

# Military Review

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE U.S. ARMY

September-October 2023



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil>

PB-100-23-09/10

Headquarters, Department of the Army

Approved for public release

Distribution is unlimited—Distribution A

AN ARMY UNIVERSITY PRESS PUBLICATION

Military Review

September-October 2023



**Reimagining the All-Volunteer Army**

Dubik and Magruder, p29

**Four Minutes to Make a Leader**

Cowen, p57

**The 11th Airborne Division Reborn  
(Arctic Angels)**

Eifler and Hardy, p64

**Russia's "Ideology of the Future"**

Baumann, p73

**Pistol-Packing Padres**

Friedman, p116

PIN: 215815-000

# Military Review

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE U.S. ARMY

September–October 2023, Vol. 103, No. 5  
Professional Bulletin 100-23-09/10  
Commander, USACAC; Commandant, CGSC; DCG for Combined Arms, TRADOC:  
Lt. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., U.S. Army

Provost, Army University; DCG for CGSC: Brig. Gen. David C. Foley, U.S. Army  
Director and Editor in Chief: Col. Todd A. Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army  
Managing Editor: William M. Darley, Col., U.S. Army (Ret.)  
Editorial Assistant: Charlotte Richter  
Operations Officer: Capt. Hallie J. Freeman, U.S. Army  
Senior Editor: Jeffrey Buczkowski, Lt. Col., U.S. Army (Ret.)  
Writing and Editing: Beth Warrington; Allyson McNitt, PhD  
Graphic Design: Michael M. Lopez  
Webmasters: Michael Serravo; Kyle Davis—Contractor  
Editorial Board Members: Rich Creed, Col., U.S. Army (Ret.)—Director, Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate; Dr. Lester W. Grau—Director of Research, Foreign Military Studies Office; Col. Sam Saine—Director, Center for Army Profession and Leadership; Col. Scott W. Mueller—Director, Center for Army Lessons Learned; Howard Brewington—Deputy Director, Mission Command Center of Excellence; Edward T. Bohemann, Col., U.S. Army (Ret.)—Deputy, Combined Arms Center-Training; Richard J. Dixon, Col., U.S. Army (Ret.)—Deputy Director, School of Advanced Military Studies  
Consulting Editors: Col. Ewerton Santana Pereira—Brazilian Army, Portuguese Edition; Col. Roque Guillermo Zevallos Roncagliolo—Peruvian Army, Spanish Edition

Submit manuscripts and queries by email to [usarmyleavenworth.tradoc.mbx.armyu-aup-military-review-public@armymil](mailto:usarmyleavenworth.tradoc.mbx.armyu-aup-military-review-public@armymil); visit our web page for author submission guidelines at <https://www.armyupress.armymil/Publish-With-Us/#mr-submissions>.

*Military Review* presents professional information, but the views expressed herein are those of the authors, not the Department of Defense or its elements. The content does not necessarily reflect the official U.S. Army position and does not change or supersede any information in other official U.S. Army publications. Authors are responsible for the accuracy and source documentation of material they provide. *Military Review* reserves the right to edit material. A limited number of hard copies are available for distribution to headquarters elements of major commands, corps, divisions, brigades, battalions, major staff agencies, garrison commands, Army schools, reserve commands, cadet command organizations, medical commands, hospitals, and other units as designated. Information on personal subscriptions may be obtained by consulting *Military Review*, which is available online at <https://www.armyupress.armymil/Military-Review/>.

*Military Review* (US ISSN 0026-4148) (USPS 123-830) is published bimonthly by the Department of the Army, Army University Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1293. Periodical postage paid at Leavenworth, KS, and additional mailing offices.

Yearly paid subscriptions are for \$42 US/APO/FPO and \$58.80 for foreign addresses and are available through the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) at <https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/military-review-professional-journal-united-states-army>.

ADDRESS CHANGES: For personal subscriptions, contact GPO at 1-866-512-1800 or [contactcenter@gpo.gov](mailto:contactcenter@gpo.gov). For military units and other official government subscribers, contact [usarmyleavenworth.tradoc.mbx.military-review-public-em@armymil](mailto:usarmyleavenworth.tradoc.mbx.military-review-public-em@armymil).

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.

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

**RANDY A. GEORGE**

General, Acting United States Army  
Chief of Staff

Official:



**MARK F. AVERILL**

Administrative Assistant

to the Secretary of the Army

2322103



**Cover photo:** Special Operations Command North and 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct a free-fall parachute insertion 9 April 2021 above the Arctic Circle to validate techniques in extreme cold weather conditions. The exercise rehearsed other rapid insertion tactics including maritime operations under seven feet of ice. (Photo by Sgt. Justin Smith, U.S. Army)



- 8 Pen and Sword**  
**The Symbiosis between Ernest Hemingway and Maj. Gen. Buck Lanham**  
Eileen Martin  
Greer Rising  
*The writer and the soldier forged a friendship that lasted their entire lives, and their unique collaboration of pen and sword enriched the literary world and the profession of arms.*
- 17 Low Crawling toward Obscurity**  
**The Army's Professional Journals**  
Maj. Zachary Griffiths, U.S. Army  
*The Army's professional publications must modernize toward web-first platforms to reach soldiers where they are, and the Army should consider modest incentives for writing and editing professional military publications.*
- 29 Reimagining America's Professional All-Volunteer Army**  
Lt. Gen. James M. Dubik, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired  
Lt. Gen. Lawson W. Magruder III, U.S. Army, Retired  
*Our Nation is in a multipolar, great-power period, and it is time to reexamine, perhaps even reimagine, the relationship between America's Army—Active, Guard, and Reserve—and the contextual conditions that shape it.*
- 44 Lack of Will**  
**How the All-Volunteer Force Conditioned the American Public**  
Maj. Christopher J. Parker, U.S. Army  
*Despite its investment in personnel, fifty years of the all-volunteer force has conditioned much of the American public to eschew military service while simultaneously enabling wars of want that have, in turn, only reinforced public skepticism about military service.*
- 57 Four Minutes to Make a Leader**  
Maj. James Cowen, British Army  
*The principles of transformational leadership grow in importance when it comes to defining an organizational vision and setting a culture. This article was awarded first place in the General Douglas MacArthur Military Leadership Writing Competition.*
- 64 The 11th Airborne Division Reborn Arctic Angels**  
Maj. Gen. Brian S. Eifler, U.S. Army  
Natalie M. Hardy  
*The 11th Airborne Division, reactivated in 2022, is capable of operating in the Arctic, in mountainous terrain, and in other extreme cold weather areas while maintaining readiness for global deployments.*
- 73 Russians Are Busy Hammering Out Their "Ideology of the Future"**  
Dr. Robert F. Baumann  
*The new ideology put forth by Russian leaders in light of their struggles during Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine provides a useful lens through which to understand the ambitions of the Putin government.*
- 87 Xi Jinping's PLA Reforms and Redefining "Active Defense"**  
Capt. Scott J. Tosi, U.S. Army Reserve  
*China is making great efforts to downsize, professionalize, restructure existing command relationships, and enable joint operations within the People's Liberation Army.*

## 107 **Data Centricity and the 1st Cavalry Division's "Speed of Relevance" during Warfighter 23-04**

Maj. Thomas D. Richardson, U.S. Army

*The 1st Cavalry Division demonstrated the significance of data centricity in conducting multidomain operations during a recent Warfighter exercise. This article was awarded first place in the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association Writing Contest.*

## 116 **Pistol-Packing Padres** **Rethinking Regulations Prohibiting Armed Military Chaplains**

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Joseph Friedman, Colorado Air National Guard

*The Department of Defense's insistence on unarmed chaplains must be reconsidered. Just as medical personnel are authorized to carry defensive weapons, so should chaplains.*

## 128 **Comedy in Combat Culture** **Understanding the Use of Humor in Crisis and Conflict**

Maj. Sally Williamson, Australian Army

*Appropriate humor can serve as a useful tool for interpersonal and informative communication, transcend traditional hierarchies, serve as a culturally acceptable mechanism for voicing dissatisfaction, and act as an effective coping strategy in crisis and conflict. This article was awarded second place in the General Douglas MacArthur Military Leadership Writing Competition.*

## 136 **Rear Detachment Operations through a Project Management Framework**

Maj. Aaron F. Anderson, U.S. Army

*Rear detachment operations are critical to units during and after deployments, but there is limited current doctrine dedicated to the topic. One industry that can provide a framework for rear detachment operations is project management.*

### REVIEW ESSAY

## 146 **Creating the Modern Army** **Citizen-Soldiers and the American Way of War, 1919–1939**

Col. Dean A. Nowowiejski, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired

*The author critiques William J. Woolley's book on the origins of the modern U.S. Army.*

# Professional Membership Expectations and Privileges

Col. Todd Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army

*I refuse to join any club that would have me as a member.*  
—Groucho Marx

When I first came on active duty in the mid-1990s, there were a few things that became very clear to me when I reported to my first unit in the 82nd Airborne Division. I should contribute to the cup and flower fund. I should join the Officer's Club. I should attend all Officer Call events. I should attend all Hail and Farewells. I should join my branch association. I should join my division association. I should donate to the Combined Federal Campaign. I should donate to the Army Emergency Relief Fund. I should join the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) Foundation. I should join the Association of the United States Army (AUSA). I should encourage my peers and subordinates to do the same.

There were certain expectations.

I remember very clearly how senior officers would “highly encourage” young soldiers to join, support, participate, and pay dues to all these different funds, clubs, events, charitable organizations, and associations. I did not ask any questions. As a young lieutenant, I had the resources to comply and meet expectations. I blindly obeyed and followed the advice of my senior leaders. I did it because I was told to do it, not necessarily because I had thought about it and found it was the right thing to do.

In hindsight, in my opinion, it was the right thing to do.

Things have changed, however. Now, after decades of service, I have watched how some practices of the Army's past have evolved. Some good expectations, traditions, and practices have atrophied. Or maybe I am just feeling nostalgic.



Col. Todd Schmidt, PhD, U.S. Army  
Director, Army University Press

Regardless, there was an enculturation process that was occurring. Over the course of time, orientation, observation, mentorship, counseling, coaching, and the collective spoken and unspoken expectations of young service members, I was molded into a military professional. I may not have understood the process at the time. In fact, I know that I did not. Why, for instance, were we expected to spit shine our combat boots and starch our camouflage uniforms?

Over time, however, I slowly realized that membership in the military profession required me to support aspects of the military institution, military organizations, and the military mission that go beyond merely putting on the uniform and showing up to work. For example, members of a profession are expected to contribute to the betterment of the profession. This may take the form of intellectual contribution through writing and study. It may also take the form of financial contribution to supporting entities like Army Emergency Relief.

This is not to say that we should not question expectations or our practices, norms, and traditions. On

the contrary, we must also understand and respect our lineage, history, heritage, and the legions of professionals that have served before us. What we may find, with a little reflection, is that we are very privileged to be a part of something exceptional that deserves our contribution.

Over the past year, I have become active with three organizations—the Rotary Club, the CGSC Foundation, and AUSA. With my local Rotary, I support an association of local residents who truly want to give back to their community. Each Friday, at the local community center, we say the Pledge of Allegiance, share breakfast, and listen to and share ideas with one another about how we can improve the lives of individuals in our community and across the globe. I willingly pay to be a part of this wonderful organization.

I joined the CGSC Foundation as a major and became a life member in 2022. The benefits of the foundation are not just for members (though the academic scholarships available for members and their families equate to thousands of dollars each year). If a curious reader investigates all the great support the foundation provides to CGSC and Fort Leavenworth, they will quickly understand that the programs, events, awards, and support CGSC and the local community receives vastly outweighs the support the foundation receives in return from students or the installation. If you are stationed at Fort Leavenworth or attending or attended CGSC, I encourage you to support the CGSC Foundation. You will find that the fiduciary responsibility of this organization ensures that the benefits of membership provide an immeasurable return on investment beyond any annual membership dues.

I paid my lifetime membership to AUSA as a second lieutenant in 1996. Honestly, beyond reading the monthly *ARMY Magazine* and randomly contributing articles for publication over the years, I never considered the benefits or value of AUSA seriously. However, I now volunteer to serve as secretary of the local Greater Kansas City Chapter. The services and support the chapter provides to local ROTC battalions, recruiting offices, active-duty service members, Army Reservists, and National Guardsmen are incredible. An active chapter has the potential to contribute so much to the local community, while also representing and telling the Army's story to our civilian friends and neighbors.

Of course, there are certain privileges that go along with membership, donations, and dues.

If we are brutally honest, we very rarely do anything that does not provide us with some personal benefit. And that is okay, even if that benefit is simply to make us feel good about ourselves—it means we are rational beings. Supporting professional funds, clubs, events, charitable organizations, and associations is the right thing to do.

Over time, the resources or charitable giving we provide to a cup and flower fund, branch association, the Combined Federal Campaign, Army Emergency Relief, the CGSC Foundation, or AUSA benefit members of our military profession, past and present. Participation and support can build and contribute to healthy esprit de corps. Programs and initiatives funded by donations and membership dues help send our children to college, improve professional development and the study of our profession, and provide relief and assistance for struggling soldiers and their families. Some programs also help build relationships with the local community, host foreign military students and representatives, provide networking and job opportunities for retirees, assist veterans in navigating governmental bureaucracy, and so much more.

The satire of Groucho Marx is funny. However, being a cynic is easy. It is too easy to complain about all faults we may find, especially in the Army. And there will always be a chance that someone does something that may cast a shadow on all the great things our professional funds, organizations, and associations do daily. These should not be reasons to not contribute, donate, join, and support. In the past, you may have viewed pressure from senior leaders to support extracurricular causes and activities with cynicism or skepticism. Maybe a poor command climate colored your view.

Regardless, membership in a profession and support of professional organizations and associations is an expectation, particularly as you graduate through the ranks. The return on these investments, however, provides more than you will ever see or be able to calculate. Regardless of expectations, membership has its privileges, and hopefully, you will begin to understand that it is a privilege to serve and contribute, not just to our profession, but to many of the supporting funds, organizations, and associations that support us. ■

# FUTURE WARFARE WRITING PROGRAM

## Call for Speculative Essays and Short Works of Fiction

*Military Review* calls for short works of fiction for inclusion in the Army University Press Future Warfare Writing Program (FWWP). The purpose of this program is to solicit serious contemplation of possible future scenarios through the medium of fiction in order to anticipate future security requirements. As a result, well-written works of fiction in short-story format with new and fresh insights into the character of possible future martial conflicts and domestic unrest

are of special interest. Detailed guidance related to the character of such fiction together with submission guidelines can be found at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Special-Topics/Future-Warfare-Writing-Program/Future-Warfare-Writing-Program-Submission-Guidelines/>. To read previously published FWWP submissions, visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Special-Topics/FWWP-TOC/>.



# Write for Military Review

## Suggested Writing Themes and Topics—2023

- From the U.S. military perspective, what are the greatest external threats to the United States? Why, and how?
- Are there nations that consider themselves to be at war with the United States? If so, how are they conducting war and what would increase the probabilities of their success?
- Is there a new “Cold War”? If so, who make up the new confederated blocs (i.e., the new “Axis” powers) aligned against the United States and how do they cooperate with each other? What types of treaties or agreements do they have that outline relationships they share to reinforce each other?
- Who best synchronizes DIME (diplomacy, information, military, and economic elements of power) to achieve strategic goals? Contrast and compare employment of DIME by China, Russia, Iran, and the United States. How should the United States defend itself against foreign DIME?
- Does China have an “Achilles’ heel”? What is its center of gravity? If it has one, how can it best be attacked/exploited?”
- What does China view as the United States’ “Achille’s heel” or center of gravity? (e.g., Trade relations? Resource shortages? Diminishing technological manufacturing base? Societal instability and factionalism?) How specifically is it exploiting these?
- How should the United States respond to Chinese aggression toward Taiwan?
- What lessons are we learning from Russia’s war with Ukraine? What should be the next steps for the United States? What should be the desired end state from a U.S. perspective?
- What is the impact of irregular immigration on the security of the United States?
- What is the status of security force assistance brigades (SFAB)? What is the future for SFABs?
- What is the role now of the U.S. Armed Forces in Africa? Far East? Middle East?
- What logistical challenges will the U.S. military face in large-scale combat operations?
- What does the future hold for nanoweapons? Electromagnetic warfare? Artificial intelligence? Information warfare? How is the Army planning to mitigate effects?






The United States Army Combined Arms Center (CAC) Doctrine Newsletter & Doctrine Developer's Guidance is designed to facilitate the production and dissemination of doctrine. Doctrine priorities for the next 6 months are—

- FM 3-0 (Operations) MTT execution.
- Aligning keystone and capstone doctrine to FM 3-0.
- Operations Doctrine including ATP 3-82 Corps Operations, ATP 3-81 Division Operations, and ATP 3-94.3 Rear Operations
- Publication of ADP 3-13 (Information).
- Emerging Command and Control Doctrine with the development of ATP 6-0.5 (Command Posts) following the publication of FM 5-0, ADP 5-0, and ADP 6-0.
- Setting conditions for the publication of a capstone publication on irregular warfare in late 2024.

CAC is the Army doctrine proponent. The preparing agency for Doctrine Developer's Guidance is the Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate (CADD), Mission Command Center of Excellence (MCCOE), Comments and recommendations may be mailed to Commander, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, ATEL-MCO, 300 McPherson Avenue, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2337, or emailed to [usarmy.leavenworth.mccoe.mbx.cadd-001-mailbox@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.leavenworth.mccoe.mbx.cadd-001-mailbox@army.mil).

For the Army doctrine proponent,

  
**RICHARD D. CREED, JR.**  
 Director, Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate

Approved for Public Release  
 Distribution Unlimited

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Multidomain Operations Integration ..... 2
- Doctrine Development Priorities ..... 2
- Operations ..... 3
- NATO Multidomain Operations Update ..... 4
- CAC OOD Doctrinal Approval Process ..... 4
- Joint Publications ..... 5
- Joint Publications under Revision/Production ..... 5
- Update Department of Defense Terms ..... 5
- Army Publications Coming Soon ..... 6
- Publication Staffing Status ..... 6
- New Army Publications ..... 7
- Field Manuals ..... 7
- Army Technique Publications ..... 8
- Army Doctrine Terms ..... 10
- New Army Terms, definitions, and acronyms ..... 10
- Modified defined term definitions ..... 11
- Revised Army term definitions ..... 12
- Comment Resolution Matrix Formats ..... 12
- Doctrinal Dues Due: All Things Yango ..... 13
- Sustainment Operations By Echelon ..... 15
- Recommending Publication Changes ..... 16
- Creating Heritage Publications ..... 17
- Doctrine Word Template Update ..... 18
- Army Doctrine Development Tool Update ..... 18
- Online Access to Comprehensive Doctrine Guide ..... 18
- Army Doctrine Audiobooks ..... 19
- CACD's "Breasting Doctrine" Podcast ..... 19
- CACD's "Doctrine Digest" Videos and YouTube Channel ..... 20
- Mission Command Center of Excellence Directorate of Training 2023 Doctrine Developer Forum ..... 21

# Military Review

## Invites Your Attention

The latest issue of the Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate's semiannual doctrine newsletter is now available: a comprehensive authoritative review of developments related to the status of Army doctrine formulation, updates, and announcements of recent releases.

**Combined Arms Doctrine Newsletter (Spring 2023)**

<https://rdl.train.army.mil/catalog-ws/view/100.ATSC/D7B75FEF-C5BA-4C83-8FE9-83556F327C4B-1684250389150/CACxDoctrinexNewsletterxSpringx2023.pdf>

**Newsletter Collection**

[https://rdl.train.army.mil/catalog/search?current=true&search\\_terms=CADD-CADN](https://rdl.train.army.mil/catalog/search?current=true&search_terms=CADD-CADN)



(Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)



Ernest Hemingway (*left*) and Col. Charles T. "Buck" Lanham with captured artillery in Schweiler, Germany, 18 September 1944. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration)

# Pen and Sword

## The Symbiosis between Ernest Hemingway and Maj. Gen. Buck Lanham

Eileen Martin

Greer Rising

**E**rnest Hemingway's time at war in Europe during World War II gave him direct experience with combat and close interaction with many U.S. military leaders on the ground. In 1944 France, Hemingway met then Col. Charles T. "Buck" Lanham, West Point class of 1924, commander of the Army's 22nd Infantry Regiment, and the two became best pals. The men were intellectual equals connected over shared interests in history, literature, and military tactics. Hemingway the journalist became a de facto member of the regiment, beloved by the commander and the troops. The writer and the soldier forged a friendship that lasted for the remaining years of Hemingway's life. They exchanged hundreds of intimate letters, and Hemingway channeled Lanham's biography in shaping infantry Col. Richard Cantwell, the cynical protagonist in his 1950 novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*. The symbiosis between the writer who longed to be a warrior and the professional soldier who was a published poet rounded out each man's character and enhanced Hemingway's art.

Although armed with full infantry credentials, most of Lanham's assignments leading up to command were staff positions focused on training and doctrine, and this, along with his published poetry, gave him an egg-head reputation, with peers seeing him more suited for a desk job than a field position leading troops. However, in July 1944, he took command of the 22nd Infantry and from the get-go was known for spewing fighting words for the enemy and profanity-laced exhortations to his men to hold their ground or face court-martial.<sup>1</sup>

Hemingway's earliest contribution to the World War II effort was to oversee his ragtag "Crook Factory" flotilla searching for German submarines in Caribbean waters off Cuba. Biographer Mary Dearborn writes that Hemingway's wife Martha Gellhorn, a nomadic journalist then covering the war in London and Italy, was annoyed Hemingway was focused not on writing but on drinking and urged him to participate in the war effort. Gellhorn sought to have the Office of Strategic Services bring Hemingway on board, but while the outfit found Hemingway possessed the requisite skills, they thought he was too much of a lone wolf for their mission. Dearborn notes that Hemingway contacted his friend Archibald MacLeish, then the Librarian of Congress, to see if a position as a writer attached to the U.S. military could be arranged so

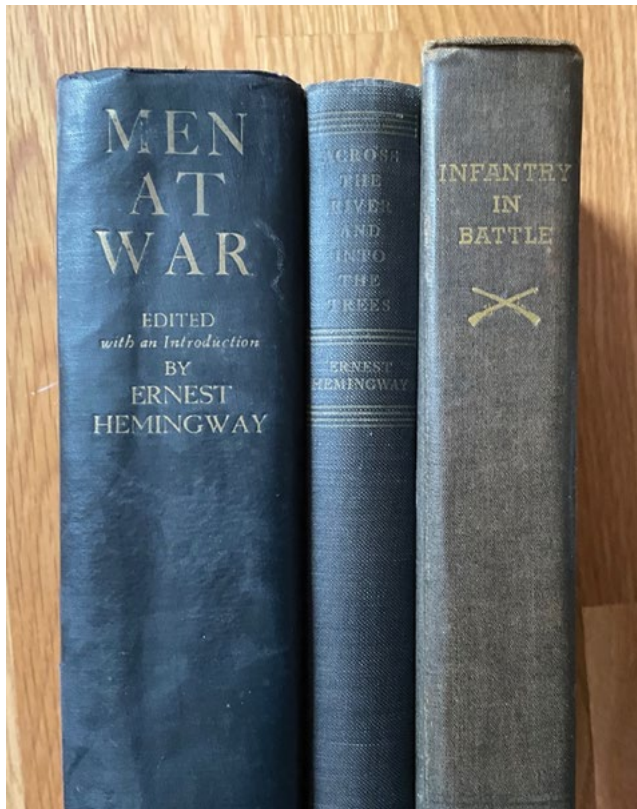
that he would have published something worthwhile when the war was over; nothing ever came of this. In May 1944, Hemingway traveled to London to cover the war for *Colliers*, again assisted by Gellhorn, who persuaded none other than former Royal Air Force officer Roald Dahl to arrange air transport.<sup>2</sup> After D-Day, Hemingway made his way to France, seeking to get closer to the action. Hemingway's lash-up with Lanham's unit would place him on the front lines, provide the camaraderie on which he thrived, and allow him to understudy a commander during key battles of the war. All to be closely observed and served up in his future writing.

What drew Hemingway and Lanham together, and what sustained their brotherhood? On the surface, they were an unlikely pair: a bear of a man and celebrated author meets a diminutive, gray-haired Army regimental commander up to his eyeballs in fighting the Germans. Accounts of Hemingway and Lanham's time together in the war have focused on their respect and admiration for each other's bravery and military acumen. They also bonded as scholars of military doctrine and literary classics. Hemingway described Lanham's

appeal: he had fun being with a man who was literate, articulate, brave, and

**Eileen Martin** is a retired senior executive of the Central Intelligence Agency. After graduating from the University of Maryland with a BS in political science, she worked in the Defense Attaché Office in Caracas, Venezuela before joining the CIA's clandestine service where she served for thirty-one years in the United States and overseas directing intelligence collection programs. Martin and Rising are working on a book about the friendship between Lanham and Hemingway based on hundreds of letters from Lanham to their family.

**Greer Rising** has a BA in history from the University of Utah, where he received a regular Army commission in the Ordnance Corps. He served in the Army for four years including in the Middle East. Rising, a retired federal civil servant, is a counterproliferation and border expert who, while living in the United States and abroad, has provided strategic and operational security advice to dozens of international military and law enforcement entities.



Books by Ernest Hemingway and Charles "Buck" Lanham. (Photo courtesy of the authors)

of superior intelligence.<sup>3</sup> Hemingway gained a commander's-eye view of how war is fought, and Lanham gained a confidante outside of his chain of command. Both acquired loyal, discreet brothers in arms and established the unique trust of those who have undergone combat together. The men shared a wicked sense of humor, pointed sharply at those who would feign heroism. Hemingway's admiration for Lanham's work in *Infantry in Battle* was one of their ties, and Lanham's specialized expertise added verisimilitude to Hemingway's writing.

Hemingway loved *Infantry in Battle*, with which Lanham had a long association. In an April 1945 letter from Cuba, Hemingway reports he has reread Lanham's *Infantry in Battle* and found it extraordinarily good.<sup>4</sup> Hemingway told Lanham that he thought a stupendous update could be produced with what they had learned from their recent war experience. In his vernacular, Hemingway pronounced that *Infantry in Battle* has less "BS" than almost any military book he had ever read. He spun out a scenario with himself and Lanham when they are "old and worthless" and carried out to the swimming pool by their "aged retainers" to

rewrite the rest of the unworthy military manuals into proper English.<sup>5</sup>

Hemingway knew which military texts were worthy. In 1942, two years before meeting Lanham, Hemingway had edited the anthology *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time*. Hemingway's introduction to the 1,069-page tome shows a deep and broad familiarity with classic war themes by strategists from Julius Caesar to Carl von Clausewitz, and the curated volume includes works by Hemingway's historical and contemporary favorites. Hemingway found it impossible not to include the entirety of the 1895 Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, likening it to a great poem.<sup>6</sup> There are three pieces by Leo Tolstoy and three stories by Hemingway himself, and perspectives ranging from the trenches to lofty leadership to outsiders looking in. This was a writer itching for a meeting of the minds with an expert practitioner like Lanham, and in the years to come, the general would send Hemingway a continuous supply of books and reading recommendations to quench his thirst for military knowledge.

Some of Hemingway's letters to Lanham were warmup exercises for his other writing and were conversational as he visited on paper with his friend, at times including stream-of-consciousness references to battles near and far. For instance, one paragraph of one letter from Hemingway to Lanham in October 1952 references Pickett's Charge, Round Top, Dan Dickles, Stonewall Jackson and Chancellorsville, Badajoz, Torres Vedra, San Juan Hill, Aguinaldo, Manila Bay, Bellopheron, Hellsport, Trafalgar, Dervishes and Tiffen, Moskowa, Hoguefont, Houffalize, Terkel, Uncle Toby, Darlan, Old Summersby, Versailles, and Reims.<sup>7</sup> A copy of *Men at War* within arm's reach may be necessary for following Hemingway's mindset during these encyclopedic digressions. Still, perhaps the well-read Lanham was able to track his friend's musings.

Lanham's association with *Infantry in Battle* dates to the beginning of his career. From 1932 to 1934, Lanham was an instructor in military history and editor of school publications for the Army's Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 1934, the then lieutenant edited and revised the Army's guide to infantry tactics, strategy, and leadership. The first edition of *Infantry in Battle* was produced under then Col. George C. Marshall, mastermind of the postwar Marshall Plan for Europe's recovery, and focused on World War

I-era tactics. The second edition in 1939 was extensively revised by then Capt. Lanham with changes to tactical doctrine. In both, Marshall was intent on checking the concepts learned in peacetime training against the experience of battle.<sup>8</sup>

Marshall's introduction to *Infantry in Battle* compares theory and practice in ways that resonate more than eighty years later. He states that officers

who have received the best peacetime training available are surprised and confused by the difference between map problems and the real world. He laments the faulty assumptions "that organizations are well trained and at full strength, that subordinates are competent, that supply arrangements function, that communications work, that orders are carried out."<sup>9</sup> In war, these ideal conditions do not exist, and the infantryman must "carry on in spite of seemingly insurmountable difficulties and regardless of the fact that the tools with which he has to work may be imperfect and worn."<sup>10</sup>

One reason Hemingway may have been a fan was Lanham's clear presentation and practical translation for the warfighter. In 1934, Marshall praised the young Lanham as someone with "genuine ability of a high order," saying he "understands the business of putting technical military matter into a form acceptable to the citizen soldier."<sup>11</sup> A veteran of World War I and the Spanish Civil War, Hemingway certainly was a citizen soldier, and his crisp writing is emulated today.

Also emulated, or replicated, was Lanham's real life. To shape the character of regimental commander Cantwell in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, Hemingway borrowed extensively from Lanham's biography and field service and channeled the hellscape



Ernest Hemingway (left) and Col. Charles T. "Buck" Lanham together on the front lines in the European theater of operations, circa 1944. (Photo courtesy of the Princeton University Library)

the men endured together in World War II. In July 1945, Hemingway told his publisher, Maxwell Perkins, that he had learned more while he and Lanham were together than he had learned up to that time, so he planned to try very hard to get some decent writing from the experience.<sup>12</sup>

The novel is a work of fiction but contains dozens of compass readings pointing to the life and service of Gen. Lanham. Many of the allusions in the novel refer to Lanham's experiences, some of which Hemingway participated in or witnessed, and others are derived from details shared in Lanham's letters to Hemingway. Stars and medals are recurring symbols in the novel and echo conversations between Lanham and Hemingway. Cantwell is humiliated over losing his general's star and reverting to colonel. This was a concern of Lanham's as well because after World War II, the U.S. Army had an excess of generals and developed a system for bucking some of them back to their previous rank. Lanham termed it open season on general officers and feared he would be given "the old heave-ho."<sup>13</sup> Lanham hung onto his star and collected

one more in the end, but his letters to Hemingway and others expressed this concern and mentioned colleagues who were reclassified. Military decorations are also on Cantwell's mind, and he counts the Distinguished Service Cross and his two Silver Stars

Cantwell was based partly on Lanham and partly on himself and another soldier friend.<sup>18</sup> A deep dive into Lanham's personal letters and military 201 (personnel) file reveals Lanham's extensive influence on Hemingway's study of the military and war, and spot-



A deep dive into Lanham's personal letters and military 201 (personnel) file reveals Lanham's extensive influence on Hemingway's study of the military and war.



among valuable possessions he could leave his Italian countess girlfriend Renata when he dies.<sup>14</sup> Hemingway and Lanham discussed medals in their letters as well, with Lanham reporting to Hemingway on the U.S. and French citations he received, and the two discussing whether Hemingway should accept a Bronze Star, a fraught topic given Hemingway's contributions to the war while serving as an unarmed journalist.<sup>15</sup> Hemingway sought Lanham's help when his Army officer son Jack Hemingway's Bronze Star and Purple Heart were stolen, and Lanham worked to obtain replacements.<sup>16</sup> These real-life discussions about rank and ribbons thread through the novel with obvious symbolism about self-worth, recognition, and fairness. Besides love and loss, the novel's leitmotifs also include honor and dishonor, other people's orders (some issued without situational awareness), and whether the no-fight generals lead from the front, all topics that featured in wisecracking exchanges between Lanham and Hemingway.

While Hemingway did not reveal details of his writing in progress with Lanham or virtually anyone else (other than reporting his daily word count), letters between the two men between the end of the war and the novel's publication covered military friends and personalities including comrades from the 22nd, discussed a prominent general who had lost his star, and chewed the fat on sundry postwar political topics, including whether another war might be brewing. Lanham supplied Hemingway with chatty reports from his duty stations and tailored reading material on military strategy and tactics to bolster Hemingway's studies as he worked on the novel.<sup>17</sup> Hemingway acknowledged

lights Cantwell as Lanham's doppelgänger more than generally acknowledged. Some similarities include the following:

- Col. Cantwell is an infantry officer who had been awarded and lost a general's star, a bitter obsession that reverberates throughout the novel. He has led a beautiful regiment that suffered heavy casualties in significant battles; he has lots of negative opinions about generals and politicians; he tirelessly narrates his war stories to the point of wondering if he is a bore; he is in love with a young woman; he appreciates fine cuisine, plied with copious amounts of alcohol morning till night; he is a linguist and a Europeanist who appreciates art and culture; and bird hunting frames the scenes in the novel.
- Gen. Lanham is an infantry officer who received a speedy wartime promotion but frets that he will be reclassified back to the rank of colonel. He led his beloved 22nd Infantry Regiment in key battles described in the novel and was anguished over the losses; he shares searingly detailed military accounts with Hemingway; he has sharp-eyed views about the many military seniors he knows; he married a woman eighteen years his junior; he enjoys fine food, his poison being smoking rather than drinking; he speaks excellent French and has served in Europe; and he has gone bird hunting with Hemingway at Gardiner's Island in New York.

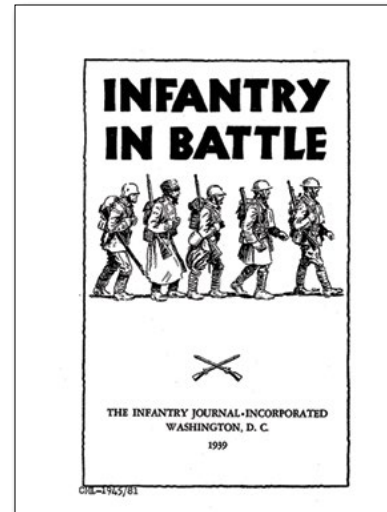
In addition to personal characteristics and experiences that Lanham shares with Cantwell, the novel is replete with dozens of places and names from Lanham's actual military service. From Hürtgen

Forest to a parade of military commanders, in the retrospective or flashback-style novel, Cantwell regales Renata with familiar scenes and personas from Lanham's life. One page alone mentions three of Lanham's bosses: Gens. Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, and Joe Collins.<sup>19</sup>

Hemingway's work became a bestseller, although it was far less successful than his 1940 *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and is poorly understood even today, partly due to its arcane references and obscure allusions that most would not decipher. Mark Cirino's comprehensive glossary of *Across the River and Into the Trees* interprets these references line by line, without the benefit of some of Lanham's private letters.<sup>20</sup> Lanham believed the novel could not be comprehended without understanding the battles in Hürtgen Forest. He told Hemingway's official biographer Carlos Baker that Hürtgen was the genesis of *Across the River and Into the Trees*. "A great deal of the book, perhaps the bulk of it, can be interpreted in terms of the Battle of Hürtgen Forest and the people whom Hemingway knew so well who were in it."<sup>21</sup>

While a full treatment of the Hürtgen Forest campaign is outside the scope of this article, in late 1944, military leaders framed the Hürtgen battles as a critical breakthrough. This achievement shattered Adolf Hitler's myth of impregnability on his western flank. Lanham's unit helped crack the Siegfried Line, a significant foray into German territory that advanced Allied objectives and threatened German resolve. In subsequent years, the high cost of human lives lost per square inch of gained territory has been critiqued, and theorists have debated all aspects of the Hürtgen Forest battles. Lanham was devastated over the losses to his brilliant regiment, which historians agree suffered casualties of more than 80 percent, magnified when reinforcement numbers are calculated.<sup>22</sup> Thus the significance of the sinister Hürtgen in Hemingway's fictionalized account overlaying a love story onto a dying colonel's sorrowful recollections of death and loss. Cantwell is dismayed over destroying his beautiful regiment by following orders from the no-fight generals and overwhelmed by feelings of futility and sadness at his men's sacrifices in the merciless Hürtgen "Death Factory."<sup>23</sup>

Unlike Cantwell, neither resentment nor bitterness are prominent themes in Lanham's writings to family



The 1939 edition of *Infantry in Battle* is designed to give peacetime-trained officers the viewpoint of veterans. The reader becomes acquainted with the realities of war and the extremely difficult and highly disconcerting conditions under which tactical problems must be solved in the face of an enemy. To view an online version of *Infantry in Battle*, visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/infantry-in-battle.pdf>.

friends. He loved the Army, was proud of fulfilling his duty and oath, and was unafraid of giving the ultimate sacrifice as part of the job if necessary. Did he criticize his colleagues, commanders, and leadership? Indeed he did, often and eloquently; as a perfectionist he did not suffer fools and had exacting standards. Lanham's literary bent and reputation for use of precise language was familiar to his colleagues, even as they mocked him as a stickler. For the seventy-fifth anniversary of the first iteration of the *Infantry Journal* issued in July 1904, an *Army Magazine* columnist remembered the journal's history and illustrious contributors and shared anecdotes of pranks played on assistant editor Lanham. The piece outlines two tricks poking fun at Lanham, one on dictating fawning letters of rejection, and one involving William Shakespeare:<sup>24</sup>

- Lanham's boss, Lt. Col. Forrest Harding (who later also became a major general), would needle Lanham by dictating a letter of rejection to a superior officer "in such abject and obsequious terms that Lanham, unable to stand it any longer, would bolt in disgust from the office to the restaurant below for a cup of coffee. While he was gone, Forrest would dictate the real letter."<sup>25</sup>
- In an elaborate literary caper, a colleague called Lanham at home at night, pointing out he had

grossly misquoted a passage from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* that was supposed to say, "Fie, my Lord fie! A soldier and afeared?" Lanham reportedly stormed into the office the next day and demanded that the whole incompetent staff be fired. The stunt had been to change only Lanham's home-de-

Each chapter begins with a concise lesson, such as these examples:

- "Superior forces must be concentrated at decisive points, and economy of force elsewhere may have to be extreme."<sup>30</sup>
- "The intelligent leader knows that terrain is his

“ The leader who frantically strives to remember what someone else did in some slightly similar situation has already set his feet on a well-traveled road to ruin. ”

livered copy to read, "Fie my Lord fie! A soldier and afeared?" Lanham, the Shakespeare aficionado, would later meet Hemingway, no slouch in the Shakespeare department, two literary minds recognizing kindred spirits.<sup>26</sup>

If Hemingway amplified his already considerable knowledge about war while with Lanham and borrowed Lanham's regimental commander persona for his fiction, what were the actual lessons from *Infantry in Battle* that he found so captivating? A review of the 1939 volume presents relevant, time-tested truths, many expressed in pithy, common-sense phrases. Lanham's voice can be heard throughout *Infantry in Battle*, as in this sentence from the first chapter on rules, explaining that combat circumstances and conditions have multiple variables that mutate and combine to produce new tactical patterns: "The leader who frantically strives to remember what someone else did in some slightly similar situation has already set his feet on a well-traveled road to ruin."<sup>27</sup>

Chapter 2 puts obscurity front and center: "In war obscurity and confusion are normal." The leader "must be prepared to take prompt and decisive action, in spite of the scarcity or total absence of reliable information. He must learn that in war the abnormal is normal and that uncertainty is certain."<sup>28</sup>

Chapter 3 champions simplicity: "Simple and direct plans and methods make for foolproof performance."<sup>29</sup> In combat, all types of confusion and unforeseen contingencies prevail, overlaying fatigue, hunger, bad weather, and other negatives impacting the troops, thus the need for simple commands.

staunchest ally, and that it virtually determines his formation and scheme of maneuver."<sup>31</sup>

- "In war a large safety factor should be included in all time and space calculations."<sup>32</sup>
- "Surprise is a master key to victory." Lest the reader finds his adages trite or shopworn, Lanham adds that "tactical surprise is usually the reward of the daring, the imaginative and the ingenious. It will rarely be gained by recourse to the obvious."<sup>33</sup>

Each of the teachings is followed by several battlefield examples illustrated by detailed maneuver maps, and many include discussion of takeaways and reinforcement of conclusions to be drawn.

Chapter 24, "Action and Morale," gives this advice: to combat the intense mental strain of battle, the leader must reassure his men and allay their tension and give them a sense of security and time for exercise and activity.<sup>34</sup> Hemingway's presence lifted Lanham's 22nd Infantry's morale to no end. For many years following the war, Lanham sent signed greetings from the entire regiment to Hemingway, and the writer would send gifts such as smoked turkeys and whiskey to their reunion celebrations.<sup>35</sup> Hemingway found a home with the 22nd Regiment and would have given anything to have stayed with them, writing Lanham in April 1945 that he was lonely and depressed, missing the regiment and wishing he were a soldier rather than a gutless writer.<sup>36</sup> Hemingway, the civilian, often referred to the esprit de corps he felt with "his" unit. Still waving its flag in 1952, Hemingway scolded his publisher and friend Charlie Scribner for delays in sending him book proofs, suggesting he whip his foot



soldiers into shape so that the press ran more like the efficient 22nd Infantry.<sup>37</sup>

Chapter 26, “Miracles,” states that “resolute action by a few determined men is often decisive.”<sup>38</sup> This treatment discusses human nature and flesh-and-bone tendencies magnified in combat. Some human beings are natural leaders and can be relied on through thick and thin; others become conveniently lost in battle. “A large proportion will go with the majority, wherever the majority happens to be going, whether it be to the front or to the rear. Men in battle respond readily to any external stimulus—strong leadership or demoralizing influences.”<sup>39</sup> This chapter’s theme reflects Lanham and Hemingway’s views on the lesser men who do not pull their weight and disrupt their units, only to emerge on the other side as heroes in their own minds with exciting tales of near misses and valor in action: “Every army contains men who will straggle at the first chance and at the first alarm flee to the rear, sowing disorder, and sometimes panic, in their wake. They tell harrowing tales of being the only survivors of actions in which they were not present, of lacking ammunition when they have not squeezed a trigger, and of having had no food for days.”<sup>40</sup>

Hemingway and Lanham shared a particular disdain for this type of hypocrisy. Their BS meters were calibrated to the same settings, sniffing out as phonies the journalists who reported eyewitness accounts of battles from hotel barrooms far from the front and

pretenders who never saw shots fired spinning tall tales in bars on the other side of town. Hemingway employs Cantwell’s contemptuous voice to disparage these men, words failing him to categorize this type of sin.<sup>41</sup> In the dour novel with no redemptive arc, the antihero Cantwell admits he is an “unjust bitter criticizer who speaks badly of everyone,” a sad, misanthropic characterization few would use to describe either Lanham or Hemingway.<sup>42</sup>

The writer and the poet-warrior admired each other so much that they wished they could walk in the other’s boots. When Lanham was named commander of the 1st Infantry Division, Hemingway wrote the general in December 1952 that he would love to command a division more than anything in the world, going as far as to state (more colorfully) that he could not care less about being a writer.<sup>43</sup> Lanham, the decorated World War II hero, had many gifts, and at the same time, was in awe of Hemingway’s talents, including his courage, perception, and “boundless joy in the rough and tumble of life,” and wished he could be more like him.<sup>44</sup> The crucible of war transformed Hemingway and Lanham, uniting and blending their mirror images, their unique collaboration of pen and sword enriching the literary world and the profession of arms. Military professionals and civilian leaders could do worse than adding *Infantry in Battle*, *Men at War*, and *Across the River and Into the Trees* to their reading lists. ■

## Notes

1. Robert Sterling Rush, *Hell in Hürtgen Forest: The Ordeal and Triumph of an American Infantry Regiment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 92.

2. Mary V. Dearborn, *Ernest Hemingway: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2017), 438–44.

3. Ernest Hemingway to Helen Kirkpatrick, 12 November 1948, in *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917–1961*, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner’s, 1981), 651.

4. Hemingway to Buck Lanham, 20 April 1945, Ernest Hemingway Personal Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston (hereinafter cited as Hemingway Papers, JFK Library).

5. Hemingway to Lanham, 14 April 1945, in Baker, *Selected Letters*, 586.

6. Ernest Hemingway, ed., *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1942), xvii.

7. Hemingway to Lanham, 28 October 1952, Ernest Hemingway Letters to Charles T. Lanham, C0067, Manuscripts Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library (hereinafter cited as Lanham Collection, Princeton University Library).

8. Charles T. Lanham, ed., *Infantry in Battle*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal, 1939), vii.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. George C. Marshall to Maj. Gen. Stuart Heintzelman, 31 October 1934, in *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall: “The Soldierly Spirit,” December 1880–June 1939*, ed. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 441.

12. Hemingway to Maxwell Perkins, 23 July 1945, in Baker, *Selected Letters*, 594.

13. Charles Lanham to Rising Family, 27 July 1945, private collection.

14. Ernest Hemingway, *Across the River and Into the Trees* (New York: Scribner’s, 1950), 255.

15. Hemingway to Charles Scribner, 18 December 1946, in Baker, *Selected Letters*, 623.

16. Hemingway to Lanham, 7 December 1945, Lanham Collection, Princeton University Library.

The Army  
University Press  
wants to hear  
from you!

*Publish  
with us*



The Army University Press provides writers with a suite of publishing venues to advance ideas and insights military professionals need to lead and succeed. Consider *Military Review*, the *Journal of Military Learning*, the NCO Journal, or the Combat Studies Institute to present cutting-edge thought and discussion on topics important to the Army and national defense.

Learn how to publish with Army University Press at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Publish-With-Us/>.



17. See, for example, Lanham to Hemingway, 17 March 1945, 4 May 1945, 30 June 1949, 30 July 1949, Hemingway Papers, JFK Library.
18. Hemingway to Lanham, 11 October 1949, Hemingway Papers, JFK Library.
19. Hemingway, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, 125.
20. Mark Cirino, *Reading Hemingway's Across the River and Into the Trees: Glossary and Commentary* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2016).
21. Charles Trueman Lanham, "Hemingway-Lanham Chronology 1944–45," manuscript, Bernice Kert Personal Papers, JFK Library.
22. See, for example, Terry Mort, *Hemingway at War: Ernest Hemingway's Adventures as a World War II Correspondent* (New York: Pegasus, 2016); and Charles Whiting, *The Battle of Hürtgen Forest* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Publishing, 2000).
23. Hemingway, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, 243.
24. L. J. B., "Front and Center," *Army Magazine*, July 1979, 7–9.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. Lanham, *Infantry in Battle*, 1.
28. *Ibid.*, 16.
29. *Ibid.*, 35.
30. *Ibid.*, 55.
31. *Ibid.*, 69.
32. *Ibid.*, 79.
33. *Ibid.*, 107, 121.
34. *Ibid.*, 355.
35. Lanham to Hemingway, 27 July 1949, Hemingway Papers, JFK Library.
36. Hemingway to Lanham, 20 April 1945, in Baker, *Selected Letters*, 588–89.
37. Hemingway to Scribner, 9–10 July 1950, in Baker, *Selected Letters*, 705.
38. Lanham, *Infantry in Battle*, 390.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. Hemingway, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, 137.
42. *Ibid.*, 229.
43. Hemingway to Lanham, 15 December 1952, Lanham Collection, Princeton University Library.
44. Lanham to Hemingway, 5 January 1945, Hemingway Papers, JFK Library.



Command and General Staff College (CGSC) students attend a class at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, circa 1960. The professional journal *Military Review* has provided a venue for CGSC students to share information and present ideas regarding the military since 1934. (Photo courtesy of the Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library)

# Low Crawling toward Obscurity

## The Army's Professional Journals

Maj. Zachary Griffiths, U.S. Army

**C**ongress has cut the U.S. Army's personnel strength down to 452,000—the lowest since the end of World War II. The last time the

Army lived on starvation rations between wars, more than a dozen professional military journals prepared the profession for the challenges of that war.<sup>1</sup> Today,

the situation is bleaker. The Army's branch magazines publish fewer pages, less often, and more erratically to an audience who has migrated away from print to downloadable PDFs to web-first publications with active social media.

This article challenges the Army and Combined Arms Center to consider the state of professional military discourse today. There is a need to improve the current situation, so this article argues for two concrete steps toward renewal. First, the Army should modernize toward web-first platforms to reach soldiers where they are. Second, the Army should consider modest incentives for writing and editing professional military publications.

Rather than low crawling toward obscurity, the Army should renew its professional publications.

## Empowered: A Renewed *Infantry*

By 1 April 1934, the audience for *Infantry Journal* had dwindled. Fewer than 4,000 subscribers read the "atrociously written articles," and the Great Depression made the \$3 subscription too much for many people to afford.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, Maj. Gen. Edward Croft, the chief of infantry, appointed Maj. Edwin Harding as its editor. Fresh from his studies at the Army War College, Harding brought experience from editing the Infantry School's *Mailing List*.<sup>3</sup>

Harding sought tough critiques of the official line and promising new authors who challenged the status quo. Better articles, new features like book reviews and editorials, and a modernized look grew subscribers to more than 10,000 in just four years.<sup>4</sup> The renewed *Infantry Journal* also resuscitated other military journals by showing them how to maximize their potential.

Today, as in previous interwar periods, the Army's branch magazines need renewal. Between 1982 and 2020, *Infantry*, *Armor*, *Engineer*, and *Field Artillery (Fires*

**Maj. Zachary Griffiths, U.S. Army**, is a career Special Forces officer. He invites you to visit <https://www.hardingproject.com> to learn more about renewing professional military writing. He tweets at @z\_e\_griffiths.

before 2020) have published fewer issues with fewer pages more erratically. The average number of issues and pages per year dropped from 5.25 per branch and 1,821 pages total to 3.5 issues per branch and just 442 pages.



Gen. Edwin F. Harding, commanding general of the 32nd Infantry Division. As a major, Harding was appointed editor of *Infantry Journal*. His modernization of the journal more than doubled the number of subscribers. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

While aiming for quarterly publication, these branch magazines published anywhere from one to six issues per year between 2018 and 2020.<sup>5</sup>

As branch content has wavered, so too has engagement. Branch magazines recently transitioned to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service—a little-known and little-browsed data repository. "Hits" average in the hundreds or low thousands per issue with only single-digit downloads. Contrast this with an article I coauthored for West Point's Modern War Institute (MWI) that hit 38,627 pageviews on just the first day. Social media engagement by branch journals is similarly weak, with no dedicated social media and single digit mentions of their journals on branch-specific accounts.<sup>6</sup>

The distance between editorial staffs and their communities has also widened. For *Military Review*, the masthead has dropped from 100 percent military in 1955 to 18 percent in 2022 as the mean military staff member increased from a junior major to a lieutenant colonel. Magazines like *Infantry* no longer have Hardings, instead relying on retired military or civilian editors, which may distance themselves from the problems of the force.<sup>7</sup> Branch journal content and connection with the force require renewal.



(Composite graphic by Michael Lopez, Army University Press)

To chart a path forward, this article recommends modernizing military publications to web-first formats and incentivizing authors and volunteer editors to write. These conclusions are based on a review of military journals, original research into the writing patterns of the Army's authors, and an original survey of those authors.

## Understanding Military Journals and Authors

Military professional journals and magazines serve multiple important purposes for the Army. While manuals and policy provide authoritative guidance, professional journals provide a venue for leaders to inform the force of the reasons behind changes.<sup>8</sup> Other articles build communities around shared challenges or present lessons for immediate incorporation by units and the field and ultimate adoption into doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Writing also identifies solutions to problems felt in the field and facilitates lateral connections in the Army's hierarchy. Books like Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras's *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession* achieve several of these goals, identifying the shared burden of compliance and leading to

a mandatory training reduction.<sup>10</sup> Writing also offers an outlet for perspectives that may not find a receptive audience within traditional command structures.

Additionally, the significance of improving writing skills cannot be overstated for military professionals. For example, the Commander's Assessment Program's inclusion of writing highlights the importance of this critical skill for issuing orders and communicating effectively.<sup>11</sup> Professional writing fosters the critical thinking skills that Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Leadership*, codifies as a necessary attribute of Army leaders.<sup>12</sup> High-quality military journals effectively convey command priorities and challenge orthodoxy, contributing to the overall health and professionalism of the military.

Military journals are full of articles encouraging officers to write, but fewer seek to understand military writers or their writing habits.<sup>13</sup> The only authorship survey I could find was a survey of 392 Marine Corps authors in 1988. That study found intrinsic motivations for authors predominated and that a lack of time was the biggest barrier to writing.<sup>14</sup>

Two other studies have examined engagement with military journals and their content. One bright spot is a 2008 monograph by Kareem Montague on

**Table 1. Army Professional Publication Landscape**

Type	Characteristics	Examples
Web-first	Content easily viewable on either desktop or mobile websites with multimedia content like podcasts	War on the Rocks, West Point’s Modern War Institute, Task and Purpose
Army institutional	Official outlets of the United States Army focused on strategic or operational issues	<i>Parameters, Military Review</i>
Branch magazines	Official outlets of Army centers of excellence focused on branch issues	<i>Infantry, Armor, Engineer, Field Artillery Bulletin</i>

(Table by author)

military learning. In it, he found a decrease in reader engagement from January 1998 to December 2007 based on published letters to the editor in *Infantry*, *Armor*, *Fires Bulletin*, and *Army Logistician*, and a survey of students at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. About forty years earlier, Alonzo Coose Jr. critiqued *Military Review*’s satisfaction of its mission by publishing the results of a 1968 readership survey and reviewing 133 articles.<sup>15</sup> Others have studied the content of military journals.<sup>16</sup> Despite these writings on military writing, none explore *who* military authors are or how they could help renew military journals—a real gap in how we holistically understand “talent management.”

To help understand the Army’s authors, this article analyzes the publications of and surveys military professional authors who published in eight outlets between 1 January 2022 and 20 April 2023. In total, *Parameters*, *Military Review*, *Infantry*, *Armor*, *Field Artillery*, *Engineer*, MWI, and War on the Rocks published 992 articles from 1,376 authors. Of the 1,376 authors, I identified 457 individual authors in the U.S. Army.

