STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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WHERE HAVE ALL THE WARRIORS GONE?

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The decline in values among senior Army leaders (defined for the purpose of this paper as Lieutenant Colonel and above) has significantly contributed to the disheartenment and attrition of junior leaders (Major and below). Senior leaders today are more interested in looking good than being good. This paper will illustrate several recent examples of poor leadership based on the Army Values that have attributed to the decline.

Article III of the Soldier's code states "I will honor my Country, the Army, my unit and my fellow soldiers by ***living the Army values***." If more senior leaders took this article to heart there would be less dissention among the ranks. An example of poor leadership will be identified for each corresponding Army Value.

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PREFACE

The majority of the vignettes presented are the personal experiences of the author. Several vignettes have been related first hand to me from classmates and friends when asked if they had similar situations occur to them during battalion command. Some of the comments have been taken from emails circulated after the CGSC sensing session in 2000. Actual authorship of these comments is difficult to ascertain however, several other colleagues have confirmed similar incidents so I do not doubt their authenticity.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE WARRIORS GONE

"OUR ARMY WOULD BE INVINCIBLE IF IT COULD BE PROPERLY ORGANIZED AND OFFICERED... THEY WILL GO ANYWHERE AND DO ANYTHING IF PROPERLY LED. BUT THERE IS THE DIFFICULTY – PROPER COMMANDERS." These words by General Robert E. Lee are just as important today as they were during the Civil War. Leadership is enduring. It is the cornerstone of great nations. In recent times we have seen numerous challenges in our Army. The newspaper headlines have announced scandals and retention and attrition problems. This paper will focus on the officer retention challenge now facing our Army.

The decline in values among senior Army leaders (LTC and above) has significantly contributed to the disheartenment and attrition of junior leaders (MAJ and below). Senior leaders today are more interested in looking good than being good. This paper will illustrate several examples of poor leadership based on the Army Values that have attributed to the decline. Although there are numerous different ways to handle each given situation I will also offer several possible solutions.

Article III of the Soldier's code states "I will honor my Country, the Army, my unit and my fellow soldiers by ***living the Army values***." In light of today's attrition problems senior leaders must be mindful of this article. This article is about doing the right thing in a given situation. When faced with a challenge or a decision all one must ask is "what is the right thing to do?" This simple question will guide leaders to the morally, ethically and legally right way to do things. Conduct more along these lines would lessen dissention among the ranks. Soldiers would view the officer's actions as in the best interest of the unit and not as self-serving. Each Army value, its definition given to us by the Chief of Staff of the Army, and an associated vignette will be discussed to illustrate this point

Loyalty: Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other soldiers. Loyalty to soldiers is where most senior leaders are missing the point. The apparent opinion among junior leaders is that most senior leaders are only loyal to themselves. Results of the September 2000 Command and General Staff College sensing session indicate that the overwhelming opinion junior leaders have of senior leaders is that "Top-down loyalty – DOES NOT EXIST. Senior leaders will throw subordinates under the bus in a heartbeat to protect or advance their career. There is no trust of senior leaders in terms of loyalty because the record is clear."[1] Communication is essential in loyalty working both ways

Vignette. An aviation Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) highly desired to attend Airborne school. The Brigade-level commander approved Airborne school attendance for his outstanding performance. The CWO received orders and was excited about his upcoming Airborne school. The Brigade Commander had signed the orders several weeks prior to his departure. The day before the officer was to leave to attend the course the orders could not be found. The Troop Commander hand walked a new copy of the orders to the Brigade commander for signature so the officer could depart as scheduled. The Brigade commander told the Troop Commander he was not going to sign the orders because a Warrant Officer should not be going to jump school and there were insufficient funds in the budget to support this TDY. The Brigade commander then went TDY for a couple of days. The former Squadron Commander who had received approval for this school called the Brigade commander. Upon reminding him of the promise that he had made four months prior, the brigade commander remembered the promise and all he could manage was "Oh, I forgot. Does he still have time to get there?" Then the Brigade Commander went on to say that he would personally ensure that the officer would get a slot at the beginning of the Fiscal Year. A year has passed since the officer was a no show at his DA approved Airborne School and still he has not been allowed to attend. The actions of this senior leader betrayed the trust and confidence that the Warrant Officer had in the chain of command. The CWO had been loyal to his chain of command but now lacked confidence in their abilities. The Brigade commander's actions established an environment of mistrust among his subordinates.

