another transformative interwar period as we approach the end of operations in Afghanistan. The generational gap in this period will be exacerbated by post-9/11 conditions of new enemies, new battlespaces, and new kinds of wars. It will also be affected by the force redesigns of “Army Transformation” and the shift from the Army of Excellence airland-battle designs, premised on the division as the basic warfighting unit, to the “modular force,” where “plug-and-play” is the operational and organizational metaphor, and the brigade combat team is the new baseline warfighting unit. Clear from the case studies above is that every generation of junior officers has a sense of disconnect from the older generation, a feeling that their elders “don’t get it.” Communication, education, and mentorship go a long way toward ameliorating this sense of disconnect. However, the generational gap is more stark today than it has ever been. The Army must create a climate of communication across its three generations of leaders

to develop an officer corps that will lead the “next Army,” leveraging the expertise and experiences of each of these cohorts.

As important as the method of dialogue across and within the generations of leaders coexisting within the Army at any given moment is the substance of those discussions. As such, we conclude this article with six key topics and underlying questions that can help inform contemporary and future consideration in the development of the professional Army officer:

- The Soldier and the Policy Process. What does it mean to be a military professional in the 21st century? How do we instill a notion of professionalism in the current and future officer corps? How can the military officer provide policy advice borne out of expertise while maintaining partisan neutrality and avoiding partisan policy advocacy?
- The Soldier and the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex. Does the nature of military professionalism change in war versus peacetime and how does perpetual war affect this dynamic? What are the consequences on national security policy of either the obsolescence of military professionalism or eroding objective control?
- The Soldier and the Strategy-Making Process. How does the changing threat environment impact the strategy-making process? Does the military have the necessary jurisdiction, legitimacy, and the expertise to fulfill our professional obligation to our nation in respect to “new frontiers,” for example, cyber security?
- The Soldier and the Political Campaign. What is the proper balance between the professional soldier and the active citizen as embodied by the citizen soldier? Should military professionals abstain from voting in elections determining their commander-in-chief? What are the effects of the contemporary coexistence of the perpetual campaign and the perpetual war?

***The Army will enter another transformative interwar period as we approach the end of operations in Afghanistan. The generational gap in this period will be exacerbated by post-9/11 conditions of new enemies, new battlespaces, and new kinds of wars.***

- The Soldier and the Military-Media Complex. What is the role of the media in shaping perceptions of the military in the policy process and of military professionalism? What challenges do contemporary war and military coverage pose to the state-soldier relationship? How can we balance the media's natural inclination toward openness with the military's often necessary desire for the secrecy and security of information?
- The Soldier and Society. What are the effects of changing military demographics on the military's

relationship with and integration into American society? How does the military adapt to changing social mores and how does this influence the military's role in the policy process and in society at large?

Dialogue and debate among the three generations of leaders concerning the proper role and function of the professional military officer within these six areas will help allow for the Army to adapt to a changing world while not losing its core mission and respected place within the republic. **MR**

*This article is derived by the authors from their chapter in the forthcoming book Civil Military Relations in Perspective: Strategy, Structure, and Policy, edited by Stephen J. Cimbala and published by Ashgate this fall.*

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#### NOTES

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# Military Review

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A black and white photograph showing the silhouette of a soldier in profile, facing right. The soldier is wearing a helmet and has a rifle slung over his shoulder. The background is a bright, hazy landscape with mountains and pine trees. The title 'Commentary: Doing the Right Thing' is overlaid in large white text across the middle of the image.

# Commentary: Doing the Right Thing

Command Sergeant Major Anthony Mahoney, U.S. Army

*“Well, you see Willard . . . In this war, things get confused out there—power, ideals, the old morality and practical military necessity. Out there with these natives, it must be a temptation to be God because there’s a conflict in every human heart between the rational and the irrational, between good and evil. The good does not always triumph. Sometimes the dark side overcomes what Lincoln called the better angels of our nature. Every man has got a breaking point—both you and I have. Walter Kurtz has reached his. And very obviously, he has gone insane.”*

— From the film, *Apocalypse Now*

THIS DIALOGUE BETWEEN the characters Corman and Willard during a scene in *Apocalypse Now* indicates that each of us, as mortals, struggle with temptations of moral conduct. One may simply acquiesce, citing the original sin from the Garden of Eden as evidence that we lack the ethical sinew to withstand the winds of moral turpitude. Or conversely, one may, to paraphrase Nancy Reagan, “just say no” to conduct that is illegal, immoral, or unethical, and therefore prejudicial to the good order and discipline of an organization.

George Washington once noted, “Discipline is the soul of an Army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak and esteem to all.” Army Regulation 600-20 states that military discipline is founded upon self-discipline, respect for properly constituted authority, and embracing of the professional Army ethic with its supporting individual values. Furthermore, discipline is manifested in individuals and units by cohesion, bonding and a spirit of teamwork; by smartness of appearance and action; by cleanliness and maintenance of dress, equipment, and quarters; by deference to seniors and mutual respect between senior and subordinate personnel; and by the prompt and willing execution of both the letter and the spirit of the legal orders of their lawful commanders.

These characteristics are subjective metrics we use to compare and contrast the discipline of military units. We are all guilty of forming snap judgments as to the discipline of a unit simply by observing it during training or during a walkthrough of its motor pool areas and billets. For example,

Command Sergeant Major Anthony Mahoney is the command sergeant major of the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY.

PHOTO: A U.S. soldier provides security atop a mountain during Operation Qqab Behar VI in Paktika province, Afghanistan, 20 May 2011. (U.S. Army, SPC George N. Hunt)

a first sergeant may display Army values posters on the orderly room walls, but does he require his subordinates to display those values through their personal conduct? A command sergeant major may require soldiers to recite the seven Army Values during promotion board procedures, but does he demonstrate those values through his personal example? Plainly stated, our actions speak much louder than our words.

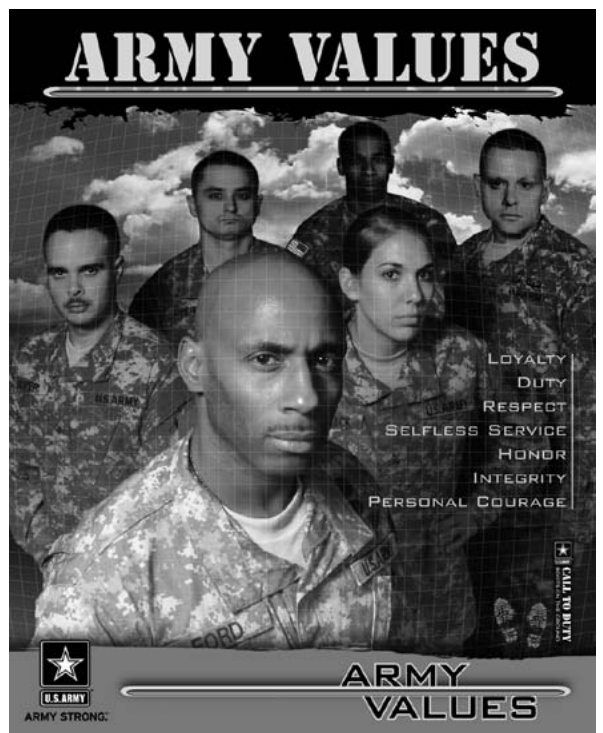
Additionally, in the “Army Strong” of today, the actions of a few may bring discredit upon the many. We are all familiar with the concept of the strategic corporal. The actions of a few undisciplined individuals at the Abu Ghraib Detention Facility in Iraq resulted in a fury of public outcry around the world and a concomitant decrease in the prestige of the U.S. military, both at home and abroad.

Mao Tse-tung understood well this concept when he published *Basic Tactics*. He observes, “Whether or not the military discipline of a unit is good influences the reputation of our whole Army and its ability to secure the sympathy and support of the popular masses.”

We can bring discredit upon ourselves, our unit and the Nation through our own egregious acts of willful misconduct and through our inaction in the presence of malfeasance. There is no defense or excuse for one’s conduct when you know that the deed is wrong and you proceed anyway.

As soldiers, we have the general military authority to take action. The road to military dereliction is paved with the deeds of commission, as well as the sins of omission. I am evangelical in my conviction that all failure at the individual level can be attributed to one of three ultimate causes: lack of training, lack of resources, or lack of motivation. If lack of these ingredients is a recipe for failure, then if present in the correct proportions, they can also produce success. Knead the mixture with a little “leadership by example” and the result will be a productive, cohesive unit.

Field Marshall Viscount Slim records the importance of discipline in the final chapter of his memoir *Defeat into Victory*. He observes that, “At some stage in all wars Armies have let their discipline sag, but they have never won victory until they make it taut again . . . We found it a great mistake to belittle the importance of smartness in turn-out, alertness of carriage, cleanliness



Army Values poster.

of person, saluting, or precision of movement, and to dismiss them as naïve, unintelligent parade-ground stuff. I do not believe that troops can have unshakable battle discipline without showing those outward and formal signs, which mark the pride men take in themselves and their units, and the mutual confidence and respect that exists between them and their officers.”

Remember, your actions speak much louder than your words, and do not ever compromise your honor. The concept of honor, while considered quaint and perhaps old fashioned to some, is the inculcation of those individual and group values we hold dear. Martin Van Creveld describes it best when he wrote, “When rewards become meaningless and punishment ceases to deter, honor alone retains the power to make men march into the muzzles of cannon trained at them.” In 1783 Thomas Paine observed that “Character is much easier kept than recovered, and . . . any man, who from any sinister view, or littleness of soul, lends his hand to injure it, contrives a wound it will never be in his power to heal.”

In today’s decentralized operating environment leaders at all levels are required to make ethical

and moral decisions. Much like the lyrics of an old Bob Seger song we sometimes find ourselves “standing on a mountain top, staring at the great divide, I could go east or I could go west, it is all up to me to decide.” People display their true character when they make the ethically correct decision—regardless of any potential personal discomfort and without expectation of any personal reward.

True character is manifested by action, by their deeds and not their words. One may deceive with flowery words and embellished appearances, but one’s actions reveal his true character. Theodore Roosevelt said it best: “Alike for the nation and the individual, the one indispensable requisite is character—character that does and dares as well as endures, character that is active in the performance of virtue and no less firm in the refusal to do aught that which is vicious or degraded.”

During the movie *Apocalypse Now*, Walter Kurtz got off the boat and quickly descended into the dark,

decaying abyss of insanity. Good did not triumph, and Kurtz allowed the darkness to overtake his better angels. In today’s decentralized operating environment opportunities abound for soldiers and leaders to discover that they have impaled themselves on the horns of an ethical dilemma.

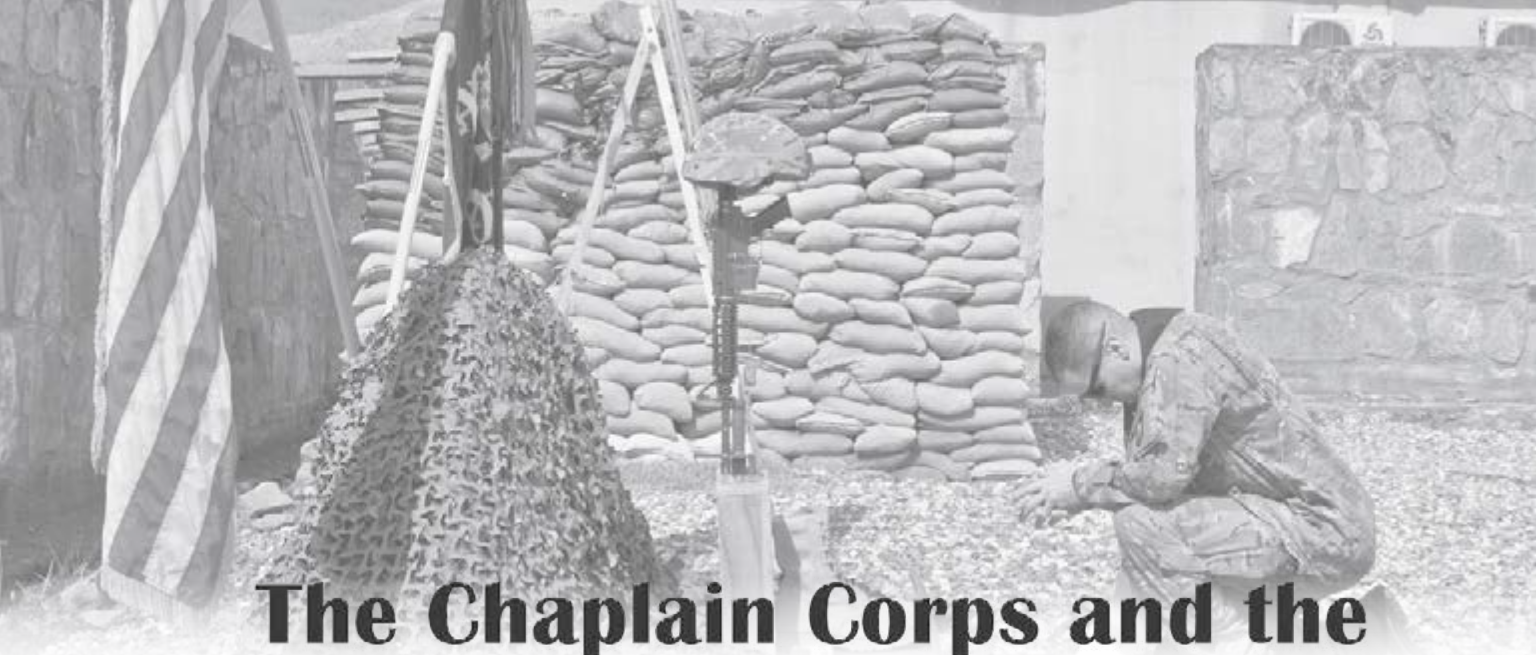
Much like Dorothy and her companions—the Tin Man who lacked a heart, the Scarecrow who needed a brain, and the Cowardly Lion who sought courage—during their journey to find the *Wizard of Oz*, our soldiers today must display that same sort of grit to navigate their “yellow brick road” on the slippery slope of ethical ambiguity. They must use their intelligence to distinguish moral issues in the fog and confusion of rapidly developing events, their heart to discern moral lassitude, and their courage to execute the ethically correct option, even when it may not be the most comfortable personally.

In the final analysis, what matters most in the real world is not one’s deceptive outward public appearance, but the real man behind the curtain. **MR**



(U.S. Air Force) SSGT Logan Tuttle

**A U.S. soldier looks down into villages in the Yayakhail District from an Afghan police station, 17 December 2009.**



# The Chaplain Corps and the Profession of Arms

Chaplain (Major General) Douglas L. Carver, U.S. Army, Retired

**W**hat does it mean to be a professional soldier after over ten years of war?” That is a primary question in our Army’s current discussion of the “Profession of Arms.” As the Chief of Chaplains, I believe that self-examination, whether as individuals or as an organization, is an extremely worthy exercise. As the ancient Jewish Prophet Jeremiah said, “let us test and examine our ways.” Self-reflection that facilitates a greater awareness of strengths and weakness, that then empowers excellence and success in our duties, is always a noble pursuit. I commend our Army leadership for calling all soldiers to examine our ways and grow as a profession.

The Profession of Arms is an interesting subject for a chief of chaplains to address, because chaplains—by Army Regulation 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*—are noncombatants who “will not bear arms in combat or in unit combat skills training.” Some might conclude that chaplains are not members of the Profession of Arms community, and there might be some validity to that position. Whatever position one takes on the question of noncombatant status in the Profession of Arms, I believe the Chaplain Corps plays an integral and essential part in supporting all those within the profession, by any definition. An anesthesiologist is not a surgeon, but both are doctors and both play key roles in a surgical procedure. The Profession of Arms consists of soldiers and, as not all doctors carry a knife into surgery, not all soldiers carry arms into battle. Chaplains are noncombatants by formal convention, but they provide religious and spiritual support to soldiers that helps empower the Army’s spiritual center of gravity and helps maintain the inner strength of soldiers. I am confident the Chaplain Corps is composed of professional soldiers vital to the Army’s Profession of Arms.

Chaplain (Major General) Douglas L. Carver was the Army’s Chief of Chaplains until July 2011.

PHOTO: An Army chaplain from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) pauses for prayer during a unit memorial ceremony in Afghanistan.



The 15th chief of staff of the Army, General of the Army George C. Marshall once delivered a speech entitled *Morale in Modern Warfare* in which he said:

The soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul are everything. Unless the soldier's soul sustains him, he cannot be relied upon, and he will fail himself, and his commander, and his country in the end.

General Marshall was the Nation's first five-star general; Winston Churchill called him "the architect of victory" for World War II. He later served as secretary of state and secretary of defense, and he received the Noble Peace Prize. Marshall was such an exceptional servant of the Nation that, on 1 September 1939, he began the day as a brigadier general and ended it as chief of staff of the Army, selected by President Franklin D. Roosevelt over scores of superior officers because of his professionalism and excellence. The Army has never possessed a greater mind than his. As chief of chaplains, I find it both encouraging and informative that the chief of staff overseeing our Army at its largest size and most critical time, was committed to the fact that the soldier's soul is what sustains him during the trials and demands of war.

As we turn now to the current discussion of our profession, we must remember as we advance forward to our future that the lesson learned by the great minds of our Army's past is that soldiers require, even by necessity demand, spiritual resilience. In that light and with that charge, the Chaplain Corps strives to serve as a mission-ready source of strength to those who former Chief of Staff of the Army General George W. Casey, Jr., calls "the strength of the nation"—our soldiers. This is not a responsibility the Chaplain Corps takes lightly, but one it embraces humbly with an earnest commitment to encourage and empower soldiers as they vigilantly support and defend the Constitution and the Nation.

The Profession of Arms is defined partly in the current discussion as a "vocation." Vocation is a word formed from the Latin word *vocatio*, which at its etymological root means "calling." The word vocation is important in many contexts, but of particular note to the Chaplain Corps, because it entered the English language by William Tyndale's use of the word in his 16th-century translation of the Bible. In the 1500s, theologians began to expand the understanding of

vocation beyond just the limits of clerical roles to a vision for vocation that embraced all occupations of virtue as a divine calling upon an individual's life. This expansion of vocation empowered individuals with higher purpose and value. Many in the Chaplain Corps (and the ministry at large) today often refer to their vocation as their "calling" into the ministry, which they believe is the divine purpose for their life. The Chaplain Corps theme for training and action in fiscal year 2011 is *Spiritual Leadership: Living our Calling, Loving our Soldiers*.

The Chaplain Corps thus seeks to affirm the Army's use of the term vocation and seeks to affirm in the hearts and souls of professional soldiers that there is great dignity in their vocation as a soldier. In affirming the soldiers' vocation, we seek to affirm the sense of purpose of their lives and to edify their souls. In affirming the calling of soldiers, the Chaplain Corps answers its own calling to serve both God and the Nation. We are soldiers serving soldiers in our respective vocations within the broader Army profession.



U.S. Army, SPC Britney Bodner

U.S. Army chaplain sergeant major at Camp Victory, Iraq, 9 August 2010.

The current institutional discussion on the Profession of Arms promotes the Army as “a vocation comprised of experts certified in the ethical application of land combat power.” Throughout its existence, the Chaplain Corps has fulfilled its mission of providing certified ethical experts in support of the Army. Field Manual 1-05, *Religious Support*, states that within the *Religious Support Mission*, “Chaplains serve as personal staff officers to commanders at all levels of the command providing essential information on troop and unit morale, quality of life matters, free exercise of religion issues, *ethical decision-making*, and the impact of religion on the operation.”

Indeed, historically the pivotal thinkers who laid the foundations of just war theory were the theologians Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, and Thomas Aquinas. Corresponding works on the laws of warfare are indebted to Augustine’s and Aquinas’ works. The Chaplain Corps seeks to serve the Army by following in that rich tradition. It does so through certified experts. By virtue of the chaplain’s masters-level theological training required for accession, and by devoting members of its ranks to further masters-level studies in ethics, the Chaplain Corps provides ethics instructors to all Army service schools, the Command and General Staff College, the War College, and the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic. At tactical level units and at educationally strategic locations across the Army, the Chaplain Corps seeks to serve the Army by shaping and developing the character of its ethical core, resulting in soldiers who are ethically informed and committed to not just knowing what is right, but doing what is right.

Quality religious support for soldiers further enhances a culture committed to a strong ethic that seeks to do what is right and to pursue noble paths and worthy actions. Per Army Regulation 165-1, Chaplains are the proponent for moral leadership training for our Army. As such, the Chaplain Corps seeks to reinforce the Army Values that so deeply undergird our Army culture. We seek to ensure that soldiers are reminded that the Nation is founded on the belief “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” Those God-given rights belong to each citizen soldier, and a true Profession of Arms not only protects those rights for their fellow citizens,

but also for their fellow soldiers. This American understanding that it is “self-evident” that our inalienable rights are endowed by a God fortifies the Nation’s values. The chaplaincy affirms and fosters those values by religious, ethical, and moral instruction that chaplains bring to their soldiers.

All armies have values of some sort, and one could make a case that every enemy the Nation has historically faced had some respect for values such as loyalty, duty, honor, and courage. Values only hold the “value” that any culture applies to them though, thus different cultures at times apply different meanings to similar terms. What is most important then is the transcendent virtues that inform pure meaning to the values we embrace. As soldiers are informed through the religious support and instruction of chaplains, they grow in their sacred understanding of the rights endowed to them by their creator and the values we collectively share as Americans, which flow directly from those divinely appointed rights.

Not all soldiers are religious, but we as a Nation declared independence and staked (our national) foundations on the premise that our rights as individuals are God-ordained. Thus, the Chaplain Corps remains rooted in that American tradition while also conducting our constitutional mandate to ensure all soldiers have the free exercise of religion. In those efforts, the Chaplain Corps seeks to maintain and sharpen the ethical azimuth of our Army through spiritual leadership that educates soldiers and that models ethical standards to which we believe we are eternally accountable. Helping soldiers grow in faith and in spirit through religious support creates an Army culture more committed to our inalienable rights and therefore more reflective of the authentic character of the Army Values and the Army’s overall ethic. The Chaplain Corps is committed to fostering the Army culture in this manner and is extremely privileged to do so.

As the Army continues this dialogue about the Profession of Arms after over ten years of war, I am reminded of another quotation in General Marshall’s speech *Morale in Modern Warfare*. Marshall went on to say in his speech that:

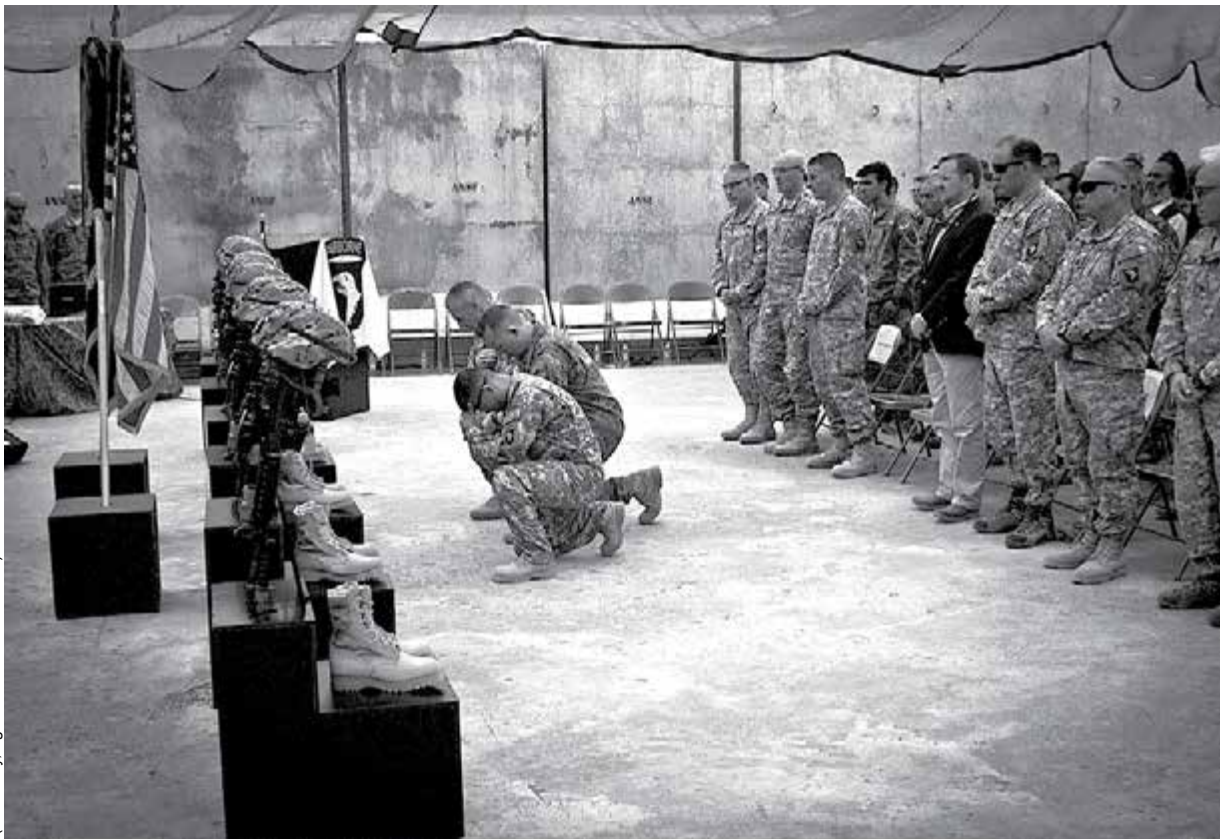
Today war . . . is not a succession of mere episodes in a day or a week. It is a long drawn out and intricately planned business and the longer it continues the heavier are

the demands on the character of the men engaged in it. With each succeeding month, with each succeeding year, it makes always heavier and more terrible demands on the mental and spiritual qualities, capacities and powers of the men engaged in it.

“What does it mean to be a Professional Soldier after over ten years of war?” I believe it means that a professional American soldier is an individual with God-given rights and a vocation to serve as the “strength of the Nation,” and as the defender of those rights for their fellow citizens. It means that the finest men and women of the Nation have volunteered to join the noble and heroic pursuits of military service. It means wearing a uniform, the Nation’s sacred cloth that too often wears out an individual by the duties of war.

General Casey often spoke of our Army as being “stretched and stressed” from ten years of war, as reflected in rising suicide, divorce, addiction, and indiscipline in our ranks. The Chaplain Corps

has vigorously addressed a tired and weary Army through ministry programs, such as the highly effective Strong Bonds marriage enrichment program, as well as through consistent increase in our professional pastoral skills. That sense of wear, indeed “terrible demand,” on our Army is also felt in the numbers of fallen warriors we have lost in battle during the ongoing conflict. Thousands have departed our formations to their eternal rewards due to their selfless sacrifice for their country. Among the departed are also members of the Chaplain Corps. The scope of the profession is perhaps best defined by the scope of those who give the ultimate sacrifice as members of it. As it has for 235 years, the Chaplain Corps after these last ten remains fully committed to the “mental and spiritual qualities, capacities and powers” of these honorable and deserving national servants. We will continue to pursue this ministry by fulfilling our doctrinal imperatives that call us



(U.S. Army, Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell)

**U.S. Army chaplains with the 101st Airborne Division kneel as they give a final prayer during a memorial service for six fallen soldiers at Forward Operating Base Joyce in eastern Afghanistan’s Kunar Province, 9 April 2011.**



(U.S. Army, CPL Robert Thaler)

**U.S. Army Chaplain CPT Robert Sterling, gives blessings at Police Sub Station 3, Kandahar City, Afghanistan, 25 November 2010.**

to nurture the living, care for the dying, and honor our sacred dead.

