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The Army Officers' Professional Ethic—Past, Present, and Future

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THE ARMY OFFICERS' PROFESSIONAL ETHIC – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Matthew Moten

February 2010

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This monograph is the second in a series that analyzes the U.S. Army's professional military ethic. The previous volume is:

- 1: *The Army's Professional Military Ethic in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, by Dr. Don M. Snider, Major Paul Oh, and Major Kevin Toner, October 2009.

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FOREWORD

This monograph is the second in a series on the Army's professional military ethic that General George W. Casey, Jr., Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, inaugurated in October 2009. In his series foreword, General Casey encouraged us, as a profession, to "think critically about our PME and promote dialogue at all levels as we deepen our understanding of what this time-honored source of strength means to the profession today."¹

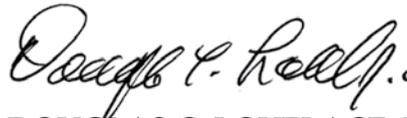
Colonel Matthew Moten, deputy head of the Department of History at West Point, has taken up that challenge. He begins with a survey of the Army's professional ethic that goes back to the colonial era, even before the founding of the U.S. Army. He shows us how ethical thought has evolved in the Army over more than 2 centuries. Then he focuses on the state of the ethic in the Army today, reaching some sobering and provocative conclusions. Turning to the future of the Army, Colonel Moten argues that the Army officer corps needs a concise statement of its ethical values to codify the diffuse understanding that currently exists. As General Casey himself observed: "If you walked around the Army and asked people what the professional military ethic is, you would get a lot of different answers."²

Then, Colonel Moten offers for our consideration a one-page statement of the Army Officers' Professional Military Ethic, organized around the recognized roles that officers play—Soldier, servant of the nation, leader of character, and member of a time-honored profession. Finally, he issues his own challenge to the profession: to take up the debate about whether such a statement is necessary, and if so, what that statement should be.

We urge our readers to take up his challenge and to enter that debate. Let it begin.



SEAN T. HANNAH
Director
Army Center for the Professional
Military Ethic



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute

ENDNOTES - FOREWORD

1. Don Snider, Paul Oh, and Kevin Toner, *The Army's Professional Military Ethic in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, October 2009, p. iii.

2. General George W. Casey made this comment at a briefing on the Army Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic, West Point, New York, October 31, 2007. The author was present. Another definitional problem is that of delineating the terms "ethic" and "ethics." I will use the term "ethic" to mean a body of principles of right or good conduct. I will use the term "ethics" to describe the study of moral behavior. Other dictionary definitions of the two terms can make them almost interchangeable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MATTHEW MOTEN, a colonel in the U.S. Army, is currently a professor and Deputy Head of the Department of History at the U.S. Military Academy. After graduating from West Point, he was commissioned in the Armor Branch and served in the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment in Germany and in the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. He then taught military history at West Point. After assignments in Kuwait, Fort Jackson, and the Pentagon, Colonel Moten became speechwriter and later legislative advisor to General Eric K. Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. In 2002, Colonel Moten was selected as an Academy Professor in the USMA Department of History and assigned as Chief, Military History Division. From January to June of 2005, he served as deputy commanding officer, Dragon Brigade, XVIII Airborne Corps and Task Force Dragon, Multi-National Corps, Iraq. He became Professor, USMA, and deputy department head in 2006. Colonel Moten specializes in the history of American political-military relations and recently published a chapter entitled "A Broken Dialogue: Rumsfeld, Shinseki, and Civil-Military Tension," in *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). He is author of *The Delafield Commission and the American Military Profession* (Texas A&M Press, 2000) and is currently writing a history of American political-military relations. Colonel Moten attended graduate school at Rice University and holds a doctorate in history from Rice University.

SUMMARY

General George W. Casey, Jr., Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, once observed: "If you walked around the Army and asked people what the professional military ethic is, you would get a lot of different answers."¹ That is because Army's professional military ethic is not codified, although its spirit is resident in a number of documents. Other American professions have clearly promulgated statements of ethics. Within the Army, there are several extant statements of ethical responsibility – for Soldiers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and civilians – but not for officers.

This monograph briefly surveys the history of the Army's professional ethic, focusing primarily on the Army officer corps. It assesses today's strategic, professional, and ethical environment. Then it argues that a clear statement of the Army officers' professional ethic is especially necessary in a time when the Army is stretched and stressed as an institution. The Army officer corps has both a need and an opportunity to better define itself as a profession, forthrightly to articulate its professional ethic, and clearly to codify what it means to be a military professional. Finally, this monograph articulates such an ethic.

For more than 2 centuries, the U.S. Army has developed a mature professionalism, but one that waxed and waned over time. The historical record shows that wartime crises tended to produce, or perhaps to expose, the profession's shortcomings, which peacetime reformers then sought to correct. The Army's professional ethic embraced national service, obedience to civilian authority, mastery of a complex body of doctrinal and technical expertise, positive leadership, and ethical behavior. But at the beginning

of the 21st century, it was less healthy in terms of its junior professionals' acceptance of a lifelong call to service. Time would show that it was doctrinally unprepared for the trials that lay ahead.

