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CLOSING THE CANDOR CHASM: THE MISSING ELEMENT OF ARMY PROFESSIONALISM

Paul Paolozzi

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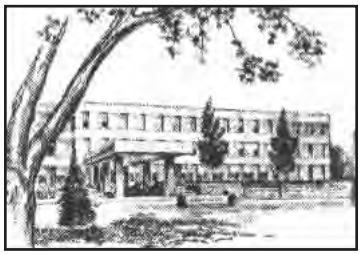

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, U.S. Army War College, 47 Ashburn Drive, Carlisle, PA 17013-5010.

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Previous titles in this series include:

1. *The Army's Professional Military Ethic in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, by Dr. Don M. Snider, Major Paul Oh, and Major Kevin Toner, October 2009.

2. *The Army Officers' Professional Ethic – Past, Present, and Future*, by Colonel Matthew Moten, February 2010.

3. *Resolving Ethical Challenges in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, by Major Tony Pfaff, April 2011.

4. *Once Again, the Challenge to the U.S. Army Military during a Defense Reduction: To Remain a Military Profession*, by Dr. Don M. Snider, January 2012.

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FOREWORD

In June 2013, the Army published *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 1, The Army Profession*, the first official doctrine the Army has ever issued that describes itself as a unique military profession. One of the essential characteristics of the military profession described in that doctrine is Stewardship:

> The five essential characteristics of the Army Profession—trust, military expertise, honorable service, esprit de corps, and stewardship—establish what General George C. Marshall described as the common spirit that binds us together as a unique military profession. Together, these characteristics provide the moral and motivational rally points around which we organize our self-understanding about what it means for the Army to be a profession and for members of the Army to be professionals.
>
> It is our commitment to the effectiveness of these characteristics in action, everyday in everything we do as professionals. As a profession, stewardship ensures we remain worthy of the trust of the American people—not just now, but also in the future. This is the essence of stewardship. Stewardship of the Army Profession is our moral responsibility to ensure the long term effectiveness of the Army as a military profession.

In this monograph, the fifth in the series on the Army's Professional Military Ethic, Colonel Paul Paolozzi challenges the Stewards of the Army Profession by addressing the well-known fact that such earned trust can only be based on relationships and communications of candor. Paolozzi's head-on approach addresses what he coins the "candor chasm," the space between what we say we value and what

is actually said or written. He argues that the topic of candor is largely absent in Army literature, muted in professional dialogue, and individually valued but organizationally uncommon. He posits that, as a profession, the Army cannot have it both ways. Either candor is valued, heralded, rewarded, and encouraged, or it remains peripheral. If the latter, it is to the detriment of new leaders who learn that forthright communication is not valued, a lesson that is as damaging to individual character as it is institutionally to the Army.

Paolozzi posits that candor involves risk, exposure, and contention, but at the same time he recognizes that encouraging authentic communication is not a license for unbridled exchange. His first-hand experience with all three Army components provides him with unique insights and personal illustrations developed while he served as an engineer battalion and brigade commander in Afghanistan. From his perspective, the bedrock of the Army can only be built on trust, trust that relies on forthright communication and candor. Without it, the professional status of the Army is in jeopardy.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute and
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PAUL PAOLOZZI, a colonel in the U.S. Army, is currently the Army's Senior Fellow to the Brookings Institution. He was commissioned an Engineer and served in the 15th Engineer Battalion, 9th Infantry Division, including service in Operation DESERT STORM. He then commanded a company in the 6th Engineer Battalion, 6th Infantry Division, in Alaska and subsequently served as a tactical officer, U.S. Corps of Cadets (USCC), and staff officer at the U.S. Military Academy. Colonel Paolozzi was selected to be a Joint Staff intern with service in J5, Joint Staff, and as the executive officer of the Army Initiatives Group. Colonel Paolozzi joined the 11th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, as the Battalion S3 in Kosovo and subsequently served as the Engineer Brigade S3. He departed Kuwait in December 2002 to become the aide-de-camp to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and later a congressional fellow before taking battalion command of the 864th Engineer Battalion in 2005. Colonel Paolozzi commanded the 864th during the unit's first combat deployment to Afghanistan and then returned to Fort Lewis, WA. In 2008, Colonel Paolozzi served as the military assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs). In 2009 he took command of the 18th Engineer Brigade, Schwetzingen, Germany and deployed the Brigade to Afghanistan for the unit's second rotation. Colonel Paolozzi graduated from Utica College of Syracuse University and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS. He holds master's degrees from Long Island University and the National Defense University.