Recommendation. Loyalty works both ways. If you expect your soldiers to be loyal to you, you must first be loyal to them. A caring leader would have fulfilled his initial promise to the soldier. The Brigade commander should have trusted his troop commander and signed the duplicate orders. If unforeseen circumstances dictated a change to his previous decision then he personally should have informed the Warrant Officer of the decision and his solution to the situation. This open communication between senior leaders and junior leaders would ensure a bond of trust within the chain of command.

I recently asked a fellow officer who is retiring this summer why he was getting out and what he thought of the officer attrition issue. His succinct response was "It's not the Optempo, it's not the deployments, it's not the pay, it's not the poor housing. It's the senior leaders who don't give a crap. All the troops want is for someone to care about them. They [senior leaders] are too into themselves."[2] Surprisingly, he thanked me for being the only person to ask him why he was getting out and what he thought. He said that just proved his point that nobody [in his chain of command] cared.

Duty: Fulfill your obligations. Legendary professional football coach Vince Lombardi describes duty another way. "I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear, is the moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle victorious."[3] Every soldier in the Army has specific duties and responsibilities. Successfully accomplishing these individual duties is part of one's professional obligation. Doing everything possible within your power to accomplish the assigned mission is expected. Senior leaders are also responsible to ensure that subordinates are afforded the time and resources to accomplish these duties. Although not a specific duty per se, every soldier is allowed thirty days of leave per year. Numerous General officers have stated that it is a leader's responsibility to ensure that soldiers are allowed the opportunity to take their annual leave.

Vignette. An officer stationed in Germany had been deployed for over 15 months of his command tour. As a result of special leave accrual the soldier had in excess of 90 days of accrued leave prior to PCS. The soldier was planning on taking substantial leave during his PCS. The soldier's Brigade commander had approved his request. After his change of command, the soldier spent the final months of his tour TDY at the higher headquarters. The soldier's TDY chain of command (Colonel, Brigadier General and Major General) only allowed the soldier to take two weeks PCS leave enroute to his next duty assignment. As a result the soldier was forced to forfeit 39 days of leave. The soldier argued his case with his TDY chain of command citing all the compelling reasons for taking a long leave and the reasons for limited leave opportunity during tour. The TDY chain of command's response contained the all too often heard responses of "You're performing a critical function here ", "there's no one to take your place", and "we just can't afford to let you go any sooner." These are the typical excuses that not only the individual but many officers had heard over several previous PCS moves. Similar chain of command reasoning contributed to a large leave balance upon the soldier's arrival to Germany. However, a couple of the responses indicated the selfishness, lack of dedication to duty and complete disregard for the welfare of subordinates. Two responses stand out as particularly glaring. The soldier was told "It's your own fault you are in this situation. You should have taken leave in command." The soldier explained that although he took a couple of weeks leave during his command, being deployed for so long, including preparation, recovery and other mandatory requirements there was limited opportunity to take leave. Two of the members in the chain went so far as to tell the soldier "You should have taken leave on weekends and holidays or you should have taken leave and still come into work.

You could have burned your leave and got your balance down." This response is not keeping with the intent of the Army leave policy and is a bad precedent to set. Senior leader responses such as these demonstrate a lack of commitment and a complete disregard for fulfilling one's obligations. An interesting footnote to this vignette, all three members of the TDY chain of command PCS'd shortly after the soldier. They all took their requested leave. Not one of them was forced to lose leave by their chain of command.

Recommendation. The TDY chain of command should have afforded the soldier the opportunity to take his requested leave. Focus should be more on the long term impact and not the short term perceived crisis.

