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THE ARMY'S IMAGE: IN NEED OF BLITZ?

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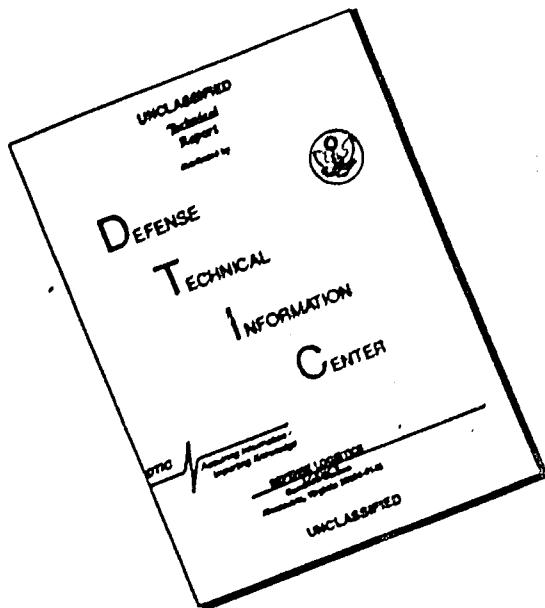
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(Essay)

THE ARMY'S IMAGE: IN NEED OF BLITZ?

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23 October 1972

ABSTRACT

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Eight years of unwanted war in Asia, coupled with social upheaval and an unsympathetic press at home, have created what has been called "An Army in Anguish." This essay first examines the issues that have contributed to the current image of the US Army. Recognition of the problem and current corrective actions are next discussed. Lastly, proposals that would rejuvenate the Army from within and polish its image are introduced. Throughout the history of the Army, professionalism has been the single most important ingredient in its organization and operation. An improved image will require an extra portion of professionalism.

THE ARMY'S IMAGE: IN NEED OF BLITZ?

"There's something about a soldier that is fine, fine, fine."
So goes the old World War I ditty. Needless to say, we have not heard the strains of that melody in many-a-year. But why haven't we heard the melodies that extol the virtues of soldiering? What has happened to tarnish the image of the Army and the soldier? Eight years of unwanted war in Asia, coupled with social upheaval and, an unsympathetic press at home have created what the Washington Post has called "An Army in Anguish." 1/
This paper will examine the issues that have contributed to the current image of the US Army but more important, the author will address those courses of action that he believes can reverse the trend and indeed, improve the image of the Army. Voltaire once stated that "whoever serves his country well has no need for ancestors." 2/ This was once true in America. Will it be so again?

THE PROBLEM - A TARNISHED IMAGE

Image is defined in Webster's Dictionary as "A mental representation of anything not actually present to the senses; a picture drawn by the fancy; broadly, a conception, idea."

¹Hayes Johnson and George C. Wilson, "Army in Anguish" The Washington Post, 12 September 1971, p.1.

²Voltaire, "Philosophical Dictionary" ed. by Peter Gay, p. 411.

3/ thus the image of the Army "is the sum of a person's experiences, impressions, feelings and knowledge relating to the Army." 4/ Certainly the prevailing image of the Army is formed in part, if not wholly, by the "instant war" as seen daily on national network television and by headlines such as "Green Berets Killings Approved by Superiors" (Washington Post, August 8, 1969) or "Army Names New Jersey Green Beret as Killer," (New York Times, September 27, 1969). Indeed, the unpopular Viet Nam war has provided the press with ample headlines that can only tarnish the military image.

The Army has however, needlessly added fuel to an already existing fire. The Song My-My Lai incident occurred in 1968. It was over a year later that it came to the attention of the civil authority in government. Since early 1969, the press has devoted a disproportionate amount of space to the incident, almost all of it critical to the Army establishment. It wasn't until late August 1972, that the Army officially announced "final" action in the matter.

3Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1959 edition) p. 413.

4Opinion Research Corporation, "The Image of the Army" (Research Park, Princeton Park, N.J.) August 1969, p. 5.