As the Army discusses its profession, the Chaplain Corps remains committed as partners in the Profession of Arms, as well as servant-leader soldiers. We are dedicated by vocation to the religious and spiritual leadership required to address the “heavier and more terrible demands” embraced and endured

by our outstanding fellow soldiers. The Army will remain a vocation that draws into itself the best the Nation has to offer, and the Chaplain Corps will continue to strive to support and enhance the Army, its Ethic, and its culture through prevailing religious support that inspires the professional soldiers of our Army, that informs the character of our Army, and that sustains the souls of our soldiers. **MR**



# Fight, Kill, Die, Buddy

## Words Professional Soldiers Live By

**Brigadier General Sean MacFarland,  
U.S. Army**

*“The preeminent military task, and what separates [the military profession] from all other occupations, is that soldiers are routinely prepared to kill . . . in addition to killing and preparing to kill, the soldier has two other principal duties . . . some soldiers die and, when they are not dying, they must be preparing to die.”*

—James H. Toner

**T**HE WORDS, “to kill and die” are as central to the profession of arms as “to serve and protect” are to the law enforcement profession, or “equal justice under the law” are to the legal profession. The life and death nature of what we do as soldiers is what draws us together and creates the unique cohesion of the bands of brothers that Shakespeare and Steven Ambrose wrote about, which simply do not exist anywhere outside military experience. Skill, trust, shared sacrifice, and even fear bind warriors together so tightly that they are capable of acts of courage that rival those of a mother protecting her children. At the core of the willingness to kill and die for one another is trust bound up in shared sacrifices. When we examine the key attributes of our profession, we can never lose sight of this underlying truth, because it sets us apart from all others.

### Ramadi

As a brigade combat team (BCT) commander in Ramadi from 2006 to early 2007, I had the opportunity to witness what James Toner called “the preeminent military task” on a scale and frequency that I hope never to repeat. After command, I served on the Joint staff. One morning, I was running past the Iwo Jima Memorial and for the first time really thought about the words engraved on the pedestal, “uncommon valor was a common virtue.” I almost stopped in my tracks when I realized that I had also experienced something like that.

In Ramadi, Soldiers, Marines, and Navy SEALs fought and died for their buddies, their leaders, and their subordinates. In the midst of it all, I

Brigadier General Sean MacFarland is the Deputy Commanding General for Leader Development and Education of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

U.S. Navy SEALs patrolling with U.S. soldiers in Ramadi, 2006. (U.S. Navy)



**Camp Ramadi Memorial Service, 2006.**

became almost numb to the routine courage and sacrifice occurring every day. Many of these acts went unrecognized at the time, but not all. In just a few days, one battalion earned a Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), three Silver Stars, several more Bronze Stars and Army Commendations Medals for Valor, and numerous Purple Hearts. A few days later, a Navy SEAL named Petty Officer Mike Mansoor, earned a posthumous Medal of Honor for his actions in Ramadi in support of our BCT. Although the awards of a DSC and a Medal of Honor were unusual, this was not a particularly intense week in Al Anbar province. Without a doubt, members of other Army brigades and Marine regiments in both Iraq and Afghanistan could equal or top this, but this is what a week at the office was like for soldiers in the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry, in September 2006.

On 24 September 2006, the enemy attacked a dismounted patrol as it made its way through a hotly contested part of South Ramadi. Several men were wounded in the firefight. Staff Sergeant Jason

P. Trumpower, commanding a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, quickly maneuvered his track in an attempt to evacuate the soldiers. But, his vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device (IED), disabling it and critically wounding the driver. Trumpower, pinned in the vehicle, maintained security and notified higher headquarters of the situation.

Staff Sergeant David Anderson, who was also responding to the call for aid in his own Bradley Fighting Vehicle, linked up with Trumpower and began evacuating the crew as another vehicle dealt with the dismounted casualties. Anderson was directing his vehicle back to Camp Ramadi when it, too, was disabled by an IED, wounding five inside.

The explosion knocked out communications and caused a fire in the rear compartment. Anderson, after checking his gunner and driver, attempted to let down the rear ramp and the troop door, but both were jammed. Trumpower, with severe wounds to his hands and face, tried to get the cargo hatch open. With Anderson's help, the two men were able to open it wide enough to evacuate

the vehicle. Specialist Reyes, a medic, although also wounded and disoriented by the flames, found the fire-suppression handle and doused the blaze long enough for everyone to escape. Once everyone was out, Anderson took a rifle from the vehicle and single-handedly made sure there were no insurgents within a nearby building while Trumpower guarded the wounded and Reyes evaluated and stabilized them.

After they moved the wounded into the building, Anderson attempted to retrieve a radio and smoke grenade to signal their location, only to find both destroyed in the vehicle. Knowing the wounded driver was going into shock and could bleed to death without immediate evacuation, Anderson ran over 400 meters through hostile streets to wave down yet another Bradley, which he then led back to the wounded soldiers, and subsequently supervised the loading of his men.

I arrived at “Charlie Med” just as the wounded men arrived in the Bradley and were unloaded onto

waiting litters. Anderson and Trumpower were the last to accept medical attention. Trumpower’s nomex [flame resistant brand fiber] was in tatters and blackened by the fire in the Bradley. The battalion command sergeant major from Task Force 1-37 Armor, to which B Co, 1-36 Infantry, was attached, finally had to order them to enter the aid station.

When I presented him with a Silver Star a few months later for his actions that day, Anderson said, “I’m just glad I was there to take care of my soldiers and bring them home safely. To me, I was just doing my job and what I was trained to do.”<sup>1</sup>

Just two days later, 2nd Lieutenant Bryan Jackson was on his way back from a meeting in the nearby city of Hit, at which I’d informed all the officers of Task Force 1-36 Infantry that our BCT had been extended by 45 days. A vehicle in his convoy became disabled while maneuvering in response to enemy fire. Jackson was helping to recover it, when he and those around him



J.D. Leopold (ARNEWS)

**1LT Walter Bryan Jackson is the seventh soldier to receive the Distinguished Service Cross since 1975. He is flanked by Secretary of the Army Pete Geren and his former commander, LTC Thomas C. Graves.**

came under heavy machine gun fire, resulting in several soldiers being wounded, to include his company commander and first sergeant. An insurgent's bullet ripped through Jackson's thigh, but did not take Jackson out of the fight. Regaining consciousness after the initial shock of the injury, his first thought was about his severely wounded comrades. Jackson alternated between returning fire on the suspected enemy position and administering first aid to his compatriot with life-threatening wounds. Ignoring his own severe injuries and relying on his tenacity and strength, Jackson carried his first sergeant to a Bradley 30 feet away for evacuation. Even as he was hit a second time by enemy fire, Jackson never faltered. Once clear of the engagement and despite the severity of his own injuries, Jackson still refused medical aid until the man he helped save was treated. At the aid station, the first words to come from him were of concern for the wounded man he had rescued. When the Secretary of the Army presented him with his Distinguished Service Cross, then-1st Lieutenant Jackson said simply, "I believe I just had to do what I had to do in that situation . . . I think many Soldiers would have done the same thing."<sup>2</sup>

## Shared Sacrifice

What is truly impressive about these two stories is that Staff Sergeant Anderson and Lieutenant Jackson were both right. They were just doing their jobs, and many other soldiers not only would have done the same, but routinely did. Uncommon valor was indeed a common virtue. Thanks to the courage of the junior leaders cited above, no Americans died in these engagements. As for killing, I am not sure how many enemy were killed or wounded; it is always difficult to know in urban combat. However, Americans seem to fight with unmatched ferocity when their comrades in arms are at risk. That the enemy paid a heavy price is probably safe to assume.

And soldierly virtues are not confined to the Army. Our soldiers in Ramadi were joined by "soldiers of the sea." At any given time, our BCT included a U.S. Marine Corps rifle battalion and was supported by two platoons of Navy SEALs who shared in their brothers' tears, sweat, and blood. Three short days after Lieutenant Jackson's firefight, on 29 September, Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Michael Mansoor, saved

***Thanks to the courage of the junior leaders cited above, no Americans died in these engagements.***

the rest of his sniper team by throwing himself on a live grenade. His sacrifice occurred just a few blocks away from where Sergeant Anderson made his run through an enemy gauntlet to save his men five days prior. The relationship between the men of SEAL Team 3 and the soldiers of 1st BCT, 1st Armored Division, was so close, that the SEALs proudly called themselves "Army SEALs" and the soldiers they fought alongside will forever remember them as part of their band of brothers—as fellow soldiers. Three different services were united by a common ethos, that of the American warrior.

Major General (Retired) Bob Scales recently said of his own experience in Vietnam:

Soldiers suffer, fight, and occasionally die for each other. It's as simple as that. What brought us to fight in the jungle was no different than the motive force that compels young soldiers today to kick open a door in Ramadi with the expectation that what lies on the other side is either an innocent huddling



Camp Ramadi Memorial Service, 2006.

(Photo courtesy of author)



with a child in her arms or a fanatic insurgent yearning to buy his ticket to eternity by killing the infidel. No difference. Patriotism and a paycheck may get a soldier into the military, but fear of letting his buddies down gets a soldier to do something that might just as well get him killed.<sup>3</sup>

Four words largely sum up what it means to be a soldier: fight, kill, die, and buddy. No other job, occupation, career, or profession entails the intimacy wrapped up in those four words. Aspiring to make soldiering a profession, one has to master the first two, prepare for the third, and be worthy of being called the fourth. A deep respect for one another, stemming from honed skills, implicit trust, and shared sacrifice rests at the foundation underlying these four words. Anderson, Trumpower, Jackson, and Mansoor attained all four. An army that gets these four things the most

right will win its wars, all things being equal, and sometimes even when other things are not equal.

Let us remember what sets American soldiers apart from many other armies. Our equipment is good but not the reason; our soldiers have their ethos, one that compares to the best that have existed in the history of civilization. General (Retired) Fred Franks said after Desert Storm, even if we had switched our equipment with the enemy, we still would have won. What are we doing today, to develop the Jacksons, Reyes's, Andersons, and Trumpowers of tomorrow? If we cannot satisfactorily answer that question, we are failing in our duty to be stewards of our profession, to leave it better than we found it. Whatever else we do as part of the profession of arms, we need to make sure that ours is always an army of buddies, who will fight, kill, and die for their country and for each other. **MR**

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#### NOTES

1. 2 February 2007, Multi-National Force-West Public Affairs, Army News Service.  
2. 2 November 2007, J.D. Leipold, ARNEWS.

3. 12 September 2009, speech by MG Robert Scales, U.S. Army (Retired) at Truman Library.



(Photo courtesy of author)

Awards ceremony for SSG Anderson, SSG Trumpower, and SPC Reyes, Camp Ramadi, 2006.



# Army Civilians—Professionals by Any Definition

Volney Jim Warner and Natalie Lui Duncan

**G**EORGE WASHINGTON FORMED a Continental Army of ordinary civilians who were willing to do whatever was necessary to make the country free. Since the Army transitioned from a conscript to a professional volunteer force, Army civilians have assumed increased levels of responsibility and greater authority. Civilians have been held to higher standards of accountability at commands, headquarters, installations, and in other organizations. By early 2010, some 300,000-plus Army civilians were serving in more than 540 occupational fields spanning 31 career programs. Of that number, 23,000 have deployed to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

## What Characteristics Distinguish a Profession Today?

Professionals view their work not simply as a vocation for earning money, but as a calling which has for its prime purpose the rendering of some form of public service. Doctors, priests, lawyers, and educators are common examples. Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil Military Relations* and Field Manual (FM) 1, *The Army*, are illustrative of the literature on professionalism.<sup>2</sup> Huntington defined the military profession using three particular characteristics: expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. Expertise includes a liberal arts education "followed by ongoing technical training staged to coincide with specific ranks and skill sets."<sup>3</sup> Responsibility is service to society, not for compensation, but "as the fulfillment of a service ethic shaped by professional values and ideals."<sup>4</sup> Corporateness, or group identity and unity, "develops through shared training and educational experiences, common work obligations, and the profession's unique social responsibility." The 14 June 2005 edition of

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Natalie Lui Duncan serves as an Army senior professional with the Army Civilian University, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. She holds a B.A. and an M.A. from Stanford University.

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PHOTO: A Department of the Army civilian at work in Baghdad, Iraq, December 2009 (U.S. Army)

FM 1—considered one of the Army’s two capstone field manuals—defines “profession” as follows:

The purpose of any profession is to serve society by effectively delivering a necessary and useful specialized service. To fulfill those societal needs, professions—such as, medicine, law, the clergy, and the military—develop and maintain distinct bodies of specialized knowledge and impart expertise through formal, theoretical, and practical education. Each profession establishes a unique subculture that distinguishes practitioners from the society they serve while supporting and enhancing that society. Professions create their own standards of performance and codes of ethics to maintain their effectiveness. To that end, they develop particular vocabularies, establish journals, and sometimes adopt distinct forms of dress. In exchange for holding their membership to high technical and ethical standards, society grants professionals a great deal of autonomy. However, the profession of arms is different from other professions, both as an institution and with respect to its individual members.<sup>5</sup>

This excerpt from FM 1 highlights three distinguishing attributes of a profession:

- Delivery of a specialized service to address societal needs.

- Establishment of a distinct subculture.
- The definition of performance standards and a code of ethics.

For the purposes of the discussion here, we will examine the attributes of Army civilians within the context of the common attributes that span across the above definitions:

- Commitment to service.
- Corporateness.
- Distinct bodies of knowledge.
- Delivery of specialized service using specialized skills.
- Ability to apply specialized knowledge and render complex judgments under conditions of uncertainty.
- Expertise imparted through formal, theoretical, and practical education.
- Accountability of members to high ethical and performance standards.
- Significant autonomy.

## How Do Army Civilians Embody the Attributes of a Professional?

In answering the question of what it means today to be a professional civilian public servant in the Army, we turn first to the question of responsibility.



(U.S. Army)

Volney J. Warner, president of the Army Civilian University, hosting an executive summit at Fort Belvoir, VA, 15 April 2011.

**Commitment to service.** As Federal Civil Service employees, Army civilians take the same oath of office as Army officers and members of Congress, solemnly swearing that they will support and defend the Constitution. In doing so, they affirm their commitment to “uphold the highest traditions of the public service,” their loyalty to the United States, and their obligations to the American people.<sup>6</sup> Paul A. Volcker, former Chair, National Commission on the Public Service, described a civil service that upholds the highest ideals as one that is “responsive to the political will of the people,” “protective of our constitutional values,” “able to cope with complexity and conflict,” “able to maintain ethical standards,” and “capable of earning the respect of all our citizens.”<sup>7</sup>

The Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage guide the conduct of all members of the Army profession, including Army civilians. The Army Civilian Corps Creed, set forth below, also embodies a commitment to selfless service. The Creed may be viewed as a contract among Army civilians, the Army, and the nation’s citizens.

- I am an Army Civilian; a member of the Army Team.
- I am dedicated to our Army, our Soldiers and civilians.
- I will always support the mission.
- I provide stability and continuity during war and peace.
- I support and defend the Constitution of the United States and consider it an honor to serve our Nation and our Army.
- I live the Army values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.
- I am an Army Civilian.

The Army is the client serviced by the Army Civilian Corps, and the Nation’s citizenry is its ultimate client. Recent pronouncements by the senior Army leadership make it clear that our client views the Corps as a profession. In a 19 June 2006 memorandum, the Secretary of the Army affirmed that “the Army Civilian Corps is vital to our Nation’s security and critical to the Army’s success in peace and war.”<sup>8</sup> The Under Secretary of the Army, Dr. Joseph W. Westphal, has acknowledged that civilians represent “a huge part of our Generating Force—60 percent, in fact.”<sup>9</sup> He recognizes their significant



(U.S. Army)

**Dr. Joseph Westphal, Under Secretary of the Army and the Army’s first Chief Management Officer, discusses the Scorpion system with LTC Karl Borjes, product manager for Improvised Explosive Device Defeat/Protect Force, 3 May 2010.**

contributions to the Army: “The Generating Force performs the incredible heavy lifting in support of ARFORGEN—training, supplying, and engineering the force so our warfighters can concentrate on their missions on the fronts, and come home safely to their families, homes, and communities across the Nation.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Dr. Westphal has noted that “the Army is increasingly calling upon our Civilian Corps to assume greater levels of responsibility and accountability at organizations throughout our service.”<sup>11</sup> The *2010 Army Posture Statement* also acknowledges Army civilians as an important component of the Army Total Force—“Army civilians are integral to the Army team, critical to the Army’s success, and thus ultimately, vital to the Nation’s security.”<sup>12</sup>

**Corporateness.** The Army Civilian Creed and Army Values tie Army civilians to a collective identity that reflects the Army’s culture, character, and core values. As noted in the *2010 U.S. Army Posture Statement*, the Creed highlights the unique social responsibility of Army civilians—namely, to “keep the U.S. Army ready to execute its mission.”<sup>13</sup>

Several developments over the past decade have strengthened the group identity of Army civilians. To signal the “Army’s commitment to fully integrate civilians into the Army”<sup>14</sup> and to strengthen the bonds between uniformed and civilian members of the Army,<sup>15</sup> the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) have established a Civilian Advisory Board. In a memorandum issued on 19 June 2006, they also announced the establishment of the Army Civilian Corps as “an integral part of our Army team.”<sup>16</sup> With the stroke of a pen, the secretary and CSA unified the 300,000 civilians who support the Army in a broad range of capacities under a collective professional identity. To demonstrate its importance to the Army, the Secretary designated himself as the Army Civilian Corps Champion.<sup>17</sup>

**Distinct bodies of knowledge.** An Army standard set of leader competencies are provided through the Civilian Education System (CES), “a progressive,

sequential leader development program for Army civilians at all levels.”<sup>18</sup> All new Army civilians are indoctrinated into the Army culture, operating practices, and foundational competencies by attending the Foundation Course. Army Regulation (AR) 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, requires each Army organization to provide its civilians with acculturation experience. Select civilians serving in or selected for force management related assignments across the Army attend The Army Force Management School. The school develops and maintains a unique body of knowledge on how the Army runs and makes that knowledge accessible to all Army cohorts. Students may apply this knowledge to “assist in the management of organizations in the current force (projection Army) and the future force (modularity).”<sup>19</sup> Senior civilians selected to attend the Army War College are introduced to capstone knowledge unique to the Army, including “the functioning and relationships of numerous



(DOD)

An Army Civilian clinical pharmacist hooks up a soldier to an ambulatory blood pressure monitoring device.

Defense, Joint, and Army organization, systems, and processes involved in the development and sustainment of trained and ready forces.”<sup>20</sup>

**Delivery of specialized service using specialized skills.** Under the merit-based Federal Civil Service system that was established as a result of the Pendleton Act of 1883, all civil servants—including Army civilians—are selected for positions based on their specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. The Pendleton Act brought an end to the “spoils system,” which had previously placed political patronage above merit in hiring decisions.<sup>21</sup> The introduction of this legislation represented an initial step toward the professionalization of the Federal Civil Service. Appointed by President Benjamin Harrison in 1889 as the first U.S. Civil Service Commissioner, Theodore Roosevelt energized a civil service system that was underpinned by the principle that candidates for positions in the government would be evaluated on a nonpartisan, merit basis—“only those who had merit [would] be appointed to Federal jobs.”<sup>22</sup> Under the current system, applicant qualifications are evaluated in the context of the requirements of the job to be filled.<sup>23</sup>

Army civilians provide a broad range of specialized services and capabilities.

**Ability to apply specialized knowledge and render complex judgments under conditions of uncertainty.** As defense leaders have reoriented the Army to confront the national security requirements of the 21st century and prevail against a full spectrum of possible threats, they have called upon Army civilians to exercise agility, adaptability, and flexibility in support of the current conflicts and to prepare for unforeseen future threats arising from the uncertainty of a highly complex security environment.<sup>24</sup>

In the memorandum issued on 19 June 2006, the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army acknowledged the increasingly multifaceted roles that have been assumed by Army civilians: “As the Army’s missions have evolved and become more complex, so have the roles of Army civilians.”<sup>25</sup> Today, Army civilians occupy



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Marc Barnes

**A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project engineer briefs Army Chief of Staff GEN George W. Casey, Jr. (center left), Fort Belvoir, VA, 11 August 2010.**

senior leadership and mission critical positions in the Operating Force deployed alongside soldiers and key positions in the Generating Force at all levels. At a panel discussion hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army at its annual meeting on 7 October 2009, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Thomas R. Lamont noted that “Our Army in many cases is supported by civilians, equipped by civilians, transported by civilians, and led by civilians. This support happens both here in CONUS [the continental United States] and overseas to include Iraq and Afghanistan.”<sup>26</sup>

Three examples of individual Army civilian professionals are illustrative.

- In May 2010, the Secretary of the Army presented the Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service to William Weed, Medical Communications for Combat Casualty Care Program Management and Business Transformation Director. The award was made for Weed’s development of an electronic medical recording system—a breakthrough technology that operates in the war zone in Iraq and Afghanistan that enables the doctors and nurses in theater to document health care electronically for our soldiers.<sup>27</sup>

- Civilian professionals have assisted in humanitarian efforts in Haiti. “Army Materiel Command—Haiti soldiers and civilians supporting the humanitar-

ian assistance mission have achieved tremendous success providing logistical support not only to our service members, but also to non-governmental organizations such as United States Agency for International Development.”<sup>28</sup>

- According to Major General Steven W. Smith, Director, Army Cyberspace Task Force, Army civilian professionals work shoulder to shoulder with soldiers at the newly established Army Forces Cyber Command based at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, serving as “the front line of defense for defending the Army network worldwide.”<sup>29</sup>

**Expertise imparted through formal, theoretical, and practical education.** Since the inception of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001, the Army has invested significantly in developing the leadership skills of its civilians “to provide a more professional, capable, and agile Civilian Corps critical to the Army’s mission.”<sup>30</sup> A 24 October 2005 memorandum by Lieutenant General James J. Lovelace, deputy chief of staff, operations, signals an affirmation of the Army’s commitment to the education and training of its civilian workforce: “Civilian leaders [will] have a much greater role in the future, requiring them to be even more adaptive leaders. The preparation of civilians for successive leadership responsibility is critical . . . I strongly endorse training and education for Army civilians.”<sup>31</sup>

The Civilian Education System was established on 22 January 2007. Its goal is to prepare agile and innovative Army civilians who can lead during times of change and uncertainty; are prepared for the rigors of service as multi-skilled leaders; and are armed with the values, skills and mindset to serve as competent, resilient supervisors and managers.”<sup>32</sup> The Civilian Education System “focuses on leadership competencies required at each level of responsibility and assignment as civilians advance through their careers.”<sup>33</sup> Select civilians are offered opportunities to attend a Senior Service College, the Defense Senior Leader Development Program, and other senior-level leader development programs to gain a broader work experience to round out their leadership skills” through a competitive process.<sup>34</sup>

The Army has also taken actions to sharpen the technical and functional capabilities of its civilians. Through the Competitive Professional

Development and the Academic Degree training programs, eligible civilians can enroll in formal programs of study in fields that relate to the performance of their job duties. The Army Initiative 5 Final Report “directed the Army to maximize the use of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) schools for civilian functional training” and the “transfer of responsibility of functional training from Army G-1 to the Army G-3/5/7.” TRADOC operates 32 schools across 16 installations. According to the *2010 U.S. Army Posture Statement*, “the Army is working to establish a civilian training system synchronized with the uniformed military system and expanding civilian career field functional training requirements to include all applicable Civilian occupational series.”<sup>35</sup>

**Accountability of members to high ethical and performance standards.** Army civilians are governed by the same high standards as military officers. The *Joint Ethics Regulation* provides guidance in the areas of financial and employment disclosure systems, post-employment rules, enforcement, and training, and other applicable laws and regulations.<sup>36</sup> In accordance with Section 1-413 of the regulation, the Inspector General “investigates ethics matters . . . and refers any such matters that involve suspected criminal violations to the appropriate criminal investigative office.”<sup>37</sup> The Inspector General subsequently reports on “investigations that result in referrals to the Department of Justice and on disciplinary actions that must be reported in response to the Office of General Counsel annual ethics survey.”<sup>38</sup> Army Regulation 20-1, *Inspector General Activities and Procedures*, prescribes duties, missions, standards, and requirements for inspectors general throughout the Army and guides them in the fulfillment of statutorily mandated self-policing functions.<sup>39</sup>

As government professionals, Army civilians have “obligations to the highest standards of performance.”<sup>40</sup> The obligations entail “a commitment

***As government professionals, Army civilians have “obligations to the highest standards of performance.”***

by civil servants . . . to efficiency, responsiveness, and integrity.”<sup>741</sup> All Army civilians are formally held accountable to meet performance standards through a performance evaluation system such as AR 690-400, *Total Army Performance Evaluation System*.

**Significant autonomy.** Army civilians have already been granted significant autonomy to make decisions of strategic importance to the Army. Over 3,000 Army civilians operating at the GS-15 level shoulder responsibilities and exercise decision making authority commensurate with Army colonels. A number of Army commands are staffed predominantly by civilians. The U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, the U.S. Army Materiel Command, and the U.S. Army Installation Management Command have designated civilians to serve as the second- or third-ranking senior officials of their respective organizations.

For all of the reasons set forth above, it is clear that as we enter the second decade of the 21st century, Army civilians are professionals—by any definition. It is, of course, important to recognize that within

the Army civilian profession, some members are also members of other professions. Because of their expertise or experience, yet others are rightly considered to be more senior professionals.

## Complementary Professions

Two examples suffice to illustrate how the separate professional status of certain Army civilians complements their work for the Army.

Army civilian attorneys are members of the legal profession as well as members of the Army Civilian Corps. They adapt their legal education and experience to address the unique legal challenges confronted by the Army. In addition to the ethical and other obligations, which must be met by all Army civilians, Army civilian lawyers must comply with the ethical, continuing legal education, and other obligations of the legal profession.

Civilian faculty members at the Army War College and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) are also members of the education profession. The *Title 10 Civilian Faculty Manual*



(U.S. Army)

Army civilians with U.S. Army South operations officer for Peacekeeping Operations North 08, Managua, Nicaragua, 11 June 2008.



published by CGSC prescribes guidelines for the recruitment, appointment, academic credentialing, faculty performance management, promotion, reward, and termination of Title 10 civilian faculty. “Sustained excellence in teaching” is cited as the most important task for faculty.<sup>42</sup> CGSC has identified the professional domains of its faculty as teaching, scholarship, service, and faculty development. While each faculty member has unique educational credentials, “the common ground for all is that excellence in teaching is required.”<sup>43</sup> Faculty members are “responsible for their development as educators.”<sup>44</sup> They are encouraged to be actively engaged in CGSC-sponsored faculty development programs and pursue self-development opportunities to enhance their effectiveness as teachers.<sup>45</sup>

## Raising the Level of Professionalism

Professionalism is not a static attribute. Members of a profession must continually work to improve the quality of their work. Thus, senior Army civilians, as well as junior Army civilians, seek additional or improved expertise and broader experience, all of which benefits the Army.

