

THE ARMY PROFESSION

By Randall K. Faulkner

For decades Army leaders have been looking at the state of the Army and the profession of Arms. A post-Vietnam report showed an Army, “close to losing its pride, heart, and soul.” Even so, the Soldiers that emerged from Vietnam won the Cold War. We emerged victorious in Operation Desert Storm and defeated Saddam Hussein’s Army in Iraq. We actively participated and prosecuted operations that separated three warring factions in the Balkans allowing for stabilization processes. We are currently demonstrating continued high performance through constant conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan for over 10 years.

Throughout the decade of combat operations where our Soldiers have had to adapt to unpredictable challenges and influences, leaders of all ranks have adapted exceptionally well. We have remained a professional and disciplined force. Even as we acknowledge some degradation of our professional ideas and the need to once again reflect and take action to correct these shortcomings, we would do a disservice by not also acknowledging the dedication to duty our Soldiers and leaders have shown during many deployments.

GEN Robert W. Cone, commanding general, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command stated in 2012, “The Army Profession Campaign is as much about dialog and reflection as it is about research and analysis. But most importantly, this campaign is about the actions we will take to improve our profession. The campaign is designed to inspire and engage our Soldiers and Civilians; to renew our collective commitment to the Army, its ideals, traditions and ethos, as well as to the American people.”

The Army Profession has two complementary components--the Profession of Arms, comprised of the informed members of the Profession, those skilled in the art of warfare and the Army civilian Corps, comprised of those non-uniformed members working for the Department of the Army. “Army professionals

are responsible for the developing and maintaining the highest standards of moral character and competence while pursuing a personal calling to serve the nation.”

As national strategies change, the force will likely lose tens of thousands of Soldiers, and this at a time when political leaders are in serious discussion to reduce or otherwise limit

benefits and pensions. Soldiers and Army civilians are concerned about the “pact” that we made with the nation when we volunteered. In order for trust to remain high, Soldiers and Army civilians must be shown proof that the Army leadership is fighting for them and keeping them informed of events that could affect them.

The Army creates its own expert knowledge for the defense of the nation through land combat. Military expertise is unique and is not generally held outside the Army Profession. “The Army’s expertise is the ethical and effective design, generation, support and application of expert land combat power by certified individuals and units in the support and defense of the America people.” As former General of the Army Omar N. Bradley stated, “The American Soldier expects his sergeant to be able to teach him how to do his job. And he expects even more from his officers.”

Winning in combat is the only acceptable out-

come. Whether or not we win is not just a function of being better equipped than our



The Army Profession includes both Soldiers and the civilians in the Department of Defense who are “responsible for developing and maintaining the highest standards of moral character and competence while pursuing a personal calling to serve the nation.”

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enemy. It is not just a function of having good leaders. It is not just a function of having Soldiers who are experts at what they do. Well before the first round is fired, it is imperative that leaders and Soldiers have created within their organization and in themselves a dominant, winning spirit. The requirement to instill esprit de corps rests upon every leader and every Soldier at every level. Esprit de Corps is what binds individuals into cohesive, fighting units. The 'never quit' attitude is what makes our combat systems effective against any enemy.

*Your word is your bond. Honor, Truth,
Honesty and Character are your watchwords
that should never be forgotten*

The Army Profession does not exist for itself. The Army profession exists for the honorable purpose of preserving and protecting the American people and our way of life. Our honorable service is always performed within the realm of the Army values. Being a member of the Army profession is more than a job. It is a moral obligation. Members are required to commit themselves as subordinate to civilian authority and to put their own interest behind those of the nation and the mission.

All true professions must self-regulate and self-generate their own expertise and ethics and continually reinforce and enforce. The only way for the Army to remain a profession is to ensure that both military and civilians leaders at all levels serve as stewards of the profession. All members of the profession are responsible for policing the institution to maintain the Army ethic.

The Army has been through three reductions-in-force since the inception of the all volunteer force. The first one was from roughly 1972-78 and actually formed the basis for the all volunteer forces. The second RIF occurred in the late 1990's after the end of the Cold War and resulted in an approximate 1/3 reduction in the force structure. As we come to the end of a decade at war we are poised for the third

reduction. It is critical to assess whether we are able to maintain and develop leaders that are effective stewards of the profession.

History has shown that in many cases those leaders who would be the best stewards leave the force, either voluntarily or involuntarily, during these downsizings. Unfortunately, we will not know if we have maintained our effectiveness until the first battle of the next war.

As General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur said in his 1962 speech on duty, honor, country: "Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that very obsession of your public service must be duty, honor, country...."

Let other than military voices argue the merits or demerits of our process of government. The free exercise of speech is available for others to ponder endless questions such as: whether our strength is being sapped by deficit financing indulged too long, by Federal paternalism grown too mighty, by power groups grown too arrogant, by career politicians tending toward corruption, by criminals acting with impunity, by shrinking moral plateaus, by escalating taxes chipping away at personal wealth or by extremists plying violent terrorist agendas.

Let those who never put on the uniform pontificate whether our personal liberties are as thorough and complete as they should be.

These ubiquitous national debates are not for your professional participation or military solution.

Our professional guidepost stands out like a ten-fold beacon in the night--"Duty, Honor, Country."

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