

A profession of arms

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In a group dynamic senior warrant officers distilled the essence of the current Army warrant officer cohort in the aftermath of a decade of persistent conflict.

The research and analysis was conducted by the authors while part of a study group consisting of Warrant Officer Senior Staff Course students. This team of students determined that the values sustaining the warrant officer cohort are consistent with those of the Army as a whole.

The Warrant Officer Corps embodies expert knowledge, integrity, service before self, and a visible quest for excellence. Furthermore, warrant officers enjoy a comprehensive training program that is continually fine-tuned as methodologies and technology progress. This allows for relative doctrine, a contemporary individual, organizational and institu-

tional development processes, and the appropriate integration of the warrant officer cohort with the Army's internal and external environments. These indispensable elements apply to the warrant officer in a technical professional that is further correctly identified as a "profession of arms."

Warrant Officers as a Profession of Arms in Relationship to the Military Technical Capacity

GEN Ronald R. Fogleman, U.S. Air Force chief of staff (1994-97) identified the common strengths within the profession of arms as integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. These certainly apply wholeheartedly to the Army and the warrant officer cohort as a profession of arms. Civilian/military education and certifications have ensured that warrant officers have sustained these strengths during

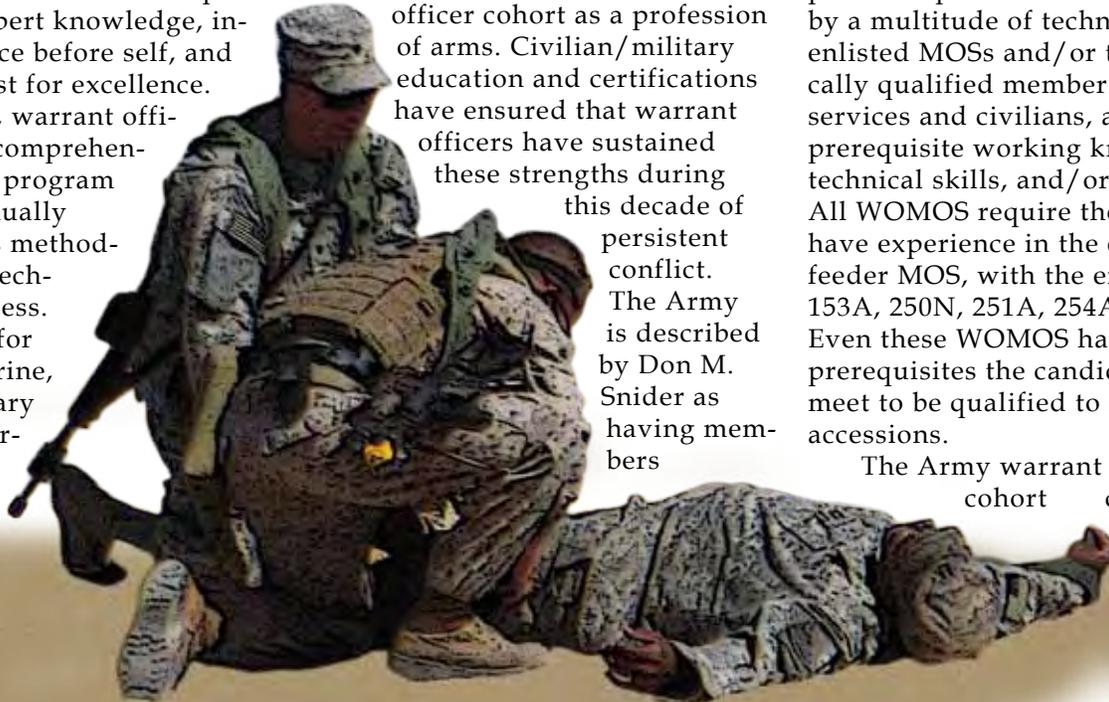
this decade of persistent conflict.