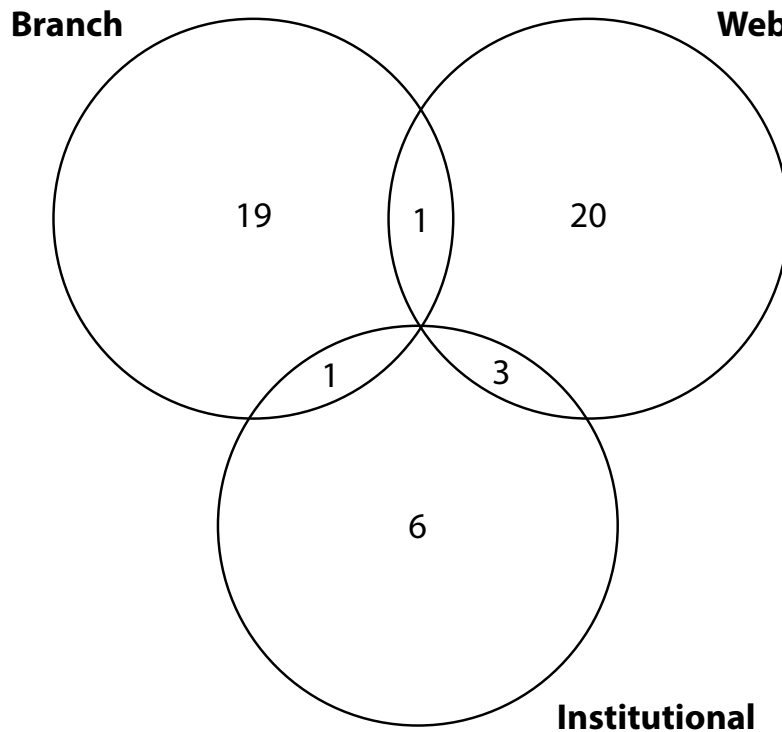
## Patterns in Military Professional Publication

Web-first, Army institutional, and branch magazines confront authors as they decide where to publish (see table 1). They might aim for web-first outlets like War on the Rocks or MWI. These outlets publish 1,500-to-2,500-word articles quickly to large audiences.

To reach an Army institutional audience, authors may write 5,000-to-8,000-word articles with more extensive review for *Military Review* or *Parameters*. Finally, writers focusing on branch-specific issues may write for their branch magazines. Branch magazines publish with more erratic schedules and less editorial oversight, but they focus on issues relevant to a branch that might not be appropriate for other outlets.<sup>17</sup>

A variety of web-first outlets reach military audiences. These include War on the Rocks, MWI, From the Green Notebook, Task and Purpose, the Military Leader, and others.<sup>18</sup> These outlets center around a webpage with written content that is easily viewable on either desktop computers or mobile devices—key information conduits that are more appropriate for today’s digital generation. They may have multiple “channels” such as MWI’s Irregular Warfare Initiative or Project 6633 with more niche content and podcasts. Web-first outlets may have an institutional affiliation as MWI does with West Point or be independent outlets like War on the Rocks or From the Green Notebook.

Web-first outlets publish a mix of military and nonmilitary authors. Together, War on the Rocks and MWI published 28 percent articles written by military authors. War on the Rocks published 78 military and 370 civilian authors, and MWI published 160 military and 256 civilians. On web-first outlets, 111 Army authors published 145 articles with a median of one article per author and a maximum of five. Of the authors, 105 were officers, two were noncommissioned



(Figure by author)

**Figure 1. Stovepiped Publications by Authors of More than One Article**

officers, three were cadets, and one was unknown based on the biography.

The Army's institutional journals speak to strategic and operational-level issues. *Parameters* is the journal of the Army War College. It publishes complete issues and individual articles as PDFs, which are not mobile friendly, though the Army War College produces podcasts like the *A Better Peace*, *Decisive Point*, *Conversations on Strategy*, and others. *Military Review* "provides an established and well-regarded Army forum to stimulate original thought and debate on topics related to the art and science of land warfare."<sup>19</sup> Army University Press also publishes more specialized journals, such as two foreign language versions of *Military Review*, the *NCO Journal*, and the *Journal of Military Learning*. *Military Review* has best adapted to modern standards with content optimized for mobile, desktop, printed forms, and podcasts, but reach remains limited without a dedicated and significant social media presence.

Institutional outlets publish more than half military authors, primarily officers. Together, *Parameters* and *Military Review* published 61 percent articles by military authors, with *Parameters* publishing 33

military and 33 civilians and *Military Review* publishing 78 military and 39 civilian authored articles. In the institutional outlets, 84 Army authors published 92 articles with a median of one article per author and a maximum of three articles per author. Of the authors, 83 authors were officers and one was a warrant officer.

Branch centers of excellence publish professional bulletins or, less formally, branch magazines. These bulletins are specific to a particular functional area and act as a forum for explaining, digesting, or debating Army doctrine, policy, or other definitive information. Branch magazines may assist with specific training and professional development. However, according to Department of the Army Pamphlet 25-40, *Army Publishing Program Procedures*, branch magazines typically include "technological developments; strategy, tactics, techniques, and procedures; 'how-to' pieces; practical exercises; training methods; historical perspectives; monographs and summaries of research papers; views and opinions; and letters to the editor."<sup>20</sup> Branch magazines serve a crucial role in promoting lateral communication and sharing lessons across different units, but they have not appreciably modernized.

Branch magazines publish primarily military authors. Together, the four branch magazines under study published 89 percent of articles by military authors with *Infantry* and *Armor* publishing 96/110 and 94/107 military, respectively, and *Engineer* and *Fires* publishing 52/55 and 52/57 military, respectively. Of the 275 military authors, 268 are in the Army with 235 officers, 26 noncommissioned officers, nine warrant officers, three cadets, and two unknowns.

Beyond specific types of outlets, Army writers appear to publish within a single outlet stovepipe. While 407/457 Army authors published only one article, only 10 percent (5/50) of authors who published more than one article in this period published in multiple outlet types (see figure 1, page 21). This stovepiping suggests that military authors either may not understand the writing landscape or they return to outlets where they have a relationship with a certain editorial team.

This review of eight military writing outlets revealed two authorship trends. First, the median author is an Army officer who published one article. Second, authors who published more than one article published overwhelmingly within the same outlet type. Only five authors published articles in more than one outlet type. But who are these officers and what motivates their writing? This article reports on the results of a survey of these Army authors in the following section.

## Survey of Army Authors

Renewing military publications requires better understanding of who writers are and what motivates their writing. The surveyed writers overwhelmingly had advanced civilian education, cited intrinsic motivations for their writing, and reported a lack of time as their primary barrier to writing. When working with editors, they valued timely communication and feedback, and clear submission guidance. Writers also generally considered volunteer editorial teams a viable method to improve timeliness and content quality.

The survey of military professional authors collected 70 responses from 457 Army authors for a response rate of 15.3 percent.<sup>21</sup> Of those 70 responses, two responses were discarded: one had not written an article in the period under study and one was recently retired, which manifests in varying response numbers for different questions.

The following sections report on writer demographics, what makes professional military outlets effective, cultivating writers, and the viability of volunteer editors.

**Demographics.** Authors are whiter and more male than the Army overall, perform well, and have advanced civilian education degrees. The median respondent was a white, non-Hispanic or non-Latino male, high-performing active-duty Army major between 30 and 39 years old with a master's degree who published two articles and has completed the Captains Career Course and one broadening opportunity. For race and ethnicity, 61 respondents identified as white, three identified as black, one as white and Asian, and one as American Indian or Alaska Native. Five identified as Hispanic or Latino, and only two respondents identified as women.

A range of ages and ranks responded. For ages, two identified as under 25, 19 between 24–30, 24 between 30–39, 19 between 40–50, and four over 50. Company and field-grade officers were most common with two noncommissioned officers, one warrant officer, 27 company-grade officers, 36 field-grade officers, and one general officer.

Writers also perform well and are highly educated. Forty-one of 66 respondents reported having “5 Most Qualified” or “4 of 5 Most Qualified” evaluations of their last five evaluations. For education, 49 of 68 respondents had advanced civilian education at the master's level or above and military education appropriate for their grade. Additionally, 45 had completed one or more broadening opportunities such as teaching or a fellowship. Military writers perform well across the Army's metrics but are overwhelmingly white and male.

The median Army writer differs than the median officer at least in terms of diversity. According to a 2008 snapshot from the Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 16.9 percent of Army officers between O-1 (second lieutenant) and O-6 (colonel) are female, while only 2.9 percent of writers were. Likewise, 22.6 percent of Army officers in the same grades are from a non-Hispanic minority, while only 7.4 percent of writers were.<sup>22</sup> The author could not find similar data for ages, education, or performance.

Respondents reported a range of publication histories: 10 had written one article, 16 had written 2–3, 25 had written 4–10, 10 had written 10–30, and five had



**Table 2. Engagement with Professional Content**

Frequency	Website	Social Media	Podcast	Branch	<i>Military Review</i>	<i>Parameters</i>
Daily	23	30	10	0	0	0
Weekly	27	14	19	3	8	2
Monthly	14	8	17	17	27	12
Seasonal	2	2	5	32	18	22
Yearly	0	2	4	9	6	6
Never	1	12	12	7	9	26

(Table by author)

written more than 30. For those authors who published more than one article over the course of their careers, 54 of 58 had published at more than one outlet, with 25 publishing in two to three outlets and 26 publishing in four to 10 outlets.

**Effective military outlets.** Analysis indicates outlets succeed because they are online and publish quality content. Authors prefer online content twice as much as podcasts or print content, which were the next most preferred. These preferences were mirrored in their engagement habits and their perceptions of their peers.

Military authors overwhelmingly considered War on the Rocks, *Military Review*, and MWI the most influential outlets. Of 116 outlets cited, War on the Rocks garnered 28 mentions, *Military Review* 18, and MWI 17. Of Army publications, respondents found that *Military Review* generally succeeded in meeting its mission, though they were less confident in either branch magazines or *Parameters*.

Writers overwhelmingly engaged by reading articles online (65/237 responses), followed by discussion on social media or in chat groups (42) and by a three-way tie among listening to podcasts, reading print articles, and writing articles (34 each). When thinking about the habits of their peers, writers thought reading online articles was most common (60/167 responses), followed by discussion on social media or in chat groups (52) and listening to podcasts (37). Authors also pointed out that many service members engage with “meme” pages on Instagram and other platforms, which may offer a

method to drive engagement with more professional military content. Table 2 depicts consumption frequency by authors. Authors visit websites or social media daily or weekly, as opposed to monthly or seasonally for branch or institutional publications. Online engagement dominates, whether reading online articles, discussing professional issues with their peers, or listening to podcasts.

Authors also most appreciate quality content. Seventy-four percent of respondents rated “quality of content” as their most important factor. Three factors vied for second place. Seventeen percent rated “senior leader engagement” as their second most important factor with regular publication schedule and having a balance of informative and argumentative articles at 14 percent. Likewise, when asked how to improve branch magazines, 38 percent of respondents prioritized content quality, 19 percent prioritized formatting for mobile viewing, and 16 percent prioritized publishing more frequently.

Given the dominant preferences for quality content optimized for online viewing, preferences for War on the Rocks, *Military Review*, and MWI make sense. This section then makes clear what other military outlets should do to improve their engagement. First, transition to web-first content. Branch magazines and *Parameters* should stop posting articles in PDF and publish in formats easily viewed on mobile devices or desktops without downloading. Second, military professional outlets must embrace social media. Formally published content may trigger debate,

**Table 3. Publication Timeliness by Outlet**

Wait	Web	Branch	<i>Military Review</i>	<i>Parameters</i>	Academic
Less than 1 week	7	1	0	0	0
1–4 weeks	19	7	3	2	1
1–6 months	13	32	13	4	5
7 months to 2 years	1	4	9	10	7
No experience	23	18	36	45	47

(Table by author)

but effective social media use can drive engagement with content and encourage further written discourse. Finally, outlets must publish quality content. Increasing quality means developing writers and editing their work effectively.

**Developing writers and publishing writing.**

Driving an idea to publication is tough but can be taught. Civilian education is an important component of writing professionally. Intrinsic factors motivate writing, while time and other commitments serve as barriers to writing more, and timely and clear feedback are key components of an editorial process.

Civilian education cultivates military writers. When asked to rank factors associated with when they started writing, 64 percent of respondents rated their civilian education as the most important. After civilian education, 22 percent rated self-teaching as the first or second most important factors, followed by on-the-job training at 21 percent and military education at 19 percent. In a free-response question on starting to write, education—especially civilian education—stood out as associated with starting to write professionally.

Free-response questions provide nuanced anecdotes that illustrate how they started writing; 29/65 mentions involved education, with 18 of those specifically mentioning civilian education. Other reasons included intrinsic motivation (8), mentorship (6), and desire to influence (6). Whether civilian education causes writing or those more likely to write pursue civilian education is not clear. Either way, civilian education may

develop the writing skills necessary but perhaps not sufficient for professional writing unless coupled with internal motivation.

Writers attribute their motivation to intrinsic factors. When asked to rank their reasons for writing, 63 percent of respondents ranked “having an idea to share” as their top reason. After “having an idea to share,” 23 percent ranked “contributing to the field” and 15 percent ranked “personal satisfaction” as their first or second motivation. Factors that might benefit an individual such as networking opportunities or career advancement were much lower. As these answers are self-reported, readers might consider this result with some skepticism. However, intrinsic motivation does accord with the limited recognition writers receive.

Generally, authors receive limited personal recognition for their writing. The most common recognition mentioned in a free-response question included notes from soldiers in the field (14), some sort of senior leader recognition in a star notes or emails (11), or a command writing award (9). Other responses included a professional military writing award such as the Red Quill (6), follow-on opportunities such as speaking in a class or at a conference (6), a small award such as an Army Achievement Medal or coin (5), public recognition at a formation or other event (4), or service on a commander’s initiatives group (1). Of note, eight respondents indicated they had never received any recognition. This lack of recognition is notable, as the barriers to writing are significant.

When asked about barriers to writing, time and other commitments dominated the responses. When asked to rank order barriers to writing, respondents rated “lack of time” as 28 percent more of a barrier than “other commitments” and 61 percent more of a barrier than the next barrier, limited access to resources. These answers accorded with their free-response answers. Of 32 responses, 23 explained why they did not write more as a lack of time (13) or other commitments (10). Other responses included burdensome editorial processes (3), skepticism by the chain of command (2), lack of impact (2), and insufficient motivation (2). Of note, writers generally felt free from censorship.<sup>23</sup>

Editorial experiences can also impact whether and how often writers write. Of 348 responses, writers rated timely communication and feedback (63) as their top choice, followed by clear submission guidance (57), constructive criticism (48), and respect for the author’s idea and voice (46), and a collaborative editing process (41) as the most important factors. For those who reported they had a relationship with editors, 32 of 139 responses felt this relationship helped them better understand the outlet, followed by better communication and feedback during submissions, greater likelihood of acceptance, and increased confidence in the final product (27 each).

While authors did not cite timeliness of publication as a major factor, the wide variation in timeliness may impact author publication decisions. Table 3 (on page 24) shows web outlets to publish much more quickly than branch or other publications. Certainly, publications must find a balance between timeliness and quality, but neither branch outlets nor *Military Review* employ a peer-review process, suggesting they could speed their publication process with greater staff or emphasis on timeliness.<sup>24</sup>

Motivated intrinsically and cultivated by civilian education, military writers overcome time barriers and other commitments and develop relationships with editors to publish quality content. The following section explores whether volunteer editors could spur a new wave of professional military discourse.

**Quality content and volunteer editors.** Volunteer editorial teams could renew military journals. In fact, about one-quarter of authors would voluntarily edit military journals, especially if provided modest incentives or recognition (see figure 2, page 26). Twenty-four of 68 were either “very likely” or “likely” to proofread or

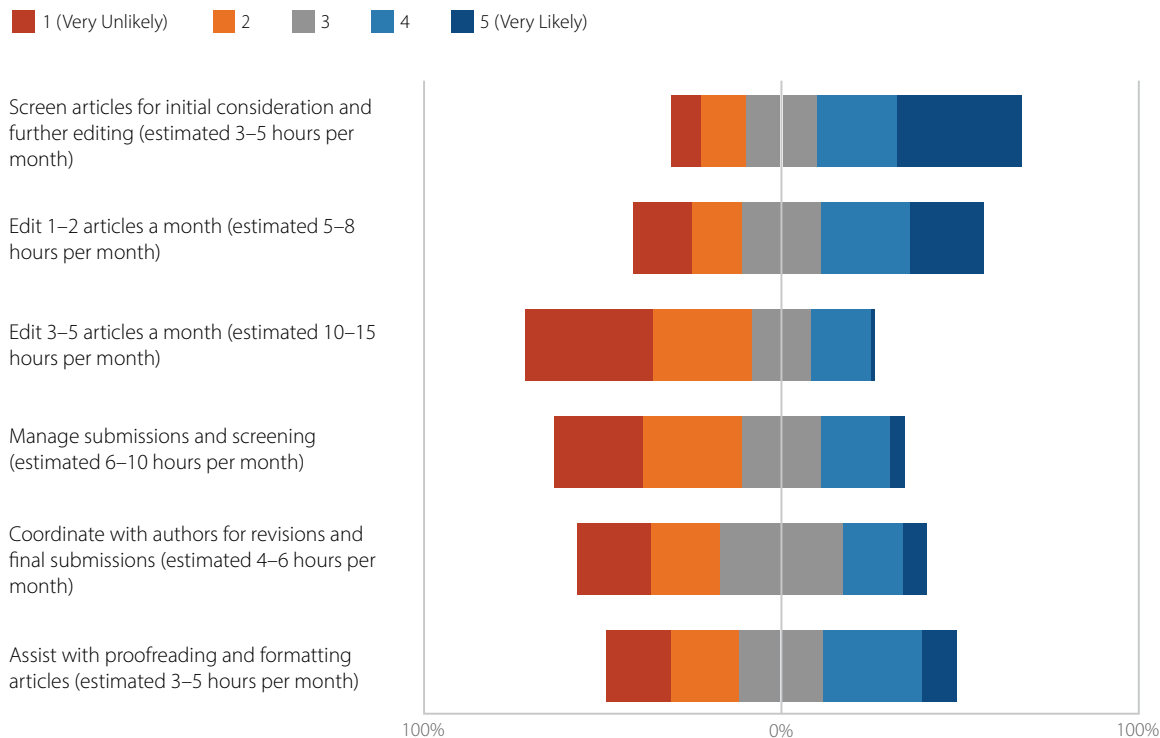
format articles (3–5 hours per month), 16 were likely to coordinate with authors (4–6 hours per month), 16 were likely to screen submissions (6–10 hours per month), and 13 were likely to edit articles (10–15 hours per month). Additionally, writers willing to volunteer in one category would consider others as well. The mean correlation between those four categories is 0.696. This means that a volunteer for any of these activities would likely consent to related volunteer tasks. About one-quarter of surveyed authors would edit, suggesting the Army may have a pool of more than 100 potential editors.

However, an outlet seeking volunteers may need to cast a wide web. No individual characteristics such as rank, age, or education was correlated with propensity to volunteer. This suggests volunteerism is an individual attribute and not common to particular groups. To draw on this potential editorial augmentation, the Army should ask them—and consider modest incentives.

Modest changes to annual evaluations or record briefs could stimulate volunteerism. Of the 98 responses to multiple-choice and free-response questions about incentives, 40 and 46 indicated that adding publications and volunteer editorial activities to the record brief or evaluation would encourage them. Of the remaining 12, three stated no incentive was required, seven thought other forms of command or board recognition would be necessary to stimulate volunteerism, and two had other comments.

Finally, when asked in a free-response question whether they had other thoughts on a volunteer model, the primary issues related to time and the editorial team. Nine authors were skeptical of the time burden associated with editing, while eight sought to make sure the editorial team avoided cliquishness or overly stringent standards for publication. The Army could harness volunteerism to renew branch magazines by asking individuals if they would like to volunteer and providing them modest recognition for their work.

The survey of Army authors delved into writer attributes, the characteristics of effective military outlets, developing and encouraging writers, and the viability of volunteer editors to help renew military publications. Authors considered outlets like War on the Rocks, *Military Review*, and MWI to be the most influential, emphasizing the importance of quality content optimized for online viewing. The survey also revealed the impact of civilian education on starting to write,



(Figure by author)

## Figure 2. Volunteerism and Editorial Tasks

the intrinsic motivation of writers, and the challenge of time constraints on publication. Authors identified timely communication, feedback, and clear submission guidance as essential elements in the editorial process. As an augmentation to professional editorial teams, volunteer editors offer a way to improve timeliness and content quality—the aspects authors identified as most important to effective outlets. To renew military publications, the Army should transition to web-first content, embrace social media, and provide modest incentives for editorial volunteers.

### Conclusion

In the 1930s, Harding’s hard work renewed the *Infantry Journal*. He modernized the format, sought out and cultivated writers who wrote well, and empowered a talented team. Then Lt. Col. Dwight Eisenhower appreciated the “extraordinary transformation [Harding] effected in [their] journal” while Gen. George C. Marshall described the *Infantry Journal* as “far ahead of any other military publication.”<sup>25</sup> Effective written discourse certainly helped set the Army on a path toward success in World War II.

Today, the Army has another opportunity to renew. The following three steps offer a path to transform the Army’s publication portfolio.

**1. The Army must modernize branch magazines and invest in social media presences.** Rather than publishing magazines as only PDFs, outlets should optimize for mobile or desktop viewing to reflect the evolution of modern media. To encourage further debate, articles should be easily shareable and have metadata compatible with citation tools like Zotero. As an interim or final step, branch magazines could tap into established brands, social media presence, and channels for niche content by partnering with outlets like MWI. Costs associated with modernizing will be modest, perhaps a few thousand dollars per outlet, and could be less if branches partner with existing outlets.

Moving or assimilating branch content into such platforms would break down the existing publication stovepipes, building relationships between authors and editorial teams who publish quality content. Writers engage with professional content on websites and social media each day. They must find the Army’s writing there.

## 2. The Army should stimulate quality writing and editing with modest talent management incentives.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed that adding publications and volunteer editorial activities to record briefs or annual evaluations would motivate them to volunteer as an editor. Annotation of writing would also help boards identify those who communicate well.

These changes might also diversify writing. The Army's current authors are worryingly homogeneous: the median author was a white male with an advanced civilian degree. Women represented just 3 percent (2/68) of the writers, while 16 percent (10/61) are a racial or ethnic minority—far below the Army's averages of 16.9 percent and 22.6 percent, respectively. Small policy changes would both encourage volunteer editing and more diverse voices.

## 3. The Army should encourage introspection on four points:

- First, all outlets should periodically survey readers, authors, and senior leaders to assess their success.<sup>26</sup>
- Second, the Army should consider why *civilian* education is the most-cited factor associated with professional writing. The Command and General Staff College requires written work from

all resident programs and faculty emphasize the writing rigor there, but authors reported military education as the fourth of fifth influences on learning to write professionally.<sup>27</sup>

- Third, others could investigate how often and under what conditions student monographs transition into published work at *Military Review* or other outlets. These monographs are typically published online, but ideally, they also spur continued written professional engagement.
- And fourth, commands and schools should assess their writing awards programs. Assuming even one person reviews articles submitted for these awards, the return on awards programs for encouraging professional writing appears to be surprisingly small. Thoughtful consideration of these points would certainly benefit the Army generally and professional discourse more specifically.

Renewal of the Army's publications is a simple task: *modernize* the format and *incentivize* authors and volunteer editors. Leadership at the Combined Arms Center can empower the next generation of the Army's professional discourse—just like the chief of infantry did almost one hundred years ago. ■

## Notes

1. Joseph Ingham Greene, ed., *The Infantry Journal Reader* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1943), v.

2. Leslie Anders, "The Watershed: Forrest Harding's *Infantry Journal*, 1934–1938," *Military Affairs* 40, no. 1 (1976): 12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1986843>.

3. *Ibid.* Readers should note that *Infantry Journal* is a predecessor of *ARMY*, while *Mailing List* is the predecessor of today's *Infantry*.

4. *Ibid.*, 15.

5. While page numbers may be a crude metric, branch journals remain roughly consistent over time. They have no advertisements and simple page layouts, making the number of pages published a rough measure for content.

6. Zachary Griffiths, "Bring Back Branch Magazines," Modern War Institute at West Point, 27 April 2023, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://mwi.usma.edu/bring-back-branch-magazines/>; "Twitter Search: from: fortbenning Infantry Magazine," Twitter, accessed 20 June 2023, [https://twitter.com/search?src=typed\\_query&q=from%3Afortbenning%20infantry%20magazine](https://twitter.com/search?src=typed_query&q=from%3Afortbenning%20infantry%20magazine).

7. *Armor* magazine retained a military editor until 2009, while the other branches transitioned to fully civilian staffs more than a decade prior.

8. See Stephen J. Townsend, "Accelerating Multi-Domain Operations: Evolution of an Idea," *Military Review* 98,

no. 1 (September–October 2018): 4–7, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/September-October-2018/Townsend-Multi-Domain-Operations/>.

9. See Donni Reed and Zachary Griffiths, "Making Tactical Innovation Happen: Five Tips for Leveraging Creativity and Experimentation in Your Unit," Modern War Institute at West Point, 18 September 2020, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://mwi.usma.edu/making-tactical-innovation-happen-five-tips-for-leveraging-creativity-and-experimentation-in-your-unit/>.

10. See Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession* (Carlisle, PA: Army War College Press, 2015), accessed 20 June 2023, <https://press.army-warcollege.edu/monographs/466/>; Meghann Myers, "The Army Just Dumped a Bunch of Mandatory Training to Free Up Soldiers' Time," *Army Times* (website), 24 April 2018, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2018/04/24/the-army-just-dumped-a-bunch-of-mandatory-training-to-free-up-soldiers-time/>.

11. Everett Spain, "Reinventing the Leader-Selection Process: The U.S. Army's New Approach to Managing Talent," *Harvard Business Review*, November–December 2020, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://hbr.org/2020/11/reinventing-the-leader-selection-process>.

12. Steve Ferenzi, "The Death of Critical Thinking in the Military? Here's How to Fix It," Real Clear Defense, 14 January

2021, accessed 20 June 2023, [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2021/01/14/the\\_death\\_of\\_critical\\_thinking\\_in\\_the\\_military\\_heres\\_how\\_to\\_fix\\_it\\_656486.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2021/01/14/the_death_of_critical_thinking_in_the_military_heres_how_to_fix_it_656486.html); Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Leadership* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2019).

13. See Todd A Schmidt, "Where Have All the Warrior-Scholars Gone? A Challenge to All Military Professionals," *Military Review* 103, no. 1 (January-February 2023): 3-4, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/January-February-2023/Letter-from-the-Editor/>; Donald A. Zoll, "The Decline of Military Literature," *Parameters* 2, no. 1 (1972), accessed 20 June 2023, <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol2/iss1/20/>; Kenneth E. Lay, "Military Writing," *Military Review* 44, no. 7 (July 1964): 53-60, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p124201coll1/id/657/>; and many others.

14. Drew Allen Bennett, "Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Writers for a Military Journal" (PhD diss., Texas A&M, 1991), 8; Kareem P. Montague, *The Army and Team Learning* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2008), 41-51, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA485558.pdf>.

15. Alonzo L. Coose Jr., *A Critical Evaluation of Military Review* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1970), accessed 20 June 2023, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD0713374.pdf>.

16. John R. Combs, "Management versus Leadership as Reflected in Selected Military Journals (1970-1985)" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1986), accessed 20 June 2023, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA172831>.

17. Outlets exist that are beyond the scope of this article. Authors may write for Army, the magazine of the Association of the United States Army, branch association magazines like *Army Engineer*, or other service journals, for example.

18. These websites can be found at War on the Rocks, <https://www.warontherocks.com>; Modern War Institute at West Point, <https://mwi.usma.edu>; From the Green Notebook, <https://www.fromthegreennotebook.com>; Task and Purpose, <https://www.taskandpurpose.com>; and The Military Leader, <https://www.themilitaryleader.com>.

19. "About," Army University Press, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/About/>.

20. Army Pamphlet 25-40, *Army Publishing Program Procedures* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2021), 54.

21. This survey used the Microsoft Forms application as part of the Army's Office 365 cloud. Note that this platform had significant drawbacks. More than twenty-five authors wrote me emails indicating they could not access the survey. The Combined Arms Center appeared to be completely blocked, removing at least twenty-one authors from the pool. Respondents could choose whether to answer questions, so not all questions have sixty-eight responses.

22. Military Leadership Diversity Commission, "Demographic Profile of the Active-Duty Officer Corps," Issue Paper No. 13 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, September 2008), 2-3, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/Documents/Resources/Commission/docs/Issue%20Papers/Paper%2013%20-%20Demographic%20Profile%20of%20Active%20Duty%20Officer%20Corps.pdf>.

23. Questions about freedom to write, the influence of the chain of command, and the influence of public affairs produced mean and median agreement that writers were generally free to write what they wanted. However, for all questions at least one writer felt very restricted.

24. Anders, "The Watershed," 15.

25. Readers should note that *Military Review* developed Online Exclusives to more rapidly publish articles independent of or ahead of publication in the journal. This is a laudable effort that could be improved with greater social media reach to increase awareness.

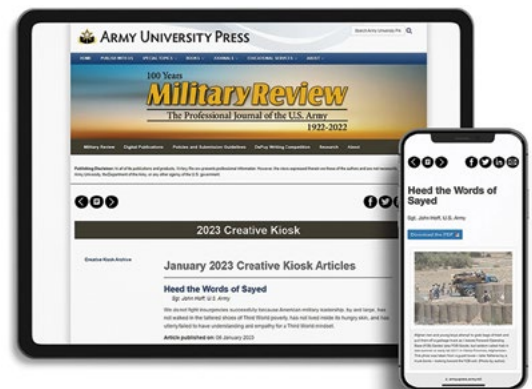
26. The last survey occurred in 1991. See "Reader Survey," *Military Review* 71, no. 5 (May 1991): 95-96, <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p124201coll1/id/488/rec/4>; Coose, *A Critical Evaluation of Military Review*.

27. "Degree Programs," U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, last updated 19 April 2023, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://armyuniversity.edu/cgsc/degreeprograms>; Trent J. Lythgoe, "Some Modest Advice for the Command and General Staff Officer's Course Class of 2020," *The Field Grade Leader*, 19 January 2019, accessed 20 June 2023, <https://fieldgradeleader.themilitaryleader.com/cgsc-advice/>.

## Military Review Creative Kiosk

The military is in some sense a cultural enclave that tends to promote different social perspectives on many issues that may differ somewhat from civilian perspectives due to different lifestyle experiences. To capture some of these expressions, *Military Review* has established the Creative Kiosk to collect and publish a modest selection of such cultural artifacts of possible broader interest to its reading audience and to augment understanding of the historical record of the times when such were collected.

To learn more about the Creative Kiosk and its submission guidelines, visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Creative-Kiosk/>.





Lt. Col. Richard A. Montcalm, commander of 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, leads recruits in the Oath of Enlistment on 18 April 2023 at the Douthitt Gunnery Complex on Fort Riley, Kansas. (Photo by Sgt. Jared Simmons, U.S. Army)

# Reimagining America's Professional All-Volunteer Army

Lt. Gen. James M. Dubik, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired

Lt. Gen. Lawson W. Magruder III, U.S. Army, Retired

**T**oday's senior civilian and military Army leaders face a challenge, different from but as complex and pressing as the one their post-Vietnam predecessors tackled: What should America's Army look like? During the Vietnam War, the United States relied on the deeply unpopular draft. By the early 1970s, social, political, economic, technological, and strategic conditions within the United States converged, leading to the conclusion that America needed a *professional volunteer* force. Both adjectives are important. The force created at the end of the Vietnam War became volunteer, but it took years to evolve into the professional Army that fought the First Gulf War. That Army has served the Nation well. However, conditions have changed significantly since the end of the Cold War and the winding down of America's

**Lt. Gen. James M. Dubik, PhD, U.S. Army, retired,**

is a senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of War, president and CEO of Dubik Associates, and a senior fellow at AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare. He commanded 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, during the 1994 Haiti intervention; was the deputy commanding general of 1st Cavalry Division in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and was the commanding general of 25th Infantry Division, I Corps, and the Multinational Security and Transition Command, Iraq, in 2007–2009. He is the author of *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory* and has published over three hundred essays, op-eds, monographs, and chapters in books. He has a PhD in philosophy from Johns Hopkins University.

post-9/11 wars. Now the Nation is in a multipolar, great-power period, and it is time to reexamine, perhaps even reimagine, the

**Lt. Gen. Lawson W. Magruder III, U.S. Army, retired,**

commanded the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, U.S. Army South in Panama, and the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum. He is a veteran of the Vietnam War and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. He holds a BBA from the University of Texas at Austin and an MA from Central Michigan University. His book *A Soldier's Journey Living His Why: Inspired by a Little Green Book* is a memoir focused on leadership lessons learned during the transformation to a volunteer professional force.

relationship between America's Army—Active, Guard, and Reserve—and the contextual conditions that shape it.

The professional volunteer Army emerged fifty years ago, and since then, contextual conditions have changed; as a result, there are major issues senior leaders face today.

## **Phase I. End of the Vietnam War to the Conclusion of the First Gulf War: Converging Conditions**

By 1970, American society had rejected the Vietnam War and the draft that fed it. Why this rejection came about has been the topic of books, conferences, and studies for decades. While academics and strategists disagreed as to the cause of this rejection, all agreed that a professional volunteer force would better serve America. Ending the draft was done relatively quickly in 1973, but recruiting and building a professional Army took much longer.

**The volunteer force.** Bernard Rostker's *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* captures the story of how the Army adapted.<sup>1</sup> Rostker's book is a thorough account of transforming a conscription-based personnel system into a recruited-based one that fit its strategic and domestic context. It is a fascinating story involving sets of senior leaders in Congress, the White House, and the Pentagon that detail multiple studies and the vast amount of work required by political and military staffs. *I Want You!* demonstrates that the shift to a recruited-based Army evolved over multiple years and multiple administrations—assisted by a Congress that had 80 percent of senators and 74 percent of representatives who had worn the uniform.<sup>2</sup>

In close coordination with Congress, Army leadership first focused on adjusting personnel policies. Among the most dramatic were changes to the Army's pay and benefit systems that had to become competitive with the civilian market because the Army, corporate America, and college admissions departments were now competing for the same pool of high-quality high school graduates.

The Army is not platform-based; it is people-based. So, to establish a volunteer Army, senior leaders began recruiting and retaining those who met the new standards. The U.S. Army Recruiting Command had to reorganize itself, educate its





workforce, design a marketing campaign, and execute it. The Army settled upon “Be All You Can Be,” which resonated with potential recruits and those serving. With a smart marketing campaign, the right set of bonuses and incentives, competitive pay and compensation packages, the Army slowly filled itself with high-quality, initial-entry soldiers.

Recruiting and retention had to mesh, however. An increase in the number of married soldiers and junior sergeants was one of the big effects of creating a volunteer force. Senior Army leaders understood that they recruited individuals but retained families. Retaining families meant adapting personnel policies, creating family-centered services, and improving the overall quality of life on Army posts. A soldier’s spouse and family viewed retirement, medical, commissary, post exchange, daycare, and educational benefits as important parts of the attractiveness of service and offsets to the risks and demands inherent to a soldier’s life. As the years progressed, the number of two-soldier and single-parent families increased. Over time, the Army also

Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger (*lower left*) and Le Duc Tho (*upper right*) initial the Paris Peace Accords on 23 January 1973 in Paris. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird followed the signing by announcing, “I wish to inform you that the Armed Forces henceforth will depend exclusively on volunteer soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines.” (Photo from the White House via Alamy)

realized that deploying a family-centric Army meant creating organizations, procedures, and services that could support families when one or both soldier-parents were gone. Spouses and families were very keen to understand how they would be taken care of when their soldier-spouse or soldier-parent deployed.

A very important but little-understood personnel cost associated with the volunteer Army concerned the expansion of the Army’s civilian workforce, which grew to do garrison jobs soldiers had previously performed. In the draft era, a normal year included training, readiness, and support cycles. In the support cycle, soldiers did garrison chores—cut grass; guarded various places on post; and provided augmentation to various garrison activities like gyms, theaters, and other



(Composite graphic by Beth A. Warrington, *Military Review*)

## The Big Five

administrative and morale and welfare operations. The volunteer soldier expected to do the job they volunteered for, the job the Nation was paying them to do.

**A professional force.** Senior Army leaders learned from their own experiences in Vietnam that the Army must become a professional force defined by its values and performance.<sup>3</sup> In 1970, the chief of staff of the Army directed the Army War College to study the status of professionalism in the force.<sup>4</sup> The study found a significant gap between a desired climate characterized by “individual integrity, mutual trust and confidence, unselfish motivation, technical competence, and unconstrained flow of information” and the existing climate perceived as embodying

selfish behavior that places personal success ahead of the good of the Service, looking upward to please superiors instead of looking downward to fulfill the legitimate needs of subordinates, preoccupation with the attainment of trivial short-term objectives even through dishonest practices that injure the long-term fabric of the organization, incomplete communications between junior and senior leaders which leave the senior uninformed and the junior feeling unimportant,

and inadequate technical or managerial competence to perform effectively.<sup>5</sup>

The study concluded that the “fix” to these problems was complex, would take time, and would hinge on Army senior leaders taking the initiative. In response to this study, for over fifteen years, several chiefs of staff and other senior leaders—in close coordination with the secretary of the Army, Department of Defense, and Congress—executed a set of programs to create the high-quality, highly trained, professional force that they envisioned. It meant that the Army’s senior leaders had to transform many of its major systems and institutions and in some cases, create new ones.<sup>6</sup>

A huge part of the transformation involved reorienting its fighting focus from counterinsurgency fighting to the conventional wars in Central Europe and Korea. That mindset change demanded that the Army develop and field new fighting doctrine and ensure that doctrine would take advantage of the modern equipment fielded in the late 1970s and 80s: the M1 Abrams tank, the M2/3 Bradley, the UH-60 Black Hawk, the AH-64 Apache, and the Patriot (known collectively as “the Big 5”). Fielding this equipment was part of reorienting the Army from Vietnam to Central Europe—the main strategic requirement of the time. The reorientation

consisted not only of fielding new equipment and new fighting doctrine but also adopting a new training methodology and revamping the leader (officer and noncommissioned officer) development programs.

Most of the concepts for the Big 5 were born in the 1960s as replacements for second-generation World War II equipment. As the Vietnam War came to an end, the need for this new generation of equipment became more urgent. By the early 1970s, the Army was ill-prepared to defend NATO. Its equipment was out of date. The cascading fielding of the Big 5 took many years. As each unit was “modernized,” however, the process excited both soldiers and leaders. All saw old equipment turned in as symbolic of moving from under the shadow of Vietnam toward becoming a new Army.

The Army’s new fighting doctrine unfolded iteratively. First came “Active Defense” in 1976, a doctrine developed in response to the technologies and tactics used in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.<sup>7</sup> Although ultimately rejected by the Army, the Active Defense doctrine spurred leaders at every level to think more rigorously about fighting a technologically enhanced, lethal, conventional war. This thinking—in conjunction with the fielding of a massive set of new equipment, the influx of high-quality soldiers, improvements in leader

development, and enhancement of pay and compensation—all combined to invigorate the Army.

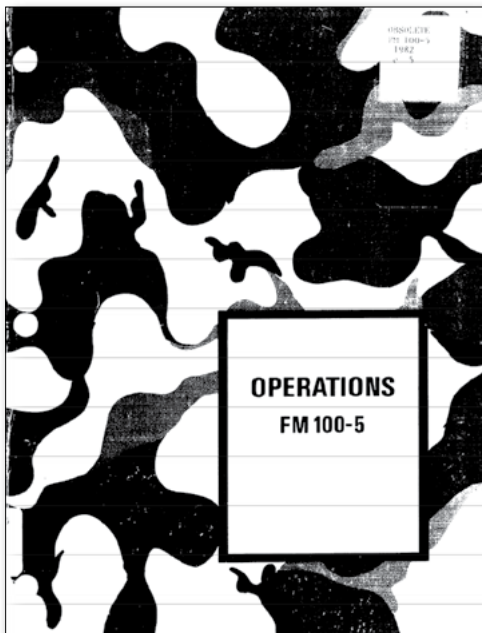
Ultimately, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command—a new command created in 1973—produced AirLand Battle doctrine in 1982, which would be central to everything the Army did for the next several decades.<sup>8</sup> Like fielding the Big 5, AirLand Battle doctrine energized Army leaders. The doctrine taught combat, combat support, and combat service commanders how to integrate their efforts at each echelon and between echelons. The tenets of the doctrine—initiative, agility, depth, and synchronization—drove new approaches in training and leader development.

The importance and effect of the Army’s adopting a revolutionary training methodology is hard to overstate five decades after its implementation. Today, the changes the Army made in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s are viewed as routine, the way the Army has always done business. It was not so at the start.<sup>9</sup>

The first major shift in the Army’s approach to training was to change from time based (e.g., two weeks allocated to platoon training) to standards based (e.g., platoons will train on the following tasks until their performance meets prescribed standards). This was called performance-oriented training. All training—from initial entry through every echelon of individual and collective training—became performance, not time, oriented. It is not an understatement to say that the shift in training philosophy was the foundation of America’s professional Army.<sup>10</sup>

The second major shift in training directed that all units derive their training focus from their wartime missions. This was called the mission-essential task list (METL). All units of the same type would no longer train on the same tasks—for example, all tank platoons across the Army training on the same generic platoon tasks. Instead, every unit in the Army would train on the tasks they were expected to execute in the warfighting plans designed for Central Europe or Korea. Using this focus, training took on a new sense of urgency and relevancy.

Third, training went from top-down directed to a mixture of top-down and bottom-up. For example, a division might conduct a major training exercise that would include several division-level, mission-essential tasks. But in preparation for this exercise, brigade, battalion, company commanders as well as platoon and squad leaders conducted their training meetings to determine which



Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (1982)



of their METL tasks would be their focus during the division exercise. Further, in conjunction with the other NCOs within their units, unit command sergeants major would identify which individual tasks they would evaluate during collective training. This was called multiechelon training. This shift ensured leaders at every level understood what they were going to do in training and why.

Next, the new training doctrine required that all training would be planned, prepared, executed, evaluated, and redone, if necessary, until all tasks were performed to standard.<sup>11</sup> Planning took place via a set of nested training meetings during which the leader or commander reviewed the individual, leader, and collective tasks; identified which tasks they had to perform; ensured the training resources were available to set the right conditions for training; and allocated sufficient time to perform to standard and retrain if necessary. The doctrine stipulated that primary trainers were two echelons above the training unit. In other words, battalion commanders ensured that platoons were properly trained; brigade commanders, companies; and division commanders, battalions, etc. This two-echelon method reinforced the Army's desire for all leaders to be able to use their initiative and act within the intent of senior leaders two levels above.<sup>12</sup>

Soldiers move forward with a Stryker Combat Vehicle in support 31 October 2019 during Decisive Action Rotation 20-02 at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. (Photo by Brooke Davis, U.S. Army)

Senior commanders executed their responsibilities by first planning training during quarterly, semiannual, and annual training briefs. Second, they created the conditions for all tasks to be performed under realistic conditions. Finally, they personally observed and evaluated training. Evaluation took place through brutally honest, unit-led after action reviews to ensure training standards were met or the task redone.

The capstone collective training events for brigades and below were conducted at combat training centers (CTC). The first of the Army's CTCs was the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California—announced in 1979 and activated in 1980. Later, the Army opened the Joint Readiness Training Center, first located at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, then moved to Fort Polk, Louisiana. The last CTC was the Combat Maneuver Training Center at Hohenfels, Germany. Units would deploy to these CTCs to execute selected METL tasks, fighting against an aggressive opposing force and

observed by highly qualified observer/controllers that were permanently stationed at the CTC. It was the ultimate test, meant to clearly identify shortcomings in unit home-station training.

Division and corps commanders were put under the warfighting microscope too, but mostly in constructed reality rather than in live exercises. The Army created the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP, now called the Mission Command Training Program). Via computer generated scenarios, division and corps commanders “fought” an opposing force as proficient as those in the live CTCs. This program evaluated the state of training of division and corps commanders and their staffs. CTCs and the BCTP ensured that no soldier, leader, or unit would go unevaluated. This new approach to training radically improved the quality of performance throughout the Army.

To lead volunteers, create professionals, and execute the new training doctrine, the Army needed to upgrade its leader development programs for both officers and NCOs. The Army adopted a “select-train-promote” methodology and a “Be, Know, Do” approach to accomplish this upgrade. Army values—ultimately standardized as loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage—were woven into the fabric of professional education curricula and officer and NCO efficiency reports.

Battalion-and-above commanders were centrally selected at the Department of the Army level against Army-wide standards, and command tours were lengthened and standardized. For NCOs, central selection began at the staff sergeant. Further, at each level of professional education, officers and NCOs were taught what they had to be (character), know, (skills), and do (behaviors) appropriate for the level of responsibility they were to assume.

The officer education program expanded, including a company command course, a battalion staff course, and a precommand course for commanders of battalions and above—these in addition to officer basic courses, the Command and General Staff Course for majors, and the War Colleges for lieutenant colonels. The Army’s School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), a school for competitively selected majors and an even smaller set of lieutenant colonels, was one of the most important innovations in officer education. Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales described this school in *Certain Victory* as a place where majors “would study the art of war in an intensive program of reading,

military history, practicing computer wargames, and writing extensively.”<sup>13</sup> “By the time of the Gulf War,” Scales reported, “SAMS graduates had established a reputation as some of the best staff officers in the Army.”<sup>14</sup>

The NCO education system was completely overhauled. As an NCO develops, the scope of his or her responsibility expands as well, so the Army developed an education program that matched this reality. At each level, sergeants learn the theory and practice of leadership appropriate to the rank and responsibilities the NCO will assume. The Army established common curricula for every level of NCO leadership: a Basic Leadership Course for sergeants, an Advanced Leadership Course for staff sergeants, and a Senior Leadership Course for sergeants first class. Later, the Army created a Sergeants Major Academy and other leadership courses to ensure continued leadership education for the NCO corps. Ultimately, command sergeants major were included in the precommand course formerly just for the commanders, thus emphasizing the command team concept. All these programs were key to professionalizing the NCO corps and help it become capable of leading and training the high-quality soldiers recruited to serve.

Creating a professional, volunteer Army meant applying all these changes—in recruiting, retention, personnel, equipment, doctrine, training, and leader development—not only to the active Army but also to the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. The active Army, Guard, and Reserve became so closely integrated in the period between the end of Vietnam and the First Gulf War that any operational use of Army forces required using substantial parts of the Guard and Reserve. This shift was called the “Total Force” policy.<sup>15</sup>

Even though the Army reduced significantly in overall size during this period, it increased the number of its active divisions. Gen. Creighton Abrams accomplished this increase in combat power by including one Army National Guard brigade—called roundout brigades—and selected Army Reserve battalions within active division structures.<sup>16</sup> The Army also shifted the majority of combat service support capacity to the U.S. Army Reserve. By the mid-to-late 1980s, 52 percent of combat forces and 67 percent of combat support and combat service support units in the Army were in the Guard and Reserve.<sup>17</sup> The sequential use of the Guard and Reserve, which had dominated the draft-era Army, changed radically. Henceforth, any



M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks of the 3rd Armored Division move across the desert 15 February 1991 during Operation Desert Storm. A Bradley Fighting Vehicle can be seen in the background. (Photo by Photographer's Mate Chief Petty Officer D. W. Holmes II, U.S. Navy)

operational use of the Army would simultaneously use all components.<sup>18</sup>

The proof of the proficiency of America's professional volunteer army came in two operations: The Panama Invasion (December 1989–January 1990) and the First Gulf War (August 1990–February 1991). In Panama, a dictator was deposed and captured, and a democratic government put in place. In Iraq, Kuwait was liberated, and the Iraqi army routed. Both operations were done quickly and decisively. In Panama and Iraq, America and the world watched the result of decades of professionalization. America's professional all-volunteer Army became the gold standard by which all other armies were measured.

The battalion commanders who executed these operations had entered service at about the time it became a professional volunteer force. The generals who led these operations were Vietnam veterans whose wartime experience was a driving force behind the leadership they provided for over a decade and a half. These officers, and the sergeants who were the backbone of the Army, were the product of more than better pay—they were the result

of sustained transformational change of one of the world's largest organizations.<sup>19</sup>

In over fifteen years of multiple, interrelated changes and iterative improvements, the Total Army had become more than the sum of its parts. Between the end of the Vietnam War and the First Gulf War, the transformed professional volunteer Total Army was aligned with its social, political, economic, technological, and strategic context. The professional volunteer Army was not just a fix to the problem of social resistance to the draft. Rather, it was the answer to two much broader questions: What did the Nation expect the Army to do, and how could such a force be created within acceptable risk?<sup>20</sup>

## **Phase II. The End of the Cold War to the Conclusion of America's Post-9/11 Wars: Changing Contextual Conditions**

Two major disruptive changes followed Panama and the Gulf War. First, the Cold War ended with the Soviet Union, America's primary threat, dissolving.

Second, information age technologies seemed to promise a “Revolution in Military Affairs.” Some used both to question the size, composition, and purpose of America’s Army. Later in this period, two potentially dangerous gaps emerged: the first, between the size and composition of the Army and the Nation’s strategic needs; the second, between the Army and the citizens on whose behalf it serves.

**The end of the Cold War and information age technology.** With the Soviet Union dissolved, some concluded that the era of ideological struggles had

intelligence, convinced some to expand the peace dividend because they believed all future wars would be rapid and decisive operations—faster and on a larger scale than the Gulf War. Ground force size, so the argument went, could be offset by precision air forces, long-range rocket and missile fires, and smaller, high-tech ground units. Some advocates believed information would be so accurate and ubiquitous that the fog of war would be lifted, and battlefield reserves would no longer be required—another reason for reducing ground forces.

“Two potentially dangerous gaps emerged: the first, between the size and composition of the Army and the Nation’s strategic needs; the second, between the Army and the citizens on whose behalf it serves.”

ended, and any potential World War III was a thing of the past, so a peace dividend was in order. In the 1990s, that dividend came in the shape of about a 30 percent cut in Army size and budget—even as the operational tempo (OPTEMPO) of the Army increased significantly. The size of the National Guard and Army Reserve was also reduced, increasing the pace of deployment for the remaining units as well. Sequential and overlapping small-scale contingency operations of the 1990s—Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and others, had a

negative effect on retention of active soldiers, but had an even more significant impact on Reserve and National Guard units not accustomed to such use. ... In fiscal year 1986, Reserve components contributed nine hundred thousand man-days of service; by fiscal year 1999 that figure had skyrocketed to 12.5 million man-days.<sup>21</sup>

By the mid-to-late 1990s, senior Army leaders were faced with the effects of high OPTEMPO, especially for Special Forces and among military occupational specialties like military police, engineers, civil affairs, and other specialties that were low density but in very high demand.

In addition, the level of precision demonstrated in the First Gulf War, both in the air and on the ground, plus the increased availability of near-real-time

Technology-inspired academicians, strategists, and leaders—some in uniform—promulgated the belief that war itself had changed. They defined war, and therefore warfighters, very narrowly: conventional; technology-enhanced; shock and awe, rapid, decisive operations. Everything else was “other than war.” And, since the Army existed to fight and win the Nation’s wars, a strain of thinking evolved both among military and civilian strategists that considered “operations other than war” somebody else’s business.

The 1990s was a bifurcated period. On the one hand, the Army shrunk, for many held the belief that a large ground force would never again be necessary. On the other hand, the actual strategic demands of multiple small-scale contingency operations increased the use of the Total Army significantly. The professional volunteer Army that won in Panama and the Gulf War no longer seemed to fit the strategic environment unfolding in the early post-Cold War period. It was too large and too tied to a form of conventional combat that many believed was obsolete—even as it was overused. As Rosa Brooks observed, “We no longer know what kind of military we need, or how to draw sensible lines between civilian and military tasks and roles.”<sup>22</sup>

The Army “digitized” in the mid-1990s to early 2000s, and smaller Army units became more lethal. But lost in the zealotry of the time was this: size still mattered because rapid, decisive operations described

only one possible way future war might be fought and waged. A tension developed, therefore, between the desire to retain a professional volunteer Army for the kind of rapid, decisive war many thought was the future and the affordability of a professional force needed to both prepare for that future and serve the Nation's immediate strategic needs.

Costs rose continuously: costs of civilianizing garrison activities, of pay and benefits, of modernizing and improving the technological capacity of equipment, of continual improvements in training—both for live training exercises as well as constructive and virtual reality simulations. The combination of reducing the size of the Army and rising costs often drove senior army and political leaders to make size and composition decisions sometimes based more on affordability than on strategic needs—decisions that exacerbated the already growing problem of overusing an ever-smaller force.

In the absence of the Cold War threat, with the “promises” of technology, and in the face of rising costs, the two-war construct for sizing the Army ultimately was abandoned. It was replaced first by a base force and a contingency force construct, then by a two-major-regional-contingency requirement, and finally a one-and-a-half war model. The Total Army was affected.<sup>23</sup>

Even before the attacks of 11 September 2001, the Nation's strategic reserve—the National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve—was becoming a de facto operational reserve. In fact, during the more than twenty years of post-9/11 war, the Nation's reserve forces have become excellent operational reserves. In the process, however, the Nation was left with an atrophied strategic mobilization capacity. The Nation's ability to expand its military and industrial base is all but gone—just as the global environment has made both strategically important.

The Guard and Reserve reduced in size at the end of the Cold War like the active force. And while not hollow, they are both suffering from recruiting and retention shortages and challenges like the active Army. More recently, it seems the Army may be intending to cast the Guard and Reserve as both an operational and strategic reserve force—risking overpromising and underdelivering.

Politically, the risks associated with continued reduction of the Total Army were considered low since technology and precision as well as ubiquitous

information could offset size. Precision would also reduce the ammunition required, even as the cost of precision munitions increased. Political leaders also considered the risk of a smaller, more precise Army acceptable because future wars would be rapid and decisive—not prolonged.

