

## Reform in the Army

The United States Army needs reform. One aspect of this need has been examined by the President's Commission to establish an All-Volunteer Armed Force, and public debate about reform has focused almost exclusively on the volunteer army. Little critical thinking has been devoted to two other areas crying — so far in the wilderness — for public attention: the officer corps and the armed services' organization. If both of these are ignored, the United States Army will continue to be badly led and badly organized, regardless of whether the enlisted men are volunteers or draftees.

### DETERIORATION IN LEADERSHIP

For roughly the last fifteen years, the quality of military leadership has been declining. The deterioration has been all too vividly revealed by the Vietnam war. The Army developed the concepts of "limited brushfire wars" and counter-insurgency to insure a military component for the international political realities of the late 1950's and early 1960's. These doctrines found natural application in Vietnam. That conflict began as a counter-insurgency situation that quickly grew into a "brushfire" war with the Green Berets as the limited warriors. But they couldn't win, and the Army was forced into a crash program in 1964 to form an Air Mobile Division — the First Air Cavalry Division — which was essentially a forerunner for large-scale conventional war. The Air



Cavalry was unable to stop the "brushfire," so the buildup of standard infantry divisions began and Vietnam became a small-scale replica of World War II — hardly what the limited war proponents had sold to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

A further deception in Army thinking is the oft-repeated assertion by high-ranking officers that political, not military, constraints have inhibited the Army's success in Vietnam. Yet the limited war concept itself is sharply restricted to achieving specific tactical objectives within a narrowly defined geographic area. It would not include offensive operations such as attacking across the DMZ, bombing Haiphong or invading Cambodia. Vietnam has revealed the limited war concept for what it really is — a mercenary expedient to assure military participation in international affairs — and the money to go with it — without any meaningful adjustment in large war force structures or any relationship to contemporary political priorities.

### IT'S OUR BABY

In short, the Army first urged and now perpetuates the war for its own parochial internal purposes, with little sense of national responsibility. And from a purely military viewpoint, the command of our forces in southeast Asia has been egregiously mismanaged because it has been guided by the wish to maximize career opportunities for senior officers, rather than maximize the effectiveness of our forces. For example, a single combat command assignment is today an unwritten prerequisite for promotion from Colonel to Brig. General and additional such assignments are virtual guarantees of further rapid promotion. To accommodate the eagerness for promotion, combat command assignments are rotated every six months. This results in more promotions for career officers. It also means that combat in Vietnam is generally led by green officers inexperienced in local battlefield command, in the past tactics and characteristics of the enemy's troops, the experience and ability of their own troops and the cli-

#### THE AUTHOR

Edward L. King, 41, is a former Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Army. He requested voluntary retirement last year because of his opposition to the Vietnam War. Lt. Col. King fought in the Korean War and most recently served with the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Future articles by Lt. Col. King will deal with U.S. force levels in Europe and the Fitzhugh's Commission report on Pentagon reorganization.

mate and terrain over which they must fight. Under such circumstances, it is virtually inevitable that more promotions for eager commanders would be accompanied by more dead enlisted soldiers than would have been the case had the Army been given stable, experienced combat leadership at all levels as a matter of policy. But the casualties of such a policy would have been career improvements for hundreds of officers. In the eyes of today's general officers, such casualties are less tolerable than the lives of soldiers who died in superfluous agony.

The situation has grown unchecked because of complete *internal conformity* — deviating from the Army party line is discouraged and punished. Internal criticism and disagreement is non-existent. And needless to say, the reprisals against criticism in public are swift and vigorous. Consequently, the uniform face put on for the public and the Congress by the Army's officer corps is not that of healthy consensus but of strict and sterile convention.

### TOE THE LINE

The futility of the war and the personal self-interest of most commanding officers have not been lost on lower-ranking junior officers and GI's. Many continue to serve and toe an undeviating line out of fear of court-martial and jail or because of a strong desire not to let their buddies down. Officers remain silent and seek promotions in the only way available because they, like other men, have home mortgages to pay, children to send to college and higher paid retirement to anticipate. Many rationalize their conformity by comparing it to that of other professionals in large corporations or other parts of government. Few recognize that the difference is in the end product — death for young Americans — rather than profit and success for the corporation or bureaucracy.

Yet the doubts are growing daily, particularly among younger officers. Among these young men, service to the nation and their subordinates, and dedication to justice, individual dignity and self-respect would be more appealing attributes of military life than service to their own careers first and to the existing system a close second. It is difficult to imagine the bitterness that is beginning to permeate the lower enlisted and officer ranks of the Army, or the creeping paranoia against the press, TV, politicians, and liberal segments of our society that afflicts the senior ranks. Such conditions, if left unattended, pose a serious danger to the future of the republic.

### CONFUSION IN ORGANIZATION

Not only is the Army badly led, it is badly structured. For example, in Europe approximately 200,000 Army troops include only about 85,000 actual combat troops. There is no valid military reason why these 85,000 combat soldiers could not be

adequately commanded and supplied by an additional 65,000 men. Thus, either the total force of 200,000 could be cut by 50,000 troops or that total should contain a much higher proportion of combat elements. Furthermore, since the mid-50's, the proportion of non-combat manpower has been growing. In Vietnam it has required an Army force of over 400,000 men to provide 100,000 actual combat troops. The present "combat slice" (i.e., the percentage of troops available to actually fire on the enemy) is under 40 percent for all Army units. This compares unfavorably to the 60 percent combat slice of the Soviet Army and 70 percent combat slice of the North Vietnamese Army.