The Army is described by Don M. Snider as having members

that have expertise in service, knowledge, and having a professional military ethic that is tested and certified. These are elements that also apply to the warrant officer as a member of the Armed Forces and as a profession of arms.

To become a warrant officer, an individual must be physically and mentally fit, an outstanding Soldier and adept in his/her specialty. Recruitment into the warrant officer cohort is voluntary. However all volunteers are not accepted. Each candidate must undergo a rigorous validation process prior to entering the Warrant Officer Candidate School. This process ensures that only the most technically qualified applicants are selected. Currently there are 46 warrant officer military occupational specialties which are fed by a multitude of technical feeder enlisted MOSs and/or technically qualified members of other services and civilians, all with the prerequisite working knowledge, technical skills, and/or education. All WOMOS require the applicant have experience in the enlisted feeder MOS, with the exception of 153A, 250N, 251A, 254A, and 882A. Even these WOMOS have specific prerequisites the candidate must meet to be qualified to compete for accessions.

The Army warrant officer cohort comprises less than



Signal warrant officers regularly train in all phases of warrior skills relevant to the profession of arms as well as high technology aspects of modern communications.

three percent of the total Army. Although small in size, the level of responsibility is immense and only the very best will be selected to become warrant officers. Warrant officers are technical and tactical leaders who specialize, throughout an entire career, in a specific technical area. Expert knowledge within the warrant officer cohort is achieved through ongoing professional military education, degree completion programs, training with industry, mentorship, and various certification programs. Warrant officers' exceptional range in skills are developed over time, increased with technical experience, enhanced with specific technical focus and training, enforced with professional and civilian education, and sustained through civilian certifications which ensures their individual technical proficiency. These efforts are reflective of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet (PAM) 525-3-1 as it describes success in future Army operations, stating that a broad training enterprise develops and sustains the tactical and technical competence that builds both confidence and agility.

Branch proponents develop and update the WOBC training and technical certification standards to ensure that all warrant officers attain the degree of technical competence needed to perform in their WOMOS at the platoon through battalion levels. Don M. Snider Council for American Private Education notes that the Army tests and certifies its members. This can be applied to warrant officer education and certification program. Snider says, "The Army tests and certifies its members to ensure each meets the standards (both competence/expertise and morality/character) of the profession before being granted status as a full member of the profession as well as at each successive level of promotion/advancement. It maintains systems to train and educate individuals in a trainee or apprenticeship status until professional standards can be met."

All WOMOS receive strenuous training and participate in certification programs. For example, warrant officer aviators receive training that meets or exceeds the requirements by Federal Aviation Administration. Signal warrant officers are certified with a litany of commercial certifications such as project management professional, Microsoft's certified systems engineers, A+, Cisco certified network associates, Microsoft certified systems administrator, Security+ and certified information systems security professional to name a few which are easily compared to the civilian professions. These are listed as the top 10 technology certifications in information technology, based upon a survey of 17,000 civilian technology professionals. Acquisitions, Military Intelligence, Military Investigations, Special Forces, and Military Culinary professionals as well as other WOMOS, all have programs which are comparable to their civilian professional counterpart. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that computer and

mathematical occupations will add 785,700 new jobs by 2018. These technical professionals often come from the military ranks. This is verifiable as the Army has experienced a loss of personnel to the civilian work force as these personnel transition with ease due to the technical knowledge and professional skills gained during their military service.

From accession and attendance at WOCS to attendance at WOSSC, doctrinal guidance is established for each phase of warrant officer training. It is constantly changing to keep up with global situations and to gain accreditation. The doctrinal data is derived from TRADOC, feeder MOS, the 46 WOMOS, and the training centers at Fort Rucker, Ala. Training also reflects changing requirements from the various proponent/branch training centers (Warrant Officer Basic and Advance Course (WOBC and WOAC respectively).

With the success and history of the Army warrant officer at each capacity, the doctrine that guides the training is adequate. This doctrine is constantly changing in order to stay abreast of the needs of that capacity. The changes are dictated by the MOS proponent and technological advances in a particular MOS or training level.