But then came the attacks of 11 September 2001. Reality spoke: not all forms of wars would be rapid and decisive. After the initial invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States found itself fighting two prolonged theater wars as well as a third global war against jihadi extremists—all at the same time. The large ground force that would never be needed was needed. Technology mattered a lot in each of these wars, but so did the numbers of ground troops. Information was extensive, but not ubiquitous; ambiguity and uncertainty reemerged as verities on the battlefield as well as in Washington, D.C., as it fought and waged these wars.

The size of the ground force necessary in Afghanistan, Iraq, and globally was offset somewhat by technology and information, but the Total Army never grew large enough to fight two regional and one global war simultaneously. The overused Total Army of the post-Cold War period became the overused Total Army of the post-9/11 period—so much so that Sergeant Major of the Army Michael Grinston recently said, “We have an enormous strain on soldiers. We're busier now than we ever have been.” He called the situation a “huge concern” for himself and other leaders.<sup>24</sup>

The actual Army strength required to fight and wage three wars simultaneously was masked during the post-9/11 wars by the substantial growth of contractor support. Contractors assumed many security, maintenance, supply, logistics, construction, administrative, and food service functions formerly done by the Army combat service support organizations long since cut from the Total Army force structure.

The result has been that costs soared—not only the ammunition, equipment, maintenance, and supply costs to fight three wars simultaneously but also the costs associated with the wartime civilian structure and the psychological cost of multiple back-to-back combat rotations. On the surface, America's Army remains the global gold standard for a professional force and its OPTEMPO has not prevented it from meeting every mission the Nation assigns to it. Below the surface, however, the Army's foundation may be cracking.





**Two gaps?** Some of the Army's shrinkage after the Cold War was natural, the normal response after any war. Another part, however, was anything but natural. It resulted from a core false belief: that American technology and proficiency would guarantee that all future wars would be short, rapid, and decisive. Some even predicted that war in the future would be conducted below the threshold of conventional war, in what are called "gray zones"—which, again, would require only Special Forces and a small Army.<sup>25</sup>

The Army's size bumped up a bit during America's three post-9/11 wars but not enough to offset the requirement of fighting three wars simultaneously. Furthermore, during the 9/11 wars, Army modernization virtually stopped. As was the case in Vietnam, the primary focus was on immediate fighting requirements. Equipment necessary to fight in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the global war against jihadi extremists improved significantly, as did many intelligence and command-and-control capabilities. Longer-term strategic needs took a back seat.

Adding to the strain of an already stretched force is a pace of operations that has not slowed since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq. Well

Spc. Semaj Girtmon (*left*) and Spc. Jaycob Plasek, assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, supporting the 4th Infantry Division, load an M249 belt-fed light machine gun during a live-fire exercise on a range at Bemowo Piskie Training Area, Poland, 5 July 2023. Thousands of soldiers have deployed from the United States to reinforce Europe either as part of strengthening NATO's defense or assisting the Ukraine military, straining the already stretched U.S. forces. (Photo by Sgt. Alex Soliday, U.S. Army)

over ten thousand soldiers, for example, have deployed from the continental United States to reinforce Europe either as part of strengthening NATO's defense or assisting the Ukraine military. The result is a gap between an overused, too-small Total Army and current U.S. strategic requirements.

A second gap is also emerging between America's Army and the society on whose behalf it fights. It is too early to say definitively, but the length of the three post-9/11 wars, the repetitive overuse of soldiers and leaders, and the ambiguity associated with the conduct and ending of the post-9/11 wars may be factors affecting American citizens' propensity to serve. Wars are fought for political aims, and the sacrifices of those fighting and of their families are seen as "worth it" when they result in achieving the identified aims. On

the one hand, the United States has not been attacked since 9/11, though military, intelligence, and police forces have thwarted several attempts. On the other hand, al-Qaida has been reduced but not destroyed; the Islamic State, though limited, still prowls; Afghanistan has returned to Taliban control; and Iraq is hardly the democratic ally in the Global War on Terrorism as originally intended. The result is that the trust between echelons within the Army that was evident following the Panama and Gulf Wars is not fully present now. Further, trust between the military and its political leaders is also weakening, as is the trust between the American people and its Army.

“Since the 1990s, the propensity [for military service] of young Americans has steadily declined.”<sup>26</sup> Generational attitudes, and the culture wars going on throughout the United States, are very likely affecting not only decisions made by today’s youth but also the advice given to them by those who influence such decisions.

Vocal and repeated accusations of the Army either being too woke or too brutish—especially by high-profile media personalities and journalists as well as by senior political leaders or retired senior military leaders—matter. Even more, political campaigns on both sides of the aisle organizing “soldiers for \_\_\_\_” or “veterans for \_\_\_\_” bring the Army into partisan politics and suggest that soldiers are just one more political action group. America’s culture wars also manifest among retired senior military officers. Lining up generals and admirals on stage as props to demonstrate military support for one candidate over another creates an impression that there are “Democratic” generals and admirals and “Republican” general and admirals, not senior officers who swear allegiance to the U.S. Constitution.

Overall, American citizens are still very proud of their Army and respectful of it, as are America’s civilian leaders, but both groups are growingly disconnected. Kori Shake and Jim Mattis discuss this disconnection in their 2016 book *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*.<sup>27</sup> While they conclude that the relationship between America’s military and its civilian society is fundamentally strong, they identify an unhealthy disparity between those who fight and those on whose behalf fighting is done.<sup>28</sup>

Over time, these trends could create too large of a separation between America and America’s Army, which

would have strategic consequences. In fact, *Warriors & Citizens* says at one point that public ignorance about the military is already problematic. It encourages “politicians to consider their strategic choices hemmed in by public opposition and to shift responsibility for winning policy arguments onto the military; [public ignorance] impedes sustained support for the war effort; permits the imposition of social policies that erode battlefield lethality; fosters a sense of victimization of veterans that skews defense spending toward pay and benefits; and distances veterans from our broader society.”<sup>29</sup>

As the volunteer force celebrates its fiftieth year, two sets of questions come to the fore. First, to what degree are the converging social, political, economic, and strategic conditions that spawned America’s volunteer Army following the Vietnam War now diverging? And if they are, is this divergence a problem? Second, to what degree does America’s professional volunteer Army fit the Nation’s strategic requirements?

An initial reading of *Warriors & Citizens* might suggest that, while there are some worrisome trends, the relationship between the Army and current social, political, economic, technological, and strategic conditions is not yet breaking. All should be cautious of such a reading, however, for the book was published in 2016, meaning its research and writing took place before 2015—before the pandemic, the embarrassing withdrawal from Afghanistan, the 6 January attack on Congress, the widening divisiveness in public discourse, the enduring recruiting crisis, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, and China’s more assertive military stance. A more current source of information on this topic is Peter Feaver’s *Thanks for Your Service: The Causes and Consequences of Public Confidence in the U.S. Military*.<sup>30</sup> His analysis may provide additional insight. Questioning the viability of the relationship between America’s Army and its contextual conditions could not come at a more important time.

### **Phase III. A Complex and Unstable Multipolar, Great Power Strategic Environment: Does America’s Total Army Still Fit?**

The myth of war as a rapid, decisive operation was exploded first by the post-9/11 wars and now by the Ukraine War. Additionally, a Chinese invasion of

Taiwan—should such an invasion occur—is unlikely to be rapid and decisive and may even spread to engulf the Indo-Pacific region. The possibility of war in all its forms is rising. Present before our eyes is the potential for a prolonged, conventional war in Europe and the potential for another in the Indo-Pacific—just the kind of wars thought in the 1990s to be a thing of the past. Furthermore, other threats remain: jihadi extremists; the ever-present nuclear-armed, rogue North Korea; a weakened Russia threatening the use of nuclear weapons as well as destabilizing Europe and the Middle East; China’s rise in Asia and beyond; and Iran’s partnerships with Russia and China, destabi-

lizing operations throughout the Middle East, quest for nuclear arms, and emerging relationship with Saudi Arabia. The emerging global security environment raises the question of the relationship between America’s Total Army and the Nation’s strategic requirements. The base questions for the Army’s senior leaders and the Nation are similar to those of the 1970s: What kind of Total Army, to include its industrial and materiel base, does America need in our actual strategic environment? And, how can the U.S. create this Army within affordable risk?

lizing operations throughout the Middle East, quest for nuclear arms, and emerging relationship with Saudi Arabia. The emerging global security environment raises the question of the relationship between America’s Total Army and the Nation’s strategic requirements. The base questions for the Army’s senior leaders and the Nation are similar to those of the 1970s: What kind of Total Army, to include its industrial and materiel base, does America need in our actual strategic environment? And, how can the U.S. create this Army within affordable risk?

America’s senior political and military leaders must ask themselves fundamental questions, just as their predecessors did at the end of the Vietnam War. This discussion must extend to the Nation’s political leaders in the executive and legislative branches. Unlike the period in which the professional volunteer Army was created, however, the current cultural milieu as well as the lack of experience and understanding of the military among political leaders (only 34 percent of senators and 18 percent of representatives have served in the military) will hinder making the appropriate

adaptive decisions necessary to align the Total Army with America and the strategic environment.<sup>31</sup>

These challenges, however, cannot divert leaders from addressing at least these critical issues:

- The Nation has never been able to afford the size of Army, to include its industrial and materiel base, that strategic requirements demand. So what size is associated with acceptable risk based upon the actual strategic requirements of today’s global environment and the realities of fighting and waging multiple kinds of wars? The size of America’s Total Army cannot be based upon the world as we would like it to be or the war we

“ The current cultural milieu as well as the lack of experience and understanding of the military among political leaders (only 34 percent of senators and 18 percent of representatives have served in the military) will hinder making the appropriate adaptive decisions necessary to align the Total Army with America and the strategic environment. ”

would like to fight. Today’s strategic environment may require better expansibility than the Army currently has. Expansibility, therefore, should be part of the discussion of right-sizing the Total Army to today’s world. Part of any discussion should also include an analysis of a newly conceived version of conscription. In the end, senior leaders may reject the idea, but to do so preemptively would be intellectually self-limiting.

- The Army’s people programs are not just about pay and benefits. They’re about readiness of individuals, leaders, units, and families. Too few Americans remember the sad state of Army readiness at the start of World War II, the beginning of the Korean War, or the hollow Army of the 1970s. Fortunately, those nadir years don’t describe today’s Total Army, but the future may begin to resemble the past unless substantial changes occur in recruitment, training time (which differs from deployment time), and quality of life issues.
- Joining the Army has never been just about the pay or benefits. They are important, but more important

is serving the Nation, being part of something greater than oneself, doing one's part as a citizen, and embracing a willingness to sacrifice in defense of our Nation. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said in 2010, however, "For a growing number of Americans, service in the military, no matter how laudable, has become something for other people to do."<sup>32</sup> How can senior political and military leaders increase the "propensity to serve" among recruit-aged citizens and their influencers? How can they expand the pool of young citizens who are qualified for service? The answers to these questions require extended civil-military cooperation, especially with congressional leaders. In the end, raising and sustaining America's Total Army is a congressional responsibility.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, the Department of the Army has a lot of self-reflection and work to do with respect to recruiting and retention as well as how insulated the Army has become. Equally sure is that Congress must act (a) to address the national problems that have reduced the pool of available recruits to less than 25 percent of American youth, (b) to help reduce the effects of culture wars and partisan political action on the Army, (c) to show that citizenship and service to the Nation are important values in a democracy, and (d) to place compensation at a level that soldiers no longer need food stamps or other programs to augment their salary.

- ♦ Adaptation to available technology, to strategic requirements, and to allocated funding has always meant that the Total Army's end strength and force structure is dynamic. So, how can the Total Army and the industrial and materiel base be gradually restructured to provide the Nation with the Army it needs? Twenty years of war has delayed serious modernization within the Army. Some plans exist, and some monies have been made available, but major improvements in the industrial base, the acquisition system, and the

Army's infrastructure remain more fallow than cultivated fields.

- ♦ The wars the Army will fight will not be in the continental United States. The Russia-Ukraine war has made evident that deploying troops, weapons, equipment, ammunition, and supplies requires more sea and airlift than is currently available. Strategic flexibility and responsiveness—important in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere—require a modern support base and secure supply chain. The right balance of forward deployed units and those stationed within the United States, upgrading and securing the materiel base, providing adequate transportation means, and suitable deployment mechanisms, therefore, must be part of any discussion.

Facing these and other issues head-on will begin to produce a Total Army that is once again aligned with the social, political, economic, technological, and strategic conditions of the current historical period. No doubt many of the capabilities, systems, units, and programs of today's Army can, and should, be continued or modified. Equally without doubt, however, is that the contextual conditions from which the professional volunteer Army emerged have changed drastically. The Army must adapt—in size and composition. Further, the adaptation must realign the relationship between America's Army and the society on whose behalf it fights.

Today's senior Army leaders are the product of twenty years at war. Like their post-Vietnam predecessors, they are responsible for the profession. They must initiate a set of conversations—within the Total Army, then among senior leaders in the executive and legislative branches—and take the action necessary to assure that the future of America's professional volunteer force is ready to respond as well as it has for the past fifty years. This will be difficult and challenging, especially given the acrimony that surrounds any serious discussions today, but it must be done for the sake of the Nation. ■

---

## Notes

1. Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006).

2. Drew DeSilver, "New Congress Will Have a Few More Veterans, but Their Share of Lawmakers Is Still Near a Record Low," Pew Research Center, 7 December 2022, accessed 30 June 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/>

[short-reads/2022/12/07/new-congress-will-have-a-few-more-veterans-but-their-share-of-lawmakers-is-still-near-a-record-low/](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/07/new-congress-will-have-a-few-more-veterans-but-their-share-of-lawmakers-is-still-near-a-record-low/).

3. Gen. Dennis J. Reimer (retired, former chief of staff of the Army), email with authors, 30 May 2023.

4. U.S. Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 30 June 1970),

53–54, accessed 30 June 2023, <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll11/id/1644>.

5. *Ibid.*, 13.

6. For an account of this period of transformation, see James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1995).

7. John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973–1982* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC], 1984).

8. *Ibid.*

9. In the 1970s, the authors were company grade officers who served together first in the 82nd Airborne Division, then in the newly formed 2nd Ranger Battalion. Both were not just observers of the Army's training transformation but also early implementors of it.

10. Chief of Staff Gen. Creighton Abrams created the modern Ranger battalions as much to demonstrate to the Army how this new training methodology could work as to provide the Army with a new operational capability.

11. The performance-oriented training methodology adopted in the 1970 was first captured in a series of TRADOC pamphlets, then in Field Manual 25-100, *Training the Force* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 1988).

12. At the time, this was called "decentralized command," now it's "mission command."

13. Robert H. Scales, *Certain Victory: The US Army in the Gulf War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1994), 27.

14. *Ibid.*, 28.

15. Ellen M. Pint et al., *Review of Army Total Force Policy Implementation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017).

16. For an excellent summary of these two decisions, see Conrad Crane's "Post-Vietnam Drawdown: The Myth of the Abrams Doctrine," in *Drawdown: The American Way of Postwar*, ed. Jason W. Warren (New York: New York University Press, 2016), chap. 10, Kindle.

17. Scales, *Certain Victory*, 18.

18. The roundout concept brought all components closer together. Ultimately, it increased professionalism, improved readiness, and allowed the Army to retain necessary force structure. But it was not without problems. Active, Guard, and Reserve personnel policies, funding methodologies, training standards, and readiness procedures all had to be rationalized. This rationalization took much senior leader effort and a lot of time. One of the main challenges for the Total Army, however, came during the First Gulf War. After the 48th, 155th, and 256th National Guard combat brigades received their active-duty notification for Operation Desert Storm, it took them much longer to get ready than expected. To further complicate Army National Guard deployment, some Guard leaders thought that the active component placed additional training requirements on them to meet deployment certification, which only one of the three brigades managed to reach. This controversy resulted in an extensive series of

extremely sensitive discussions among the senior leaders of each component and Congress. In the end, the Total Army became even more closely knitted together, however. Scars formed within the Army's components, but the fruit of this knitting was born out in America's post-9/11 wars where U.S. Army Guard and Reserve units deployed repetitively and successfully.

19. Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers*.

20. These questions developed from an email exchange between Col. (Ret.) Len Fullenkamp and the authors, 3 June 2023.

21. Crane, "Post-Vietnam Drawdown," in Warren, *Drawdown*, loc. 246, Kindle.

22. Rosa Brooks, "Civil-Military Paradoxes," in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*, ed. Kori Shake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 22.

23. The military shifted from a threat-based model to determine the appropriate size of the force to a capability-based model. The latter provided increased flexibility but also began to mask increasing levels of risk inherent in the force.

24. James Clark, "Soldiers under 'Enormous Strain' Warns Army's Top Enlisted Leader," *Army Times* (website), 12 May 2023, accessed 30 June 2023, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2023/05/12/soldiers-under-enormous-strain-warns-armys-top-enlisted-leader/>.

25. For a summary of this false belief and its strategic consequences, see James M. Dubik, *America's Global Competition, The Gray Zone in Context* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, February 2018), accessed 30 June 2023, <https://www.understandingwar.org/report/americas-global-competitions-gray-zone-context>; James M. Dubik, *The Future of War and America's Strategic Capacity* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, November 2021), accessed 30 June 2023, <https://www.understandingwar.org/report/future-war-and-america's-strategic-capacity>.

26. Ulysses J. Brown and Dharam S. Rana, "Generalized Exchange and Propensity for Military Service: The Moderating Effect of Prior Military Exposure," *Journal of Applied Statistics* 32, no. 3 (2005): 259–70, accessed 30 June 2023, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02664760500054590>.

27. Shake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*.

28. *Ibid.* Several essays in *Warriors & Citizens* address this problem: Rosa Brooks's "Civil-Military Paradoxes," 21–68; Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Is Civilian Control Over the Military Still and Issue?," 69–96; and Shake and Mattis's conclusion, "Ensuring a Civil-Military Connection," 287–326.

29. Shake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 19–20; see, especially, Brooks, "Civil-Military Paradoxes," in Shake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 39–49.

30. Peter D. Feaver, *Thanks for Your Service: The Causes and Consequences of Public Confidence in the U.S. Military* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

31. DeSilver, "New Congress Will Have a Few More Veterans."

32. Robert Gates, quoted in Brooks, "Civil-Military Paradoxes," in Shake and Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens*, 23.

33. U.S. Const., art. I, § 8, cl. 12.



Recruits recite the Oath of Enlistment 27 March 2022 in Miami. (Photo by Lara Poirrier, U.S. Army)

# Lack of Will

## How the All-Volunteer Force Conditioned the American Public

Maj. Christopher J. Parker, U.S. Army

*Woe to the government, which, relying on half-hearted politics and a shackled military policy, meets a foe who, like the untamed element, knows no law other than his own power!*

—Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

Fiscal year (FY) 2022 marked the U.S. Army's worst recruiting year since the inception of the all-volunteer force (AVF) in 1973.<sup>1</sup> The Army missed its target of sixty thousand recruits by nearly

fifteen thousand, leading to a reduction in end strength of twenty-one thousand over the previous year and prompting Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth to suggest the need for Reservists or National Guard members to fill active-duty billets.<sup>2</sup> This was despite the Army spending nearly 38 percent of its FY22 budget—roughly \$66 billion—on personnel.<sup>3</sup> It also comes only three years after the creation of the Office of the Chief Army Enterprise Marketing, a centralized office charged with coordinating the Army's national marketing and advertising strategy to support the recruiting requirements of an AVF.<sup>4</sup> Since then, the Army has continued to invest heavily in recruiting, retention, and marketing, with an FY24 budget request that includes approximately \$390 million for marketing and advertising and \$290 million for recruiting, including the largest bonus ever offered to initial recruits—\$50,000.<sup>5</sup> While the AVF's high cost is well documented and oft-debated, what is less discussed is what this price tag purchases and what effect it has on the Nation's ability to wage war.

Studying the AVF in this context helps determine whether this method of manning an Army—inducement by bounty—is suitable for delivering a combat-credible force to backstop the *National Defense Strategy*. Both the *National Defense Strategy* and *National Military Strategy* make clear, should integrated deterrence fail, the U.S. military must be able to fight and win against a peer adversary.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the Army must be able to prevail in large-scale combat. As FY22 demonstrates, if the relatively lucrative incentives tied to volunteerism are unable to meet defense requirements during peace, will they suffice in war? And not just any war, but a high-intensity, protracted fight with a technologically capable and potentially larger foe. If not, what does this indicate about the relationship between the military and society, and what does it mean for the Nation's ability to prosecute large wars?

The answers to these questions reveal that despite its investment in personnel, fifty years of the AVF has conditioned much of the American public to eschew military service while simultaneously enabling wars of want that have, in turn, only reinforced public skepticism about military service. In essence, the all-volunteer manning construct purchased a small but professional force in exchange for public acquiescence to its use abroad. Over time this began to sever society's relationship with its military, and it had a significant

impact on determining when and to what extent the Nation can wage war. By abandoning mandatory service, the AVF dismantled the executive branch's ability to directly tap the Nation's populace—a critical resource, or means, for war—under the assumption that a combination of incentives and national will, or ethos, would draw enough recruits to fill the ranks when needed. However, by conditioning the American public into believing that its military did not need it, and that wars are often fought under dubious pretense in pursuit of peripheral interests, the AVF stifled the very will needed to tap back into the means it required. This effectively eliminated the American populace from the decision calculus around when to go to war and its contribution to war prosecution.

As history, strategic theory, and contemporary events all show, big wars are a test of total means and strength of will.<sup>7</sup> The AVF's principal shortcoming, its tendency to separate the populace from the military, makes it a largely unsuitable and historically unproven vehicle for massing the strength of will necessary to prosecute large wars. While it may prove tenable for manning an Army tasked with conducting protracted limited contingency operations such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq or for the ever-elusive short and decisive war, its propensity to sideline the populace means it lacks the depth necessary for large-scale, expeditionary combat against a peer.<sup>8</sup> The policymakers charged with developing the AVF recognized this shortcoming, and two early safeguards built in and around it were designed to maintain the connective tissue between society and its military to prevent the national apathy that could result from its misuse abroad: the Abrams and Weinberger Doctrines. As such, these doctrines provide a framework for assessing how the AVF's employment can affect the public's perception of it and the public's relationship with it. Both doctrines recognized the centrality of popular will, or what Carl von Clausewitz termed “primordial violence, hatred, and enmity,” in determining the scope and character of conflict, and each recognized the risk

**Maj. Christopher Parker**

is a U.S. Army strategist serving as strategic planner on the Joint Staff, J-7. He holds a BA from Kansas State University and an MA in history from Georgia Southern University and has served combat tours in Iraq.

that an AVF might become divorced from it.<sup>9</sup> Because of this, they sought to keep warfighting a “national” affair by ensuring buy-in at home and preventing the AVF from being wantonly dispatched abroad. Using these doctrines to examine how the AVF was employed during both Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom makes it possible to understand how these very different wars conditioned the public to avoid military service.

## Creighton Abrams and the All-Volunteer Cold War Army

Born out of popular discontent with the Vietnam War, Congress approved a bill that ended the draft and transitioned the military to an AVF in September 1971.<sup>10</sup> This decision was not without debate, and only after invoking cloture was a slight majority able to stymie an attempted filibuster and pass the contested legislation.<sup>11</sup> Nor was it unanimously approved by President Richard Nixon’s inner circle. Gen. Lewis Hershey, the advisor to the president on manpower mobilization, pled with him to veto the initiative, stating, “The presumption that the national security can be maintained by armed forces provided by added pay incentives is based on hopes that have not been sustained by the history of the United States ... The message gives encouragement to those who desire to be relieved from obligations of military service.”<sup>12</sup> Despite these objections, Nixon signed the bill, and Public Law 92-129 went into effect on 28 September 1971.<sup>13</sup> After an extension clause enabled transition, the program that yielded an uninterrupted supply of personnel for the Cold War military since 1948 officially ended on 1 July 1973.

While significant, the transition to an AVF at the close of the Vietnam War was more of the norm than an exception. Throughout most of its history, America has relied on a volunteer force to man its peacetime military, swelling the ranks through conscription for war and downsizing shortly thereafter.<sup>14</sup> However, much like today, the United States did not emerge from Vietnam as the sole superpower in a peaceful world. Instead, the threat posed by the Soviet Union dominated force development and design. Internalizing lessons from Vietnam, those charged with developing an AVF that could counter a peer threat recognized the importance of national will in harnessing the support required for a big fight while also acknowledging its

perceived ability to keep the Nation out of unnecessary entanglements. Under the doctrine that bears his name, Gen. Creighton Abrams, then chief of staff of the Army, devised one such mechanism to maintain the vital relationship between America and its Army.

At its core, the Abrams Doctrine sought to keep society vested in its Army by filling the void left by the draft with the Reserve and National Guard.<sup>15</sup> It placed critical supporting units and enablers—engineers, transportation, maintenance, supply, and others—in the Reserve so that combat units could not deploy en masse without them. This inextricably linked the Reserve and Active Components in a mutually dependent relationship; a relationship then Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, and later James Schlesinger, would further refine into the Total Force Concept.<sup>16</sup> Abrams meant the doctrine to correct President Lyndon Johnson’s contentious decision to fight the Vietnam War without mobilizing the National Guard or Reserve. Johnson refused to call up the Reserve Component in a desperate attempt to keep the affair in Southeast Asia from interfering with his Great Society efforts at home.<sup>17</sup> Abrams wanted to correct this by making it increasingly difficult for future presidents to commit forces abroad without tapping into citizen-soldiers at home. “They’re not taking us to war again without calling up the Reserves,” he declared.<sup>18</sup> The intended effect was twofold.

First, Abrams aimed to use the mobilization time required for Reserve deployments to give the National Command Authority (NCA) the space necessary to assess the character of the conflict they were about to undertake and to garner the popular support required to successfully prosecute it.<sup>19</sup> In this regard, it became a de facto check on the president’s ability to deploy the volunteer force prematurely without prudent assessment or adequate national will. Second, it endeavored to maintain the representative quality of a conscript force by tying the AVF to the populace through National Guard and Reserve units woven throughout towns and cities across the country.<sup>20</sup> Gen. John Vessey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recalled Abrams’s aversion to building an insular volunteer force: “Let’s not build an Army off here in the corner someplace. The armed forces are an expression of the nation. If you take them out of the national context, you are likely to screw them up.”<sup>21</sup> This latter intention, making the





AVF representative of the American people, made the Abrams Doctrine an important component of the AVF. By reaching out and touching a vast cross-section of the Nation anytime the Army marched off to war, the doctrine sought to ensure the American public maintained literal skin in the game. Local economies, families, and every congressional district would have a very real interest in the goings-on of the American military abroad. In this capacity, the doctrine recognized the relationship between strength of will and national sacrifice, using willingness for the latter to measure the former. On the one hand, public support would indicate the strength of will necessary to prevail in a large fight or, on the other, public outcry would prevent the Nation from entering conflicts it lacked the will to win. While the doctrine ultimately failed, it tried to bridge the ever-widening gap between America and its volunteer military, ensuring the public understood that war meant sacrifice and that their willingness to do so would directly influence when and where the Nation went to war.

By 1989, on the eve of its first real test, roughly 89 percent of the Army's maintenance companies, 90

Gen. Creighton Williams Abrams Jr. (*right*), commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, attaches a campaign streamer to a unit flag during a 3 January 1970 ceremony in Vietnam. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

percent of its supply companies, and 67 percent of its combat engineer and transportation units were in the Reserve Component.<sup>22</sup> In the largest mobilization since the Korean War, over sixty-two thousand National Guard members and over thirty-five thousand Reservists were called to active duty to help eject Iraq's military from Kuwait.<sup>23</sup> The Abrams Doctrine and the Total Force Concept had effectively transitioned the Reserve Component from a strategic to an operational reserve, delivering on Abrams's promise to ensure the Nation never again went to war without them. However, between its inception in 1974 and Operation Desert Storm in 1991, another doctrine emerged that sought to inject prudence into national decision-making to preserve public trust and prevent misuse of the AVF. Although both doctrines would appear to pass this first test in Iraq with flying colors, their stunning



success had unintended consequences for subsequent decisions about when to use force abroad and the public's perception of their role in it.

## The Weinberger Doctrine and the First Gulf War

When he entered office as secretary of defense in 1981, Caspar Weinberger faced recruiting and retention challenges similar to those staring down the Army today and he worried the AVF was not ready for a showdown with the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup> Initial enlistments and reenlistments were down as was the quality of recruits, with only 60 percent of applicants possessing a high school diploma.<sup>25</sup> A strong advocate of President Ronald Reagan's initiative to significantly increase defense spending, Weinberger channeled substantial funds toward improving compensation and benefits to maintain the relative size of the AVF while improving its quality.<sup>26</sup> Between 1981 and 1987 defense spending increased by roughly a third, from \$686.6 billion to \$959.1 billion (in 2022 dollars), while the number of active duty service members only increased by 91,657.<sup>27</sup> This investment in the quality of personnel was accompanied by significant

Col. Bruce Fister (*right*), commander of the 435th Tactical Air Wing, bids farewell to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger after his visit on 28 March 1986 to Rhein-Main Air Base, West Germany. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

investment in modernization with several new weapons, such as the F-117 Stealth Fighter, the M1 Abrams Tank, and the Patriot Missile Defense System, making their debut. Such investments in modernization and professionalization would rightly give most decision-makers pause about when and where to commit such an expensive force abroad. Weinberger was no different, and with the lessons of Vietnam still fresh, he searched for a framework to help the NCA navigate the minefield of smoldering, potential Cold War conflicts.

A year after a car bomb killed 266 Marines in Beirut, Weinberger outlined his six tests for the commitment of U.S. forces in a 28 November 1984 speech to the National Press Club. Laying out the tenets of the Weinberger Doctrine, he attempted to curb the wanton use of force by arguing the following criteria should be met before sending the AVF to war:

First, the United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies.

Second, if we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning. If we are unwilling to commit the forces or resources necessary to achieve our objectives, we should not commit them at all.

Third, if we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives.

Fourth, the relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed—their size, composition, and disposition—must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.

Fifth, before the U.S. commits combat forces abroad there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress.

Sixth, finally, the commitment of U.S. forces to combat should be the last resort.<sup>28</sup>

Although not official policy, the doctrine sheds light on the perspective of the senior appointed official leading the Department of Defense for over six years, and it had a substantial impact on defense policy and those charged with crafting it for nearly a decade after its introduction.<sup>29</sup>

Weinberger's first, second, and fifth tests are paramount to understanding the risks inherent in an AVF, the importance of national will, and the fragile ties between the two. The first test implicitly acknowledges the ease with which the NCA could commit its volunteer force to wars of want without evoking a backlash at home. This was a continual challenge for



Young men registering for military conscription on 5 June 1917 in New York City. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Weinberger, who frequently found himself battling the National Security Council's desire for "ever more wild adventures for our troops. The NSC staff's eagerness to get into a fight somewhere—anywhere—coupled with their apparent lack of concern for the safety of our troops [was appalling]."<sup>30</sup> As such, the test meant to prevent an "imperial president" from involving the Nation in conflicts over anything but vital interests, for, if it did, Weinberger reasoned this would degrade willingness to serve to levels similar to those observed during the Vietnam War.<sup>31</sup> As historian Andrew Bacevich noted, "Vietnam demolished the notion of military obligation and brought the tradition of the citizen-soldier to the verge of extinction. And it persuaded many that war itself—especially as waged by obtuse American generals doing the bidding of mendacious civilian officials—had become an exercise in futility."<sup>32</sup> Further involvement in conflicts over peripheral or unclear national interests would only erode what little service ethos the populace had left.

Weinberger's second and fifth tests both relate to the importance of national will. The second test, "no half-measures," pays homage to Clausewitz's maxim that war is a test of the total means *and* strength of

will. Here, Weinberger emphasizes that if the Nation decides to commit troops to combat, it should be prepared to mobilize all available resources, including the populace and the economy, if necessary. In other words, where the troops go, the Nation follows. In this regard, its similarities with the Abrams Doctrine become more evident. Combat at large should not be considered an economy-of-force operation, as victory often depends on the government's ability to muster the necessary resources and the population's willingness to support

exploring that unique development, it is important to assess how the Weinberger Doctrine fared during the Persian Gulf War.

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 provided the first opportunity to see the Abrams and Weinberger Doctrines in action. With the Soviet Union mired in internal disputes and teetering toward dissolution, the George H. W. Bush administration could shift its focus from Europe to the Middle East, where maintaining stability and access to oil were

“ While an initial assessment of popular support is critical to deciding whether to start or join a conflict, it also rests on the Nation's leaders to sustain this support throughout the war. ”

this mobilization through the sacrifices accompanying it. Anything less risks ceding the strategic advantage to an enemy with greater will from the outset.

Weinberger's fifth test directly recognizes the importance of national will and popular support in decisions concerning combat abroad. Like the Abrams Doctrine, which sought to indirectly leverage popular buy-in by drawing on National Guard and Reserve units across congressional districts, the Weinberger Doctrine makes an explicit plea to assess this support from the start and gauge changes to it throughout the fight. Joining battle without this support is akin to neutralizing or ignoring the component of Clausewitz's renowned trinity he considered most revolutionary in his day: the people.<sup>33</sup> While an initial assessment of popular support is critical to deciding whether to start or join a conflict, it also rests on the Nation's leaders to sustain this support throughout the war. In World War II this support was tangible, as leaders urged Americans to support the war in a variety of ways, including by buying bonds, planting a victory garden, carpooling, and contributing to scrap metal drives. In more recent conflicts, such as Operation Desert Storm, civilian sacrifice evolved to symbolism as Americans displayed yellow ribbons and other patriotic regalia in a show of moral support for the troops. Later, after the 11 September 2001 attacks, this imperative was inverted, and Americans were encouraged to behave as though there was no war at all. However, before

considered vital national interests. Passing the first of Weinberger's tests, Operation Desert Storm made clear this would be no half-measure as an impressive coalition of over forty nations and nearly five hundred thousand U.S. troops assembled in the region.<sup>34</sup> To Weinberger's fifth test, roughly 57 percent of the American public supported using the military to remove Saddam's army from Kuwait, with 70 percent having full confidence in victory.<sup>35</sup> Although not without debate, Congress too got on board, narrowly passing Public Law 102-1 authorizing the use of force to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation under the auspices of United Nations Resolution 678.<sup>36</sup> Guided by four relatively clear, albeit limited, objectives outlined in National Security Directive 54, *Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf*, it can reasonably be assessed to have passed Weinberger's third test.<sup>37</sup> Having garnered broad international and domestic support, U.S. forces joined over three hundred thousand members of the multinational coalition and initiated offensive operations on 17 January 1991.<sup>38</sup> Meeting nearly all of Weinberger's prerequisites, it was time to see whether the AVF would deliver in combat.

On the surface, Operation Desert Storm was a stunning success and complete validation of the AVF. Not only did it justify the investments in personnel and weaponry of the 1980s, but it also demonstrated the AVF's qualitative edge and esprit de corps, routing the

Iraqi army in one hundred hours of ground combat. More impressive than its speed was the relative efficiency of this high-tech war, with only 147 U.S. service members killed in action to an estimated twenty-five thousand Iraqis.<sup>39</sup> The message was clear: a well-equipped, volunteer force could deliver on national security objectives when those objectives were appropriately scoped and overwhelming force was applied. The American public appreciated this as well, with approval for the use of force against Iraq rising to 80 percent once the coalition offensive was underway, and an additional 90 percent believing U.S. forces were “doing a good job.”<sup>40</sup> After the war, American confidence in the military as an institution soared to an impressive 89 percent.<sup>41</sup> A collective celebration ensued as the military, its civilian leaders, and the public enjoyed a National Victory Day parade on 8 June 1991 and a traditional ticker tape parade through New York City two days later.<sup>42</sup>

While an undeniable sense of pride washed over the Nation that summer, it is hard to help but consider the nuanced differences between what each group was celebrating. The military had finally kicked the “Vietnam syndrome” and restored its reputation. The Bush administration had worked hard to align the diplomatic, political, and military instruments of national power to achieve its objectives while avoiding the overreach that often accompanies initial success in war.<sup>43</sup> The public, asked only to symbolically support the troops, cheered its volunteer force for demonstrating American military prowess and delivering justice where due. All three groups likely breathed a collective sigh of relief in the confirmation that an AVF, under the right circumstances, could win. Like the cause for celebration, the effect of this realization varied between the groups. For the military, it vindicated the significant force development initiatives and structural reforms that went into the post-Vietnam military. For the political leadership, it increased confidence in the military instrument of power and lowered inhibitions for its use abroad. Finally, for the public, it reinforced the notion that service as choice is an effective model, and reduced the likelihood they would ever be pressed into it. If, as Bacevich argues, the Vietnam War “demolished the notion of military obligation,” then the Persian Gulf War put the first nail in its coffin by demonstrating to the American public that the Nation could fight and win its wars without them.<sup>44</sup> In many regards,

Operation Desert Storm was the perfect storm, and the AVF emerged from it superficially unscathed because it was employed in accordance with the strict criteria established by the Weinberger Doctrine. However, just over a decade later the AVF would again face Saddam’s army, this time without passing Weinberger’s tests, and this time the result would be much different.

## At the Mall: Operation Iraqi Freedom

In 2003, the Nation would once again forgo conscription in favor of calling on the AVF to do its bidding. But aside from sharing this unique feature, the Iraq War of 2003 differed in almost every conceivable way from the Iraq War of 1991. Although it met some of Weinberger’s tests, it failed others, and it directly turned one on its head. This, coupled with the failure of the Abrams Doctrine and the administration’s ability to shield the populace from the war through programs like Stop Loss, undermined society’s trust in the military and had a disastrous effect on how it viewed military service. The resultant conditioning only reinforced the professionalization of America’s warrior class and increased the public’s general aversion to service.

When examining the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the George W. Bush administration clearly saw little value in the Weinberger Doctrine, refusing to be constrained by tests designed to impede the rush to war. Unlike 1991, Iraq had not grievously violated an international norm prior to the U.S. invasion; instead, the administration justified the campaign as a preemptive act to thwart Saddam Hussein from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Although based on faulty intelligence, this appeared to be in the Nation’s vital interest, and in the year prior to the invasion, a vast majority of the American public, a staggering 73 percent, supported using force to remove Saddam from power.<sup>45</sup> While support fell once events in Iraq began to unravel, at the outset, both Congress and the American people were behind the endeavor. Having initially passed Weinberger’s first and fifth tests, the Bush administration was unable to garner United Nations support and the campaign ultimately failed the doctrine’s sixth test as war with Iraq in 2003 was by no means a last resort. It also failed the third test as the initial reason for removing Saddam—his pursuit of WMD—quickly gave way to much more amorphous objectives regarding the

promotion of democracy once WMD were nowhere to be found.<sup>46</sup> This shift in pretense seriously damaged public trust; a public that recognized the vital importance of protecting the Nation from attack by WMD but did not place equal import on Iraq's form of governance. The populace felt betrayed and their sentiment showed as much: by 2007, 67 percent said the war was not going well; and a year later, 54 percent believed the U.S. made the wrong decision to use military force in Iraq, a 38 percent increase in disapproval from 2002.<sup>47</sup> Much of this displeasure likely stemmed from being sold a war the administration claimed would require few resources and little effort, a complete dismissal of Weinberger's second test—"no half measures"—and one that deserves a closer look.

Instead of responsibly mobilizing the Nation for war, the Bush administration made clear that Iraq would be a limited war and senior officials promised it would cost little in the way of blood or treasure. This led to constant back-and-forth negotiations on troop levels between the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), led by Donald Rumsfeld, and the operational planners at U.S. Central Command, who had the support of the service chiefs. In his initial guidance, Rumsfeld advocated a "running-start plan" that called for a paltry commitment of eighteen thousand troops with follow-on forces only deploying when necessary.<sup>48</sup> Recognizing the infeasibility of this course of action, U.S. Central Command planners eventually convinced Rumsfeld to accept a different plan and a larger, but still modest, contingent of 222,500 troops—roughly a third of the number used in Operation Desert Storm.<sup>49</sup> This did not sit well with Gen. Eric Shinseki, then chief of staff of the Army, who remarked that the OSD had "constipated the hell out of the process" and greatly stressed the Reserve Component by introducing an unnecessary degree of uncertainty into mobilizations.<sup>50</sup> Weeks later, on 25 February 2003, when testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) about the number of troops required to stabilize Iraq, Shinseki was clear that many more would be needed, remarking that "several hundred thousand soldiers are probably ... required."<sup>51</sup> For this suggestion, he was publicly lambasted by Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz who called Shinseki's estimate "wildly off the mark" and "outlandish."<sup>52</sup> Although Shinseki's retirement that summer had been approved well before his comments to the SASC,

Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz's rebuke had a chilling effect across the Department of Defense, and it became clear the administration's intent was to keep this war as minimally invasive as possible.<sup>53</sup> Having stifled most of the dissent regarding troop commitments, the OSD next moved to convince the Nation the war would be fought on the cheap as well.

Approximately a month after Shinseki's testimony before the SASC, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz testified before the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee regarding the cost of reconstruction in Iraq. In their testimony, both leaders made clear to the American public that it would not bear the cost of reconstruction, not through taxes and certainly not through an outmoded construct like war bonds. Wolfowitz stated, "We're dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon."<sup>54</sup> Rumsfeld took it a step further with his remarks stating, "I don't believe the United States has the responsibility for reconstruction ... and the funds can come from those various sources I mentioned: frozen assets, oil revenues and a variety of other things ..."<sup>55</sup> According to Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, this new, self-funding war would not require America's "full-measure," and they would do all in their power to prevent it from imposing on the public.

The citizenry largely obliged and instead of sacrificing through increased taxes, carpooling, or the like, the Nation went about its business uninterrupted. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the public was told to go to Disney World, and what was once a collective, national burden was placed entirely on the shoulders of the AVF.<sup>56</sup> Ironically, in a war heavily influenced by America's interest in oil, instead of taking measures to reduce this dependency, 2003 and 2004 witnessed the only consecutive, two-year decrease in average fuel efficiency for light trucks since 2000.<sup>57</sup> It seemed as though patriotism had been reduced to buying a large, gas-guzzling truck and placing an American flag sticker on the bumper. While able to shield the public from the financial burden of war by shifting the cost to later generations, soldiers cannot be purchased on credit, and as the short, cheap war ground into a protracted insurgency, the administration relied on the Total Force Concept to deliver them.

The NCA did not shy away from using the Reserve Component to meet the needs of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with over 143,000 National



Guard and Reserve troops mobilized by June 2003, it appeared as though Abrams succeeded in ensuring the Nation never again went to war without the Reserves.<sup>58</sup> However, if Abrams and the architects of the Total Force Concept intended it to function as a check on the president's ability to use force abroad, it certainly failed in this regard. As public disapproval with the war grew so too did the number of Reserve Component troops serving in it, with over 250,000 National Guard members serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and upward of 183,000 Reservists having deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan by 2009.<sup>59</sup> Although tough, the disruptions caused by National Guard and Reserve mobilizations were not enough to trigger a serious reconsideration of the war; however, the administration's reliance on a seldom used Cold War personnel policy to make ends meet certainly caught the public's attention.

As the Total Force buckled but did not break, the Bush administration kept with their intent to avoid placing any war-related burden on the populace and, instead, leveraged the Stop Loss program to meet the increasing personnel requirements of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Created by the Department of Defense Authorization Act of 1984, Stop Loss enables the

The newly confirmed Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (*right*) emphasizes a point as he talks to reporters in the Pentagon on 1 March 2001. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (*left*) introduced Wolfowitz to reporters during a Pentagon news briefing. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of Defense)

president to suspend retirements and separations during periods of national emergency or a presidential call-up of the Reserve Component.<sup>60</sup> Under this program, service members assigned to a unit slated for deployment, whose separation is scheduled to occur either during the deployment or within ninety days thereof, are involuntarily extended through the deployment until ninety days after return. Although not its first use, 2001 to 2009 witnessed the greatest application of Stop Loss since 1984, with over 185,000 service members involuntarily extended for deployments to either Iraq or Afghanistan.<sup>61</sup> This, in effect, became a "backdoor draft," where the only citizens compelled to serve were those who had volunteered in the first place. The program wholly shifted the Nation's wartime burden to the AVF and the public took notice. The program was so prevalent that even Paramount Pictures

got into the action with its 2008 film *Stop-Loss*, chronicling the hardships of Staff Sgt. Brandon King, played by Ryan Phillippe, as he faced an involuntary deployment to Iraq.<sup>62</sup> Although fictional, the film reinforced several popular themes that characterized the Iraq war in the public psyche: the objectives were dubious, the deployments were arbitrary and numerous, and the Army was callous and unsympathetic. Outside of movie theaters, the extent to which the administration used the Stop Loss program to confine the hardships of war

in 2022.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, fewer Americans are choosing to serve, and since 1973, the percent of the population on active duty has halved, from 1 percent to less than 0.5 percent.<sup>65</sup> Effectively neutralizing one-third of Clausewitz's renowned trinity, the government and the military have been left to fight the Nation's wars without the people. This model has conditioned the American public to eschew military service for five decades, leaving the United States at a severe disadvantage when it comes time to rally for the next big war.

“ When asked what single, Iraq-related issue [the lieutenant colonel] would raise with President George W. Bush if given the chance, the officer responded, ‘We’re at war, America’s at the mall.’ ”

to the AVF further conditioned the public to believe they had no obligation to serve and were unlikely to be called upon to do so. Not only did this degrade public trust, as it presented the military as not keeping its bargain with service members, but it also widened the chasm between society and the military, a military increasingly exhausted by the frequency of deployments and the administration's unwillingness to spread the burden. In a candid 2006 interview, a lieutenant colonel deployed to Baghdad summarized both the overwhelming frustration with, and the inherent shortcoming of, the AVF. When asked what single, Iraq-related issue he would raise with President George W. Bush if given the chance, the officer responded, “We’re at war, America’s at the mall.”<sup>63</sup>

## The Government, the Military, and the People

Since the return to the AVF, American citizens have become increasingly divorced from the business, the sacrifice, and the effects of war-making. However, this unhealthy social dynamic is not their fault, but the product of fifty years of conditioning to rely on the AVF. Indicators of the widening gulf between the military and the people abound and are not trending positively. In addition to 2022's dismal recruiting results, public trust and confidence in the military have fallen sharply from 70 percent in 2017 to 48 percent

No matter how well trained and equipped they may be, 0.5 percent of the Nation is a woeful representation of national will. While the populace would likely answer the call to arms for an attack on the United States, it is doubtful they will do so for an attack on the Penghu, Senkaku, or Kinmen islands—all potential flash points in the next war. This leaves the AVF in a precarious situation as it prepares for wars it lacks the influence to prevent and may not have the will to win.

Colored by the lessons of Vietnam, both the Abrams and Weinberger Doctrines sought to preserve the vital link between the people and the military by ensuring the former maintained “skin in the game” and the latter was not abused in wars of want. Adhering to these, it was assumed, would confirm the strength of will at home necessary to win abroad. With the George H. W. Bush administration applying both doctrines during Operation Desert Storm, the AVF's stunning success appeared to validate it as the optimal manning construct. In reality, the AVF was a victim of its own success, and the message received was that the American populace could stay home as its military could win without them. Thereafter, the AVF fit nicely in that brief period of American hegemony that prompted Francis Fukuyama to coin the “end of history.”<sup>66</sup> Without a peer threat on the horizon, surely the AVF was up to the task of deposing formerly third-world despots and hunting terrorists. Unfortunately,



the George W. Bush administration's neglect of the Weinberger Doctrine in 2003 left the AVF to prosecute a messy, protracted counterinsurgency under dubious pretense in pursuit of vague objectives. The Pentagon, struggling to meet personnel requirements, relied on the Stop Loss program to involuntarily extend volunteer soldiers, thereby shielding the public from the effects of war. Going a step further, the administration's general messaging after the events of 9/11 encouraged its citizens to vacation, shop, and dine; gone were tax increases, victory gardens, or any other vestige of sacrifice. Although conceptually admirable, the Abrams Doctrine overestimated the Reserve Component's ability to affect popular will and it was unable to

prevent the fiasco in Iraq. All of this has resulted in a very sick trinity and a Nation ill-prepared to prosecute the protracted, expeditionary campaigns it is likely to face in the future. Adjusting course requires reconditioning the American people to recognize service as an obligatory part of citizenship through the creation of a blended force of conscripts and volunteers sized to meet annual requirements. The Nation's adversaries all recognize the importance of their populace in waging war, it's time the United States does the same. ■

*The views expressed are the author's alone and do not reflect the views of the Joint Staff, U.S. Army, or Department of Defense.*

## Notes

**Epigraph.** Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 219.

1. "Why Has America's Army Recruitment Plummeted?" *Economist* (website), 29 November 2022, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2022/11/29/why-has-americas-army-recruitment-plummeted>.

2. Ibid.; "Army Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Overview," Army Financial Management and Comptroller, 28 March 2022, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.asafm.army.mil/Budget-Materials/>; "Army Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Overview," Army Financial Management and Comptroller, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.asafm.army.mil/Budget-Materials/>.

3. "Army Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Overview"

4. Army Directive 2019-25, *Establishment of the Office of the Chief Army Enterprise Marketing* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1 August 2019), accessed 27 June 2023, [https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB\\_ID=1007542](https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB_ID=1007542).

5. "Army Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Overview"; Jonathan Franklin, "The Army Is Increasing Its Largest Signing Bonus to \$50,000 for Some New Recruits," National Public Radio, 12 January 2022, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/12/1072628577/army-increases-bonus-new-recruits>.

6. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2022), accessed 28 June 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2022), accessed 28 June 2023, <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/NMS%202022%20Signed.pdf>.

7. Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.

8. John Nagl et al., "U.S. Army War College Integrated Lessons Learned from the Russo-Ukraine War" (panel presentation, United States Army War College Strategic Landpower Symposium,

Carlisle Barracks, PA, 9–11 May 2023), accessed 27 June 2023, <https://csl.armywarcollege.edu/landpower/default.aspx>.

9. Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

10. David E. Rosenbaum, "Senate Approves Draft Bill, 55-30; President to Sign," *New York Times* (website), 22 September 1971, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/22/archives/senate-approves-draft-bill-5530-president-to-sign-action-in.html>.

11. Ibid.

12. Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 92, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG265.html>.

13. Military Selective Service Act of 1967, amendments, Pub. L. No. 92-129, 85 Stat. 348 (1971).

14. Rostker, *I Want You!*, 25; David R. Segal, *Recruiting for Uncle Sam: Citizenship and Military Manpower Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 31.

15. Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 363–64.

16. James Jay Carafano, "Total Force Policy and the Abrams Doctrine: Unfulfilled Promise, Uncertain Future," Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1 February 2005, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2005/02/total-force-policy-and-the-abrams-doctrine-unfulfilled-promise-uncertain-future/>.

17. Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, 2nd updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 39.

18. Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 361–62, 364.

19. Harry G. Summers, "The Army after Vietnam," in *Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 363; Andrew J. Bacevich, *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Picador, 2014), 106.

20. Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 364.

21. Ibid.

22. Martin Binkin, *Who Will Fight the Next War? The Changing Face of the American Military* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1993), 109–10.
23. "Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm," Office of Army Reserve History, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.usar.army.mil/OurHistory/DesertShield-DesertStorm/>; "25th Anniversary: Operation Desert Storm," National Guard Bureau, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Features/2016/Desert-Storm/>.
24. "Caspar W. Weinberger," Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://history.defense.gov/Multimedia/Biographies/Article-View/Article/571286/caspar-w-weinberger/>.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. "What Is the State of the Military and How Are Us Veterans Faring?," USA Facts, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://usafacts.org/state-of-the-union/defense/>.
28. "Excerpts from Address of Weinberger," *New York Times* (website), 29 November 1984, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/29/world/excerpts-from-address-of-weinberger.html>; Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 310–11.
29. Bacevich, *New American Militarism*, 51–52.
30. Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 159.
31. Handel, *Masters of War*, 308–9.
32. Bacevich, *New American Militarism*, 99.
33. Handel, *Masters of War*, 318.
34. Shannon Collins, "Desert Storm: A Look Back," U.S. Department of Defense, 11 January 2019, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/article/1728715/desert-storm-a-look-back/>.
35. William Thomas Allison, *The Gulf War, 1990–91* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 89.
36. Ibid., 92–94; Authorization for Use of United States Armed Forces, Pub. L. No. 102-1, 105 Stat. 3 (1991); UN Security Council, Resolution 678, S/RES/678 (29 November 1990).
37. National Security Directive 54, *Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf* (Washington, DC: The White House, 15 January 1991), accessed 27 June 2023, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsd/nsd54.pdf>.
38. Allison, *The Gulf War*, 102.
39. Ibid., 144.
40. Ibid., 153.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., 154.
43. Ibid., 94.
44. Bacevich, *New American Militarism*, 99.
45. Dexter Filkins, "Colin Powell's Fateful Moment," *New Yorker* (website), 18 October 2021, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/colin-powells-fateful-moment>; Pew Research Center, *Americans Favor Force in Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 22 January 2002), accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2002/01/22/americans-favor-force-in-iraq-somalia-sudan-and/>.
46. Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 123, 153–54.
47. Pew Research Center, *Americans Favor Force in Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan*; "Public Attitudes Toward the War in Iraq: 2003–2008," Pew Research Center, 19 March 2008, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/2008/03/19/public-attitudes-toward-the-war-in-iraq-20032008/>.
48. David E. Johnson et al., *The U.S. Army and the Battle for Baghdad: Lessons Learned – And Still to Be Learned* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), 23–27, accessed 27 June 2023, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR3076.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3076.html).
49. Ibid., 27.
50. Ibid., 27–28.
51. Ibid., 33.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. 149 Cong. Rec. S13753 (2003), accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-149/issue-157/senate-section/article/S13751-7?r=1097>.
55. 149 Cong. Rec. S13754 (2003), accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-149/issue-157/senate-section/article/S13751-7?r=1097>.
56. George W. Bush, "At O'Hare, President Says 'Get on Board'" (remarks to airline employees, Chicago, IL, 27 September 2001), accessed 27 June 2023, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010927-1.html>.
57. "Average Fuel Efficiency of U.S. Light Duty Vehicles," Bureau of Transportation Statistics, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.bts.gov/content/average-fuel-efficiency-us-light-duty-vehicles>.
58. Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 361–62, 364; Gregory Fontenot, E. J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 176.
59. John Orrell, "The National Guard's Contribution: 300,000-Plus Iraq Deployments," National Guard Bureau, 4 January 2012, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.national-guard.mil/News/Article/576180/the-national-guards-contribution-300000-plus-iraq-deployments/>; Kathryn Roe Coker, *Bianual Army Reserve Historical Summary: 2008/2009*, ed. Deborah Foster-King et al. (Fort Bragg, NC: Office of Army Reserve History, 2013), xlvii, accessed 27 June 2023, [https://www.usar.army.mil/Portals/98/Documents/historycorner/USARC%202008\\_2009%20History%20for%20Web.pdf](https://www.usar.army.mil/Portals/98/Documents/historycorner/USARC%202008_2009%20History%20for%20Web.pdf).
60. Charles A. Henning, *U.S. Military Stop Loss Program: Key Questions and Answers*, Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report No. R40121 (Washington, DC: CRS, 10 July 2009), accessed 27 June 2023, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA503196>.
61. Ibid.
62. *Stop-Loss*, directed by Kimberly Peirce (Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 2008), last updated 12 December 2012, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0489281/>.
63. Greg Kandra, "We're at War; America's at the Mall," CBS News, 8 September 2006, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/were-at-war-americas-at-the-mall/>.
64. Stew Magnuson, "Annual Poll Shows Low Confidence in Military," *National Defense* (website), 18 January 2023, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2023/1/18/annual-poll-shows-low-confidence-in-military>.
65. "Demographics of the U.S. Military," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated 13 July 2020, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/demographics-us-military>.
66. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), xi.



