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"The overall objective of the Campaign is for Soldiers and leaders to refine their understanding of what it means to be professionals – expert members of the Profession of Arms – after over nine years of war and to recommit to a culture of service and the responsibilities and behaviors of our profession as articulated in the Army ethic." -- General Martin E. Dempsey, Commanding General, TRADOC

I stated last month that we'd be spending a great deal of time discussing the Army's Profession of Arms Campaign this year. Let's begin by discussing professions in general, and specifically the profession of arms.

What exactly does it mean to be part of a profession, to be considered a "professional?" Cambridge Dictionary defines a professional as "a person who has a job that needs skill, education, or training." So, to be a member of the "Profession of Arms" requires skill, education, or and training. Yes, I replaced "or" with "and." I did so, because to be a successful member of our profession you have to have all three attributes.

I also believe a word is missing from the Cambridge definition, that word is dedication... When you join the Profession or Arms, you sign a blank check made out to the United States of America – a check that can be cashed at any time, for any amount, up to and including your life. TRADOC calls this "unlimited liability."

The TRADOC booklet Army: Profession of Arms states "a Professional Soldier is an expert, a volunteer certified in the Profession of Arms, bonded with comrades in a shared identity and culture of sacrifice and service to the Nation and the Constitution, who adheres to the highest ethical standards and is a steward of the future of the profession."

The CG recently sent out an email describing the personal testimony of a Professional Soldier – SPC David Bixler, who recently was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart and Combat Action Badge for his courageous acts under fire in Afghanistan. As we read from SFC Bixler's account, being a Soldier in America's Army demands qualities that set us apart from those we serve. We are expected to be "experts" at our craft. Society also demands that we be ethical in the application of force (land combat power). We serve under civilian authority and are entrusted with the solemn duty of defending our Constitution and the American people.

These are not new norms or standards. They are as old as the Army in which we serve. We are readdressing them because our Army continues to evolve in response to the threats we face and the changes in the ways and means available to respond to these threats. Nearly ten years of war has changed the Army. We are an "Army in transition..." far different than we were in 2001, and still evolving.

You can rightly point out that we're doing a great job as Soldiers, that we've proven over and over again that we rightly belong to the "Profession of Arms." However, as General Dempsey notes, "you are not a profession simply because you declare yourself to be a profession...you have to earn the title every day." You must earn the right to be called an American Soldier. Not just in boot camp, and not just in combat.

You must earn the right to be a member of our profession in every situation; in garrison, on leave, in social gatherings... by adhering to our norms of conduct, our guiding values and our high standards. You either are or are not a Professional Soldier; it is not a "sometimes" thing. I believe that each of us is a professional and that each of us will strive to attain the high goals and standards of our profession on a daily basis.

I ask that you continually evaluate your performance; both in and out of uniform. Guard against actions that compromise both you and your chosen profession. Constantly adhere to the principles of our profession and accept nothing less from your fellow Soldiers.

SECURE THE HIGH GROUND!

The sun never sets on USASMDC/ARSTRAT