Eight years of repetitive deployments have left the Army, in the words of General Casey, "stressed and stretched."² Some observers think the Army is near the breaking point. Several factors contribute to that stress. One concern is the type of warfare that the Army is being asked to conduct, counterinsurgency, which is one of the most ethically complex forms of war. Further, during these years of war, some policy decisions have tended to blur moral, ethical, and legal lines that Soldiers have long been trained to observe and uphold. Officers, above all, must fight to maintain and safeguard the laws of war as a professional responsibility. Third, since the post-Cold War drawdown, the armed forces have chosen to rely more and more heavily on commercial contractors, sometimes for inherently governmental functions. Today, the Army is "selling" large tracts of its professional jurisdiction. Finally, professionally improper dissent on the part of retired generals and the widespread perception that they speak for their former colleagues still on active duty threaten the public trust in the military's apolitical and nonpartisan ethic of service as well as the principle of civilian control.

This brief history shows that the Army tends to reform at the end of wars that have highlighted its shortcomings of one kind or another. Now, we are faced with a different situation. Our Army is stressed and stretched, and ethical strains have begun to show. However, we are not at the end of a conflict, but in the midst of what will likely be a long war with no clearly demarcated end. The stresses on the force and their likely continuation in a long period of conflict present

both an opportunity and a requirement to define the Army's ethical standards clearly and forthrightly. The Army must reform itself even as it fights.

The essence of the professional ethic needs no radical change. Yet the ethic has never been clearly and succinctly codified. There is some concern that a written code would push the profession toward a legalistic sense of itself. If the code were a list of punishable infractions written in legalese, then that concern would be valid. If the Army is to have a written code, it must focus on the moral and ethical, not the legal, requirements of the profession. It should be inspirational, an exhortation to better behavior, rather than a list of offenses. The Army should set for itself a goal of issuing a succinct statement of professional ethics focusing on the roles of commissioned officers—Soldier, servant of the nation, leader of character, and member of a time-honored profession. This monograph promulgates such a statement in a one-page document, written to be read aloud and to inspire officers toward ethical and honorable service.

Before the Army accepts such a statement of its professional ethic, much debate is in order. Should we use hard phrases such as “total accountability” and “unlimited liability?” What are officers' core responsibilities as leaders, and how far do they extend? How concisely should we explicate our adherence to the principle of civilian control? Should we espouse nonpartisanship as part of our ethic? The debate required to answer such questions will provide impetus for an Army-wide discussion about the profession, its ethical values, and the role that it should play as a servant of American society in the future.

ENDNOTES - SUMMARY

1. General George W. Casey made this comment at a briefing on the Army Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic, West Point, New York, October 31, 2007. The author was present. Another definitional problem is that of delineating the terms "ethic" and "ethics." I will use the term "ethic" to mean a body of principles of right or good conduct. I will use the term "ethics" to describe the study of moral behavior. Other dictionary definitions of the two terms can make them almost interchangeable.

2. General George Casey, Jr., "Statement on the Army's Strategic Imperatives," before the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, 1st Sess., 110th Cong., September 26, 2007.

THE ARMY OFFICERS' PROFESSIONAL ETHIC – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

In 2007 the Army established at West Point a Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic. Its purpose was to promote scholarship and education on moral and ethical issues as they apply to the military profession and to assist trainers, educators, and commanders across the Army. At a briefing to outline the mission and vision of the center, General George W. Casey, Jr., Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, noted that the first issue may be one of definition: “If you walked around the Army and asked people what the Professional Military Ethic is, you would get a lot of different answers.”¹

The Army’s professional military ethic is not codified, although its spirit is resident in a number of documents. During World War II, General George C. Marshall commissioned S. L. A. Marshall to write *The Armed Forces Officer*, an inspirational work meant to assist officers with their self-development that has gone through several editions over the decades.² General Sir John Hackett briefly and eloquently chronicled the history of the military profession in *The Profession of Arms*, released as a U.S. Army pamphlet in 1986.³ More recently, Richard Swain has penned an article that details the various sources of the professional military ethic from the Constitution to authorizing legislation to *Field Manual (FM) 1, The Army*.⁴ Yet the perceived need that compelled Swain to write such an article points to the absence of a common understanding of the Army’s professional military ethic.

Other American professions have clearly promulgated statements of ethics. The American Medical Association’s *Code of Medical Ethics* is an

updated version of a code that was first published in 1847.⁵ That document, in turn, descends from the Hippocratic Oath. Likewise, the American Bar Association recently published a centennial edition of its *Model Rules for Professional Conduct*, dozens of rules that are regularly amended by the ABA's House of Delegates to codify standards of professional legal behavior.⁶

Even within the Army there are extant statements of ethical responsibility. The NCO Creed has guided noncommissioned officers (NCOs) for many years, and, more recently, the Army has adopted the Soldier's Creed. Indeed, we now have an Army Civilian Corps Creed. All of these creeds are clear and precise statements of who their adherents are, what they believe, and what responsibilities they have accepted.

This monograph will briefly survey the history of the Army's professional ethic, focusing primarily on the Army officer corps. Then it will assess today's strategic, professional, and ethical environment. It will argue that a clear statement of the Army officers' professional ethic is especially necessary in a time when the Army is stretched and stressed as an institution. The Army officer corps has both a need and an opportunity to better define itself as a profession, forthrightly to articulate its professional ethic, and clearly to codify what it means to be a military professional. Finally, it will articulate such an ethic.