Soldiers of Headquarters, C Company, 3 RIFLES, pose for a group picture in Patrol Base Folad, Afghanistan, during Operation Herrick 16 (March–October 2012). The author is in the front row, fourth from right. Company Serjeant Major Paton is seated fifth from right. (Photo from author)

# Four Minutes to Make a Leader



Maj. James Cowen, British Army

**I**n the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, there is a scene where Tom Hanks's character, Capt. John Miller, is staggering up the beach.<sup>1</sup> His helmet has been blown off, and he struggles to take in his surroundings. The sound of battle is muted by a ringing noise that replicates the temporary deafness he is experiencing. One of his NCOs is shouting in his face, but he remains incognizant and unhearing. Finally, he reaches for his helmet and places it back on his head. Doing so drags him sharply back to reality, the din of battle returns, and his surroundings come back into focus. This sequence lasts only a minute and a half. Still, to me, it is one of the most powerful cinematic moments ever committed to film. I find myself returning to those ninety seconds quite frequently. They help me relive,

in a visceral way, a personal memory that is a keystone to my approach to leadership. This is because I have been John Miller staggering up the beach, overcome by shock, unable to bring myself back into the here and now, despite reality screaming for my undivided attention. What I learned in those moments is hugely rich insight for a leader. On the face of it, much of what I learned would appear to be limited to the direct leadership that the experience most obviously exhibits. However, as a newly promoted major, my career will gradually remove me from that direct leadership role over the coming years.

In the spirit of preparing for this transition to organizational leadership, I must return to this seminal moment in my career. Marshall Goldsmith suggests

that “what got you here won’t get you there.”<sup>2</sup> His general thesis is that the leadership habits that have proved successful as a direct leader will not necessarily carry over into organizational leadership. Naturally, this is a worrying proposition for someone whose identity as a leader is vested in a formative experience from the early days of his career. As a result, I have dedicated significant time to extracting what I can from this event to carry with me into this new role. Naturally, my principal concern is avoiding a leadership identity crisis should this formative event diminish in importance.

The event I am about to discuss is inherently personal, so it is with some trepidation that I choose to share it. I do so for three main reasons. First, it is to demonstrate the role of leaders in overcoming shock. In so doing, I hope to provide an explicit endorsement of the principles of transformational leadership and their utility under extreme pressure. Transformational leadership is, of course, a valuable tool for direct leaders. Still, this article will focus on how the principles of this concept grow in importance when it comes to defining an organizational vision and setting a culture.

Second, perhaps self-indulgently, I want to acknowledge the event in a public forum. The event lasted only

#### **Maj. James Patrick**

**Cowen** is a reconnaissance officer in the British Army. He is currently a student at U.S. School of Advanced Military Studies having recently completed the Command and General Staff Officers' Course. He graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2013, where he earned a commission in 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards. Deployments to Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Zambia, and Mali have punctuated time spent on staff at battalion and brigade level.

four minutes out of the long summer of 2012 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Yet, since that August morning, it has played on the back of my eyelids almost daily. Writing about it, trying to capture it on paper, feels like an essential step in coming to terms with the true significance of what happened.

Finally, I hope to encourage anyone who recognizes the look in John Miller's eyes to respect these experiences properly. My vocation, and that of many in the audience to which I am

writing, brings us into direct contact with trauma more frequently than we care to acknowledge. Committing this one traumatic incident to writing will have been worthwhile if sharing my story helps someone else find their means of catharsis. My attempt is not without example; the British chief of the General Staff, Gen. Sir Patrick Sanders, did something similar two years ago when he acknowledged his mental health journey.<sup>3</sup> This article is my response to his short video that Sanders called *Time to Talk*. Doing so normalizes the practice and hopefully has developed an environment where others will feel comfortable doing the same.

## **The Event**

*At 1135 hrs. on 9 August 2012, our company operations room in Nad-e-Ali District, Helmand Province, fell silent. We had just heard the chilling squawk of the radio inform us, “Contact, small arms fire, man down, wait out.” It was not the voice we were expecting. My close friend Andy Chesterman was the patrol commander on the ground, yet he was alarmingly absent from the net. A cacophony and frantic activity replaced the initial silence following the contact report. My worst fears were confirmed when the anonymous voice relayed the nine-line medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) request over the radio. Andy had prior service in the Navy, so his ZAP (personal ID) number was different from a standard Army number. Ironically, we use ZAP numbers as a way of protecting the identity of a casualty. Andy's number was so distinct that the radio operator might as well have been shouting his name into the handset as he relayed the contact report. The remainder of the nine-liner was also grim listening; it was clear that Andy was in serious trouble.*

*I froze, completely choked. The room fell out of focus, and sound became meaningless. Without a doubt, I was experiencing an acute shock. It was not immediately apparent why I was so affected as to be overcome to the point of incapacitation. However, having relived that moment repeatedly in the intervening years, I have a good idea why I responded as I did. I was a twenty-three-year-old boy on the adventure of a lifetime. We, my unit, had spent the summer fighting a fierce opponent and consistently winning without suffering a scratch. We thought of ourselves as invincible. Yet, that illusion, built over months, had come crashing down in seconds. The sucker punch was all the more devastating because at the moment he was shot, my friend was stripped of everything that made him Andy. In his place, just the six-digit ZAP number and rapidly deteriorating vital signs constantly spitting out of the*



A Medical Emergency Response Team Chinook helicopter leaves Patrol Base Qudrat to rush Andy to the hospital in Camp Bastian, Afghanistan. (Photo from author)

*radio speaker. The company serjeant major (CSM), Gavin Paton, had seen my reaction; he had watched me choke from across the room and acted quickly, leading me outside.<sup>4</sup> Four minutes after the initial contact report, I was back in the operations room contributing to the MEDEVAC effort. In the intervening four minutes, I had been consoled, rebuked, motivated, and returned to the fight by an expert leader.*

## Transformational Leadership

It may appear to be a bit of a leap to apply a concept like transformational leadership to a four-minute period. In his book *Leadership*, James Burns, the initial proponent for the term, stresses that transformational leadership is not a one-time event or a quick fix, but rather a continuous process.<sup>5</sup> Much of the groundwork for leading this way is achieved by articulating and modeling a set of values and beliefs. In essence, it is about organizational culture. The CSM set the culture in the company. He demanded total professionalism that he rewarded with humbling levels of trust. A closeness permeated the company that permitted us to be remarkably forthright across all ranks. Paton conditioned us this way because

he knew it would build individual and team resilience, a trait that the company would need during the long fighting season. As I will explore, the value of this investment lies in the reserves of resiliency, mutual trust, and dedication we relied upon in a crisis.

This section will take the reader through the four minutes following the shooting of Andy Chesterman. Then, using the principles of transformational leadership, I will demonstrate the effectiveness of a transformational style in the heat of the moment. Taken in turn, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence, the “four Is” of transformational leadership will demonstrate how the investment in the team by Paton set the foundations that we would need during our worst day in Helmand. Doing so will be crucial to expanding the relevance of my experience to my future as an organizational leader.

## Individualized Consideration

Individualized consideration is the leader’s ability to understand each follower’s unique needs and to provide personalized support and guidance to help them reach

their full potential.<sup>6</sup> Transformational leaders build strong relationships with followers and prioritize their well-being and growth.

The above synopsis of the first pillar of transformational leadership suits my purpose very well. The first half talks about identifying the unique needs of the individual follower. In the seconds following the contact

sense of urgency and excitement that inspires people to work harder and achieve more than they ever thought possible.<sup>7</sup>

Early August was one of the most delicate periods of our deployment. Our usual chain of command was fractured and disjointed. I was covering for the company second in command (2IC) because the commander

“ Transformational leaders challenge their followers to exceed their own expectations and to achieve results that they never thought possible. ”

report, Paton led me outside and, with very few words, reminded me that I had a job to do. He also reminded me that I had my role in keeping my subordinates motivated. As a leader, I had to display physical courage and selfless commitment. He tailored his words perfectly for me. His execution acted as a sharp jolt to my senses, he didn't mince his words, and I snapped out of the daze. His bluntness was a risk; of course, it could have backfired, but it didn't, and I believe Paton knew it wouldn't.

The second half of the synopsis of individualized consideration talks about the importance of building solid relationships. Before writing this, I had not considered this event in any broader context. The significance of that conversation was limited to the impact of the intervention in that moment. However, from my current vantage point, I can appreciate the slow and deliberate effort Paton made with the individuals in the company in the months before deploying. Every interaction he had with the team was meaningful and designed to match his eventual vision for C Company, a vision founded on mutual trust and total professionalism. Paton wanted to be able to talk frankly with whoever needed to hear frank words. To do so, he took the time to get to know the team. Paton executed perfect individualized consideration in the six months that led us to that conversation and in those four minutes with me.

## Intellectual Stimulation

Transformational leaders challenge their followers to exceed their own expectations and to achieve results that they never thought possible. They create a

was on leave in the UK. Likewise, the normal 2IC was now in command. Our organizational resilience was not at 100 percent. My role that day would be running the operations room. Therefore, I was the person tasked with coordinating the MEDEVAC.

Immediately before the CSM led me outside, I vaguely recall a signaller asking me to decide on a course of action. Like Capt. Miller in the film, when his NCO was shouting for his attention, I was incognizant and deaf to everything around me. Part of what contributed to my shock was the weight of responsibility suddenly thrust upon me. To give Andy the best chance of survival, I would have to exercise decision-making under an extreme level of pressure that was new to me. Paton had his role in getting Andy off the ground. He would deploy out and move Andy to the helicopter landing site. Before he could do so, he needed to be reassured that the operations room was functioning as it should be. The last thing the CSM said to me before sending me back into the room was, “Mr. Chesterman needs you.” I reentered the operations room and took hold of the radio handset, imbued with a burning desire to play my part in what would follow. He knew I would find intellectual stimulation by putting me back into the fray. He provided a singular focus for the stream of emotion that I was experiencing. Paton had created the “sense of urgency and excitement that inspires people to work harder.”

## Inspirational Motivation

Based on Burns's explanation of inspirational motivation, it might appear challenging to link this pillar

of transformational leadership to an isolated event. According to Burns, inspirational motivation ultimately rests on moral and ideological foundations, not on a mere search for short-term gains.<sup>8</sup> I will argue here that a transformational leader who has conditioned their team to their leadership style can adapt that style to achieve short-term results. “C Company will be the best

and that we had to exercise every sinew of our collective body to get those in the fight out of trouble. He told us our priority was the MEDEVAC and preventing further casualties. He went on to focus us on what was to come; when everyone was off the ground, “C Company would find the shooter and wrestle back the initiative from the insurgents.” This short-term vision

“When a leader can rely upon a solid foundation that complements and supports their vision, they can stimulate a positive response during a crisis.”

company in 3 RIFLES” is the vision I remember for the company. If you asked any of us back then who was the best company in Afghanistan, let alone 3 RIFLES, I know what most would say.

The members of C Company were well-conditioned for this vision. We operated in an environment of total professionalism and mutual trust. We were accountable to ourselves first but likewise for each other and to each other. That said, the execution of a vision of excellence is fraught with some risk. Firstly, suppose that “excellence” is an illusion or the mantle awarded without concrete support. In those cases, organizational resilience will suffer under crisis. Put simply, there will be nothing concrete to fall back upon and structures will crumble. Likewise, if the foundation is not maintained, the illusion of excellence might persist despite an erosion of those foundations. We believed we were the best company in Afghanistan because we had complete faith in the team. From this belief grew the boldness with which we fought the insurgent for the first three months of the deployment. It is why I was so affected when the enemy eventually hit one of our own. I overcame this emotional response through the immediate corrective intervention of Paton. I only needed a quick intervention because of our individual and team resilience. When a leader can rely upon a solid foundation that complements and supports their vision, they can stimulate a positive response during a crisis.

As Paton and I reentered the room, he issued a thirty-second edict to the team. He made it clear that we in the operations room serve the people on the ground

built upon the long-term idea that C Company was the best company in 3 RIFLES. Paton appealed to the resilience he had built into our team. As he finished talking, he strapped on his body armor and moved out to assist in the MEDEVAC. There was nothing Churchillian about his speech. It was matter-of-fact, down to earth, and precisely what we needed to hear. We were inspired, and we went to work.

### Idealized Influence

Bernard Bass holds up idealized influence as the bedrock on which the other three principles stand. For Bass, it means the degree to which leaders act as role models, demonstrate high standards of ethical and moral conduct, and make personal sacrifices to achieve group goals.<sup>9</sup> I prefer to imagine the four Is as independent pillars supporting the overall transformational leadership concept. I do so because in Burns’s original work, he emphasizes a leader’s charisma as the vehicle for achieving idealized influence.<sup>10</sup> If charisma is a crucial personal characteristic for idealized influence, one could extrapolate that only charismatic people can execute transformational leadership. I much prefer Bass’s reliance on high standards and ethical, moral conduct as a more important trait in a leader than charisma.

As it happens, Paton embodied everything Bass describes as a requirement for achieving idealized influence. He had high standards that he modeled and demanded of others. Likewise, Paton always exhibited firm ethical grounding and unimpeachable moral conduct. One of the things I admired most during those



Crowds line the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland, as soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 3 RIFLES, march through the city 3 November 2012 after returning from a demanding six-month tour in Helmand Province during Operation Herrick 16 as part of the 12th Mechanized Brigade. We were all very aware that one of us was missing. (Photo by Cpl. Paul Morrison, Crown Copyright)

six months was his readiness to put himself in the line of fire for the soldiers he was fighting alongside. Setting an example is what he did that day when he went out to get Andy off the ground. It is probably worth sharing another anecdote about Paton at this point. He is huge. When the Taliban would count us out of the patrol base (a procedure we listened to by intercepting their radio transmissions), they had a nickname for him. You would hear them count; “1, 2, 3, The Bear, 5, 6.” He knew that his presence on the battlefield affected everyone. C Company knew he was coming to get us if we got hurt. Likewise, the insurgents knew when he was heading out and they feared him. He knew his place was on the battlefield. In setting this personal example of physical courage, the company witnessed a role model doing what was right in a tough moment—idealized influence.

## Conclusion

When I set about writing this article, I had three main goals. The first was to use my experience of strong

leadership as an antidote to shock to endorse a well-executed transformational leadership style. I did so to prove that my identity as a leader would remain intact even as I transition to organizational leadership. I have been reassured that Goldsmith’s warning of “what got you here won’t get you there” is only somewhat valid. I do not have to discard the lessons in direct leadership from that summer. They will continue to be as relevant as ever, particularly because they have taught me to build and maintain strong and meaningful relationships. Writing this article has given me an opportunity to uncover a rich vein of lessons that will be supremely relevant at the organizational level. We did not achieve excellence by being the best at marksmanship or the most aggressive on the battlefield. On the contrary, we fulfilled a vision of excellence founded on trust, professionalism, and relationship building. Perhaps most pertinently, I can now see this moment of extreme emotion and violence through a wider lens. Of course, there is much more to leadership for a military professional than these moments. These moments are the exception



and not the norm. But for an organizational leader hoping to immunize their team against the effects of shock, what is clear to me now is that resilience is hard earned and requires dedicated investment. I learned to lead, or at least what leadership looks like, in a baptism of fire that I have kept very close for my whole career. It is a solid grounding that will serve me well as I continue to study the art and science of leadership.

Second, I planted a flag in my mental health journey. I think this article comes across as a stream of consciousness at points. I refuse to edit that because this purpose of catharsis is more important to me than the first. Paton had built a resilient team in which we cared for each other. The morning after the shooting, the battalion commander stood on the steps outside the operations room. The whole company had gathered to hear him speak. I knew what he was about to say, but it still hit me like a freight train. "Lt. Chesterman fought bravely through the night but did not survive his wounds."<sup>11</sup> Before I had processed the words, I felt a hand on my back, and another grabbed my hand. Two riflemen, private soldiers, had reacted the way Paton had trained us and were supporting their teammate. At that moment, I saw the distinction between setting a vision and achieving a vision. That was the true mark of excellence and why C Company was the best company in 3 RIFLES and the best in Afghanistan. From top to bottom, we had each other's backs.

Finally, I wanted to contribute my voice to the conversation on mental health more widely. I have seen firsthand, not just in the aftermath of that tour but throughout my career, that most of us are living with our trauma. Writing about it will not be the way for everyone, but I would echo the chief of the General Staff's encouragement: it's time to talk. One thing that has struck a chord as I have relived these events is the impact that leaving a team like C Company has had on me as an individual. The further away from that summer in Helmand time takes me, the further away I am from being in that team. That is a reasonably common emotion for a soldier, but it is worth considering. Those tight-knit teams are built to provide mutual support to get through tough times. The broader conversation about mental health must continue to help us deal with everyday life after trauma.

No, Andrew Chesterman did not survive his wounds. Still, we rallied around his death and went after the insurgents with renewed ferocity. For the remainder of the summer, we did very well. The tone was set in the four minutes after the contact report was received. I will always be grateful to Paton for how firmly yet sensitively he guided me from the precipice of self-indulgent grief to a place of ruthless determination. My career ever since has been dominated by two personal priorities; to guard the memory of Andy Chesterman and to lead per Paton's transformational example.<sup>12</sup> ■

---

## Notes

1. *Saving Private Ryan*, directed by Steven Spielberg (Universal City, CA: Dreamworks Pictures, 1998).

2. Marshall Goldsmith, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There: A Round Table Comic: How Successful People Became Even More Successful* (Mundelein, IL: Writers of the Round Table Press, 2011), 10.

3. *It's Time to Talk* by General Sir Patrick Sanders, YouTube video, posted by "NSDF," 4:10, 8 July 2021, [https://youtu.be/xiblUgr\\_xoo](https://youtu.be/xiblUgr_xoo).

4. British light infantry spelling of "sergeant."

5. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 20.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 2nd ed. (New York: Psychology Press, 2005).

8. *Ibid.*, chap. 6.

9. *Ibid.*, 14.

10. Burns, *Leadership*, 16.

11. Title of author's diary entry for 11 August 2012. The image of the battalion commander standing on the steps outside the operations room has become a persistent, recurring, memory. The impact of Andy's loss has been life and career defining for the author.

12. "Lieutenant Andrew Chesterman Killed in Afghanistan," UK Ministry of Defence, 9 August 2012, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/fatalities/lieutenant-andrew-chesterman-killed-in-afghanistan>.



Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 11th Airborne Division, stand at Pershing Parade Field during the reflagging ceremony of the 11th Airborne Division on 6 June 2022 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (Photo by Senior Airman Patrick Sullivan, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Public Affairs)

# The 11th Airborne Division Reborn

## Arctic Angels

Maj. Gen. Brian S. Eifler, U.S. Army  
Natalie M. Hardy

The 11th Airborne Division is back! Embracing the newest evolution of its three incarnations, the 11th once again is purpose-built to meet the shifting challenges facing our country. Originally activated in 1943 as the first airborne division to be built from the ground up, the 11th became Douglas MacArthur’s “secret weapon” in the Pacific, conducting multiple airborne assaults while fighting through the Philippines.

As the war ended in September 1945, the soldiers of the 11th Airborne Division “Angels” would be recognized for their ability to rapidly organize into a combat-credible, airborne fighting formation that provided key support to the war effort. Retired Lt. Gen. E. M. Flanagan Jr. notes in his personalized history, *The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division*, that despite being a small division with minimal resources and firepower, they “took on the missions of a full-sized division and proved that heart and courage and training and camaraderie and esprit and loyalty, not only up but down, engender self-confidence and invincibility, making giants of ordinary men.”<sup>1</sup> The 11th Airborne Division especially distinguished itself in the fierce battles to liberate Manila; during a daring raid by land, sea, and air on Los Baños detention camp to rescue over two thousand Allied civilian internees; and in overseeing postwar Japanese occupation forces until 1949.<sup>2</sup>

As national security needs shifted after World War II, the division was inactivated in 1958 following a deployment to Germany. During the Vietnam conflict, it was incarnated once again, reactivating from 1963 to 1965 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, as the 11th Air Assault Division. The division’s purpose focused on developing the nascent air assault tactics for helicopter operations and subsequently spawned the first units to execute those operations in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup>

After a fifty-seven-year dormancy, the 11th Airborne Division reactivated in 2022 once again to meet the evolving challenges facing our Nation. The *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, issued by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, notes that great powers and rising powers fighting for global dominance will set the parameters for future world order.<sup>4</sup> Department of Defense and Army leaders at every echelon are focused on maintaining global stability as regional competitors become increasingly aggressive and adversarial. Having a division unit of action in a strategic location

to respond to crisis or conflict in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and the Arctic fills a strategic gap—thus, the 11th Airborne Division was reborn a third time, at the crossroad of transformation and modernization.

Today, the “Arctic Angels” of the 11th build capability to operate in the Arctic, mountain terrain, and other extreme cold weather (ECW) areas while maintaining readiness for global deployments. To attain these diverse objectives, the 11th Airborne Division (Arctic) concentrates on three distinct sectors of development: Arctic capability, readiness for large-scale combat operations, and interoperability with allies and partners.

## Arctic Capability

Our Nation’s strategy for the Arctic continues to evolve with increasing recognition of China’s desire to expand its sphere of influence throughout the region. The *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* notes that by building economic, diplomatic, scientific, and military partnerships, China has the potential to undermine our national security objectives.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, the strategy acknowledges the difficulties associated with

**Maj. Gen. Brian S. Eifler, U.S. Army**, assumed command of U.S. Army Alaska on 21 July 2021 and the 11th Airborne Division on 6 June 2022. He previously served as Army chief legislative liaison, deputy commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division (Light), and CJ3 for Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq. He holds a bachelor’s degree in interpersonal and public communication from Central Michigan University and a master’s degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He is also a graduate of the MIT Seminar XXI National Security Studies Program.

maintaining regional stability as Russia continues its activities in Ukraine, which effectively stymies formal government-to-government discussions on Arctic cooperation.<sup>6</sup> China and Russia,

**Natalie M. Hardy** is the strategic initiatives specialist for the 11th Airborne Division and has worked for the Department of Defense for over eighteen years. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alaska Anchorage and a Master of Military Operational Art and Science from the U.S. Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

working together, may present even greater challenges as they strengthen their economic partnerships, expand military cooperation, and form mutually beneficial collaborative efforts. Their recently signed coast guard cooperation agreement will likely increase Sino-Russian joint exercise activity across the maritime region.<sup>7</sup>

In response to the growing importance of the Arctic to national security, the Army published its Arctic strategy, *Regaining Arctic Dominance*, in 2021. While there are other service-specific Arctic strategies in the Department of Defense, only the Army has an implementation plan manifested in a new division. For the Army, Arctic capability is more than words on paper. The Arctic is arguably one of the harshest environments on the planet. Recognizing the inherent necessity of ECW training in Alaska, the Army has chosen its forces there to implement the objectives and goals laid out within the strategic and operational framework.<sup>8</sup> In addition to its responsibilities in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the 11th Airborne Division has been given the task to become the most highly trained, disciplined, and fit Arctic warfighting unit in the world—to not just survive but thrive in ECW and mountainous terrain. Appropriately, the division's home is Alaska, the only state in the Arctic and the only state with land less than three miles from Russian soil.<sup>9</sup>

To regain Arctic dominance requires transformation into a fully operational division, a warfighting command that can conduct and sustain extended operations to, within, and from the Arctic/ECW to project power within the theater. These capabilities can support varied missions, including land force options for a joint force during crisis and conflict, security cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and defense support to civil authorities.

Building ECW, mountainous, high-latitude, combat-capable forces remains central to the strategy's key tenets and the division's mission. Our forces must have the range, endurance, and protection enablers to conduct sustained operations in the Arctic environment. The 11th Airborne Division must operate and endure across long distances, in ECW, at high latitudes, and at high elevations.

To operate in these environments, the Army requires capabilities that are dynamically employed throughout the coldest part of the year in a strategically predictable but operationally unpredictable

manner. Extreme cold, snow, rugged and mountainous terrain, and persistent light or darkness necessitate new technologies and modernization of existing assets. The Army must develop or refine concepts, doctrine, organizations, and training in the Arctic environment to inform risk-based modernization.

Several years ago, the Center for Army Lessons Learned identified twenty-three capability gaps in the Army's Arctic force, emphasizing that this environment complicates all warfighting functions.<sup>10</sup> The good news is that the division and the Army enterprise have been working to address these gaps, and in some cases have been successful. One overarching finding was that the Army needs to improve its ability to establish and maintain mobile command posts in the Arctic environment. Command and control can be degraded by unreliable communications and dispersion of forces. Tents fail in the extreme cold. Lower tactical internet is limited due to extreme cold and high winds, and upper tactical internet fails due to the low-look angle to equatorial geostationary satellites. Any equipment with a liquid crystal display can be unreliable and fragile in extreme cold temperatures.

Movement and maneuver can be slow and difficult, requiring purpose-built equipment. Extended maintenance times due to environmental conditions and lack of expeditionary temperature-controlled maintenance bays preclude normal operations. Cold-soaking vulnerability limits forward deployment, and helicopter maintenance requires access to hangars, so rotary-wing aviation is severely constrained.<sup>11</sup>

Fires will often be less precise because of unique position, navigation, and timing challenges. Prime mover limitations in uncompacted snow are exacerbated by a wheeled towing system. Firing capability requires power generation, hydraulics, and preparation to fire and actuation procedures that are complicated by ECW.

ECW environments also constrain the capacity to produce, purify, store, and distribute liquid water. Ambient cold freezes critical medical supplies such as plasma and intravenous medicines, rendering them unusable until thawed, and the need for tents limits expeditionary capability.

Increased vulnerabilities associated with Arctic operations can magnify protection requirements. There is increased chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear vulnerability due to multiple system failures

below  $-25^{\circ}\text{F}$ . Decontamination requires use of liquid water, which is scarce in subzero temperatures. Personal protective equipment malfunctions: mask valves and canisters freeze; protective gloves crack; and wearing layers of clothing, boots, hats, and gloves for warmth complicates decontamination.

Climate and high-latitude impact tactical collection platforms, and electronic warfare capabilities limit the commander's understanding of the battlefield. Batteries fail in the cold, resulting in multiple platform failures. Climate and latitude limit intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, and the low-look angle degrades satellite communications.

Despite these challenges, the Arctic Angels cannot wait for solutions to be delivered. The strength of the division remains its people; with innovation, determination, and grit, Arctic Angels overcome obstacles and figure it out! It is part of the heritage of the Native Alaskan people who have lived in this environment for centuries, and their support to us cannot go unmentioned.

To become an Arctic-capable force, our units must be equipped to train and live in the environment. We must ensure formations have sufficient opportunities to train at echelon in Arctic environments and develop the expertise required to survive and thrive. This is the only reliable way to understand and mitigate the effects of extreme cold on performance and equipment. By establishing the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center's (JPMRC) regional combat training capability in Alaska, we provide a singular opportunity to train Army forces in the region, in the harsh environment.

The annual JPMRC Alaska event is exactly what our formation needs and the Arctic strategy requires. In its inaugural year, the JPMRC Alaska rotation exceeded all expectations, and 2023 added complexity and tactical challenges. Both iterations took place during subzero temperatures and spanned from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage to Fort Wainwright and the Yukon Training Area 350 miles north, with numerous strategic missions taking place



1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment soldiers cross train on skis with Finnish RK 62 rifles during exercise Arctic Forge 2023 in Finland. (Photo courtesy of 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment)

deep within the Arctic Circle. Both JPMRC exercises leveraged live, virtual, and constructive environments to execute a brigade combat team large-scale combat operation under ECW conditions using the Army's Arctic decisive-action training environment.

JPMRC Alaska, executed in the heart of winter, incorporates critical elements of a traditional combat training center, and culminates the yearlong training cycles of the division's two brigades. The exercise design features professional observer controller/trainers, an Arctic capable and dynamic opposing force, and an expeditionary, full-instrumentation package. Integrated airborne joint forcible entry operations amplify complexity. Last year's JPMRC exercise also validated a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System expeditionary strike package that involved Canadian and U.S. lift aircraft as well as fifth-generation sensors from U.S. Air Force F-35 fighters.

JPMRC offers several critical advantages. It ensures our units' highest density of training takes place during the ECW months of October through March. It is always joint and multicomponent with Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Army Reserve units. It incorporates Arctic allies and



"Arctic Wolves" with 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, conduct a platoon live-fire exercise 9 November 2022 at the Yukon Training Area in Alaska. Platoons trained on multiple weapons systems while executing battle drills to perfect the art of Arctic lethality. (Photo by 1st Lt. Daniel Isakoff, U.S. Army)

other partners to improve interoperability and learn from foreign armies who are experts at Arctic operations. Lessons learned, especially in the areas of sustainment and communications, inform improvements to Army equipment and tactics necessary to win in the harsh conditions. We are demonstrating the high value of over-the-snow mobility, dismounted maneuver, and the effective integration of fires and effects. By training in the region and with our regional partners, we remain postured to rapidly deploy in support of Pacific theater requirements before, during, and after the exercise—not losing people and equipment for months due to transit to the continental United States. Most importantly, JPMRC reflects the environment and conditions where 11th Airborne Division soldiers are likely to deploy and operate.

## Readiness for Rapid Global Deployment

Although the Arctic region is drawing considerable attention as Russia and China extend their presence

and influence, sustaining a free and open Indo-Pacific theater remains a top national priority. The 11th Airborne Division has a foot firmly in each region by virtue of both mission and geography. Sitting at the nexus of both regions, the division routinely executes expeditionary and multidomain operations in support of combatant commanders across the globe while building Arctic expertise. The 11th Airborne Division is assigned to U.S. Army Pacific in support of the Indo-Pacific Command, and it can supply a credible force in crisis, conflict, and competition.

The division's rapidly deployable airborne and air assault brigades function as the Army's Indo-Pacific response force by offering the joint force commander geographic proximity coupled with readiness. The division's strategic location provides the shortest distances to potential crisis both in the Pacific and over the North Pole to Scandinavian countries. The division's mission, roles, and expertise meet the demands of both the operational environment and the joint force commander. Last year's approved conversion of



Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment "Bobcats," 1st Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, conduct a company live fire at Yukon Training Area, Alaska, as part of Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center rotation 22-02 on 15 March 2022. The brigade reflagged on 6 June 2022 as an element of the 11th Airborne Division. (Photo by Benjamin Wilson, U.S. Army)

the Stryker brigade to light infantry optimized the unit for rapid response.

Follow-on transformation efforts should see the introduction of sustainment, fires, and aviation enablers as well as the improved equipping of the force for its Arctic mission. The Army is deliberately planning and executing this transformation, which will be synchronized and integrated with our enduring priorities, requirements, and training objectives.

We are training various options for over-the-snow mobility, including skis, snowshoes, snow machines, and soon, the Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicle. We will continue to test solutions for the identified Arctic capability gaps and provide feedback to the Army enterprise on the best investments going forward.

## Allies and Partners

Having strong partners is a cornerstone of the national defense strategy and is integral to the Army's success. We are committed to building relationships

with the joint and total force and our partners and allies to be ready in competition, crisis, conflict, and change. We have actively pursued this objective, engaging and training with India, Japan, Mongolia, Malaysia, and Australia, as well as Norway, Finland, and Sweden.

The division's brigade combat teams' routine deployments across the Pacific theater and the Arctic demonstrate the value of multilateral solutions and cooperation. In 2023, the division participated in eighteen major exercises. Our units are on the ground with our foreign partners and allies, articulating the valuable role of the U.S. Army in enabling multilateral activities, exercises, and training events. The broad and deep exercise participation serves to expose the criticality of logistics and sustainment for military operations in the region while simultaneously revealing our Army's unmatched abilities in these arenas.

Training for ground operations in Arctic/ECW environments with allies and partners hones our ability while increasing interoperability. In May 2022, the



Spc. Adrien Dutter, a forward observer assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, out of Fort Wainwright, Alaska, retrieves skiing gear during the polar plunge portion of winter survival training 19 February 2023 at Arctic Forge 2023 on Sodankylä Garrison, Finland. Exercise Arctic Forge 23 is a U.S. Army Europe and Africa-led umbrella exercise that leverages host-nation exercises Defense Exercise North in Finland and exercise Joint Viking in Norway focused on building capabilities and cooperation in support of the U.S. Army's Arctic strategy. (Photo by Sgt. Austin Baker, U.S. Army)

Spartan Brigade went to Norway for Swift Response, executing an emergency deployment readiness exercise for a battalion task force and an in-flight rig for an airborne operation over the North Pole, and training force-on-force with multinational partners. Exercises like this ensure we are prepared to respond to threats or crisis in cold environments while reinforcing the enduring bond of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Also demonstrating our potential to support operations in the European Command, 1st Brigade, 11th Airborne Division Infantry Brigade Combat Team (1/11 IBCT), sent a battalion tactical command post and an infantry company to Arctic Forge 23 for cold weather training with the Finnish Defence Forces. This winter warfare training event featured ski training, a biathlon, squad tactics, and Arctic survival skills—intensive challenges that strengthened partnerships and increased readiness to meet shared responsibilities in the Arctic and other ECW locations.

In November 2022, we deployed an airborne battalion to opposite side of the world, traveling to India's Himalayan mountains. Paratroopers from 2/11 IBCT (Airborne) took part in the Yudh Abhyas 22 training exercise, operating at ten-thousand-foot elevation alongside soldiers from the Indian Army's 9th Assam Regiment. This was an extraordinary first that really got the attention of our competitors on the world stage.

The division's air assault brigade is likewise building a strong relationship with the winter soldiers of the Northern Army of the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force. They participated in a bilateral exchange for North Wind 23, with the 1/11 IBCT "Arctic Wolves" deploying a battalion to Hokkaido to train alongside the Japanese in harsh winter conditions. The division also went to Japan for Yama Sakura 83 in December, and we are deep in planning for Yama Sakura 85 this coming winter. These exercises increase our countries' mutual combat readiness to respond to a wide range of crisis contingencies in the Indo-Pacific region.



Another key Indo-Pacific partner is the country of Mongolia. Khaan Quest in June 2023 was a multilateral exercise hosted by the Mongolian Armed Forces. We participated in tough training at the Five Hills Training Area, sharing practices for peacekeeping and stability operations while promoting regional security. While our soldiers exchanged lessons and techniques, it was also a clear demonstration of the U.S. strategic commitment to maintain international stability.

All these exercises focused on training alongside our partners and allies to advance our technical and procedural interoperability as well as to build a cohesive team operating in the Arctic and Indo-Pacific environments. Taken as a whole, these exercises and shared training events are contributing to global security and increasing mutual military trust.

Arctic capability and mission readiness ultimately depend on our greatest resource, our soldiers. People have been and remain our top priority, with a focus on taking care of soldiers, families, and our Army community through leadership and connections. On 6 June 2022, the 11th Airborne Division activation properly aligned identity, purpose, and mission for our soldiers, and the chief of staff of the Army charged us with reestablishing the proud reputation of this storied division. This was a huge missing piece of the puzzle. We improved soldiers' and family members' quality of life by clearing away the previous "Frankenstein-like" creation that was cobbled together with various patches and units. The best quality of life program in the Army remains tough, challenging, training as part of a cohesive unit—and that must remain foundational.

This past June, the 11th Airborne Division celebrated its first anniversary since reactivating. Observing a full week of activities focused on the proud legacy of the division, we conducted Angel Rendezvous Week, during which we honored the sacrifices of the brave men and women who served before us and celebrated the contributions of those that still wear the uniform today.

We have codified our approach in the Arctic Angels Standing Orders, with a tip of the hat to Robert Rogers' Standing Orders; using our moniker "Arctic Angel" as an acronym, we provide eleven precepts that define our approach to leadership, training, readiness, and mission execution:

**A**ngels have grit and are physically tough! These are required regardless of equipment and resources. A unit will be victorious where soldiers' willingness to accept hardship is the norm. Maintaining a positive attitude regardless of conditions can be the difference between survival or death, victory or defeat.

**R**ealistic training, morale, and stamina are the foundation of an Arctic warrior that no equipment or technology can replace. A winter-trained soldier is also good in the summer, but the reverse is not true.

**C**old weather requires a plan A, B, and C to survive the cold. Extra layers and tents are always a must. Never wait to be cold to put on an extra layer or set up a tent or it will be too late. Wet clothes will lead to hypothermia; if you sweat, you die, so stay dry!

**T**rusted leadership prevents cold weather injuries! A squad must carry the necessary equipment to withstand any temperature and be ready to autonomously treat cold weather injuries. Cold weather injuries are a failure in supervision, planning, and training. Leadership, no excuse. Be Arctic smart!

**I**nclement Arctic conditions give a 10:1 advantage to the defender; force your enemy out of his positions and entrenchments by outmaneuvering him out of contact and then you'll own the advantage. Roads, trails, and cut lines are the enemy's engagement areas; if it is easy, you are walking into a trap; if it is hard, you are winning. Be Arctic tough!

**C**ombat-ready, small, mobile units that can move in difficult terrain will defeat larger formations that are less mobile and holding terrain. Arctic winning units are experts at raiding and ambushing. Master the Ranger skills and adapt to your environment. See the enemy first and be the "white ghost"!

**A**rctic patrol bases must be established in less than an hour and broken down in less than ten minutes. Always have your equipment ready to march. Don't leave your tent up if you are not actively refitting or resting. The minimum safety is always one squad per patrol base for roving and sentries. The track discipline is the most sacred element of your patrol base security; if it is broken, you are packing! Be ready to march at a minute's warning.

**N**ever compromise your security! When advancing in enemy territory, prioritize security, manage the effort and workload. In close terrain when you are forced to travel single file and break trail, spread out at least one

moose to one bear apart. When halting, stay in trail to avoid being counted and set frequent ambushes to eliminate possible trailing foes.

Graceful and stealthy movement over snow is only mastered through tough, repetitive training. The Arctic soldier always carries snowshoes and is the master of complex terrain mobility skills. When you need to close with the enemy, use your snowshoes; when you need to go fast, use your skis; when you need to bring supplies forward, consider the use of snow machines or small unit support vehicles.

Equipment maintenance is vital to surviving in the Arctic. Take care of your equipment; your life depends on it. Check and test your squad support system before heading out. Keep your weapon dry and don't take it inside unless you are cleaning it.

Learned lessons in the cold are acquired by harnessing tough repetitive training and exposure. Expect hardship but place as much consideration to the sustainment, support and refitting of your force as you do for maneuver. Arctic resupply can be precarious, be prepared to be self-sufficient for a week at a time.

## Looking Forward

Arctic capability, readiness for large-scale combat operations, and interoperability with allies and partners will continue to be the division's path to regaining Arctic dominance. With people our most valuable resources, we must maintain our focus on servant leadership, discipline, and tough training. Building cohesive teams on a foundation of mutual trust and strong connection is essential to personal and unit readiness.

The Army must continue to build this division based on the mission and requirements, gaining more robust functionality in logistics, aviation, intelligence, and fires—becoming a stronger, more versatile asset in the joint commander's arsenal. We must continue to operationalize the division headquarters and develop our warfighting skills that will be paramount to our preparation for any conflict or crisis. Most importantly, our focus on tough, crucible training at company levels and below must not waver. A ready force is a deterrent, and we must be positioned to fight so that we do our part to deter war. ■

---

## Notes

1. E. M. Flanagan Jr., *The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division, 1943–1946* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1989), 395.

2. "Our History: The 11th Airborne Division and the Army in Alaska," 11th Airborne Division, accessed 5 July 2023, <https://11thairbornedivision.army.mil/History/>.

3. Ibid.

4. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community* (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 6 February 2023), 4, accessed 5 July 2023, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2023-Unclassified-Report.pdf>.

5. The White House, *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* (Washington, DC: The White House, October 2022), 6, accessed 5 July 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>.

6. Ibid., 5.

7. Elisabeth Braw, "Arctic Harmony Is Falling Apart," *Foreign Policy* (website), 15 May 2023, accessed 5 July 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/05/15/russia-china-arctic-cooperation-svalbard/>.

8. James C. McConville and Ryan D. McCarthy, foreword to *Regaining Arctic Dominance: The U.S. Army in the Arctic*, Chief of Staff Paper #3 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 19 January 2021), accessed 5 July 2023, [https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/about/2021\\_army\\_arctic\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/about/2021_army_arctic_strategy.pdf).

9. "Yesterday and Tomorrow Islands," Earth Observatory, NASA, 27 January 2018, accessed 5 July 2023, <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/91638/yesterday-and-tomorrow-islands>.

10. Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), *Arctic Gap Quick-Look Report: Enabling Arctic Dominance* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CALL, 2021).

11. Cold-soaked equipment generally means all aircraft components, metals, composites, and fluids are the same temperature as the ambient air. The solid components as well as rubber bushings become brittle, liquids become viscous or solid. In extreme cold weather (-40° C/F), it is near impossible to conduct maintenance or start the cold-soaked aircraft. Cold-soaked aircraft must be brought into a warm hangar or work space (above freezing) for an extended period of time, up to seventy-two hours, before significant maintenance can be conducted.



The "Ideology of the Future" movement asserts that Russia is a separate civilization in its own right—neither Western nor Eastern. Moreover, advocates of the ideology in the government assert that Russian civilization as it has evolved provides a superior guide for the future political and economic formation of global society when compared to the failing liberal democratic systems that predominate in the current international system. The foundations of the new ideology will be taught to students of all majors in the first semester of their first year at university. This means that regardless of the students' course selection, all begin their higher education with ideological indoctrination using such means as textbooks on the history of Russia. (Photo courtesy of Oleg Elkov)

# Russians Are Busy Hammering Out Their "Ideology of the Future"

Dr. Robert F. Baumann

The official position of state-sponsored public intellectuals since the beginning of the war in Ukraine has been that President Vladimir Putin's "special military operation" marked a global historical turning point. For instance, Dmitri Trenin, a scholar at the Center for National Security of the Russian Academy of Sciences, called it a "watershed moment" in the November 2022 periodical *Russia in Global Affairs*.<sup>1</sup> To make himself perfectly clear, Trenin noted that he is not talking about a simple "turning point," which might be subject to reversal, but a definitive, irreversible break with the past. This surprising proposition has become a core tenet of Russia's emerging "ideology of the future."

Vladimir Medinsky—Putin's handpicked presidential assistant, head of the influential Russian Military Historical Society (RMHS), and shaper of ideological and cultural dialogue—said essentially the same thing in equally cataclysmic terms, characterizing the present moment as "the greatest challenge" in Russian history and warning that the survival of Russian civilization was at risk.<sup>2</sup> As bizarre as this might sound to outsiders, such remarks capture the current hysteria in Russia resulting from the (so far) thwarted attempt to seize Ukraine.

Just months prior to the start of the euphemistically titled special military operation on 24 February 2022, the RMHS founded a new journal under the pretentious title *Ideology of the Future*. With

**Dr. Robert Baumann**

is a former professor of history at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) on Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He holds a BA in Russian from Dartmouth College, an MA in Russian and East European studies from Yale University, and a PhD in Russian history. Over a span of several decades, he taught courses in Russian and Eurasian history at CGSC, the University of Kansas, and Kansas State University. In addition to studying at Moscow University and Leningrad University in the former USSR, he has conducted numerous research trips to Russia and spent several years as an education advisor at the Armed Forces Academy of Uzbekistan under the auspices of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

extensive backing from the state and state-approved public intellectuals, this publication aimed to provide a forum for thought about Russia's future. The main categories included Russia's future in focused scientific discussion; Russia, the Russian world, and Russian civilization in current conditions of global threat; and military-historical heritage in the struggle against "myths" and falsifications.<sup>3</sup> However, its orientation changed significantly once the special military operation began to sputter in March 2022. On 21 March, the state officially registered it as a source of mass information and thus subject to new controls. Suddenly, *Ideology of the Future* pushed the staggering assertion that over one thousand years of Russian history are divisible into two parts: before and after 24 February 2022, the date Putin's special military operation officially launched. The fifth issue, published in June 2022, reflected a dramatic change of focus. Since then, almost every article has drawn alleged scientific connections to the *spetsial'naia voennaia operatsiia* (SVO) as it is abbreviated in Russian.

Also in this issue, a new lead section, consisting of eight articles, carried the title "Special Operation: Ideological and Informational Support." In effect, the journal's mission statement changed. The first article, "The Ideology of Russian Victory: Out Sacred Codes," outlined the traits and circumstances that shaped Russia and contributed to victories through the centuries. It established a storyline of defeat and redemption. Its author, Aleksandr Prokhanov, noted the vital role of miracles in Russian history, exemplified in the twentieth century by victory in the Great Patriotic War. Demonstrating the same spirit today, the people have dug their country out from the ashes and miraculously returned Crimea to Russia. "Today's Russian state arose after a huge historic defeat, resurrected itself after a stunning crash. We have again started the Russian reactor."<sup>4</sup> Subsequent articles highlighted the Russian information campaign supporting SVO with particular focus on denazification and allegations of genocide in Donbas.

The journal's editorial board as well as its list of principal contributors draws from select sources beholden to the regime. There is, of course, the RMHS and its network of branches around the country. In addition, there are strong links to academic centers, defense colleges, and think tanks that also function as government propaganda arms. Finally, there are

well-publicized discussion clubs consisting of politically loyal public intellectuals.

This article aims to examine the intellectual evolution of the new worldview and especially Russia's Orwellian quest to produce a rational framework for a policy that can galvanize support from a weary population for whatever the Putin regime may choose to do. Although it has received intensive attention since the start of the war in Ukraine, the so-called "ideology of the future" has been in the making for a long time and yet still eludes precise formulation.<sup>5</sup> We can, however, identify salient tenets in this line of thought and reach some tentative conclusions about what the ideology is and is not at this stage of its development.

## Contextual Review

First, a contextual review is in order. The "deep history" of the new ideology reflects concepts such as Eurasianism, whose roots reach back at least as far as the Russian Revolution of 1917. Briefly stated, Eurasianism, as framed by Russian intellectuals, regards Russia as a distinctive civilization apart from the adversarial West and profoundly influenced by connections to Asia.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, Eurasianist philosophizing is often convoluted and full of arcane references. In fact, it occasionally delves so far down the proverbial "rabbit hole" that it brings to mind George Kennan's reference to the "Russian capacity for self-delusion."<sup>7</sup>

Ideology has multiple uses for Putin. As noted by journalist Frank Foer, "*Kulturkampf* is not merely a diagnosis of the world; it is a political strategy."<sup>8</sup> In Putin's case, ideology helped him brush off election protests in 2011 and push back at the West over values-based debates concerning gender, colonialism, economic bullying, and so forth. Putin learned the utility of ideology from serving the Soviet Union, which governed the former Russian Empire for seven decades. It was not so much the Marxist-Leninist content of the ideology, for which Putin held little admiration, that left a permanent imprint as it was the logical template of official ideology as a rubric for officially sanctioned thought. Marxism-Leninism, though often manipulated by the leadership to justify all manner political machinations, provided the Soviet populace with a philosophical north star that provided a seemingly principled rationale for the regime and pointed toward a hazily defined better future. Furthermore, it provided a relatively

durable framework for intellectual and political life, and for those inclined to accept it a fully developed belief system as well. Soviet citizens had an idea of their place in political and world history. Even in the worst of times, most Soviet citizens assumed that their country was advanced and respected worldwide.

All this came crashing down with the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Amidst the brief period of euphoric flirtation with democracy as the union dissolved into fifteen separate republics, the Russian Federation headed by President Boris Yeltsin quickly found itself groping in the darkness for a new sense of direction and purpose. For example, how was the Russian Federation to define itself? Russians made up the preponderant demographic and cultural component of the country, but even stripped of the minority republics of the former USSR, Russia remained a diverse country. Thus, one attempt to clarify matters was a project proclaimed in 1996 to establish a "Concept of the State Nationalities Policy."<sup>9</sup> The purpose of the document was to lay the groundwork for a new federal structure that would simultaneously allow for the development of Russian identity as foundational to the new state while making space for non-Russians who were part of the "Russian world" to continue their own cultures in a Russian context. Unlike the former Soviet Union, whose ideology demanded subordination of Russian identity to the concept of a multinational federation of "independent" republics, the Russian Federation did not conceal its fundamentally national character.

Accentuating the Russianness of the federation marked a subtle departure from the policies of the USSR and even the Russian Empire, which had always highlighted its Russian distinctiveness while framing its decisions in the context of imperial interests rather than narrowly Russian national prerogatives.<sup>10</sup> The doctrine of "Official Nationality" put forth under Tsar Nicholas I in the 1830s gave official sanction to the place of the Orthodox faith, identification with the Russian nation in a civic sense, and autocracy as the system of rule.<sup>11</sup> In practical terms, this meant that overt Russian nationalism as expressed by Pan-Slavists lacked the Tsar's endorsement. Thus, Nikolai Danilevsky's hugely influential book, *Russia and Europe* (1869 in serialized form), emphasizing competing civilizations, carried no official imprimatur. To be sure, the work resonated with Russian nationalists in political

and military circles, but the regime regarded expressions of popular opinion as undermining the exclusive tsarist prerogative to determine policy without interference.<sup>12</sup> In any case, a decentralized federal nationalities policy under Yeltsin emerged but did not survive the subsequent Putin presidency that incrementally centralized and subordinated the non-Russian regional republics to Moscow. This was especially so once Putin began his second tour in the presidency in 2012 at which point Russian identity openly became the organizing principle of the federation.<sup>13</sup>

United States during the Gulf War of 1991. One Russian theorist at the time, Gen.-Maj. Vladimir Slipchenko, characterized it as sixth-generation warfare employing means that posed a clear danger to the overmatched military of Russia.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the war immediately preceded the collapse of the USSR left Russian military analysts rattled. One prominent interpretation of events that gained currency was that the Central Intelligence Agency had played a role in bringing down the Soviet regime. (This is the sort of thinking that helped condition Putin to accept the

“ Putin proceeded to do away with the inconvenience of democracy through a series of new election laws that impeded formation of an actual opposition. ”

Putin’s return to the presidency shaped the current environment in important ways. One immediate consequence of Putin’s election fixing in 2000 was that, in the words of now-detained dissident critic Vladimir Kara-Murza, “Putin proceeded to do away with the inconvenience of democracy through a series of new election laws that impeded formation of an actual opposition.”<sup>14</sup> After serving the constitutional maximum of eight years, Putin temporarily ceded the presidency to his ally Dmitry Medvedev. The prospect of Putin’s return to the presidency prompted widespread protests in 2011 in Saint Petersburg and Moscow by Russians who understood that a rigged transition posed an existential threat to what remained of Russian democracy. Putin’s “takeaway” from this experience was that the protests of democracy activists could only have been orchestrated from abroad. To be sure, the United States, for example, openly voiced its sympathy for the democracy activists.<sup>15</sup> To Putin, this amounted to election interference, whether the elections themselves were legitimate or not. For him and his inner circle, it was part of the accumulation of evidence that the West was orchestrating a so-called color revolution (like those on Ukraine or Georgia) in Russia.

Another bastion of growing alarm about Western intentions was Russia’s Ministry of Defense. Concerns traced to the display of advanced technology by the

idea that foreign intelligence services were working assiduously in 2011 to do the same to him.) Renewed protests in 2019 about pension reform and other issues reminded Putin about the perils of tolerating democratic expression.

Meanwhile, the steady expansion of NATO dovetailed nicely with this conspiratorial view of events. So potent was this worry that figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev who had opened Russia to the West in the first place in the late 1980s concurred with much of it. As political scientist William Taubman noted in his biography of the last Soviet leader, “Gorbachev, too, condemned Western attempts to ‘turn us into some kind of backwater’ after the cold war.” Like Putin, Gorbachev protested NATO expansion and the bombing of Yugoslavia during the conflict over Kosovo.<sup>17</sup>

For Russia, the decade after the end of the Cold War brought vast disappointment following a brief period of soaring hopes. Democracy was not working

**Next page:** (From left) Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, President of the Alexander Solzhenitsyn Russian Charity Foundation Natalia Solzhenitsyna, President of Russia Vladimir Putin, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, and Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky take part in unveiling a monument to the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal of the Apostles, in Moscow’s Borovitskaya Square on 4 November 2016, the National Unity Day. (Photo by Dmitry Astakhov, Sputnik via the Associated Press)



well, the economy floundered during the transition to market capitalism, angry pensioners aligned with the recently deposed communist party, crime rates exploded to shocking levels, and Russia's global influence evaporated. The ensuing crisis, brought on by rampant corruption and administrative incompetence under President Boris Yeltsin, left most Russians willing to accept a partial return to authoritarianism in return for a bit of stability.

One sign of Putin's plans to rejuvenate the country psychologically was the christening in formal legislation of the RMHS in 2012.<sup>18</sup> Putin put his personal imprimatur on the new organization, which received lavish funding. That an ostensibly educational organization focusing on military heritage would become part of the new ideological vanguard revealed a simultaneously old and new strategy. It was old in the sense that the tsarist empire and even more so the Soviet government understood that control of historical narratives was a key to defining national identity and justifying current and future policy. It was new in that it resurrected Russia's imperial history as the prime narrative of national greatness supplemented by a deep excursion into the Great Patriotic War.