Some Army organizations have worked to significantly enhance the professionalism of civilians. Winners of the *2009 Excellence in Education Award*, sponsored in part by the Army Management Staff College, have been recognized for “strengthening the core attributes of the Army workforce through innovation in education, aggressive and creative professional development programs, and a unique emphasis in lifelong learning.” Examples of best practices adopted by the first, second, and third place winners follow.

The U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research Development and Engineering Center (NSRDEC) has embraced the concept of a continuum of professional development that begins in the formative years and continues throughout a civilian’s career. The Center has defined leadership competencies for its team leaders, division chiefs, and directors. Skills training, developmental rotations, and opportunities to earn advanced degrees and certifications contribute toward the development of civilians equipped with specialized capabilities required to solve Army problems. The Center conducts quarterly internal reviews, which provide its senior leadership with visibility

***Army schools provide excellent opportunities for soldiers and civilians to learn together . . .***

into science, technology, and engineering efforts underway. It also convenes peer reviews, where NSRDEC seeks “unbiased insight and guidance about the technical quality, maturity, and relevance of [its] basic research program” from external sources.<sup>46</sup>

The U.S. Army Audit Agency prepares its more than 600 civilian employees with the skills required to deliver audit services to the Army leadership. The Agency also offers training to strengthen the auditing skills of its auditors at every level. The Agency sponsors select employees for advanced degrees, certifications, and memberships in professional organizations. It “incorporates lessons learned from peer reviews, follow-up reviews, internal quality assurance engagements, and internal control reviews” and corrects the weaknesses identified.<sup>47</sup>

The U.S. Army Contracting Command has invested in the development of specialized expertise and the creation of self-policing mechanisms to hold its workforce accountable to high ethical and performance standards. Interns, which represent 45 percent of its workforce, go through a “Buyer Boot Camp” that strengthens their job-readiness. Journeymen and senior contracting personnel attend refresher training.

There are, of course, many other ways to raise the standard of professionalism within the Army Civilian Corps. We are limited only by our imagination. Several ideas are currently under discussion.

To enhance commitment to service, some—but not all—organizations arrange for civilians to take the oath of office in formal induction ceremonies presided by a senior Army official and to renew the oath at key milestones throughout their career. Policy changes could require initial entry and promotions to be more formal to reinforce the oath of office.

History is an excellent vehicle for providing examples and inspiration to professionals. Profiling distinguished civilians who embody the highest ideals of public service in support of the Army mission could reinforce the service ethic.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 directed acculturation training for all



(U.S. Army)

**Michelle Klapper, the Morale, Welfare, and Recreations coordinator at Forward Operating Base Spin Boldak, Afghanistan, sits among items her facility offers to the servicemembers and civilians deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Klapper has served continuously in both Iraq and Afghanistan since 2004, with the exception of a short break she had to take because of an injury from a mortar attack.**

Army civilians. The Army has planned to deploy a program to facilitate the on-boarding of all civilians beginning in 2012.

Many Army organizations are comprised of a mix of uniformed and civilian personnel. Both cohorts lament the lack of early opportunities to collaborate. Army schools provide excellent opportunities for soldiers and civilians to learn together, to exchange ideas, and to address problems from a multi-dimensional perspective. Providing administrative tools for more Army civilians to attend appropriate TRADOC courses could be beneficial.

Army civilians receive much of their professional information from proponents. Civilian functional proponents can use their communication vehicles to share Army enterprise knowledge. Departmental issues and priorities are more open and available than ever before via Army Knowledge Online and the Army Public Affairs website.

The Army Civilian Corps has a unique knowledge domain. Many areas of civilian knowledge are defined by legislation. Title IX describes critical functions. Other laws prescribe acquisition, intelligence, or other functions. The Army itself, however, prescribes the areas of expertise common to *all* leaders and managers. Greater clarity regarding common standards for

career progression would enhance the Army civilian profession.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 directed that all Department of Defense organizations move to a more competency-based management of the workforce. Defining levels of responsibility that will be used to codify positions is foundational to achieving this goal. Defining education, training, and experience required to achieve each level of responsibility will be difficult. It must include leadership, functional, and technical requirements. The Civilian Workforce Transformation Initiative has begun to define competency requirements. Success of this critical effort will be a significant step forward.

To maximize the benefits of competency management, senior Army leadership has initiated plans to manage *all* civilians in career programs in accordance with the *Army Campaign Plan 2011*. In the words of Under Secretary Westphal, "Our goal is to move from 40% of the force managed in a career field to 100% coverage."<sup>48</sup> All civilians should be guided by career development roadmaps that include education, training, professional development, performance enhancing job experiences, and certification.<sup>49</sup> Such a structured approach to career management could enhance the professional capabilities of Army civilians at all

levels by improving both their general knowledge and their systemic knowledge. “General knowledge” may be viewed as “having a broad understanding of the various aspects of their [respective career] field[s].”<sup>50</sup> “Systemic knowledge” may be viewed as “having an understanding of how various parts of the whole interact with each other” to support the overarching Army mission.<sup>51</sup> It could also provide the Army with greater visibility into the leadership capabilities and technical expertise of Army civilian professionals so that their skills may be optimally leveraged to support a full spectrum of security requirements.

We must continue to build a strong bench of strategic Army civilian leaders who are “broadly skilled, adaptive, and proactive” and are capable of resolving problems that require a whole-of-government approach.<sup>52</sup> We need to broaden their understanding of Army decision making processes, how various parts of the Army interact to accomplish the Army mission, and how the Army works with the other military services and federal agencies in support of the *National Security Strategy*. Richard A. Lacquement, a distinguished military historian, noted that “the Army seeks to create generalists familiar with many or all of the major aspects of the profession’s expertise and the appropriate use of such expertise”<sup>53</sup> to “complement . . . the specialists who master areas of knowledge that support the Army’s success in its core expertise.”<sup>54</sup> “These generalists are the core from which we obtain the strategic leaders of the profession.”<sup>55</sup>

We should define the capabilities required of Army civilians to support the accomplishment of current and likely future missions outlined in the *2010 Quadrennial Defense Review*.<sup>56</sup> Identify capability gaps and build cadres of civilians with expertise in these particular areas through specialized training.

We need to capture lessons learned from civilians who have supported the Operating Force or have worked as part of the Generating Force. The knowledge applied under unique circumstances should be shared through the Center for Army Lessons Learned, best known for its support of the Operating Force, when in fact, it supports the whole Army.

There are many programs to train and educate the civilian workforce, but they remain uncoordinated. The Army has initiated efforts to conduct an inventory of the most significant civilian leader development and functional training programs, which are currently being delivered. Large, broadly targeted programs

with significant costs should be rationalized. Programs should align with leadership, functional, and technical competencies required by the Army.

All Army civilians receive regular ethics training. This training reinforces Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. The message is that the “highest standards of ethics and performance are demanded from those who hold public trust.”<sup>57</sup> We can go further by incorporating hypothetical ethics case studies in the workplace. A required comment on ethics in performance evaluations could reinforce high ethical standards.

Section 1113 of the National Defense Authorization Act FY2010 and the Federal Supervisor Training Act of 2010 direct DOD to develop and deploy supervisory training that addresses the topics mandated by statute to new supervisors and experienced supervisors. The training is intended to equip new and experienced supervisors with the requisite skills to manage employee performance effectively and to achieve the strategic priorities of the Army.

A performance-driven culture should be created by promoting an ongoing dialogue between supervisors and their employees regarding performance expectations. The now-defunct National Security Personnel System had the positive effect of engaging the entire workforce in a performance management dialogue. We could capitalize on that dialogue by incorporating performance accountability into the Total Army Performance Evaluation System to ensure that each civilian achieves high standards of competence.

We could also evaluate competence in performance management as a criterion for the selection of candidates for supervisory positions, as recommended by the Merit Systems Protection Board in its May 2010 report to the President and Congress.<sup>58</sup> Selections based solely on evaluation of technical competence should not be made.

Autonomy is a result of demonstrated professionalism. When society recognizes that members of a profession consistently demonstrate high standards of performance excellence and adhere to high ethical standards, it is more likely to defer to the judgment of the professionals. The more that we recruit, train, and develop our talented Army civilians, the more responsibility and autonomy they will acquire, and the more professional our Army Civilian Corps will be. **MR**

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## The Reflective Military Practitioner: How Military Professionals Think in Action

**Colonel Christopher R. Paparone, U.S. Army, Retired, Ph.D.  
and Colonel George Reed, U.S. Army, Retired, Ph.D.**

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

—T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

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PHOTO: by U.S. Air Force, TSGT Adrian Cadiz.

**V**OLATILITY, UNCERTAINTY, COMPLEXITY, AND AMBIGUITY characterize the contemporary operational environment (COE), requiring military professionals to continuously reflect on the roles, norms, and values of their craft.<sup>1</sup> An apparent accelerated rate of change in the security environment makes it increasingly difficult to predict national security opportunities and threats, and the skills and capabilities needed to address both.<sup>2</sup> Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have demonstrated the need for rapid change in tactics, techniques, and procedures and our overall approach to campaigning. They have proven that the more complex the COE, the more the body of professional military knowledge must remain in a state of purposeful instability.

One can define "professional knowledge" as information that members of the profession believe provides meaning and value in promoting understanding of how things work in their field.<sup>3</sup> A profession constructs and shares its unique body of abstract knowledge through social processes. Over time, the existing body of knowledge and the ongoing socio-professional processes that create and maintain it come to constitute paradigmatic thought, a model of effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> As theorist Donald Schön has observed, the network of experts and organizational leaders and the clients they serve who accept this model believe the paradigm to be so unique that laymen can neither understand nor apply it.<sup>5</sup>

Don Snider of the U.S. Military Academy deserves credit for renewing interest in the notion of the Army as a professional institution. Snider rightly raises a number of questions about the state of the profession. In two editions of *The Future of the Army Profession*, Snider and his co-authors express concern over the degree to which bureaucratic hierarchy is supplanting professionalism.<sup>6</sup> Through these edited works we are reacquainted with the essential elements of professions, specifically, that they are "exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases."<sup>7</sup> It is hard to overemphasize the importance of abstract knowledge to professions. Snider argues that healthy professions deliberately control and develop their bodies of knowledge to service their clients and to compete for dominance in a professional jurisdiction.

If the military were to lose society's trust in its ability to apply its unique form of knowledge, or if it should fail to differentiate itself from other groups that provide similar services, it would also lose some of the autonomy granted to it as a profession. In one of the classic works on professions, Andrew Abbott calls abstract knowledge the "currency of competition between professions."<sup>8</sup> Snider confirms this when he says, "The coins of the professional realm are expertise and the knowledge underlying it."<sup>9</sup> Reflective practitioners and good stewards of professions encourage habits in themselves and subordinates that develop and improve a profession's underlying body of knowledge. In this article we examine the means by which the Army develops, maintains, and judges its body of abstract professional knowledge. Our conclusion is that practitioners and good stewards of the profession apply what Schön describes as "reflective practice."<sup>10</sup>

The military contributes to, and draws upon, several traditional repositories of professional knowledge, including doctrine, journals, magazines, published assessments, and various meetings and conferences. The advent of web-based knowledge forums and electronic mail has opened up both formal and informal collaborative opportunities. Robust interaction with peers, subordinates, and superiors engaged in training and operations, or in research and education, ensures the professional military body of knowledge remains in an ongoing state of flux and transformation.<sup>11</sup>

Yet despite these visible signs of flux and transformation, few have written about how the knowledge process works. How is a professional body of knowledge transformed? How should professionals reflect on their knowledge? How should they judge the quality of the professional body of knowledge? What are the implications for the profession's senior leaders and clients? Answers to these questions are important to military professionals and senior leaders, to research and education institutions, and to Congress in its oversight role.

## How Professional Knowledge is Transformed

Educational theorist David A. Kolb developed one of the most intuitively appealing theories of knowledge to assess students' learning styles.

***Reflective practitioners and good stewards of professions encourage habits...that develop and improve a profession's underlying body of knowledge.***

Today, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College uses his archetype to promote professional military education.<sup>12</sup> Kolb's "experiential" learning model presents a complex view of knowledge formation. Although Kolb developed his model to provide insights into how normal individuals learn from experience, his theory has clear application as a vehicle for thinking about professional knowledge development. His four-stage framework recapitulates how bodies of knowledge are continuously grasped and transformed.<sup>13</sup> At various levels of internalization—from a tacit state of apprehension to a consciously knowing state of comprehension—knowledge transforms through *active experimentation*, *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, and *abstract conceptualization*. The last phase constitutes a generalization of technique to be applied to future experience.

Kolb describes four forms of knowledge that appear at various stages in the process of professional knowledge formation and reformation: *divergent*, *accommodative*, *convergent*, and *assimilative*.<sup>14</sup> Let us examine Kolb's theory and consider how social processes contribute to changes in the professional body of knowledge over time.

**Divergent knowledge.** Divergent knowledge is gained from reflective observations of experiences by participants who come from an assortment of disciplines, professions, and occupations. They bring diverse roles, norms, and values together for a common interest, usually motivated by a shared realization that they face complex or chaotic situations where old knowledge is no longer sufficient.<sup>15</sup> In some cases the situation confronted is so different and challenging and the existing perspective is so inadequate that it necessitates a new frame of reference and model of effectiveness—a paradigm shift.<sup>16</sup> In this case, the eclectic participants are linked by their thirst for new knowledge, perceived by them as necessary for setting new conditions,

perhaps for an emerging profession. They work to reconstruct reality by developing new, sometimes radical frames of reference.<sup>17</sup>

At this point, new professional roles, norms, and values are only loosely defined because learning categories and their interrelationships are exploratory. Informal groupings of like-minded leaders from varying backgrounds come together, all attempting to grapple with an indefinable state of knowing. For example, the Army's Louisiana Maneuvers of 1941 may have been a critical rally point for a group of diverse thinkers who helped transform a cavalry-based Army into a motorized Army.<sup>18</sup> The quality of professional relationships at this stage is important. Non-defensive interpersonal communications, shared trust, commitment, and enduring optimism are critical to offset the stress and anxiety associated with exploratory learning and the ever present risk of surprise and failure.<sup>19</sup> During this period of formation, alternative professional viewpoints emerge.

**Accommodative knowledge.** Based on shared concrete experiences and active experimentation, accommodative knowledge emerges when newly forming professional networks begin to extend more intuitive kinds of knowledge into forms that entertain new assumptions and beliefs on a broader scale. Professionals begin the process of examining the otherwise unexaminable when they combine concrete experience with *action research* (i.e., dynamic experimentation).<sup>20</sup> This activity requires flexibility of thought (e.g., temporarily suspending disbelief in other ways to frame or make sense of the COE) while accepting more unstructured and intangible ways of active inquiry (e.g., developing awareness about dealing with an active insurgency in Iraq when known technology does not seem to be effective).<sup>21</sup> In this stage, active experimentation is vital to learning. As experience with highly complex and unique situations develops from experimentation and trial and error, a growing sense develops that existing technology is inadequate.

**Convergent knowledge.** Convergent knowledge is knowledge that coalesces as the emergent network begins to make sense of the world in a collective way and passes this knowledge to other members. Thus, highly abstract concepts transform into realizable knowledge goals and objectives that can be institutionalized as technical comprehen-

sion.<sup>22</sup> Institutional performance depends on this more understandable and evaluated professional knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships. The institution begins to formulate rules and structure to gain control over the growing body of knowledge so that convergent knowledge can be more efficiently shared. New specialist categories form or old ones renew.<sup>23</sup> For example, the Army developed its Special Forces (SF) around divergent knowledge about fighting proxy wars in the 1950s, but it did not consider SF worthy of a separate branch until 30 years later.<sup>24</sup> Case studies, readings in theory, and time to reflect on one's current context and recent activity are helpful to test convergent knowledge in education and research endeavors.

A negative aspect of convergent knowledge is that the uncritical or naïve practitioner may help perpetuate a "cultural myth" as dogma rather than facilitate self-correction of the professional body of knowledge.<sup>25</sup> Continuous professional reflection and application of good habits in critical thinking help members sustain the body of knowledge. They also help the profession's societal clients make sense of a rapidly changing environment.

Professionals understand that convergent knowledge is a temporary state and work to prevent the body of knowledge from becoming stagnant, blinding all concerned from a more insightful future construction of reality that is always around the corner. U.S. Joint Forces Command "pre-doctrinal" pamphlets and Army interim field manuals are examples of convergent knowledge that extends beyond a shared sense of apprehension and emerges as a more interpretable, shared comprehension.<sup>26</sup>

**Assimilative knowledge.** We see assimilative knowledge when it is transformed into institutionalized technology; for example, in the form of records, rules, doctrine, textbooks, approved lessons learned, programs of instruction, and other structures that begin to modify roles, norms, and values within the community.<sup>27</sup> In the military's case, tasks, conditions, and standards of work technology become routinized; they are enforced by the profession and, eventually, by the institution's bureaucratic hierarchy and rule structure.<sup>28</sup> The irony here is that an inherent inertia develops. An institution often overvalues the overt qualities of assimilative knowledge and creates bureaucratic or mechanistic structures that stifle innovation,

thereby crippling professional progress. Aspects of more intuitive divergent and accommodative knowledge explorations go orphaned.<sup>29</sup>

Overly structured training, hierarchically supervised professional military educational programs, extensive procedural rules designed to standardize job performance, and other strictures can create an intractable situation, a procrustean bed that bars divergent and accommodative knowledge from the field and leads to the dismissal of research outcomes. Programmed knowledge appeals to senior managers because of perceived certainty derived from institutionalized metrics frequently associated with technology. Routine and habit are the hallmarks of technocratic bureaucracies. Such comfortable standardization possesses an attraction that devalues divergent alternatives.

There is a way to address this propensity to engineer assimilative knowledge. Professionals should avoid scientizing and reifying assimilative knowledge at inappropriate levels of discourse.<sup>30</sup> When reification occurs, “the way things get done around here” becomes “the only way to do things around here,” resulting in a serious obstacle to knowledge production.<sup>31</sup> To put it still another way, professionals must be cautious not to take for granted this seemingly settled body of knowledge about technical cause-and-effect relationships. As they practice the profession, they should continuously uncover and question the unseen underlying apprehension that still exists from the divergent stage and take action to confirm or change their apparent technical comprehension. As implied by the title of this article, this continuous professional inquiry is called *reflection-in-action*.<sup>32</sup>

## Reflecting on Professional Knowledge

Effective professionals realize that assimilative knowledge can be the most difficult to challenge because its meaning and use can appear so rational as to be technically unquestionable. Overcoming what amounts to a myopic belief in assimilative knowledge is even more difficult because intuitive

logic (the hallmark of accommodative and divergent knowledge forms) can be nearly impossible to articulate.<sup>33</sup> According to Schön, the apparent validity and infallibility of technical rationality constitute a “competency trap” in which unquestioned belief creates less effective professionals who become the “self-serving elite who use science-based technique” as their “masquerade of extraordinary knowledge.”<sup>34</sup> Technical rationality is a perspective that assumes complete knowledge of cause-and-effect relationships based in principles originally derived from Cartesian philosophy.<sup>35</sup> This sense of “rationality” errs by applying Newtonian scientific method to abstractions; in essence shoehorning discourses of physical science into the understanding of conceptual mental processes. George Bernard Shaw once defined this trap as a dangerous façade that can be created by use of assimilative jargon, a phenomenon he described as a “conspiracy against laity.”<sup>36</sup> For Schön, the cure for unquestioned belief in technical rationality is professional *reflection-in-action* that is “central to the ‘art’ by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, and value-conflict.”<sup>37</sup> In addition,

A practitioner’s reflection can serve as a corrective to over learning. Through reflection, he can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness, which he may allow himself to experience.<sup>38</sup>

Schön makes a strong case that technical rationality can dominate professions to the point that members lose track of the interdependent complex interactions that make each case unique. Professionals become—

locked into a view of themselves as technical experts, [and they] find nothing in the world of practice to occasion reflection. They have become too skillful at techniques of selective inattention, junk categories, and situational control techniques, which they use to preserve

***...the cure for unquestioned belief in technical rationality is professional reflection-in-action...***



constancy of their knowledge-in-practice. For them, uncertainty is a threat; its admission a sign of weakness. Others, more inclined toward and adept at reflection-in-action, nevertheless feel profoundly uneasy because they cannot say what they know how to do, cannot justify its quality or rigor.<sup>39</sup>

Note the ironic turn in Schön's last sentence, where he suggests a requirement to accept uncertainty while recognizing the call for quality and rigor. Schön speaks to this tendency toward dogmatic simplification as follows:

When [the professional] is confronted with demands that seem incompatible or inconsistent, [he] may respond by reflecting on the appreciations which he and others have brought to the situation. Conscious of a dilemma, he may attribute it to the way in which he has set the problem, or even the way in which he has framed his role. He may then find a way of integrating or choosing among the values at stake in the situation.<sup>40</sup>

The complexity of the COE makes each situation contextually unique. Hence, true professionals have to reflect on what the profession may otherwise take for granted and understand how to challenge assumptions. This happens naturally when one sees assimilative knowledge as ineffective; then, the more intuitive divergent knowledge process gains value. In these cases, professionals become researchers-in-action, as professional learning becomes a complex process of adaptation in the midst of epistemic paradox.<sup>41</sup> To Kolb, real professionalism involves considering the value of all types of knowledge simultaneously, no matter how contradictory they seem.<sup>42</sup>

The professional who reflects-in-action pays attention to, and acts on, the environment through paradoxical use of divergent, accommodative, and convergent forms of knowledge, especially when assimilative knowledge does not seem to be working. In that regard, stewards of the profession want the profession's field practitioners and de facto researchers to be able to challenge role assumptions, normative beliefs, and established values in order to determine their relevancy for the reality they are facing. This challenge demands a soft heuristic (rule of thumb) process rather than a hard scientific one since the quality or aptness of a body of knowledge

cannot be scientifically deduced in the same way Descartes applied Newton's empirical methods to philosophy. Professional judgment requires the challenging of assumptions, even those behind the paradigmatic Westernized scientific view. It necessitates a philosophical perspective that embraces the possibility of divergence rather than an ideological perspective that seems to enshrine assimilative knowledge as objective certainty.<sup>43</sup>

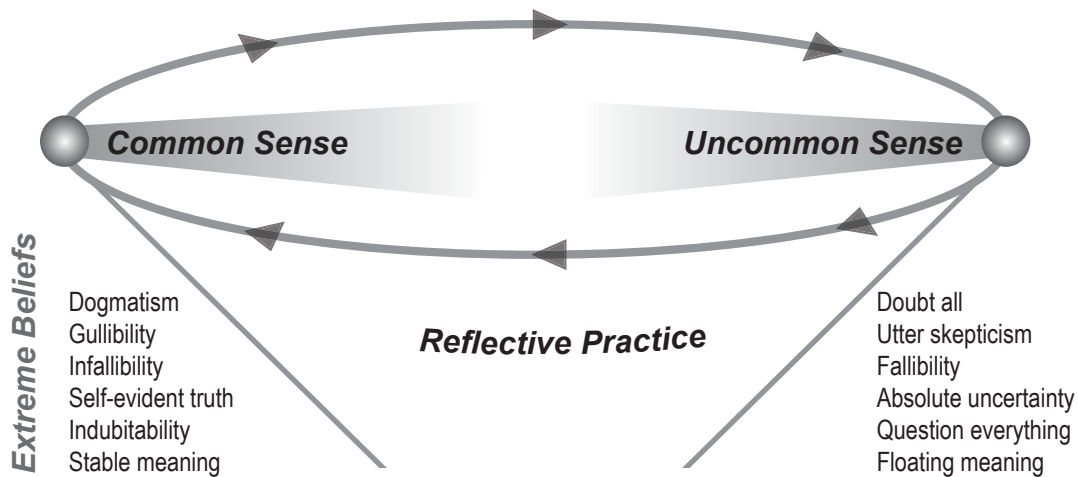
In that regard, we see the purpose of officer professional development as not only teaching convergent and assimilative knowledge forms, but also creating opportunities for exploring and practicing judgment on divergent and accommodative knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, we propose that military doctrine should reorient the professional community more on collaborative inquiry and collective judgment and lessen dependence on the convenient mythology of accepted technique or "best practices" passed down by authority with the stamp of "science" on them. Relying on the dogma of received wisdom founded on closed epistemic evaluations ultimately could serve to de-professionalize the military through chauvinism.<sup>45</sup>

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## **Assessing the Body of Knowledge**

In a process that parallels reflection-in-action, professionals ideally judge and make sense of knowledge across a spectrum ranging from an unquestioned belief in the certainty of assimilative wisdom to a radical, divergent form of skepticism (see figure).<sup>46</sup> Professionals appreciate and judge expert knowledge by acting all along the spectrum. At its best, in a process that entails paradoxical thinking while acting, a judgment appreciates opposing perspectives simultaneously.<sup>47</sup>

Professionals and stewards of the profession recognize that practicing the art of professional



**Figure 1. The continuum of judging knowledge involves paradoxical thinking.**

reflection-in-action is less risky in genuinely collaborative situations where *learning* is more valued than *knowing*.<sup>48</sup> In hierarchical organizations, on the other hand, especially during crises, the pressure to conform to a professionally acceptable body of technical knowledge can be tremendous—we tend to value those who have the temerity to resist such pressures, but only if they are right.<sup>49</sup> In that regard, Aaron B. Wildavsky’s concept of “speaking truth to power” can be one of the most heroic things professionals do.<sup>50</sup> The profession should consider as courageous those who speak such truth to those in authority who are not receptive. It should judge as virtuous senior officials who allow and encourage the naked truth to be spoken freely to them.

Successful collaboration in a professional network across the stages of knowledge requires participants to appreciate existing opinions and arguments while striving to understand and appreciate new ones. This can be a challenge when those proposing the new approach have not yet developed sufficient language to fully describe what they are intuiting. Effective collaborative professional communities seek educated, well-thought-out judgments. They are skeptical of dogma characterized by unchallenged and unsubstantiated beliefs and equally suspicious of extreme doubting that bears no possibility of closure. Paradoxically, a professional social system supports both common and uncommon inquiry because they are the lifeblood of the profession’s body of knowledge, facilitating its accumulation and maintenance. Professionals should freely admit

that they are unable to judge what they have not yet learned. Socratic wisdom rests on the admission that one does not know when and how the opportunity for learning will arise. The task of collaboratively shaping social interrelationships is anchored in the professional’s shared passion for knowledge—revealed in the sociological theory of roles, norms, and values.<sup>51</sup> As repositories of knowledge, human beings (including professionals) develop roles, norms, and values as forms of knowledge through a socially constructed process.<sup>52</sup>

**Roles.** Roles are the most visible aspect of this social construction. They are standardized patterns describing the behavior required of all persons playing a given part in society. Roles can differentiate one organizational position from another. A role reflects the recurring actions of the individual playing it. It is appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield generally predictable outcomes. When individual roles are combined, people create a “social system” or “subsystem.” In the case of the military, role-playing is ubiquitous. Names like commander, staff member, family support group leader, enlisted Soldier, and staff college professor all represent visible, descriptive role categories.

**Norms.** Less visible social manifestations than roles, norms reflect the general expectations of role incumbents within a social system or subsystem. Norms imply or explicitly prescribe ethics that people interactively create and refer to in order to sanction behavior. As such, norms have a specific “ought” or “must” quality. Norms formally (through

organizational procedures) or informally (through interpersonal relationships) shape the way roles are performed. Some examples we are familiar with include “commanders ought to be honest and fair;” “all officers are leaders;” “senior NCOs should speak for the enlisted population after getting to know them personally;” and, “the military decision-making process (MDMP) is the best way to approach planning for U.S. Army full-spectrum operations.”