5/ During the ensuing three year period the press had a field day as the headlines rang with the names of Koster, Henderson, Young, McKnight, Mitchell and Calley. Newsweek summed up the reaction of the American public when it stated that "(the public) cannot find it in their hearts to blame the men who took part in the operation." 6/ The same article goes on to criticize the Army:

The fact that the Army was so slow in coming to grips with the Song My case has weakened not only the legal position regarding discharged soldiers, but its public image as well. (emphasis added)

One other aspect of the problem with respect to Viet Nam must be considered. The press and presumably the American public, have long ago abandoned the quest for a pure military victory in Viet Nam. However, the military and the Army in particular must guard against what Time magazine called a "Stab-in-the-back" complex relating to a subsequent military/political settlement. 7/ As early as 1969, General David M. Shoup wrote that the professional military favored the war because "war and combat are an exciting adventure, a competitive game and an escape from the dull routine of peacetime."

5"Army Closes My Lai Affair," The Evening Star and Washington Daily News, 3 September 1972, p. 3.

6"The Killings at Song My," Newsweek, 8 December 1969, p. 36.

7Time Essay, "The Army and Viet Nam; the Stab-in-the-Back Complex," Time Magazine, 12 December 1969, pp. 26-27.

8/ While the public can discount the rantings of a Jane Fonda or even a Ramsey Clark, there are few indeed who challenge the cited remarks of General Shoup or a military hero, the caliber of General James Gavin, whose views with respect to the war are also well known. 9/

So much for the war. Although Viet Nam continues to provide ample television footage, there are numerous other incidents that reflect in an adverse manner on the military. Consider these headlines from leading newspapers: "NCO Club Scandal" The New York Times, October 8, 1969) or "Former Provost Marshal General Accused in Gun Selling," (Washington Post, October 6, 1969) or "Army Goes to Some Length in Relaxing its Hair Rules," Washington Post, May 31, 1970) or even the 29 December 1970 column by Jack Anderson (Washington Post and over 300 other nationwide newspapers) in which he challenged the Army on everything from "medals, marijuanna and mediocrity" to "lax discipline, racial tension and ticket punching."

At this juncture, even as the war "winds down," the criticism continues, particularly in this very political year of 1972. The "military-industrial complex" receives ample criticism, some

⁸General David M. Shoup, "The New American Militarism" Atlantic (April 1969) p. 53.

⁹The Evening Star and Washington Daily News, 28 September 1972, p. 403.

of which appears warranted, due in part to a lack of decision on the part of the military as industry continues to develop sophisticated and expensive hardware for real and imagined requirements. Case at point is the XM-803 (Main Battle Tank) program which was finally terminated by a joint Senate-House Conference Committee on 14 December 1971, when it became apparent that the cost per tank would approximate \$1 million each. 10/ The Army apparently learned its lesson with respect to sophistication and cost when it finally cancelled the AH-56 (Cheyenne) program in late August 1972 11/ hopefully setting the stage for more cost effective and timely methods of weapons system development and procurement.

Lastly, the Army, more so than her sister services, is a microcosm of American society. Consequently she suffers those same ills and experiences, the same tramas as does the population in general. The Washington Post article "Army in Anguish," quoted earlier in this essay, highlights those ills which include racism, idleness and boredom, drugs, poor morale and a lack of imaginative leadership. 12/ However inaccurate that report may be, the fact remains that the Army is experiencing many of the cited problems and since those problems unlike the Viet Nam situation are

¹⁰A New Main Battle Tank? Tank Automotive News, March-April 1972, p. 403.

¹¹Washington News Briefs, Army Cancels Cheyenne, Army Times, 16 August 1972, p. 3.

¹²Johnson and Wilson, (20 September 1971) p. 1.

purely internal, then it follows that therin lies the area in which "Today's Army" must concentrate its efforts and practice its reform. Even a long-time friend of the military, Representative George H. Mahon (D-Texas) stated in May of 1969 that "the military has made so many mistakes that it has generated a lack of confidence."

13/ Representative Mahon was making reference to the conditions existing within our Army in Europe and the embarrassing incident involving the death of 6,000 sheep in Utah in which the Army first denied any knowledge of the cause, but subsequently admitted that a faulty nerve gas was responsible. 14/

Thus far the discussion has centered around relatively contemporary problems and issues. It would be well to go back and briefly examine the history of the Army as it evolved as an institution in American society. The United States shares with Europe a legacy of military thought and practice whose roots lie deep in the past, but whose military system has grown out of its own military experience. 15/ From its beginning the United States has sought to reconcile individual liberty with national security without becoming a nation in arms. Chief among the characteristics of American culture is the value placed upon

13The Pentagon and its Critics - What Policies Should Prevail?
Foreign Policy News, Spring 1971, p. 71.