## Russia Today

Today, the form of Soviet ideology, though little of the content, offers a blank template for thinking about Russia. Putin has always tried to shape the dialogue from a distance, leaving the particulars to others to work out. This way there is a semblance of uncontrolled public discussion that he can elect to embrace or dismiss. He also gains the opportunity to sense incipient trends among his core supporters. In addition to the RMHS, Putin has encouraged the activities of so-called discussion clubs, whose membership extensively overlaps with RMHS as well as government institutes, defense think tanks, and patriotic organizations. Collectively, these function both as cheerleaders for the regime and forums for controlled political analysis.

The best known of these is the Valdai Club, but others such as the Izborsk Discussion Club and the Zinoviev Discussion Club also have significant public profiles. Established in 2009, the Valdai Club, named after Lake Valdai near Novgorod where the founding meeting was held, is the most closely linked to Putin himself. In fact, Putin's annual address to the Valdai Club has become

a policy event. Putin shares his latest thoughts in a forum that offers a veneer of intellectual gravitas. After all, most members hold advanced degrees as well as high-level appointments to research or political centers. Many members are content contributors to *Ideology of the Future*. Prior to the crisis in Ukraine, some Western policymakers were invited to participate. In recent years, conference themes have hewed closer to the governmental party line and especially related to how Russia can reshape the world order. While the club may play a modest role in influencing policy, it plays a prominent role in amplifying policy.

One notable aspect of the Valdai meetings is that a share of them take place outside of the Russian Federation itself. For example, in the fall of 2021, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, hosted a meeting emphasizing relations between Russia and the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. At a recent meeting on Central Asia staged in May 2023, one of the Russian organizers, Timofei Bordachev, exclaimed, "Russia is the closest neighbor and ancient partner of the peoples of Central Asia."<sup>19</sup> This comment signaled Russia's not-so-subtle view that it retains a strong interest in what it considers its realm of privileged influence.

In turn, the Izborsk Club, which was established in 2012 in association with the 1,150th anniversary of the founding of its namesake city, has an explicitly patriotic mission. The chairman is Aleksandr Prokhanov, editor of the daily *Zavtra* (tomorrow) newspaper. A longtime conservative going back to his opposition to Yeltsin (Russia's first post-Soviet president who enjoyed Western backing), Prokhanov became a proponent of the idea of "Fifth Empire," which postulates that Russia's current regime is the fifth in a series of historic Russian empires. This notion, which holds Putin as the founder, has enjoyed considerable play in *Ideology of the Future*, where Prokhanov is an editorial board member.<sup>20</sup>

Another interesting example of the discussion group phenomenon is the Zinoviev Club, which proclaims commitment to the outlook and writings of philosopher Alexander Zinoviev who died in 2006. Zinoviev earned fame as a Soviet-era satirist and as author of the acclaimed novel *Yawning Heights* as well as works such as *Homo-Soveticus*. Exiled by the Soviet government in 1978, Zinoviev returned to the motherland in 1999. Loosely in the tradition of Nikolai Danilevsky, he embraced an allegedly scientific analysis of society and history.<sup>21</sup>



Overall, it is worth taking note of what has been adopted and what has been rejected from the Soviet style of ideological logic. For the Soviets, the cult of Vladimir Lenin (and for a while Joseph Stalin), the mythology of the October Revolution marked by associated parades and holidays, and the official obsession with the Great Patriotic War (World War II to the rest of the planet) provided the means to glorify the communist regime and establish historical mythology around its achievements.<sup>22</sup> Of course, the regime's egregious failures remained unacknowledged and consigned to the forbidden realm banned ideas. In any case, Putin has marginalized memory of Lenin and October, while elevating memory of the Great Patriotic War and Stalin ("mistakes" and all) to the pantheon of ideological monuments reserved for Alexander Nevsky, Peter the Great, and lately Putin himself.

Under Putin, the constant memorialization of World War II along with numerous other milestones in Russian military history has been fundamental in forming a new ideology. Victory Day, the 9 May holiday commemorating victory in the Great Patriotic War, is perhaps now the most important holiday on the calendar. Until 2015, it was also Russia's international calling card, a moment to invite representatives of formerly allied countries in the war against the Nazis to attend the grandiose parade in Moscow and bask in the glory of Russia's most conspicuous achievement of the twentieth century. However, following Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, some invited countries such as the United States and Britain declined to send representatives.

Still, Victory Day retained its place even as the global COVID pandemic disrupted normalcy around the world. As observed by Saint Petersburg professor Ivan Kurilla in 2020, celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the war was linked to constitutional reform, the return of Russia to great power status, and the transformation of the official narrative about the Great Patriotic War into a fiercely defended pillar of the emerging ideology. Political scientist Paul Goble likens World War II to the "founding myth" of the Putin government.<sup>23</sup> As scholar Gregory Carleton noted about the spirit of triumphalism, "More than any other subject, it [the war] makes Russia the decisive protagonist in the greatest conflict the world has ever known."<sup>24</sup> This is a primary reason why the

government is so anxious to draw comparisons at every opportunity with the special military operation. One popular claim is that the special military operation with its purported purpose to denazify Ukraine is the perfectly logical step to complete the unfinished work of the Great Patriotic War.<sup>25</sup>

This new narrative has become official dogma. In fact, recent legislation as well as a constitutional amendment (Article 67/1) threatened sanctions against historians inclined to challenge the correct point of view.<sup>26</sup> In addition, laws against the rehabilitation of Nazism and support for extremism used language vague enough to put historians on guard. The constitutional provision prohibited "diminution of the significance of the achievements of the people in defense of the Fatherland."<sup>27</sup> At the same time, guardians of the official view such as Vladimir Medinsky championed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact—often denounced by historians, especially in the West—as a triumph of Soviet diplomacy.<sup>28</sup>

Some republics of the former Soviet Union, such as in Central Asia, served as venues for commemorative events through 2021. Victory Day celebrations became a transparent instrument of Russian influence. Many schools incorporated Victory Day events into their schedules to complement official diplomatic ceremonies staged at various regional war memorials. Russian television crews filmed examples of school activities for news consumption back in Russia. Historical conferences offered forums for speeches about the war by international representatives, above all those from Russia. One common theme of interest voiced by Russian speakers was the struggle to rescue the history of the war from distortions by Western scholars seeking to diminish the enormous Soviet contribution to victory. Speakers framed this assault on their favored interpretation of the history of the war as part of a broader cultural offensive against Russians and by extension the other peoples of the former Soviet Union who sacrificed in the war.<sup>29</sup> Irina Kaznacheeva, writing in *Ideology of the Future*, attributed this and other historical heresies to what she terms the Western industry of historical fakes.<sup>30</sup> The point was to spread the sense of grievance and insult professed by Russian nationalist historians to other formerly Soviet nationalities. Whereas in fact most Western scholarly challenges to Putin's favored narrative focus on Stalin's decisions such

as the deal with Germany in 1939, war crimes in occupied territories, widespread purges, and the imposition of communist regimes in eastern Europe, nationalist historians cast these criticisms as an attack on the heroes who saved the world from Nazism.

Victory Day events revealed several layers of the new historically based ideology in both theory and practice. On one hand, they accentuated Russia's leadership role in the war and the solidarity among the peoples of the former Soviet Union. They especially reinforced Russia's implicit claim to leadership among the former republics. On the other hand, they reflected Russia's determination to control the historical narrative of the war and issue an ideological rebuff to the West.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 resulted in a change of atmospherics surrounding Victory Day celebrations. Central Asian republics such as Uzbekistan muted commemorative events and steered clear of any actions that might imply an endorsement of Russian foreign policy. In 2023, schools in Uzbekistan acknowledged Victory Day but commemorative events remained subdued.

In any case, the relevant question here concerns what Russia's current historical obsessions tell us about an emergent ideology. An examination of the journal *Ideology of the Future* gives a few indications. One derives from the consensus among regime supporters that an officially sanctioned national idea is necessary. R. I. Medinsky, not to be confused with Vladimir Medinsky, claims Russia needs such an idea like never before. He alludes to his experience in the 1980s when he participated in the massive and dangerous cleanup after Chernobyl. He asserts that a sense of patriotism and values instilled by his Soviet education kept him and others going under extremely adverse circumstances. Drawing an unflattering comparison with the present, he asks, "Where have the true patriots gone?"<sup>31</sup> Echoing Putin, Medinsky condemns the privileged "rats" of the modern "elite" who jump ship when the country faces adversity.<sup>32</sup>

In short, Medinsky and others regard a national ideology as the answer to an immediate problem—how to sustain support for the special military operation. Building on this theme, Kaznacheeva proclaims that great leaders have always appeared in Russia's national history to provide guiding ideas ranging from the "Third Rome" of the Monk Filofei to the drive for

empire advanced by Peter the Great. She concludes that Putin is the man to meet the moment today: "The course of Putin and his team absolutely does not align with the plans of the collective West. Russia has entered a phase of global opposition to the American hegemon and its allies."<sup>33</sup>

To date, themes propagated in *Ideology of the Future* focus overwhelmingly on history, particularly on military history, or what in the Soviet Union was known as military-patriotic education. In that context, Russian military achievements constituted the highest manifestation of patriotism. The goal of military-patriotic education was to produce new generations ready to sacrifice for the motherland. Today, as in the Soviet era, Russia is engaged in an information war with the West over historical truth.<sup>34</sup> Thus, while its content is heavily weighted toward historical narrative, the journal is also highly presentist in its outlook. It asserts that history is directly relevant to the special military operation and its success. The new generation must pick up the torch and carry Russia to new victories.

Accordingly, the current moment is a decisive one in the stream Russian history. Young patriots are living out the latest manifestations of Russia's historical development. To drive home the point, the journal repeatedly identifies Putin as a leader of his age on par with the greatest figures in Russian history. His special military operation is an act of resolve and genius dictated by the circumstances of the times. Putin's response to foreign threat is worthy of comparison to the deeds of his predecessors from Nevsky to Peter to Stalin.<sup>35</sup> To drive home the point, the Ministries of Defense and Culture, bastions of the current ideological trend, announced plans to establish a national network of museums dedicated to the special military operation, thereby further elevating its importance.<sup>36</sup> Apparently, the "future" in *Ideology of the Future* is a reference to what is at stake and how Russia must shape the future.

## Nine Pillars of Russia's Worldview

Although the new ideology is still a work in progress, this article tentatively posits nine pillars of the emerging worldview.

**One.** Though seldom expressed in such blunt terms, *there is a personality cult at the top in Russia* that provides the underlying rationale behind much of the rest. The top priority of the Putin regime is its continuation in



Vladimir Medinsky, head of the influential Russian Military Historical Society and de facto minister of culture, gives a lecture 22 February 2022 on the three hundredth anniversary of the Russian Empire. (Photo by the Russian Military Historical Society)

power and every subsequent ideological claim serves that end. It starts with the assertion that a “vertical state” with some trappings of democracy is perfectly natural for Russia and so the modern presidency is consonant with the traditions of princes and tsars.<sup>37</sup> After all, what did Alexander Nevsky, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, or Joseph Stalin need with democracy? Putin is simply the latest in this proud lineage. Prokhanov writes in *Ideology of the Future*, “No, it is not Putin who has written his name in Russian history. Russian history has been written in him.”<sup>38</sup> Insulting the president, entailing almost any form of explicit or implicit criticism, is illegal. Consequently, the government’s unyielding refusal to face the dismal outcome to date of the special military operation stems from fear that any lack of firmness would suggest that the current regime is incompetent.

**Two.** *The role of historically based military-patriotic education in Russia today is to justify the current regime and its policies by invoking the mythical greatness of an eternal Russian civilization defined as Eurasian and shaped by the Orthodox Church, transcendent leaders, and a distinct set of values. That civilization is entitled to a seat at the table of great powers but is currently under threat from the perpetually hostile West. Programs underway in schools and civic organizations across Russia tell young people that the essence of being Russian is to embrace the received traditions of their ancestors as interpreted for them by the current*

regime. Unwavering support of the state is fundamental to their identity.

**Three.** An essential aspect of this historical tradition is the view that Russia has earned its status as a world civilization and all the perquisites that this implies. Some authors refer to a “code” like the primordial DNA of Russian civilization that is permanently reflected in its national character and drive to secure its sphere of influence.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, *Russia has legitimate interests, is entitled to its historic space, and can only be judged by its own standards.* Russia does not need Western-style democracy because it enjoys a unique consensual relationship between the ruler and the governed.

**Four.** The history of the Russian Orthodox Church exemplifies what is distinctive about the Russian world. Its oppositional relationship to Catholicism (and subsequently Protestantism as well) has lasted for a millennium. *Orthodoxy has been crucial to the idea of Russia as a separate civilizational center.* In fact, references to “third Rome” imply world leadership. Although for most Russians Orthodoxy is more a matter of cultural heritage than religious conviction, the country retains a profound emotional connection to its enduring symbolism whether in its distinctive church architecture or veneration of icons.

**Five.** *Russia is a Eurasian power.* Affinity with China, as expressed in the “unlimited partnership” declared by Putin and Xi Jinping, is a naturally occurring strategic alignment against the West to thwart American

hegemony. This relationship resides in the tradition of Alexander Nevsky who stood firmly against the West while making accommodation with the Mongol Empire in the East. As long ago as 2015, Russian financial commentator Aleksandr Razuvayev compared Putin's choice to Nevsky's, noting, "He preferred the Horde to the Catholic West and an Asian market from the Volga to China to trade with Europe."<sup>40</sup> Not to resist Western influence would result in gradual assimilation by Europe and cost Russia its identity. Today, Russia seeks to organize states worldwide that do not wish to submit to colonization by Western values.

**Six.** Hence, Western hybrid war aimed at undermining Russia and imposing Western values is the central problem of the present age. The Great Patriotic War provides a victory narrative to inspire emulation. One practical objective of the reverence for history is to build support for a *renewed militarization of Russia*. This is evident not only through the fixation with the development of a multilayered system of military-patriotic education but also the gradual introduction of wartime norms in Russian society. These range from clamping down on what little remains of press freedom and jailing political opponents to expanding laws pertaining to treason and espionage. To oppose Russia's special military operation against Ukraine in print or speech is construed to discredit the army and provide moral support to the enemy. To describe it as war or invasion is illegal. Even as the special military operation stalled at the start of spring 2022, various Russian websites began compiling lists of traitors.<sup>41</sup> Broadly speaking, establishing a wartime regime grants Putin maximum latitude to classify any critic as an enemy of the state or a foreign agent.

**Seven.** *Russia is a victim.* Creating their own peculiar brand of identity politics, advocates of the new order constantly perceive evidence of Western disrespect, anti-Russian racism, foreign subversion, and so on. Speaking of the West at the Valdai Discussion Club Meeting in October 2022, Putin argued, "It [the West] denies the sovereignty of countries and peoples, their originality and uniqueness, does not put the interests of other states in anything."<sup>42</sup> Ironically, Putin invoked writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn's famous speech at Harvard in 1978 when, while exiled by the Soviet regime as punishment for exposing the evils of Stalinism, he nevertheless criticized the Western sense of superiority and its insistence that other countries follow its norms. (Of course, these dreaded "norms"

include respect for the human rights of individuals as well as for democracy, and above all the right to criticize one's government, for which Solzhenitsyn was arrested and eventually exiled.) Furthermore, Putin added, "Over the past nearly half a century, this blindness that Solzhenitsyn spoke of—openly racist and neo-colonial in nature [Putin's words, not Solzhenitsyn's]—has taken on simply ugly forms, especially after the emergence of the so-called unipolar world."<sup>43</sup>

**Eight.** As framed by Putin, *Russian sovereignty is at stake*. Moreover, he is not so subtly trying to align Russia with states (especially dictatorships) in Africa and Asia that were once part of European colonial empires yet today must tolerate European critiques of their politics and human rights records. Putin would have us believe that Russia feels their pain. (Actually, Putin is calling on authoritarian rulers to close ranks against pressure to democratize.) Somehow, to suggest that authoritarianism is wrong is "to deny the very existence of culture, art, science of other peoples."<sup>44</sup> Putin falsely extends this to "prohibitions of Dostoevsky and Tchaikovsky" (which have not occurred), all a part of "the modern Western culture of cancellation."<sup>45</sup> With the breathtaking audacity of one who allows no serious domestic dissent, *Putin claims that he is the one standing up for "open society" and the right of every country to choose its own form of government.* (As though Russia's elections were not fixed, and the people actively and consciously chose dictatorship as their preferred system of governance.) In effect, Russia's president holds that choosing to have no political rights is a fundamental individual right reflecting the natural distinctiveness of different cultures.<sup>46</sup>

In turn, all Western criticism is inherently malicious and aimed at absorbing Russia into the decadent, anti-traditional European cultural orbit. Traditional values, Putin posits, flow from unique national experiences and are entitled to respect. After all, Russia does not tell Europe how to live. Again and again, Putin returns to the question posed by Russian Pan-Slav philosopher Nikolai Danilevsky, "Why does Europe hate us?"<sup>47</sup> There is ample precedent for such thinking. During the Soviet era, the Communist Party constantly cited the destruction resulting from the Nazi invasion to explain away systemic inefficiencies and shortcomings in economic development. At the same time, internal propaganda about the war covered up errors and atrocities



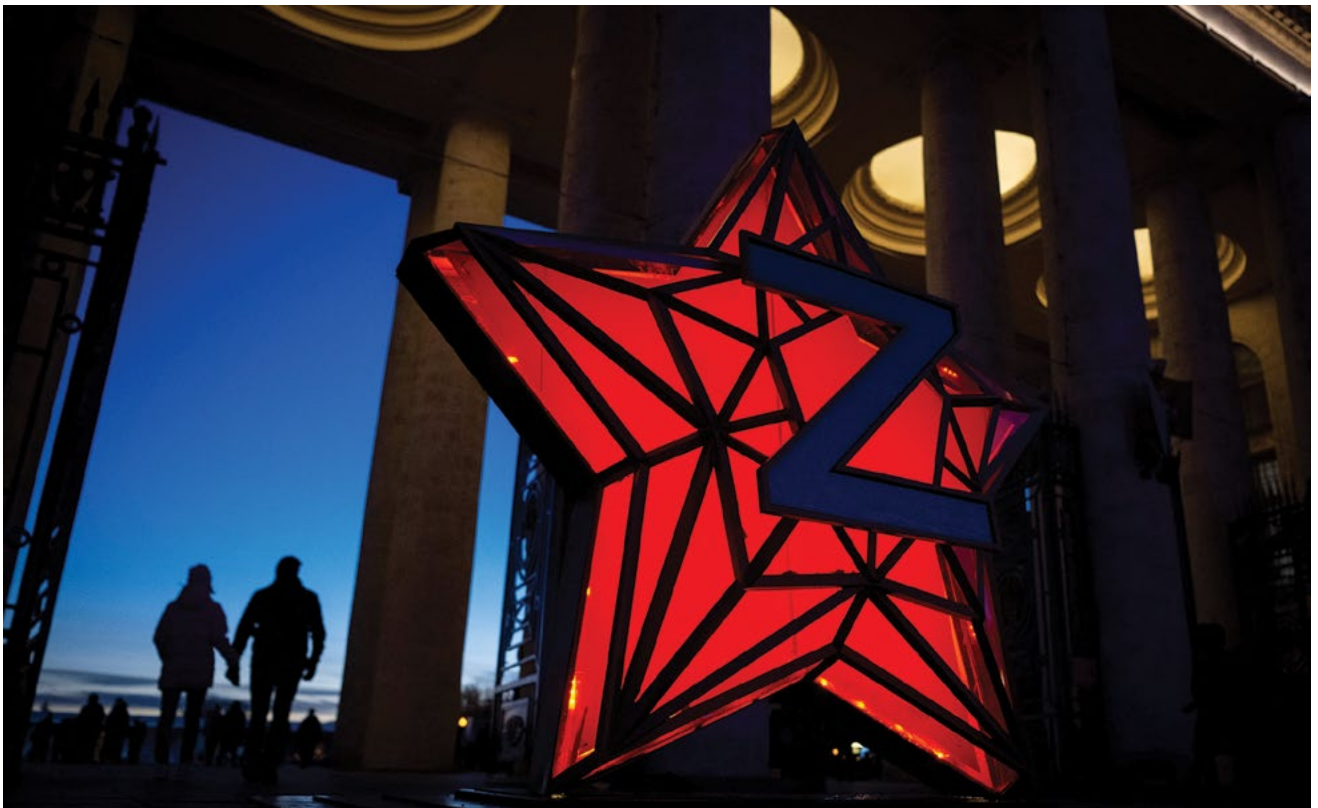
Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a laying ceremony 9 May 2020 at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Kremlin Wall in Moscow, marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nazi defeat in World War II. Putin postponed the massive Victory Day parade due to the coronavirus pandemic but ordered a flyover of warplanes over Red Square. (Photo by Alexei Druzhinin, Associated Press)

by Stalin and the Communist Party. That Putin, as an ex-KGB operative, would fall back on this style of reasoning is not shocking. Thus, his view is that today the United States and the West are attacking Russia without any provocation whatsoever.

**Nine.** Many Russian nationalist commentators invoke *the importance of justice*. However, what this usually implies is *not justice for individuals in a Western sense but rather justice for Russia itself*. In short, the war in Ukraine seeks a kind of restorative justice, returning to Russia what rightfully belongs to it. As for Russia's position in the international system, Putin claims that Russia is fighting for democracy in international relations: "But today the absolute majority of the world community demands democracy in international affairs and does not accept any form of authoritarian dictate by individual countries or groups of states. What is this if not the direct application of the principles of democracy at the level of international relations?"<sup>48</sup>

Overall, a striking feature of commentary about ideology in Russia is its particularity. Other than pious

assertions of the right of states to manage their internal affairs without interference, it makes few universal claims to relevance characteristic of Marxism-Leninism or Western liberalism. *The ideology of the future* applies to Russia and a specific understanding of Russia's place and prerogatives in the world. From this vantage point, Russia is a benign power, a threat to no one. It is simply claiming its rightful place among world civilizations. Accordingly, neighboring peoples that were once under Russian sway within the empire or the USSR should gravitate naturally to their proper place in subordination to a greater power. Russian nationalists regard the contiguous former republics as beholden to Russia for the gift of Russian civilization and membership in the Russian world. In this scenario, Russia was never an imperialist colonizing nation like the European powers. The accumulation of territory across Eurasia was natural and, for the most part, benevolent. Equally important, as Putin himself has indicated, Russian territorial gains under Peter, for example, did not require the approval of Europe.<sup>49</sup>



Pedestrians walk past a New Year decoration stylized as the “Kremlin Star” 2 January 2023 in Moscow. The decoration includes the letter “Z,” a tactical insignia used by Russian troops in Ukraine. (Photo by Natalia Kolesnikova, Agence France-Presse)

## Conclusion

Ultimately, Putin’s regime and its formative ideology may have staked too much on the special military operation in Ukraine. Failure in this overhyped endeavor could grievously undermine claims about historical inevitability, Russia’s unique “victory code,” Putin’s infallibility, and Russia’s civilizational mission. Yevgeny Prigozhin’s June declaration (not to mention his brief mutiny) about the falsehood of Russia’s pretext for launching the war against Ukraine offers evidence to that effect. Still, the principal streams of reasoning that collectively constitute

the still unresolved “ideology of the future” will in all probability far outlive the Putin administration. They withstood past societal changes and political earthquakes in Russia and will retain their grip on the imagination of nationalists for decades to come. Even so, it is not certain that a new ideology really offers a solution to Russia’s underlying problems. Support for the war seems widespread but tepid. This is consistent with the impact of ideology during the Soviet era. Still, the ideology does provide a useful lens through which to understand the ambitions of the Putin government. ■

---

## Notes

1. Dmitri Trenin, “Spetsial’naia voennaia operatsiia na Ukraine kak perelomnaia tochka vneshnei politiki sovremennoi Rossii” [The special military operation in Ukraine as a watershed moment in the foreign policy of contemporary Russia], *Rossiiia v global’noi politike* [Russia in global affairs], 30 November 2022, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/perelomnaya-tochka/>.

2. Vladimir Medinsky, “Rossiia sevodnia stolknulas’ s velichaim vyzovom v svoei istorii” [Russia today confronts the greatest challenge in its history], Russian Military Historical Society, 24 March 2022, accessed 25 March 2022, <https://rvio.histrf.ru/activities/news/vladimir-medinskij-rossiya-segodnya-stolknulas-s-velichaim-vyzovom-v-svoei-istorii>.

[chajshim-vyzovom-v-svoej-istorii](#). The English language tends to conflate the Russian adjectives *russkoe*, which is an ethnic term of reference, and *rossiiskoe*, which implies belonging to the Russian state or civilization. The point is that the Russian Military Historical Society focuses not on a narrow ethnic history but on the history of the state and the many peoples that populate it and belong to the lands that constituted the empire.

3. *Ideologija budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 1 (2021), accessed 15 June 2023, <https://histrf.ru/magazine/release/ideologiya-budushchego-obshchestvenno-politicheskij-nauchno-teoreticheskij-ekspertno-analiticheskij-zhurnal-2021-1>.

4. Aleksandr Prokhanov, "Ideologiya Russkoi pobedy: nashi sviashchennye kody" [The ideology of Russian victory: Our sacred codes], *Ideologiya budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 5 (June 2022), 8, accessed 27 May 2023, [https://histrf.ru/files/ideology\\_of\\_future\\_part5.pdf](https://histrf.ru/files/ideology_of_future_part5.pdf).
5. For a concise discussion, see Andrei Kolesnikov, "Scientific Putinism: Shaping Official Ideology in Russia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 21 November 2022, accessed 15 June 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88451>. Kolesnikov notes that the effort to construct an ideology has gained urgency with the war in Ukraine. See also Rayna Breuer, "The Cocktail of Ideologies Behind Putin," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 March 2022, accessed 15 June 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/the-cocktail-of-ideologies-behind-vladimir-putin/a-61242466>.
6. For a thorough discussion of the origins of Eurasianism, see Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).
7. X [George Kennan], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* (website), 1 July 1947, accessed 13 June 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/george-kennan-sources-soviet-conduct>.
8. Franklin Foer, "It's Putin's World," *Atlantic* (website), 15 March 2017, accessed 13 June 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/its-putins-world/513848/>.
9. Helge Blakkisrud, "Blurring the Boundary between Civic and Ethnic: The Kremlin's New Approach to National Identity under Putin's Third Term," in *The New Russian Nationalism: Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism 2000–2015*, ed. Pal Kolsto and Helge Blakkisrud (Edinburgh, GB: Edinburgh University, 2016), 261, accessed 14 June 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1bh-2kk5>. This is a thoughtful and well-researched anthology. Meanwhile, for context, a concise conceptual outline of Soviet federalism is available in Aleksandr M. Iusupovskii, *Poiski novykh podkhodov k resheniiu natsional'nykh problem: uroki istorii* [An investigation of new approaches to resolution of nationalities problems: Lessons of history] (Moscow: "Knowledge" Society, 1990), 37–38.
10. Vera Tolz analyzes the problem of post-Soviet nation-building in "Forging the Nation: National Identity and Nation Building in Post-Communist Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 6 (September 1998): 993–1022, accessed 15 June 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/154053>. Olga Malinova discusses Russia's post-Soviet struggle to construct "the national idea of 'We' in Russian society" in "A Workable Past: Symbolic Politics in Post-Soviet Russia," *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 4 (October-December 2012): 84–94, accessed 15 June 2023, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/a-workable-past/>; For a concise overview of pre-2005 literature in English on the place of Russian identity in imperial and Soviet contexts, see Peter Duncan, "Contemporary Russian Identity between East and West," *Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 277–94, accessed 15 June 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4091687>.
11. For a summary, see Nicholas Riasanovsky, "Nationality in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I," *Russian Review* 19, no. 1 (January 1960): 38–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/126191>; for a more detailed look, see Riasanovsky's *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959).
12. For a recent discussion of Danilevsky's view on civilizations, see Vlad Alalykin-Izvekov, "The Russian Sphinx: Contemplating Danilevsky's Enigmatic Magnum Opus Russia and Europe," *Comparative Civilizations Review*, no. 86 (Spring 2022): 73–89, accessed 15 June 2023, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol86/iss86/9/>.
13. Robert Baumann, "Culture under Construction: History and Identity as Instruments of Russian Policy," in *Great Power Competition: The Changing Landscape of Global Geopolitics*, ed. Mahir J. Ibrahimov (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2020), 42.
14. Vladimir Kara-Murza, "Stealing the Vote: The Kremlin Fixes Another Election," *World Affairs* 174, no. 3 (September-October 2011): 47–48, accessed 6 November 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41290343>. Kara-Murza is currently imprisoned in Russia as punishment for speaking out about the war in Ukraine.
15. For an in-depth look at the changing political climate in Russia during the Obama administration, see Michael McFaul, *From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018); for insight into Putin's redefinition of "democracy," see Angela Stent, *Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2020), 41.
16. See Jacob Kipp, review of *Future War* [Budushchaya voyna], by Vladimir Slipchenko and Makhmut Gareev, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 1 (2007): 150–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13518040701205878>.
17. William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017), 685.
18. Presidential Decree No. 1710 (Moscow: The Kremlin, 29 December 2012), accessed 15 June 2023, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/acts/files/0001201301040034.pdf>.
19. Timofei Bordachev, "Russia and Central Asia: A Great Peaceful Game," Valdai Discussion Club, 15 May 2023, accessed 15 June 2023, [https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-and-central-asia-a-great-peaceful-game/?sphrase\\_id=1525266](https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-and-central-asia-a-great-peaceful-game/?sphrase_id=1525266).
20. "Aleksandr Prokhanov," Izborsk Club of Experts, 7 November 2016, accessed 15 June 2023, <https://izborsk-club.ru/10978>.
21. See Philip Hanson, "Alexander Zinoviev's Russian Tragedy: The Reality of Post-Communism," accessed 15 June 2023, <https://bal-ticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/zinovjev.pdf>. Note the similarities in Danilevsky's work *Rossia i Evropa* [Russia and Europe] (Saint Petersburg, RU: n.p., 1871), especially chapters 2 and 5. Also of interest is Danilevsky's collection of articles under the title *Gore pobediteliam* [Grief to the victors] (Moscow: n.p., 1998).
22. See Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 133–46.
23. Paul Goble, "History Is the Ideology of Putin's Russia and Is Increasingly Controlled as Such, Kurilla Says," *Window on Eurasia*, 30 September 2020, accessed 15 May 2023, <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2020/09/history-is-ideology-of-putins-russia.html>.
24. Gregory Carleton, "History Done Right: War and the Dynamics of Triumphalism in Contemporary Russian Culture," *Slavic Review* 70, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 616, <https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.70.3.0615>.
25. Iurii Rubtsov, "Bitva s natsizmom prodolzhaetsia: operatsiia po denatsifikatsii ukrainy est' logicheskoe zavershenie velikoi otechestvennoi voiny" [The battle with Nazism continues: The operation in Ukraine as the logical conclusion of the Great Patriotic War], *Ideologiya budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 5 (June 2022): 13–16, accessed 15 June 2023, [https://histrf.ru/files/ideology\\_of\\_future\\_part5.pdf](https://histrf.ru/files/ideology_of_future_part5.pdf).
26. Ivan Kurilla, "Rossiia: kakuiu istoriiu napi-shut sledovateli?" [Russia: What history do the researchers write?], *Eurasianet*, 28 September 2020, accessed 15 May 2023, <https://russian.eurasianet.org/%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F->

%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%83%D1%8E-%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%8E-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%88%D1%83%D1%82-%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B8; J. Sadowski, "Amendments of 2020 to the Russian Constitution as an Update to Its Symbolic and Identity Programme," *International Journal of Semiotic Law* 35 (2022): 723–36, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-020-09802-w>.

27. Kurilla, "Rossiia." Kurilla wrote his dissertation on the Vlasov army, which was a legion of Russian prisoners of war formed by Germany into military units to fight Joseph Stalin.

28. Ibid.; Iain King, "Is Past Prologue? The Eightieth Anniversary of the Start of World War II and a Secret Pact Between Great Powers," 23 August 2019, accessed 27 June 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/past-prologue-eightieth-anniversary-start-world-war-ii-and-secret-pact-between-great>.

29. The author of this article was in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, during Victory Day ceremonies in 2021, and personally witnessed some of the activities and was a guest speaker at three different events.

30. Irina Kaznacheeva, "Velikaia natsional'naia ideia Rossii" [The great national idea of Russia], *Ideologiya budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 8 (2023): 14, accessed 15 May 2023, [https://histrf.ru/files/ideology\\_of\\_future\\_8.pdf](https://histrf.ru/files/ideology_of_future_8.pdf).

31. R. I. Medinsky, "Chemu uchat nas uroki istoricheskoi pravdy? O neobkhodimosti natsional'noi idei (gosudarstvennaia ideologiya)" [What do the lessons of historical truth teach us: On the necessity of a national idea (state ideology)], *Ideologiya budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 8 (2023): 11, accessed 15 May 2023, [https://histrf.ru/files/ideology\\_of\\_future\\_8.pdf](https://histrf.ru/files/ideology_of_future_8.pdf).

32. Ibid., 10.

33. Kaznacheeva, "Velikaia natsional'naia ideia Rossii," 17.

34. Vladimir Kiknadze, "Sila v pravde" [Power is in the truth], *Ideologiya budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 7 (2022): 23–27, accessed 15 June 2023, [https://histrf.ru/images/RVIO\\_7\\_2022.pdf](https://histrf.ru/images/RVIO_7_2022.pdf).

35. Aleksandr Prokhanov, "Putinskii kod pobedy" [Putin's victory code], *Ideologiya budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 7 (2022): 19–22, accessed 15 June 2023, [https://histrf.ru/images/RVIO\\_7\\_2022.pdf](https://histrf.ru/images/RVIO_7_2022.pdf).

36. Ekaterina Morozova, "Putin poruchil sozdat' muzei, posvyashchennye SVO [special military operation] na Ukraine" [Putin directed establishment of museums dedicated to the SVO in Ukraine], Prufy.ru, 28 April 2023, accessed 15 June 2023, [https://prufy.ru/news/society/136457-putin\\_poruchil\\_sozdat\\_muzei\\_posvyashchennye\\_svo\\_na\\_ukraine](https://prufy.ru/news/society/136457-putin_poruchil_sozdat_muzei_posvyashchennye_svo_na_ukraine).

37. Prokhanov, "Putinskii kod pobedy," 22.

38. Ibid.

39. Aleksandr Prokhanov, "Dukhovnye konstanty russkoi pobedy" [The spiritual constants of Russian victory], *Ideologiya budushchego* [Ideology of the future], no. 8 (2023): 39–40, accessed 14 June 2023, [https://history.ru/files/ideology\\_of\\_future\\_8.pdf](https://history.ru/files/ideology_of_future_8.pdf); see also Prokhanov, "Putinskii kod pobedy," 19–22.

40. Paul Goble, "Putin Is the Alexander Nevsky of Today, Ruzvayev Says," Window on Eurasia, accessed 9 August 2015, <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.cz/2015/09/putin-is-alexander-of-today.html>.

41. Robert Baumann, "Russia's Latest Historical Revisionism and Reinventing the Future," *Military Review* Online Exclusive, 29 November 2022, accessed 13 June 2023, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/online-exclusive/2022-ole/Baumann/>; "Russofoby 2022, polnyi spisok" [Russophobes 2022: The complete list], Tsargrad TV, accessed 15 June 2023, <https://tsargrad.tv/rusofob>.

42. Vladimir Putin, "Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the Valdai Discussion Club. Transcript of the Plenary Session of the 19th Annual Meeting" (speech, Valdai Discussion Club, Moscow, 27 October 2022), accessed 15 June 2023, <https://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/vladimir-putin-meets-with-members-of-the-valdai-club/>.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Nikolai Danilevsky, *Rossiia I evropa* [Russia and Europe] (Saint Petersburg, RU: Slavica Pub, 1871), chap. 2.

48. Putin, speech.

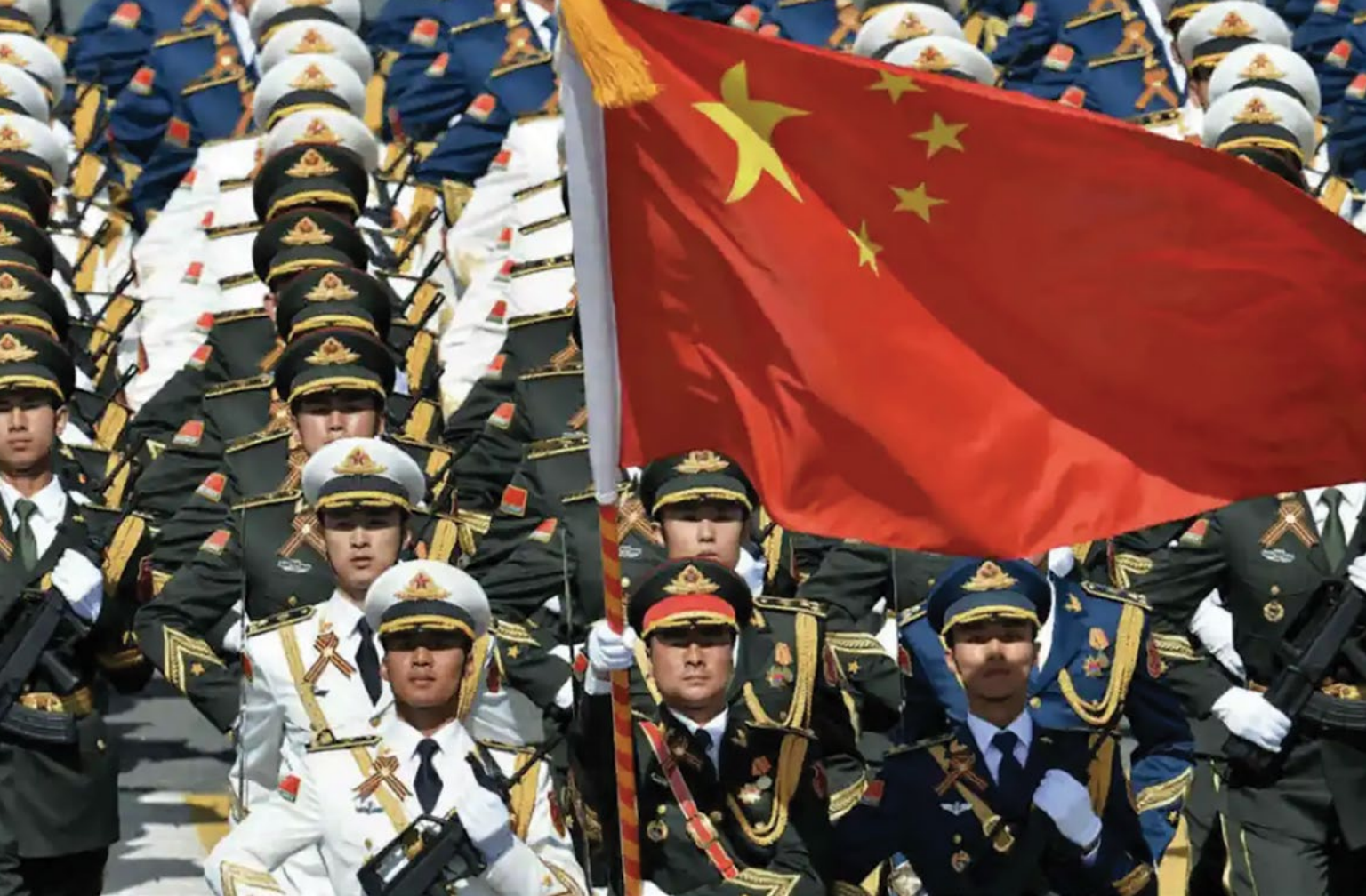
49. Nathan Hodge, "Restoration of the Empire Is the Endgame for Russia's Vladimir Putin," CNN, 11 June 2022, accessed 13 June 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/10/europe/russia-putin-empire-restoration-endgame-intl-cmd/index.html>.

## Interested in getting a personal subscription to *Military Review*?

Requests for personal subscriptions should be sent to the U.S. Government Publishing Office. For information on cost and instructions for subscribing online, visit <https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/sku/708-099-00000-7?ctid=1387>.







The honor guards of China's People's Liberation Army's Navy, Army, and Air Force march in Russia's May 2015 Victory Day parade in Moscow. (Photo courtesy of the *Global Times*)

# Xi Jinping's PLA Reforms and Redefining "Active Defense"

Capt. Scott J. Tosi, U.S. Army Reserve

**A**t the November 2013 Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a mere one year after assuming the role of chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), President Xi Jinping, through official party communiques, announced plans for major reforms of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>1</sup> Though initially vague in its undertakings, Xi further refined the goals of the reforms at the 19th National Congress, stating, "We will modernize our military across the board in terms of theory, organizational structure, service personnel, and weaponry" so that "by the mid-21st century our people's armed forces will have been fully transformed into world-class forces."<sup>2</sup> The reforms, which began in earnest in 2015, manifested over subsequent years as sweeping concurrent efforts to downsize, professionalize, restructure existing command relationships, and enable joint operations within the PLA.

To date, the PLA has overhauled its structure, geographic alignment, and interservice relationships

**Capt. Scott J. Tosi, U.S. Army Reserve**, is an intelligence officer assigned to the 323rd Military Intelligence Battalion and a senior intelligence analyst and team lead with Nisos, a private threat intelligence company. He holds a BS in history and social sciences education from Illinois State University, an MPA from the University of Illinois-Springfield, and is currently a graduate candidate for an MA in security studies at Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service. His previous active-duty assignments include Yongsan, Korea; Fort George G. Meade, Maryland; Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti; and Camp Humphreys, Korea.

to enable joint command and control of PLA forces in what came to be known as "above-the-neck" reforms. Simultaneous to these top-level reforms, the PLA significantly downsized the PLA Army (PLAA, also referred to as the PLA Ground Force) and increased the budgets and influence of the PLA Navy (PLAN), PLA Air Force (PLAAF), PLA Rocket Force (formerly the Second Artillery Force), and, particularly, the newly created Strategic Support Force (SSF).<sup>3</sup> Experts have likened the scope and magnitude of the above-the-neck

structural reforms to the U.S. Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986, which drastically overhauled the American civilian-military relationship and placed all operational control of military forces under the control of joint geographic combatant commanders.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent to top-level reforms, the PLA shifted to "below-the-neck" reforms focused on service-level force structure changes and standardization, professionalization of the officer corps, and doctrinal and regulatory revisions to include joint operations.

Concurrent with the structural reforms, a doctrinal shift, likely a result of shifting Chinese perception of the global balance of power, appears to be a major driver behind the reforms. The structural reforms are a means to enable the People's Republic of China (PRC) to project an increasingly offensive posture regionally, particularly around Taiwan and the South China Sea, and have accompanied an equally important strategic shift in PLA strategic outlines. The 2015 PLA white paper, *China's Military Strategy*, alluded to a shift in strategic outlook in which the CCP views American unipolarity as waning, stating, "In today's world, the global trends toward multi-polarity and economic globalization are intensifying. ... Profound changes are taking place in the international situation, as manifested in the historic changes in the balance of power."<sup>5</sup> The reforms mark a potentially momentous shift from the PLA's strategically active defense posture to a PLA capable of operating outside of China's immediate periphery. The overarching objective of this strategic shift is to project strategically offensive regional and, eventually, global power in a multipolar world. If a strategic shift by the PRC embodies the ends, the ongoing PLA reforms and redefining active defense are the primary means.

The success of the reforms, the ability of the PLA to conduct joint operations, and the shift in active defense doctrine will determine the PLA's ability and willingness to conduct increasingly aggressive military operations outside its borders. This poses serious consideration for a Taiwan contingency, which many reforms appear geared toward enabling. To measure the potential success of the reforms and their likely global implications, three components of the reforms must be analyzed: the shift in active defense doctrine, the top-level reforms to the PLA, and the below-the-neck

reforms. The success of these three components will likely determine the nature of the PLA for decades to come and determine the PRC and PLA's willingness to conduct increasingly aggressive offensive military operations such as a Taiwan contingency in the future.

## Drivers of Reform: Global Power Competition and Chinese Rejuvenation

Large structural reforms and strategic revisions are nothing new to the PLA, which has undergone nine distinct reformations—either structural, strategic, or a combination of both—since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949.<sup>6</sup> The PLA has historically attempted to adapt and revise its strategy in response to changes in its strategic situation, such as the Sino-Soviet split, and military technological advances, such as the unprecedented supremacy of military technology exhibited by the United States in the Gulf War.<sup>7</sup> A separate and, on occasion, greater driver of past reforms in the PLA has been internal party politics, an influence to which the PLA is particularly prone given its status as the party's military and not the nation's.<sup>8</sup> Like past reforms, internal party politics contributed to Xi's calculus when introducing and implementing reform. What sets the most recent reforms apart from previous reforms is that it is expressly not a reaction to a technological or strategic shift but rather a proactive action preceding a perceived strategic shift by the CCP.

Though internal party politics certainly offer a convenient means of consolidating and ensuring party power under Xi and undoubtedly is an important factor, the PLA reforms are primarily driven by Xi's goal to achieve the "Chinese dream of national rejuvenation."<sup>9</sup> This goal is central as a justification and driver of PLA reform, and it serves the dual purpose of advancing Xi and the party's legitimacy to the Chinese people at home and advancing the CCP's foreign policy abroad. The concept of Chinese rejuvenation harkens sentiment to Imperial China (221 BCE–1912 CE), when the country, as the metaphorical center of the world, reigned as the central power in the known world surrounded by tributary states. Equally important to a rejuvenation of China's former greatness, the CCP "bases its claim to continue ruling China in part on having rescued the country from a century of

humiliation at the hands of foreign imperialism that lasted from the middle of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century."<sup>10</sup> For the CCP, foreign policy and domestic politics are inextricably linked. A revitalization of China's economic centrality in the world and indisputable military capability to protect China's sovereignty is required to achieve rejuvenation and to prevent a repeat of foreign interventions and unequal treatment by the major powers seen during the century of humiliation.

China, the second largest economy in the world, has largely overcome its historical economic and industrial woes, but it has yet to rectify its military shortcomings. Metaphorically, China still punches well below its weight militarily as a global power on the international stage. The PLA reforms under Xi mark an attempt to achieve military parity with strategic competitors and secure China's standing as a military power on the global stage to prevent foreign encroachment of what China considers its sovereignty. Xi outlined the PLA reforms as a component of Chinese rejuvenation in his speech to the 19th National Congress of the CPC in 2017, stating, "With a view to realizing the Chinese Dream (of national rejuvenation) and the dream of building a powerful military, we have developed a strategy for the military under new circumstances, and have made every effort to modernize national defense and the armed forces."<sup>11</sup>

Taking Xi's address a step further, the 2015 PLA white paper, which served as the strategic accompaniment to the structural and organizational reforms, stated, "In today's world, the global trend toward multipolarity and economic globalization are intensifying. ... Profound changes are taking place in the international situation, as manifested in the historic changes in the balance of power, global governance structure, Asia-Pacific geostrategic landscape, and international competition."<sup>12</sup> Though not explicitly asserted, the white paper alludes toward a sentiment amongst the PLA and party at large that American unipolarity, which has defined and shaped the international order since the end of the Cold War, is coming to an end. In its place, the CCP envisions a future characterized by a multipolar international order in which the CCP and PLA can maneuver to advance its strategic position.<sup>13</sup> To this end, a strategic shift was required for the PLA to position itself to achieve this long-term goal.

## Shifting Definitions: “Active Defense” for the Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation

Historically, the PLA has adopted a strategy of active defense, a term which, despite its constant use throughout the PLA's history, has had a multitude of shifting meanings. First coined by Mao Zedong during the Chinese Civil War for the strategy of the Red Army (the precursor to the PLA), the term emphasized a strategically defensive posture characterized by tactically and operationally offensive actions, primarily within the confines of China's geographic borders.<sup>14</sup> More simply, the PLA adopted a strategy of mobile warfare in which ground forces would conduct a strategic defense before transitioning to a counterattack to overwhelm an adversary with numerically superior forces.<sup>15</sup> Rather than a dogmatic doctrine, the strategy of active defense went through a series of revisions dependent upon the strategic position the PRC and military technological advances that has shaped both the PLA's force structure and the PRC's national policy and strategic intent.

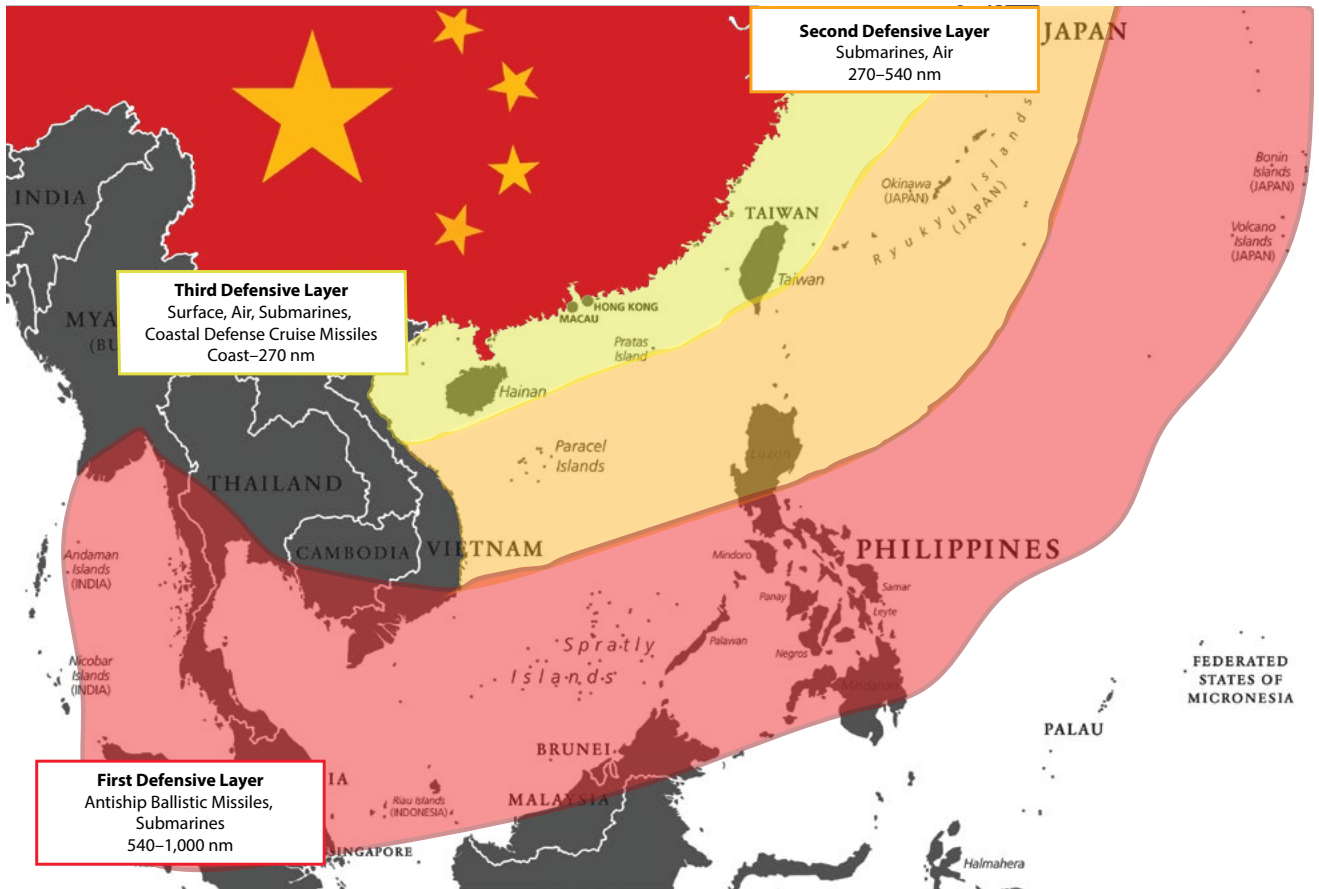
Despite strategic guideline changes, the PLA active defense strategy was primarily focused on an invasion of mainland China by the United States following the Korean War and the Soviet Union following the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>16</sup> However, this would drastically change in 1993 when the PLA revised its strategic guidelines and redefined active defense in reaction to the disappearance of a Soviet threat with its collapse in 1991 and, more importantly, the overwhelming ease with which the United States defeated the formidable Iraqi military in the Gulf War.<sup>17</sup> As a result of the Gulf War, the PLA's emphasis on active defense would shift from “luring the enemy in deep” of the 1960s to 1980s and overwhelming an enemy with numerically superior forces to focusing on fighting local wars under high-technology conditions along China's periphery, marking the first drastic shift in the PLA toward a quality-over-quantity force.<sup>18</sup>

With the looming threat of a conventional ground invasion of China gone and the obsolescence of numerically superior ground forces exhibited during the Gulf War, the PLA shifted its structural focus toward modernizing and downsizing while shifting its strategic focus to its periphery, notably Taiwan. As a first step, then CMC Chairman Jiang Zemin downsized the

PLA's force strength by nearly five hundred thousand personnel and another two hundred thousand were further reduced in 2005 by Hu Jintao.<sup>19</sup> A 2005 RAND report outlined the then ongoing PLA's modernization efforts, stating, “The PLA is currently transitioning from a continental military requiring large land forces for ‘in-depth’ defense to a combined continental-maritime force primarily consisting of smaller, more mobile and sophisticated military forces” primarily focused on a Taiwan contingency.<sup>20</sup> These reforms, however, fell short of achieving a modern or joint fighting force capable of conducting operations outside of China's borders in any meaningful manner.

The latest reforms implemented by Xi exhibit potential to revise and, more importantly, expand the scope and nature of active defense and alleviate and fix the shortcomings of the 1993 reforms. While the language in the 2015 PLA white paper does not overtly promote aggressive military action, it does allude to expanding its scope outside a strategically defensive nature. The white paper states, “The PLAA will continue to reorient from theater defense to trans-theater mobility. ... The PLAN will gradually shift its focus from ‘offshore waters defense’ to the combination of ‘offshore waters defense’ with ‘open seas protection.’ ... The PLAAF will endeavor to shift its focus from territorial air defense to both defense and offense.”<sup>21</sup> This language, though subtle as party and PLA statements often are, suggests an expanding geographic reach of PLA forces and a reorientation of military forces toward a more offensive posture of active defense.