**Values.** The least visible of social manifestations, values are generalized ideological justifications for roles and norms. They express aspirations that inform what is required for action.<sup>53</sup> Values are more culturally rooted than roles and norms, and they serve as the often unseen, frequently tacit backdrop that drives criteria for making judgments about knowledge. Like roles and norms, values may be *espoused*—stated deliberately and formally by the institution. The U.S. Army’s “Soldier’s Creed,” for example, is a BLUF declaration of the values the Army wants its members to inculcate (“I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade. I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough...”) On the other hand, values may be *in use* as cultural phenomena, passed from one generation to another as deeply hidden or tacit forms of assimilated knowledge.<sup>54</sup> If the espoused values approximate or are equal to those in use, the profession can approach a state of social equilibrium among itself, the institution, and clients.

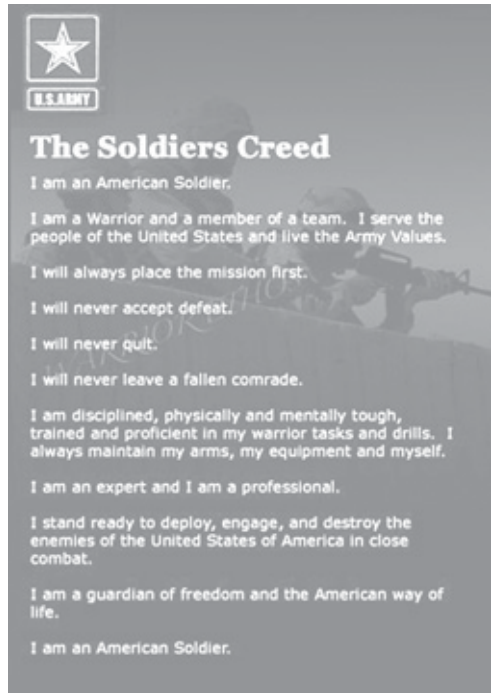
**Single- and double-loop learning.** Harvard professor Chris Argyris refers to the process of sustaining assimilative knowledge, in which associated roles, norms, and values go unchallenged, as *single-loop learning*. In its worst form, the profession, institution, and clients all firmly believe that they will continue to be successful with the knowledge they have. Faith and certainty feed off each other in a continuous loop. Theoretically, in a more stable COE, this may be a successful strategy with which

to judge knowledge (i.e., “it works, therefore why look for alternatives?”). However, this strategy is not considered viable in the midst of a perceived unstable COE with inherent fog and friction. As a remedy, Argyris describes *double-loop learning*, the ability to suspend deeply-held beliefs, no matter how successful they have been, in order to value alternative forms of knowledge (what Kolb termed “accommodative and divergent forms of knowledge”).<sup>55</sup>

**Defensive routines.** Even when professionals and institutional leaders embrace double-loop learning as the preferred strategy for judging knowledge, *defensive routines* can inhibit the process.<sup>56</sup> Defensive routines are emotional responses to alternative beliefs, values, and assumptions about assimilative knowledge, and they discourage all but single-loop learning.<sup>57</sup> A few notable examples of defensive routines include—

• *Irony of success*, a form of single-loop learning in which a reinforcing cycle of persistence causes leaders to “bask in past successes” and increase their collaboration with those of like mind, rather than recognize the need for change.<sup>58</sup> Psychologist Irving Janis called this like-mindedness and excessive desire for cohesion *groupthink*. According to Chamu Sundaramurthy and Marianne Lewis, groupthink is “a pattern of collective defenses aimed at denying or suppressing tensions;” it is associated with a shared comfortable feeling about known technology.<sup>59</sup> Repeated success can help build huge egos and contribute to a situation in which admitting that one can learn is tantamount to admitting weakness. In this case, Argyris concluded through his clinical research that “it can be especially difficult for smart people to learn not because they have little to learn but because they have a lot invested in appearing not to need to.”<sup>60</sup>

• *Faulty attribution*, a process that works two ways: by blaming failure on a mythical belief or a scapegoat, or by taking (wishful) credit for success



in a way that inspires overconfidence. Both cases reduce incentives to question the real causes of good or bad performance.<sup>61</sup> In U.S. Army culture, for example, there is a tendency to attribute success or failure to the technologies of leadership and/or training when there may, in fact, be alternative explanations.<sup>62</sup> The Army has a similar problem with non-attribution of its official doctrine (a written source of technology), which is published without proper citation of the sources of knowledge.<sup>63</sup>

- *Threat rigidity*, also known as “hunkering down” or entrenchment. This mind-set occurs when already-formed beliefs are retained in the face of conflicting information or even impending failure. Denying or marginalizing such disconfirming information results in psychological inertia, which is often accompanied by escalating commitment to the failing course of action. Using outsiders to assess new information and being open to their findings can help override this type of defensive routine.<sup>64</sup> For example, the Army should seek alternatives to assimilative knowledge beyond the readily available pantheon of retired military officers engaged in defense consulting work and those associated with what President Eisenhower dubbed “the military-industrial complex.”<sup>65</sup> Such quasi-insiders bring valuable knowledge about the inner workings and culture of the military, but they may find it difficult to provide the outsider’s view that could be more useful in countering threat rigidity.

- *Excessive use of bureaucratic controls*, which occurs when management overuses performance metrics, rules, and regulations that squelch professional knowledge adaptation and increase the probability of transaction-style leadership.<sup>66</sup> Professional problems often call for non-routine solutions. Yet routine solutions are observable in many organizations’ excessive use of management-by-objectives-type performance evaluations as well as statistical controls found in popular concepts such as “reengineering,” “balanced scorecard,” “Lean,” and “Six Sigma.” Excessive administrative controls on the use of known technology stifle experimentation and innovation; plus, they inhibit learning essential to the production of divergent and accommodative knowledge.<sup>67</sup>

- *Myopic decision-making*. When decisions are tied to an inflexible set of criteria or a set technology, the result is myopic decision-making. In this mind-set, learning usually entails comparing the

results of a single course of action against potentially factitious standards, thus fueling low-risk, single-loop learning while “discouraging more frame-breaking innovations and change.”<sup>68</sup> One could argue that the MDMP espoused by U.S. Army doctrine falls into this category.<sup>69</sup>

- *Impression management*. In this defensive routine, the individual or organization fixates on a facade of performance. (In the case of the military, this is often a facade of readiness.) This mode privileges form over function, overlooking substantive performance. Impression management distorts communications and intensifies information asymmetries among hierarchical levels of organization, thereby inhibiting effective decision-making and fueling suspicions.<sup>70</sup> Such masquerading amounts to a technology of deception.

## Implications for Senior Leaders and Clients

When senior officials of the institution are also active members of the profession, they should function as *stewards*. According to Webster’s *Unabridged Dictionary*, a steward is “one called upon to exercise responsible care over possessions (time, talent, and treasure) entrusted to him.” Stewards of a profession are intrinsically motivated to act in the best interests of their clients. In the case of the U.S. military, we might describe the ultimate client as the American people constitutionally represented by elected and appointed officials. Good stewardship entails not only accomplishing assigned missions, but also propelling the entrusted profession to new heights by setting conditions for the forms of knowledge outlined above to work eclectically, simultaneously, and without encumbrance.<sup>71</sup>

By providing opportunities to experiment and fail, effective stewards set the conditions for high-quality collaborative inquiry into divergent knowledge. Accepting thoughtful, open, and honest feedback, they encourage and share a passion for creativity among professionals.<sup>72</sup> They appreciate the uncertain nature of divergent knowledge and the need to curtail preemptive, hierarchical-style decision-making where it is not warranted. Stewards learn to defer to and encourage those professional knowledge explorers who have the potential to be the artful framers of a transformed paradigm.<sup>73</sup> The steward’s role is to help set conditions for *action research* with

other professionals in the absence of the clarity, accuracy, and precision so appealing to the technically rational mind-set.<sup>74</sup> Under the right conditions, the professional practice of action research will occur naturally in the field during strategy sessions, operations, training, and educational opportunities.<sup>75</sup> Action research, we argue, is essential to all levels for adaptation and survival in the COE.

One way those in senior institutional positions can best steward the accumulation of professional knowledge is by providing sufficient resources for experimentation. We should not underestimate the challenges such a goal presents. In the military, justifying budgets for exploring divergent knowledge could be considered cost-prohibitive. Moreover, the planning, programming, budgeting, and execution process calls for predictions of clearly identified problems, milestones, and technical solutions.<sup>76</sup> Good stewards are aware that the emergent knowledge professionals report can prompt institutional bureaucrats to converge or assimilate it, entrenching with comforting myths while paying less attention to or summarily dismissing more divergent views.

Deciding too early on a course of action in the MDMP, the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System, or in an acquisition system milestone approval process are examples of impulses to converge knowledge too quickly. The cultural propensity to employ analytical decision-making at early stages of knowledge development may prematurely close on possibly attractive solutions rather than allow accommodative knowledge to develop further. The wise steward fights the impulse to rush to cost-benefit analysis or ORSA-style decision-making when knowledge is in the process of being explored.<sup>77</sup> Effective stewards of the military profession facilitate multiple perspectives and invite nonmilitary sources to develop theories, based on emergent forms, that enhance

double-loop learning. They also convince their political clients to fight the impulse to suppress and under-resource activities in the divergent and accommodative stages of professional knowledge development. The steward's shaping task, then, becomes a matter of not only encouraging professional action research and consideration of alternatives, but also reducing or eliminating defensive routines that might interfere with double-loop learning.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to dealing with systemic or culturally embedded defensive routines, the good steward of the profession ensures that a diversity of knowledge types is working simultaneously and that multiple perspectives are available. In short, the steward shapes conditions for critical evaluation of the profession's corpus of expert knowledge.<sup>79</sup>

To recapitulate, the institutional conditions necessary to sustain the professional body of knowledge exist when—

- Professional reflection is facilitated by valuing the processes that challenge assimilative knowledge (i.e., continuous truth seeking) and by embracing the inevitable conflict associated with truth seeking.
- Professionals are encouraged to “speak truth to power” despite bureaucratic pressures to conform to a body of assimilative knowledge.
- Double-loop learning and action research are institutionally valued processes whereby knowledge is created and reformed, and where the conditions are sometimes set for a complete paradigm shift.
- Stewards of the profession set conditions for an institutional climate that enables patterned, sound judgments about the condition of divergent, accommodative, assimilative, and convergent professional knowledge.
- Effective stewards help shape professional roles, norms, and values that set the conditions for all of the above.

Professional reflection-in-action requires free and open dialog, so that effective collaborative judgment across Kolb's forms of knowledge can occur. Professionals who aspire to action-research practices should—

- Advocate positions as forthrightly as possible, but do so in a way that encourages others to question them.
- Ask for a better-supported argument whenever someone states a disagreeable position, or help the arguer better assess the position.

***Effective stewards of the military profession facilitate multiple perspectives and invite nonmilitary sources to develop theories, based on emergent forms, that enhance double-loop learning.***

- Use illustrative data and make lucid, cogent arguments when evaluating another person's argument. Clearly articulated reason, rather than authority, should serve as the standard for assimilated knowledge.

- Apologize if, in the process of professional discourse, you act in ways that appear to upset others. Assure them that this was not the intention (provided that is genuinely the case) and state the intent and the reasoning behind it.

- Ask for the reasoning behind actions that you find upsetting, in order to understand the other's intentions.<sup>80</sup>

## Summary

The military profession's health depends in no small part on the accumulation and maintenance of a specialized body of abstract knowledge. In this article we have argued that in a COE characterized by complex and rapid change, good habits of reflective practice are essential to adapt the professional body of knowledge effectively. To develop such practices, an understanding of how professional-knowledge social processes work is beneficial, especially for stewards of the profession. Good stewards of the profession set the conditions for collaborative inquiry and are appreciative of Kolb's four-part framework of knowledge. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Some examples that agree include the anthology projects of Don M. Snider and Gayle L. Watkins, *The Future of the Army Profession*, 1st and 2d eds. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002 and 2005); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Boston: Belknap, 1957); Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Andrew Brien, "Professional Ethics and The Culture of Trust," *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, no. 4 (1998): 391-409.

2. We say "apparent" because there is little reason to expect today's COE to be any more complicated than it was, for example, in 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland and the United States was ill-prepared for the coming world war. The same applies to the Korean and Vietnam wars, and during the Cold War, for that matter. Nevertheless, with the advent and potential proliferation of nuclear weapons and the potential for other weapons of mass destruction, we think the world is at least more dangerous than it ever has been. For a discussion of the propensities for current generations to believe they inhabit the most turbulent environment, see Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning: Reconceiving Roles for Planning, Plans, and Planners* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 203-09.

3. Adapted from Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Organizations and Organization Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1992), 227-28. We would add (and argue in this essay) that knowledge is also about the way that things *could* or *should* work as well; hence, it can be unsettling.

4. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3d ed. (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 175. For Kuhn, "paradigm" "stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by members of a given community."

5. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

6. Snider and Watkins, *The Future of the Army Profession*, 1st & 2d ed., 2002, 2005.

7. Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

8. *Ibid.*, 9.

9. Snider, 13.

10. Schön.

11. For example, witness the joint community's use of pre-doctrinal publications and the U.S. Army's use of interim field manuals, both of which signify the near-impossible attempt to keep up with learning as it occurs in the field or in the schoolhouses. Quoting Greek philosopher Heraclitus, Gareth Morgan provides this metaphor of flux and transformation: "You cannot step twice in the same river, for other waters are continuously flowing on." Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), 251.

12. David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984). The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), Fort Leavenworth, KS, has used Kolb's model and assessment instruments to inform its educational philosophy, faculty development programs, and curriculum. One of the authors recently attended a weeklong CGSC faculty development program in which Kolb's theory was applied to the seminar-style classroom.

13. This continuum is also explained by Kolb as being linked to the left and right hemispheres of the brain—the left associated with comprehension and the right with apprehension (Kolb, 46-9). According to Michael Polyani, such tacit knowledge is "a way to know more than we can tell," Polyani, *Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 18.

14. Kolb, 121-31. Kolb describes the process of social learning as "living systems of inquiry" and even links these forms to various careers, professions, or occupations. For example, he cites research that demonstrates possible linkages between the science of engineering and convergent knowledge preferences (science-based professions). Chemistry is associated with assimilative knowledge preferences; historians and psychologists with divergent knowledge; and, business people linked more to accommodative knowledge structures (more contextual in nature).

15. Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

16. This essentially recapitulates Kuhn's thesis about how scientific revolutions come about.

17. For a detailed account that confirms this divergent process, see Mitchell Waldrop's *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (New York: Touchstone, 1992). Waldrop tells the story of how scientists from diverse fields of study formed the Santa Fe Institute, which established complexity science as a legitimate field of study.

18. Generals Omar Bradley, Mark Clark, Dwight D. Eisenhower, George Marshall, and George Patton were all present.

19. Karl E. Weick and Kathleen Sutcliffe, *Managing the Unexpected: Assuring High Performance in an Age of Complexity* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

20. Some have investigated the analogy of how ant colonies learn—where a kind of "swarm intelligence" emerges. See John H. Holland, *Emergence: From Chaos to Order* (Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1998). The concept of action research was developed in the 1940s by the late MIT social psychology professor Kurt Lewin, who turned away from a best-practices approach to solving complex social problems in favor of a *dynamic, real-time method of theorizing while practicing*, resulting in continuous personal and organizational development. His ideas have been further developed by a host of students of social psychology and organization theory. We see prosecuting the full range/spectrum of military operations as a corollary to solving complex social problems; hence, we suggest that action research would be an effective professional military methodology. Variations include action science, cooperative inquiry, and interactive social science.

21. Here, we incorporate an encompassing definition of technology, defined as: "all the knowledge, information, material resources, techniques, and procedures that a work unit uses to convert system inputs into outputs—that is to conduct work." Rupert F. Chisholm, "Introducing Advanced Information Technology into Public Organizations," *Public Productivity Review* 11, no. 4 (1988): 39-56. We would add the term "tactics" as well to round out the definition in military terms. This definition implies that technology is a pre-existing solution to a given problem and that "technical rationality" is the reasoned application of it.

22. Kolb, 97.

23. For example, the Army Green Berets emerged out of the Kennedy administration's perceived need for "graduated response" in the midst of proxy and guerrilla warfare in the COE of the 1960s. Special Forces has since grown in stature and numbers, and, combined with other special-operations forces, has become part of a new unified command (U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, FL). Today, we see a resurgence of irregular-warfare doctrine from the 1960s—a brushing off of old knowledge.

24. The Army Special Forces branch was established in 1987, more than 40 years after the U.S. Office of Strategic Services in World War II recognized the need and established the beginnings of the requisite specialized knowledge. U.S. Special Operations Command was established as a joint combatant command about the same time.

25. Harrison M. Trice and Janice M. Beyer, "Studying Organizational Cultures Through Rites and Ceremonials," *Academy of Management Review* 9, no. 4 (1984). Trice and Beyer define "cultural myth" as "a dramatic narrative of imagined events, usually used to explain origins or transformations of something. It is also an unquestioned belief about practical benefits of certain techniques and behaviors that is not supported by demonstrated facts" (655).

26. U.S. Joint Forces Command pre-doctrinal publications are available online at <[www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jwfc\\_pam.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jwfc_pam.htm)> (12 September 2006). Army interim doctrine (Field Manual-Interim or "FMIs") examples are available online at <[www.army.mil/usapa/doctrine/Active\\_FM.html](http://www.army.mil/usapa/doctrine/Active_FM.html)> (13 September 2006).

27. Kolb calls this process "organizing information" (96).

28. For example, see Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3500.04C, *Universal Joint Task List*, 1 July 2002, where the Joint Staff has codified tasks, conditions, and standards for four levels of war to an amazing level of detail.

29. On the other hand, one notion of success with assimilative knowledge comes from valuing *bricolage*, or emphasizing resilience by forming new ways to accomplish things through the creative use of existing knowledge. Paradoxically, the improvised use of assimilated knowledge can be quite creative and result in a new divergent-accommodative-convergent cycle of knowledge creation in itself. See Karl E. Weick, "Improvisation as a Mindset for Organizational Analysis," *Organization Science*, Vol. 9, No. 5, 1998, 543-55.

30. Karl E. Weick, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 34. "Reification" means "to treat an abstract concept as if it referred to a thing."

31. First quote is from Terrence E. Deal and Alan A. Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1982), 4. Second quote in this sentence is our rendition.

32. Schön.

33. See note 21 for our more complete definition of technical rationality.

34. Schön, 50. The term "competency trap" was described in detail by James G. March in *A Primer on Decision Making, How Decisions Happen* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 96-7. For March, the trap "reflects the ways in which improving capabilities with one rule, technology, strategy, or practice interferes with changing that rule, technology, strategy or practice to another that is potentially superior." Henry Mintzberg has also written extensively on how Defense management "whiz kids" have used "the cover of technique to promote their own influence." According to Mintzberg: "The age of management has become the age of the 'quick fix.' Call in your technocrats, throw a lot of technique at the problem, drown in hard data . . . [and make sure you] resolve it quickly so that you can get on with the next problem." See Henry Mintzberg, *Mintzberg on Management: Inside Our Strange World of Organizations* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 356-57.

35. For an excellent history of technical rationality, see Mark R. Rutgers, "Be rational! But what does it mean? A history of the idea of rationality and its relation to management thought," *Journal of Management History* 5, no. 1 (1999), 17-36. Rutgers described the emergence of the Cartesian paradigm as follows: "Rationality becomes associated with the question of 'how can humanity control nature and society.' From Sir Francis Bacon's adage 'knowledge is power,' it is evident that rationality became associated with method, especially, scientific method. In this regard, rationalism served as the most extreme edict of this development. The 'rationalist' school of thought claimed that all knowledge is ultimately based on reason, and reason alone. Thus, Enlightenment philosophers not only gave a new meaning to rationality, but also provided it with a significant social credibility: society can be improved by applying (scientific) reason. They not only define the dominant modern comprehension of rationality, but actually induce an explicit strife for the rational organization of everyday social life."

36. George B. Shaw, *The Doctor's Dilemma* (New York: Penguin, 1946). Extract of this book, containing the quote, accessed from the *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Oxford University, on-line at <[http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/32/6/910?ijkey=cd3bc5a05fcd63510ca3e9a5061ccc9ae654fd67&keytype=tf\\_ipsecsha](http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/32/6/910?ijkey=cd3bc5a05fcd63510ca3e9a5061ccc9ae654fd67&keytype=tf_ipsecsha)> (23 July 2006).

37. Schön, 50.

38. *Ibid.*, 61.

39. *Ibid.*, 69.

40. *Ibid.*, 68.

41. *Ibid.*, 68.

42. Kolb, in *Experiential Learning*, 1994, spends his last chapter discussing lifelong learning and makes it a point to metaphorically stress integrative knowledge in terms of "one foot on the shore of the conventions of social knowledge and one foot in the canoe of an emergent future" (225). He further states that "knowledge is refined by viewing predicaments through the dialectically opposed lenses of the four basic knowledge structures and then acting sensibly" (226).

43. Sahotra Sarkar, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics," in Sahotra Sarkar (ed.) Volume 3 (*Basic Works of Logical Empiricism Science and Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: Logic, Probability, and Epistemology*) (New York: Garland, 1996), 1-35. Metaphysics, according to Sarkar, is inquiry by means other than deduction or empiricism (23). The subjective-based study of the social construction of reality may be a form of such other means of inquiry.

44. Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1980), 149. We see this as the fundamental purpose of professional military education and we advocate small-group seminar dialog to help achieve it.

45. In the footsteps of Argyris and Schön, we believe every situation is unique to the military professional during complex operations; hence, best practices are a myth fueled by a sense of comfort associated with a belief in technical rationality. This also brings into question the way we process operational and tactical lessons learned with the hope that we find solutions that are assumed to be generalizable for the next time (i.e., a Cartesian mentality). We strongly dispute this method. While reading about best practices might serve to inform the practitioner of what others are doing, there is no substitute for acting and learning (i.e., for action research).

46. Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: Prolegomena to Systematic Philosophy and a Complete Survey of Metaphysics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1942), 44. Pepper calls professional knowledge "expert knowledge." We developed this chart (figure) from the ideas in Pepper's discussion.

47. For our explanation of paradoxical thinking, see Christopher R. Pappone and James A. Crupi, "The Principles of War as Paradox," *Proceedings* 132, no. 10 (39-44).

48. This is where the U.S. Army may have a problem in that the "Be, Know, and Do" framework of leadership (Army FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*, 2006) seems to overvalue assimilative knowledge and technical rationality and stresses associated "competencies." Changing to a "Be, Learn, and Do" framework may more effectively demonstrate increased institutional valuation of the adaptive learning process. The word "competencies" invokes a sense of known knowledge. To recognize the continuous need to invent knowledge, we suggest that the Army's *competency framework* would have to be changed to a *professional reflection-in-action framework* that would subsume competencies associated with assimilative knowledge and include divergent, accommodative, and convergent forms of knowledge.

49. Weick, "Drop Your Tools: An Allegory for Organizational Studies," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41 (1996): 301-13.

50. Aaron B. Wildavsky, *Speaking Truth to Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1987).

51. Our discussion of the social construction of roles, norms, and values is derived

primarily from Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, 2d ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978).

52. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor, 1966).

53. Katz and Kahn, 43.

54. Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1997), 19-21. For the U.S. Army Warrior's Ethos, see <[www.army.mil/warrior ethos/](http://www.army.mil/warrior ethos/)>; for the Soldier's Creed, see <[www.army.mil/Soldiers Creed/flash\\_version/index.html](http://www.army.mil/Soldiers Creed/flash_version/index.html)> (4 August 2006).

55. Chris Argyris, *Strategy, Change, and Defensive Routines* (Marshfield, MA: Pitman, 1985).

56. Argyris and Schön.

57. Chamu Sundaramurthy and Marianne Lewis, "Control and Collaboration: Paradoxes of Governance," *Academy of Management Review* 28, no. 3 (2003): 397-415. The authors describe defensive routines that "denote cognitive, behavioral, and organizational responses that protect the ego, preventing actors from confronting the limits of current understandings and practices . . . Studies depict cycles of self-fulfilling prophecies, downward spirals or strategic persistence due to the dysfunctional dynamics of defensive routines" (399).

58. *Ibid.*, 399.

59. *Ibid.*, 400.

60. Chris Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1991): 99-109.

61. Sundaramurthy and Lewis, 403.

62. See one of the author's related assertions in earlier works: Christopher R. Pappone, "The Deconstruction of Army Leadership," *Military Review* 134, no. 1 (2004), 2-10; "Is Hope the Only Method? The Army's Organization and Management Identity Crisis," *Military Review*, no. 3 (2003): 47-55; and "Piercing the Corporate Veil: OE and Army Transformation," *Military Review* 131, no. 2 (2001): 78-82.

63. In addition, U.S. Army doctrine employs no system to cite specific references in its publications; hence the old adage, "There is no plagiarism in the Army." It is difficult if not impossible to deconstruct Army doctrine and make professional counter-arguments by establishing the original sources of the knowledge. On the other hand, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) does a commendable job of including detailed citations in its doctrine (see USMC Publication Number 6, *Command and Control*, from which, for example, U.S. Army FM 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, arguably plagiarizes in large, non-attributed segments). The U.S. Army is not helping professional reflection if its principal body of knowledge remains a source of faulty attribution (in the case of Army doctrine, inadequate attribution).

If the professional body of knowledge is in a continuous state of flux and transformation, which we have contended in this essay, then the profession has to maintain an "audit trail" of sources of learning; otherwise, we are un-anchoring shared meaning, and the profession will begin to unravel.

64. Sundaramurthy and Lewis, 408. The authors also link the cure for this routine to promoting diversity and shared understandings, where professionals value both the trust and the conflict that are necessary for healthy collaboration.

65. See the full text of Eisenhower's 1960 speech online at <<http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/indst.html>> (15 July 2006).

66. Marta B. Calas, "Deconstructing Charismatic Leadership: Re-reading the Weber from the Darker Side," *Leadership Quarterly* 4 (1993): 305-28.

67. Sundaramurthy and Lewis, 404.

68. *Ibid.*, 405.

69. Christopher R. Pappone, "U.S. Army Decision-making: Past, Present and Future," *Military Review* 131, no. 4 (2001): 45-54.

70. *Ibid.*, 406.

71. James H. Davis, David F. Schoorman, and Lex Donaldson, "Toward a Stewardship Theory of Management," *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1997, 20-47.

72. Paraphrasing Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations*, 1995, we include, in the definition of collaborative inquiry, the concept of *sensemaking*—a form of imagination characterized by using, modifying, rejecting, and creating new paradigms or mental models when dealing with situations of incoherency and disorderliness.

73. Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001.

74. Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978). Unfortunately, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College has professed the opposite consideration in Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools*, 4th ed. (The Foundation for Critical Thinking), 2004. Paul and Elder claim there are "Universal Intellectual Standards" (i.e. *clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness*) that "must be applied to thinking" (emphases added, 7). If one accepts Kolb's typology of knowledge, these standards would be absurd, especially during the divergent and accommodative stages where the opposites of these standards may reflect a more appropriate sense of reality.