TRADOC serves as the change agent for the Army's Human Capital Enterprise. Most of the assessment and certification of individual capacity occurs during institutional training, but this alone does not completely prepare the future force. Career colleges and proponent schools have a slow change life cycle. Field level pushback, lessons learned and unit tactics, techniques and procedures validate current practices. The Army needs to examine new models for assessment and certification. The warrant officer cohort is the best positioned agent to support change within the Army professions of arms.

The Army is a highly specialized, self-regulating profession tasked by its citizenry as a trusted defender of the Constitution. Army leaders and all members adhere to a strict code of moral conduct. The Army is an element of the joint force exerting necessary power in the science of war to protect the American way of life against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Current and future operational environments place heavy reliance on the capacities of the human dimension. This is due in large part to a need for the Army to conduct full spectrum operations in an ever changing and challenging OE. Field Manual (FM) 7-0, Training for Full Spectrum Operations, addresses the fundamentals of training modular, expeditionary Army forces for simultaneous offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations in an era of persistent conflict. TRADOC PAM

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Senior warrant officers attending their Professional Military Education course at the Warrant Officer Career College.

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525-3-7-01, The U.S. Army Study of the Human Dimension in the Future, focuses attention on the human dimensional components of Soldier moral, cognitive, and physical behavior necessary for Army organizational development and performance essential to raise, prepare, and employ future landpower. The document states that current trends in the global and domestic OE will challenge the United States' ability to maintain a future responsive, professional, all-volunteer Force.

The human element is the key to the Army's future. The Soldier is the centerpiece of transformation. Faced with continuous employment across the full range of military operations, the Army will require extraordinary strength in moral, physical, and cognitive components of its professional force. Developing a professionally competent Army requires attention to the cognitive component of the human dimension. Critical competencies of Soldiers must be identi-

fied as well as the processes and tools needed to build these competencies. TRADOC leaders indicate the most influencing Army resource lies in modular, tailored, accessible, and realistic training and leader education. Conventional practices must be revised. It's no longer good enough to simply train to a task. This order of learning is too elementary.

Army professionals must be innovative critical thinkers capable of sustaining high tactical, technical, and cultural intellect consistent and adaptive to all potential OE; particularly in respect to joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational operations. The advancement of technology is rapid. New equipment fielding is persistent. TTPs are constantly being refined as new threats evolve. TRADOC leaders have implemented appropriate self examination of the HCE to form institutional change that will have a significant impact on assessing and certifying the competence and overall intellectual/cognitive capabilities

within our Army of professionals.

The branch/proponents and professional military schools should collaborate across cohorts to understand the present TLE transformation that must occur. The warrant officer cohort is well advised to implement Recommendation 104 of the 2002 Warrant Officer Army Training and Leader Development Panel which advises us to "...develop and implement an integrated system for all Army officers that accounts for common direct leader skills and actions required by the Army Vision and full spectrum operations in the contemporary operational environment." It continues, "This education system must also meet the training and leader development requirements of Army officers by branch, grade position, specialty, functional area, and assignment." This document seems to be the most comprehensive study on behalf of the warrant officer cohort and should be re-examined to determine if these recommendations are still valid. And if they are

valid, why have they not been acted upon?

LTG [U.S. Army-Ret James C.] Riley (2002) in his presentation of the ATLDP-Warrant Officers, highlights the conclusion that the "Warrant Officer Education System fails to meet the needs of the Army and warrant officers and requires thorough revision." The report further concludes that warrant officer training and skills must be related to grade and position rather than linked to promotion and that the WOES must provide the right training at the right time. Furthermore, a system must be in place that promotes self-development.

It is widely acknowledged that the warrant officer cohort brings a high level of technical expertise to the profession of arms. However, too frequently this becomes the sole defining characteristic of the cohort and thus limits its full degree of military/technical capacity. Mistakenly, the warrant officer cohort is guilty of a narrow interpretation of military/technical capacity. Often warrant officers describes themselves from a single dimension of technical expertise rather than what the profession of arms demands – a highly specialized expert officer, leader, and trainer fully competent in technical, tactical, and leadership skills.