The shift in active defense and emphasis on joint operations was formalized in November 2020 with the “Outline of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Joint Operations (Trial).” The outline “highlights the guiding principles, focuses on macro-guidance, outlines the guidelines for overall regulation, focuses on clarifying the basic issues of joint combat organization and implementation, and focuses on unifying combat thinking.”<sup>22</sup> Though the “top-level” regulation is classified and a “trial,” it will likely guide many of the changes to the upcoming PLA white paper and shape future PLA doctrine.<sup>23</sup> Vital to this implementation is reforming, reorganizing, and restructuring the PLA to enable such joint military operations capable of fighting outside of the Chinese mainland and its immediate periphery. To understand the likelihood of this goal succeeding,



(Map by Michael Lopez, *Military Review*; information courtesy of the Office of Naval Intelligence)

## China's Three Defensive Layers

the specifics of Xi's PLA reforms will be examined at top-level and below-the-neck reforms.

### PLA "Above-the-Neck" Reforms

In the wake of the Korean War, the PLA modeled itself after the Soviet military, focusing largely on low-tech ground forces.<sup>24</sup> The PLA has, despite past reforms, downsizing, and reorganization, retained this ground force-centric, low-tech organization and doctrine until recent decades. While the PLA has undoubtedly made impressive advances in modernizing its forces technologically since early 1990s, as an organization the PLA remains antiquated, amounting to little more than "a collection of institutional relationships and practices, some of which are poorly suited to its current requirements for historical or political reasons. As a result, the very structure itself can create a system riddled with inefficiencies, stovepiped information, and lack of oversight."<sup>25</sup> The latest 2015 PLA reforms appear to be an

attempt to overcome this shortcoming, divorcing the PLA from its traditional ground-based Soviet model and moving the PLA toward a joint force-oriented organization more similar to the post-Goldwater-Nichols U.S. military.

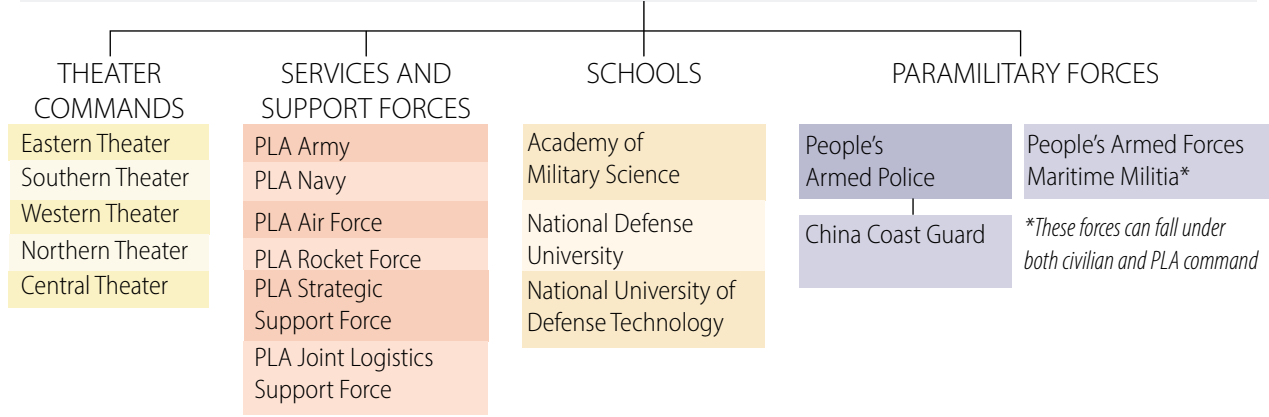
The first formal structural impacts of the reforms were announced in September 2015 in the form of a force reduction of three hundred thousand personnel within the PLA.<sup>26</sup> Since the announcement, the majority of the force reductions have occurred within the PLAA, while the PLAN, PLAAF, PLA Rocket Force, and SSF have seen either few reductions or even increases in force and budgetary allocations from the CMC.<sup>27</sup> This initial shift in force allocation and alignment represents a fundamental shift within the PLA away from a PLAA-centric force toward a joint capable force.

**Central military commission reforms.** Perhaps the most impactful structural reforms to the PLA

CENTRAL MILITARY COMMISSION				
<b>Chairman</b>	Xi Jinping			
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Gen Xu Qiliang	Gen Zhang Youxia		
<b>Members</b>	Gen Wei Enghe	Gen Li Zuocheng	Adm Miao Hua	Gen Zhang Shengmin

DEPARTMENTS	COMMISSIONS	OFFICES
Joint Staff Department	Discipline Inspection Commission	Agency for Offices Administration
Political Work Department	Politics and Law Commission	Audit Office
Logistics Support Department	Science and Technology Commission	Office for International Military Cooperation
Equipment Development Department		Reform and Organization Office
Training and Administration Department		Strategic Planning Office
National Defense Mobilization Department		



Ministry of National Defense and general offices are not depicted in this chart.

(Graphic courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021 Annual Report to Congress)

## China's Military Leadership

were the changes implemented into the CMC and its bureaucratic changes between the 18th CMC (2012–2017) and the 19th CMC (2017–2022). Prior to the 2015 reforms, the CMC formed the central organ under the direct control of the chairman (always the CCP general secretary to ensure direct party control and political loyalty of the PLA) and ten other CMC members who shaped the PLA's structure and inter-service relationships.<sup>28</sup>

The four general departments (General Staff Department, General Political Department, General Logistics Department, and General Armament Department) were PLAA-led departments serving as headquarters for their respective military functions.<sup>29</sup>

These ground-centric departments had, by 2015, become highly stovepiped and the directors functioned with a high degree of autonomy from the CMC and, by extension, from the party.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, service commanders possessed operational and administrative control over their respective service forces independent of the geographical military region commander.<sup>31</sup> The pre-reform CMC structure effectually created a stovepiped, compartmentalized, ground-centric PLA incapable of conducting effective joint operations inside or outside its borders.

As a major component of the reforms, the 19th CMC (formed in 2017) was reorganized from eleven members to seven.<sup>32</sup> The most notable structural

changes within the CMC were the dismantling of the four general departments and reorganization of the various functions into fifteen CMC subsidiary organs under the direct control of the CMC and the removal of the PLAN, PLAAF, and Second Artillery (now the PLA Rocket Force) commanders' seats on the CMC.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, service branches now only possess administrative control and no longer possess operational control over their respective forces, instead relegating operational control to the newly created five theater commands (from the previous seven military regions).<sup>34</sup>

In place of the previous four general departments, fifteen CMC subsidiary organs were created, consisting of six departments, three commissions, and five offices under the direct control of the CMC, greatly reducing the autonomy of the former PLAA-controlled general departments and likewise increasing the CMC and party's control over the functions and day-to-day administration of the PLA. The dismantling of the General Staff Department and greater direct oversight of the CMC on PLA staff functions give the chairman and the party greater exercise of control over the PLA with less bureaucratic barricades and less PLAA control over the PLA at large. The PLA streamlined many top-level staff functions through these reforms and removed the entrenched PLAA control over stovepiped bureaucratic organizations.

**Service-level reforms.** Below the CMC, several sweeping structural changes were introduced and enacted to enhance joint warfighting capabilities within the PLA at the service and subservice level. Prior to the reforms, the PLAA, PLAN, and PLAAF below the CMC comprised the only three services under the general department and CMC structure, with the PLA Second Artillery as an independent branch under the PLAA but direct operational control of the CMC.<sup>35</sup> Following the reforms, the structure changed to include the PLAA (newly divorced from the general department structure), PLAN, PLAAF, and PLA Rocket Force (formerly the Second Artillery) as service-level headquarters and introduced both the Strategic Support Force and Joint Logistics Support Force as subservice headquarters reporting to the CMC.<sup>36</sup>

On 31 December 2015, the PLA Second Artillery Force, the PLA's strategic missile force responsible

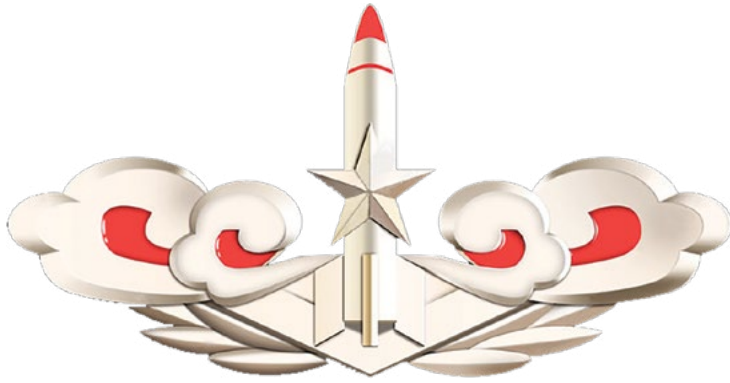


Emblem of the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

for land-based ballistic and cruise missiles, was renamed the PLA Rocket Force.<sup>37</sup> Accompanying this name change was an elevation of the PLA Rocket Force from a branch reporting directly to the CMC to an independent service on par with the PLAA, PLAAF, and PLAN.<sup>38</sup> While all nuclear forces remained under the tight direct control of the CMC, the relationship between the PLA Rocket Force and the newly created theater commands is too unclear to draw definitive conclusions on where operational authority over ballistic and cruise missile forces rests. Whether the PLA Rocket Force national headquarters, the PLA Rocket Force theater base, the theater commander, or a combination thereof on a system-by-system basis maintain operational control over PLA Rocket Forces is uncertain.<sup>39</sup> Despite the unknowns, the elevation of the force to an independent service highlights the vital importance placed on its missile forces by the PLA.

The same month as the PLA Rocket Force was announced, the PLA formally stood up its newest independent service: the Strategic Support Force.<sup>40</sup> The SSF centralizes operational and administrative control of space, cyber, electronic, and information and psychological operations, and reports directly to the CMC, operationally independent of other service or theater commands.<sup>41</sup>

Rather than creating the force from scratch, the SSF is an amalgamation and consolidation of existing force structures consolidated under the centralized command of the SSF. Two distinct and subdivisions of the SSF exist: the Space Systems Department, responsible for all space operations, and the Network Systems Department, responsible for all cyber, electronic, information, and psychological operations, as semi-independent branches.<sup>42</sup>



Emblem of People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

The creation of the SSF as an independent command that retains both operational and administrative control under direct control of the CMC gives the party greater authority in controlling the information, cyber, and psychological domains, which the party views as their “chief vulnerability” and “worry about the societal effects of an adversary undermining Chinese domestic information control.”<sup>43</sup> Unlike the

diffusion and decentralization of operational control to theaters of command across the other PLA services, the structure of the SSF highlights the CCP's priority of centralized party control of sensitive and potentially politically threatening matters over practical operational flexibility and of delegation and decentralization of authority and decision-making.

#### **Geographic command reforms.**

Accompanying the structural changes to the PLA hierarchy, a major restructuring of the PLA's geographic alignment, to an extent imitating the United States' combatant command system or, perhaps more aptly, Russia's military districts, was introduced to create unified commands with the resources, structure, and authority to conduct joint operations outside of China's immediate periphery. More than just a realignment of forces and force projection posture, the geographic reform of the PLA is the central mechanism of much of the structural and, particularly, the inter-service changes.



China's DF-17 missiles carrying DF-ZF hypersonic glide vehicles. (Video screenshot from China Central Television)



The PLA historically divided the geographic landmass of mainland China into varying numbers of military regions, with the most recent organization constituting seven military regions, each commanded by a PLAA commander who possessed operational control only over ground forces during peacetime.<sup>44</sup> Under this structure, other services (PLAN, PLAAF, Second Artillery Corps) were operationally independent of military region commanders during peacetime, making joint training or, if need be, wartime operations

importantly, external threats. The Northern Theater Command is primarily aligned to face Korea Peninsula contingencies. The Eastern Theater Command is assessed to be the primary operational force against Taiwan, Japan, and security contests in the East China Sea. The Southern Theater Command is oriented toward South China Sea, particularly focused on the nine-dash line, and Southeast Asia as well as supporting the Eastern Theater Command in the event of a Taiwan invasion. As somewhat of an outlier, the

“ The consolidation of operational control under theater commanders drastically changed the primary function of PLA services to a support and administrative role responsible for training, equipping, and manning forces supporting the joint theater commands. ”

extremely difficult to coordinate and execute.<sup>45</sup> While military region commander's notionally held authority within their geographic commands during contingency or wartime, the other services retained a high degree of autonomy and thus diffused command authority from a singular operational commander to several service commanders. To impose a higher degree of joint interoperability, simplification of the command-and-control structure within the PLA, and enablement of the CMC to exert more direct and coherent control over PLA forces, geographic reforms were utilized as a catalyst for overhauling interservice and command relationships within the PLA below the CMC.

The seven ground-centric military regions were replaced with five theater commands in 2016, greatly streamlining the number of commands and aligning geographic boundaries in a more strategically coherent manner.

The new theaters consist of the Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, and Central Theater Commands, which align along province and semiautonomous region borders.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the previous military regions, which were administrative and defensive in nature and reflected active defense doctrine in its more original interpretation, the new theater commands are operationally aligned to meet both internal and, more

Western Theater Command's primary function is to conduct “counterterrorism” and other security operations in the semiautonomous regions of Xinjiang and Tibet while simultaneously preparing for border issues with India. The Central Theater Command, surrounding Beijing, serves as capital defense for internal and external security purposes and supports other theaters as required.<sup>47</sup> This posturing of forces exhibits a more externally focused PLA, capable of conducting operations outside the CCP's sovereign territory and immediately periphery to encompass regional power projection, marking a shift in the strategic nature of active defense doctrine.

More than just a geographic consolidation, the newly appointed theater commanders possess peacetime and wartime joint operational control over almost all conventional forces (PLAA, PLAAF, and PLAN) within each respective theater.<sup>48</sup> However, the CMC retains direct operational control independent of theater chain of command over all SSE, nuclear forces, and to date, an unknown composition of the PLA Rocket Force.<sup>49</sup> Unlike past military region commanders, which had been exclusively staffed with PLAA officers, theater commanders are assigned by the CMC from any service, with deputy theater commanders drawn from the other services.<sup>50</sup> In addition to promoting

“jointness” within theater commands, the dissolution of the PLAA’s monopoly on military region command further reduced the PLAA’s overwhelming primacy within the PLA and elevated the PLAAF and PLAN to more equal status.

The consolidation of operational control under theater commanders drastically changed the primary function of PLA services to a support and administrative role responsible for training, equipping, and manning forces supporting the joint theater commands.<sup>51</sup> The bifurcation of authority for subordinate operational units now dictates that services possess administrative control over their service units while theater commanders possess operational control.<sup>52</sup> To address cross-theater operations and training or units operating outside of a theater command’s area of responsibility, the Joint Staff Department of the CMC will directly coordinate cross-theater or far-reaching operations.<sup>53</sup> The feasibility and practicality of the Joint Staff Department’s control over distant or cross-theater operations has yet to be seen in practice, leaving a potential major gap in PLA capabilities.

## PLA “Below-the-Neck” Reforms

Following the implementation of above-the-neck reforms, the PLA began a series of below-the-neck reforms beginning around 2017 with an initial target completion of 2020 but has been subsequently extended to the end of 2022 due to COVID-19 and other modernization shortcomings. These series of reforms are focused at the corps level and below on force restructuring and standardization, professionalization of the officer corps, updating service doctrine, and joint training.

### “Brigadization” and force structure reform.

Similar to the U.S. Army’s shift in the early 2000s under Donald Rumsfeld from a division-centric to a brigade-centric force, the PLA is undergoing a “brigadization” process to create both a standardized and more agile fighting force.<sup>54</sup> From the top down, the PLAA reduced the number of corps-sized army groups from eighteen to thirteen, split all existing divisions or regiments into one or two brigades, and created standardized combined arms brigades as the backbone force of the PLAA. Under the new organization, each army group consists of six combined arms brigades, one artillery brigade, one air defense brigade, one special

operations brigade, one army aviation brigade, one engineer and chemical defense brigade, and one service support brigade.<sup>55</sup> The combined arms brigades consist of a tailored combination of five standardized variants: heavy, medium, light, amphibious, and mountain.<sup>56</sup>

Like the PLAA, the PLAF has reorganized into a base-brigade organization for fighter, fighter-bomber, and attack units, though the division-regiment organization has been retained for bombers and transport. These newly formed base-brigade units oversee all aviation, surface-to-air missile, artillery, and radar units within their area of responsibility and directly coordinate with other PLA services.<sup>57</sup> This more agile PLAF will generate greater interoperability with other services and streamline air support.

Perhaps the greatest beneficiary of the below-the-neck reforms has been the PLAN’s Marine Corps, which has increased in size from just two brigades to eight, adding four new combined arms brigades, one special operations brigade, and a shipborne aviation brigade. Much of the forces for these new brigades were transferred from PLAA and PLAN aviation units.<sup>58</sup> This new expansion of the PLAN’s Marine Corps from approximately twelve thousand to nearly forty thousand marines demonstrates the PLA’s expanded expeditionary ambitions as well as providing a large enough amphibious force to secure a landing in the event of a Taiwan contingency.

**Doctrinal and training reforms.** To support this “brigadization” within the PLA and to promote joint force interoperability, the PLA has overhauled both its strategic guidelines and doctrine in the past several years and overhauled its convoluted rank and grade system to streamline and standardize officer promotions for a more professional officer corps.<sup>59</sup> In 2017, the PLA introduced revised “Military Training Regulations” and a new “Outline of Military Training” to focus training on realistic joint operations.<sup>60</sup> In 2019, the PLA released the latest edition of its white paper, *China’s National Defense in the New Era*, which shifted emphasis from regional defensive operations to joint offensive operations, stressed the integration the Joint Logistic Support Force into the PLA’s joint operations and explicitly identified the United States as the principal instigator on the global stage.<sup>61</sup> The most impactful doctrine change came on 7 November 2020, when the PLA announced the release of the

“Outline of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army Joint Operations (Trial).”<sup>62</sup> This draft doctrine marks only the fifth time the PLA has changed its operational-level doctrine in its history, marking a potentially drastic shift in PLA operations. The document has not been released to the public and is still in draft form, but it will undoubtedly shape PLA training, operations, and subsequent doctrine over the next several years to implement the goals of the reforms at the operational and tactical levels.

In conjunction with doctrinal changes, the PLA has increased the frequency, size, and complexity of joint training to support an integrated joint force. The restructuring of under the above-the-neck reforms gave joint theater commanders the authority and ability to conduct joint training more easily within their areas of responsibility without interference or hindrance from the services that had previously plagued the PLA prior to the reforms. Despite early setbacks due to COVID-19 and delayed modernization fielding to newly reorganized units, combined arms and joint training exercises increased from 2019 to 2020.<sup>63</sup> This trend continued in subsequent years, with, for example, the number of joint amphibious island-capture training scenarios increasing from thirteen in 2020 to twenty in 2021.<sup>64</sup> This trend will undoubtedly continue in coming years as modernization fielding completes and doctrinal changes are tested and implemented at the tactical and operational levels.

**People’s Armed Police.** Concurrent to the PLA below-the-neck reforms, the CMC also reorganized the structure and command relationship of the People’s Armed Police (PAP), the party’s paramilitary force charged with internal and domestic security missions. Though separate from the PLA, the PAP has always maintained the notional, albeit seldom exercised, secondary mission of conducting rear area support for the PLA during wartime.<sup>65</sup> Announced in 2017, the PAP’s reforms, following on the heel of the announcement and commencement of the PLA’s reform, saw the CMC, and by extension the party, exert increasingly direct control over the PAP.<sup>66</sup> Under the new command structure, the PAP, which had formerly been placed under the authority of both the CMC and the State Council, and by extension the Ministry of Public Security, was placed solely under the operational and administrative control of the

CMC. This reform removed the party premier as the head of the State Council and the Minister of Public Security from any command or oversight role, placing the PAP solely under the CMC chairman’s control.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the Coast Guard, which was previously under dual command of the Ministry of Public Security and the State Oceanic Administration, was placed solely within the structure of the PAP.<sup>68</sup> The consolidation of the PAP under the direct sole control of the CMC serves to increase cooperation between the PAP and the PLA and between the Coast Guard and the PLAN.

While the below-the-neck reforms have been delayed due to COVID-19 and lagging modernization of reorganized units, the PLA has made tremendous progress in reorganizing such a large force in a relatively short period. With Xi’s confirmation of an unprecedented third term at the 20th Party Congress in fall 2022, the successes of his reforms of the PLA have been touted as a major triumph of his first decade as the CMC chairman. The question remains of how successful both the above-the-neck and below-the-neck reforms have been in achieving a joint PLA capable of conducting operations under this newly conceptualized active defense and how will these successes or failures impact the PLA’s posture and willingness to conduct aggressive military operations in coming years.

## Limited Success: Measuring the Effectiveness of Reform

The changes implemented thus far to the PLA under Xi’s reforms have, from the top down, drastically changed the composition and nature of the PLA to create a modern joint force capable of conducting operations. Both the above-the-neck and below-the-neck reforms complement each other to provide a top-level command-and-control structure designed to enable joint operations and an operational and tactical force structure capable of operating under such a joint framework. The accomplishment of achieving these goals in such a relatively short period of time with a force as large and a bureaucracy as entrenched as the PLA cannot be understated. The progress of the reforms, which were announced and implemented at the beginning of Xi’s tenure and scheduled to be completed before the Party Congress, were touted as a

major success for both the party and Xi. The question remains, however, of whether the reforms can help achieve the “Chinese dream of national rejuvenation,” and it must be answered by analyzing the progress of the reforms, whether they are achieving their intended effects, and what long-term effect the reforms will have on the PLA’s future operations.

In theory, the PLA successfully accomplished all its major goals for its above-the-neck reforms: reorganizing the CMC, implementing a new joint geographic command structure, and overhauling the service and command-and-control relationships. In practice it has yet to be seen whether the PLA can overcome its entrenched bureaucracy and service rivalry, and successfully adapt to its new command-and-control structure.

The dismantling of the powerful and highly independent general departments into subsidiary organs directly under the CMC gives the chairman of the CMC an unprecedented degree of direct authority over the PLA and PAP, providing a streamlined and efficient chain of command and emphasizing far greater operational focus for the PLA and joint commanders.<sup>69</sup> However, the PLA remains the party’s and not the nation’s military force, despite muted past calls for nationalization, which will continue to hamper its military professionalism and external force projection as the party under Xi shifts focus of national security to increasingly “attach equal importance to internal and external security.”<sup>70</sup> Internal security, therefore, will continue to hamstring the PLA with additional security requirements that would otherwise be assigned to other departments and agencies in most other nations.

The geographic reforms, while undoubtedly a significant step toward moving to a joint force, lacks a reach beyond a regional scope. Unlike the U.S. combatant command system, which spans the globe, the PLA’s theater command system encompasses only the PRC’s sovereign territory with peripheral areas of responsibility for each theater. Outside of this immediate periphery, cross-theater operational coordination under the Joint Staff Department is vague, uncertain, and untested. The ability of the PRC to conduct large-scale operations globally is, both technologically and logistically under the new PLA geographic alignment, unrealistic at present.

The above-the-neck reforms concretely achieved their intended goals in restructuring, but the success

of desired cultural and professional changes and cooperative interservice coordination during training, contingency, and war will not come to fruition, if at all, for years until new officers rise through the newly established system. Furthermore, whether the bifurcation of administrative and operational control succeeds or whether theater commanders will, in practice, possess adequate authority independent of the services to conduct successful joint operations may largely depend on personal, PLA, and internal party politics.

The below-the-neck reforms, hampered by COVID-19 and modernization delays, have been met with less short-term success and have decreased the readiness of the PLA in the immediate term as units reorganize, reoutfit, and retrain. The restructuring of divisions and regiments into brigades disrupted unit training, and equipment modernization efforts have lagged far behind expected scheduled. According to the 2021 *China Military Power Report*, approximately 40 percent of the PLAA’s main battle tank arsenal is between twenty and forty years old, and infantry brigades suffer from antiquated equipment.<sup>71</sup> The slow modernization and fielding of equipment means that many PLAA brigades are not functionally as capable as on paper. Likewise, the PLAMC has similarly suffered from inadequate fielding of required equipment for its newly formed brigades and will only reach full capability by 2030.<sup>72</sup> This will continue to hamper the PLA’s ability to achieve a necessary level of readiness in both equipment and training on new equipment for conducting combined arms operations.

## Conclusion

While the PLA has either accomplished or is on track to accomplish all its structural goals of the reforms, translating these structural changes into a cultural change within the PLA is an entirely separate matter. The implementation of draft joint doctrine, effective management of bifurcated lines of command between theaters and services, and the conduct of joint expeditionary training and operations all require a major cultural and professional shift within the PLA. For the reforms to succeed, the PLAA will have to willingly relinquish much of its former precedence within the new PLA structure. This professional and cultural shift within the PLA could likely to take a decade as junior

officers rise through the ranks and will likely outlast Xi's tenure as the CMC chairman, however long that may continue past his unprecedented third term. Therefore, the long-term success of the reforms may largely depend on Xi's successor and successive senior-level PLA officers continuing to emphasize joint operations and redefining active defense.

The success of the reforms, however, may prove less important than the PLA and CCP's perception of its success. Emboldened by the reforms, either founded or not, the party may employ the PLA more aggressively in contentious regional hot spots in the future, such as the South China Sea, the disputed Sino-Indian border, and, most importantly and consequentially, against Taiwan. With the rhetoric of "active defense" becoming increasingly aggressive and belligerent, confidence in a capable joint force, whether it is adequately prepared for such operations or not, can give the CCP newfound confidence to challenge its regional and increasingly global competitors. Perhaps more dangerous to escalation of regional conflicts than a capable PLA is the perception of a capable of PLA by the party.

While Xi's reforms and the shifting definition of active defense will not establish the PLA as a global military power in the short term, its importance and potential impact can also not be understated. The reforms, if successfully carried out, would strengthen the PLA's burgeoning ability to conduct expeditionary

operations and threaten the current geopolitical situation in the Indo-Pacific region, allowing the PLA to act according to its redefined strategic guideline of active defense. The rise of a militarily aggressive and capable PRC backed by the world's second largest economy, interdependent with the international community, could have disastrous unforeseen consequences. Growing tensions in the South China Sea, cross-strait relations, and Sino-Japanese relations all become more contentious with an expeditionary PLA capable of challenging rivals in the region.

As the PRC views American retrenchment and global multipolarity as an inevitability, the future may find an emboldened PLA conducting operations regionally.<sup>73</sup> Though the PRC does not seek to supplant the U.S. as a global power, it does seek to challenge the established international order and maneuver to advance its own interests on the global stage. While the PLA certainly has numerous technological shortfalls to overcome to make successful expeditionary operations a reality, the current ongoing reforms and redefined active defense strategic guidelines may prove sufficient in providing the force structure, organization, and doctrinal foundation to enable such activities in the future. Xi's reforms, therefore, may prove to be a vital first step to realizing the "Chinese dream of national rejuvenation" by achieving the goal of transforming the PLA into a world-class force by the mid-twenty-first century.<sup>74</sup> ■

## Notes

1. "Communiqué of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China," China.org.cn, 15 January 2014, accessed 31 May 2023, [http://www.china.org.cn/china/third\\_plenary\\_session/2014-01/15/content\\_31203056.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/third_plenary_session/2014-01/15/content_31203056.htm).

2. Xi Jinping, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (speech, 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing, 18 October 2017), 48, accessed 31 May 2023, [http://en.npc.gov.cn.cdurl.cn/2021-12/24/c\\_693899.htm](http://en.npc.gov.cn.cdurl.cn/2021-12/24/c_693899.htm).

3. Joel Wuthnow and Phillip C. Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping: Drivers, Challenges, and Implications* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2017), 39.

4. Phillip C. Saunders and Joel Wuthnow, "China's Goldwater-Nichols? Assessing PLA Organizational Reforms," *Strategic Forum* 294 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, April 2016), 3–4, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-294.pdf>.

5. Information Office of the State Council, *China's Military Strategy* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, May 2015), 4,

accessed 30 May 2023, [http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2015/05/27/content\\_281475115610833.htm](http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2015/05/27/content_281475115610833.htm).

6. M. Taylor Fravel, "Shifts in Warfare and Party Unity: Explaining China's Changes in Military Strategy," *International Security* 42, no. 3 (2018): 37, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/118865>.

7. M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy since 1949* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 139–41; Joel Wuthnow, Phillip C. Saunders, and Ian Bruns McCaslin, "PLA Overseas Operations in 2035: Inching toward a Global Combat Capability," *Strategic Forum* 309 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, May 2021), 4, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-309.pdf>.

8. Timothy R. Heath, "Chapter 1: An Overview of China's National Military Strategy," in *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, ed. Joe McReynolds (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2016), 7–11.

9. Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory," 1.

10. William A. Joseph, "Studying Chinese Politics," in *Politics in China: An Introduction*, ed. William A. Joseph, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 13–14.

11. Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory," 5.
12. Information Office of the State Council, *China's Military Strategy*, 5.
13. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2020), 7, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.
14. Fravel, *Active Defense*, 62–63.
15. *Ibid.*, 62.
16. *Ibid.*, 34.
17. *Ibid.*, 182–83.
18. *Ibid.*, 114; Edmund J. Burke et al., *People's Liberation Army Operational Concepts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 4, accessed 31 May 2023, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA394-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA394-1.html).
19. John Chen, "Choosing the 'Least Bad Option:' Organizational Interests and Change in the PLA Ground Force," in *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*, ed. Philip C. Saunders et al. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 109, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Publications/Books/Chairman-Xi-Remakes-the-PLA/>.
20. Keith Crane et al., *Modernizing China's Military: Opportunities and Constraints* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), 201, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG260-1.html>.
21. Information Office of the State Council, *China's Military Strategy*, 14–15.
22. Xinhua News Agency, "Approved by Xi Jinping, Chairman of the Central Military Commission, the Central Military Commission Issued the 'Outline of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Joint Operations (Trial)'" [in Chinese], Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 13 November 2020, accessed 30 May 2023, [http://www.mod.gov.cn/topnews/2020-11/13/content\\_4874081.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/topnews/2020-11/13/content_4874081.htm).
23. *Ibid.*
24. Wuthnow and Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping*, 6.
25. Michael S. Chase et al., *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 43, accessed 30 May 2023, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR893.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR893.html).
26. Xinhua News Agency, "China to Cut Troops by 300,000: President Xi," *People's Daily*, 3 September 2015, accessed 30 May 2023, <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/0903/c90000-8945295.html>.
27. Wuthnow and Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping*, 39–40.
28. Joel Wuthnow and Phillip C. Saunders, introduction to Saunders et al., *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA*, 11.
29. *Ibid.*, 25.
30. Joel Wuthnow, "The CMC General Office: Recentralizing Power in the PLA," *China Brief* 17, no. 7 (2017): 12–13, accessed 30 May 2023, [https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CB\\_17\\_7.pdf?x23987](https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CB_17_7.pdf?x23987).
31. Ian Burns McCaslin and Andrew S. Erickson, "The Impacts of Xi-Era Reforms on the Chinese Navy," in Saunders et al., *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA*, 137.
32. Wuthnow and Saunders, introduction to Saunders et al., *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA*, 11.
33. *Ibid.*; Wuthnow and Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping*, 11.
34. Wuthnow and Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping*, 7, 10.
35. *Ibid.*, 7, 14.
36. *Ibid.*, 7–10.
37. *PLA Rocket Force Modernization and China's Military Reforms Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission* (15 February 2018) (testimony of Michael S. Chase, RAND Corporation), 1, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT489.html>.
38. Andrew Scobell et al., *China's Grand Strategy: Trends, Trajectories, and Long-Term Competition* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 90, accessed 30 May 2023, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2798.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2798.html).
39. Roderick Lee, "Integrating the PLA Rocket Force into Conventional Theater Operations," *China Brief* 20, no. 14 (2020): 24–31, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://jamestown.org/program/integrating-the-pla-rocket-force-into-conventional-theater-operations/>.
40. John Costello and Joe McReynolds, *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era*, China Strategic Perspectives 13 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, October 2018), 12–13, accessed 30 May 2023, [https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/china-perspectives\\_13.pdf](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/china-perspectives_13.pdf).
41. *Ibid.*, 1.
42. *Ibid.*, 12–17.
43. *Ibid.*, 48.
44. Wuthnow and Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping*, 7–8.
45. Saunders and Wuthnow, "China's Goldwater-Nichols?," 2.
46. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2016* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2016), 2, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2016%20China%20Military%20Power%20Report.pdf>.
47. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress 2020*, 94–110.
48. Wuthnow and Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping*, 39–40.
49. David C. Logan, "Making Sense of China's Missile Forces," in Saunders et al., *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA*, 410–12.
50. *Ibid.*, 409.
51. Wuthnow and Saunders, *Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping*, 21.
52. *Ibid.*, 22.
53. Saunders and Wuthnow, "China's Goldwater-Nichols?," 4.
54. Robert D. Kaplan, "What Rumsfeld Got Right: How Donald Rumsfeld Remade the US. Military for a More Uncertain World," *The Atlantic* (website), July–August 2008, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/what-rumsfeld-got-right/306870/>.
55. Madip Singh, "Learning from Russia: How China Used Russian Models and Experiences to Modernize the PLA" (Berlin: Mercator Institute for China Studies, 23 September 2020), accessed 31 May 2023, <https://merics.org/en/report/learning-russia-how-china-used-russian-models-and-experiences-modernize-pla>.
56. Army Techniques Publication 7-100.3, *Chinese Tactics* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2021), 2-7–2-8.

57. James Char, "The People's Liberation Army in Its Tenth Decade: Assessing 'Below the Neck' Reforms in China's Military Modernization," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44, no. 2 (2021): 141–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2020.1731953>.

58. Dennis J. Blasko and Rockerick Lee, "The Chinese Navy's Marine Corps, Part 1: Expansion and Reorganization," *China Brief* 19, no. 3 (2019): 11–13, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://james-town.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Read-the-02-01-2019-CB-Issue-in-PDF.pdf?x20399>.

59. "国防部:新的军官制度由基于职务等级调整为基于军衔等级" [Ministry of national defense: The new officer system is adjusted from position-ranked to rank-based], Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, 28 January 2021, accessed 31 May 2023, [http://www.mod.gov.cn/jzhzt/2021-01/28/content\\_4878080.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/jzhzt/2021-01/28/content_4878080.htm).

60. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 7, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF>.

61. Information Office of the State Council, *China's National Defense in the New Era* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, July 2019).

62. Xinhua News Agency, "Outline of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Joint Operations (Trial)."

63. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2021* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2021), 45–46, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF>.

64. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2022* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2022), 125–26, accessed 16 June 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Nov/29/2003122279/-1/-1/1/2022-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>.

65. Joel Wuthnow, *China's Other Army: The People's Armed Police in an Era of Reform* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 4.

66. *Ibid.*, 10.

67. *Ibid.*, 6–11.

68. *Ibid.*, 15.

69. Timothy R. Heath, Kristen Gunness, and Cortez A. Cooper, *The PLA and China's Rejuvenation: National Security and Military Strategies, Deterrence Concepts, and Combat Capabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 42–43, accessed 31 May 2023, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1402.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1402.html).

70. Liz Carter, "Whom Should the Chinese Army Serve—The Party or the State?," *The Atlantic* (website), 25 October 2012, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/whom-should-the-chinese-army-serve-the-party-or-the-state/264104/>; Xi Jinping, "A Holistic View of National Security," in *The Governance of China I* (Beijing: Qiushi, 15 April 2014), accessed 31 May 2023, [http://en.qstheory.cn/2020-12/04/c\\_607611.htm](http://en.qstheory.cn/2020-12/04/c_607611.htm).

71. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress 2021*, 46.

72. Blasko and Lee, "The Chinese Navy's Marine Corps," 11–13.

73. Information Office of the State Council, *China's Military Strategy*, 3–4.

74. Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory," 1, 48.

## Army University Press Products of Relevance to INDOPACOM and Korea



### **Military Review**

*Military Review* is a legacy journal of the AUP that has an archive of published articles reaching back more than a hundred years. For readers unfamiliar with the origin and history of Communist China from its beginning to the present day, *Military Review* has assembled a collection of selected articles from its own archives as well as works drawn from other sources at the following website:

<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Special-Topics/World-Hot-Spots//China/>

Qing-era representation of Sun Tzu (Artwork courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; appearing in Geoff Babb, "China's Military History and Way of War: A Backrounder," *Military Review World Hot Spots* [March 2023], <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2023-OLE/Babb/>)

# Army University Press Products of Relevance to INDOPACOM and Korea

## AUP Films

The People's Republic of China is determined to become the leading global economic and military power. In an effort to assist those researching China or other issues in the INDOPACOM area of operations, the Army University Press invites readers to examine the repository of resources it has that may help them glean valuable lessons learned from previous conflicts in the INDOPACOM region. This repository includes books, films, staff rides, and journal articles. The newest addition to the Army University Press menu of resources is the Army University Films Team.

The Army University Films Team creates documentary films designed to teach current U.S. Army doctrine using historical case studies. Army University Films works in conjunction with the Combined Arms Center, Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate, Army University, Army Centers of Excellence, and other Professional Military Education programs to select relevant doctrine and historical topics as the basis for its documentary films.

## Legacy Products in the Archives: *The Big Picture*



The first installment of the long-running Army production *The Big Picture*, *The First Forty Days in Korea* follows several companies of the 24th Infantry Division during America's entry into the war. Unlike later episodes of *The Big Picture*, which offer interviews with subject matter experts, *The First Forty Days in Korea* is almost exclusively narrated combat footage recorded and produced by the Army Signal Corps.



The fourth installment of *The Big Picture*, *Chinese Reds Enter the Korean War* outlines the UN struggle against a new enemy and the brutal cold. After looking at the situation in Korea from 20 October through 20 November 1950, the episode describes the evacuation process for the wounded from the front to hospitals. The film also showcases the production of new weaponry at Aberdeen Proving Ground, the Navy's fight against winter storms in the Sea of Japan, the Air Force's pack plane, and the latest in winter uniforms.



The fifth installment of *The Big Picture*, *United Nations Forces Escape the Chinese Trap* follows the United Nation retrograde from the Chinese border at the Yalu River to the massive evacuation of Soldiers, Marines, and civilians at Hungnam.

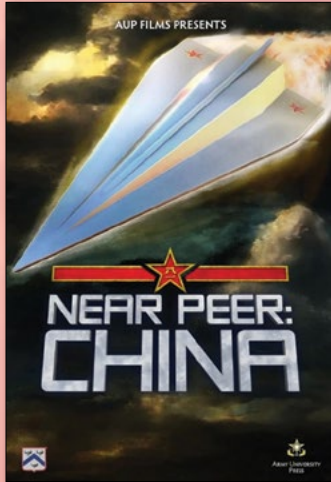


For more information and access to entire inventory of films and documentaries, see <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Educational-Services/Documentaries/>.





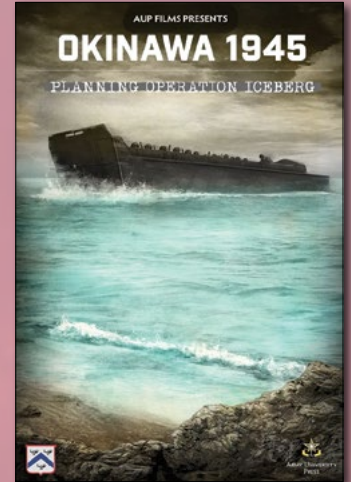
## Recent Films of Interest



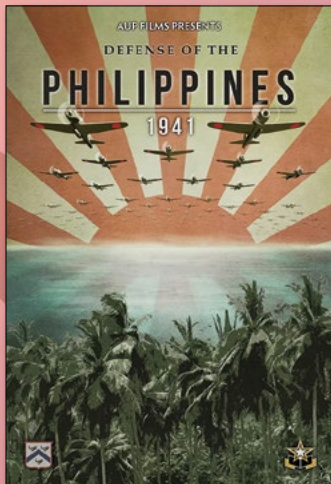
*Near Peer: China*



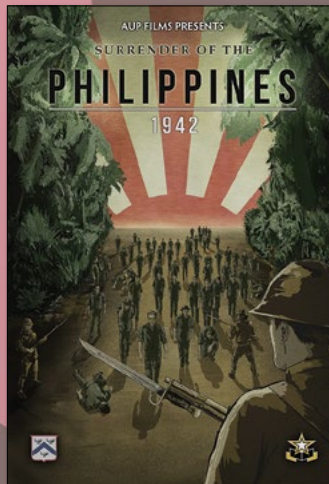
*Okinawa 1945: Typhoon of Steel*



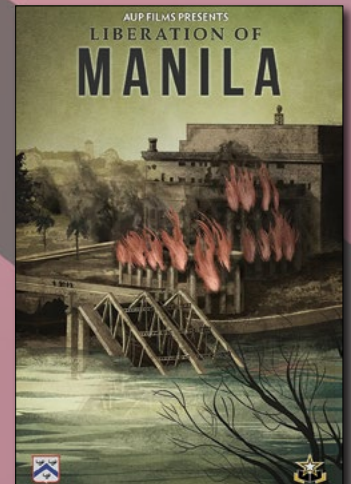
*Okinawa 1945: Planning Operation ICEBERG*



*Defense of the Philippines, 1941*



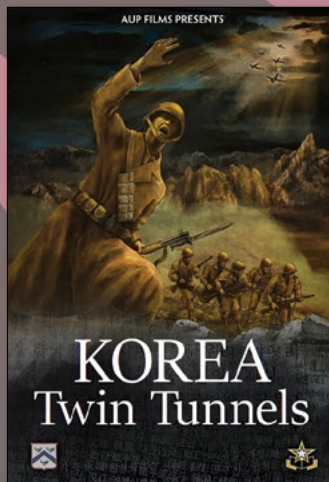
*Surrender of the Philippines, 1942*



*Liberation of Manila*



*Korea: Chipyeong-ni*



*Korea: Twin Tunnels*



*Korea: Sustaining Operation KILLER*

# Staff Rides

The Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team develops and conducts two types of staff rides as educational tools for the US Army: live and virtual. Both focus on the timeless and universal aspects of warfighting that provide important insights into the factors affecting military operations, including terrain analysis and concepts of leadership. Presentations employ vignettes and open discussion among participants. The live staff ride takes place at the site of actual battlefields. The virtual staff ride (VSR) consists of simulated terrain built in a 3D virtual environment produced largely from satellite imagery, digital terrain elevation data, photographs, video, and first-hand accounts. The team has developed multiple VSRs to replicate terrain that Army organizations cannot readily access from the continental United States. Additionally, the staff rides element makes available staff ride handbooks for units that wish to conduct their own.

## Examples of Virtual Staff Rides

The Korean War staff ride series examine the 2nd Infantry Division's fight at Chipyong-ni at multiple levels of command. The Combat Action Korea (the Lost Patrol) is a three-hour staff ride that examines a platoon reconnaissance mission and the follow-on relief effort of a company to rescue the isolated platoon (27–30 January 1951). The Battle of Chipyong-ni is a four-to-six-hour staff ride that studies the attack of multiple divisions of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army against the 23rd Regimental Combat Team's perimeter at Chipyong-ni (27 January–15 February 1951).



Chipyong-ni perimeter, Battle of the Korean War Virtual Staff Ride

Each version of the Korean War VSR is fully exportable to any organization that has access to the Army-licensed gaming software, Virtual Battlespace 3 (VBS3). Each exportable package includes full instructor support materials, student readings, and instructions on how to use everything.

## Other VSR Specifically Relevant to INDOPACOM

- Battle of Buna, Papua New Guinea (1942)
- Battle of Munda Point, New Georgia (1943)
- Bougainville: Defending the Lodgment (1943–44)
- Battle of Lone Tree Hill, Papua New Guinea (1944)
- Okinawa (1945)



All virtual staff rides can be requested at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Staff-Rides/Virtual-Staff-Ride/>.

For more information on staff rides overall, see the Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride website at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Educational-Services/Staff-Ride-Team-Offerings/>.

# Books

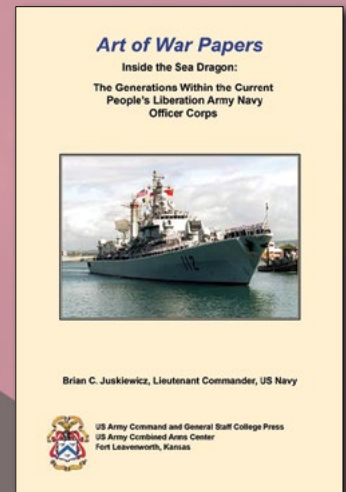
The AUP Books section at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, publishes original, interpretive research on topics pertinent to current topics of immediate and enduring interest to the U.S. Army and sister services. To that purpose, AUP offers a variety of documents in monograph and article format that may be of use to those vested in defense planning within the INDOPACOM region and Korea. All AUP publications are released in digital format onto the press's website. Examples of such materials are noted below.

## Art of War Papers

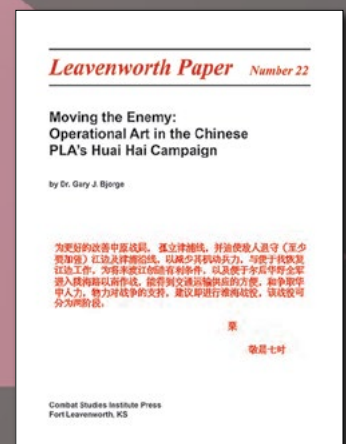
- *Inside the Sea Dragon: The Generations Within the Current People's Liberation Army Navy Officer Corps* by Lt. Cmdr. Brian Juskiewicz (USN) (2019), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/inside-the-sea-dragon-the-generations-within-the-current-peoples-liberation-army-navy-officer-corps.pdf>
- *How China Wins: A Case Study of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War* by Maj. Christopher Gin (2016), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/how-china-wins.pdf>
- *Jakarta Knows Best: US Defense Policies and Security Cooperation in 1950s* by Maj. Richard Hutton (2019), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/jakarta-knows-best-us-defense-policies-and-security-cooperation-in-1950s-indonesia.pdf>
- *Survival Through Adaptation: The Chinese Red Army and the Extermination Campaigns, 1927–1936* by Maj. Wilbur Hsu (2012), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/ArtOfWarSurvivalThroughAdaptation.pdf>

## Leavenworth Papers

- Leavenworth Paper #2, *Nomonhan: Japanese-Soviet Tactical Combat, 1939* (1981), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/Drea-Nomonhan.pdf>
- Leavenworth Paper #13, *Counterattack on the Nakdong, 1950* (1986), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/Robertson-Nakdong-LP13.pdf>
- Leavenworth Paper #18, *Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April–June 1945* (1990), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/BattleofOkinawa.pdf>
- Leavenworth Paper #19, *Scenes From an Unfinished War: Low-Intensity Conflict Korea, 1966–1969* (1991), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/Scenes-From-an-Unfinished-War.pdf>
- Leavenworth Paper #22, *Moving the Enemy: Operational Art in the Chinese PLA's Huai Hai Campaign* (revised) (2003), [https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/bjorge\\_huai.pdf](https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/bjorge_huai.pdf)



*Inside the Sea Dragon: The Generations within the Current People's Liberation Army Navy Officer Corps*



*Moving the Enemy: Operational Art in the Chinese PLA's Huai Hai Campaign*

For more information, contact BOOKS at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Books/Books-and-Manuscript-Guide/>.



# Military Review Recommends

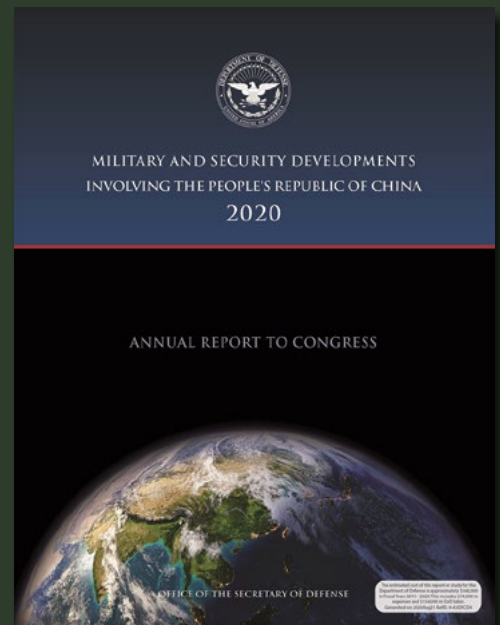


## **Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms**

China's current military reforms are unprecedented in their ambition and in the scale and scope of the organizational changes. Virtually every part of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) now reports to different leaders, has had its mission and responsibilities changed, has lost or gained subordinate units, or has undergone a major internal reorganization. Drawing on papers presented at two conferences co-organized by the U.S. National Defense University, the RAND Corporation, and Taiwan's Council of Advanced Policy Studies, this edited 2019 volume brings together some of the world's best experts on the Chinese military to analyze the various dimensions of the reforms in detail and assess their implications for the PLA's ability to conduct joint operations, for the Chinese Communist Party's control of the army, and for civil-military integration. To read online, visit <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Publications/Books/Chairman-Xi-Remakes-the-PLA/>.

## **Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2020: Annual Report to Congress**

This 2020 study by the Office of the Secretary of Defense asserts that the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) objective is to become a "world-class" military by the end of 2049—a goal first announced by General Secretary Xi Jinping in 2017. Although the Chinese Communist Party has not defined what a "world-class" military means, within the context of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) national strategy it is likely that Beijing will seek to develop a military by mid-century that is equal to—or in some cases superior to—the U.S. military, or that of any other great power that the PRC views as a threat. As this report details, the PRC has marshalled the resources, technology, and political will over the past two decades to strengthen and modernize the PLA in nearly every respect. Indeed, as this report shows, China is already ahead of the United States in certain areas such as shipbuilding, land-based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles, and integrated air defense systems. Other advancements are detailed. To read online, visit <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.





Maj. Huw Miller, 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) current operations officer from the 3 (UK) Division, tracks and synchronizes current operations on the battlefield on 9 February 2023 during Warfighter Exercise 23-04. During this exercise, 1CD fully integrated all mission command integration systems including the Command Post Computing Environment to synchronize units across the division battlespace. (Photo by Lt. Col. Jennifer Bocanegra, U.S. Army)

# Data Centricity and the 1st Cavalry Division's "Speed of Relevance" during Warfighter 23-04



Maj. Thomas D. Richardson, U.S. Army



PEO  
IEW&S

Army leaders at Program Executive Office Intelligence, Electronic Warfare and Sensors learned about data-centric organizations at the Army Data Driven Leadership Certificate Program, a collaborative executive training by the U.S. Army and Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College, 24 March 2023. (Photo by Robert W. Mitchell, Defense Visual Information Distribution Service)

In February 2022, Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth articulated a major objective to guide change within the Army: “to ensure the Army becomes more data-centric and can conduct operations in contested environments, which will enable our ability to prevail on the future battlefield.”<sup>1</sup>

**Maj. Thomas D. Richardson, U.S. Army,** holds an MA from James Madison University and an MMAS from the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He deployed as an armor platoon leader in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and as a cavalry squadron intelligence officer in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Data centrality enables rapid decision-making by Army commanders in combat. This speed of data access to commanders is essential to successful application of multidomain operations (MDO), particularly the tenet of convergence, which requires cross-domain communication from joint force sensors to ground commanders. The 1st Cavalry Division demonstrated the significance of data

centricity in conducting MDO during Warfighter 23-04. The modern battlefield requires a multidomain force operating within a data-centric model. A data-centric Army can rapidly collect, analyze, and distribute information to the commander to inform battlefield decision-making. Wormuth describes data centrality as a characteristic that “empowers leaders and Soldiers with the right information at the right time to gauge risk, optimize combat power, fully employ national means and attain decision dominance at all echelons.”<sup>2</sup>

Time is the key difference here from the Army's previous network-centric model. Whereas network centrality filters data into functional categories on disparate systems based on data type, a data-centric approach enables organizational users to procure needed data from a common hub. This model speeds up decision-making by commanders who can more quickly pull the information they need to inform battlefield decisions. Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. James McConville explains, “You have to have sensors that can find the targets throughout the battlefield, and then quickly move that data through an integrated command system to the appropriate lethal systems to allow



Staff Sgt. Steve Mathiew, a signal support system NCO with III Armored Corps, operates the Mounted Assured, Positioning, Navigation, and Timing System (MAPS) on 18 April 2023 during Warfighter Exercise 23-04 on Fort Hood, Texas. Mathiew utilized the MAPS to assist with a vehicle movement rehearsal between 3rd (UK) Division soldiers and 3rd Cavalry Regiment. (Photo by Sgt. Brahim Douglas, U.S. Army)

you to conduct those types of combat operations.”<sup>3</sup> In a data-centric Army, information flows through channels commanders can rapidly access in real time, not at scheduled and specialized data collection points. This speed is especially important when conducting MDO.

Data centrality is critical to successful MDO because it enables rapid information sharing from sources across the joint force to the Army’s ground commanders. The *Army Data Plan* recognizes this reality: “By its nature, the Army’s Multi-Domain Operations, as part of Joint All Domain Operations, has a larger and increasing scope than earlier military operations. Each domain has its own growing information and data flow ... Today’s Soldiers and Commanders require synthesis across these domains to dominate the battlespace.”<sup>4</sup> Data centrality makes sense within MDO because commanders need to be able to access information from across domains to inform their decisions. Data comes from sensors within each domain (space, cyberspace, air, land, and

maritime) and generates meaning for ground forces across the physical, information, and human dimensions of understanding.<sup>5</sup> A data-centric force can more quickly access and understand the relevance of new data, which then forms the basis for commander decision-making. Data centrality is crucial to MDO because information moves to commanders faster and more efficiently, directly enabling battlefield success. The data-centric multidomain force is also best positioned to achieve convergence, a tenet of MDO.

Multidomain convergence requires a data-centric force. Convergence quickly integrates joint capabilities that mass effects to overmatch the enemy.<sup>6</sup> By establishing systems—within the human, physical, and information dimensions—whereby commanders can quickly and continuously access data about the enemy and the battlefield, data centrality enables convergence by informing commanders’ decisions within the combat environment. The data-centric multidomain commander can access “the right data, at the right time, at



Master Sgt. Laura Gunby, 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) medical operations noncommissioned officer, tracks and coordinates medical support on 12 April 2023 during Warfighter Exercise 23-04. During this exercise, 1CD fully integrated all mission command integration systems including the Command Post Computing Environment to synchronize units across the division battlespace. (Photo by Sgt. Darrell Stembridge, U.S. Army)

the right place [to] enable faster and better decisions at echelon—to out-think and out-pace any adversary.<sup>7</sup> Speed is paramount, and data that is more readily available to commanders in combat can give ground forces a marked advantage over the enemy by enabling convergence. Faster data processing from sensor to commander increases cross-domain fires lethality and generates cross-domain maneuver options for the ground force.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, a data-centric Army best postures the commander to take advantages of opportunities for battlefield convergence, enabling him or her to “thrive at the speed of war in the 21st century.”<sup>9</sup> A recent Warfighter exercise demonstrates the importance of data centrality to battlefield decision-making.