A Brief History of the Army's Professional Ethic.⁷

The Army's sense of itself, its culture, and its ethic have grown and developed over 400 years of American history. In the colonial era, most Americans equated military service with citizenship. White males

who expected to have a voice in community affairs also understood that they were liable to defend their communities through militia service. Community leaders gained commissions either by appointment or election and led their fellow citizens whenever local crises arose. The militia's purpose was local defense, and the duration of service was usually brief. Along with this citizen-soldier tradition, Americans, like their English cousins, maintained a fear of standing armies as oppressors of their liberties. Thus, early American military service was both universal and anti-professional.⁸

The American Revolution bequeathed other traditions. The first, mainly a legacy of General George Washington's sterling example, was strict adherence to a principle of civilian control of the military. Second, despite long-standing fears, the new nation found it necessary in the emergency to raise a regular army — local militias were not sufficient to the task, although they proved to be a welcome complement to the Continentals. Third, General Washington attempted to commission men of gentle birth, maintaining the European belief that only gentlemen had the ability to command soldiers. He was unsuccessful in this endeavor because there were too few gentlemen in America to provide all the officers the Continental Army required. Still, professionalism was not yet a component of commissioned leadership.

After the Revolution, American leaders found the Articles of Confederation inadequate to govern the new republic, mainly in providing for the common defense. The Constitution remedied that shortcoming, clearly codifying principles for raising military forces, providing for their leadership, and establishing war powers. Just as clearly, the Constitution divided

control of the military between the Executive and the Legislative Branches, creating dual loyalties that govern, and complicate, American civil-military relations to this day. Yet the Constitution's most profound legacy was to foster a national reverence for the rule of law and not of men. The requirement that each Federal officer swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States enshrined that principle in the professional military ethic.

Over several decades, the new government raised one army after another to respond to various crises. There was little continuity of service, either for officers or enlisted men, and thus little sense of belonging to a distinct profession or of responsibility to the people. For a while, the senior general in the U.S. Army was also a secret agent of the Spanish crown!⁹ The establishment of the United States Military Academy (USMA) in 1802 was a halting step in the direction of a national army and a professional officer corps, but many years would pass before it had much effect.

Early national officers, sporadically serving and only partially identifying with military culture, nonetheless affected martial titles in and out of service and mimicked European officers' social customs. Among these was an exaggerated sense of personal honor, a term that had as much to do with appearances and reputation as with integrity. Sensitive to slights, many officers settled their differences with one another by dueling. Although prohibited by law and later by regulation, dueling continued to hamper discipline and retard professionalization until the mid-19th century.¹⁰

A second war with Great Britain showed that the United States could no longer afford to rely on state militias and hastily raised regulars for its defense. With all its defensive advantages, the country came within

a whisker of defeat in the war of 1812. After the war, reformers such as Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, General Winfield Scott, and Colonel Sylvanus Thayer laid the foundations for a standing regular army with a long-service officer corps. The days of relying on state militias and raising a new army for each emergency were waning. For the first time, Calhoun pronounced that the purpose of the Army was to prepare for war, to stand in readiness to defend the republic. It was a new departure. The Army codified regulations, wrote tactical manuals, and established schools of practice to train its units. Thayer reformed the USMA, making it both the nation's first engineering school and a reliable source of officers for the new regular force. Military journals sprang up, fostering an exchange of views on professional subjects. Officers began to think of themselves as competent professionals and as apolitical servants of the nation.¹¹

The Army also served the growing nation in ways that were not strictly military, exploring the western frontier, building roads and canals, and superintending public works. They also built a coastal fortifications system and administered western territories, protecting Indians and settlers from one another, an early peacekeeping mission. Part of this legacy, the removal of Indians from Eastern States and territories to reservations in the West, is morally distasteful to us now, but the Army served as the national government directed.

In the late-1840s, the professionalizing Regular Army, augmented with thousands of volunteers, proved its mettle in its first expeditionary war against Mexico. A generation of young West Point graduates—Robert E. Lee, Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, George B. McClellan, and George G. Meade,

to name a few—demonstrated superb tactical skills, while General Winfield Scott ably led at the strategic and operational levels. The victory came fast and was so complete that finding a Mexican government with which to negotiate terms of surrender was problematic. The resulting peace treaty greatly expanded U.S. territory. While the Regular Army possessed a high-level of professional skill, its officers began to develop a prideful disdain for volunteer soldiers. That arrogance would have no place in the next war.

The American Civil War produced two massive, citizen-soldier armies, both led at their highest echelons by the professional officers of the antebellum era. These officers were competent practitioners of the military art, highly dedicated to their duty. By trial and error, they learned to lead volunteer soldiers. Yet the fact that almost a third of the U.S. Army's officer corps resigned and defected to the rebel cause emphasized a critical flaw in the professional military ethic—loyalty to the Constitution and the national government was not pervasive. It matters not that larger proportions of other institutions—the Congress, the Supreme Court, 11 Southern States—also chose secession. The Army had been split asunder by a political crisis. Rekindling a sense of national loyalty as a central tenet of the professional ethic was of primary importance in the post-war Army.

As the Civil War progressed, it became more and more brutal, both in terms of tactical destructiveness and in the armies' treatment of noncombatants. A felt need to control the violence led President Lincoln to publish General Order No. 100, a set of rules to guide military actions. Based on religious and philosophical thought, the General Order gave the Army its first set of codified ethical guidelines.¹² Thus, the Army's

evolving professional ethic now contained elements of military competence, loyalty to the nation, defense of the Constitution, obedience to civilian authority, leadership of citizen-soldiers, and a moral component to govern the employment of armed force.

After a rapid demobilization, the U.S. Army took on the mission of administering Southern reconstruction and redeployed to the Western territories to fight the Indian wars. The Army was too small for these difficult missions that often presented tactical problems with strategic ramifications, much like the stresses of counterinsurgency today. Military thinkers argued about roles, missions, and organization. Emory Upton advocated a Prussian model army, with a great general staff and long-service conscript soldiers. John Logan promoted a return to a citizen-army, much like the old militia with citizen-officers as well.¹³ The nation was still too close to its fear of a standing army to countenance the former prescription, but had learned too much of the hardships and complexities of war to accept the latter. In the late 19th century, General William T. Sherman established a school at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for the education of officers, a renaissance of Calhoun's seminal idea that the Army's purpose is to prepare for war.