Expert knowledge must transcend all cohorts and is not only measured as an individual quality, but also should be exhibited as a collective unit quality. Warrant officers must possess the technical and leader skills that make them the innovative integrators and dynamic teachers characterized by the definition of the warrant officer of the "Future Force" in Department of the Army (DA) PAM 600-3. The warrant officer professional is critical to promoting the level of technical expertise demanded by the Army profession of arms. FM 6-22 Army Leadership makes note of the fact cohorts differ in the magnitude of responsibility vested in them. It is incumbent upon the warrant officer cohort to perform the appropriate self-examination to ensure it is contributing to the overall strength of assigned commands through its high degree of specialization and leader skills.

Efforts are not adequately shaping the leadership and technical competence necessary for future full spectrum operations according to needs assessed in current HCE studies. The level of responsibility vested in the warrant officer dictates a high-level of intellectual capacity. The warrant officer of today must be a self aware and adaptive learner. This characteristic requires conceptual components of intelligence such as mental agility, sound judgment, innovation, interpersonal tact, and domain knowledge.

Historically, domain knowledge is a position of warrant officer strength. However, it requires possessing facts, beliefs, and logical assumptions beyond core technical proficiency. Warrant officers should

seek mastery of domain knowledge. This entails mastery of tactical, technical, joint, cultural and geopolitical knowledge. Warrant officers, like leaders from other cohorts, have careers where learning is the product of immersion in three environments: institutional training and education (PME and technical branch proponent), operational assignments, and self-development.

Self-development is continuous. It involves the individual with support of first-line leaders and commanders. It results in a broadened focus where leaders become independent learners. And it includes both civilian and military education.

Military institution training and PME in conjunction with operational assignments will not totally ensure Army warrant officers sustain the degree of competency needed. Unfortunately, self-development participation is often adversely impacted by unit operational pace. The present WOES and operational assignments are not developing leadership and technical abilities adequately. There is an atrophy of technical expertise due to stagnation in assignments and evolving technology. As a consequence, warrant officers are not receiving the training necessary to remain current in their technical disciplines. Efforts must be explored to provide for greater self-development to bridge the gap between warrant officer institutional and unit training experiences.

The current warrant officer assessment undertaken advocates a new breed of warrant officer leader. As a cohort, can we accept something less than this new hybrid of "super professional?" The answer to this question is yes. It is unrealistic to expect that the volunteer force will generate warrant officer branch cohorts capable of identical tactical, technical, teacher/trainer, leadership and cognitive skill sets. We each possess different strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps rather than organizational excellence being the offshoot of individual capacity, we need to adjust our thinking to team excellence as the fundamental building block in our profession of arms. We need only exam the success of our Special Operations Forces to see the effectiveness of this model.

The Army has been very successful in managing this integration strategy which includes the integration and interface of initiatives and requirements across the command, its component commands, fellow combatant commands and multinational partners. Our Army must be balanced. We must be organized to be versatile; deployable enough to be expeditionary; responsive enough to be agile; pre

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cise enough to be lethal; robust and protected enough to be sustainable; and flexible enough to be interoperable with a wide range of partners.

These are the defining qualities of a balanced Army. They describe not only the operating force, but also the generating force. This forms the basis of this modernization strategy.

The imperative for the Army is that we must continuously and aggressively modernize our capabilities to ensure we remain the dominant force, capable of operating in all environments across the full spectrum of conflict, including: prevailing in protracted counterinsurgency campaigns; helping other nations build capacity; assuring our friends and allies; supporting civil authorities; and defeating varying threats.

Army leaders are beginning to give troops some flexibility in adjusting approaches to better suit uncertain conditions at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The Army uses the term 'decentralization' in this context. Decentralization may allow for greater flexibility of action within stabilization and counter insurgency operations. Improved military education in the more traditional sense - in leadership training as well as more formal trade training - will remain essential for militaries to manage the ever changing environments in the world.