Only a fraction of the vastly increased support forces are required by the new military technology. Most are merely the baggage that go along with sending the Army "first-class" and with the proliferation of headquarters commands which do nothing more than pass orders to lower commands and provide slots for general officers and their retinues. The present U.S. Army is a dragon with a huge tail and tiny teeth.

The implications of this situation are several. First, economically, the U.S. Army is far too expensive compared to its combat potential. In Western Europe, for example, at least two and probably three senior command levels between the Pentagon and the combat commanders could be eliminated. These headquarters contribute little to military effectiveness; quite the contrary.

Second, tactically, the dragon is reasonably mobile and can travel in the luxury to which it has become accustomed only when it has absolute air superiority. Yet in Western Europe, it is not assumed that the Air Force will have absolute air superiority.

Third, strategically, when only limited conventional combat forces are available against superior conventional forces in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, greater motivation exists for U.S. forces to resort quickly to first use of nuclear weapons with the inherent danger of nuclear escalation rather than flexible response to aggression.

The foregoing implications are, of course, mere suggestions of the need for a hard look at the organization of the U.S. Army and the military unified and specified staff concepts. Resistance to that hard look comes from career officers who feel that they personally have nothing to gain from a restructuring of the Army, and considerable to protect by perpetuating the system that provides comfortably for professional advancement and retirement.

### WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Reforming the Army is not a contradiction in terms, but it does pose obvious obstacles of entrenched service and Congressional attitudes and habitual bureaucratic inertia, as well as the added problem that any criticism of the military is

characterized by some as patriotically suspect if not quasi-treasonable. Nevertheless, the obstacle course and the risk of obscurantist slander must be run.

To improve leadership:

—Better education. The service academies are in fact only engineering schools and on the basis of faculties and curricula second-rate ones at that. They and the career officer training schools need improved and broadened curricula and more civilian instructors. Now is the time to establish national priorities clearly and to emphasize that military service is a way of providing national service and not a personal end in itself.

—Internal dissent and debate must be encouraged; public comment by military men on matters of ordinary concern to citizens should be restrained only when *substantive* evidence exists that such comment *seriously* prejudices true order and discipline of the Army.

—The Uniform Code of Military Justice should be revised to bring it more in accord with accepted principles of justice. Court-martial should not be used in lieu of leadership as was the case at the Presidio. The rights of the soldier must be better protected.

—Non-discriminatory promotions. Promotions should be made solely because of demonstrated merit and ability, without regard to source of commission (e.g., West Point, ROTC, OCS), component of service (e.g. regular, reserve), family background, race or religion. Discrimination on all these grounds now exists.

—Less conformity-conscious rating system. Efficiency report ratings should be more oriented to demonstrated and potential ability and less weighted by the opinion of one individual on whether or not an officer was constantly conforming to the wishes of that individual.

—Civilian surveillance. Civilian leaders, especially in the Pentagon and White House, must unceasingly seek out and reward officers who lead by their personal example and performance of duty rather than by force of rank. The service secretaries should be men with experience in military affairs, but with unquestioned independence. (This requirement should not exclude former military men from serving in civilian capacities. Examples: General James Gavin could probably be a more effective civilian Secretary of the Army than most civilians. President Eisenhower probably better preserved civilian control over the armed services than any recent President.)

To improve organization:

—Tough civilian leadership. Even though many officers would welcome a more streamlined and austere Army, they will certainly not succeed in achieving it unless supported by vigorous Congressional and Executive action.

—Reduction in Non-Combat Forces. Western Europe provides obvious examples, but the continental U.S. command structure could be greatly reduced without the slightest reduction in preparedness or effectiveness.

Present top-heavy unified command structures and unproductive specified commands must be reduced in accord with changing national priorities.

To reform is to prosper. Yet the armed services show few signs of reform vitality. This state of affairs is beginning to be appreciated by the public through the dark glass of recent history: vast overspending on the C-5A, ill-fated defense systems such as the F-111 and the Cheyenne Helicopter, the cover-up of My-Lai, the Green Beret murder accusations, the sordid activities of Major General Turner and Army Sergeant Major Wooldridge, the legal "overkill" of court-martials at Fort Jackson, Fort Dix and the Presidio, and the apparent futility and questionable judgment of such bloody incidents as the Hamburger Hill assault (for which the combat commander was rewarded with a third star and a choice job with the Joint Chiefs of Staff). These are now in the public domain and have disillusioned and alienated much of the civilian community.

But what is not yet at public issue is the inflexibility, shortsightedness and selfishness within the armed services which have allowed these incidents to occur.

—EDWARD L. KING

---

## THE DISSENTING MOTHER GOOSE

HOLLAR SCHOLAR

*A diller, a hollar,  
A sign waving scholar,  
What puts you in such gloom?  
The troops are in combat,  
And the National Guard's in my room.*

VOCAL VEEP

*Richard had a vocal veep,  
His voice was never low;  
And everywhere that Spiro went  
The words were sure to flow.  
He loved to bait the schools each day,  
He called the students slobs,  
And learned men who knocked the War,  
He labelled effete snobs.  
And Anger grew among us,  
But still he spewed more dirt;  
He was a polished Wallace  
In a button-down shirt.  
Why does he carry on so?  
The angry students cry;  
Why Richard has a Southern plan  
On which he must rely.*

— more on page 15