After decades of tactical employment in small units across the West, the Army performed abysmally at the strategic and operational levels when it deployed to Cuba for the Spanish-American War. Once there, the Army made short work of its enemy, only to take far more casualties from disease than it had from combat, largely because of logistical failures. On the other side of the globe, the Army invaded the Philippine archipelago, quickly overthrowing the Spanish government, but then finding itself unprepared for

a long insurgency that varied in tactics and intensity from island to island and from town to town. This was a company commander's war, for which tactical doctrine from the Indian wars and the ethical guidelines of General Orders 100 were equally inadequate. American soldiers committed war crimes because their leaders were tactically and ethically unprepared for the type of war they were fighting.¹⁴

In response to these shortcomings, Secretary of War Elihu Root began another series of reforms, creating a U.S. Army War College and a general staff, and he encouraged legislation to raise the readiness standards of the reserve components. When millions of American doughboys entered the Great War a decade later, they mobilized and deployed on the orders of a general staff composed of Leavenworth and War College graduates speaking and writing a common professional lexicon. Likewise, their commanders and staff officers in the American Expeditionary Forces in France demonstrated the fruits of the Army's officer education system. By war's end, America had entered the ranks of the world's great powers, thanks in no small measure to the professionalism of its Army.¹⁵

Another rapid demobilization left the Army with a small core of veteran professional officers. Hamstrung by small budgets and a national sense of having survived the war to end all wars, the Army nonetheless attempted to innovate and develop the technologies that had been born on European battlefields—the airplane, the tank, and the wireless. Those efforts were imperfect and the Army made mistakes, but it continued to learn and to experiment. More than at any time in the past, the Army officer corps went to school. Indeed, General Omar Bradley later opined that “the greatest difference” between the Army before

and after the Great War “was the school system.”¹⁶ Of the 34 corps commanders in World War II, 25 had spent 10 or more years in Army schools as students or instructors. Through a thoroughgoing commitment to officer education, the interwar Army developed a body of professional expertise that would be the foundation of victory in World War II.¹⁷

The senior Army leaders in that war were well-educated, broadly experienced professional officers with a strong sense of corporate culture and responsibility to the nation. They led a draftee Army of some eight million Soldiers and Airmen deployed in theaters around the globe. They were skilled in joint and combined operations, working effectively with the U.S. Navy and Allied forces, and providing strategic advice to the President and his fellow commanders in chief at a number of Allied conferences. They managed an immense mobilization of the national economy, turning American industry into the *arsenal of democracy* that equipped not only Americans, but British, French, Russian, and other Allied forces as well. And they guided the Manhattan Project, a \$2 billion effort harnessing the finest scientific minds in the world, to bring the promise of quantum physics to the dread reality of the atomic bomb.

At Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the most brutal and violent war in human history ended, and a deadly new age began. War had approached a Clausewitzian absolute. Six million Jews had been exterminated in the Holocaust. Tens of millions of soldiers and civilians had lost their lives in the fighting. Almost no one on Earth had gone untouched by the war. Atomic weapons seemed to have changed the very nature of warfare. Over the next several years, diplomats and politicians, lawyers and soldiers tried to find a way to step back

from the abyss. The United Nations (UN) was formed. The Geneva Conventions advanced the laws of war to further codify rules to limit armed violence.

A new geostrategic reality emerged. The former great powers lay prostrate from years of debilitating warfare. Only the Soviet Union and the United States retained the ability to project military power. Ideologically incompatible, the two superpowers became locked in a 45-year Cold War, which kept the possibility of mutual annihilation mere minutes away, but ironically fostered an era of relative stability.

The Army demobilized after World War II, but it has never again been a small force. Global responsibilities required an end to the traditional bias against a large peacetime army. President Harry S. Truman ordered the Armed Forces to integrate African-Americans, ending more than a century of official discrimination. A new Uniform Code of Military Justice fostered regularity in a formerly haphazard administration of military law. The NCO corps, long the backbone of company-level formations, grew in size, responsibility, and stature. Within 20 years, commanders at all levels had senior NCOs assisting them in leading a large, Regular enlisted force.

In 1950, the Army began a bloody, frustrating war in Korea for which it was again ill prepared in almost every way, from manning to equipment to training and operational planning. North Koreans overran the South and almost drove responding American forces into the sea. A daring amphibious envelopment at Inchon reversed fortunes, allowing General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to attack into North Korea in a bid to reunite the nation. Then the Chinese intervened, embarrassing the Eighth Army and driving it back to Seoul.

At this point, chafing under political restrictions fostered by fears of a third, probably nuclear, world war, MacArthur publicly challenged Truman's strategic direction, violating the Army's long tradition of obedience to civil authority. Truman relieved MacArthur and restored control, but the nation had been awakened to an unsettling possibility. In a nation possessing the most powerful weapons ever known, one rogue general could threaten global stability. Civilian control of the military had never been more important.