A second example more clearly illustrates a senior leader's duty. It is also the senior leader's duty to ensure that junior officers are properly mentored. The Training and Leader Development Panel conducted at U.S Army Command and General Staff College reported that although most junior leaders felt that mentoring was an important part of their professional development the top response on an Army survey was that performance counseling was non-existent in their unit.[4]

Senior leaders have a duty to invest in the future through mentoring, counseling and training. Only through these tools will the Army continue to improve and remain a viable fighting force. A trend among junior leaders is that "many have never been counseled...and feel that they are not mentored or listened to by senior leaders."[5] Granted there is a small minority that could be counseled everyday and still not consider themselves as being counseled. Senior leaders must take it upon themselves to make a concerted effort to counsel every NCO and Officer they rate or senior rate. An event after my first NCOER out brief cemented my commitment to that task. The HHT First Sergeant was PCSing to a new duty station and was my first NCOER out brief. We discussed not only his performance, The NCOER Form itself, rating philosophies, but I asked for his career goals, family goals, ways to improve on the unit, and things he would change if he had to do it all over again. After 90 minutes of quality one-on-one time the 1SG turn to go and shook my hand and stated "Sir, thanks. I've been in the Army over 16 years, and this is the first time that a senior rater has counseled me on my NCOER and asked for my thoughts and opinions." Unfortunately that scene was repeated all too frequently with both officers and NCOs I out briefed. Although time was extremely scarce, I found that you could not afford to NOT make the time to talk to these soldiers. That is the best way for units as well as individuals to improve. We, as senior leaders have an obligation to develop the next generation of leaders, both NCOs and Officers. The time we spend coaching, teaching and mentoring is an investment in the future. It is our duty.

Respect: Treat people as they should be treated. Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall firmly believed that leaders should earn their respect. He is quoted in the Armed Forces Officer of 1950.

> While men may be rallied for a short space by someone setting an example of great courage, they can be kept in line under conditions of increasing stress and mounting hardship only when loyalty is based upon a respect which the commander has won by consistently thoughtful regard for the welfare and rights of his people, and a correct measuring of his responsibility to them.[6]

Exercising the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would have others do unto you) is a good philosophy to follow. A leader who demonstrates respect for his subordinates will in turn receive their respect.

Vignette. A Brigade Commander called a no-notice motor pool inspection. He wanted the soldiers standing by their vehicles and containers for inspection. After waiting for the Brigade Commander for four hours the Battalion Commander released the soldiers back to duty. The Brigade Commander did not relay any gratitude for the soldiers waiting for him for that long period of time, only that he would reschedule and be sure complete the inspections the next time. On a subsequent, unrelated, motor pool inspection the Brigade Commander questioned the accuracy of the daily status report. He told the commander, Executive Officer (XO), Battalion Motor Officer (BMO) and the Motor Sergeant, "I think you are lying." After the Battalion Commander pulled the Brigade Commander aside and related the extremely long hours the motor pool personnel had endured in preparation for this inspection including a requested courtesy inspection from corps headquarters in which the inspectors cited the operations as one of the top two in the corps, the Brigade Commander could only manage: "I don't care what you've done, I still don't trust you."[7] This type of attitude and self-importance is detrimental to the morale and performance of any unit. It seriously degrades the level of respect between junior leaders and senior leaders. Clearly that Colonel would not have liked to be treated the way he treated those soldiers.

Recommendation. The Brigade Commander should have respected the hard work of the motor pool and trusted his subordinates. This lack of respect produced an unhealthy environment and set a poor personal example. Soldiers would feel that all their hard work and effort would have been appreciated, if just acknowledged by the Brigade Commander.