14Ibid.

15American Military History, Army Historical Series, Office of Military History, (1969) p. 14.

human beings as individuals. 16/ Thus, the vital importance of public opinion in building and supporting a military establishment. This helps to explain the traditional rhythm in sharp expansion of the military in wartime and the precipitate contraction immediately thereafter. However, since World War II, Berlin, Korea, Cuba and Viet Nam have become symbols of the pressures confronting the nation and the Army in a new concept (at least for America) of world power. 17/ In an age when the forces in being may well determine the outcome of a war, the principle of reliance on masses of citizen soldiers has given way to the concept of a relatively large, efficient professional force, supported by a selected body of trained reserves. Whatever the composition of the Army, it will still incorporate the historic principle, ingrained in the nation's military system, of being representative of the people and subject to civilian control. 18/

We have entered an era in which the professional soldier cares what the public thinks of him. He always held his own self-image, but now that he has become a part of the public domain (largely through his own efforts) in a keenly aware public, he must concern himself with his image. 19/ With the advent of a Modern Volunteer Army, the need for an appealing image is keenly felt.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁹Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier, (1960) p. 226.

In the Opinion Research Corporation report entitled "The Image of the Army," the Army ran a poor third behind its sister services. The Army's three major weaknesses were identified as bureaucracy and red tape, inefficiency, and poor leadership. 20

These then are the problems. What is left of course is to determine feasible courses of action to improve the image and change those aspects of the military establishment that are detrimental to that image and ultimately to mission performance.

²⁰Opinion Research Corporation, "The Image of the Army," pp. 8-9.

THE SOLUTION - IS BLITZ THE ANSWER?

Several writers have addressed this subject in articles and professional papers published during the last two years. Surprisingly, the most prolific of these writings were by individuals closely associated with the military, but not members of the active U.S. Army. Wing Commander, R. G. Funnell, Royal Australian Air Force, writes a paper prepared for the Air War College, of the need for social change within the military establishment. 21/ LTC N. G. Smith, USAF, identifies in his paper prepared for Army War College, specific improvements required for the oft mismanaged Community Relations Program. 22/ Edward L. King, writing in the Washington Post writes of a "Sluggish Army (in need of) Drastic Reform" 23/ in which he identifies improved leadership as the most critical commodity in that reform. Perhaps the best recent work on this subject was done by Lawrence R. Crane writing in the July 1972 issue of Army. 24/ Mr. Crane expounds on what he calls

21R. G. Funnell, Wing Commander, RAAF, Introducing Social Change Into the Military, Professional Study, (Maxwell AFB, Alabama 1972).

22N. G. Smith, LTC, USAF, Image of the U.S. Army, Essay, (Carlisle Barracks, 14 March 1971).

23Edward L. King, "Sluggish Army Needs Drastic Reform," The Washington Post, 13 September 1970, p. B1.

24Lawrence R. Crane, "How the Army can Create a GFI," Army, July 1972, pp. 47-48.

a "GFI," that is, a "generally favorable impression" which he identifies as an absolute requirement if the Army is to shed its familiar military aloofness and replace it with a fresh awareness of the importance of public opinion.

These and other writers on the subject all agree that reform is required, that meaningful reform can only come from within the military, and that justifiable criticism should be answered forthrightly, in an honest, accurate manner, preferably by the civilian control arm of the military establishment. Morris Janowitz the noted writer of military affairs, places the responsibility for rebuttal on the civilian leadership:

In the United States the task of civilian leadership includes not only the professional direction of the military, but the prevention of growth of frustration in the profession, of felt injustice and inflexibility under the weight of its responsibilities. 25/

From the vantage point of this author, it is apparent that relatively recent changes in this regard have scored highly with the press, the populace and particularly with the military. Secretary of Defense Laird recently was quoted as saying: "Much of the harsh criticism now being leveled at the military is totally misplaced. Civilians decide our national-security policy; civilians decide the strategies we shall follow; civilians decide our forces structure, and civilians run the Department of Defense

25Janowitz, p. IX.