After the Korean War, the Army adjusted fitfully to a new era. President Dwight Eisenhower's military budget tightening and emphasis on nuclear deterrence left the Army in an ambiguous position. Land power seemed irrelevant in comparison to the nuclear capabilities wielded by the newly independent U.S. Air Force and its Strategic Air Command. What was the Army's mission? Whither its professional expertise? Another Asian war provided an unsatisfactory answer. Vietnam was not a conventional, *big-unit* war, as much as some tried to make it so. The American Army found itself fighting another insurgency halfway around the world. Strategic indirection yielded operational and tactical confusion. The American people grew restive with a war for which they could see little purpose. Racial tension, drug epidemics, and official corruption plagued the Army. Uncertain of its mission, doubtful of victory, torn by internal strife, the Army lost its professional moorings. The criminal tragedy at My Lai was a symptom of a profession that once again needed reform, this time of its values.

After the war in Vietnam, the first unqualified strategic loss in the history of American arms, the Army went into the wilderness. General Creighton Abrams, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, led it out. In his words,

“Soldiers are not in the Army. Soldiers are the Army.”¹⁸ The draftee Army was gone; the all-volunteer force was in. The Army conducted a study of its officer corps and found the profession wanting in its ethics and values.¹⁹ It slowly began to purge itself of its drug culture, expelling Soldiers who could not maintain standards of discipline. Abrams commenced a modernization effort, building five new major weapons systems. Senior officers rewrote the Army’s operational doctrine to employ those weapons, focusing on a campaign of maneuver against a numerically superior Soviet foe. A training revolution demanded a realistic battle-focus in new centers devoted to tactical planning, rehearsal, and execution against experienced and proficient opposing forces. One of the first and most important changes in the training revolution was the institution of performance-based training that required Soldiers and units to meet a set of clearly articulated standards. Startlingly candid after-action reviews forced leaders to confront their mistakes and then to try again. A new leadership manual that went a long way toward defining our professional ethic propounded the novel idea that those leaders were not born, but could be—had to be—developed. FM 22-100 focused on team building and positive actions to get the best out of the volunteer Soldiers who remained in the service.

At the end of the Cold War, two brilliant campaigns, Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama and Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM in Southwest Asia, demonstrated how far the Army had come in 15 years. With two widely different forms of operational maneuver, light and airborne infantry in the first instance and rapid mechanized warfare in the second, the Army quickly enveloped, overwhelmed, and defeated its enemies, and just as quickly withdrew.

Yet the stability provided by the bipolar Cold War rivalry had given way to a much more fragmented world. In the 1990s the Army found itself 40 percent smaller and deploying two to three times as often as it had previously done. The reduction in force (RIF) had the Army doing more with less. Senior leaders began to micro-manage and seemed far less forgiving of their subordinates' mistakes. Junior officers, especially those with attractive private sector options, left the service in high numbers, forsaking professional careers. As the United States, the world's only superpower, became more and more involved in overseas conflicts, some Soldiers complained that they were being asked to take on nontraditional missions such as peacekeeping and nation-building, forgetting the military history of nearly every decade before 1941. Declining morale and a series of scandals sent the Army back to basics, focusing on seven core values – Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Courage.

At the turn of the century, General Eric Shinseki, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, led the Army into a thorough transformation, one part focusing on near-term readiness, another on training Soldiers and developing leaders, and a third on a long-term modernization campaign to build a force for the future. Simultaneously, a small group of academics and Soldiers gathered at West Point to conduct the first in-depth study of the Army profession since 1970. It probed the corpus of Army professional expertise and attempted to map its contours. Defining four principal clusters, the Future of the Army Profession project set about developing and expanding the Army's knowledge about itself, its missions, and its competencies. Those four clusters yielded four facets of an officer's identity – the warrior, the servant of the nation, the leader of character, and the member of a time-honored profession.²⁰

Thus, by the summer of 2001 the U.S. Army had developed a mature professionalism, but one that waxed and waned over time. Wartime crises tended to produce, or perhaps to expose, the profession's shortcomings, which peacetime reformers then sought to correct. The Army's professional ethic embraced national service, loyalty to the Constitution, obedience to civilian authority, mastery of a complex body of doctrinal and technical expertise, positive leadership, and ethical behavior. It was less healthy in terms of its junior professionals' acceptance of a lifelong call to service, and time would show that it was doctrinally unprepared for the trials that lay ahead.

The Army's Professional Ethic – The Present.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) punctuated the professional renaissance begun at the turn of the century. Already stretched thin by multiple deployments, the Army soon found itself deployed in two wars on top of an increased homeland defense mission. A strategic decision to deploy too few forces into Iraq exacerbated a lack of planning for post-maneuver operations. Iraq soon descended into insurgency and civil war. Eight years later, with no clearly discernable end or victory in sight, the Army finds itself a profession that looks eerily reminiscent of its early-1970s predecessor.

Eight years of repetitive deployments have left the Army, in the words of General Casey, "stressed and stretched."²¹ The force is exceptionally combat experienced, but it is also fatigued by continuing deployments and training requirements to prepare for them. There is a collective pride in the Army's accomplishments to date, but also a sense that the

Army is at war while the nation is not, that Soldiers have done their duty, and perhaps it is someone else's turn. Open-ended commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan create a concern that this high operational tempo is unsustainable without a large buildup of forces. Attrition rates within the junior officer and mid-grade NCO corps, problems before 9/11, are rising again. The Army has been forced to decrease its standards for enlistment and increase its rates of promotion. Some observers think the Army is near the breaking point.

Another concern is the type of warfare the Army is being asked to conduct. Counterinsurgency is one of the most complex forms of war. Tangible accomplishments can seem fleeting. The enemy is hard to identify, and so the ways and means of combating him are difficult to determine, as is assessing their effectiveness. Moreover, fighting an enemy who does not abide by the laws of war is morally ambiguous, and the resulting stress is enormous. Moral and legal lapses, such as those at Abu Ghraib and Mahmudiya, are partially attributable to these difficulties, but the mere fact of their occurrence harms morale and indicates problems with indiscipline.²² Of equal concern is that commissioned officers have been involved in every incident that has gained notoriety.