75. The latter, for example, includes the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College's School of Advanced Military Studies ("SAMS"), which requires each student to publish original research in the form of a monograph.

76. See, for example, Christopher R. Pappone, "If Planning is Everything, Maybe It's Nothing: Why We Need to Deflate the pbb in PPBE," *Army Logician*, in press.

77. For a treatise on this subject, which we consider a potentially dangerous practice, see Christopher R. Pappone and James A. Crupi, "Rubrics Cubed: Are We Prisoners of ORSA-style Decision-Making?" *Defense Acquisition Review Journal* (December 2005-March 2006): 420-55. There are always solutions looking for problems, and the impulse may be to grab them without realizing the problem has morphed and was never or no longer is connected to that solution. ORSA is the military's acronym for operations research/systems analysis.

78. For example, see the many remedies described by Sundaramurthy and Lewis.

79. We paraphrase from personal correspondence with COL (Ret) Don M. Snider, Ph.D., professor, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, 9 April 2003.

80. Argyris, 258-59.

# LEADING OUR LEADERS

When he heard that Marcellus had been killed, [Hannibal] hurried to the spot and stood for a long time by the dead body, admiring its strength and beauty. He uttered not a boastful word, nor did he show any sign of exultation, such as might be expected of a man who has just rid himself of a bitter and formidable enemy. After he had expressed his wonder at the unexpectedness of Marcellus's death, he removed his signet ring, but gave orders that his body should be treated with honor, wrapped in a fine robe, adorned, and burned. After this he collected the ashes in a silver urn, crowned it with a gilded wreath, and sent it to Marcellus's son.

—Plutarch (66 to c. 120 CE), *Life of Marcellus*



## Lieutenant Colonel Tim Challans, Ph.D., U.S. Army, Retired

*Views expressed are  
solely the author's*

*Originally published in the  
September-October 2009 edi-  
tion of MR.*

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LITHOGRAPH: Hannibal Barca.

WE HEAR LOTS OF TALK about leaders “setting the conditions” for success. And we have lots of leaders taking credit for doing just that. But are we applying a reciprocal level of accountability when leaders set the conditions for failure? There was a long military tradition known as *respondeat superior*, meaning “let the master answer.” Our legal experts will say that our military does not have such a system. And while that is true, legally, our notions of leaders being responsible, at least morally, for everything their people do or fail to do derives from this tradition. The Nuremberg Tribunals, as it is well known, explicitly established that this tradition did not include an escape clause if our actions violated the law, allowing us to claim we were just following orders. Accountability resided at the level of perpetration. And that is a good thing. But as it turns out, it is a much more straightforward practice to hold those who committed the acts accountable than to hold accountable those who set the conditions that enabled, encouraged, motivated, and created the *sine qua non* (not without which) potential for those actions.

By the time those in our junior enlisted ranks were crossing over legal and moral lines during the last decade, the conditions had long been set by their leaders for moral failure, from junior grade leaders all the way up through the White House. As military leaders we have an explicit mandate to protect and defend the Constitution. But how were we supposed to do that several years ago when we had policies altered from the White House on down—following the Alberto Gonzales and John Yoo “school of law”—policies that systematically set aside the spirit and letter of legal principles and statutes that had constitutional force? These policies helped to set the conditions that enabled and empowered a global network of interrogation and rendition practices that ultimately resulted in widespread torture and in many cases even murder.

These abuses may be the tip of an iceberg that marks more treacherous depths, dangerous waters that threaten the route bounded by our professional, legal, and moral compass. The cost of carrying out these wayward policies has been incalculably high, not only in terms of people's lives and money, but also in the intangible currencies of legitimate global trust and respect.





NARA

Japanese POWs, 1945. Worshiping the emperor as a god in a Buddhist/Shinto context led to a brutal fanaticism in the Imperial Japanese Army.

If we look toward the Army's leadership doctrine for guidance to answer this question, we are told that there is much ado about character and values. Yet the *Schlesinger Report* concluded that major programs such as the Army's core values program did very little in preparing service members to know what they should and shouldn't be doing in detention operations.

As an example, the current leadership manual is substantively the same as the 1999 version, especially the section on character and values and ethics. The original drafts of the 1999 leadership manual included one very important feature of the value of "respect," the idea that we were to respect our enemies. The idea was drawn from Michael Walzer's work, in *Just and Unjust Wars*, about the moral equality of the enemy, as well as Paul Christopher's work in *The Ethics of War and Peace*, about treating the enemy with respect as a comrade

**...the Army's core values program did very little in preparing service members to know what they should and shouldn't be doing in detention operations.**

in arms, albeit on an opposing side. The idea did not survive the staffing and approval process of doctrine development, and it was removed. The Chaplain Corps was incensed that our enemies would have moral equality, and they led the charge in ensuring that the concept of respect did not include any idea of respecting the enemy. So, to this day, the value of respect reads as one that applies only to those on our side. Sadly, this is one value that may have made some difference had its original conception been preserved.

I remember attending a chaplain conference in Orlando, Florida, to argue against a religious foundation in the leadership manual for the Army's conception of professional ethics. With few exceptions, the Chaplain Corps believed that Field Manual (FM) 22-100 should have such a religious foundation. This is the conference that rejected the notion of the moral equality of the enemy, largely on religious grounds. The conference influenced another change in the doctrine at that time, which still stands in the current manual. There was language in the original drafts to remind leaders to keep a professional perspective when it comes to religion, to prevent religious leaders from applying any undue influence in matters of faith. There may have been a time when it was hard being a Christian in the Army, but the tables have been reversed. It is now hard *not* to be a Christian in the Army. Instead of language in the manual that establishes proper boundaries between church and state, it contains language that opens the door and enables religious beliefs to be foundational in our institutional professional conception of ethics. The FM's draft at one time even cited the Constitution about there being no religious tests for public office or service; that too disappeared.

The practices of torture, murder, slavery, and the general disrespect of persons have historically been perfectly consistent with the religions of the world (one need look no further than Al-Qaeda). It is now more important than ever for leaders to keep religion and its potentially coercive influence out of a public, governmental profession. It may be time to ask why we even have a Chaplain Corps, particularly one engaged in the formulation of doctrine. The Supreme Court in *Katkov v. Marsh* ruled that the Army could retain a Chaplain Corps out of tradition but required that its only function should be providing services

***It is now more important than ever for leaders to keep religion and its potentially coercive influence out of a public, governmental profession.***

to service members who wouldn't have access to worship, especially when deployed.\* But why are military chaplains involved in the ethics business? Or the counseling business? Or the policy business? Some militaries today do not even have a chaplains' corps, such as Japan's military, which takes religious separation seriously because of its bad experience in World War II.

Now that we are all too aware of the high cost of wayward policies, what can we do as an institution given that we can no longer afford such failure? What can leaders do, given the force of gravity, the fact that everything rolls downhill? Well, we should

push some of these rocks back uphill. Leaders at all levels are responsible for ensuring that whatever they are doing makes sense and is justifiable. If not, we should push back wherever and whenever we need to. We should foster a leadership climate in which leaders are accountable not only to their seniors, but also to their peers and juniors. For those who may disagree or find such a suggestion shocking, they should remember that the notion is already implicit within a sound command climate. This will not change from the top; it has to start, like most things, not at the bottom either, but in the middle. If we're doing the right thing in the right way for the right reason, then we should have nothing to worry about. We just have to say it out loud; we have to start leading our leaders. **MR**

***...we have to start leading our leaders.***

\*The author wishes to note that the Kalkoff case ruling was a lower-court decision carrying Constitutional content and ruling. The article was published in 2009 before correcting this error.

**“ . . . the death of chivalry is not the end of moral judgment. We still hold soldiers to certain standards . . . Armed, he is an enemy; but he isn't 'my' enemy in any specific sense; the war itself isn't a relation between persons but between political entities and their human instruments. These human instruments are not comrades in arms in the old style, members of the fellowship of warriors; they are 'poor sods, just like me,' trapped in a war they didn't make. I find in them my moral equals. That is not to say simply that I acknowledge their humanity, for it is not the recognition of fellow men that explains the rules of war; criminals are men too. It is precisely the recognition of men who are not criminals . . . These judgments are clear enough, I think, and they suggest that war is still, somehow, a rule-governed activity, a world of permissions and prohibitions—a moral world, therefore, in the midst of hell.”**

**—Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars***

1st Place  
2010 DePuy Writing Contest Winner

# Controlling the Beast Within

## The Key to Success on 21st-Century Battlefields

Major Douglas A. Pryer, U.S. Army



*Once an army is involved in war, there is a beast in every fighting man which begins tugging at its chains, and a good officer must learn early on how to keep the beast under control, both in his men and himself.*

— General George C. Marshall, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

Originally published in the January-February 2011 edition of MR.

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ART: *The Huns at The Battle of the Chalons*, Alphonse De Neuville (1836-1885)

### A Revolution in Military Affairs?

“WHAT DO I want you to do!?” the gravel-voiced brigade commander roared. “I want you to kill them!”

It was 14 November 1997, and the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division (the “Iron Brigade”) was taking part in an “Advanced Warfighter Experiment” at Fort Hood, Texas.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the exercise was to validate the Army’s “Force XXI” concept. Via computer simulation, the division was testing the effectiveness of the latest digital communications gear, reconnaissance aircraft, and combat systems against a Soviet-modeled armored force.

Blips on the brigade command post’s giant flat-screen monitor had just indicated that the massive units of the enemy (the evil “Krasnovians”) were on the move. The Krasnovian 2nd Army Group was attacking the division. Within the brigade’s sector, the brigade S2 had rightly predicted that the first echelon of the enemy’s attack would include two motorized rifle divisions of the enemy’s 1st Combined Arms Army. If the brigade survived to see it, an enemy tank division would follow.

On this, the last day of the exercise, the Iron Brigade’s bald, physically fit, and imposing commander was putting on a show. If “Old Blood and Guts” himself, General George S. Patton, had been there, he would have been impressed.

As the commander barked orders, staff officers leapt into action, directing Army Apache helicopters and Air Force air-to-ground fighter jets toward preplanned engagement areas. These deep attacks heavily attrited the enemy's first echelon forces. Undeterred, enemy forces kept advancing into friendly artillery range, where unmanned aerial vehicles spotted them, enabling the brigade's artillery battalion to pound their formations with rolling barrages of shells. This finally proved too much for the enemy's forward divisions, which ground to a halt and assumed a hasty defense.

The battle was not over, though. The enemy's still-intact 24th Tank Division passed through the enemy's first echelon divisions and pressed home the attack. Now it was the "close fight," belonging more to the staffs of subordinate battalions than to the brigade staff. The brigade staff could do little more than track the battle and await the outcome. They did not have long to wait. In a few short hours, this enemy tank division was so battered that it, too, "went to ground," unable to sustain further offensive operations.

The brigade's staff officers were jubilant, smiling and slapping each other on the backs. True, a few friendly companies had been overrun and annihilated. But, these officers believed, they had still proven a point. Due to a situational awareness unmatched by any army unit in the annals of history, none of their casualties had been due to fratricide. What is more, thanks to the superior standoff range of their brigade's combat and reconnaissance systems, they had defeated an attacking force whose superior combat power would have achieved certain victory over any other U.S. brigade.

During this exercise, many of these staff officers had heard the term, "Revolution in Military Affairs." They believed they were at the vanguard of such a revolution. Warfare, they thought, had changed forever. The day when the U.S. Army could easily defeat any enemy who dared oppose it would soon be at hand.

Of course, this was pure fantasy.

## **Enter: Reality**

Six years later, on 3 January 2004, a platoon of the same brigade stopped two locals at a checkpoint in Samarra, Iraq, around 2300 hours, which was curfew time.<sup>3</sup> At the checkpoint, the soldiers

of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, thoroughly searched the vehicle.<sup>4</sup> Satisfied that the men inside, Marwan and Zaydoon Fadhil, were not insurgents, the soldiers told the two cousins that they could leave.<sup>5</sup>

First Lieutenant Jack Saville, their platoon leader, sat in a nearby Bradley Fighting Vehicle.<sup>6</sup> As the two cousins pulled away, he issued an order via the radio for his platoon to stop the truck again.<sup>7</sup> Intent on teaching the curfew violators a lesson, Saville directed his soldiers to go with him to a bridge that ran atop the Tharthar Dam and to throw the two cousins in the Tigris River.<sup>8</sup> He did not intend to hurt them, he later testified, but to frighten them.<sup>9</sup>

What exactly happened when the two Iraqis were thrown in the river was never proven in military court. Marwan would allege to investigators that he had heard soldiers laughing as he fought unsuccessfully to save his 19-year-old cousin from drowning in the strong current.<sup>10</sup> Other family members would also allege that Zaydoon had died, claiming that his dead body was fished out 13 days later from a canal below the dam.<sup>11</sup> However, the soldiers who were there would tell a different story, swearing that—through night-vision goggles— they had seen both Iraqis clamber onto shore safely.<sup>12</sup> Battalion leaders also testified that informants had told them that Zaydoon was still alive.<sup>13</sup> His death, these leaders believed, had been feigned by insurgents in an effort to smear coalition forces.<sup>14</sup>

Whether Zaydoon died or not, Saville exhibited extremely poor judgment. As mere curfew violators, the two Iraqi cousins were unquestionably entitled to Geneva protections.<sup>15</sup> What is more, Saville recklessly put himself and his men at risk of negligent homicide charges. If Zaydoon did not drown, he certainly could have drowned, considering how fast and deep the current sometimes runs at the dam.<sup>16</sup> Surely, detaining these first-time offenders overnight would have been enough to teach them the importance of keeping curfew.

What is also clear is that the ethical judgment of these soldiers' battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Sassaman, was just as skewed. When informed of a pending 3rd Brigade investigation into the incident, Sassaman directed a cover-up, telling his subordinates to inform the investigator of everything "except the water."<sup>17</sup> Sassaman's

decision to lie, and to direct his soldiers to lie, was a stunningly poor choice for any U.S. officer to make. The fact that Sassaman was also a graduate of West Point, an institution with few rivals among commissioning sources for its emphasis on officer integrity, makes it an even more surprising choice. “A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do,” the honor code at West Point famously proclaims.

The incident gained international notoriety.<sup>18</sup> Under media scrutiny, an unflattering picture emerged of the battalion’s tactics. Journalists reported that the unit had stormed homes, kicked-in doors, humiliated male occupants by manhandling them in front of their family, conducted brutal interrogations at the point of capture, indiscriminately detained large groups of male Iraqis, fired excessive counter-battery barrages, and withheld medical treatment from injured insurgents.<sup>19</sup>

This ugly image may have been to some extent exaggerated. Even so, it suggests that the problem of heavy-handed, counterproductive tactics and poor ethical decision making may have run deep in this unit. Thanks to this underlying problem, even if the death of Zaydoon were feigned, the resulting scandal undermined coalition credibility to a degree that must have exceeded any Samarra insurgent’s wildest dreams.

Ultimately, the Iron Brigade learned in Iraq that the achievement of enduring success had little to do with expensive information technology, even less to do with knowing the exact locations of friendly units, and nothing at all to do with the capability to detect large tank formations from the other side of the planet. Instead, to achieve lasting success, it would need to rethink its organization and tactics.

Even more importantly, the Iron Brigade would need to rethink how much emphasis it placed on right conduct.

## Ethics and the Information Age

The Iron Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division has hardly been alone in its struggle to adapt to warfare in the 21st century. The story of this brigade has been very much the story of our Army. Donald Rumsfeld once famously quipped, “You go to war with the Army you have . . . not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time.”<sup>20</sup> Rumsfeld would have been more intellectually honest if he had



(U.S. Army, DeAngelo M. Weils)

**U.S. Army 4th Infantry Division, stand among 64 newly reenlisted soldiers to take a group photo on Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq, 9 October 2010. A total of 209 Iron Brigade soldiers took part in the ceremony at five locations across southern Iraq and Kuwait.**

instead opined that, when choosing a war, you do not always get the war you thought you had chosen or wished to have.

We certainly did not get the wars we expected in Iraq and Afghanistan. In retrospect, what is perhaps most surprising about what Clausewitz would have called the “nature” of each of these wars is that we were caught so off-guard by them. If we had read the tea leaves properly, we would have seen that the Vietnam War rather than the Gulf War would be the real harbinger of things to come.

Today, conventional wisdom has it that in Vietnam our Army never lost a battle, but our country still lost the war. Since battalions and companies did lose engagements in that war, this maxim is an exaggeration.<sup>21</sup> Yet, it is not a great exaggeration. What is more, it comes very close to describing our often-perilous situation in our most recent military conflicts.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, even more so than in Vietnam, force of arms has not defeated the U.S. Army. Often, territory has been ceded, and yes, a few platoon-level skirmishes have been lost. There have also been some close calls in company-level engagements. Nonetheless, neither Iraqi insurgents nor the Taliban have had the option of holding any ground that our Army has chosen to seriously contest. Our overwhelming advantage in combat power has hardly mattered, though. We have still managed to suffer such grievous defeats in these two countries that, as in Vietnam, we have nearly “lost the war”—and still might.

Thanks to the personal computer, Internet, satellite phones, digital cameras, and a host of other high-speed communications devices, a watching world can learn of the misconduct of American soldiers far more quickly, completely, and luridly than it has in the past. Reports of this misconduct inspire enemy fighters, serve as recruitment boons for our enemies, turn local populations against us, degrade support for our foreign conflicts at home, and undermine the relationship between our nation and its allies.

Particularly painful episodes earn so much adverse publicity that they receive the notoriety formerly reserved for the great defeats of major historical campaigns. Instead of setbacks at Kasserine Pass or the Hurtgen Forest, though, the public talks today of place names such as Gitmo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, Samarra, Mahmudiyah, or Kunduz.<sup>22</sup>

These defeats did not come at the hands of our enemies. Sadly, we inflicted these defeats upon ourselves, through unethical actions. Thus, for the remainder of this essay, I will not look outside our Army to the battlegrounds of Afghanistan or Iraq to understand what we need to do to achieve battlefield

success. Instead, I will look within our own ranks, to where the far more dangerous enemy hides. Achieving this inner victory should not be hard if we truly make the effort. After all, at our best, we have been an Army rooted in ethical principles.

## Who We Are, at Our Best

The moral defeats we have suffered thus far in the War on Terrorism are painfully ironic, considering our Army's proud history.

No army has ever posed a greater existential threat than that posed by the powerful British Army at our fledgling nation's birth. Nonetheless, during the Revolutionary War, leaders of the Continental Army and Congress were determined not only to win the war, but to do so in a way that was consistent with their moral principles and core belief in human rights.<sup>23</sup> General George Washington set conditions in this regard through personal example and military orders. In one written order, for example, Washington directed that 211 British captives be treated "with humanity" and be given "no reason to Complain of our Copying the brutal example of the British army in their Treatment of our unfortunate brethren."<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the Continental Army



Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-128831

George Washington and other officers of the Continental Army arriving in New York amid a jubilant crowd, 25 November 1783. The Continental Army had not only won the war, they had proven it could be won in a manner commensurate with Enlightenment ideals of liberty and human rights.

practiced an uncommon humanity for the times. During the more than two centuries that have passed since its birth, our Army has conducted most of its campaigns within this tradition of humanity.

However, our Army also contains a less dominant ethical tradition. Within this other tradition, the imagined greater good outweighs the rights of the individual. In particular, this perspective argues that the ends justify the means when these ends are to achieve victory or to save American lives. Often (but not always), racism has had something to do with our adopting this perspective. Contrast, for example, the Continental Army's restraint when fighting the British Army with the Continental Army's treatment of the Iroquois Indian tribe. Or, witness our sometimes savage treatment of Filipinos during the Philippine-American War, of Japanese during World War II, and of southeast Asians during the Vietnam War.

One remarkable Army directive not only captured both of these traditions, but it also reflected their relative order of precedence.

In July 1862, General Henry Halleck was appointed commanding general of Union forces. During that first hot, terrible summer of the Civil War, Halleck felt increasingly frustrated by insurgents. A lawyer by background, he sought clarity as to how the Army should deal with Confederate irregulars. In a letter to a scholar, he vented, "The rebel authorities claim the right to send men, in the garb of peaceful citizens, to waylay and attack our troops, to burn bridges and houses and to destroy property and persons within our lines."<sup>25</sup>

The scholar to whom he wrote was Dr. Francis Lieber, a Prussia-born veteran of Waterloo and professor of political science at Columbia College.<sup>26</sup> Lieber accepted Halleck's challenge to produce a code regulating the Union Army's conduct of the war. In April 1863, after it had been reviewed by a panel of generals, President Abraham Lincoln approved the "Lieber Code." It was finally published as "General Order 100" in May 1863.

Above all else, Lieber hoped his code would guide the Union Army to exercise wise, compassionate restraint on the battlefield.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the Lieber Code contained a long list of rules meant to ensure that Union troops humanely treated both noncombatants and prisoners of war. The Lieber Code forbade certain battlefield tactics outright, such

as torture, the use of poisons, and refusing quarter or merciful treatment to surrendering soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

Decades after the war, this code would become the primary source document for the drafters of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.<sup>29</sup> Thus today, American soldiers can rightly and proudly assert that their great Army was not only the first Army to codify the Law of War, but also their Army helped shape the final form that this law took via the international treaty.

Yet, beneath the Lieber Code's obvious current of humane principles, there was also a strong ends-justify-the-means undertow. In a number of places, the Lieber Code gave commanders the option of violating a rule in the case of "military necessity." Unarmed citizens, for example, were "to be spared in person, property, and honor," but only inasmuch as the "exigencies of war will admit."<sup>30</sup>

This tension between our dominant and subordinate ethical traditions has never been fully resolved. In early 2002, for example, President George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld enabled harsh interrogation techniques by signing policies, which said that, in cases of "military necessity," Taliban and Al-Qaeda operatives did not have to be treated in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.<sup>31</sup>

Thanks to subsequent torture scandals and other frightful stories of hyper-kinetic U.S. forces, it is no wonder that some outside observers believe that our Army has grown immoral. Such outsiders are wrong. Anyone who has ever deployed downrange with the U.S. Army realizes that the vast majority of soldiers conduct themselves honorably on today's battlegrounds. Still, it is frightening to think how close such observers came to being right.

## A Professional Ethic in Peril

With hindsight, it seems blindingly obvious that our Army's professional ethic was in trouble as we entered the 21st century. Owing in part to our success

***...the Lieber Code contained a long list of rules meant to ensure that Union troops humanely treated both noncombatants and prisoners of war.***



Tens of thousands attended an Iraq War protest on 27 January 2007 in Washington, DC. The protest's organizers, United for Peace and Justice, intended to galvanize a newly elected Democratic congress into ending the war. Favorable political conditions in Iraq (most critically "the Sunni Awakening"), supported by a troop surge and more effective counterinsurgent tactics, would prevent a precipitous withdrawal.

in the Gulf War, we thought we could ignore the human and moral dimension of war, relying instead on high-tech weapons and intelligence systems.<sup>32</sup> Our experiences in Lebanon, Mogadishu, and the Balkans encouraged a "force protection at any cost" mind-set in some leaders, who later advocated "taking the gloves off" in interrogations to save the lives of American troops.<sup>33</sup> Also, effects-based operational planning got us into the habit of evaluating proposed actions on the basis of predicted effects alone, instead of immediately rejecting some actions on principle.<sup>34</sup>

The damage to our Army's professional ethic runs deep. Officers and soldiers still argue about whether torture is right in some circumstances, and the misdeeds of former Army leaders like Lieutenant Colonel Sassaman, Lieutenant Colonel Allen West, and Chief Warrant Officer Lewis Welshofer have many apologists.<sup>35</sup>

Indicative of the depth of the problem, a Department of Defense mental health survey of soldiers and Marines in Iraq in the fall of 2006 released the following findings:

Only 47 percent of soldiers and 38 percent of Marines agreed that noncombatants should be treated with dignity and respect. More than one-third of all soldiers and Marines reported that torture should be allowed to save the life of a fellow soldier or Marine, and less than half of the soldiers or Marines said they would report a team member for unethical behavior. Also, 10 percent of the soldiers and Marines reported mistreating noncombatants or damaging property when it was not necessary.<sup>36</sup>

General David Petraeus, the commander of our armed forces in Iraq at the time, was rightly alarmed by this survey's results. In response,



he wrote an open letter to the members of his command. U.S. forces, Petraeus wrote in this letter, would fail in their mission if they could not show Iraqis that they, rather than their enemies, occupied “the moral high ground.”<sup>37</sup>

While we have recently taken steps as an Army to heal our professional ethic, this healing process has been a painfully slow one. One step has been to substantially revise our doctrine, which today is far more robust, consistent, and unambiguous with regard to battlefield conduct than it was just five years ago.

Another important step has been to improve ethics instruction at basic training: all trainees now carry a card called “Soldier Rules” (an abridged version of the Law of War), and each trainee receives 35 to 45 hours of values-based training.<sup>38</sup> Also, promisingly, in May 2008 the Army established the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic for the purpose of studying, defining, and promulgating our professional ethic.<sup>39</sup> Just as promisingly, our Army is calling 2011, “The Year of the Profession of Arms” (with a clear mandate to develop the professional ethic), a strong indicator that Army leadership intends for us to do better in this area.

And we need to do better. One area in which we need to do better is officership, as evidenced by events at such places as Gitmo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and Samarra.

The still deeper problem, however, lies in subcultures hidden within our operational Army. In *A Tactical Ethic: Moral Conduct in the Insurgent Battlespace*, former Navy SEAL officer Dick Couch presents the compelling argument that new recruits today leave their initial military training with a thorough understanding of U.S. military values, but when they are assigned to operational units, they may enter a small-unit culture that is not what higher commands want this culture to be. A potentially dangerous subculture, Couch argues, is usually due to one or two key influencers (moral insurgents) who convert or gain silent acquiescence from other members of the unit.<sup>40</sup> Since young soldiers want to fit in with their small units, they usually conform.<sup>41</sup>

Couch is correct. Abu Ghraib, the most extreme example of a small unit run by ethical insurgents, is hardly the only example. Indeed, it is no

overstatement to say that all of the great moral defeats we have suffered thus far in the War on Terrorism have involved, to varying degrees, harmful subcultures. To avert future defeat, we must first get right conduct right at the small-unit level.

This can only be done at home station.

## The Culture Training Needed Most

In recent years, our Army has placed a growing emphasis on the need for deployed soldiers to understand the local culture. All soldiers now deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan receive culture and language orientation courses, usually taught by teams of experts from Fort Huachuca or the Defense Language Institute. Just as importantly, a five-person “human terrain team” consisting of anthropologists and social scientists now supports the commander of each deployed combat brigade. This emphasis is clearly a good thing. After all, it is not rare for soldiers to operate fully in accordance with law and our Army’s professional expectations and yet undermine America’s popular support abroad via unintentional violations of religious, ethnic, or local customs.

Culture training will remain relevant to our success in the information age, but it should also involve home-station training that builds ethical cultures within operational units, especially within small units. Here are a few proposals:

- Army Values, Law of War, and rules of engagement training need to be *command business*. The impact this training has is of a completely different order of magnitude when a commander or other senior unit operator gives it rather than a lawyer. Lawyers should help develop this training, and they may even deliver a portion of it. However, at the large-unit level, a commander,

**“...having a battalion commander talk to every soldier about coming home with their honor intact worked.”**

executive officer, or operations officer should be required to lead this training. As Major Tony Suzzi, the executive officer for a cavalry squadron in the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, said: “I guess I’m a simple guy, but from my combat experience, having a battalion commander talk to every soldier about coming home with their honor intact worked.”<sup>42</sup>

- Our operational Army should place its greatest emphasis on ethics training at the small-unit level. Commanders or other senior combat operators should lead initial ethics discussions, which then set the tone for longer, breakaway discussions within small units. Platoon, squad, or team leaders should lead their small units in these breakaway discussions.