Another example clearly illustrates the out of touch nature of senior leaders. A Field Artillery Officer stationed in Germany had worked with his branch and had been notified of his

next assignment at the University of Colorado as a ROTC instructor. After spending the majority of his tour either deployed or in the field he was ready for a break from the rigors of field duty. Upon hearing of his assignment the Brigade Commander called the officer into his office. The Brigade Commander told the officer that wasn't a smart choice for assignments. What the officer really needed was a tour at the NTC as an Observer/Controller. It was a much better job, better for his career and he'll make it happen. With his final OER from the brigade commander due shortly the Captain was reluctant to voice his opposition. The Brigade Commander called the Department of the Army Personnel Command and was able to change the assignment. The Captain was not thrilled about his new assignment but vowed to make the best of the situation.[8]

Recommendation. The Brigade Commander should have asked the officer what he wanted to do and not tell him what his next assignment should be. He could offer advice and mentorship but let the soldier make the final decision. Senior leaders need to listen more to soldiers instead of telling them what to do. Communication is key in understanding subordinates. Senior leaders must trust their subordinates and treat them with dignity and respect.

Selfless-Service: Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own. Too many senior leaders make the mistake of self-serving. Some senior leaders are more interested in looking good, sometimes at the expense of their soldiers. Some fail to properly plan training and adjust training schedules to suit their personal agendas. An Army Colonel on a recent sensing session recounted junior leaders comments about training schedules. The "6 week lock-in for training is a joke...things are always changing at the last minute. Often planned events are preempted for unplanned taskings, and many of these taskings have no relationship to METL/Warfighting."[9] Senior leaders should be cognizant of the good idea cutoff point and not arbitrarily change training to suit their needs.

Vignette. A Brigade Commander scheduled a brigade run two days before the event is to take place. Coincidently, this also happens to be the morning of his first Training Management Review (TMR) to his boss, the Corps Commander. During the Brigade Commander's opening comments he states, "Sir, we had a brigade 4 mile run this morning. We beat the corps standard by 4 minutes." The corps commander was impressed and congratulated the Brigade Commander on the outstanding physical fitness of the Brigade. What wasn't said was that a) the subordinate commanders had to change their training schedules two days out in violation of the corps commanders policy of no training schedule changes within a five week lock-in, b) there was no time allowed that morning for any subordinate final preparations as all leaders had

to race directly from the run to the TMR, c) the Brigade Commander addressed the unit before the run stating the pace would be the corps standard, d) due to the quick pace, over 30% of the brigade fell out of the run. Had the corps commander been aware of all these points, I don't think he would have been impressed. This is a clear example of looking good and not being good. The troops all knew the reason for scheduling a regimental run at the last minute and the intentionally fast pace. Leonard Wong in his "Generations Apart" study states "the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) reiterated the theme of mistrust and differing perceptions across the ranks."[10] He further notes "As competition in the now trimmer Army became keener, a stifling atmosphere of perfection known as the 'zero defects mentality' along with notions of careerism emerged."[11] This atmosphere is created when senior leaders are more interested in accomplishing what makes them look good and not what is good for the unit.

Recommendation. Senior leaders must practice selfless service. Leaders must make sacrifices by putting the needs of the Army, the Nation and the soldiers before their own. Through selfless service leaders can reassure their unit that they have the soldier's best interests in mind.

Honor: Live up to the Army values. Thomas Jefferson described honor to Manchot, the war chief of the Potawatomies in December 1808: "Nobody can acquire honor by doing what is wrong."[12] A simple yet precise description that is still applicable almost 200 years later. Put another way one could say just do the right thing. A true American hero, William J. Donovan describes the honor and its effect on his battalion after a lengthy eight day battle during WWI.

> ...In every day of that fighting our Battalion had participated. It had never retired, it had gone the furthest and stayed the longest...Their discipline and their training, and above all their spirit, held them full of fight in a position which had previously been given up by two other outfits...I had made them work when others did not work, and I held them to too high a standard...No one should get into this fight who hasn't the physical endurance and stamina. Courage is the smallest part of it. Physical endurance will give one control of one's nerves long after the breaking point seems to be reached."[13]

Donovan's battalion performed magnificently by choosing to do what was right and refusing to take the easier wrong. Their honor was instrumental in achieving victory.