. . . the men and women of our armed services execute the policies, with courage and determination and loyalty." 26/

Needless to say the turn around or rebuilding process will take a considerable period of time; however, results are beginning to show. The most significant aspect of the problem has already been identified: that of recognition that a problem does in fact exist. Early criticism (era 1967-68) of the Army tended to be chalked off to Viet Nam and/or social unrest at home without a realization that while these were contributing factors, the fact remained that these problems were also within the military establishment. The initial impact of the Washington Post series, "Army in Anguish" was that the authors were telling the Army something they didn't already know or at least were reluctant to publicly admit. 27/ The "drug scene" and early racial tensions certainly fell into this broad category of unmentionable command problems in the late 1960's and early 1970's. 28/

This is no longer the case. The Army, thanks in part to its new dynamic Secretary, has begun to "tell it like it is." It has begun to meet its problems head on, realizing that its problems are "America's problems" 29/ but not using that as an excuse, rather only as a reason for their existence.

26Foreign Policy News p. 70.

27Johnson and Wilson, (20 September 1971),pp. A1 & A12.

28Ibid., (19 September 1971), p. A14.

29Ibid., (20 September 1971), p. A12.

Aside from the fact that we are "winding down" in Viet Nam, thereby reducing the size of the Army (thus reducing the size of the problem), the most significant single action with respect to changing the image of the Army is the creation of a true volunteer force called the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA) complete with its numerous attendant innovations. "Impressive gains are being chalked up in the drive to reshape America's ground forces" 30/ so reads the lead-in to an article written in the U.S. News and World Report. The article went on to highlight increased voluntary enlistments, a new emphasis on attracting bright "highly qualified" men, progress in improving basic training and control of the drug situation. Optimism continues with the prediction by Defense Secretary Laird, that the draft will end by the achievement of the all volunteer force. 31/

Brigadier General Robert M. Montague, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Modern Volunteer Army told the U.S. News and World Report, "We found an Army in transition from war to peace with a lot of problems-dissent, drugs, race. We had to examine a lot of past practices (in order) to make service more attractive." In short he said, "It was just a matter of knocking off the baloney." A man can now join the Army, which is founded on discipline and still maintain his individualism. 32/

30"Building A 'New' Army: Results Begin to Show, U.S. News & World Report, (6 March 1972), p. 48.

31"End of Draft by July," Army Times, 13 September 1972, p. 24.

32Ibid., "Building a 'New' Army," pp. 48-50.

How successful had the MVA been? Army in the September 1972 issue printed extracts of a Human Resources Research Organization study on the subject. The summary of that article reads in part:

"It seems unlikely that any single action, in and of itself, will greatly affect satisfaction with Army life and career intentions . . . However, the (study) suggests that focusing actions on consideration for the individual and conditions of work would affect the greatest number of men and produce the most apparent continuing effects on them."

33/

Only time will tell how lasting will be the MVA's effect on the Army. Many of the innovations will never go beyond the experimental stage, others will be discarded as ineffective and still others will become an enduring part of the Army. The "new" Army is still a goal, not yet in full-blown existence. General Montague conceded that the Army has a long way to go, but, added "If we fail, it won't be for lack of trying." 34/

So much for the MVA and other immediate internal reforms. There is obviously a myriad of other actions that have a significant impact on the image of the Army.

The Washington Post series, "Army in Anguish," succinctly stated the current Army problems. To quote Major General Franklin M. Davis, Commandant of the U. S. Army War College, "these articles created quite a storm here as they were published, and much

³³"People Features Tops in Volar Survey," Army, (September 1972)pp. 7-8.

³⁴Ibid., "Building A New Army," p. 50.

discussion ensued." 35/ General Davis went on to state (in a letter to Lieutenant General Claire E. Hutchin, Jr., Commanding General, First United States Army):

"As to how we feel that the Army's image can be improved we at the Army War College feel that "professionalism" is the answer. We must tighten discipline, improve personal appearance, and emphasize courtesy. In this effort, the chain of command must be the backbone of all that we do. Our objective is to instill pride. Our belief is that our country will be proud of us, if we continue to evidence that pride--based on firm but enlightened discipline." 36/

In this regard, Defense Secretary Laird ties the end of the draft in part to "The American people (giving) military people the respect due them for their contribution to national security."