- Large- and small-unit discussions should be scenario-based, with the bulk of time spent in Socratic discussions rather than passively watching PowerPoint slideshows. Furthermore, moral restraint needs to be incorporated in all battle drills, such as tank tables, urban close-quarters combat lanes, and practice interrogations. “Once my interrogators saw with their own eyes the advantages of appreciating the positive aspects of Muslim culture,” said Matthew Alexander, the noted author and interrogator who led U.S. forces to Zarqawi, “they converted [from using harsh tactics] quickly.”<sup>43</sup>

- Lawyers should be a staff component of, not the staff proponent for, ethics. First, what is technically legal is not necessarily what is right. “Moral decisions are simply too important to be left up to lawyers,” the notable historian, Michael Ignatieff, once sagely observed.<sup>44</sup> Most critically, since lawyers are not combat operators, they are not the trainers you want to have oversight of battle drills with weapons and role players. Since chaplains do not even carry weapons, they are an even poorer choice for providing such oversight.

- To ensure that ethical theory and practice is effectively integrated in training, we need an overall staff proponent conversant in both. Why not have ethics master gunners appointed within brigades, groups and battalions to ensure this integration, under the proponenty of the operations officer? Additional ethics trainers would also be appointed at the company level. These ethics master gunners and trainers would provide oversight for commanders, to include ensuring that ethical vignettes and decision making are fully integrated into all training events.

- Ethics staff appointments would be filled only by senior unit operators. At the brigade, group, or battalion level, the operations officer, assistant operations officer, or operations sergeant major would be a good choice. At the company level, it should be the executive officer or first sergeant.

- To prepare appointed ethics leaders, they would need to attend a two-to-four-week ethics course, which would need to be developed. This course could be installation-run, or be incorporated into already existing executive officer, operations officer, and first sergeant courses.

- Phase I of this ethics course should be “theory,” and lawyers, academics, mental health professionals, chaplains, and former commanders could teach classes. Phase II of the course should be application. The Center for the Army Profession and Ethic has already developed a one-week theoretical course for ethics trainers that could serve as the foundation for Phase I, and for Phase II, the experience of a firm like Close Quarters Defense® (CQD®) could be leveraged to develop the curriculum, build facilities, and “train the trainers.”<sup>45</sup>

- Generally, officers receive sufficient ethics training at their commissioning source, whether that source is West Point, a military college, or an ROTC program. However, a newly minted 22-year-old lieutenant may have just as much trouble standing firm in the face of an immoral unit subculture as a 22-year-old recruit, even if this lieutenant is the unit’s designated leader.<sup>46</sup> To foster good officer-ship, we must focus more on training for officers to sustain their ethical understanding and commitment after commissioning. Ensuring that senior leaders lead ethics training at home station will help. The reinforcement of our professional military ethic should also be the backbone of any unit’s Officer Professional Development Program. Additionally, our service schools need to contribute more in this regard. Out of a year spent at Command and General Staff College, for example, field grade officers receive only four hours of ethics-related instruction. This is woefully inadequate, considering the moral nature of our defeats in recent years.<sup>47</sup>

## The Real Revolution

In Iraq and Afghanistan, we have edged painfully close to winning every battle but still “losing the war.” Even today, the outcome of these two

conflicts is very much in doubt. Although Iraq is far more stable than it was two years ago, it might yet unravel into civil war. In Afghanistan, while the hope for an honorable peace has sprung anew with our recent troop surge, that conflict is best described at present as a stalemate.<sup>48</sup>

One crucial reason for our current predicament is the tragic succession of moral defeats we have suffered on these twin battlegrounds. These shameful losses have strengthened the determination of our enemies to achieve victory and undermined the will of the American people at home to achieve the same. Such defeats are especially distressing considering our Army's proud history of sound battlefield conduct.

General George Marshall (a paragon of principled officership, referred to by Winston Churchill as "that noble Roman") spoke of the "beast within" which emerges inside the individual in combat. During World War II, Marshall was more concerned about controlling this beast in order to preserve good order and discipline within the ranks. However, in the information age, when this beast takes control, an insurgent may appear within our ranks who is far more politically dangerous than any insurgent we confront with arms on the battlefield—the moral insurgent.

To defeat this most dangerous insurgent, our Army's operational culture must learn that right conduct on the battlefield now matters more than anything else that we do. Good conduct cannot in itself win the peace, which often depends upon strategic conditions we soldiers do not control. But sound battlefield conduct, when combined with the right objectives and tactics, does marginalize insurgents by depriving them of the popular support that they need to thrive. Thus, as surreal as it sometimes seems to those of us who served in the 1990s, battlefield technology, armored vehicles, gunneries, and weapons ranges contribute less to our mission success today than does the ethical behavior of our troops.

This is not to say that our traditional means of waging war are no longer important. Of course, they are important. Some soldiers still find themselves in situations where, above all else, they are glad that they have good weapons that they know how to use. Sometimes, calculated ferocity is what is required of soldiers. However,



U.S. Army

**George C. Marshall, General of the Army, 1942**

in the 21st century, battlefield conduct does not just matter sometimes; it always matters, and this importance will only continue to grow as information technology improves. In the future, even conventional wars—at least if these wars are to be sustained by mature democracies like the U.S.—will have to be waged from pure practical necessity in accordance with ethical principles, to include the Law of War.<sup>49</sup> In its ability to impose socially acceptable battlefield conduct upon a democracy's military service members, information technology has become the great leveler of all forms of warfare.

Whether preparing for conventional or unconventional wars, we can no longer permit weapons and combat proficiencies to deafen us to what has become most important and, like the proverbial siren's song, wreck us upon the watching world's jagged rocks. We must make sound battlefield conduct our Army's highest educational and training priority.

On a final note, the concept of a "Revolution in Military Affairs" may be the most over-used term in military writing today. However, since I began

this essay with one misuse of the phrase, it is worth referring to once more. After spending billions of dollars to achieve a massive technological superiority over the armies of other nations, would it not be ironic if we realized that, in the 21st century, the most

fundamental component of a revolution in military affairs is our simply remembering that, at our best, we are a principled Army? If this lesson must be the starting point of any meaningful military revolution, it is surely not too late for us to learn it. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Matthew Alexander, "My Written Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing," *The Huffington Post*, 13 May 2009, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-alexander/my-written-testimony-to-t\\_b\\_203269.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-alexander/my-written-testimony-to-t_b_203269.html)> (28 June 2010). When referring to "controlling" the beast within, Marshall was referring to managing rather than eliminating the ferocity of American soldiers. This, too, is my meaning in this essay: like falcons trained by falconers, the violent passions which arise within professional soldiers in combat must be trained to strike only the right targets. Unlike falcons, though, human beings are trained through more than simple physical conditioning; we must also be educated via appeals to our faculties of reason and emotion.

2. This opening narrative is based on my own experiences as an assistant brigade S2 at this exercise.

3. Dexter Filkins, "The Fall of the Warrior King," *The New York Times*, 23 October 2005, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/23/magazine/23sassaman.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/23/magazine/23sassaman.html?_r=1)> (28 June 2010), 1.

4. *Ibid.*, 2.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 12.

10. *Ibid.*, 10.

11. *Ibid.*, 11-12.

12. *Ibid.*, 10-11.

13. *Ibid.*, 11-12.

14. *Ibid.*

15. At the time, there was some confusion as to whether "unlawful combatants," a category coined by the Bush Administration to describe armed insurgents, were entitled to Geneva protections. This was due to policies signed by President Bush and his secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, in early 2002, which denied these protections to members of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in cases of "military necessity." In its landmark 29 June 2006, decision in the case of *Hamdan vs. Rumsfeld*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that unlawful combatants were entitled at least to the protections granted by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. There was never any question in any theater, though, whether criminals were entitled to full Geneva protections.

16. *Ibid.*, 11.

17. *Ibid.*, 1.

18. Indicative of the level of press the Samarra Incident has received, a Tom Cruise movie about the incident is under development.

19. *Ibid.*, 5-8; Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 279-90.

20. William Kristol, *The Defense Secretary We Have*, 15 December 2004, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A132-2004Dec14.html>> (28 June 2010).

21. One such tactical defeat was the near annihilation of the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, of the 1st Cavalry Division, on 17 November 1965, in the Ia Drang Valley. This battle is vividly described in retired LTG Harold G. Moore's and Joseph L. Galloway's book, *We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young*.

22. The use of enhanced interrogation techniques is deeply entwined with the Gitmo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram scandals. The Samarra incident was described above. In the Mahmudiyah killings, on 12 March 2006, five soldiers of the 502d Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, raped a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and murdered her family. The incident is the subject of a recent book, *Black Hearts*, by Jim Frederick. The Kunduz Massacre is the subject of a European documentary film. This massacre involved the deaths of hundreds of Taliban when they were transported in sealed, airless containers by Northern Alliance troops, allegedly under the oversight of a U.S. Army Special Forces team. The U.S. Marine Corps has had its share of moral scandals as well, the most notorious incidents occurring at Haditha, Hamdania, and Shinwar.

23. David Hackett Fisher, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 375.

24. *Ibid.*, 379.

25. David Bosco, "Moral Principle vs. Military Necessity," *American Scholar*, Winter 2008, <<http://www.theamericanscholar.org/moral-principle-vs-military-necessity/>> (28 June 2010).

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. Dr. Francis Lieber, "Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field," *Law of War*, 24 April 1863, <[http://www.lawofwar.org/general\\_order\\_100.htm](http://www.lawofwar.org/general_order_100.htm)> (10 June 2010), Articles 16 and 49.

29. Telford Taylor, "Foreword," *The Law of War: A Documentary History*, edited by Leon Friedman (New York: Random House, 1973), 6. According to Taylor, the Lieber Code "remained for half a century the official Army pronouncement on the subject, furnished much of the material for the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and today still commands attention as the germinal document for codification of the laws of land warfare."

30. Lieber, Article 22.

31. President George W. Bush, "Memorandum, Humane Treatment of al Qaeda and Taliban Detainees, February 7, 2002," *George Washington University's The National Security Archives*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/02.02.07.pdf>> (28 June 2010), 2; Donald Rumsfeld, Memorandum for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Status of Taliban and Al Qaeda, 19 January 2002," *George Washington University's The National Security Archives*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/02.01.19.pdf>> (28 June 2010).

32. Of the intelligence estimates I kept from the 1996 Advanced Warfighter Exercise described above, not one contains a single reference to a civil-military matter. These intelligence estimates discuss only the notional enemy's order of battle, equipment, and likely courses of action for its maneuver forces. Before 2003, I participated in three rotations at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA, and two rotations at the Combat Maneuver Training Center at Hohenfels, Germany. All but the last of these rotations were identical in the disregard for the civil-military aspects of warfare (and my last rotation in 2002 was not much better). The cliché that an Army trains for the last war it won, not the next war it will fight, certainly pertains here. The only purely military enemy we have ever fought that was remotely like the one we fought in our training exercises in the 1990s was the Iraqi Army, as we fought this army in the empty deserts of the Gulf War.

33. Dr. Don M. Snider, MAJ John A. Nagl, and MAJ Tony Pfaff, "Army Professionalism, the Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century," U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, December 1999, <<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub282.pdf>> (28 June 2010), 2. Since this document was written before the War on Terrorism, it does not draw a direct link between our "force protection at any cost" mentality of the 1990s and our "intelligence at any cost if it saves lives" mentality of the early years of this war. Still, this remarkably prescient document anticipates this connection, stating "that the Army's norms of professional behaviour are being corroded by political guidance on force protection." The paper also called for our Army to return to a professional military ethic rooted in principles.

34. GEN James N. Mattis, "USJFCOM Commander's Guidance for Effects-Based Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 4th Quarter, 2008: 105-108, 107; LTC Tim Challans, "Tipping Sacred Cows: Moral Potential through Operational Art," *Military Review* (September-October 2009): 19-28, 19. In his command guidance to USJFCOM, General Mattis limited the scope of effects-based operational planning, saying, "Any planning construct that mechanistically attempts to provide certainty in an inherently uncertain environment is at odds with the nature of war." Challans makes a direct connection between effects based operational planning and an amoral mindset, saying that, "This approach, by whatever name, has little potential to accommodate important moral concerns that have proven to have strategic ramifications."

35. LTC Allen West was, like Sassaman, a 4th Infantry Division battalion commander during Operation Iraqi Freedom I. In order to extract intelligence, West allowed his soldiers to beat a detainee before firing two shots from his pistol near the detainee's head. CW3 Welshofer, a contemporary of West and Sassaman in Iraq, was the senior interrogator for the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. Welshofer was found guilty of negligent homicide in the case of a detainee who died during an especially brutal application of an enhanced interrogation technique.

36. SGT Sara Wood, "Petraeus urges troops to adhere to ethical standards in recent letter," *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Official Website of United States Forces-Iraq*, 14 May 2007, <[http://www.usf-iraq.com/?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=11869&Itemid=110](http://www.usf-iraq.com/?option=com_content&task=view&id=11869&Itemid=110)> (28 June 2010). In the report, mistreating noncombatants was defined as either stealing from a noncombatant, destroying or damaging property when it wasn't necessary, or hitting or kicking a noncombatant.

37. GEN David H. Petraeus, "Appendix I: General David H. Petraeus on Values," in *A Tactical Ethic: Moral Conduct in the Insurgent Battlespace*, by Dick Couch, 113-15 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010): 114, 113.

38. Couch, 46.

39. "About the CAPE," U.S. Army Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (29 July 2010), at <<http://acpme.army.mil/about.html>> (15 August 2010).

40. Couch, 77. Perhaps to avoid confusion in the minds of counterinsurgents, Couch actually calls these immoral individuals "pirates" rather than insurgents, even though their role is much more akin to an insurgent's role.

41. Couch, 54. Exacerbating the problem, Couch points out, is that today's generation of recruits (largely consisting of "Millenials") demonstrate a greater "need to belong" than previous generations.

42. MAJ Tony Suzzi, email to MAJ Doug Pryer, 16 June 2010.

43. Matthew Alexander, email to MAJ Doug Pryer, 23 June 2010. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a Jordanian militant and the founder of the terrorist group, "al Qaeda in Iraq." Before his death by guided bombs on 7 June 2006, Zarqawi was the most wanted man of coalition forces in Iraq.

44. Couch, xvi.

45. According to MAJ Kevin Cutright, a former philosophy instructor at West Point, the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic conducts a one-week course

at West Point called the "Master Army Profession and Ethic Trainer Course." A third of the students, he says, have been chaplains, with the remainder being staff officers, senior noncommissioned officers, and drill sergeants. Regarding the proposed Phase II training, teams from Special Operations Command and various civilian agencies have been cycling through the training facility belonging to Close Quarters Defense®, a civilian company, for two decades now. What marks the Close Quarters Defense® (CQD®) program as unique is its integration of Internal Warrior™ Training, ethical precepts, with close-quarter combat techniques. A soldier fights better, the program teaches, if he is not just fighting for his fellow soldiers but also for his family and nation. The program also teaches that true soldiers exhibit such qualities as respect, compassion, and courageous restraint. A course run by this company incorporates unarmed and armed training, progressing from individual to team. Each course is specialized for the group's mission. The company's "Hooded Box Drill™" is one particularly effective technique the company employs for reinforcing the right responses in soldiers to various scenarios. In this drill, the trainee is placed within a hooded box, and when the box is lifted, he must react quickly to a "lethal" or "non-lethal" situation.

46. MAJ Douglas A. Pryer, *The Fight for the High Ground: The U.S. Army and Interrogation During Operation Iraqi Freedom*, May 2003-April 2004 (Fort Leavenworth:

CGSC Foundation Press, 2009), 88. Cited here is the story of a platoon leader of Task Force 1-36 Infantry, 1st Brigade Combat Team, Task Force 1st Armored Division. In the early summer of 2003, this weak platoon leader stood by as his platoon descended into pure thuggery. The platoon extorted money from locals to purchase luxury items, beat looters, and apparently battered at least one innocent Iraqi just for the perverse pleasure of it. For the platoon's crimes, the platoon sergeant did jail time while the platoon leader was separated from the Army. This is just one of several recent examples in Iraq and Afghanistan of young lieutenants being changed by, rather than changing, a small unit's immoral subculture.

47. CGSC is hardly alone in this regard among our military's service schools.

48. On 13 May 2010, GEN Stanley McChrystal called the conflict there "a draw."

49. A "mature" democracy is one in which the people have acquired genuine power over their government. Samuel P. Huntington's definition of a mature democracy is probably the most commonly referenced definition. According to Huntington, a democracy which has seen the ruling party replaced by an opposition party twice in a peaceful and democratic fashion can be called a "mature" democracy. Often debated by political scientists is whether true mature democracies ever wage war against one another.



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# BECOMING AN ADAPTIVE LEADER

Major Harold H. Whiffen, U.S. Army

Originally published in in the November-December 2007 edition of MR.

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PHOTOS: (left) Circa 2001, mechanized forces maneuver during a field training exercise at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. (right) In 2006, Soldiers from 1st Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, protect the front gate of mock Forward Operating Base Dallas from simulated rioters during a mission readiness exercise at Fort Stewart, Georgia in preparation for an upcoming deployment to Iraq. (U.S. Army, MSG Johancharles Van Boers)

**M**ANY ARMY OFFICERS know the story of Lieutenant Colonel Nate Sassaman. Even if they do not recognize his name, they probably remember a *New York Times* article about him, “The Fall of the Warrior King,” which tells how Sassaman, a rising star in the Army officer corps, resigned after Soldiers under his command pushed two Iraqi civilians into the Tigris River for violating a local curfew.<sup>1</sup> One of the Iraqi civilians survived; the other either drowned or escaped and went into hiding. When Sassaman learned of the incident and its impending investigation, he suggested to his subordinates that they tell investigators the entire story of their detention of the Iraqi civilians, except for the part where the Soldiers pushed the Iraqi civilians into the Tigris River. Army investigators eventually uncovered the entire scheme. Several Soldiers were punished, and others, including Sassaman, left the Army.

This is not the only example of leadership failure in Iraq. Others include the widely publicized Abu Ghraib prisoner-abuse scandal and reports of unnecessary killing of civilians or the unjustified destruction of private property. These were isolated incidents, but students of military leadership must question what causes military leaders, especially proven ones like Sassaman, to foster a command climate that supports illegal acts and endorses unethical behavior that clearly runs counter to Army values.

Sassaman was respected by senior officers and reportedly idolized by subordinates.<sup>2</sup> To have been selected for battalion command, he must have excelled as a company commander and a staff officer. He had completed all requisite training and education the Army deems necessary for one to command an infantry battalion of nearly 800 Soldiers. Like many of his peers, however, he had spent most of his career preparing to fight a large-scale linear battle against well-equipped armies, and had little, if any, training on counterinsurgency; the Army had shelved its counterinsurgency doctrine and training after the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, Sassaman’s 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, was part of a larger force that became a major player in the counterinsurgency fight that broke out shortly after U.S. forces occupied Baghdad. Some Army leaders adapted well to the counterinsurgency fight. Others, like Sassaman, maintained a kinetic-operations mind-set in a world that needed nation-building and peacekeeping operations. Like other recent

leadership failures in the Army, Sassaman's failure was a result of his inability to adapt to the changing battlefield in Iraq. His story illustrates why military leaders need to practice adaptive leadership to succeed in the challenging contemporary operating environment.

## Adaptive Leadership

To understand a military leader's failure to adapt in unfamiliar circumstances, we ought to first define adaptive leadership. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "adapt" as "to make fit (as for a specific new use or situation), often by modification."<sup>3</sup> Thus, in its essence, adaptive leadership is the ability to modify individual and collective actions based on circumstances. In his study, *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Leonard Wong tells us: "Adaptive leaders learn to live with unpredictability. They spend less time fretting about the inability to establish a routine or control the future and focus more on exploiting opportunities."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the recipe for success in stability operations depends upon embracing the possibilities created by the changing environment.

This focus on exploiting opportunities seems to run counter to such formulas as the Army's military decision-making process and troop leading procedures. Army leaders are quick to reach for a field manual (FM) or Army regulation to learn the next step to take in any set of circumstances, and the canon of Army literature does an outstanding job guiding them in the familiar actions of preparing for combat. Any Soldier, from a private to a general, can grab a manual and read what is required for success on tasks ranging from physical fitness to rifle marksmanship. But during the early phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), there was no manual on how to conduct a counterinsurgency campaign and no metrics to gauge success.

In the absence of experience and doctrine, commanders struggled to find a way to measure progress during OIF. They used reports of the number of killed insurgents, captured weapons, and houses cleared, and even resorted to diligently charting the murder rate in Iraqi cities. Today, commanders like Sassaman continue to struggle to find the right formula for success. However, when given the option of adapting or maintaining their mental status quo,

many leaders choose the latter with no hesitation, and often with negative results.

While authors like Wong have highlighted the necessity for adaptive leadership in the Army, the 1999 edition of FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, uses the word "adapt" only 6 times in its entire 278 pages.<sup>5</sup> The FM implies that such flexibility is important, but with so little discussion devoted to the topic, we should not be surprised that Army officers fail to associate the term with success in military leadership.

Fortunately, some Army leaders noted the absence of the concept of adaptive leadership in Army doctrine. In the wake of significant change and restructure in the Army, a team was devoted to the rewriting of FM 7-0, *Training the Force*, and FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*.<sup>6</sup> The revision to FM 7-0 changed one of the training principles from "Train and Develop Leaders" to "Train Adaptive Leaders and Units."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, a section titled "Tools for Adaptability" was included in FM 6-22.<sup>8</sup> These changes imply that Army leaders should adapt as their organizations' peacetime and wartime missions change and, arguably most important, they should train and mentor subordinates to be flexible, or as the proposed revision to FM 7-0 states, "Train leaders how to think, not what to think."<sup>9</sup>

## Critical Components of Adaptive Leadership

To be adaptive and train others to be so as well, leaders must understand the fundamental tenets of adaptive leadership. According to FM 6-22, an adaptable leader has the ability to "recognize changes in the environment, identify the critical elements of the new situation, and trigger changes accordingly to meet new requirements."<sup>10</sup> These three components are simple and straightforward; in fact, the entire concept appears to be almost a given at first glance. Yet, the ability to practice it

**...with so little discussion devoted to ...[adaptive leadership]...we should not be surprised that Army officers fail to associate the term with success in military leadership.**

consists of more art than science. To understand adaptive leadership, we need to explore each of these components.

**Recognizing change.** FM 6-22 states, “Leaders must be particularly observant for evidence that the environment has changed in unexpected ways.”<sup>11</sup> In our daily lives, we often fail to notice subtle changes around us. We may not notice that the tree in front of our headquarters was trimmed or that our spouse rearranged the pictures in the hallway. These examples demonstrate how easily we can fail to notice unexpected changes. On the other hand, we are quick to observe expected changes. If we tell the Sergeant Major to ensure the motor pool is clean for the commanding general’s visit, we will be quick to notice his compliance to the order and even quicker to notice his noncompliance. Thus, to be adaptive leaders, we should train ourselves to look for unexpected changes.

To this end, we need to challenge our preconceived notions. For example, most Army officers have the opportunity to test their concept of operational art when they try to envision the enemy’s actions in a war game. Young officers often expect an enemy tank platoon to fight just like their own platoon fights. They quickly learn that this assumption is not valid after their first encounter with the opposing force. They have to adapt to “think like the enemy.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition to challenging our assumptions, we should seek out “situations that are novel and unfamiliar.”<sup>13</sup> As company commanders, many of us never experienced convoy live-fire training without excessive control measures. In the 1990s, commanders were so risk averse that they were reluctant to conduct realistic training. When we attempted scenarios with live ammunition, training control measures made injuries unlikely, but at the same time, there was little value in the training beyond the opportunity to improve one’s marksmanship skills. Now operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have made the Army more willing to conduct the type of training that takes Soldiers outside of their comfort zone and forces them to recognize and adapt to new situations.

In preparation for operations in Iraq, Sassaman’s battalion participated in a rotation

at the National Training Center where it fought a conventional opposing force.<sup>14</sup> The staff spent countless hours planning for engagements with massed armored formations much like the battles in Operation Desert Storm a decade earlier. Those engagements did take place in the initial phases of OIF, but the situation had changed by the time Sassaman arrived. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez summarized the problem in June 2004: “In May 2003, the general attitude was that the war was over. But within a matter of days, we began to realize that the enemy was still out there.”<sup>15</sup> The enemy was there; however, it was not the conventional enemy that U.S. units had prepared to fight. Sassaman and others knew this, but they did not recognize the need to change their tactics.

In all fairness, when he learned of the change, Sassaman probably conducted training for operations in urban environments and explored the ramifications of occupying a country with a foreign and ancient culture, but he admittedly was not prepared to conduct counterinsurgency missions. He once remarked that he wished “there were more people who knew about nation-building.”<sup>16</sup> In his favor, he successfully organized a city council and conducted elections.<sup>17</sup> He clearly made a concerted effort to eliminate insurgents in a region troubled with Sunni and Shi’a violence. Unfortunately, with his limited



DOD, Jim Garamone

**GEN Richard B. Myers, center, listens to a briefing from COL Fred Rudesheim, right, and LTC Nate Sassaman, left, at the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, Balad, Iraq, 28 July 2003. Behind Myers is 4th Infantry Division commander MG Ray Odierno.**



knowledge of counterinsurgency and no doctrine to guide him, he resorted to conventional actions to wage an asymmetric fight.

To illustrate, in one instance, before entering Samarra to combat insurgents, Sassaman commented that his forces were going to “inflict extreme violence.”<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, his conventional mindset and frustration with the continuing insurgent activities led to the unlawful actions that occurred in January 2004.

If Sassaman had foreseen the changes in Iraq, he might have studied the concepts of counterinsurgency in detail and pursued novel training approaches to give his Soldiers a better knowledge of the environment and the actions necessary for success in it. If the Army had anticipated the Iraqi insurgency, it might have given Sassaman and others additional training to prepare for the complexity of the environment. Sassaman was not the only leader in Iraq who underestimated the magnitude of the insurgency and found it a challenge to adapt to the new operating environment, but he bore the brunt of a collective failure to anticipate, recognize, and then adapt to this change.

**Identifying critical elements.** Once a leader perceives changes in the operating environment, he should identify the “critical elements of the new situation.”<sup>19</sup> Arguably, this step is the most challenging one in the journey to becoming an adaptive leader. One may see the change, but one may be unable to determine the essential elements of the change.

To identify these critical elements, the leader has to first determine what caused the change. In some situations, a single cause that one can easily discern might have provoked the change. In others, multiple factors may have contributed to it. In either case, leaders should understand that they might be constrained in their ability to affect the cause or causes of change, even if doing so would solve the problem. Moreover, just addressing the cause or causes for the change may not lead to success in the new situation. Leaders ought to remain flexible and adaptable so that they can employ the most appropriate solutions.

