America's Military - A Profession of Arms

White Paper

"We must ***renew our commitment to the Profession of Arms***. We're not a profession simply because we say we're a profession. We must continue to learn, to understand, and to promote the knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that define us as a profession."

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We have come a long way since the Goldwater-Nichols Act became law more than 25 years ago, we can go further. We will.

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The CJCS leads our Profession of Arms. He is the steward of our military profession, and with the Joint Chiefs is the keeper of our values, ethics, and standards. He integrates the collective strengths and unique cultures of each Service into a Joint Team during both peace and war, promoting Jointness. Professionalism and Jointness are perishable, they must be cultivated.

Introduction: Why we must renew our commitment to the Profession of Arms

Following September 11, 2001, America's All-Volunteer Force embarked on campaigns extending well beyond any limits imagined as the era of persistent conflict unfolded, its resilience arguably exceeded expectations of its architects. As we reflect on a decade of war, America's Service men and women fought as a Joint Force *selflessly serving* our Nation, answering the call to duty repeatedly, continuously adapting. The sacred element of *trust* enabled them to persevere.

With the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in transition, we must prepare for a different future as we shape *Joint Force 2020* in an environment of increasing fiscal pressure. **Renewing our commitment to the Profession of Arms is essential to ensure we maintain the best led and best trained force in the world - *Leadership* is the foundation of our profession.** This is essential to ensure we remain the finest military in the world.

As learning institutions, it is imperative that we reflect on our experiences during the past 10 years to assess the impact and understand both our strengths and weaknesses. This is necessary to ***see ourselves*** so we can determine how we should adapt and institutionalize the lessons of the last decade. This will enable us to promote the knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that define us as a profession, and develop our future leaders.

We undertake this as we remain both a force in contact and a force that must begin to reshape. We do so from a position of strength anchored in our shared values and joint effectiveness born from years of fighting together, and the strength of our Service competencies and cultures. As we go forward, we must continue to uphold the values that underpin our profession to maintain and enhance the *trust* of those we serve, our civilian leaders in government, and the American people.

Values. The Profession of Arms demands its members live by the values described in the "City on the Hill" metaphor. We must provide an example to the world that cannot be diminished by hardships and challenges. This example is based upon the words and intent of the US Constitution that each of us takes a personal oath to support and defend. Our oath demands each of us display moral courage and always do what is right, regardless of the cost. We are all volunteers in our willingness to serve and to place others' needs above our own. As shared values, our calling cards are Duty, Honor, Courage, Integrity, and Selfless Service. Commitment to the rule of law is integral to our values which provide the moral and ethical fabric of our profession.

The Military Profession. The seriousness of our profession was most vividly explained by General Douglas MacArthur in his farewell speech to West Point Cadets in May of 1962 when he said "Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is

no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country." Our profession is a calling requiring unique expertise to fulfill our collective responsibility to the American people, "provide for the common defense and secure the blessings of liberty." Our profession is distinguished from others in society because of our expertise in the justified application of lethal military force and the willingness of those who serve to die for our Nation. **Our profession is defined by our values, ethics, standards, code of conduct, skills, and attributes.** As volunteers, our sworn duty is to the Constitution. Our status as a profession is granted by those whom we are accountable to, our civilian authority, and the American people.

All service men and women belong to the profession from the junior enlisted to our most senior leaders. We are all accountable for meeting ethical and performance standards in our actions and similarly, accountable for our failure to take action, when appropriate. The distinction between ranks lies in our level of responsibility and degree of accountability. We share the common attributes of character, courage, competence, and commitment. We qualify as professionals through intensive training, education, and practical experience. As professionals, we are defined by our strength of character, life-long commitment to core values, and maintaining our professional abilities through continuous improvement, individually and institutionally.

Trust – both internal and external. As the Joint Force fought together for last 10 years under difficult conditions, *trust* stands out as the defining element that enabled our military to overcome adversity and endure the demands of extended combat. *Trust* is earned not given, through deeds not words. It extends laterally and vertically, both ways. *Trust* is inherent in the strength of our collective character.

