



S M D C / A R S T R A T
Headquartered on Redstone Arsenal, Alabama



CG Column
February 2009

“Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But, those values upon which our success depends – hard work and honesty, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism – these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.” (Excerpt from President Barack Obama’s inaugural address)

The human dimension of war is relatively unchanged, according to the Combat Studies Institute, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. We can read about and see the technological changes to warfare that have taken place throughout history. From flintlock to rifled bore to laser designators, there have been countless technological advances in warfare. What has not changed is human nature. The human nature that causes a Soldier to rise up in the face of withering fire and advance toward an enemy stronghold is as robust now as it was during Vietnam, Korea, World War II, or the frontier days.

Consider, April 6, 2008: Team 336 of the 3rd Special Forces Group, along with their Afghan commandos, were surrounded in an insurgent stronghold in Afghanistan. Outnumbered, they fought with courage, extricated the wounded, and recovered equipment at great risk to ensure it did fall into enemy hands. For actions on that fateful day, 10 of the Soldiers received Silver Stars.

Consider that Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Nein was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for courageous actions during his second deployment to Iraq in March 2005. He is now serving on his third deployment. He didn’t have to go back to Iraq, but he did.

What makes America’s Soldiers stand out from the rest of the world? It isn’t the world-class equipment or the leading technology – it is our Army values. Those values that we hold most dear are what set us apart from our adversaries.

As a military culture, we tend to key on mission-accomplishment, but at the same time, we also expect that tasks are executed with integrity – done the right way for the right reason.

Accomplishing our missions for the right reasons is a bedrock for promotions. Whether the promotion is for an officer or for an NCO, each promotion certificate begins in similar fashion, “The President of the United States has reposed special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity and abilities....” It is important to note that promotions attest to the values a Soldier possesses and to a Soldier’s demonstrated potential for increased responsibility. I believe that we must hold values higher than accomplishment; trust higher than accolades; and that we must hold the high ground of integrity when it would be easier to slip into the morass of expediency.

Promotions represent milestones in a Soldier’s career, especially when being inducted into the Noncommissioned Officer ranks or going from company grade to field grade. As Soldiers prepare to pin on stripes for the first time or officers to wear eagles – across the entire rank spectrum – we should remember the solemn vows we gave to the nation to “bear true faith and allegiance.” We should also remember the Warrior Ethos that we promised to each other: to place the mission first, to never accept defeat, to never quit, and to never leave a fallen comrade.

As the President said, our challenges are new but our values are not. We face a determined enemy in an era of persistent conflict. Both state and non-state actors on the global stage have goals that are contrary to our own. Demographics, globalization, economics, energy, food, water, climate change, pandemics, cyber and space all will influence the world’s security in the coming decades. One constant that will help us stay the course is our values.

SECURE THE HIGH GROUND!