The 1st Cavalry Division showcased the capabilities available to a data-centric force during a recent training exercise. Warfighter 23-04, conducted 19–28 April 2023, pitted “America’s First Team” against the live, freethinking, world-class opposing force of the

Fort Leavenworth-based Mission Command Training Program in a simulation-based tactical command post exercise.<sup>10</sup> Preliminary insights gathered from the division’s leaders demonstrate how the organization met the challenge of conducting MDO while practicing data centrality. During telephonic interviews with the division chief of staff, Col. Todd Hook, and the division cavalry squadron operations officer, Maj. Ragan Rutherford, I discussed how the division’s adoption of a data-centric model enabled tactical success during the exercise.

1st Cavalry Division deliberately shifted processes to a data-centric model as part of its preparation for the warfighter. The division chief of staff simplified the regular contact points between the division and its brigade commanders, reducing the myriad meetings and working groups to three daily distributed commander-driven discussions: a targeting decision brief and two commander-to-commander dialogues.<sup>11</sup> Staff officers were expected to listen to the discussions,





Col. Todd Hook, 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) chief of staff, explains the staff concept for operational control to section leaders during Command Post Exercise 1.5 on 20 October 2022 at Fort Hood, Texas, in preparation for Warfighter Exercise 23-04. Maj. Gen. John B. Richardson IV, 1CD commanding general, observes and stands by to provide additional clarification and guidance. During the Warfighter Exercise, 1CD leaders and staff honed their capabilities to manage the complex requirements of conducting a large-scale combat operation in multiple domains using upgraded data processing systems. (Photo by Pfc. Jacob Nunnenkamp, U.S. Army)

receive data, and establish their specified and implied tasks without having a dedicated portion of the meeting to brief. Rather than generate various products for specific briefings and meetings, division staff running estimates, available for subordinate commanders and their staffs to access, became much more critical as living documents and decision-making tools that described the current estimates of the staff function in real time. The cavalry squadron operations officer noticed this shift, explaining the squadron staff had more time to shape and inform the dialogue among the commanders without needing to dedicate time and personnel to generating numerous briefing products, each relevant for only a short “snapshot” in time.<sup>12</sup> Both officers described this transition in mindset among the staff and greater formation as a shift from a static battle rhythm to the more dynamic and fluid “rhythm of the battle.”<sup>13</sup> This change of mindset

reflects the larger environmental differences between counterinsurgency (COIN) operations and large-scale combat operations (LSCO).

1st Cavalry Division’s move to data centrality highlights the faster speed required in data management during LSCO. In the COIN operations common to the U.S. Army experience in the Global War on Terrorism, units were mostly deployed in static geographic locations and operated within a stable, predictable, regular battle rhythm of events. Hook described a generational gap of experience within the formation, as most Army officers’ practical warfighting has been in the context of COIN operations.<sup>14</sup> A LSCO environment is much more dynamic, fluid, and mobile. Command posts cannot remain in static positions for very long, and large gatherings of commanders and staff leaders are vulnerable to detection and targeting by enemy forces. For this reason, the exercise’s senior mentor, retired Lt. Gen. Terry R. Ferrell, advised the organization to move

away from the “static battle rhythm” with which they were familiar.<sup>15</sup> The “rhythm of the battle” concept as practiced by 1st Cavalry in this exercise was characterized by greater commander-to-commander communication and significantly reduced direct interaction between the headquarters staff and subordinate commanders, all while transitioning from offense to defense and back again throughout the exercise. As Rutherford put it, commanders had more time to dialogue with the commanding general and each other, and “the staff has to keep up.”<sup>16</sup> In LSCO, commanders cannot wait for the weekly staff update to receive the latest data from the higher headquarters; instead, they need to access the most up-to-date staff analysis to inform real-time decisions.

Battle damage assessment proved to be the specific data most essential to mission success for the 1st Cavalry Division. The organization remained enemy-focused throughout the exercise, and battle damage assessment data from the various domains enabled subordinate commanders to make informed decisions about how to engage the enemy forces arrayed against them.<sup>17</sup> As enemy forces were destroyed, the staff kept commanders informed on remaining enemy capabilities and possible options. The staff’s agility and focus on understanding the changing battlefield environment enabled the division to twice shift its course of action midbattle and rapidly respond to opportunities recognized by staff officers and communicated to commanders—once in blunting an enemy counterattack and again in shifting the division’s main effort to seize a critical enemy sustainment node.<sup>18</sup> Rutherford noted his fellow staff officers in the cavalry squadron needed to stay current on the progress of the battle so as to best report the enemy situation to the rest of the division.<sup>19</sup> Hook described this data-centric approach as “the speed of relevance,” with data generated by the staff rapidly enabling decisions by the commander. As Hook said, “Making decisions—confident decisions—depends on how fast we get data.”<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, for America’s First Team, data centrality meant faster and more efficient data flow from sensor to commander and directly contributed to a successful Warfighter exercise.

A data-centric Army enables its commanders to make informed decisions by putting in place the physical, information, and human systems required to quickly push relevant data from sensor to commander. Speed is paramount, as the modern battlefield is dynamic and



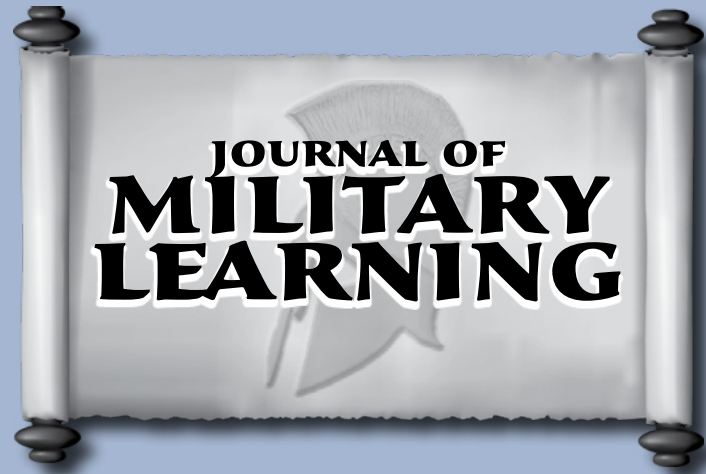
Maj. Ragan Rutherford, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, participates in planning of future operations as part of Warfighter 23-04 at Fort Cavazos, Texas, on 23 March 2023. The exercise streamlined commander-to-commander interaction and facilitated staffs at each echelon keeping their commanders updated as exercise conditions changed. (Photo courtesy of Maj. Ragan Rutherford, U.S. Army)

commanders in MDO need to be able to access multidomain data quickly and in real time. As the *Army Data Plan* acknowledges, “With the fires growing in range and automation and forces increasingly dispersed on the battlefield, speed of decision to neutralize critical targets can have rapid cascading effects to allow our forces to penetrate, disintegrate, and then exploit in order to win. Integration and speed of information is achieved through data and data analytics.”<sup>21</sup> The experiences of Hook, Rutherford, and the rest of America’s First Team during Warfighter 23-04 prove this is not a theoretical postulation but a validated reality of the modern battlefield. 1st Cavalry Division’s exercise performance offers some preliminary insights about the importance of speed as an aspect of data centrality in multidomain operations. ■

## Notes

1. Christine E. Wormuth, "Message from the Secretary of the Army to the Force," Army.mil, 8 February 2022, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://www.army.mil/article/253814/message-from-the-secretary-of-the-army-to-the-force>.
2. Christine E. Wormuth, quoted in Darren LeBlanc, "Quarterbacking Digital Transformation," *Army AL&T Magazine*, Winter 2023, 32, accessed 31 May 2023, [https://asc.army.mil/armyalt/Winter2023/html/print/ArmyAL&T\\_Magazine\\_Winter2023\\_DL.pdf](https://asc.army.mil/armyalt/Winter2023/html/print/ArmyAL&T_Magazine_Winter2023_DL.pdf).
3. James McConville, quoted in Michelle Tan, "No Letting Up: McConville Oversees Significant Changes," Association of the United States Army, 28 September 2022, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://www.ausa.org/articles/no-letting-mcconville-oversees-significant-changes>.
4. Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), *Army Data Plan* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2022), 2, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/2022/10/13/16061cab/army-data-plan-final.pdf>.
5. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2022), 1-16-1-23, accessed 7 June 2023, [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_al/ARN36290-FM\\_3-0-000-WEB-2.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_al/ARN36290-FM_3-0-000-WEB-2.pdf).
6. "Convergence is the rapid and continuous integration of capabilities in all domains, the EMS, and the information environment that optimizes effects to overmatch the enemy through cross-domain synergy and multiple forms of attack all enabled by mission command and disciplined initiative." Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 6 December 2018), 20, accessed 31 May 2023, <https://adminpubs.tradoc.army.mil/pamphlets/TP525-3-1.pdf>.
7. OCIO, *Army Data Plan*, 2.
8. TP 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*, 19.
9. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., "Maintaining a Boxer's Stance," *Joint Force Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (3rd Quarter, 2017): 3, accessed 31 May 2023, [https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-86/jfq-86\\_2-3\\_Dunford.pdf](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-86/jfq-86_2-3_Dunford.pdf).
10. Jennifer Bocanegra, "1st Cavalry Division Tests Multi-Domain Capability during Warfighter Exercise," Army.mil, 29 April 2023, accessed 31 May 2023, [https://www.army.mil/article/266255/1st\\_cavalry\\_division\\_tests\\_multi\\_domain\\_capability\\_during\\_warfighter\\_exercise](https://www.army.mil/article/266255/1st_cavalry_division_tests_multi_domain_capability_during_warfighter_exercise).
11. Todd Hook (chief of staff, 1st Cavalry Division), in discussion with the author, 29 April 2023.
12. Ragan Rutherford (operations officer, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment), in discussion with the author, 30 April 2023.
13. *Ibid.*; Hook, discussion.
14. Hook, discussion.
15. Rutherford, discussion.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Hook, discussion.
18. *Ibid.*; Rutherford, discussion.
19. Rutherford, discussion.
20. Hook, discussion.
21. OCIO, *Army Data Plan*, 2.

# CALL FOR PAPERS



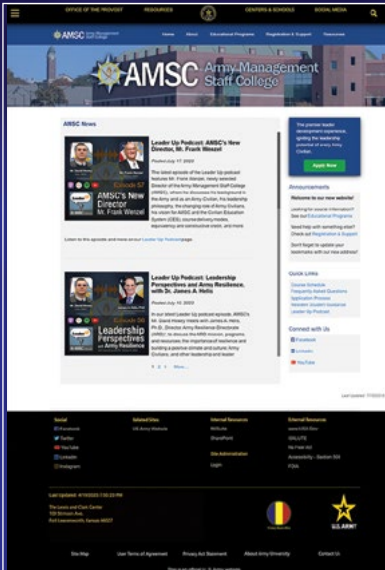
The *Journal of Military Learning* (JML) is a peer-reviewed semiannual publication that seeks to support the military's effort to improve education and training for the U.S. Army and the overall profession of arms. The JML invites practitioners, researchers, academics, and military professionals to submit manuscripts that address the issues and challenges of adult education and training such as education technology, adult learning models and theory, distance learning, training development, and other subjects relevant to the field. Book reviews of published relevant works are also encouraged.

To view the current and past editions of the JML, visit Army University Press at <http://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Journal-of-Military-Learning/>.

We are now accepting manuscripts for future editions of JML. Manuscripts should be submitted to [us-armyleavenworth.tradoc.mbx.journal-of-military-learning@army.mil](mailto:us-armyleavenworth.tradoc.mbx.journal-of-military-learning@army.mil). Submissions should be between 3,500 and 5,000 words and supported by research, evident through the citation of sources. For detailed author submission guidelines, visit the JML page on the Army University Press website at <http://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Journal-of-Military-Learning/>.

For additional information call 913-684-2090 or send an email to the above address.

# PODCAST



Leader Up, a podcast by the Army Management Staff College (AMSC), discusses a broad range of leadership and leader development topics with an emphasis on the Army Profession. If you have questions, suggestions, or feedback, write us at [usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.armyu-amsc-podcast@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.armyu-amsc-podcast@army.mil).



Available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, & YouTube

Leader Up, a podcast by the Army Management Staff College, discusses a broad range of leadership and leader development topics with an emphasis on the Army Civilian Professional.



Featuring a variety of guests to include senior leaders, subject matter experts, Civilian Education System graduates, and more!

[ArmyUniversity.edu/amsc/podcast](http://ArmyUniversity.edu/amsc/podcast)

# SAVE THE DATE

## U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE STRATEGIC LANDPOWER SYMPOSIUM

**7-9 MAY 2024**

**ARMY HERITAGE AND EDUCATION CENTER  
CARLISLE, PA**

**Registration begins August 1, 2023**

Find more information about the Symposium at the  
Symposium website:

<https://csl.armywarcollege.edu/landpower/>



### Contacts:

Dr. Gregory Cantwell, [gregory.l.cantwell.civ@army.mil](mailto:gregory.l.cantwell.civ@army.mil) or 717-245-3235

Mr. Robert Foster, [robert.l.foster1.ctr@army.mil](mailto:robert.l.foster1.ctr@army.mil) or 717-961-2028





California Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Donald Dow, a chaplain's assistant with the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, fires his M-16A2 at a rifle qualification range near Camp Buehring, Kuwait, 5 April 2016. One of the duties of the chaplain's assistant is to protect the chaplain during combat because chaplains are prohibited by regulation from carrying weapons. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ian M. Kummer, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs)

# Pistol-Packing Padres

## Rethinking Regulations Prohibiting Armed Military Chaplains

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Joseph Friedman, Colorado Air National Guard

From biblical times until the mid-nineteenth century, military chaplains went into battle as combatants. That began to change in the 1860s with the development of modern national and international laws of warfare, at which time chaplains assumed the legally significant status of “non-combatants.”<sup>1</sup>

While the Geneva Conventions do not explicitly forbid chaplains from carrying weapons, particularly in a defensive or nonhostile posture, they form the basis of later-promulgated Department of Defense (DOD) regulations prohibiting chaplains from carrying weapons, even defensively. Interestingly, medical personnel—also categorized by the Geneva Conventions as noncombatants—are explicitly allowed by both the conventions and the DOD to carry defensive side arms. The reason is clearly articulated; the Geneva Conventions state that medical personnel cannot be asked to sacrifice themselves without resistance when their unit is attacked.<sup>2</sup> Yet, inexplicably, chaplains are not afforded that same self-preserving opportunity.

Military chaplains, particularly those embedded in combat units, face the same existential threat as any other member of the armed services. Yet, as a signatory to the Geneva Conventions, the United States requires its military chaplains to preserve their noncombatant status, even at risk to their very life. Such a proposition might even be considered reasonable if everyone played by the same rules. However, as will be shown, for the last seventy-five years, and probably for the foreseeable future, the enemies of the United States are likely to be either nonstate actors, nonsignatory states to the Geneva Conventions, or combatants from cultures who cannot be depended on to abide by internationally accepted laws of armed conflict. From the Korean War through the most recent actions against the Taliban and the Islamic State, U.S. enemies ignored the noncombatant status of both medics and chaplains. Yet, the chaplains alone were required to remain unarmed.

The DOD’s insistence on unarmed chaplains does not make sense, and as will be shown, may have never made sense. As chaplains and medical personnel are noncombatants, they should be treated equally. Just as medical personnel are authorized to carry defensive weapons, so should chaplains.

## Chaplains and the Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions, signed on 22 August 1864 and ratified by almost all the signatory countries the following year, stated its overarching principle: wounded and sick soldiers must be taken in and cared for without distinction of nationality.<sup>3</sup> In addition to laying out how enemy combatants should be treated, the Conventions also recognized the noncombatant status of both chaplains and medical personnel. Article 2 of the agreement declared that “hospital and ambulance personnel, including the quarter-master’s staff, the medical, administrative and transport services, and the chaplains, shall have the benefit of the same neutrality when on duty, and while there remain any wounded to be brought in or assisted.”<sup>4</sup> They were afforded this special treatment since both medical personnel and chaplains “are often called upon to give help of a more material nature to the wounded on the battlefield,” and therefore chaplains and medical personnel in the battlefield shall be “respected and protected in all circumstances,” including when captured by the enemy.<sup>5</sup> In sum, the noncombatant status of chaplains and medical personnel affords them a special immunity with special privileges during combat as well as if they are captured. However, this special status and its privileges are conditional; it is predicated on them always maintaining their noncombatant posture. In the case of chaplains, the commentaries to the Geneva Conventions note that “to be entitled to immunity, [chaplains] must be employed exclusively on specific ... religious duties ... must obviously abstain from all hostile acts.”<sup>6</sup> However, as noted earlier, nothing is stated regarding chaplains carrying weapons defensively.

Regarding medical personnel, the Geneva

### Chaplain (Lt. Col.)

**Joseph Friedman, Colorado Air National Guard**, is the 140th Wing chaplain at Buckley Space Force Base in Aurora, Colorado, and currently serves as interim wing chaplain for the 374th Airlift Wing at Yokota Air Base, Japan. He holds a BA from Ner Israel Rabbinical College, Md.; an MDiv (equivalent) from Kollel Rivivos Ephraim, Tenn.; and a JD from Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, University of Memphis. He was the senior rabbi at congregations in Omaha, Nebraska; Norfolk, Virginia; and Denver.

Conventions are clear: “Medical personnel, working in fixed establishments, with mobile medical units, or aboard hospital ships, are legally protected against attack, and this protection is not forfeited *if they are armed for the purpose of defending themselves and their patients*” (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> The commentaries to the Conventions explain the rationale behind this exception:

If, despite the warnings given, it became apparent that the enemy was making a deliberate attack on the hospital ship or medical unit, in flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions, then the medical personnel would have no option but to surrender and hoist the white flag. If the adversary were to announce his criminal intent of destroying the establishment and killing its occupants, *the medical personnel could obviously use their weapons. One cannot expect men to allow themselves to be slaughtered like sheep.* ... In no case, however, may the fact that a member of the medical personnel *defends himself or the wounded in his charge against an illicit attack be considered as an “act harmful to the enemy” depriving him of his right to protection* (emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

This is a limited exception; it does not grant medical personnel license to engage offensively in battle. However, they may “resort to arms for purely defensive purposes” when it is “obviously necessary,” and they must “refrain from all aggressive action.”<sup>9</sup> Yet, this opportunity for self-defense and defense of the defenseless is not afforded chaplains. It appears “one cannot expect men to allow themselves to be slaughtered like sheep” unless they are chaplains.<sup>10</sup>

This inequity is unabashedly articulated within U.S. military regulations. The 1992 Fleet Marine Field Manual 3-61, *Ministry in Combat*, states,

Although the Geneva Convention allows non-combatants the right to self-defense, as well as the prerogative to protect the wounded, Marine Corps regulations limit those actions by chaplains. They make it clear that chaplains are not to bear arms under any circumstances. The simple act of bearing a weapon could identify the chaplain as a combatant. Thus, the Marine Corps manual on chaplains states that chaplains “shall bear

no arms and shall perform no duties relating to combat except those prescribed for chaplains.”<sup>11</sup>

If both chaplains and medical personnel are granted noncombatant status under the same articles of the Geneva Conventions, based on the same rationale (both chaplains and medics provide noncombatant support to the wounded on the battlefield as well as when captured), then why are medical personnel allowed to carry defensive sidearms, while chaplains cannot? Why is it that medical personnel cannot be expected “to allow themselves to be slaughtered like sheep,” while chaplains are asked to do just that? By what rationale did the paths of these two exempted classes of noncombatants diverge, both in the Conventions as well as current military regulations?

## Chaplains and Military Regulations

It took 175 years for the DOD to address the issue of armed chaplains. Chaplain Robert Nay notes that as recently as 1926, the Army chaplain field manual failed to explicitly prohibit chaplains from carrying defensive weapons and did not even forbid chaplains from joining in an attack.<sup>12</sup> The manual instructs “the duty of the chaplain lies with the men of his command who are in the fighting line. This does not mean that the chaplain should take part in every assault and go over the top with the men and become a ‘fighting parson.’”<sup>13</sup> This instruction reinforces the purpose of the chaplain in combat—to minister to the troops—and while that may not require the chaplain to “go over the top” every time, it certainly contemplates the possibility of doing so when and if the spiritual needs of the soldiers require it.

The 1944 Technical Manual 16-205, *The Chaplain*, contained the first reference to chaplains not bearing arms:

Paragraph 76, AR [Army Regulation] 600-30, makes this distinction clear and directs that chaplains shall not bear arms. Immunities are forfeited by those who commit acts injurious to the enemy. To benefit by a protected status, recognized and respected by the enemy, then to take part in acts which deliberately injure would seem a breach of faith a little short of treachery and would be punishable under the law of nations and the military law of the United States.<sup>14</sup>



However, by couching the prohibition in terms of “acts injurious to the enemy” and “acts ... a little short of treachery,” it clearly referred to offensive actions and still did not implicate carrying weapons defensively.<sup>15</sup>

The Army chief of chaplains, Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) William R. Arnold, issued Circular #277 on 1 October 1943, in which he warned (not prohibited) chaplains from carrying weapons for fear they would lose their Geneva Conventions protections.<sup>16</sup> A year later, he issued Circular #286, which included a nonbinding opinion from a judge advocate general who concurred with Arnold’s earlier warning.<sup>17</sup> However, neither the judge advocate general’s opinion nor the circular itself forbade chaplains from carrying weapons. In fact, a chaplain recounted that, while serving in Southern France during the winter of 1944–45, he was *ordered* to carry a weapon when away from his unit, for fear the Germans would capture him for his uniform so they could infiltrate U.S. lines.<sup>18</sup>

The next manual, released in 1944, provided examples of proper and improper ways a chaplain can impact a battle:

Many proper services performed by the chaplains are an indirect injury to the enemy. If he raises the morale of the men, he makes them better fighters. If he bandages a wound, he may save the life of a soldier who will fight again at a later time. If he distributes chocolate bars in fox holes, he may make the soldiers more energetic physically and more resolute of mind. These, however, are proper functions, and he would do the same for enemy wounded or prisoners. If he were to observe the enemy position and tell the artillery where to fire, or were to carry ammunition to the firing line, or convey information or orders about combat operations, it would be direct participation in hostilities.<sup>19</sup>

Note there was still no explicit directive not to carry a defensive weapon, only a proscription from being involved in offensive hostilities, even indirectly. Equally noteworthy is that in the 1952 manual—published during the Korean conflict—not only was that entire paragraph absent, but so is any reference to the non-combatant status of chaplains and the need to protect that status.<sup>20</sup> This omission may be based on an event that took place during that conflict.

Of the many atrocities documented during the Korean conflict, a particularly shocking event became known as the “Chaplain-Medic Massacre.” On 17 July 1950, the North Korean communists surprised and slaughtered approximately twenty seriously wounded American soldiers. The regimental surgeon who wore the identifiable red cross armband administered aid to soldiers and an Army chaplain wore a Christian cross, and neither of them was armed. The chaplain was killed, while the wounded surgeon, Capt. Linton J. Buttrey, managed to survive and escape; he was the sole survivor. Another example is the tragic, albeit inspiring story of Chaplain Emil Kapaun, the most decorated military chaplain in U.S. history and posthumous recipient of the Medal of Honor. When he was captured by Communist forces, the enemy did not accord him noncombatant status in accordance with Geneva Conventions, but rather treated him like all the other prisoners of war (POW)—and in some cases, even worse—and as a result, he died of malnutrition and pneumonia.<sup>21</sup>

As word of these atrocities spread among the troops, particularly among noncombatants, the Geneva Conventions assurances of immunity seemed farcical. A Senate subcommittee for the Committee on Government Operations heard testimony on the massacre and concluded in its report: “Virtually every provision of the Geneva Convention governing the treatment of war prisoners was purposely violated or ignored by the North Korean and Chinese forces.”<sup>22</sup> Perhaps this contributed to the 1952 Army chaplain manual’s complete silence on the question of chaplains carrying weapons and the need to protect their non-combatant status.

The concerns by noncombatants in Korea resurfaced fifteen years later in Vietnam for both medics and chaplains alike. During the Vietnam War, medics, for the first time, were routinely armed.<sup>23</sup> Even the very symbol of noncombatant immunity—the red cross on a helmet and on an armband—was no longer worn; it became a target at which the North Vietnamese Army and its allies deliberately aimed.<sup>24</sup> During the Vietnam War, air ambulances that displayed the red cross suffered a loss rate to hostile fire that was 3.3 times that of all other forms of helicopter missions in the Vietnam War and 1.5 times higher than nonmedical helicopters flying direct combat missions.<sup>25</sup>



Chaplain Curtis Bowers (left) and a soldier during the Vietnam War. Bowers carried a pistol and grenades for self-defense. (Photo courtesy of the Online Chaplain History Museum)

The most famous and most highly decorated chaplain of the Vietnam War era was Army Chaplain Jerry Autry.<sup>26</sup> Autry was wounded twice and received nine awards for valor along with two Purple Hearts, which may explain why he traveled everywhere with an M-16 assault rifle. A *Time* magazine reporter who witnessed Autry's bravery during an ambush by Vietnamese troops—he personally led several men to safety—dubbed him “the gun-toting chaplain” and the

name stuck. When Autry was asked why he carried a weapon, he said, “The soldiers there were very protective of me. I realized I could have these guys looking after me, but that’s not their job; they really needed to look after themselves. So, I started carrying my own weapon. I almost never took it off my shoulder, I never fired at anybody and nobody ever asked me why I did it.”<sup>27</sup> Another Vietnam-era chaplain known for carrying weapons was Chaplain Curtis Bowers, assigned to the 101st Airborne Brigade. When accompanying his battalion in battle, he would carry a .45 caliber pistol and fragmentation grenades. In an interview, he explained, “I don’t want to be a drag when the going is hot and heavy. I ought to be able to earn my own keep with these men. But I would only use these things in self-defense—my job is to save souls and not to take lives.”<sup>28</sup> Sixteen chaplains were killed during the Vietnam War, of which five were killed by small-arms fire while providing either care or last rites to the wounded.<sup>29</sup>

When asked about chaplains carrying weapons, Autry said, “Later on, it became a hassle in the chaplaincy. They changed the regulations, which used to say that a chaplain is ‘not required’ to carry a weapon. Now it says that a chaplain ‘will not’ carry a weapon.”<sup>30</sup> Autry was referring to the explicit change in directive that took place a decade after the Vietnam War. In 1989, for the first time, Field Manual 16-01, *Religious Support Doctrine: The Chaplain and Chaplain Assistant*, stated unequivocally, “Chaplains are non-combatant. They will not bear arms.”<sup>31</sup> No reason was given; no rationale was provided.

Since then, all branches of the U.S. military have unequivocally reiterated the same position:

- Army Regulation 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities*, states, “Chaplains will not bear arms in combat or in unit combat skills training.”<sup>32</sup>
- Air Force Instruction 52-101, *Planning and Organizing*, states, “Chaplains will not perform

duties incompatible with their endorsing organizations or professional role and will remain in a non-combatant status.”<sup>33</sup>

- ♦ Air Force Instruction 52-104, *Chaplain Corps (HC) Readiness*, states, “Chaplains will not bear or transport arms or ammunition.”<sup>34</sup>
- ♦ Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1730.7E, *Religious Ministry within the Department of the Navy*, states, “Chaplains are non-combatants. They cannot bear arms or seek weapons training in connection with their military duties nor will they seek weapons or warfare qualifications.”<sup>35</sup>
- ♦ Marine Corps Tactical Publication 3-30D, *Religious Ministry in the United States Marine Corps*, states, “Chaplains are noncombatants and will not bear arms.”<sup>36</sup>

Yet, none of the branches apply the same prohibition to the other noncombatants—medical personnel. For example, the Army training manual for combat medics (Army Techniques Publication 4-02.4, *Medical Platoon*) states, “In recognition of the necessity of self-defense, however, medical personnel may be armed for their own defense or for the protection of the wounded and sick under their charge.”<sup>37</sup> The Air Force (Air Force Doctrine Publication 4-02, *Health Services*) instructs: “Medical forces may carry only light individual arms for their own defense and the defense of the sick and wounded in their charge ... if the enemy is attacking and ignoring the marked medical status of the personnel or facility, personnel may consider using force (though the dangers of being viewed as a combatant should be self-evident).”<sup>38</sup>

One could speculate the reason the branches are adamant that chaplains remain unarmed is rooted in concerns that, should they be captured by the enemy, they would retain their noncombatant status. Accordingly, they would not be held as POWs and could minister freely to the prisoners. In fact, many if not most chaplains, when asked, would say the regulations prohibiting armed chaplains are specifically grounded in the issue of remaining noncombatants per the Geneva Conventions. However, as previously noted, nothing in the conventions explicitly indicate a chaplain carrying a defensive weapon would lose their immunity. More importantly, the purported immunity granted by the conventions has not been exhibited by U.S. enemies in over seventy-five years.

The issues previously documented which chaplains faced in Korea and Vietnam resurfaced during the Global War on Terrorism. Chaplain Steve Dundas, who is not a proponent of arming chaplains, wrote in 2011, “Chaplains are already a high priority target for Al Qaeda as our capture would be of great propaganda value. I had a number of Iraqi officers express their admiration for my service and care for American and Iraqi soldiers and the fact that they recognized that I was in constant danger and was unarmed.”<sup>39</sup> In 2012, British Royal Navy Chaplain Stuart Hallam, while serving in Afghanistan, said, “For the first time in any theatre of war we are seen as a legitimate target by the enemy.”<sup>40</sup> If the enemies of the United States are going to target chaplains as they do medical personnel, then chaplains should have the opportunity and the choice to defend themselves the same way as medical personnel. So why do so many chaplains oppose carrying defensive weapons?

## The Argument against Arming Chaplains

In 2009, Chaplain Steven Schaick (later to become the Air Force’s nineteenth chief of chaplains) wrote a research report for his Air War College requirements, addressing the nature of chaplains as noncombatants.<sup>41</sup> In it, Schaick provides anecdotal, historical, theological, and legal arguments supporting the contention that chaplains must remain unarmed. He cites, for example, the Council of Ratisbon in 742 CE, at which Christian clergy were authorized to participate in and with military units, though they were strictly prohibited from either carrying or using a weapon. “We prohibit the servant of God in every way from bearing arms or fighting in the army or going against the enemy.”<sup>42</sup> However, Schaick neglects to mention how that directive was often ignored. Archbishop Turpin (d. 800 CE), immortalized in the eleventh-century French poem “The Song of Roland,” is a notable example of the warrior priest.<sup>43</sup> The famous Bayeux Tapestry depicts Bishop Odo, the younger half-brother of William the Conqueror, fighting at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 with a heavy blunt mace.<sup>44</sup> In 1095, Pope Urban II assigned Bishop Adhémar of Le Puy to be his personal representative in the First Crusade. Even though in 1175, the Synod of Westminster (England) prohibited the clergy to

“take up arms nor to go about in armor,” until the fourteenth century this was generally not heeded.<sup>45</sup>

Schaick cites many examples of chaplains who made incredible impressions on their troops specifically because they were not armed, as well as the incredible story of Chaplain Robert Preston Taylor, who endured the Bataan Death March and served as a beacon of hope and faith to all who encountered him, precisely because he faced such horrors armed only with his faith. I have no doubt there are countless service members inspired by their chaplain marching forth, protected by nothing but their faith. However, while the argument makes for a good sermon, it is not dispositive. It is predicated on the logical fallacy of *cum hoc ergo propter hoc* (with this, therefore because of this), more commonly referred to as “correlation does not imply causation.” Because many are inspired by unarmed chaplains does not establish others would not be inspired by armed chaplains, prepared to defend both themselves, as well as those serving alongside them. The absence of armed chaplains (with few exceptions already cited) precludes providing evidence to the contrary.

Some theologians argue there is an inherent incompatibility between a soldier’s duty and a minister’s duty. According to Darrell Cole, an assistant professor of religion, Thomas Aquinas reasoned that

bishops and clerics cannot be soldiers because these occupations cannot “be fittingly exercised at the same time.” Aquinas offers two reasons why. First, warlike pursuits keep clergy from their proper duties. In other words, their participation is unlawful, not because war is evil, but because warlike pursuits prevent them from doing their jobs. Second, it is “unbecoming” for those who give the Eucharist to shed blood, even if they do so without sin (i.e., in a just war).<sup>46</sup>

This argument, as well as much of Schaick’s arguments, are predicated on a Christian point of view. However, there are many different faith traditions reflected in the United States chaplaincy, some of which take a very different position on the issue. For example, the Bible instructs, “Neither shalt thou stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor.”<sup>47</sup> The Shulchan Arukh (Code of Jewish Law), the most authoritative legal code of traditional Judaism, states: “One who sees his friend drowning in the sea, or that robbers are

attacking him, or a wild animal is coming upon him and (the observer) has the ability to save him ... and does not save him ... transgresses the obligation ‘neither shalt thou stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor.’”<sup>48</sup> Why is the DOD demanding a Jewish chaplain violate his or her religious code by not defending the life of a colleague, let alone self-defense?

What of the danger in which an unarmed chaplain places other service members? Infantry doctrine is generally based upon the infantry squad, composed of two four-man fire teams and a squad leader. The squad “can establish a base of fire, providing security for another element, or conducting fire and movement with one team providing a base of fire, while the other team moves to the next position of advantage or onto an objective.”<sup>49</sup> Every member of a squad has a specific job to ensure the protection of all the squad members. When a chaplain finds himself in a combat situation—for example, his convoy comes under fire or his base is overrun—he becomes a tremendous liability to the combatants around him. Rather than serving as part of a carefully coordinated unit, squad members must ensure the safety of the unarmed chaplain. On 29 March 2012, an Air Force chaplain recounted to me an incident in which, while deployed to Iraq, an improvised explosive device hit the convoy in which he was traveling, forcing them all to enter a local village on foot. The squad suddenly found themselves serving as bodyguards for a defenseless officer rather than operating as a highly choreographed fire team. The chaplain put all five of them in a more vulnerable position than they would have been in had he not been present, or had he been qualified and able to defend himself.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, it should be noted the idea of defensively armed chaplains is not novel. Denmark is a signatory to the Geneva Conventions, and its military chaplains are permitted to carry defensive sidearms. The Church of Denmark’s website reads, “The field chaplain has the right to carry handguns, which may be used in self-defense.”<sup>51</sup> Israel is a signatory as well; Israel Defense Force chaplains are not only required to carry offensive weapons but must be field-qualified to serve in combat with the unit to which they are attached.<sup>52</sup> Finally, while British chaplains are prohibited from carrying defensive weapons, they have been actively advocating for the right to do so since 2007.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

The Geneva Conventions do not prohibit chaplains from carrying weapons; they only suspend their battlefield and POW immunity if they engage in hostilities. Since 1950, the point has been irrelevant, as the adversaries the United States has faced have not extended those immunities in any event. It is not proposed here that all chaplains be *required* to carry defensive weapons; that would be as much a burden on many chaplains as the prohibition is for others. Rather, it should be a chaplain's choice. And just as it should be a chaplain's choice to carry or not, it should be a commander's choice which chaplains to send into a hostile

environment where chaplains may have to defend themselves or those to whom they are ministering.

The reality of the existential threat chaplains face in combat situations, coupled with the inequity of regulations that allow some noncombatants (medical personnel) to carry defensive weapons while others (chaplains) cannot, suggests revisiting the current policy regarding defenseless chaplains, and instead giving them the choice and ability to protect themselves and those they faithfully serve. ■

**Editor's note:** *Nine chaplains have been awarded the Medal of Honor. Read their stories beginning on page 125.*

## Notes

1. Jean S. Pictet, ed., *Commentary on the First Geneva Convention: Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 1952), 218, accessed 18 May 2023, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gci-1949/article-24/commentary/1952>.
2. *Ibid.*, 203.
3. Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949, 21 October 1950, 75 U.N.T.S. 31, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/geneva-conventions-1949-additional-protocols> [hereinafter Geneva Convention (I)].
4. Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field, 22 August 1864, 22 Stat. 940, T.S. No. 377, accessed 18 May 2023, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gc-1864>.
5. Pictet, *Commentary on Convention (I)*, 220.
6. *Ibid.*, 220–21.
7. Geneva Convention (I), art. 22.
8. Jean S. Pictet, ed., *Commentary on the First Geneva Convention: Convention (II) for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea* (Geneva, ICRC, 1960), art. 35, accessed 18 May 2023, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gcii-1949/article-35/commentary/1960>.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Fleet Marine Force Manual 3-61, *Ministry in Combat* (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 22 June 1992), § 1004(f).
12. Robert Nay, "The Operational, Social, and Religious Influences Upon the Army Chaplain Field Manual, 1926–1952" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 13 June 2008), 36.
13. Technical Manual (TM) 2270-5, *The Chaplain: His Place and Duties* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1926), 51.
14. TM 16-205, *The Chaplain* (Washington, DC: War Department, 1944), quoted in Nay, "The Operational, Social, and Religious Influences," 36.
15. *Ibid.* There are a few things troubling about this paragraph, not the least of which is the threat that chaplains engaging in hostilities "would be punishable under the law of nations." That is false. The chaplain would lose his or her noncombatant status, but the Geneva Conventions do not contemplate punishment, let alone criminality, for such behavior.
16. Nay, "Army Chaplain Field Manual," 38
17. *Ibid.*
18. Israel A. S. Yost, *Combat Chaplain: The Personal Story of the WWII Chaplain of the Japanese American 100th Battalion*, ed. Monica E. Yost and Michael Markrich (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 214–15. Out of fear for losing his noncombatant status, Chaplain Yost complied with the order by having his assistant store a rifle in the jeep's door and a pistol on the seat beside him—but he never actually carried a weapon.
19. TM 16-205, *The Chaplain*, 67.
20. Field Manual (FM) 16-5, *The Chaplain* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 31 January 1952). This manual replaced the previous TM 16-205.
21. Father Kapaun Guild, "The Story of Father Emil J. Kapaun" (Wichita, KS: Catholic Diocese of Wichita, n.d.), 13–14, 16, accessed 11 July 2023, [https://catholicdioceseofwichita.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Father-Kapaun-booklet\\_single-page\\_2016.pdf](https://catholicdioceseofwichita.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Father-Kapaun-booklet_single-page_2016.pdf).
22. Committee on Government Operations, *Korean War Atrocities Report of the Committee on Government Operations Made through Its Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations by Its Subcommittee on Korean War Atrocities, Pursuant to S. Res. 40* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 15, accessed 18 May 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525375/>.
23. Marc Levy, "From Vietnam to Afghanistan: The Bling They Curse and Carry," Vietnam Veterans against the War, 4 September 2009, accessed 17 May 2023, <http://www.vvaw.org/commentary/?id=1271>; Philip Katcher, *Armies of the Vietnam War 1962–75* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 1980), 18.

24. Rolf von Uslar and Florian van Schewick, "The Red Cross as a Target?," *Military-Medicine*, 12 January 2010, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://military-medicine.com/article/3047-the-red-cross-as-a-target.html>.
25. Peter Dorland and James Nanney, *Dust Off: Army Aero-medical Evacuation in Vietnam* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), 117, accessed 17 May 2023, [https://history.army.mil/html/books/090/90-28-1/CMH\\_Pub\\_90-28-1.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/090/90-28-1/CMH_Pub_90-28-1.pdf).
26. David Ian Miller, "Finding My Religion: Jerry Autry, the 'Gun-Toting Chaplain,' Reflects on an Army Career," SFGate, 29 May 2006, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/FINDING-MY-RELIGION-Jerry-Autry-the-3300407.php>.
27. Ibid.
28. "Profiles in Courage: Curtis 'Curt' Bowers," Warhawk Air Museum, 25 April 2020, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://warhawkairmuseum.org/blog/profiles-in-courage-curtis-curt-bowers/>.
29. "The 16 Chaplains on the Vietnam Memorial Wall Who Put Themselves in Harm's Way," Veterans Site by GreaterGood, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://blog.theveteranssite.gretergood.com/chaplains-vietnam/>.
30. Miller, "Finding My Religion."
31. FM 16-01, *Religious Support Doctrine: The Chaplain and Chaplain Assistant* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 1989).
32. Army Regulation 165-1, *Army Chaplain Corps Activities* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2015), 7.
33. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 52-101, *Planning and Organizing* (Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 2019), 7.
34. AFI 52-104, *Chaplain Corps (HC) Readiness* (Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 2019), 12.
35. Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1730.7E, *Religious Ministry within the Department of the Navy* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 2019), 19.
36. Marine Corps Tactical Publication 3-30D, *Religious Ministry in the United States Marine Corps* (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2018), 1-4.
37. Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 4-02.4, *Medical Platoon* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2021), G-1.
38. Air Force Doctrine Publication 4-02, *Health Services* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: LeMay Center for Doctrine, 2019), 41.
39. Steve Dundas, "Changes of Plans: It's What You Learn after You Know It All That Counts," *Inglorious Padre Steve's World*, 10 April 2011, accessed 17 May 2023, <http://padresteve.com/2011/04/10/changes-of-plans-its-what-you-learn-after-you-know-it-all-that-counts/>.
40. "Army Chaplains Want Right to Carry Weapons to Protect Themselves against the Taliban," *Evening Standard* (website), 13 April 2012, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://www.standard.co.uk/hp/front/army-chaplains-want-right-to-carry-weapons-to-protect-themselves-against-the-taliban-7272167.html>.
41. Steven A. Schaick, *Examining the Role of Chaplains as Non-Combatants While Involved in Religious Leader Engagement/Liaison* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air War College, 17 February 2009), accessed 17 May 2023, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA539854.pdf>.
42. Ibid., 2.
43. *The Song of Roland*, tran. Jessie Crosland (Cambridge, CAN: In Parentheses Publications, 1999), 26, 31, 33, 42, accessed 6 June 2023, [https://www.yorku.ca/inpar/roland\\_crosland.pdf](https://www.yorku.ca/inpar/roland_crosland.pdf).
44. Richard M. Koch, "Sacred Threads: The Bayeux Tapestry as a Religious Object," *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 2, no. 4 (2009): 163, accessed 11 July 2023, <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol2/iss4/6>.
45. Murray Joseph Thompson, *Shepherds of God in Wolves' Clothing: Random Reflections of a Former Army Chaplain* (Meadville, PA: Christian Faith Publishing, 2021), 6.
46. Darrell Cole, "Good Wars," *First Things* (October 2001), accessed 17 May 2023, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2001/10/good-wars>.
47. Leviticus 19:16 (JPS).
48. Joseph Karo, "Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat (Code of Jewish Law, Fourth Section)," Sefaria, accessed 17 May 2023, [https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan\\_Arukh%2C\\_Choshen\\_Mishpat.426.1?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Choshen_Mishpat.426.1?lang=bi).
49. ATP 3-21.8, *Infantry Platoon and Squad* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 12 April 2016), 1-12, accessed 17 May 2023, [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/ARN13842-ATP\\_3-21.8-001-WEB-4.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN13842-ATP_3-21.8-001-WEB-4.pdf).
50. Anonymous (chaplain), in discussion with the author, 19 March 2012.
51. "Military Chaplain" [in Danish], Folkekirken [Church of Denmark], accessed 18 May 2023, <https://www.folkekirken.dk/folkekirken-arbejder/praester-med-saerlige-opgaver/feltpraest>.
52. The author has many friends who serve or served as chaplains in the Israel Defense Forces. The information was received firsthand from them.
53. Adam Lusher, "The 10-Hour Battle for Curly, Larry and Moe," *The Telegraph* (website), 13 April 2003, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1427421/The-10-hour-battle-for-Curly-Larry-and-Moe.html>; Matthew Hickley, "Navy Chaplains Want Right to Carry Weapons to Protect Themselves against the Taliban," *Daily Mail* (website), 18 December 2007, accessed 17 May 2023, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-495281/Navy-chaplains-want-right-carry-weapons-protect-Taliban.html>.



1st Lt. James Hill  
15 March 1893



Milton Lorenzo Haney  
3 November 1896



Francis B. Hall  
16 February 1897

# Medal of Honor

## Nine Chaplains

In the long line of military chaplains over the years, nine stand out. From as early as 1893 to as recently as 2013, the prestigious Medal of Honor has been awarded to nine extraordinary chaplains for sacrifices, bravery, and selflessness during battle.

### Civil War

In May 1863, **1st Lt. James Hill** served in the 21st Iowa Regiment during the Battle of Champion Hill, which was Ulysses S. Grant's campaign to encircle Vicksburg, Mississippi. During the bulk of the heaviest fighting, Hill came across three Confederate pickets while alone in the forest. Realizing that he was outnumbered and vulnerable, he quickly ordered the three Confederates to "ground arms" before issuing loud orders to a phantom Union detail in the woods. The Confederate soldiers fell for the ruse, became prisoners, and were marched to the rear while Hill continued to issue orders to an imaginary Union guard. For this action and his quick thinking, Hill earned the Medal of Honor on 15 March 1893. It was only afterward that Hill became the regiment's chaplain.

**Chaplain Milton Lorenzo Haney** was with the 55th Illinois Regiment during the Battle of Atlanta, on 22 July 1864 when he picked up a musket and joined the ranks of the regiment. The goal was to overtake a Union breastwork that had recently fallen to the Confederates. This action earned him the name "The Fighting Chaplain" by the Illinois men. He survived the war and was awarded the Medal of Honor on 3 November 1896.

On the morning of 3 May 1863, the 16th New York Regiment found itself engaged in the intense shot and shellfire of the Battle of Salem Church around Fredericksburg, Virginia. This was Chaplain **Francis B. Hall's** first taste of battle, and he rose to the occasion. One hundred and fifty-four men died in the battle, and Hall was reported to have repeatedly carried wounded men on his horse to the rear of the fight for appropriate care and attendance. He survived the war, and his valor and courage during a time of intense battle earned him the Medal of Honor, awarded 16 February 1897.

**John Milton Whitehead** enlisted in the 15th Indiana Regiment as a thirty-nine-year-old preacher from Westville, Indiana. Whitehead and his regiment were at the center of the heavy fighting at the Battle of Stones River near Mufreesboro, Tennessee, toward the end of 1862. The battle was so intense that Whitehead detailed the events in writing, claiming a "fearful loss of life." Ignoring the flying shells and shots whizzing by his body, Whitehead actively worked to evacuate casualties to the rear of the fighting. For his life-saving actions on the battlefield, he became known as "The Angel of Stones River." He too survived the war and was awarded the Medal of Honor on 4 April 1898.

### World War II

On 19 March 1945, **Chaplain (Lt. Cdmr.) Joseph O'Callahan** served on the USS *Franklin* near Kobe, Japan, when a two-engine bomber suddenly attacked



John Milton Whitehead  
4 April 1898



Lt. Cdr. Joseph O'Callahan  
23 January 1946



Capt. Charles Liteky  
19 November 1968

and Imperial Japanese forces engaged the ship in battle. The *Franklin* was badly damaged in the attack and the crew fought valiantly to keep her afloat. Fighting his way through the blazing inferno in darkened, smoke-filled corridors, he arrived on the deck to a mass of wounded and dying and flames burning uncontrolled. He ministered to the casualties, and still managed to fight alongside his crew by directing the crew to jettison live ammunition and flood the magazine. He inspired his fellow men and managed to get the ship back to port. For his bravery and initiative, O'Callahan was awarded the Medal of Honor on 23 January 1946.

## Vietnam

**Chaplain (Capt.) Charles Liteky**, 199th Infantry Brigade, was in Vietnam on 6 December 1967 near Phuoc-Lac, when his men were violently attacked by a battalion-sized enemy force. Liteky acted quickly and decisively; he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire and managed to place himself between an enemy machine gun and his wounded men and carry off fellow soldiers to safety. He administered last rites to the dying and he evacuated the wounded amidst heavy fighting. During the fight, Liteky was wounded in the neck and foot, but he survived his wounds and the war, and was commended for removing at least twenty soldiers from the thick of the fight. He was awarded the Medal of Honor on 19 November 1968.

**Chaplain (Lt.) Vincent Capodanno** attached to the U.S. Marine Corps after officer candidate school. While there, he established a solid reputation as a man dedicated to his fellow servicemen; he shared their hardships and attended to their spiritual well-being. So it was no surprise that on 7 September 1967, Capodanno rushed into action after an ambush by the North Vietnamese Army Force while on a mission to

rescue two Marine companies that had been attacked in the Que Son Valley. He ran through intense enemy fire to administer last rites and assist with medical aid. Between dragging men off the battlefield and coming to the aid of several injured marines, his fellow soldiers perceived Capodanno as a hero. Capodanno was instantly killed when he put himself between a corpsman and an enemy machine gun situated merely yards from his position. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on 7 January 1969.

During the Battle of Dak To, on 19 November 1967, **Chaplain Charles Watters** of the 173rd Support Battalion, was moving with one of the battalion's companies when it was attacked by an enemy battalion. He was unarmed and exposed to both friendly and enemy fire, yet he marched forward with his men aiding the wounded, assisting in their evacuations, and administering last rites to the dying. In addition, Watters carried a shocked paratrooper out of the way of enemy fire, and repeatedly risked his life running in front of enemy fire to evacuate fallen soldiers. Once all the wounded was within the established perimeter, Watters was able to assist with medical care, providing food and water, providing dressing to wounds, and giving spiritual strength. He was mortally wounded while giving aid to the injured. He was awarded the Medal of Honor on 4 November 1969.

## Korea

**Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun**, 1st Cavalry Division, served as an Army chaplain in both World War II and Korea. Preferring to serve near the front lines so he could attend to the needs of his men, Kapaun maintained a U.S. Army jeep as a portable altar in the field. At the battle of Unsan, North Pyongan province (what is present-day North Korea), Chinese





Lt. Vincent Capodanno  
7 January 1969



Charles Watters  
4 November 1969



Capt. Emil Kapaun  
11 April 2013

assaults inflicted thousands of American and South Korean casualties. Kapaun calmly walked through the obliterating firefight to provide comfort and medical aid to his comrades and evacuate the wounded. On 1 November 1950, Kapaun and some others were captured by advancing Chinese forces. While Kapaun managed to escape the captors, he ultimately decided to stay with the wounded soldiers. This decision led to his recapture, but Kapaun managed to save the life of an American sergeant whose injuries prevented him from walking on his own. Kapaun physically supported the man for sixty miles as they walked to the

prisoner-of-war (POW) camp; this compassionate act inspired the other captives. While in the POW camp, Kapaun ministered to the sick and wounded American POWs and stole scarce food to bring to the weak, all the while praying to Saint Dismas, the penitent thief and patron saint of condemned prisoners, for protection. Kapaun died of pneumonia in the prison camp in May 1951. He was awarded the Medal of Honor on 11 April 2013, after U.S. Rep. Todd Tiahrt campaigned for Kapaun to receive the honor. ■

—Editor, *Military Review*



The Center for Army Lessons Learned leads the **ARMY LESSONS LEARNED PROGRAM** and delivers timely and relevant information to resolve gaps, enhance readiness, and inform modernization.

**BUILDING COHESIVE TEAMS**



**COMPANY LEADERSHIP**



**HANDBOOK**



**COMMANDER AND STAFF GUIDE TO REHEARSALS**



**PREPARING FOR LARGE-SCALE COMBAT OPERATIONS**



**HOW TO MASTER WARGAMING**



**THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF PLATOON LEADERSHIP**

**THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF COMPANY LEADERSHIP**

**THE FIRST 100 Days OF PLATOON LEADERSHIP**

**PREPARING FOR LARGE-SCALE COMBAT OPERATIONS**

**HOW TO MASTER WARGAMING**

# AUDIOBOOK RELEASES



**(913) 684-9533/2255**

**ARMY.MIL/CALL**



Soldiers stand in line at a "reenlistment office" in Baghdad on 25 February 2004. (Photo and satirical caption by Staff. Sgt Wes Wooten, 982nd Signal Company)

# Comedy in Combat Culture



## Understanding the Use of Humor in Crisis and Conflict

Maj. Sally Williamson, Australian Army

There are few leaders with a job more serious right now than Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Yet, this emergent world leader still finds the odd occasion not to take himself too seriously. During an interview with David Letterman in an underground train station in Kyiv nine months after the large-scale Russian invasion, Zelensky joked:

Two Jewish guys from Odesa meet up. One is asking the other, “So what’s the situation? What are the people saying?”  
 And he goes: “What are people saying? They are saying it’s a war.”  
 “War? What kind of war?”  
 “Russia is fighting NATO.”  
 “Are you serious?”  
 “Yes, Russia is fighting NATO!”  
 “So, how is it going?”  
 “What do you mean, how is it going? Seventy thousand Russian soldiers are dead. Missile stockpile has been almost depleted. A lot of equipment is damaged, blown up. That’s the situation.”  
 “And what about NATO?”  
 “What about NATO? NATO hasn’t even arrived yet!”<sup>1</sup>

His tone is calm, and his voice is clear. There is a small smile and his usually serious and sullen face lights up for just a second as he says the punch line. Although spontaneous, it is a thoughtful joke delivered to domestic and international audiences with a slightly different message for each. It demonstrates how appropriate humor can serve as a useful tool for interpersonal and informative communication, transcend traditional hierarchies, serve as a culturally acceptable mechanism for voicing dissatisfaction, and act as an effective coping strategy in crisis and conflict.