Internal trust is integral to the chain of command. It is both inherent in and demanded amongst peers, between seniors and subordinates. Followers trust that their leaders will take care of their charges even at their own expense. Leaders set the example and foster a relationship with their subordinates as teacher to scholar. Military leadership should, as President John Adams counseled, "inspire others to dream more, learn more and achieve more." And in the heat of battle our troops *trust* one another to each do their duty; they *trust* their leaders and chain of command to ensure they get the support they need; they *trust* their families will be cared for; that a fallen comrade will never be left behind.

External trust is the bond with which we connect with those we serve, our leaders in government and the American people. It must be continually earned. Special trust and confidence is placed in military leaders. This trust is based upon the fact that the members of our profession remain apolitical and would never betray the principles and intent of the Constitution, even at the risk of their own lives. Our men and women, who serve, return to society better for their service.

Leadership as the Foundation – Strengthening our Profession of Arms. If we provide the leadership that our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen deserve, they will execute beyond imagination. Hence, the foundation and driving force of the Profession of Arms are its leaders. They provide an incalculable competitive advantage against our adversaries. They are the builders and maintainers of trust; they inspire others to achieve what they thought was beyond reach; they teach and mentor their subordinates to develop experts; and

they uphold and enforce our ethical and moral standards regardless of the situation. They understand the cost of leadership places mission and welfare of others above self. It is they who instill the ethos that we will never leave a fallen comrade nor betray the public trust. Today we have the finest officers and non-commissioned officers on the planet. Investing in their development is essential to strengthening and cultivating our profession.

Mission Command. The increasing complexity and uncertainty anticipated in the future environment demand that *Joint Force 2020* employ mission command to unleash its full potential in a way that harnesses the initiative and innovation of all members of the team. Commanders exercise mission command by understanding the military problem, visualizing the end state and operation, and describing their vision. They direct actions throughout planning and execution and arm their subordinates with intent.

Today, much of the Joint Force is employed in environments involving ill-structured problems and against adaptable, thinking adversaries who exploit opportunities at every turn. These challenges call for leaders at the tactical level to exercise greater personal initiative vice relying on the decision-making of echelons well above the point of action. Leaders must empower individual initiative by providing clear, concise, and complete mission orders in a climate of mutual trust and understanding. The future joint force will be one where junior leaders are empowered to exercise disciplined initiative based on clear guidance and intent. Institutionalizing mission command is imperative to prepare our next generation of leaders.

***Jointness* – Strength from Diversity.** Each Service has a proud history, rich heritage, and distinct culture, but all share an ethic of service to the nation and willingness to sacrifice. From this common ground they derive their espoused values. The artifacts and basic assumptions that define each Service culture reflect their assigned roles and missions, and the principal domain in which they operate. Service cultures provide a source of strength for honing their unique expertise and competencies.

Strength in diversity of Service cultures and their unique characteristics lies in the adaptability and versatility they provide to the Joint Force across the range of military operations when operating as a team. Integrating Service cultures in a complimentary fashion realizes this strength. This is achieved by fostering trust and confidence. Operating together as an interdependent team creates an environment that promotes mutual respect and cohesion. *Jointness* is a manifestation of strength from diversity.

Jointness is derived from the integration of Service cultures and competencies, and requires teamwork amongst all Services and Military Departments to accomplish objectives in the best interest of National security unfettered by parochialism. It also demands teamwork with our interagency, intergovernmental, and coalition partners to achieve unity of effort to accomplish our shared objectives. Joint interdependence is integral to *Jointness* and is essential to provide the greatest number of military options for our Nation's leaders to preserve peace, and when necessary, respond to crisis to defend the American people and our national interests.

The Way Ahead – Advancing the Profession of Arms. Renewing our commitment to our profession is imperative as we bring more of the Joint Force home to reset. This presents unique challenges for many who only know the cycle of repetitive combat and deployment. As we reflect on our combat and operational experiences over the last decade of war, we must do so

from both joint and Service perspectives to conduct a holistic assessment. Then we must train and educate on what we have learned. In some cases, core competencies have faded and must be strengthened. We also understand that we must be proficient in more than combat, and must remain versatile to conduct security, engagement, relief and reconstruction. This endeavor requires all Joint Warfighters to engage in a serious dialogue to chart the way ahead to strengthen our profession as we develop Joint Force 2020. We must ensure we remain responsive and resilient; the American people deserve nothing less.