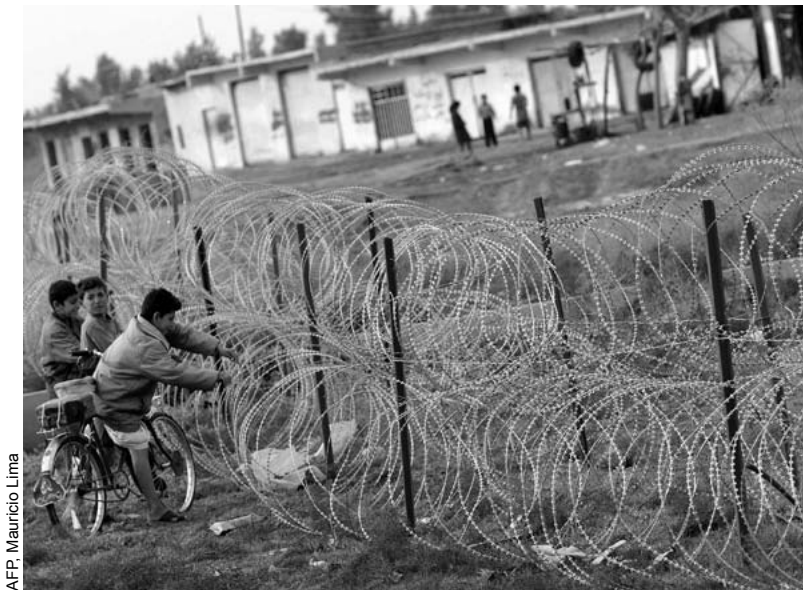
To illustrate this concept, consider a simple counterinsurgency example. A battalion commander in Iraq notices an increase in violence in his area of operations. Clearly, he has identified

***Leaders ought to remain flexible and adaptable so that they can employ the most appropriate solutions.***

the change. Iraqi forces in his area have reported the arrival of a new sheik who is inciting members of the community to take up arms against Americans. The commander realizes that it would not be wise to detain the sheik, even though he has likely encouraged the increase in violence. The commander determines that the critical element that he needs to address to reduce the violence is the community’s discontent with a lack of public services. Thus, he chooses to guarantee the community access to public services such as water, sewage treatment, and electricity. This simplified example illustrates the concept of determining the cause for change and identifying the critical elements necessary to ensure success in the new environment. Furthermore, it illustrates the importance of remaining open to alternative solutions.

As previously stated, LTC Sassaman failed to recognize the magnitude of the change in his environment, but he was quick to recognize such symptoms as escalating violence and curfew violations. In fact, these were the changes he expected and was prepared to combat. In most cases, however, he did not attempt to identify the factors that caused the increased violence. Instead, he determined that the critical action necessary for success was to respond to violence in kind. Sassaman told CNN: “You’ve got to meet aggression with controlled violence. A lot of people will say violence leads to more violence. I’ll tell you that controlled violence leads to no more violence.”<sup>20</sup> Sassaman’s eye-for-an-eye philosophy reveals that he failed to assess the elements critical to success in this environment. Instead, he focused on a solution that he and his Soldiers were well prepared to execute.

Sassaman also resorted to extreme measures to control violence. After the death of one of Sassaman’s Soldiers, he ordered his men to emplace barbed wire around the village where the Soldier was killed and to require all citizens entering the village to carry identification cards written in



AFP, Mauricio Lima

**Children look through the barbed wire fence surrounding the village of Abu Hishma, 75 kilometers north of Baghdad, 14 January 2004. The fence was put up by soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 8th Regiment, in a bid to prevent attacks on its troops coming from the village.**

English.<sup>21</sup> The Iraqis' response was a negative one. Journalist Dexter Filkins reported that the villagers "compare[d] themselves to Palestinians," who regularly endure similar security measures because terrorists live in their midst.<sup>22</sup> Even though violence temporarily decreased after the battalion carried out Sassaman's orders, he had clearly alienated the population.

Other commanders in the region chose different strategies. For instance, Colonel Dana Pittard's efforts to engage the Sunni population in Diyala Province were highly successful.<sup>23</sup> Pittard credits the success his Soldiers achieved to actions designed to "gain the trust and confidence of the people." For instance, if Iraqi children gestured inappropriately at his Soldiers, Pittard had his Soldiers approach the children's parents and tell them what the children had done.<sup>24</sup> In doing so, Pittard demonstrated respect for the sovereignty of the Iraqi people in their own land.

Had Sassaman taken the time to assess the critical elements driving the insurgency, he might have quelled the violence in his area of operations by means of a more successful long-term solution. In fairness to Sassaman, he was not the only commander who resorted to extreme measures, but his failure to determine the essential elements to ensure his unit's success ultimately led to the

alleged drowning of an Iraqi civilian. While we will probably never know how complex Sassaman's situation was or the other actions he considered, military leaders can study this case to learn how to apply adaptive leadership to future situations.

**Using triggers.** As FM 6-22 states, "Deciding when to adapt is equally important as how to adapt."<sup>25</sup> The final tenet of adaptive leadership is the ability to trigger changes accordingly to meet new requirements. Much like using a triggering event to decide when to attack a column of tanks with artillery, knowing when to make changes in operations is critical in complex missions like stability operations.

In the contemporary operating environment, the adaptive leader should balance force and restraint. The environment's complexity might suggest a peaceful solution in one circumstance and a violent solution in a very similar circumstance. Because every situation is different, a leader may never use the same tactic twice. However, a leader who has correctly assessed the conditions and determined the critical elements for success under the circumstances will be in a better position to know what events will require what response from his organization.

Another important element in determining the mark for change is the leader's ability to assess his strengths and weaknesses and those of his organization.<sup>26</sup> If he knows his organization has a tendency to resort to violence, he ought to program more restraint to prevent unnecessary escalations of violence. Conversely, he should also assess his Soldiers' tendency for restraint in certain circumstances to ensure they appropriately escalate actions. Because of the rapidly changing operating environment, a commander's best method to assess his unit in this regard is to observe them during training. A commander needs to develop realistic scenarios that test his organization's ability to progress rapidly from restraint to violence. These scenarios will develop Soldiers' discipline and ability to interpret triggers. Such training also allows a commander to

***...knowing when to make changes in operations is critical...***

practice visualizing potential actions based on his organization's level of competence.

Like other deploying units, the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, conducted training exercises in preparation for combat.<sup>27</sup> During their NTC rotation, Sassaman and his staff had probably refined their targeting procedures for close air support, army aviation, and artillery but spent little, if any, time considering how to adapt the organization for a counterinsurgency fight. This oversight was largely a result of the Army's focus on the conventional fight. Once in Iraq, Sassaman employed his forces in a conventional manner instead of adapting to the operating environment. His primary trigger was insurgent violence. For example, if violence erupted, he regularly ordered his Soldiers to detain Sunni sheiks and imprison Iraqis who provided bad intelligence. When insurgent violence against American Soldiers escalated, Sassaman responded by escalating violence in turn.<sup>28</sup> From the evidence available, it appears that Sassaman never adapted his tactics to the changing environment. Rather, he merely applied various levels of punishment in an attempt to deter violence.

After Sassaman's Soldiers pushed the Iraqi civilians into the Tigris River, members of his unit acknowledged in interviews that Sassaman included such acts within the scope of the authorized use of nonlethal force. The Soldiers apparently acted in a manner that they felt was consistent with their commander's intent.<sup>29</sup> By failing to assess his unit's propensity for violence and set limits accordingly, Sassaman, in effect, allowed his subordinates to decide when and how they would respond to events they encountered during patrols, searches, or guard duty. In a conventional fight, Sassaman certainly would not have left the decision to request close air support on a column of tanks up to each one of his subordinate leaders. Had Sassaman considered the changes in the environment, assessed his unit's strengths and weaknesses, and established a balance between force and restraint suitable for the types of events his Soldiers encountered, he might have avoided the leadership failure that led to his resignation.

## **How Do Army Officers Become Adaptive Leaders?**

Sassaman was in a challenging situation in the violence-riddled region surrounding Balad, Iraq. Because we have not experienced the daily events that he did, it is difficult to pass judgment on each aspect of his operation. Clearly, scheming to withhold information during an investigation is wrong. But the value in this analysis is in considering how we might have acted in a similar situation. Would we have encircled a village with barbed wire if one of our Soldiers had been killed? Would we have responded to violence with escalating violence in every case, or would we have considered other options and adapted as necessary? We need to be able to adapt so that we can make the best possible decisions when faced with challenges.

First, we should "learn to adapt by adapting."<sup>30</sup> We ought to put ourselves in challenging, unfamiliar, and uncomfortable situations. As a young staff officer, I conducted many movement-to-contact missions in training. In almost every case, the operations order required the forward passage of a brigade combat team to continue the fight, but I do not recall actually executing this phase of the operation. Instead, the order to conduct a forward passage of lines was followed by brief radio silence and the inevitable "end ex" call to signal the conclusion of the mission. I always wondered why we never executed what appeared to be the most challenging part of the mission. In retrospect, we certainly did not have the money or maneuver space to conduct the operation with a full brigade, but the squadron could have used a smaller force to replicate the challenges involved in passing a unit forward while in contact. I now realize that we probably did not conduct the passage because it fell into the "too-hard-to-do" category. As a result, we sacrificed a great training opportunity by not placing ourselves in unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory. As leaders, when we train we should seek challenging situations for our organizations and ourselves, or we will fail to take the first step toward becoming adaptive leaders.

Second, we should learn to "lead across cultures."<sup>31</sup> We will probably always fight as a joint and multinational coalition, so we should actively seek opportunities to train and work with other services and other nations. When those opportunities are available, we

should make the effort to embrace and learn our sister services' and our allies' culture. In Iraq, we will continue to work with an interagency presence, so we need to capitalize on opportunities to learn the interagency business. In short, we should strive to attain as much cultural knowledge as possible to adapt and succeed on today's battlefield.

Finally, we ought to seek challenges.<sup>32</sup> We should maintain proficiency in our individual branches, but the ability to understand other aspects of the profession of arms is critical to our long-term success. We should look for tough and unusual assignments and find new and unique ways to challenge our organizations. As FM 6-22 states, the ability to adapt increases with breadth of experience.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

When we can recognize change in the operating environment, assess its critical elements, and modify our own actions to adapt to the change, we become adaptive leaders who can excel in today's counterinsurgency fight.

The story of LTC Nate Sassaman offers only one example of why we need adaptable leaders. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will not end in the near future, and other opportunities will likely present themselves as we wage the War on Terrorism. We should not disregard the lessons we have learned about conventional warfare, for as soon

as we dismiss the concept, we may find ourselves preparing to wage a conventional war. Rather, we need to be proficient in every facet of our profession, regardless of how unlikely the requirement to use the proficiency might be. That, in essence, is what an adaptive leader does. **MR**

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### NOTES

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12. *Ibid.*, 10-9.
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17. *Ibid.*, 4.
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22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, 8.
24. *Ibid.*
25. FM 6-22, 10-8.
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28. *Ibid.*, 8.
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30. FM 6-22, 10-9.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*

# DEVELOPING NCO LEADERS for the 21st Century

Master Sergeant John W. Proctor, U.S. Army

*Soldiers actually tend to be pretty skilled at this kind of work. A huge fraction of military officers were captains of their soccer teams, scout leaders, student government officers, whatever. They understand leadership. Even at the enlisted level, the basic essence of being a good sergeant is to be a quick study of character, a master of motivation, and a strong communicator, someone who really understands human nature. A lot of basic military work is inherently 'sociological,' and this has helped us in our crash effort to building up a working society here.<sup>1</sup>*

—Captain Ken Burgess, 2d Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Baghdad, Iraq, 2004

*The key to the Army's success is our flexibility and willingness to change, to meet the world as it is—without altering the core competencies that make the Army the best fighting force in the world.<sup>2</sup>*

—Field Manual (FM) 22-7.7

**A**T THE CENTER of Army transformation efforts stands the noncommissioned officer. He leads our Soldiers into 21st-century battle.<sup>3</sup> He cares for, trains, and directs our Soldiers in peace and in war. He is the primary implementer of our new doctrine and concepts. He commands the small units maneuvering our new platforms and engaging the enemy with our new weapons systems. He is the face of the American people as he interacts with indigenous people on counterinsurgency battlefields. An effective leadership development model for the U.S. Army noncommissioned officer waging 21st-century warfare must define the threat correctly, develop leaders of character, and implement knowledge management strategies for disseminating current and emerging doctrine.

In today's security environment, change is the norm. The 360-degree fight among indigenous populations is probably here to stay.<sup>4</sup> Our capstone doctrine in FM 3-0, *Operations* explains that—

Army doctrine now equally weights tasks dealing with the population—stability or civil support—with those related to offensive and defensive operations. This parity is critical; it recognizes that 21st-century conflict involves more than combat between armed opponents. While defeating the enemy with offensive and defensive operations, Army forces simultaneously shape the broader situation through nonlethal actions to restore security and normalcy to the local populace.

Soldiers operate among populations, not adjacent to them or above them. They often face the enemy among noncombatants, with little to distinguish one from the other until combat erupts. Killing

*Originally published in in the September-October 2009 edition of MR.*

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PHOTO: SGT Andrew Wolfgang provides security during a cordon and knock in Taji, Iraq, 9 August 2009. (U.S. Army, PFC Ali Hargis)

or capturing the enemy in proximity to noncombatants complicates land operations exponentially. Winning battles and engagements is important but alone is not sufficient. Shaping the civil situation is just as important to success.<sup>5</sup>

The greater part of the panorama of change affecting contemporary operations is the dramatically increased involvement of the American Soldier with indigenous peoples. While changes in weaponry, equipment, force design, communications, technology, information exchange, and an exhaustive menu of threats deluge our Army at war, the human dimension profoundly begs the attention of transformation efforts.<sup>6</sup> Our NCO leader stands at the heart of this transformation as its primary agent of delivery.

## **Irregular Warfare**

The Army will conduct full spectrum operations among the people. Whole-of-government approaches will include soft power, non-lethal engagements, and effective messaging in information operations. At the blink of an eye, however, situations can and do turn explosively lethal and require disciplined application of combined arms maneuver. In this environment, the shaping of attitudes and values is as important as fire control, economy of force, and rules of engagement. Irregular warfare is about people, not platforms.<sup>7</sup> Platforms, technology, weaponry, and information superiority are all mission-essential components of successful land combat operations in 21st-century warfare. However, without a thorough understanding of the human dimension, a wily and cunning enemy adept at cultural exploitation may actually leverage military superiority against the Army's campaign objectives. When examining leader development models for the Army NCO corps for the 21st century, it is imperative that we define the threat environment correctly and apply paradigms that address the requirements of an increasingly human-centric battlefield.

We need NCO leaders who are educated, trained, and inspired to pursue a balanced, human-centric approach to irregular warfare in the 21st century. These NCO leaders must be self-aware and always conscious of the strategic context of their actions and the unit's actions.

This is not to say that leader development for major combat operations is no longer required or that conventional warfare training is obsolete. We should not sacrifice systematic training in large-scale combined arms maneuver for increased effectiveness in irregular warfare environments. The question of either/or is based on a false premise and disregards the doctrinal azimuth provided in FM 3-0.

Leader development for NCOs must and will include development of leadership capabilities normally honed in more conventional training venues. NCOs will still provide leadership at qualification tables and gunneries; combined live-fire exercises; joint rapid-deployment exercises; force-on-force conventional maneuver in our "dirt" combat training centers; and advanced training in battle command processes and applications. Leadership in major combat operations or in irregular warfare is still leadership. The contexts and threats may vary, but the relationship between the leader and the led still requires education in military art and science and indoctrination in a culture of values and tradition.

Our allies hail from diverse ethnic, national, and cultural origins. Operating in large-scale combined arms maneuver with multinational partners may require cross-cultural association skills for the NCO small-unit leader or the battle staff NCO coordinating actions between commands. Human-centric leadership capabilities honed in our own units require external applications when dealing outside our own cultural comfort zones. Modern warfare has produced the phenomenon of the "global rifle platoon."

Our military transition teams immerse themselves in the culture of indigenous forces. In counter-insurgency operations, indigenous forces must gradually assume the lead in order for our forces to retrograde. The military transition team must overcome the barriers of language, culture, race,

***The contexts and threats may vary, but the relationship between the leader and the led still requires education in military art...***

religion, and experience if it is to succeed in developing the capabilities of indigenous forces. The U.S. Army NCO frequently assumes responsibility for providing leadership for these missions. His education and training may contribute to the success of counterinsurgency operations or fail him at the point of attack. Military transition team members that become a source of irritation of indigenous forces may impede the progress of the campaign plan. NCO leadership for these contexts must be developed intentionally and deliberately.

In the spring of 2008, an American NCO defaced a copy of the Koran by scrawling foul language on its pages and then posted it on a silhouette for target practice on a small arms range shared with Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi security forces found the holy book with 14 holes in it the next day. Their indignant reaction was so severe that several general officers immediately convened councils with Iraqi leaders to issue official apologies. Even the President of the United States publicly asked for forgiveness from the Iraqi Prime Minister.<sup>8</sup>

While this situation is not the norm, neither is it an anomaly. Irregular warfare requires weaponizing cultural knowledge, not merely routine “check-the-block” cultural awareness classes. Human-centric warfare requires area-specific cultural knowledge as well as tactical adaptability.

The adaptive, multi-skilled leader described in FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*, is a paradigm for 21st-century NCO leader development. His adaptability is a key trait:

Adaptable leaders scan the environment, derive the key characteristics of the situation, and are aware of what it will take to perform in the changed environment. Leaders must be particularly observant for evidence that the environment has changed in unexpected ways. They recognize that they face highly adaptive adversaries, and operate within dynamic, ever-changing environments. Sometimes what happens in the same environment changes suddenly and unexpectedly from a calm, relatively safe operation to a direct fire situation. Other times environments differ (from a combat deployment to a humanitarian one) and adaptation is required for mind-sets and instincts to change.<sup>9</sup>

Today’s Soldier knows almost nothing but change and must adapt constantly to a volatile and unpredictable environment. Since 2004, our Army has introduced an entirely new force design (modularity), dozens of new equipment and uniform suites, digital communication command posts, and modifications to training programs of instruction and methods of delivery. Moreover, we soldier within the vortex of an unprecedented doctrinal revolution as the Army has rewritten nearly all its field manuals during this period. This places increasing demands upon squad leaders, platoon and section sergeants, first sergeants, and sergeants major to adapt standards, requirements, and safety considerations to the avalanche of change facing today’s Soldier.

Counterinsurgency operations may provide the best problem set in arriving at the optimal solution for developing adaptive NCO leaders. If an NCO leader can learn to thrive in a counterinsurgency operation, everything else is easier in comparison. General David H. Petraeus has referred to counterinsurgency as “graduate-level warfare.”<sup>10</sup> An NCO corps at home in the dangerous, complex, ambiguous environs of counterinsurgency warfare should find conventional warfare less difficult and easier to adapt to.<sup>11</sup>

The optimal leadership development model for the 21st century recognizes the NCO as the principal agent of change in a transforming force and emphasizes human-centric factors in full spectrum operations. Correctly diagnosing the threat environment of irregular warfare must inform our models for leader development. Adaptive and creative thinking will remain a staple in addressing both the threat and the operational environment.

## Traditions, Heritage, and Values

Noncommissioned officers are the stewards of Army traditions, emblems, regalia, and heraldry. From the days when the standard-bearer literally bore the unit’s flag or standards into battle at the

***The optimal leadership development model for the 21st century recognizes the NCO as the principal agent of change...***



U.S. Army, SGT Teddy Wade

U.S. Army soldiers from 3rd Infantry Regiment, Old Guard, march during the NCO Parade at Fort Myer, VA, 19 May 2009.

head of the formation to the present, where the command sergeant major safeguards the unit's colors, NCOs promote reverence for and pride in the Army service. The Army's customs, courtesies, and rituals pass from generation to generation through the diligent observance of noncommissioned officers who preserve the heritage of the past and project the tradition of *esprit de corps* into the present.

Ceremonies and rituals are a vehicle for displaying the Army's values. Far from being empty exercises in pomp and parade, they communicate transcendent values such as love of country, liberty, and honor. Whether observing a major ceremony such as a memorial for fallen comrades or a minor ceremony such as Retreat and To the Colors, the NCO stands at the center of the traditions and rituals. The NCO prepares the parade field, the banquet hall, and the chapel. The NCO supervises the firing teams, the pallbearers, and the Color Guard. NCOs stand between commanders exchanging the regimental colors at a change of command ceremony.

These ceremonies and rituals highlight the Army's values and traditions. They symbolize the honor, discipline, and sacrifices our Soldiers have made throughout our long and storied history. These values must never change; we must conscientiously adhere to them in order to pass them along with fidelity and respect to emerging generations of Soldiers. In an era where change is fast and furi-

ous and leaders learn to "adapt or die," our professional NCO corps must remain firmly grounded in our prestigious heritage of victory with honor. The Army is a values-based organization and requires NCO leaders that faithfully transmit our values at home and abroad, whether during peace keeping or combat.

Army leadership doctrine explains what leaders must *be*, *know*, and *do*. This model translates into the spiritual, mental, and physical characteristics of leadership and provides a metric for self-development that addresses the whole person.

We must begin with character. What a leader must be is a model of Army Values—loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor,

integrity, and personal courage. Don Snider, a professor of political science at the U.S. Military Academy, breaks down character development into three strands: the spiritual (what is true); the ethical (what is right); and the social (actions).<sup>12</sup> Snider teaches that a leader of character "seeks to discover the truth, decide what is right, and demonstrate the courage to act accordingly. . . always."<sup>13</sup> Current NCO development models do not address this highly personal and spiritual quest for truth firmly enough. Should we teach cadets at West Point to employ their personal faith as a leadership tool in this way, but not our NCO corps? While respecting each NCO's personal choices and beliefs, it is nonetheless material to this discussion to note that morals do not emerge from a vacuum. In his farewell address, George Washington stated:

Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. . . . And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid



us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.<sup>14</sup>

NCO leader development models should require character development to more closely mirror the educational paradigms employed at West Point. Many NCO leaders inculcate this spiritual dimension into their personal self-development, but the Noncommissioned Officer Educational System is silent on the matter. It is critical for our own NCO leaders to seek truth as our Soldiers face complex ethical dangers conducting full spectrum operations in religiously saturated environments. In an interview with the Combat Studies Institute, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Iacobucci explains the importance of morals and values in conflict. Reflecting on the lessons he learned from this experience [Operation Iraqi Freedom], Iacobucci stresses the importance of “having a good command climate and establishing sound morals and values.” As he explains, “If you’re going to go into this business of exchanging blows with people and taking their lives, it can very quickly erode into something very messy. It’s only values and morals that keep everything together.”<sup>15</sup>

The Army Leadership Requirements Model detailed in FM 6-22 identifies three attributes of what a leader must be: a leader of character, a leader with presence, and a leader with intellectual capacity. The Noncommissioned Officer Educational System plays a central role in NCO leader development and programs of instruction should emphasize these requirements. Success in 21st-century warfare begins with educational experiences that deepen the professional NCO’s commitment to leading with character.

Knowledge must inform character, and knowledge must be translated into action. The *be, know, and do* model remains relevant for our professional development efforts in the NCO corps. Knowledge and action not informed by strong moral character may prove ineffective during combat in current and future threat environments.

***Success in 21st-century warfare begins with...the professional NCO’s commitment to leading with character.***

The demands of 21st-century warfare will continue to pose complex sets of problems for our leaders to navigate and may include religious, tribal, ethnic, social, and political variables. The actions of the “strategic corporal” on COIN battlefields frequently blast throughout the world in real time on digital mass media. Establishing educational and training values that emphasize character development, self-awareness, and personal growth will help our NCO leaders stay true to unchanging principles. Fidelity to these principles will contribute to mission success in constantly changing environments with complex sets of human-centric problems.

Noncommissioned officers are the conduit of leadership that connects commanders and Soldiers. As stewards of our traditions, heritage, ceremonies, and heraldry, NCOs bear our standards in the midst of the daunting challenges posed by 21st-century warfare. Now more than ever before, leadership development for NCOs must be grounded in unchanging principles and values.

## **The NCO Leader and Doctrine**

The capstone of Army doctrine, FM 3-0, *Full Spectrum Operations*, initiated a doctrinal revolution within the Army that is still generating change.<sup>16</sup> Many of today’s senior NCOs learned doctrine from painstaking study of dog-eared paper manuals by highlighting key passages and making notes in the margins. The shelf life of these doctrinal publications ordinarily lasted five years. While always dynamic in nature, doctrine seemed relatively stable from the early 1990s until the outset of the War on Terrorism. Most NCOs owned their own copies of the field manuals on leadership, physical training, leadership counseling, battle drills, and battle focused training, and their proponent FM or unique-unit FM. In the Noncommissioned Officer Educational System, noncommissioned officers learned how to navigate doctrine by searching for answers to problems using glossaries or other reference aids.

Today, two unique challenges have emerged to complicate the dissemination of Army doctrine: the advent of paperless references and the fluid nature of current doctrine itself. Together, these two factors affect the transmittal of doctrinal knowledge and require a fresh look at how NCOs obtain and retain doctrinal knowledge.



U.S. Army PFC Richard W. Jones Jr.

**SSG William Fullerton, assigned to 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, Special Troops Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, briefs his soldiers prior to going on patrol from Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, 4 July 2009.**

Digitization of operational products, regulations, field manuals, pamphlets, and other distributed information has changed the culture of information exchange. No longer bound by the constraints of researching paper references and painstakingly typing out quoted portions, today's operator can copy and paste with lightning speed (and perhaps not as much attention to detail). Without paper products, however, NCOs may lose some of the traditional absorption and retention of doctrinal knowledge. This situation results in a professional NCO corps frequently overwhelmed by information and constrained to reading from a desktop computer screen instead of a paper FM that could fit into a Tuff Box, rucksack, or cargo pocket.

Even if today's NCO leader had recourse to the old paper versions of his doctrine, the doctrine itself presents two additional difficulties: it is fluid in nature (as the recent generation of interim field manuals suggests); and doctrine often yields to battlefield lessons learned. Placing greater emphasis on knowledge management strategies for NCO leader development may mitigate both difficulties.

NCOs in the 21st century should appropriate knowledge management concepts as the principal delivery system for the Army-wide transmittal of current and emerging doctrinal knowledge. Knowledge management is simply the practice of captur-

ing, storing, and sharing explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is delivered in publications, slide shows, spreadsheets, reports, etc. Tacit knowledge such as insights, experiences, advice, analysis, and opinion is experiential. It is delivered in online forums, instant messaging, and other means of social sharing. While both types of knowledge are necessary, it is tacit knowledge that fosters social learning for a community of practice.<sup>17</sup>

Professional online forums such as the Battle Command Knowledge System's NCO Net hold enormous potential for enabling knowledge management for our NCO leadership.<sup>18</sup> NCO Net provides a secure, professionally moderated discussion and exchange forum for NCOs

working out the problems facing our Army at war today. NCOs share questions and problems as well as solutions, experiences, and advice for fellow NCOs. NCO Net has helped thousands of noncommissioned officers in fielding assistance with current issues in near real time. These forums provide a way of discussing doctrine in theory as well as applied and expanded doctrine as members share their own tactics, techniques, and procedures. Current membership in NCO Net tops 37,000 voluntary participants from active duty, U.S. Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserves.