Outside the profession's control, but impinging on its jurisdiction, some government policies in what was then called the Global War on Terror (GWOT) served to undermine the Army's ethical principles. A Justice Department finding on the treatment of captured enemies dismissed the laws of war as "quaint." It disdained the terms combatant and noncombatant and refused to define the captured as prisoners of war, settling on the term "detainees." Secret and ambiguous

policies on the treatment of these detainees and an unwillingness forthrightly and publicly to define torture left the Army in a doctrinal quandary. These questions are policy matters and they became political issues, but, for the military officer, they are and should be professional concerns as well because they strike at the heart of the Army's moral-ethical framework. Officers, above all, must fight to maintain and safeguard the laws of war as a professional jurisdiction.

Since the post-Cold War drawdown, the Armed Forces have chosen to rely more and more heavily on commercial contractors. In many cases, this reliance has been unavoidable and indeed liberating, such as in the manufacture of complex weapons systems. Properly overseen, this military-industrial partnership can be a boon to national security. In many other cases, however, contractors have assumed responsibilities that heretofore were considered inherently military, such as logistical support, protecting installations and high-ranking officials, and developing professional doctrine. An army that depends on commercial enterprise to deliver its food and fuel is subcontracting its sustenance—an army travels on its stomach. An army that relies on contractors for its doctrine is farming out its thinking—an army fights with its brain as much as its arms. And an army that permits civilians to employ armed force on the battlefield tolerates mercenaries, the antithesis of professionals. Today, the Army is "selling" large tracts of its professional jurisdiction. Moreover, as the Army contracts for these core functions, it not only cedes professional jurisdiction to private enterprise, it loses some of its ability to sustain and renew its expertise, to develop the next generation of professional officers, and to nurture the ability to think creatively about new problems—each of which is intrinsic to a healthy profession. An army that chooses

short-term expediency over long-term professional health also chooses slow professional death.

Finally, there have been several troublesome developments in the realm of civil-military relations. Many observers have faulted former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and others in the Bush administration for their treatment of senior officers and their general handling of the military. Among the issues raised was Secretary Rumsfeld's choice to interview candidates for numerous flag officer positions, a practice that many saw as tending to politicize the officer corps. While those are matters of concern, as policy choices by civilian leaders they lie outside the scope of the professional military ethic. On the other hand, the behavior of several retired general officers and colonels does not. In 2006, six recently retired Army and Marine generals called for the resignation of Secretary Rumsfeld because of his handling of the wars and treatment of the military. This dissent and the widespread perception that the retired generals "spoke for" their former colleagues still on active duty threatened the public trust in the military's apolitical and nonpartisan ethic of service as well as the principle of civilian control. Equally troubling was a 2008 report that numerous retired officer-commentators on television news programs had parroted without attribution "talking points" provided by the Department of Defense (DoD). Some of these former officers, most of them former generals, also had fiduciary ties to defense industries with contracts in support of the war effort. Those ties had also gone undisclosed. In November 2009, DoD and the U.S. Senate launched probes into the Pentagon's employment of 158 retired flag officers as advisers and senior mentors, many of whom were also employed

by corporations in the defense industry, raising questions of conflicts of interest.²³ The palpable sense that those retired officers had sold their professionalism to the highest bidder cast an ethical shadow over all the military services.

The Case for a Professional Military Ethic.

Predicting the future, especially about an enterprise as complex as war, is problematic. However, several trends are evident. Recent history shows that the Army has been deploying more and more frequently since the end of the relatively stable era of the Cold War. Then, the events of 9/11 brought into sharp focus a deadly new type of nonstate actor bent on our destruction. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan came about in response to that global threat, and they remain of uncertain duration. Many observers expect a protracted conflict against insurgents, extremists, and terrorists. Furthermore, there are many other potential trouble spots around the world, including Pakistan, Iran, China, and North Korea. Health and environmental catastrophes could present crises in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The scarcity of resources, especially water, may provoke conflict in many less-developed regions of the world. The places and forms of future conflict remain unpredictable, but its likelihood is not. As long as the United States maintains global responsibilities and interests, the American people will expect the U.S. Army to remain ready to project military power around the world.

As the brief history at the beginning of this monograph shows, the Army tends to reform at the end of wars that have accentuated its shortcomings of one kind or another. Now, we are faced with a different

situation. Our Army is stressed and stretched, and ethical strains have begun to show. However, we are not at the end of a conflict, but in the midst of what will likely be a long war with no clearly demarcated end. The stresses on the force and their likely continuation in a long period of conflict present both an opportunity and a requirement to define the Army's ethical standards clearly and forthrightly. The Army must reform itself even as it fights.

The essence of the professional ethic needs no radical change. The ethics of a professional officer serving this constitutional democracy have evolved toward an understanding of the military's place in and duty to society, a high level of professional expertise, a sense of military service as a full-time occupation and a long-term calling, a subordination to duly elected and appointed civil authority, an ethos of positive and responsible leadership of subordinates, and a moral-ethical compass fixed on the laws of war and the Constitution. While adherence to those values has waxed and waned through history, the common understanding of them as guiding principles has steadily evolved.