37/

The Army continues to represent itself as a cross-section of contemporary American society. As Sir John Hackett said:

"What a society gets in its armed services is exactly what it asks for, no more and no less. What it asks for tends to be a reflection of what it is. When a country looks to its fighting forces it is looking in a mirror; if the mirror is a true one the face that it sees there will be its own." 38/

This author feels however that a selective all volunteer force

³⁵Franklin M. Davis, Jr., MG, USA, Commandant, US Army War College, Letter to LTG Claire F. Hutchin, Jr., 5 October 1971.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., "End of Draft by July," p. 24.

³⁸Sir John Hackett, The Profession of Arms, p. 34.

can in fact be "a cut above" the average and that the Army can be an improved mirror image of our society.

General William C. Westmoreland , former Army Chief of Staff, stated in his 1971 annual report (as published in Army, October 1971) that: "The volunteer Army we seek must have improved combat capability, higher standards of service and enhanced quality of Army life." His report went on:

The United States Army bases its standards, its character and its loyalty to constituted authority on the quality of its professional leaders. Because of this, the achievement of the highest standards of professionalism is our overriding concern.

Professionalism is the attainment of excellence through education experience and personal dedication. It is characterized by fidelity and selfless devotion which presupposes self-discipline, great skill, extensive knowledge and willingness to abide by established military ethics. It is further reflected by a desire to promote high standards, tempered by sound judgment, compassion and understanding. Professionalism implies a special trust which is inherent in the oath executed by every member of the armed force of the United States. 39/

General Westmoreland went on to list numerous actions that have or will be taken in order to improve the Army from within.

* Service school instruction for all student officers in professional ethics.

³⁹William C. Westmoreland, General, USA, An Army Taking Stock in a Changing Society, Army (October 1971) pp. 19-22.

- * Race relation instruction for all junior leaders and trainees.
- * Decentralized training.
- * Army-wide and equitable assignment of senior service school graduates.
- * Stabilized command tours.
- * Enlisted Career Management.
- * Junior officer time-in-grade promotion requirements extended.
- * Priority on retention of quality junior officers.
- * Establishment of a Directorate of Discipline and Drug Policies.
- * Study of the effectiveness of the administration of military justice.
- * Emphasis on equal opportunity and treatment in every aspect of Army life.
- * Improved Officer and NCO training and management systems.

40/

Thus far this paper has addressed internal reform. Undoubtedly this is first and foremost on the long list of needed actions. However, the Army must project a new or an improved image to the media and ultimately to the public if it is to succeed in its image polishing effort.

As mentioned early in this essay, one of the most recent articles written on this subject, is in the opinion of this author,

40Ibid.

one of the best. Lawrence Crane lists those actions which he feels the Army should take in order to create a "Generally Favorable Impression." In short, the author proposes a new civil action program, a program that would utilize Army facilities, enthusiasm and talent, working for the social good of the public.

41/ Specifically, Mr. Crane suggests a people-to-people program that would include:

- * Adult school classes on military history, wilderness survival techniques, weapons cleaning and safety.
- * Orientation instruction and competition (as this sport is practiced in Europe).
- * Rifle and pistol marksmanship instruction and competition.
- * Hiking and camping activities.
- * Confidence courses and physical conditioning.

The key to the program is involvement. Involvement by the military in civilian community activities and involvement by the populace in military activities. 42/

It is the observation of this author that such a program, conducted on a limited scale, proved to be very successful in improving relations between an admittedly hostile community and NIKE-HERCULES missile sites located in a large Eastern state. The same program, properly coordinated and funded could well be the answer to improving the military image. An "Open House"

⁴¹Crane, p. 48.

⁴²Ibid.

conducted once a year on a sunny Saturday afternoon in May is not the answer. Perhaps a viable, civic action program is. What better place for the local Boy Scout Troop to go on their annual campout or weekly wilderness hike, than to a nearby military reservation that is clean, safe and more accessible than many State and Federal parks? If such a program can be successful at the Battery (Company) and Battalion level, then it can be made to work on the Post or Installation level as well.