The Center for Army Lessons Learned also offers enormous potential for enhancing the Army's NCO leadership. We have barely tapped resources like the Battle Command Knowledge System and the Center for Army Lessons Learned as social learning platforms that support transformation. Formal inclusion of these and other knowledge management platforms in all enlisted training programs

***...doctrine itself presents two...difficulties: it is fluid in nature...and...often yields to battlefield lessons learned.***

with emphasis on the Noncommissioned Officer Educational System will rapidly multiply organizational knowledge. Unit commanders at every echelon should support participation in knowledge management forums at the organizational and Army levels.

We are a doctrine-based Army, and FM 3-0 sets the direction for the present and the future. It is imperative that our NCO leaders absorb and communicate the doctrinal parameters provided in FM 3-0 and incorporate relevant observations, insights, and lessons into their training efforts. We can optimize this fluid, dynamic learning environment by implementing aggressive, intentional knowledge-management strategies for today's NCO leaders. Through platforms such as the noncommissioned officer network, our enlisted leaders can share the doctrinal knowledge explained in our publications as well as lessons learned from current operations. Pulling together the doctrinal concepts as well as the battlefield observations, insights, and lessons will also accelerate efforts to develop relevant "dirt" training in the combat training centers. Building synergy between field operators, Training and Doctrine Command developers, and Combat Training Center observer/controllers is a stated goal of the Training and Doctrine Command.<sup>19</sup>

The paperless publication system promotes online presence. NCO leaders that stay current on emerging issues and topics may find a wealth of support on a variety of Battle Command Knowledge System online forums. Communities of practice exist for niche communities (such as executive or training officer network) or macro communities (logisticians network). An active community of practice applies the collective knowledge of its membership to problem-solving. This fosters collaboration and social learning as it facilitates the development of relevant solution sets. A single forum topic posted on the Battle Command Knowledge System Counterinsurgency Forum in 2007, "Suicide Bomber Defeat," garnered 187 replies from sources as divergent as the Asymmetric Warfare Group, the Multinational Force-I Counterinsurgency Center for Excellence and the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.<sup>20</sup> This type of collaboration exponentially multiplies the doctrinal acumen and operational savvy of all participants and their organizations.

It is probably not realistic to assume our corps of noncommissioned officers will master the fluid nature of current doctrinal concepts utilizing pre-digital educational methods alone. Noncommissioned Officer Educational System classrooms practice the small-group method of instruction in order to optimize the experiences, knowledge, and cognitive abilities of the students in a professionally facilitated forum. Virtual knowledge management forums do the same but on an Army-wide scale that maximizes reach and depth. The doctrinal revolution set in motion by FM 3-0 is still reverberating throughout the force; observations, insights, and lessons are still pouring in from combat operations in theater. NCOs are deluged with new information. We can find a more realistic paradigm for the transmission of current and emerging doctrine for our corps of noncommissioned officers by utilizing knowledge management platforms.

## Changing Conditions, Unchanging Values

Warfare in the 21st century will demand increasingly complex skill sets from NCO leaders and require a human-centric focus for problem solving. The operational environment will almost certainly involve unconventional, asymmetrical threats and intensive human interaction with indigenous populations, indigenous forces, and multinational partners. The volatile, unpredictable nature of irregular warfare will require an NCO corps firmly rooted in heritage, tradition, and a culture of conscientiously observed Army values. The leader with character who seeks truth and acts ethically will be able to model that which must never change in situations that are constantly changing all around him.

Developing this leader will require knowledge management strategies that leverage the collective expertise of the NCO corps for the benefit of all its members. A doctrine-based Army must disseminate doctrine in ways that are practical, deliverable, and relevant to this generation of NCO leaders. To achieve this, we must adapt available learning methods to the intended target audience. Online communities of practice provide social exchanges of experiential knowledge and rapid transfer of emerging best practices in near real time. This process aids the education and training of combat-ready warriors well prepared for a

variety of operational scenarios. Optimization of the experiences of other Soldiers has long been an Army precept and an educational linchpin of our institutional and operational training domains.

The Army NCO is the primary transmitter of transformation. He is also the steward of our heritage, traditions, and values. Deploying the NCO leader to volatile 21st-century battlefields to conduct

full spectrum operations will require leadership that can adapt tactics without compromising ethics. Technologies rise and fall, and weapons systems evolve; but human beings will always remain at the center of warfare. The Army NCO leaders of tomorrow will rise to meet every challenge with courage, competence, and confidence—as long as we never forget who we are and how we got here. **MR**

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## NOTES

1. Karl Zinsmeister, *Dawn Over Baghdad: How the U.S. Military is Using Bullets and Ballots to Remake Iraq*, (New York: Encounter Books, 2005)

2. FM 22-7.7, *The Army NCO Guide* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 2002).

3. In this article, the pronouns “he” and “him” are generic and represent both male and female NCO leaders.

4. Trend analysis is the most fragile element of forecasting. The world’s future over the coming quarter of a century will be subject to enormous disruptions and surprises, natural as well as man-made. These disruptions, and many other contiguous forces, can easily change the trajectory of any single trend. The *Joint Operating Environment* (Norfolk, VA: United States Joint Forces Command, November 2008) recognizes that many, if not all, trends and trajectories of the future will be non-linear.

5. FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington DC: GPO, February 2008).

6. Ibid. “This conflict will be waged in an environment that is complex, multidimensional, and rooted in the human dimension. Military forces alone cannot win this conflict; winning requires the close cooperation and coordination of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic efforts. Due to the human nature of the conflict, however, land power will remain important to the military effort and essential to victory.”

7. *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept* (Washington DC: GPO, September 2007). “Irregular warfare is about people, not platforms. *Irregular warfare* depends not just on our military prowess, but also our understanding of such social dynamics as tribal politics, social networks, religious influences, and cultural mores. *People, not platforms and advanced technology will be the key to irregular warfare success*. The joint force will need patient, persistent, and culturally savvy people to build the local relationships and partnerships essential to executing *irregular warfare*.”

8. Qassim Abdul-Zahra, “Bush Apologizes for Quran Shooting,” Associated Press, 2008-05-20.

9. FM 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington DC: GPO), para. 10-49.

10. Jamie Gumbrecht, “Troop Numbers to Thin In 2008,” McClatchy Newspapers, 30 December 2007.

11. BG Edward L. Cardon, “Recognizing the Army’s Cultural Changes,” *Army*, September 2007. “We do not fully understand how the culture of our junior leaders and soldiers has changed. For example, we know a number of our armor captains have not completed tank gunnery because of an extended deployment. To some, this is a harbinger to a downfall of Army readiness. But to our junior leaders, the reaction is quite different. *They are very confident they can rapidly master the required skills*. Why do they think like this? New equipment, new tactics, different training—our sol-

diers know they have to adapt both to win and to stay alive. They are not afraid of the unknown; they use their skills to adapt to the unknown. This is not to suggest or say that we should never conduct tank gunnery. We should, and there is no sound reason why our armor crewmen should not be experts on their tanks as a matter of training, but our junior leaders see a lack of a particular skill as a challenge to overcome, as they have already demonstrated in every combat deployment.”

12. Don Snider, “The Human Spirit, Ethics, and Character: An Integrated Approach to Warrior Development,” presentation to the Chief of Chaplains’ Senior Leadership Conference, April 2007.

13. Ibid.

14. George Washington, *Farewell Address*, Preparatory to His Declination, Baltimore, MD., George and Henry Keating (1896).

15. Combat Studies Institute, *Operational Leadership Experiences*, interview with LTC Michael Iocabucci, 1 June 2006.

16. GEN William S. Wallace, “FM 3-0 Setting the Capstone of Army Doctrine,” *Army*, March 2008.

17. FM 6-01.1, *Knowledge Management*, (Washington DC: GPO, 2008), para. 1-17. “*Connection* provides people with a structure and networks—both technical and social—that facilitate communication. Since knowledge is social and used for the benefit of people, most people seek it from those they know and trust before querying others or accessing databases. Seeking knowledge from other people leads to collaboration.”

18. The Lessons Learned Course, conducted by the Center for Army Lessons Learned, Fort Leavenworth, KS, is being designed to train officers, warrant officers, and NCOs assigned responsibility for establishing and managing a lessons learned program in their organization and their subordinate units.

19. Ibid., GEN William S. Wallace, “TRADOC is committed to providing our soldiers with the best, most relevant and innovative training opportunities while transforming a campaign-quality Army with Joint and expeditionary capabilities. We continue to push lessons learned in theater directly to soldiers on the ground and to units across the Army. Our lessons learned are simultaneously providing the foundation and underpinnings for development of Army doctrine that is reinforced and practiced at operational units and our training centers.”

20. Battle Command Knowledge System, professional forums, 30 July 2009, <<https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=384421&lang=en-U.S.>> (AKO password required). Alternate site, <<https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/communitybrowser.aspx?>> (30 July 2009).



## *Sebastian Junger's* **WAR**

An Unvarnished Look at Our Soldiers in Afghanistan

**Emma Vialpando**

**T**HE ORIGINS OF the surrealist movement in the early 20th century were influenced by an aesthetic of contradictory convergence in which opposite elements intermingle to create energetic clashes of energy and movement. This ironic merging of contradictions can also manifest itself within combat zones and is on full display in Sebastian Junger's recent book, *War*, which juxtaposes the seeming simplicity of military tactics with the cacophony and friction of combat, the boredom of waiting for the next operation with the adrenaline-pumping rush of a firefight, the brotherly bonds of war with the lonely isolation of dealing with one's fear. Broken into three parts that in many ways embody the visceral nature of combat—fear, killing, and love—*War* delves into the world of a combat infantry unit and provides an unvarnished picture of our modern-day Soldiers.

Between the spring of 2007 and 2008, Junger made five trips to the Korengal Valley and was embedded with the Soldiers of the 2d Platoon, Battle Company, 173d Airborne Brigade. A *Vanity Fair* correspondent, Junger is no stranger to placing himself in highly dangerous environments. Before writing *War*, he was embedded with a unit in Afghanistan's Zabul Province, and he also spent time in the Niger Delta profiling Nigerian militants attacking U.S. oil and gas infrastructure. However, he admits that he was unprepared for the level of violence in the Korengal Valley.

Situated in northeastern Afghanistan, the Korengal Valley is a mere six miles wide and six miles long, and is in many ways "the Afghanistan of Afghanistan: too remote to conquer, too poor to intimidate, too autonomous to buy off." Battle Company's objective is to block mobility corridors of insurgents, who are traipsing back and forth along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and bringing men and supplies with them. A large part of this mission involves the Sisyphean task of hauling heavy loads up steep hills to secure the higher ground: "Wars are fought with very heavy machinery that works best on top of the biggest hill in the area and used against men who are lower

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down. That, in a nutshell, is military tactics, and it means that an enormous amount of war-fighting simply consists of carrying heavy loads uphill.”

One of Battle Company’s key tasks is to build an outpost—named Restrepo after a fallen comrade—on a hilltop overlooking the valley. Other construction projects focus on development efforts such as paving roads and transportation routes in an effort to gain the support of the local civilians. Development projects, however, seem to lag behind schedule. The primary focus appears to be gaining territorial dominance. In the documentary, *Restrepo*, created by Junger and British cameraman Tim Hetherington, the company commander believes the Restrepo Outpost is a “middle finger” to the insurgents because it means that U.S. troops have the territorial advantage. It represents one of the unit’s most successful achievements.

During this period, Battle Company is also the “tip of the spear” in Afghanistan. Nearly 70 percent of the bombs dropped in Afghanistan were in and around the Korengal Valley, and these 150 Soldiers encountered nearly one-fifth of all combat operations in Afghanistan. At times there was a routinized battle structure that developed in which U.S. troops conducted daily patrols until they confronted the enemy and a firefight ensued. Once troops were in contact, they called in their massive firepower and the insurgents knew that they had about 30 minutes until the Apaches and the A-10s arrived. Even with the airpower advantage, each Soldier in the platoon carries anywhere between 80 and 120 pounds of guns and ammunition—an oxymoronic light infantry.

Moreover, the men of Battle Company face a grueling and austere environment of “axle-breaking, helicopter crashing, spirit-killing, mind-bending terrain that few military plans survive intact even for an hour.” Often they only eat one hot meal a day, tarantulas frequently invade their living space, they can go for days or weeks without showering, and they are cut off entirely from their friends, family . . . and women.

What kind of young men are drawn to this environment, and in many cases, volunteer to be sent to the front lines?

Ironically, many of the men within this unit are accidental Soldiers. What draws many of these 20-somethings to the war front is rarely the political

disagreements between the U.S. government and the Taliban insurgents. For a few, military service represents a family tradition. For some, the terrorist attacks on 9/11 motivated their decision to join the military. However, for a majority of the men, boredom, staying out of jail, or simply getting their lives straightened out are common reasons for joining the military. Reading the conversations of the Soldiers feels, in many ways, like eavesdropping on a group of fraternity boys: touting their hunting adventures at home; practicing pick-up lines on each other; and even speculating about the possibility of masturbating during a firefight. For most, the war does not represent an extension of politics; rather, fighting in Afghanistan offers them an unforeseen opportunity to feel utilized and to remake themselves among the shale and holly trees in the Korengal Valley.

For many of these men, combat is a game they fall in love with. For starters, combat can be exciting. Enveloped in a cacophony of activities—from the spitfire of artillery, to covering fellow Soldiers, to dodging bullets that travel faster than the speed of sound—combat can pump so much adrenaline that fear dissipates into the background. The relatively calm and composed nature of the Soldiers under such unimaginable conditions—at least for most civilians—is a testament to their steely professionalism. In fact, it seems that the Soldiers are more apprehensive when they are not fighting because during these times they have less control over events.

More than excitement, combat can attract young men because everything takes on a significant importance. Even mundane activities such as drinking water and staying hydrated become important. If a Soldier is dehydrated, he could endanger the whole group by falling behind on a patrol or tipping off the enemy because his urine gives off a concentrated stench. Soldiers cannot only think of themselves but must elevate the group’s needs above their own. The protection and

***For many of these men, combat is a game they fall in love with.***

survival of the platoon becomes the greater cause: “The defense of the tribe is an insanely compelling idea, and once you’ve been exposed to it, there’s almost nothing else that you’d rather do . . . collective defense can be so compelling—so addictive—that eventually it becomes the rationale for why the group exists in the first place.”

This pledge to each other provides the men with a clear and certain purpose—something that many do not have outside the combat zone. It also creates unbreakable ties among men that provide them unwavering reassurance, protection, and moral support.

Simultaneously, there is deep isolation that accompanies combat, and many of the Soldiers tend to compartmentalize and suppress discussion regarding disturbing, personal emotions. Fear is obviously an emotion that each one experiences; however, there seems to be an unspoken rule not to discuss it. The official military support system also appears to be in line with this approach. When one of the men goes to the counselor to unload, he is advised to start smoking cigarettes to help relieve his stress:

Anderson sat on an ammo crate and gave me one of those awkward grins that sometimes precede a confession. “I’ve only been here four months and I can’t believe how messed up I already am,” he said, “I went to the counselor and he asked if I smoked cigarettes and I told him no and he said, ‘Well, you may want to think about starting.’” He lit a cigarette and inhaled. “I hate these fuckin’ things, he said.

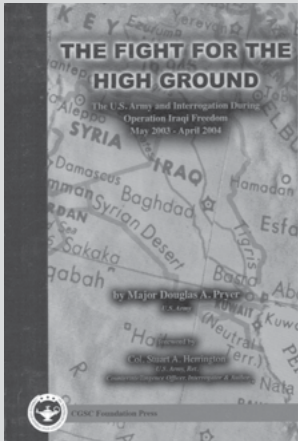
The constant suppression of haunting memories takes its toll. Some men become numb, some are unable to reintegrate into a non-combat environment, and many take a host of psychiatric meds. The sweeping of combat’s psychological impacts under the proverbial rug provides a disturbing realization how, as a society, we are short changing our Soldier’s

***Although the intent of the book is not to discuss the overarching Afghanistan strategy, it nonetheless provides keen insights into the larger conflict.***

long-term mental well-being for their short-term “warrior ethos.”

Overall, *War* provides an unadulterated and revealing glimpse of the rhythms of day-to-day combat at the tactical level. An award-winning author who wrote *The Perfect Storm*, Junger has a flair for vivid literary illustrations. His raw descriptions of combat can make you feel as if you are reading the script for the next Hollywood blockbuster, but in these scenes, the blood and iron are not stage props.

However, upon finishing the book, I felt distressed. Although the intent of the book is not to discuss the overarching Afghanistan strategy, it nonetheless provides keen insights into the larger conflict. In April 2010, the U.S. military left the Korengal Valley not because we had declared “victory” but because we realized that the area was not a terrorist hotbed. Rather, the secondary and tertiary effects of our presence sparked much of the fighting. The area surrounding many U.S. outposts had traditionally been a main conduit for the lumber industry. By some accounts, when American Soldiers first came into the Valley in 2002, they aligned themselves with a northern Safi tribe, which ignited armed resistance from local lumber cutters who believed that the northern Safis were looking to take over their traditional operational area. Reflecting on these larger dynamics and sub-dynamics, I wonder if often we are sending our accidental Soldiers to fight accidental terrorists. **MR**



## *Douglas Pryer's The Fight for the High Ground*

Colonel Peter R. Mansoor, Ph.D., U.S. Army, Retired

MOST AMERICANS VIEW U.S. Army interrogations in Iraq in 2003–2004 through the lens of Abu Ghraib. As Douglas Pryer points out in *The Fight for the High Ground: The U.S. Army and Interrogation During Operation Iraqi Freedom, May 2003–April 2004* (CGSC Foundation Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2009), this view is distorted and potentially dangerous. In this well written and thoroughly researched book, Pryer examines the shortcomings of U.S. Army interrogation doctrine, the deficiencies of its counterintelligence force structure, and the inadequate training that led to the promulgation of harsh interrogation policies and the abuse of detainees in Iraq during the first, crucial year of the conflict. Pryer, an active duty counterintelligence officer who served in Iraq during the conflict's first year, is well qualified to analyze these matters. The mistakes made in Iraq during this period, epitomized by the criminal actions of U.S. Soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison, have had long-term consequences for the international image of the United States and its military forces. Pryer reminds us that Americans should and must aspire to higher ideals. His excellent study is an essential step along a journey of understanding to repair the damage to the U.S. Army and its core values and to ensure that such policies and practices that led to prisoner abuse in Iraq do not occur again.

Intelligence is the coin of the realm in counterinsurgency warfare, and the best intelligence is normally gained from human sources. Yet despite the fact that a well-trained interrogator can elicit information willingly from most prisoners, far too many U.S. military personnel in Iraq thought that harsh treatment would somehow lead to better results. This attitude reflected outright ignorance of the basics of interrogation doctrine—a specialized area routinely ignored in pre-command courses and at the Army's combat training centers. Ironically, the one school that many Army leaders attended in this regard was the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) School—a course intended to teach military personnel how to resist interrogation by an enemy that did not follow the Geneva Conventions regarding the ethical treatment of prisoners.

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America's political leaders were even less well informed in these matters. They increasingly advocated for brutality in the name of saving American lives, aided by the dubious opinions of a coterie of legal advisers who had spent the majority of their careers inside the Beltway. The administration redefined torture to enable interrogators to inflict temporary physical and psychological pain, and then adopted interrogation techniques used at SERE schools. These techniques were first used at Guantanamo Bay, soon migrated to Afghanistan, and from there transferred to Iraq.

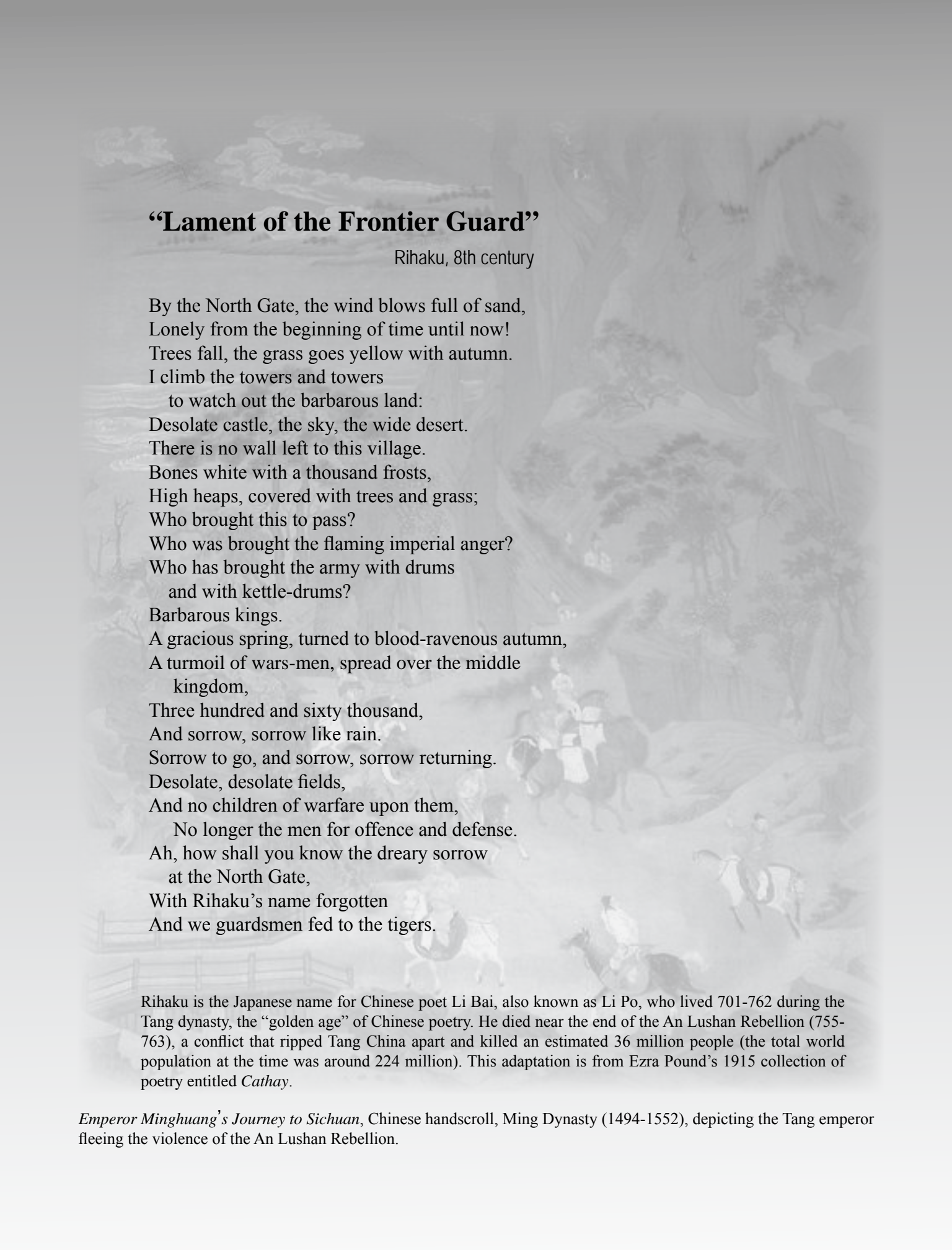
Pryer details the moral descent of the U.S. Army in Iraq in 2003 as frustration and casualties mounted. In August 2003 Combined Joint Task Force 7, the highest military headquarters in Iraq, encouraged subordinate units to "take the gloves off" and treat detainees harshly in an attempt to pry additional and more useful information from them. The astonishing fact is that some interrogators approved of this order to engage in harsh interrogation practices despite reams of historical evidence that harsh treatment rarely results in good intelligence. Regardless of the tactical information gained, the strategic cost of these policies was certainly not worth the price of obtaining it. Regrettably, some leaders did not see the irony in their attempts to turn U.S. human intelligence personnel into the 21st-century version of the Gestapo.

Pryer details instances of detainee abuse by some capturing units as well as the broader context of ethical conduct by the vast majority of combat units in Iraq. Inconsistent Army doctrine, vague and changing guidance, and lack of effective training contributed to massive variations in interrogation standards, and in some cases to abuse of detainees. Some interpretations of approaches such as "Fear-up (Harsh)" led to mental and physical abuse and even death. To complement this sad tale of woe,

there is no evidence that these abusive interrogation procedures actually worked. No intelligence of value came out of the criminal abuses at Abu Ghraib. Abusive approaches led to strategic consequences, most often with nothing to show for the effort other than damaging photographs and a few broken corpses.

Ethical decision making, in Pryer's view, is one of the foundations of a unit's strategic effectiveness in counterinsurgency operations. One can sum up the key difference between those units that maintained the moral high ground and those that faltered in a single word—leadership. Few units were immune to detainee abuse, but the best commanders dealt with such abuses as did occur firmly and rapidly.

Pryer offers sensible recommendations to improve U.S. Army detention and interrogation doctrine and procedures. He argues that the Army must increase the number of HUMINT analysts and interrogators with the requisite language and cultural skills to make a difference. The Army must also address the ethical education of its officers and noncommissioned officers. He also offers a stark warning regarding what will happen if the Army fails to do so. "If uncorrected," Pryer writes, "high operational tempo coupled with poor ethical training will once again fertilize the darkest embryo of the human soul, and one of history's greatest armies will give birth to yet another Abu Ghraib or My Lai. When this occurs, we Army leaders will have only ourselves to blame." Pryer's warning should be a wake-up call to the Army leadership. I highly recommend that every officer read this book for the lessons and warnings it offers. At the very minimum, *The Fight for the High Ground* should be part of professional military education curriculum. The alternative to better education—to bump merrily along hoping that Army values instruction will prevent future abuse—is unacceptable. **MR**



## “Lament of the Frontier Guard”

Rihaku, 8th century

By the North Gate, the wind blows full of sand,  
Lonely from the beginning of time until now!  
Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.  
I climb the towers and towers  
    to watch out the barbarous land:  
Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert.  
There is no wall left to this village.  
Bones white with a thousand frosts,  
High heaps, covered with trees and grass;  
Who brought this to pass?  
Who was brought the flaming imperial anger?  
Who has brought the army with drums  
    and with kettle-drums?  
Barbarous kings.  
A gracious spring, turned to blood-ravenous autumn,  
A turmoil of wars-men, spread over the middle  
    kingdom,  
Three hundred and sixty thousand,  
And sorrow, sorrow like rain.  
Sorrow to go, and sorrow, sorrow returning.  
Desolate, desolate fields,  
And no children of warfare upon them,  
    No longer the men for offence and defense.  
Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow  
    at the North Gate,  
With Rihaku’s name forgotten  
And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

Rihaku is the Japanese name for Chinese poet Li Bai, also known as Li Po, who lived 701-762 during the Tang dynasty, the “golden age” of Chinese poetry. He died near the end of the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763), a conflict that ripped Tang China apart and killed an estimated 36 million people (the total world population at the time was around 224 million). This adaptation is from Ezra Pound’s 1915 collection of poetry entitled *Cathay*.

*Emperor Minghuang’s Journey to Sichuan*, Chinese handscroll, Ming Dynasty (1494-1552), depicting the Tang emperor fleeing the violence of the An Lushan Rebellion.



**General Winfield Scott and his gray-clad regulars at the Battle of Chippewa, 5 July 1814. The Battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane (on 25 July 1814) during the War of 1812 were the proving grounds of a professionalized U.S. soldiery. Scott trained his troops for 10 hours a day to prepare them to stand in battle against the best British infantry, which included veteran officers with much experience in the peninsular campaign against Napoleon. These battles showed that the American Army had become a professional fighting force.**