Today, there is little debate that military officers must abide by a professional ethic. Yet, as this review of Army history and its current situation have shown, adherence to ethical standards is inconsistent. In part, the reason for lapses and inconsistencies is that the ethic has never been clearly and succinctly codified. Several authors have written about the professional military ethic, including S. L. A. Marshall, Sir John Hackett, Samuel P. Huntington, Allan R. Millett, William B. Skelton, and Richard Swain.²⁴ The general impression that one can derive from these works is that the Army's professional ethic is akin to the British constitution—

it exists in a variety of forms, but it is hard to get one's arms around it. One scholar, Brigadier General (Ret.) Anthony Hartle, has attempted to explicate and ramify the professional military ethic. His *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making* (2d Ed., revised 2004) is a compact treatise that drew little official notice at the time of its first publication in 1989, yet it is a thoughtful treatment of military professionalism, the provenance of the professional ethic, and the implications of adhering to an ethical standard. From his survey, Hartle develops a "traditional ethic" for the military professions in seven principles. Military professionals:

1. Accept service to country as their watchword and defense of the Constitution of the United States of America as their calling. They subordinate their personal interests to the requirements of their professional functions and the accomplishment of assigned missions.

2. Conduct themselves at all times as members of an honorable profession whose integrity, loyalty, and moral and physical courage are exemplary. Such qualities are essential on and off the battlefield if a military organization is to function effectively.

3. Develop and maintain the highest possible level of professional knowledge and skill. To do less is to fail to meet their obligations to the men and women with whom they serve, to the profession, and to the country.

4. Take full responsibility for their actions and orders.

5. Promote and safeguard, within the context of mission accomplishment, the welfare of their subordinates as persons, not merely as soldiers, sailors, or airmen.

6. Conform strictly to the principle that subordinates the military to civilian authority. They do not involve

themselves or their subordinates in domestic politics beyond the exercise of basic civil rights.

7. Adhere to the laws of war, the laws of the United States, and the regulations of their service in performing their professional functions.²⁵

Hartle acknowledges that his work provokes the question of whether it is wise to codify the professional military ethic. He does not address the question fully, but suggests that each service may require several ethical statements at various levels of responsibility, and “that a variety of codes would deemphasize the importance of each.”²⁶

Does the Army officer corps need such a statement of ethics? My own view is that it does. Hartle’s seven principles provide a good jumping-off point for a discussion about a written code. The Army’s history demonstrates an evolving articulation of the professional ethic, and each year brings more and more research about the values and virtues of professional military service. The Future of the Army Profession project has expanded the Army’s understanding of itself as a profession, its professional expertise, and the identities of a professional officer.

There is some concern that a written code would push the profession toward a legalistic sense of itself. If the code were a list of punishable infractions written in legalese, then that concern would be valid. If the Army is to have a written code, it must focus on the moral and ethical, not the legal requirements of the profession. It should be inspirational, an exhortation to better behavior, rather than a list of offenses. I believe that the Army should set for itself a goal of issuing a succinct statement of professional ethics focusing on the roles of commissioned officers. Toward that end, I propose the following statement:

The Army Officer's Professional Ethic

I am a Soldier, a leader of character, a servant of the nation, and a member of the profession of arms.

Nominated by the President of the United States and confirmed by the United States Senate, I am an officer in the United States Army. I hold a commission through which the President has reposed special trust and confidence in my patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities. My oath of loyalty and service is to the Constitution of the United States.

As a Soldier, Army Values and the Soldier's Creed are my touchstones. I . . .
place my duty first;
subordinate personal interests to my professional requirements;
and I develop and maintain the highest level of professional expertise in order to accomplish the broad range of missions that I may be ordered to perform.

As a leader of character, living an honorable life is my dedication. My word is my bond. I . . .
set a worthy example in everything I do;
obey all lawful orders and give orders in my own name;
take full responsibility for the manner in which my orders are carried out;
accept total accountability for my decisions and unlimited liability for the accomplishment of my assigned missions;
place my Soldiers before myself;
promote and safeguard, within the context of mission accomplishment, their welfare as persons and as Soldiers;
share their dangers and their hardships;
develop my Soldiers to accomplish their missions and to grow through positions of increasing responsibility;
I am a leader—a teacher, a trainer, and a coach.

As a servant of the nation, service is my watchword and defense of the Constitution is my calling. I . . .
adhere to and enforce the laws of war, the laws of the United States, and Army regulations in performing my professional duty;
conform strictly to the constitutional principle of military subordination to civilian authority;
render candid professional advice when appropriate, and I faithfully execute the policies of the United States Government to the best of my ability;
and I am non-partisan—I do not involve myself or my subordinates in domestic politics.

As a member of the profession of arms, I . . .
am a life-long learner, seeking continually to enhance my professional education;
employ my education, training, and experience in the daily conduct of my professional duties—the continual exercise of discretionary judgment;
respect the laws, institutions, and people of the United States without reservation or qualification.
respect our allies, all combatants and non-combatants according to the laws of war;
know that the accomplishment of my mission will happen only in combination and cooperation with professionals in other branches, services, and agencies;
respect the capabilities and professionalism of fellow members of the Armed Forces and officers of the Government, regardless of rank, position, or branch of service;
and I conduct myself at all times as a member of the profession of arms, whose traditions of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and moral and physical courage are exemplary.

I am a commissioned officer in the United States Army—a Soldier, a leader of character, a servant of the nation, and a member of the profession arms.

This statement blends Hartle's seven principles with the four identities of officership developed in the Future of the Army Profession project, with one exception. In this statement, the word Soldier replaces Warrior. Just as the Warrior Ethos is but a part of the Soldier's Creed, the attributes of warriors are only a part of what Americans expect of their Soldiers.