SUMMARY

Expressing openness and transparency is something we all say that we want but often choose to forego. Candor intimidates and creates discomfort; consequently, its presence is most often inversely proportional to rank and organizational size. There is no shortage of reasons why authentic communication is not used, but it is difficult to find precisely where candor stops being important or why it seems to be so undervalued. It is tough to measure, cannot be legislated, and is often organizationally absent, even when everyone seems to want it desperately.

Candor stands as the keystone element in creating the foundation of trust in the Army, yet the topic is muted. The difficult issues of balance in the Army between competing demands and, equally important, the maintenance and development of the people who make up the Army in a decade of expected budget cuts, requires plain-spoken leaders at all levels. But these leaders do not express authentic communication because the time is right; they do it because they are loyal stewards of the Army Profession. It is time to discuss what is missing in Army Values. Resurrecting candor requires a new taxonomy that is simple and explains the relationship with honesty. Previously, the Army incorporated candor in doctrine, yet nearly no mention of it currently exists in education, training, and professional discourse. Could this be the reason it is not as prevalent as it should be throughout the Army?

Fully developing the topic of candor involves exposure, risk, and possibly contention to embody authenticity. Two examples—the demands placed on the Army Reserve Components and a review of the

Army's counseling and evaluation environment—serve as areas where candor requires revitalization. The Army now has an opportunity to reevaluate how trust, the bedrock of the profession, can be bolstered through leadership and an infusion of candor at all levels, revisiting the sacrosanct seven Army Values, and by bolstering education and training with forthright communication at the earliest levels of leader development.

CLOSING THE CANDOR CHASM: THE MISSING ELEMENT OF ARMY PROFESSIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

> . . . If as an officer one does not tell blunt truths or create an environment where candor is encouraged, then they have done themselves and the institution a disservice.[1]
>
> Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, 2008

Openly expressing truth and being transparent—it is something we all say that we want, but often choose not to execute. Candor intimidates; it is messy, hard, creates discomfort, and its presence is most often inversely proportional to rank and organizational size. Culture, politics, and societal "developments," all serve as culprits for why it is not used. It is difficult to find precisely where candor stops being important or why it seems to be so undervalued. It is tough to measure, cannot be legislated, and is often organizationally absent even when everyone seems to want it desperately. Welcoming candor is not a license to be brash, angry, or habitually wrong; it is the constructive contribution to communication that builds transparency. Naturally, nearly everyone can think of a vivid illustration of candor, closely followed by an expectation of how candor *should* be a part of how professionals communicate.

Larger than life leaders, such as General of the Army George C. Marshall, serve as symbols enshrined in our minds because his timeless character provides a guide for future generations. Marshall is routinely ref-

erenced as a quintessential role model with legendary stature as a "straight-shooter." Those who have read of his famous private exchanges, in which he challenged General John Pershing during World War I in France as a captain and President Franklin Roosevelt during World War II, are amazed at his steadfastness as a man of candor.[2] During the first exchange, Marshall boldly placed his hand on Pershing's arm in an effort to return Pershing's attention to his comments. Unable to recall exactly what he said, Marshall released a torrent of facts in what he called an "inspired moment."[3] In the second example, Marshall followed then Secretary Henry Morgenthau's advice for addressing President Roosevelt, "Stand up and tell him what you think. . . . There are too few people who do it, and he likes it!"[4] Marshall quietly demanded 3 minutes of the President's time and ended with "If you don't do something . . . and do it right away, I don't know what is going to happen to this country."[5]

Following each of Marshall's candid episodes, others believed he was destined for an abbreviated career, but Marshall experienced exactly the opposite. What is often forgotten about these stories is that Pershing and Roosevelt personally valued candor. They chose to reinforce and reward candor as opposed to extinguishing it. In these two examples, candor was not only valued but transportable for Marshall in very different environments. Their trust in Marshall was simply illuminated in these events, not created there. Marshall *created* trust by being a man of candor early in his career and not veering from the path.

Candor is a critical mark of character in communication—providing strength, purpose, boldness, and validity. A dearth of candor impedes the flow and accuracy of information and ultimately erodes trust

between parties. The net effect of its absence goes beyond ineffective communication; it degrades confidence in institutions, leaders, and organizations. For the U.S. Army, it should serve as bedrock in a profession that espouses a sacred bond with the American people, civil leaders, and fellow soldiers. Whether in matters of strategic importance, such as advising our nation's most senior leaders, or daily interpersonal exchanges, such as providing feedback and evaluations to subordinates, forthright communication is equally important. Candor in the Army has eroded through neglect, chiefly in training, education, counseling, and evaluations, effectively limiting the manner in which trust is reinforced.