Vignette. During a deployment to a hostile fire area, a Battalion Commander was drinking beer and playing cards with his Company Commanders and staff during deployment. This was a clear violation of General Order number 1 which forbade drinking or possessing alcohol during deployments. When confronted by a fellow Battalion Commander who saw him, he denied the

incident. When confronted by the Brigade Commander, he again lied and denied consuming alcohol. The battalion S3 of that unit was asked of the situation and responded, "Yes, we were drinking beer and playing cards. Our boss said it was OK. I don't know why he would say otherwise." The Brigade Commander, satisfied with the Battalion Commander's answer, considered the situation resolved. This officer successfully completed his battalion command. The Army has shown that this officer is the type they want by selecting for additional schooling and selecting for promotion to the next higher rank. Think of the message this sends to the junior officers - not just those who were present but their fellow Company Commanders who inquired about the incident and were told what really occurred. There is an impression of double standards, if not the standard itself then in the equity of enforcement. These actions occurred while not under actual fire. Imagine the actions of this individual if bullets were actually being fired.

Recommendation. Leaders must know the standards. Set the standards through personal example and equitably enforce the standards throughout the ranks. When caught violating the standards then they must own up to their actions and be honest and truthful and suffer the consequences for their actions. Mark Twain would counsel these leaders to "when in doubt, tell the truth. [14]

Integrity: Do what's right, legally and morally. General John D. Ryan says it best: "Integrity is the most important responsibility of command. Commanders are dependent on the integrity of those reporting to them in every decision they make. Integrity can be ordered but it can only be achieved by encouragement and example."[15] It has been often stated that nobody can take your integrity, you must give it away. As long as leaders adhere to ethical, legal and moral principals, their integrity remains intact.

Vignette. A Brigade Commander marked Above Center of Mass (ACOM) on one of his outgoing Company Commander's Officer Evaluation Report (OER). The officer was counseled on his great job in Company Command and transferred to another location and duty assignment. This senior Captain was selected for Major and eagerly awaited the Command and General Staff College selection list. The officer was non-select for CGSC. The officer called his branch assignment officer and was not able to determine the reason for his non-selection. The officer thought in his mind "I have two ACOM command OERs in my file surely that can't be the norm." The officer called his former battalion commander (FBC), an Army War College Student, to ask for his advice. The FBC talked to the branch chief and found out the real reason the officer was non-select for CGSC. The Brigade Commander had knowingly

given the Company Commander an ACOM block check when his profile would not support an ACOM rating. The Brigade Commander did not relay this to the Company Commander. Even after the Brigade Commander received a personal phone call from the PERSCOM CG stating he had a misfire and the Company Commander was rated as Center of Mass, the Colonel failed to notify the Company Commander. The former battalion commander was informed that his former company commander instead of having two ACOM ratings as he was informed, had in fact, only one ACOM rating. It fell on the former battalion commander to inform his former company commander of the Brigade Commander's negligence.[16] This Brigade Commander failed in his responsibility to be honest and truthful to his subordinates. His indiscretion gave the officer a false sense of security and caused that officer's trust in the Army's senior leadership to be greatly reduced. To add insult to injury and make matters worse the Army has shown that this Brigade Commander's behavior should be emulated and that is the type of officer who deserves to be promoted. That Brigade Commander was selected for promotion to Brigadier General. And we ask ourselves why junior officers don't trust the senior leadership? Leonard Wong quotes a Colonel who has also seen this situation: "They have lost faith with the senior leadership of the Army. They believe they [senior leaders] are either out of touch with reality or liars. We're losing a generation of good leaders."[17]

Recommendation. Leaders must be honest and forthright with soldiers. If you make a mistake, own up to it, your soldiers will respect you more for it. Never lie. Your soldiers will always know the truth. Soldiers may not always agree with, but they will always respect a leader for doing what is considered morally, ethically or legally the right course of action.

Personal Courage: Face fear, danger, or adversity (Physical or Moral). President John F. Kennedy describes personal courage.

> For without belittling the courage with which men have died, we should not forget those acts of courage with which men...have lived. The courage of life is often a less dramatic spectacle than the courage of a final moment; but it is no less a magnificent mixture of triumph and tragedy. A man does what he must-in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures-and that is the basis of all human mortality.[18]

President Kennedy's definition is applicable to today's senior leaders in displaying courage under fire whether engaged with a hostile enemy or reporting to a congress. In his address to the Corps of Cadets at West Point in 1962, General Douglas MacArthur more narrowly described personal courage: "However horrible the incidents of war be, the soldier who is called

upon to offer and to give his life for his country, is the noblest development of mankind."[19] In order to be a great leader you must be willing to make great personal sacrifice.