The statement is written in the first person and meant to be spoken or recited. It is both descriptive of the officer corps' responsibilities and values and intended to inspire officers to live up to them.

Before the Army accepts such a statement of its professional ethic, much debate is in order. Should we use hard phrases such as "total accountability" and "unlimited liability?" What are officers' core responsibilities as leaders and how far do they extend? How concisely should we explicate our adherence to the principle of civilian control? Should we espouse nonpartisanship as part of our ethic? The debate required to answer such questions will provide impetus for an Army-wide discussion about the profession, its ethical values, and the role that it should play as a servant of American society in the future.

Let it begin.

ENDNOTES

1. General George W. Casey made this comment at a briefing on the Army Center of Excellence for the Professional Military Ethic, West Point, New York, October 31, 2007. The author was present. Another definitional problem is that of delineating the terms "ethic" and "ethics." I will use the term "ethic" to mean a body of principles of right or good conduct. I will use the term "ethics" to describe the study of moral behavior. Other dictionary definitions of the two terms can make them almost interchangeable.

2. *The Armed Forces Officer*, Washington, DC: Armed Forces Information Office, Department of Defense (DoD), 1950. The volume, published as official doctrine for the DoD and each of the services, was revised in 1960, 1962, 1975, 1988, and 2007.

3. Lieutenant General Sir John Winthrop Hackett, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *The Profession of Arms*, CMH Pub 70-18, Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1986. A soldier-historian, Sir John originally delivered his thoughts as the 1962 Lee Knowles Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, UK.

4. Richard Swain, "Reflection on an Ethic of Officership," *Parameters*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 4-22.

5. *Code of Medical Ethics: Current Opinions with Annotations, 2006-2007 of the American Medical Association*, Chicago, IL: American Medical Association, Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs., 2006.

6. *Model Rules of Professional Conduct: Centennial Edition*, Chicago, IL: American Bar Association, The Center for Professional Responsibility, April 2008.

7. The following brief history derives from an understanding of hundreds of works of American and European military history. The reader might find several works useful for further study, including: Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, Revised and Expanded Ed., New York: Free Press, 1994; Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000*, New York: Viking, 2005; Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, New York: MacMillan, 1967; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1957; Richard H. Kohn, ed., *The United States Military under the Constitution of the United States, 1789-1989*, New York: New York University Press, 1991; and William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861*, Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1992.

8. See Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

9. Brigadier General James Wilkinson had a colorful and scandalous career in and out of the Army from the Revolution to the War of 1812. He was forced to resign his commission twice and probably conspired with Aaron Burr. The newest and best biography of Wilkinson is Andro Linklater, *An Artist in Treason: The Extraordinary Double Life of General James Wilkinson*, New York: Walker, 2009. Others include James Ripley Jacobs, *Tarnished Warrior: Major General James Wilkinson*, New York: MacMillan, 1938; Thomas Robson Hay and M.R. Werner, *The Admirable Trumpeter: A Biography of General James Wilkinson*, Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1941; and Royal Ornan Shreve, *The Finished Scoundrel: General James Wilkinson*, Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1933.

10. See Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, pp. 131-167; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 42-103; and Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1968.

11. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, pp. 167-259; Matthew Moten, *The Delafield Commission and the American Military Profession*, College Station: The Texas A&M University Press, 2000, pp. 19-72.

12. U.S. War Department, "General Orders No. 100, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, April 24, 1863," *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series III, Vol. 3, Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880-1901, pp. 148-164.

13. Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904; John A. Logan, *The Volunteer Soldier of America*, New York: RS Peale & Co., 1887.

14. Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971; Brian M. Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2000.

15. Edward M. Coffman, "The AEF Leaders' Education for War," R. J. Q. Adams, ed., *The Great War, 1914-1918*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1990, pp. 139-159.

16. Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898-1941*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. 259-289. See especially pp. 280-281.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, New York: HarcourtBrace & Co., 1999, p. 370.

19. *Study on Military Professionalism*, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1970.

20. See Don M. Snider and Gayle L. Watkins, project directors, and Lloyd J. Matthews, ed., *The Future of the Army Profession*, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002; and Don M. Snider, project director, and Lloyd J. Matthews, ed., *The Future of the Army Profession, Revised and Expanded Second Edition*, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2005.

21. General George Casey, Jr., "Statement on the Army's Strategic Imperatives," before the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, 1st Sess., 110th Cong., September 26, 2007.

22. Gale Pollock, DoD News Briefing with Assistant Secretary Casscells from the Pentagon, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Defense (Public Affairs) News Transcript, May 4, 2007, available from www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3958.

23. David Barstow, "Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand: Courting Ex-Officers Tied to Military Contractors," *New York Times*, April 20, 2008, p. A1; Tom Vanden Brook and Ken Dilanian, "Retired Officer's Dual Roles for Pentagon Raise Questions," and "Inquiries Look into Use of Retired Generals as Advisers," *USA Today*, November 17, 2009; Ken Dilanian, Tom Vanden Brook, and Ray Locker, "Army Mentoring Deals Bypass Ethics Law," "Military Mentors Paid Well for Advice," *USA Today*, November 17, 2009; Tom Vanden Brook, Ken Dilanian, and Ray Locker, "Retired Military Officers Cash in as Well-Paid Consultants," *USA Today*, November 18, 2009.

24. See endnote 7.

25. Anthony E. Hartle, *Moral Issues in Military Decision Making*, 2d Ed., Rev., Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004, pp. 73-74.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

Army Center for the Professional Military Ethic



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