Understanding what constitutes appropriate versus inappropriate humor is based on individual values and beliefs, and the context in which it is delivered. Filipe Sobral, Liliana Furtado, and Gazi Islam describe humor as having two potential styles: positive or negative. Positive humor includes affiliative or self-enhancing humor and seeks to “build and enhance interpersonal relationships through funny stories, jokes, and witty comments.”<sup>2</sup> Negative humor, on the other hand, is aggressive or deprecating and functions through irony,

sarcasm, and ridicule. This kind of humor is used to vent dissatisfaction and create relatability by drawing the comedic aspects from shared or collective hardships.<sup>3</sup> Another important aspect of humor relates to whether the joke targets oneself or whether it targets a person or entity that is a stranger to the audience, known to the audience, or a member of the audience.<sup>4</sup> From a context perspective, humor is generally best received when the audience shares the same context or can, at a minimum, imagine themselves in that situation.<sup>5</sup> Timing, tone, and method of delivery can also serve to make a joke more or less effective, as anyone who has seen stand-up comedy can attest.<sup>6</sup>

There are substantial amounts of literature that focus on the managerial aspects of humor.<sup>7</sup> However, for the military, comedy is more than just a tool for transformational leadership, it is a part of the organization’s social identity and culture.<sup>8</sup> In a 2016 *Army Magazine* article, Col. Eric Zimmerman discusses how humor was historically incorporated into leadership doctrine. He explains that the 1948 Department of the Army Pamphlet 22-1, *Leadership*, and the 1999 Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership: Be, Know, Do*, both included passages espousing the positive aspects of affiliative humor. He recommends that the “artful application of humor in leadership” should be incorporated into modern doctrine as there are many potential benefits, such as the “development and maintenance of trust and cohesive teams, resiliency and critical and creative thinking.”<sup>9</sup> Modern U.S.

Army doctrine does not mention humor as a leadership trait, but it emphasizes why having a sense of humor is important in retaining a positive emotional state and achieving optimal mental readiness.<sup>10</sup> Studies tend to support Army Techniques Publication 7-22, *Army Team Building*, and Zimmerman’s claims.<sup>11</sup> However, these same studies also warn that if comedy is inconsistent with the leadership

**Maj. Sally Williamson, Australian Army**, is an Art of War Scholar at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. She holds a BA in Indonesian and politics and an MA in defence studies from the University of New South Wales. She has operational experience in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the Southwest Pacific; and she completed her subunit command time in a special operations battalion.



David Letterman interviews Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in October 2022 three hundred feet below ground on an active subway platform in Kyiv as part of his show *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction with David Letterman*. Zelensky, a former comedian, uses humor as a tool to convey messages to internal and external audiences. (Screenshots from YouTube)

style or typical behaviors of a certain individual, it may aggravate divergence in leader-follower relationships and impair team outcomes.<sup>12</sup>

For comedy to be an effective interpersonal and informative communication tool, leaders attempting humor must have high levels of emotional intelligence and a natural or learned affinity for humor. Contrived or fake attempts at humor will likely detract from the messaging, undermine the legitimacy of the deliverer, and generate mistrust.<sup>13</sup> Zelensky has been a comedian much longer than a politician, so even though his domestic and international information campaigns are usually grim, sincere, and serious, he can naturally revert to humor when opportunities arise.<sup>14</sup> Although an advantageous trait, military leaders do not need to be comedians. However, they need to recognize the value of having a collective and individual sense of humor because comedy does not just operate in a linear or hierarchic fashion and is an inevitable component of workplace relations.<sup>15</sup>

The many forms of Army-deprecating humor that operate beyond the boundaries of traditional military structures are important expressions or artifacts of culture. Doctrine Man, Army WTF Moments, Duffelblog, Sad Officer Memes, Miltwitter, and the Angry Staff Officer are modern examples of ironic, satirical, and negative humor that reflect parts of Army culture rarely discussed formally.<sup>16</sup> Although social

media has made creating and disseminating jokes easier, military-related satire has always been present in the United States. Fictional examples like the cartoon *Willie and Joe*, the movie and spin-off television series *M\*A\*S\*H*, and the movie *Stripes*, funny anecdotes from military memoirs, and cartoons from military magazines and newsletters demonstrate the power of comedy in breaking open taboos, building rapport, and creating a shared sense of understanding.<sup>17</sup> As will be discussed in later sections of this article, satirical humor is primarily used as a means of voicing dissatisfaction and relieving stress; however, it also serves as a relatable and socially acceptable communicative tool to nonmilitary personnel.

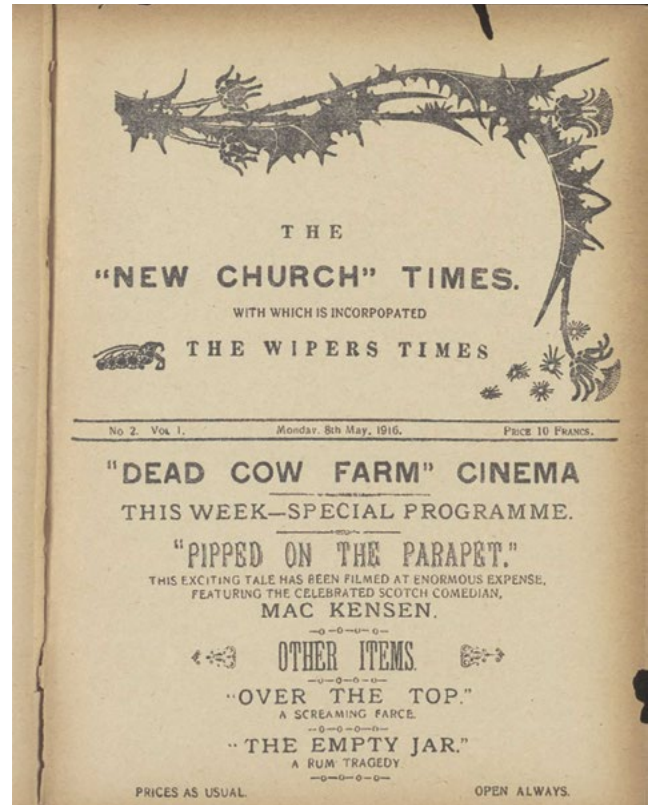
Bridging the military-civilian divide, particularly during conflict or crisis—when the realities of war can feel far removed from the everyday existence of friends, family, and the general population at home—can be very difficult. The Army strives to demonstrate unwavering professionalism, discipline, and responsibility, but in so doing, it can create a robotic reflection that is disassociated from the civilians they serve.<sup>18</sup> Comedic outlets are an avenue for communicating the human side of military life. They are a nonendorsed way of showing imperfection, relatability, and most importantly, humanity.<sup>19</sup> As Angry Staff Officer suggested, “The more that we can do to show that we are their Army, the better.”<sup>20</sup>

Although useful in messaging to nonmilitary audiences, the primary motivation for these comedic outlets is to voice dissatisfaction with leadership, the military bureaucracy, or the political masters that control it. Individuals or groups may voice dissent through humor because it is often a more culturally and socially acceptable way to motivate change in situations where they might not otherwise have agency due to existing power structures and hierarchies.<sup>21</sup> Comedy transcends rank and position and provides an avenue to challenge policy, decision-making, and resource apportionment without threatening the chain of command.<sup>22</sup>

When leaders use deprecating humor toward subordinates without establishing a very close bond, they are unlikely to get a good reaction.<sup>23</sup> However, when a subordinate uses ironic humor toward superiors or the Army, it can incite positive change. This only works, however, if those superiors and authorities retain their sense of humor and see the joke or story in the way it was intended—as a form of constructive criticism.<sup>24</sup> The following anecdote comes from the author's personal experience and describes how a well-timed joke from a soldier can work to diffuse tension, deliver feedback, and motivate change.

It was late. After patrolling half lost in the tropical heat all day, the platoon finally wandered into the support area and made their way to the mess tent. Hoping for a fresh meal, they quickly realized that the cooks had finished for the night and were deep into clean-up duties. You could feel the mood sink and the soldiers walked dejectedly outside looking for a place to sit down and open yet another MRE. The platoon jester cleared his throat, and in his finest mock general officer's voice exclaimed, "Don't worry men! We have so much morale right now, that we can just eat that for dinner instead." Laughter and smiles replaced the silent disappointment that had filled the air only seconds before and the young platoon commander breathed a sigh of relief. He made a quiet promise to himself to work extra hard on navigation that night.

There is no doubt that the primary target of the joke was the platoon leader, and the message delivered by the soldier was ironic but clear. Morale was low because the team had missed out on fresh food, and



The *Wipers Times* cover from 8 May 1916. The magazine was produced by British soldiers during World War I to help maintain morale. (Image courtesy of Westflandrica Heritage Library, Kortrijk, Belgium via Wikimedia Commons)

the cause of this condition was the leader's poor navigation skills. However, the delivery was witty, tactful, and funny, and the deliverer was known to the audience as a natural joker. An angry or direct attack on the platoon leader or even a quiet word from one of the senior NCOs may have invoked the desired change of behavior; however, it would also have represented a challenge to perceived notions of hierarchy and elicited a very different physiological response. The informal, timely, and effective quip was a relatable expression of collective thought and an assessment of the platoon leader's performance but delivered in a nonthreatening way.

This expression of collective thought is not only useful in motivating leaders to action, but it can also be a way of venting frustration in stressful situations. Humor has long been established as an effective coping mechanism for soldiers and civilians caught up in conflict and crisis.<sup>25</sup> *The Wipers Times* was a British World War I magazine produced by soldiers in the



Door gunner Petty Officer Richard Symonds of the Royal Navy wears a Santa Claus outfit as he delivers mail and Christmas presents to troops around Helmand Province, Afghanistan, on 25 December 2010. (Photo courtesy of the British Ministry of Defence)

Ypres Salient. The editorial in volume 3 from March 1916 states, “We hear that the war (to which we alluded guardedly in our first number), is proceeding satisfactorily, and we hope shortly to be able to announce that it is a going concern. So, for the time being, there we will leave it and turn to graver subjects.”<sup>26</sup> This type of ironic or dark humor, and the sharing of jokes and stories in dire situations where one might otherwise freeze or crumble, helps to maintain morale, willpower, and cohesion amongst fighting forces.<sup>27</sup>

Leaders, however, need to recognize when their subordinates are using humor as a tool for managing stress as it is often indicative of underlying sentiments or thoughts.<sup>28</sup> Deprecating humor directed at others can quickly shift from appropriate to inappropriate as the values and norms of the fighting force are stretched beyond accepted cultural standards due to escalations of violence and human suffering.<sup>29</sup> Words spoken in jest often lie somewhere between the desired truth and reality and can signal shifts in morality, faith, and

self-belief.<sup>30</sup> This is not to say that leaders should completely restrict the use of dark humor by their subordinates but rather pay more attention to whom they are targeting their jokes, monitor the impacts they are having on the team, and find time to reinforce moral and ethical standards when appropriate.

We can reconsider the Zelensky joke from the opening paragraph as both a stress-coping mechanism and a means of voicing dissatisfaction toward NATO. Although the subject of his joke is primarily Russia, there is a hint of deprecation toward his powerful Western-based allies. Zelensky makes his humorous yet poignant criticism in such a way that his message is clear and culturally acceptable given Ukraine’s position within the global hierarchy. His joke is appropriate and relatable, and he delivers it at a time and to both an internal and external audience who is ready to receive it. Although not all leaders have the requisite emotional intelligence to use comedy as part of their repertoire, they should understand its value as a tool

for interpersonal communication, study its history as an outlet for expressing dissatisfaction, recognize its positive and negative attributes, and acknowledge its importance as a coping strategy. Humor is a fundamental component of combat culture in conflict and

crisis. As Zelensky said in his interview, “Because these days there aren’t as many opportunities in our lives for a smile but you can’t live without a smile. Humor is a part of one’s being ... it’s very important, as it helps one not to lose their mind.”<sup>31</sup> ■

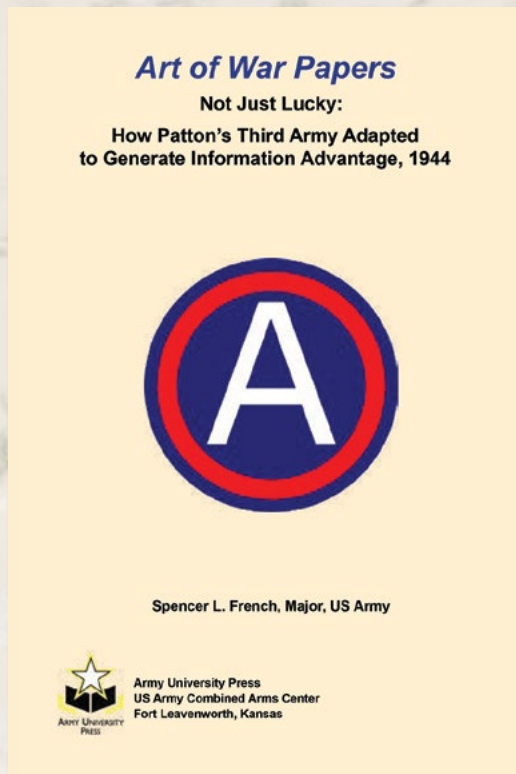
## Notes

1. Volodymyr Zelensky, interview by David Letterman, *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction with David Letterman*, episode 25, Netflix, 12 December 2022, accessed 13 June 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liooTXAF5Xo>.
2. Filipe Sobral, Liliane Furtado, and Gazi Islam, “Humor as Catalyst and Neutralizer of Leadership Effectiveness,” *Revista de Administração de Empresas* 59, no. 5 (2019): 315, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-759020190502>.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Robert P. Vecchio, Joseph E. Justin, and Craig L. Pearce, “The Influence of Leader Humor on Relationships between Leader Behavior and Follower Outcomes,” *Journal of Managerial Issues* 21, no. 2 (2009): 171–94, accessed 14 June 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40604642>.
6. Paul Lewis, *Cracking Up: American Humor in a Time of Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1–23.
7. See the following for a summary of the literature on the subject. Gordon P. Brooks, “Humor in Leadership: State of the Art in Theory and Practice” (paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Education Research Association, Chicago, IL, October 1992), accessed 28 March 2023, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED417113.pdf>.
8. Richard Godfrey, “Soldiering On: Exploring the Role of Humour as a Disciplinary Technology in the Military,” *Organization* 23, no. 2 (2016): 168, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508414533164>.
9. Eric E. Zimmerman, “Seriously, Let’s Inject Humor into Leadership,” *Army Magazine* 66, no. 8 (August 2016): 22.
10. Army Techniques Publication 7-22, *Army Team Building* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2022), 9-4-9-8.
11. Sobral, Furtado, and Islam, “Humour as Catalyst,” 313–22; Vecchio, Justin, and Pearce, “The Influence of Leader Humor,” 171–94; Bruce J. Avolio, Jane M. Howell, and John J. Sosik, “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Bottom Line: Humor as a Moderator of Leadership Style Effects,” *Academy of Management Journal* 42, no. 2 (1999): 219–27, <https://doi.org/10.5465/257094>; Barabara Wisse and Eric Rietzschel, “Humor in Leader-Follower Relationships: Humor Styles, Similarity and Relationship Quality,” *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 27, no. 2 (2014): 249–69, <https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2014-0017>.
12. Sobral, Furtado, and Islam, “Humour as Catalyst,” 322.
13. Charles Kibben, “Humor and Emotional Intelligence: A Correlational Study of Leadership” (PhD diss., University of Phoenix, 2012).
14. Jessica Pisano, “How Zelensky Has Changed Ukraine,” *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 3 (July 2022): 5–13, accessed 14 June 2023, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/how-zelensky-has-changed-ukraine/>.
15. Godfrey, “Soldiering On,” 168; Zimmerman, “Seriously, Let’s Inject Humor,” 21.
16. To explore some of these sites further, see Doctrine Man, <https://www.facebook.com/DoctrineMan/>; Army WTF Moments, <https://www.facebook.com/usawtfm/>; Duffel Blog, <https://www.duffelblog.com/>; and The Angry Staff Officer, <https://angrystaffofficer.com/>.
17. Zimmerman, “Seriously, Let’s Inject Humor,” 21.
18. Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
19. Angry Staff Officer, interview by David Weart and Zach Mierva, “Humor and Leadership: A Conversation with Angry Staff Officer,” 7 June 2019, in *The Leader’s Huddle*, podcast, 8:30, accessed 14 June 2023, <https://juniorofficer.army.mil/ep029-humor-and-leadership-a-conversation-with-angry-staff-officer>.
20. Ibid.
21. Godfrey, “Soldiering On,” 168, 173–75.
22. Ibid., 183, 185.
23. Sobral, Furtado, and Islam, “Humour as Catalyst,” 314–16, 322.
24. Godfrey, “Soldiering On,” 183, 185; Joshua M. Averbeck and Dale Hample, “Ironic Message Production: How and Why We Produce Ironic Messages,” *Communication Monographs* 75, no. 4 (2008): 396–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750802512389>.
25. Liz Willis, “Humour as a Strategy in War,” *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 18, no. 1 (2002): 81–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13623690208409610>; Jelena Gavrilovic et al., “Coping Strategies in Civilians During Air Attacks,” *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology: The International Journal for Research in Social and Genetic Epidemiology and Mental Health Services* 38, no. 3 (2003): 128–33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-003-0612-9>.
26. “The Wipers Times; No. 3, Vol 1, Monday 6 March 1916,” National Army Museum, accessed 23 March 2023, <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=2007-03-17-1>.
27. Godfrey, “Soldiering On,” 186.
28. Lewis, *Cracking Up*, 1–23.
29. Godfrey, “Soldiering On,” 189.
30. Sigmund Freud, *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. Abraham A Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), 762–803.
31. Zelensky, interview by Letterman, 20:30.

**Army University Press Books invites your attention to**

# ***Not Just Lucky: How Patton's Third Army Adapted to Generate Information Advantage, 1944***

An Art of War paper by Maj. Spencer L. French



This Art of War paper is based on a thesis by Maj. Spencer L. French that he wrote while attending the Command and General Staff College Staff Officer's Course from 2021 to 2022. The thesis was recognized with the Birrer-Brookes Award for outstanding Master of Military Arts and Sciences thesis for 2022.

In August 1944, Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army smashed through German defenses in Normandy and broke out in a rapid pursuit across France. Third Army's success was substantially due to its effectiveness at generating operational-level information advantage. Information advantage enabled Third Army to gain and maintain the initiative, anticipate decisions, and extend operational reach. Yet when Third Army activated in England in the spring of 1944, it possessed neither the information forces nor the staff processes to generate information advantage effectively. This study examines how Patton successfully embedded a unique military culture that encouraged rapid adaptation within Third Army's information forces. Specifically, it explores how Patton's visionary leadership created a sense of organizational urgency, reducing change resistance. It also analyzes how Patton's coalition established robust feedback loops and a culture of self-criticism and experimentation. Finally, it looks at how Patton leveraged diverse expertise

to develop devastatingly effective solutions to complex problems. Improvements in Third Army's ability to generate information advantage resulted not from any technological advance or material factor but from a military culture that encouraged adaptation.

*Not Just Lucky* can be found at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Research%20and%20Books/Book%20Series/Art%20of%20War/2023/AOW-French-Lucky.pdf>.

A condensed version of this paper covering key points of interest was published in the March-April 2022 edition of *Military Review*. It can be found at <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/March-April-2022/French/>.

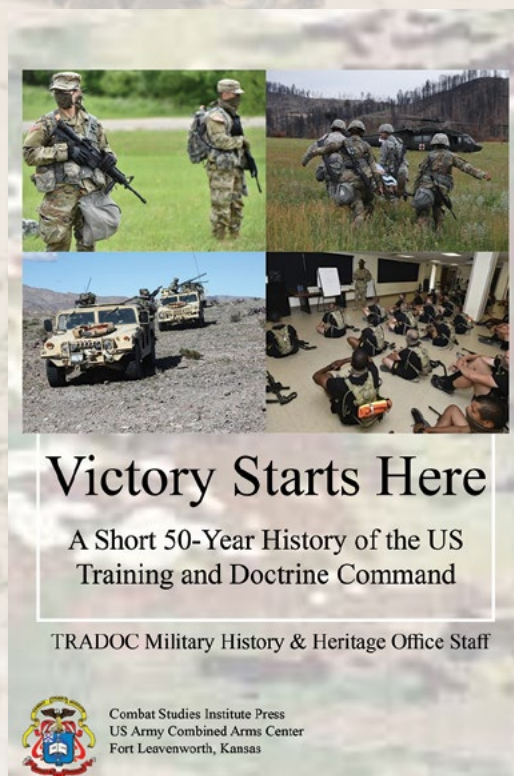


# Victory Starts Here: A Short 50-Year History of the US Training and Doctrine Command

From the TRADOC Military History and Heritage Office Staff

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) reached its fiftieth anniversary on 1 July 2023. On that date in 1973, the U.S. Army completed its Operation Steadfast reform effort with the simultaneous establishment of TRADOC and the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) from the former U.S. Army Continental Army Command and the U.S. Army Combat Developments Command. Every five years beginning with TRADOC's twentieth anniversary in 1993, the command's Military History and Heritage Office has published a short history of TRADOC. This fifty-year edition updates TRADOC's history through the COVID-19 experience, the emergence of multidomain operations, and other current topics.

Read *Victory Starts Here* at <https://www.armypress.army.mil/books/browse-books/units-and-organizations/#victory-starts-here>.



**Background:** An M1 Abrams tank from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas, fires a 120 mm round during a live-fire exercise in the United Arab Emirates, 23 January 2018. (Photo by Sgt. Thomas X. Crough, U.S. Army)



1st Lt. Chris Lind with the 197th Field Artillery Brigade (rear detachment) and 1st Sgt. Paul Emond, senior enlisted advisor with the 744th Forward Support Company, 3rd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery Regiment, work together 13 December 2022 to load donated bikes into a light medium tactical vehicle for Operation Santa Claus in Concord, New Hampshire. The annual holiday gift drive, hosted by the State Employees' Association, provides the opportunity to give to disadvantaged children in the Granite State. The program sponsored more than 3,200 children in 2022. (Photo by Sgt. Bei Simmons, 114th Public Affairs Detachment)

# Rear Detachment Operations through a Project Management Framework

Maj. Aaron F. Anderson, U.S. Army

Although they do not attract the same attention as their deployed counterparts, rear detachment (or rear-d) operations are critical to units during and after deployments. Currently, there is limited doctrine dedicated to the topic, leaving each rear element to re-create similar systems and processes. This includes the March 2023 release of Army Techniques Publication 3-35, *Army Deployment and Redeployment*, where the term “rear detachment” is mentioned once in the appendix for unit movement officer duties.<sup>1</sup> Much like the missions units deploy to support, the size and scope of rear detachments vary widely. Sometimes units deploy all available forces and leave a skeleton force, as could be expected during large-scale combat operations. However, there are other times, like during security force advise-and-assist team missions in Afghanistan over the past twenty years, where large percentages of units remained at home. What is constant is the requirement for a rear-d, and therefore, so is the need to understand how to approach this critical enabling mission effectively.

One industry that can provide a framework for rear-d operations is project management. The sixth edition of the Project Management Institute’s *Project Management Book of Knowledge* defines a project as “a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.”<sup>2</sup> Rear-d operations meet all these criteria. They are temporary and usually have a defined start and end date. Planners and leaders can approach the operations using the initiating, planning, executing, monitoring/controlling, and closing processes.<sup>3</sup> It also produces a unique service and result. Rear operations are unique as the command operates with a percentage of the overall force. The results produced are different than those of a typical training cycle. Regardless of the rear size, those running in charge are as busy as those deployed, wear many hats, and accomplish tasks usually given to larger formations. Further, the command accomplishes this while leading populations of soldiers that did not deploy for many reasons. While challenging, rear-d operations allow leaders at all echelons to step into challenging roles of higher responsibility to learn and grow. As a brigade executive officer and operations officer during my unit’s recent rotation to U.S. Central Command, the feeling was that my team and I were learning lessons most likely solved by rear-ds many times over.

This article aims to shed light on these lessons to help others in the future.

## Initiating

Initiating length depends on whether the deployment is an ordered or short-notice mission and may last several hours to several weeks. It is usually the quickest of the five processes identified above, with the most critical outputs being the minimal information requirements from Warning Order #1: who (naming of rear-d leadership), type of operation (what), and a planning timeline (when).<sup>4</sup> This process is initially challenging as it competes with deployment planning. As the unit gets wrapped into the newly assigned mission, the tendency is to accept risk planning for the rear-d. Naming the rear-d command allows the rear-d team to form a subordinate command and begin concurrent planning to feed the overall deployment military decision-making process. Naming a subordinate command team one echelon down as the rear-d command is a good practice if afforded the opportunity. Another option is to activate a deputy commanding officer if available. Setting a timeline for activating the rear-d drives a transition schedule and establishes clear command and control within the formation to free the forward team from garrison responsibilities.

## Planning

**People.** Choosing the rear-d team is a negotiation during the military decision-making process to ensure that the requirements of both the forward and rear missions meet the commander’s intent. Two important but not

**Maj. Aaron Anderson, U.S. Army**, is the executive officer for the 7th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) at Fort Drum, New York. He holds a BS from the U.S. Military Academy, MS degrees from the University of Michigan and the Missouri University of Science and Technology, and an MA from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. During his career, Anderson has served with U.S. Army Alaska, Joint Task Force-Bravo, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He is a licensed professional engineer in the state of Missouri and a certified project management professional.



Rear detachment commander 1st Lt. Jacob Bales, 552nd Military Police (MP) Company, 728th MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment Command, answers questions from a group of Advancement via Individual Determination students 18 February 2018 at Leilehua High School, Wahiawa, Hawaii, while the students write personal notes to place inside the care packages they planned to send to the soldiers of 552nd MP Company who were deployed in Guam. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Taresha Hill, U.S. Army)

exclusive considerations are whether the rear-d has the correct leader-to-led ratio and whether the unit has allocated the proper subject-matter experts and quantity of personnel to accomplish the commander's priorities. Failure to address either of the questions during the planning process may cause the commander to have to divert unplanned attention from the deployed mission back to the rear.

Ensuring a correct number of leaders in the rear serves several vital purposes. The most obvious is to lead and manage the portion of the unit's population that is nondeployable for reasons including legal issues, high-risk behavior, medical issues, and personnel departures due to changes of station or the end of Army service. These soldiers comprise the rear NCOs, officers, and judge advocate staff attempting to maintain pace with the number of packets, investigations, and boards. For example, five field grade officers each carried at least two open investigations and were primary members of separation boards during our recent deployment. Having

the rear-d complete personnel and property actions is a common and appropriate objective, but one must account for the time these actions take away from other tasks. The same holds for property book actions. Splitting property books means identifying another set of responsible leaders. While some units may bring their entire equipment table, plenty remains in the rear to account for and maintain. A unit that assigns property books to inexperienced or incapable soldiers does a disservice to the soldier at the risk of substantial liability and a disservice to the unit post-deployment when the commander resumes control of all items. Finally, commanders must consider that certain signature authorities are restricted by rank, even with the assumption of command orders. Are the right leaders back to sign actions, and who has the authority if not? Awards provide an example: only an O-5 (lieutenant colonel) can sign Army Achievement Medals and only an O-6 (colonel) can sign Army Commendation Medals.<sup>5</sup> Taking leaders away from the forward population comes with risk to the forward

**Table. Example Tasking Matrix Showing Tasks by Lines of Effort during Each of the Three Planning Horizons**

	Deployment	Rear-D Exclusive	Redeployment
<b>LOE 1: Command Discipline Programs (CDPs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lateral Transfers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excess Divestiture</li> <li>Lateral Transfers</li> <li>Organizational Inspection Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lateral Transfers</li> <li>Equipment Reset</li> </ul>
<b>LOE 2: Forward Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Casing Ceremony</li> <li>Railhead</li> <li>Port Detail</li> <li>Soldier Readiness Program (SRP)</li> <li>Flightline Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Late Deployers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flightline Support</li> <li>Welcome Home Ceremony</li> <li>Reverse Soldier Readiness Program (rSRP)</li> <li>Uncasing Ceremony</li> </ul>
<b>LOE 3: Unit Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predeployment Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual Ranges</li> <li>Team Live-Fire Exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Army Regulation 350-1 Training</li> </ul>
<b>LOE 4: Taskings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training Exercise Support</li> <li>Garrison Support</li> <li>Reoccurring Division Tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brigade-Level Field Training Exercise Support</li> <li>Community Relations Events</li> <li>Garrison Support</li> <li>Gate Guard</li> <li>Reoccurring Division Tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combat Training Center Support</li> <li>Reoccurring Division Tasks</li> <li>Garrison Support</li> </ul>

(Table by author)

mission, but the commander must weigh that risk to the rear mission and the long-term post-deployment health of the unit.

Ensuring proper size and composition is the second half of naming a properly manned rear-d team. Continuity is an essential aspect of any team. Leaving staff or unit leaders that are going to depart the unit mid-deployment is accepting risk. Our team learned this over nine months by employing five S-4s (logistics officers) at the brigade level, which led to continual challenges in tracking and executing routine tasks. Second, while it is easy to consider each staff section by its primary functions, it is equally easy to forget about additional duties such as unit safety, environmental control, sexual harassment and assault, equal opportunity, and barracks management. It takes leaders identified by their primary duty position and adds more to their plate. Finally, get creative. Some staff sections only have one or two people, so the rear-d may inevitably lose that capability

completely. Specific functions can become additional duties to maintain as a portion of a staff’s function. One example is naming unit public affairs representatives to assist the public affairs officer and continue to tell the rear-d story.

If there is a large amount of equipment but a lack of maintainers, units can look to contracted solutions to help sustainment functions keep pace. The Unit Maintained Equipment Program uses contractors to help units keep pace with services and fully mission-capable vehicles while providing valuable experience to nondeploying soldiers to learn their craft better, and contracted family readiness support assistants can help manage communications and support functions for families.<sup>6</sup> These contracted efforts require time to implement, so leaders must program in these requirements early.

**Operations.** The rear-d commander must sit with the unit commander to define realistic and defined goals early in the planning. Once defined, it benefits the

rear-d to establish expectations with the home station's higher headquarters. If the deployment is an ordered deployment and time allows, briefing these expectations at a quarterly training brief allows approval of the rear-d priorities with the higher headquarters commander in a public setting. It establishes the glide path for the rear-d and sets expectations for how many taskings the rear-d can absorb. Setting priorities and expectations is also critical to enabling mission command. The tyranny

commander and division headquarters. Therefore, our rear headquarters turned the brigade commander's priorities into four lines of effort that were tasked to a subordinate battalion or brigade staff section to lead to maximize resources. The table (on page 139) shows the planning time horizons and lines of effort (LOE), which are discussed in the next section, used during our deployment. Many of the items addressed in the matrix are typical across other rear formations.

“ The tyranny of distance and time finds a way to make it impossible for the forward commander to fully understand what is happening in the rear, no matter how advanced video teleconferences or computer technology becomes. ”

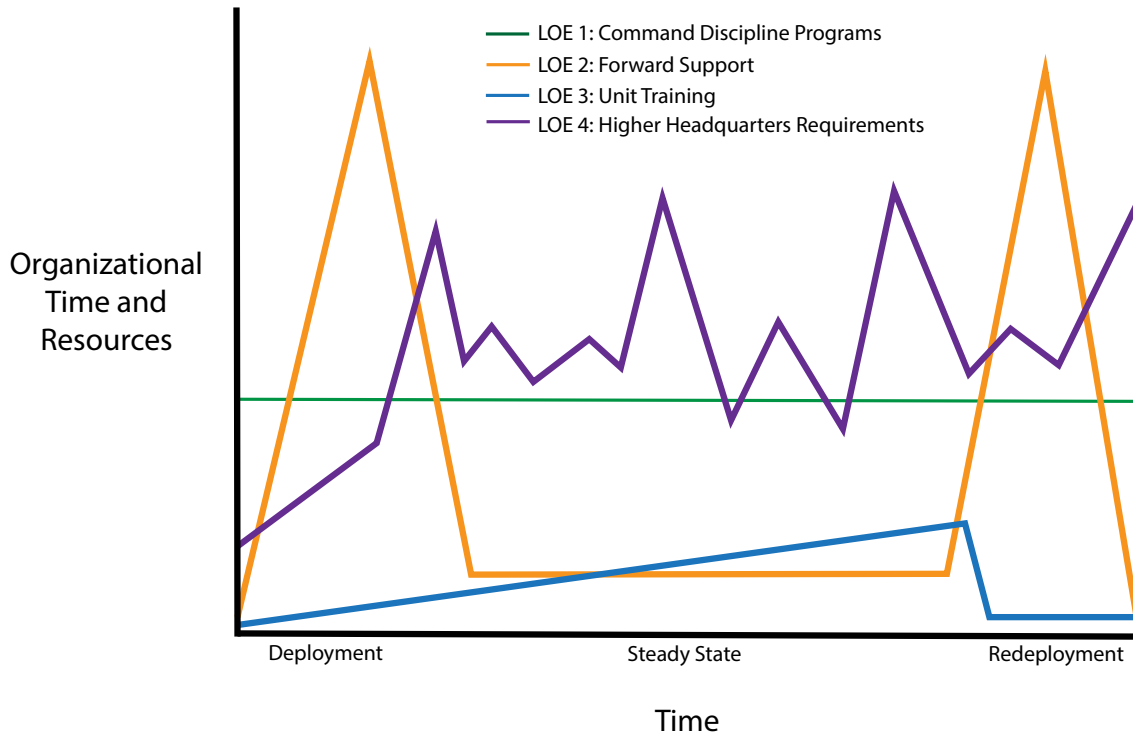
of distance and time finds a way to make it impossible for the forward commander to fully understand what is happening in the rear, no matter how advanced video teleconferences or computer technology becomes. Without refined guidance from the forward or rear-d commander, a simple mission statement or set of lines of effort can be enough for rear leaders to act on.

Finally, setting expectations and priorities allows the rear-d to task organize by effort. The reduced size of the rear-d formation and its leaders stresses what a rear-d can accomplish while maintaining a traditional line and wire diagram task organization. Our recent deployment took approximately 65 percent of the formation forward, but the ratio was not distributed equally amongst ranks or formations. Six of the seven battalion headquarters and the brigade headquarters and staff went forward. It left one battalion headquarters with a reduced brigade staff to manage approximately two thousand soldiers at the home station. Distributed operations forward meant each battalion was fortunate if they could split their majors and leave one back. I served as the sole field grade officer as the brigade executive officer and operations officer for most of the deployment. At the same time, the lone battalion commander and command sergeant major ran both the brigade rear-d and their battalion. We did not have the same capacity as prior to the deployment to run the tasks given to us by our brigade

## Executing

As discussed in the initiating process, execution can begin at a specified time, such as a color casing ceremony, or it may begin less officially as the deployment draws near when the preparation required of the forward team makes running garrison operations unsustainable. Most likely, though, rear-d operations begin in earnest with the deployment of the forward team; for as long as commanders are still on the ground, there is still the tendency to command their entire formation. The following subsections of this process are organized by the LOEs identified in the table. These LOEs adjust and adapt depending on the scope and size of the rear-d. However, to cover a wide swath of rear-d operations, they provide a variety of mission sets while also allowing for further discussion on select examples.

**LOE 1: Command discipline programs.** LOE 1 efforts are areas where units can make forward progress and put the unit on a firmer foundation upon redeployment. This effort includes but is not limited to programs related to supply, maintenance (Command Maintenance Discipline Program, or CMDP), and deployment. It also includes additional related items, such as the reduction of excess equipment, lateral transfers, and the organizational inspection program. LOE 1 is an area where the rear-d can leverage subject-matter experts within subordinate formations to lead a more significant effort. CMDP efforts can leverage the rear elements of a forward support company or brigade support battalion. At the same time,



(Figure by author)

**Figure. Rear-Detachment Lifecycle to LOE Considerations**

lateral transfers and reduction of equipment can allow an S-4, property book officer, or even a company executive officer to take the lead. The greatest challenge in executing these programs is the knowledge gap created by having new and junior leaders take over as property book holders. The benefit of this LOE is the ability to use the entire rear-d population. Physical profiles preventing the wear of gear or departing soldiers with numerous appointments can still contribute to this LOE daily. This effort is ongoing throughout the deployment but will most likely see the most significant gains in the middle of the deployment when not supporting deployment or redeployment efforts.

**LOE 2: Support to the forward element.** At the beginning of the rear-d lifecycle, the team is busy putting the unit through the Soldier Readiness Program (SRP), running the unit during pre-deployment leave, and eventually enabling the departure of personnel and equipment (see figure). It is a complete team effort by the rear-d staff and subordinate units. It can last from several days to several months, depending on the size of the unit and deployment notification timeline. Once the forward team has departed, the effort wanes and shifts to preparing late deployers and accepting individuals that return early from the theater. It

is a much smaller operation that an S-4 shop can most likely manage, as it primarily consists of arranging transportation. The S-1 (personnel officer) and medical officer in charge also manage a smaller, continuous SRP. Eventually, like deployment operations, the redeployment becomes a total team effort. In this case, initial welcoming home tasks, reverse SRP, associated redeployment training, acceptance of initial equipment, and an uncasing ceremony supersede other LOEs. Like deployment, the redeployment phase can take several weeks to months of planning and execution.

**LOE 3: Unit training.** Training may range from maintaining proficiency in basic soldier skills to beginning another progression of team or squad proficiency. Either way, training serves three critical functions. First, it keeps soldiers professionally engaged and reduces off-duty incidents. Second, individual and small-unit training builds a strong foundation for the forward team to fall back on. Soldiers that arrive late to the unit and miss the deployment are the soldiers that have the most longevity in the formation. The unit relies on these soldiers during the next training cycle as many of the deployed population depart. Third, a portion of junior leaders left on rear-d, many who wanted to deploy but did not get the chance, need repetitions in

the eight-step training model to plan, resource, and execute training. The unit cannot afford to lose the development of junior NCOs and officers in the chaos of competing requirements and taskings at home.

**LOE 4: Support to higher headquarters requirements.** LOE 4 is the most public display of maintaining the unit's reputation and can be a significant source of friction. The unit is no longer in the training phase and has deployed forward to accomplish its assigned mission. Those remaining at home station are no longer conducting large-scale collective training, and higher headquarters and garrison likely expect them to support taskings. However, the formation is small, and the unit commander has provided their own priorities while away. Ultimately, these two competing requirements compete, and leaders need to balance the requirements. As a data point, our deployment taskings amounted to approximately 1,811 individual soldiers contributing 223,000 man-hours over nine months.

**Considerations.** There are several additional characteristics of the rear-d worth discussing as they are common across time and units. The first is that the rear-d is underresourced. How much depends on the unit and forward mission, but we found that on any given day, our rear-d had roughly one thousand people available for tasks. This amounted to approximately 50 percent of the overall rear-d and just 22 percent of a light infantry brigade combat team's overall strength. Additionally, the analysis does not account for the aforementioned loss of leaders to investigations, separation boards, and property actions. Finally, the reality is that the tasks received from a higher headquarters typically require the same quality people (NCOs, no profile, not flagged for adverse action, longevity in the unit) that are the rear-d's most precious resource.

Several techniques can assist in creating a shared understanding amongst all organizations. As discussed earlier, the first is briefing the rear composition and LOEs during the unit quarterly training brief leading up to the deployment. The second is maintaining a troop-to-task list, especially for key populations. Analysis of previous taskings can identify those ranks and military occupation specialties most likely to get pulled, and maintaining these shorter troops to tasks can pay significant dividends. We found medical personnel, E-7s (sergeants first class), and food service soldiers were in high demand. Finally, it is vital to work with the higher headquarters to understand their intent. Higher often assigns taskings for a specific rank or job title, but the rear-d can meet the intent task in alternate

ways. While conducting support for another unit's training exercise, does the mission require thirty soldiers, or is the intent to create the effects of a platoon? One or two squads with additional crew-served weapons or vehicles may meet all the training objectives and offer the same training value.

Finally, many deployments last six months or longer, enough time for conditions at the home station to change. As leaders rotate, new personalities change the atmosphere, battle rhythm, and expectations. Additionally, some forward leaders have been in the formation for some time and believe they understand how to conduct operations in the rear. They may express frustration when things are not going according to their home station paradigm. While the rear-d must keep the forward element aware of these changes, it is also impossible to fully understand or appreciate the home station without being physically present. The bottom line is that it is hard to fully comprehend its complexity unless you have served on the rear-d. It is also impossible for the rear-d to understand the deployed environment without being there. No explanation, least of all this article, can fix that.

## Monitoring and Controlling

Today's technology allows communication between forward and rears in ways unimaginable to previous generations. Phone, email, and video teleconferences over unclassified (Non-Secure Internet Protocol Router, or NIPR) and classified (Secure Internet Protocol Router, or SIPR) networks facilitate the flow of information at all hours of the day. There must be a balance that weighs the commander having knowledge of operations at home against making them the rear-d commander. One method for achieving this is establishing and adhering to a battle rhythm. Mission and commander personalities determine the correct frequency and communication medium, but forward and rear leaders can consider the following techniques and lessons learned. First, just because the forward operates more on SIPR than NIPR does mean that the rear has the same capability. There are situations when the medium needs to be SIPR, but if the brief entails rear data and/or was a NIPR product before deployment, chances are it is still NIPR. Making briefings difficult or impossible to access frustrates commanders when subordinates cannot answer questions.

Second, leaders must be mindful of the time difference between the rear and forward. For the rear-d, this may mean regularly scheduled meetings occur during





A member of the rear detachment of 3rd Battalion, 2nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade, ties down a vehicle during strategic air load operations 11 May 2020 in Lawton, Oklahoma. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Hunt, U.S. Army)

traditional physical training hours or outside the normal duty day. The rear must also be aware that prime times for meetings and engagements at home station are most likely off hours for the forward. We found two or three scheduled video teleconference engagements a week were sufficient to ensure shared understanding. One typically was for leader-to-leader synchronization, while the other was a forward-to-rear unit battle rhythm event, such as a wellness meeting, command and staff, or leader professional development engagement. As expected, off-cycle events to address timely information also occur, so limiting scheduled engagements to two to three per week allows for these extra engagements without overburdening either side. Remember, while the goal is to keep the command informed, it is also important to relieve the commander from having to control operations at both locations.

## Closing

Closing activities begin with the planning and execution of redeployment operations. These are like deployment operations but in reverse order. The first activity will most likely be the reception and welcoming home

of personnel. Communication with the forward team, higher headquarters, garrison support agencies, and family readiness groups is critical to making this first impression successful. Following the initial welcome home, the next redeployment task rear-d may get tagged with is to plan and execute the reverse SRP process. If possible, regenerate a scaled-down version of the SRP plan used for deployment and include the appropriate garrison agencies into the plan early and often. Finally, the rear-d may be responsible for initial property returning, especially if the property comes back direct from the deployed location by military aircraft. If the equipment comes back on a slower contracted ship, there is a good chance the unit may not receive it until after redeployment leave. Like the deployment phase, the redeployment phase may end with a defined event or may naturally transition back to the complete formation. If the former, it may look like an uncasing the colors ceremony, another task for the rear to plan and execute.

Regardless of the scope or scale of the operation, the rear-d needs to remain flexible and humble throughout the process. We experienced shifting redeployment flights, frustrated redeploying soldiers, and an eager forward

team ready to come back and immediately take control following the deployment. The first item, shifting flights, is beyond the control of a rear-d and creates stress for the deployed soldiers, their families waiting for them, and the rear-d support soldiers who sit around waiting for planes or buses to support. All one can do in this situation is communicate to all parties and remain humble as frustrated soldiers eventually make it home. In most cases, soldiers immediately forget their frustrations as soon as they reunite with their families. The second item is usually another frustration appearing in the heat of the moment. Soldiers are aware that redeployment tasks are the only tasks preventing them from going home, reuniting with their loved ones, or taking leave. Any time not actively engaged begins to create discontent and the belief that the system is inefficient or broken. The final item is the desire of the forward team to come back and immediately put their processes and thoughts into action. Again, remain humble and offer your best advice. Much like the rear-d had to figure out the relationships and systems at the home station, the forward team also navigates these waters—the only responsibility of the rear-d is to make the transition smoother and offer advice. Bring the forward counterparts to all the battle rhythm meetings, explain each report or slide, and provide context where necessary, but do not get frustrated when things change.

When closing out rear-d operations, it is easy to become overwhelmed with redeployment and lose track of good people and their accomplishments as they transition into new roles. Many subordinates will pleasantly surprise leaders with their time, effort, and accomplishments. Some of these people, like the deployers, depart the formation shortly after the deployment for other positions. Others remain in their current positions and revert to the chain of command they experienced before deployment. Either

way, they were a part of the rear team during the deployment and deserve proper recognition. Write proper evaluations or letters of continuity, and even though there is no end-of-tour award for rear-d, it doesn't mean leaders cannot recognize individual achievements. Identify excellence by writing impact awards, publicly acknowledge soldiers, and point out the "all-stars" in the formation. Finally, ensure the rear-d personnel get a chance to take leave. Supporting the deployed team can mean putting personal plans on hold for the greater good. It is a disservice to the larger organization if rear-d talent burns out before they can begin the next training cycle. They are the foundation for the next mission.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Properly planned, resourced, and executed rear operations can be a tremendous learning opportunity. Unfortunately, even after years of deployments and rotations, the doctrine on rear detachment operations is limited. Army Techniques Publication 3-91, *Division Operations*, dedicates twelve paragraphs to the topic at the division echelon, leaving detailed planning at lower echelons to the experience of previous leaders and dusty continuity books.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it is time to further study and consider rear detachment in doctrine, as regardless of what the next war looks like, there will be requirements for families, soldiers, equipment, and facilities at home station. Rear detachment operations could be part of a more extensive doctrine on the rear area. Given the reach of information and cyber operations, the home station is closer than ever to the front. Hopefully, this article can provide a primer and highlight several characteristics common to many rear detachments, provide examples from experience, and offer several lessons to drive further conversation on this critical and consistent topic. ■

---

## Notes

1. Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-35, *Army Deployment and Redeployment* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2023), D-2.

2. Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide)*, 6th ed. (Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute, 2017), 715.

3. *Ibid.*, 554.

4. Field Manual 5-0, *Planning and Orders Production* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2022), 5-8.

5. Army Regulation 600-8-22, *Military Awards* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019), 3-6.

6. Sarah Bailey, "'Maintenance' Program Successful," Army. mil, 8 July 2013, accessed 8 June 2023, [https://www.army.mil/article/106999/maintenance\\_program\\_successful](https://www.army.mil/article/106999/maintenance_program_successful).

7. ATP 3-91, *Division Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2014), 4-9.



During an early morning patrol on 13 August 2009, a soldier scans the hills surrounding the volatile Korengal Valley in Afghanistan's Kunar Province. (Photo by Sgt. Matthew Moeller, 5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

# Walking Point

Maj. Joseph T. Costello, U.S. Army Reserve

Head on a swivel, scouting the trail,  
Each foot is carefully placed.  
Looking ahead, then looking down,  
For an enemy that cannot be faced.  
He takes his last step, the trigger unseen,  
Chaos tears through our minds.  
He took the hit and we owe him our lives,  
Those of us who walked behind.

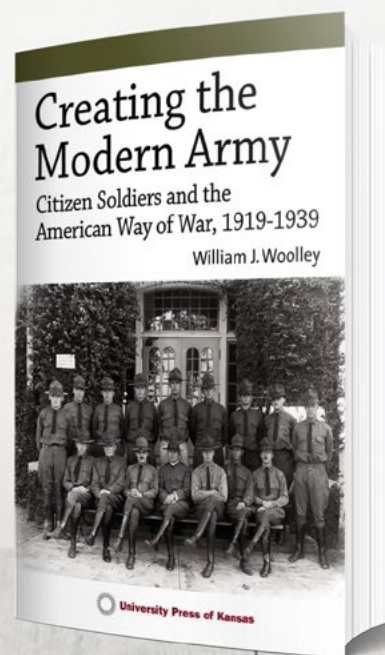
## In Memory of Sgt. Justin Officer

---

**Maj. Joseph T. Costello** is chief of operations for the 627th Hospital Center at Fort Carson, Colorado. This poem was written during deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom after a dismounted IED blast killed Sgt. Justin Officer, a cavalry scout, as they walked back to the command post from an Afghan village.

# Creating the Modern Army

## Citizen-Soldiers and the American Way of War, 1919–1939



William J. Woolley, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 2022, 384 pages

Col. Dean A. Nowowiejski, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired

**I**n his book *Creating the Modern Army: Citizen-Soldiers and the American Way of War, 1919–1939*, William J. Woolley has captivantly explained

**Col. Dean A. Nowowiejski, PhD, U.S. Army**, retired, serves as the director of the Art of War Scholars Program at the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. His book *The American Army in Germany, 1918–1923: Success against the Odds* (2021) analyzes the creation and life of the U.S. Army in Germany after World War I.

the most important legislative act no one has ever heard about, the National Defense Act of 1920. Woolley is professor emeritus of Ripon College, and this book was developed from decades of teaching a seminar on American military institutions there. Woolley shows the academic thoroughness you would expect of an emeritus professor. He is accomplished in both

research and writing, and readers will find this history compelling. What Woolley does is explain the deep origins of the modern U.S. Army.

Serving Army officers will easily recognize the citizen-army institutions created by the National Defense Act of 1920. This act, envisioned by John McCauley Palmer after World War I, created an organized Army Reserve, National Guard, Citizens' Military Training Camps, and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. The decision to enshrine the citizen-army concept in the National Defense Act decided a debate on the enduring character of the American Army that had raged since before World War I. That debate pitted the preparedness advocates who wanted a large citizen Army against those who advocated for an expandable Army built from a core of professional soldiers. In the Active Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard, the three components of the citizen army created in 1920 endure today. Woolley explains how they evolved during the period between world wars and assesses some of their

impact on U.S. performance in World War II. How these entities survived the interwar period is a story of the interaction among the Regular Army, the president, and Congress. Woolley deftly weaves the influence of each into his narrative explanation of interwar trends.

The United States emerged from World War I having successfully expanded the Army to include four million men, based on a wartime draft. There is no doubt that this Army, by sending two million men to

explanation on the four major branches of the interwar Army: infantry, cavalry, field artillery, and coast artillery. Third, he explains how the Army built a progressive system of professional military education. Last, he describes the process of mechanization in the Army, contrasting the infantry and the cavalry.

In the interplay among the American public, Congress, and the president on the issue of a citizen army, there were some surprises. One was the popular-

“ For most of the decade of the 1920s, the presence of many World War I veterans in the American population helped to keep the National Guard and Army Reserve afloat, but as those veterans aged out of the force, this presented new challenges to keeping all of the parts of the citizen army alive. ”

France, contributed decisively to the outcome of the war, but the United States had depended on its allies to provide machine guns, airplanes, and tanks. What would prevent this lack of readiness from happening again, especially as the Army shrank back to prewar size? The answer was in the Army institutions offered by the National Defense Act of 1920. The challenge was to maintain the effective readiness of this citizen army in a time of prosperity, waning budgets, isolationism, and disarmament. For most of the decade of the 1920s, the presence of many World War I veterans in the American population helped to keep the National Guard and Army Reserve afloat, but as those veterans aged out of the force, this presented new challenges to keeping all of the parts of the citizen army alive. The Army in the 1930s had to overcome the significant challenges of budget austerity to officer readiness, force size, modernization, and mechanization. It just barely did so, principally because of changes begun at the end of the decade.

Woolley ably traces four trends during the interwar period that shaped the Army as it still exists today. First was the creation of the three components of the Army: the Active Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard. Second, the organization of a system of professional military branches. Woolley concentrates his

ity of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, even in a time of budget austerity and isolationism. This was due in large part to effective partnership with civilian academics on the part of Army leaders. Another was how important the National Guard was to maintain any semblance of readiness in the interwar period. A third was the lost world of the Citizens' Military Training Camps and the Civilian Conservation Corps. These institutions were a critical training ground for the interwar officers corps. In the end, the Army was better prepared for World War II than it would have been without the National Defense Act of 1920 because of the existence of these institutions. They maintained the citizen army that eventually won the war.

This book is essential reading for Army professionals and educators for several reasons. First, it is a must read for military professionals to understand the origins of the Army today, components, branches, education system, and mechanization. Second, this book is an effective historical primer on the important relationships of senior Army leaders with Congress and the administration. Third, it is thorough, well-written, and effective history based on significant primary sources and a lifetime of expertise in the area. *Creating the Modern Army* is essential institutional history for the twenty-first-century professional soldier. ■

# Military Review

## BOOK REVIEW PROGRAM

The *Military Review* book review program allows reviewers to read books of interest to military professionals—often before book publication—and then present their thoughts on the Army University Press website. The reviewer then retains the book. Read our latest book reviews at <http://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/MR-Book-Reviews/>.

Books for review are available only through the *Military Review* book review editor. If you are interested in becoming a reviewer, see our Book Review Submission Guide at <http://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/MR-Book-Review-Submission-Guide/>.



# Medal of Honor

## Master Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee



On 16 December 2021, President Joseph Biden presented the Medal of Honor to Master Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee of Clinton, Oklahoma, for his gallant actions on 28 August 2013 while serving as a weapons sergeant assigned to Charlie Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Forward Operating Base Ghazni in Afghanistan.

On that day, Afghan insurgents suddenly attacked the complex, and a massive explosion opened a sixty-foot breach in the base's perimeter wall. Ten insurgents wearing Afghan National Army uniforms and suicide vests poured through the hole in the wall.

Intent on defending the base, Plumlee and five other special operations soldiers mounted two vehicles and headed toward the detonation site. Plumlee's driver deliberately maneuvered the vehicle into enemy fire to shield three other soldiers, two of whom were injured. This decision placed the vehicle under enemy fire from the front and right side. With a disregard for his own safety, Plumlee used his body to shield the driver from enemy fire before he drew his weapon and advanced toward the enemy force, engaging with multiple insurgents before killing two of them.

Plumlee found cover but left the safety of it and advanced alone toward enemy forces. He was wounded by a detonating suicide vest but continued to engage the enemy. Moving from cover to counterattack the infiltrators, Plumlee ran to assist a wounded staff sergeant, carry him to safety, and render first aid, though the soldier died later. Afterward, he methodically cleared the area, remained in a security posture, and continued to scan for any incoming threats.

Biden said that Plumlee earned the award "for conspicuous gallantry at the risk of his life and above and beyond the call of duty. [Then] Staff Sergeant Earl D. Plumlee distinguished himself by acts of gallantry above and beyond the call of duty on 28 August 2013, while serving as a weapons sergeant, C Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) in support of Enduring Freedom." After returning from Afghanistan, Plumlee completed nine months of physical rehabilitation, while



Medal of Honor recipient U.S. Army Master Sgt. Earl D. Plumlee (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

continuing to serve in the 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne).

To learn more about Plumlee's award, visit <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/plumlee/>. ■



Then Staff Sgt. Earl Plumlee poses for a photo during predeployment training circa 2013 in Yakima, Washington. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)