Most Installations or Posts presently have a Community Relations Program and no doubt they are thought to be successful because the Installation Commander attends the various service club meetings and is on friendly terms with the Mayor and local Chamber of Commerce and perhaps even the local press. But this is not a program of involvement. Involvement would include the Lieutenant talking at the Masonic or Knights of Columbus Hall, the Sergeant Major talking to the American Legion or V.F.W., the Sergeant addressing the Boy Scouts and in these days of womens liberation, the members of the WAC out talking to the Girl Scouts and the Brownies. It is at these levels that real inroads can be made in our effort to improve the image. The success of such a program comes through involvement and identification. The general public can better identify with the Sergeants and the Lieutenants than they can with their own Mayor or the Post Commander.

Such a program would require coordination at either the CONUS Army or even the Department of the Army level. It would be the

responsibility of the coordination level headquarters to prepare a short outline on the myriad of subjects that would be in demand in a given geographic location. The outline would be just that - an outline limited to less than one page and supported with 35mm slides or other appropriate visual aids. The script, if in fact one was required, would be prepared by the presentor. The key of the program is to keep the presentation as informal as possible and at as low a level as possible. Some ten or twelve years ago, the Army prepared a brochure of ten cards, each one of which stated the Army position on the then current issues. I envision a similar brochure being published in order that the Army position on current issues could be presented in the Community Relations Program.

This section was subtitled, Is Blitz the Answer (to the tarnished image problem)? I suggest that the answer to that query is no. Blitz tends to give a quick shine to the object in need of a shine . . . what is needed is more lasting luster to assure a permanent shine to the long neglected image.

CONCLUSION

What is, is. "And all the sorrow and all the tears; cannot erase one word of it," wrote Omar Kahayyam. That something must be done and how it is to be accomplished remains as the challenge that faces all of us who wear Army Green. Our problem is critical. Time is not on our side. An image exists and it is indeed the wrong image. Action, strong and immediate must be taken to erase the current image and replace it with what we know to be the true spirit of the United States Army. The Army can't do this job alone. We need the help of all who place value on honorable military service. But the basic reforms must come from within. The first few fledging steps have been taken. The MVA is almost a reality. But the MVA won't be enough. Mediocrity must be identified and eliminated. Sub-par performance cannot be tolerated. The Marines are currently advertising that all they need are a "few good men." The Army's sights should not be set any lower. The Army is in need of more than just a few good men and we shouldn't settle for anything less. That means of course, that the initial screening process must be tightened and steps taken to insure that only the best are attracted and accepted by the Army. It has been recognized that the Army offers the best career education program of all the military services. It seems to this writer however, that the Army has failed to advertise this fact.

Thanks in part to Viet Nam and thanks in part to our own

ineptness, the Army has been criticized on all fronts in the past few years. Thus a viable, realistic public relations program is required if we are to lick the problem. It is no secret that the largest and the most successful firms in the country employ "Madison Avenue hotshots" to improve, change or maintain their corporate images. The same standards should be utilized by the military. But more often than not, the command Public Relations Officer is an excess Lieutenant or a Major awaiting retirement. Neither of these gentlemen I submit, should be spokesmen for the command, but rather the sharp young Major "on the way up" or the aggressive young career Lieutenant should be spokesman that the press and in turn, the public draws their impressions from.

This is an age of "involvement" and the military is no exception. So let the Army get involved. Get involved with a viable civic action program, get involved in community relations. Get off the Post and get involved in those activities that thrust the Army to the fore. Carry the message to the people, tell it like it is. Tell what we do, how we do it and why we do it the way we do. The local Army installation should be a part of the surrounding community, not an isolated fortress at the edge of town. Get the local papers and radio stations to give free time for a weekly feature on the local Army installation, unit or individuals that in fact make up part of their community.

Lastly, but most important . . . be professional. The Chief of Staff has identified the requirement, it follows then that

each and every man in uniform has the requirement to follow through on that charge and by doing so will in his own way be part of 850,000 man team dedicated to improving what others see in us.

In these fast-moving times of change, conflict and challenge to existing standards and ideas, the public needs and no doubt seeks stability. It would follow then that the image of the Army could be best served by todays Army being the best trained, best prepared and most professional Army the Republic has ever seen. The Army must be prepared to succeed in combat. Success in peace-time is no less important since success in combat is completely dependant upon our professionalism today.



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