Vignette. For years service chiefs have not accurately described the military's readiness. Junior leaders and soldiers at every level below the service chief knew that lack of funds, reduced spare parts, over-commitment to numerous operations and lack of quality mission focused training time seriously degraded the unit's readiness.

> A related problem, which the leadership does not seem to grasp, is that the personnel hemorrhage in the mid-level officer and non-commissioned officer ranks is in no small part due to frustrations over politically correct agendas foisted on them and their units to the detriment of tactical and operational effectiveness.[20]

Within this last election year numerous reports were made public. Numerous General officers, up until recently, denied the fact that there was an officer retention problem. These senior leaders chose to blame the attrition on Battalion and Brigade Commanders, preferring to believe that in no way was their leadership, policies or command climate responsible for the exodus. Instead of continuing to deny the reports senior leaders have finally had the courage to confirm that yes we are having problems.

Recommendation. Senior leaders need to have the intestinal fortitude to accurately describe their true state of the units. Leaders lacking personal courage are more concerned with their image or career. As a result they have delayed badly needed changes or improvements in the armed forces. It takes tremendous personal courage, both physical and mental, to admit that contrary to previous reports, you are not ready for combat. For the vast majority of leaders, I am proud of the manner in which they respond when faced with adversity or physical danger. There is only a small minority that knowingly shies away from danger when duty calls. Raters and senior raters need to have the courage to accurately portray their performance on their Officer Evaluation Report to keep these individual from attaining the rank of Colonel or above.

The Revolutionary War hero, John Paul Jones, preferred certain types of ships. His comment when finding no ship to his liking as a command ship, after he rejected all offered in disgust was, "I wish to have no Connection with any Ship that does not sail *fast*, for I intend *to go in harm's way*."[21] Jones' solicitation for leaders with personal courage still rings true today. The profession of arms is very difficult and challenging. Only through personal courage are leaders able to emerge victorious on the battlefield or off.

CONCLUSION

As illustrated above the decline in values among Army senior leaders has significantly contributed to the disheartenment and attrition of junior leaders. Senior leaders today appear more interested in looking good than being good. In her book The Kinder Gentler Military, Stephanie Gutmann quotes U.S. Army Captain Jeff Church when discussing the Army attrition problem: "It's not just about money. The U.S. Military has never made anybody but flag officers wealthy. People used to stay in because they felt like they were warriors, making a difference, with commander they respected, in units they were proud of. Those feelings don't exist today." These feelings are similar to those expressed in numerous sensing sessions at installations throughout the military. Military leaders can be just as successful caring for their subordinates, focusing on what is right for their unit, and acting less out of concern for their personal career.

The solution, although simple in nature, is difficult in application. Leaders must adhere to the values of their chosen profession. They must be good and not just look good. Leaders must demonstrate care and compassion for their subordinates. Marine Corps General Zinni in his address at the US Naval Institute shortly before his retirement described the needed leadership of the future. He characterized what he expected out of his son as a future military leader.

> What will we expect of him as a battlefield commander? Brains, guts, and determination – nothing new here. But we would ask for more than battlefield skill from our future commanders. We want character, sense of moral responsibility, and an ethical standard that rises above those of all other professions. We want him to be a model who accepts the profession of arms as a calling. We want him to take care of our sons and daughters and treat their lives as something precious-putting them in harm's way only if it means something that truly counts. We'll expect him to stand up to civilian leadership before thinking about his own career.
>
> And I hope that we would think enough of him and his compatriots to show some respect for them along the way.[22]

ENDNOTES

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[7] LTC George M. Bilafer, U.S. Army, interview by author, December 2000, Carlisle, PA.

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[12] Fitton, 116.

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[14] Fitton, 298.

[15] Fitton, 130.

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[18] Fitton, 61.

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