There exist signs and symptoms of exhaustion, depression, and stress across mental, social, and physical boundaries. We understand that stress is tension produced by conditions in the work environment making negative impacts on ones psychological or emotional well-being. The widely accepted causes of stress in military life are attributable to such things as deployments overseas, exposure to combat, education and training and the threat of bodily harm. The periodic permanent change of station, stationing of personnel overseas, and lack of control over duty assignments are other examples of factors that may affect the mental health of its members.

This team of researchers discovered another unique stressor often missed. Through less than optimal levels of education and training, warrant officers have difficulty keeping pace with the new technology that the Army acquires from the civilian community. Commanders in the past have been viewed as non-supportive in allowing the senior warrant officers the time and funds necessary to seek and obtain the appropriate education and training required to meet the level of understanding needed to accomplish their assigned missions. Education and training on the latest technologies has come at a very high cost to units. This increases the stress on the technical advi-

sor to inform the command or produce a result that is acceptable to the commander's intent or requirement.

Moral and Ethical Capacity

The military profession requires Soldiers to discharge their professional duties in a moral and ethical manner. Army leaders in particular are obligated to the American people to maintain professional competence and personal character. As members of the profession of arms, leaders must exhibit the qualities which mark service in the military as a truly professional endeavor. These qualities include a code of professional conduct, a high degree of competence based on established and well regulated examinations of skill, education, and performance, and self-regulation to purge those members who fail to meet standards or demonstrate required professional knowledge. Like other professions such as medicine and law, the military also requires institutional training to develop a broad range of skills and a commitment to continuous education.

Successful Army leaders have consistently promoted strong morale, cohesion, and mental preparation in their subordinates. In units with strong bonds, warrant officers reflect their leader's professional values and report that core Soldier values are very important to them. Without such bonding and positive leadership, some otherwise highly cohesive units have adopted dysfunctional norms and behaviors. This socialization process reflects the Soldier's internalization of these values as his or her own.

This includes a variety of scenarios such as leadership in an organization, lack of knowledge and/or experience conducive to the assignment, lack of education, personal value system, strength of character, pay disparity between "O grade" officers and "W grade" officers (and professional expectations are on a higher level at times for warrant officer - i.e. working in "O grade" position or commensurate responsibility but huge pay disparity). Moral/ethical stressors can be levied at individual, organizational or institutional levels.

The Army develops warrant officers as leaders and technicians who embody the highest standards of moral and ethical conduct. Warrant officers must internalize, demonstrate and sustain a warrior ethos that insists upon commitment to core institutional values. The strengths that have sustained the warrant officer cohort are consistent with those of the Army as they envelope leadership, expert knowledge, integrity, service before self, and excellence. These indispensable elements apply to the warrant officer as leaders and technical professionals identifying them as a profession of arms.

The Co-Authors of this article consist of a profes-

sional group of warrant officers, who recently graduated from the Warrant Officer Senior Staff Course. Their combined total military experience is equivalent to 249 combined years of Army service.

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ACRONYM QuickScan

ATLDP – Army Training and Leader Development Panel
CAPE – Council for American Private Education
COCOM – Combatant Command
COIN – Counter Insurgency
DA – Department of the Army
FM – Field Manual
GTA – Graphic Training Aid
HCE – Human Capital Enterprise
JAG – Judge Advocate General
JIIM – Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational
MOS – Military Occupational Specialty
OE – Operational Environment
PAM – Pamphlet

PME – Professional Military Education
TLE – Training and Leader Education
TRADOC – Training and Doctrine Command
TTP – Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
WOAC – Warrant Officer Basic Advance Course
WOBC – Warrant Officer Basic Course
WOCS – Warrant Officer Candidate School
WOES – Warrant Officer Education System
WOMOS – Warrant Officer Military Occupational Specialties
WOSC – Warrant Officer Staff Course
WOSSC – Warrant Officer Senior Staff Course