Exercising candor is not the same as telling the truth; candor more accurately embodies the achievement of honesty often by revealing risk, contention, openness, and authenticity.[6] In February 2003, then General Erik K. Shinseki answered a question posed by Senator Carl Levin regarding the magnitude of the Army's force requirement during an occupation of Iraq *truthfully* when he deferred the precise numbers to the Combatant Commander—no further answer was needed. When Levin pressed Shinseki, "How 'bout a range?" Shinseki replied with unflinching *candor*—candor unwelcomed by senior Department of Defense (DoD) leadership, who later characterized his accurate testimony as "outlandish" and "wildly off the mark." The experienced Levin knew the question was best answered by the Combatant Commander, but was still well within Shinseki's knowledge. Shinseki exemplified frankness when replying "several hundred thousand," even though he knew senior DoD leaders advocated a light-footprint and quick response campaign.[7] Candor involves exposure.

Beyond a personal belief that candor exposes forthright thinking, the dictionary definition identifies the character and manner in which candor is exchanged: "The state or quality of being frank, open, and sincere in speech or expression."[8] The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* reinforces qualities that define candor as "freedom from prejudice or malice" and "unreserved, honest, or sincere expression," which represent candor's role as an independent element of trust.[9]

Fully developing the topic of candor requires more than a bold example and a dictionary definition, however. This research will first present a new taxonomy of how candor should be viewed as a multifaceted ethic through different examples. Next, I will review the Army's recent past and current perspective from literature guiding how candor is viewed and valued. Third, I will provide two examples to illustrate how candor is muted at both the organizational and the interpersonal levels. Finally, I will offer recommendations for reviving candor in the Army, a revival that starts with identifying the four facets of candor and outlining the different ways in which it operates.

THE FOUR FACETS OF CANDOR

Establishing, or reinvigorating, candor in the Army is professionally important and more easily understood through its multifaceted framework. Routinely, candor is understood within an archetypal framework: a subordinate summoning the courage to express genuine thought to a senior. Subordinate to senior candor is commonly addressed, but three additional types of candor are particularly relevant to the Army context: senior to subordinate candor; peer candor; and self-candor.[10]

Subordinate to Senior Candor.

The most widely understood directional concept of candor is represented by a subordinate speaking candidly to a senior as opposed to sharing only what he perceives the senior wants to hear. Subordinates are often junior, less experienced, and may feel unease displaying candor because of the senior's supervisory authority and/or evaluative position. In lower echelon units, subordinates may have more experience, which may facilitate candid communication. For ease of reference, I'll refer to it as subordinate candor.

The best noncommissioned officers (NCOs) earn their reputation as professionals skilled in exercising subordinate candor. They speak plainly and often create healthy professional discomfort due to their straightforward approach. They understand they are not placed in senior enlisted advisor's positions to be liked, make friends, or be popular. Their role is to steadfastly guide and advise regardless of whether their opinion is solicited. NCOs promoted too soon or immersed in a candorless culture seldom fully gain an understanding of how their professional custodianship is essential to the Army profession.

Damage to an organization can be manifested beyond the primary participants when subordinate candor does not exist. Sarah Chayes, a former special adviser to the Joint Staff, courageously implicated herself and a host of others in their collective role as a responsible party allowing General David Petreaus to continue what appeared to be an inappropriate relationship in Iraq.

> In a community, friends—and even military subordinates—bear some collective responsibility for the

> behavior of their friends or superiors, as uncomfortable as it may be to intervene. Even more importantly, those who claim a stake in national security policy ought to bear some collective responsibility for the national interest. That national interest, if not Petraeus's welfare, should have outweighed any reticence. Yet none of us, that I know of—including me—asked him a tough question.[11]

Subordinate candor is ideally displayed at the highest levels of authority as well, particularly when Army senior leaders provide expert military advice to the President or Congress. The agents (senior Army leaders) have the responsibility to provide the principal (Chief Executive or Congress) candid knowledge to make well-informed decisions.

Senior to Subordinate Candor.

Within this form of candor, two scenarios routinely serve as the model in the Army: a senior counseling and providing evaluations for those within the established chain of command, and mentorship. Likewise, for ease of reference I'll refer to it as senior candor. Senior responsibilities are delineated in *U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 6-22*, but the missing essential element of providing candid feedback has serious repercussions for each party in both of these contexts.[12] Providing formal and informal feedback to subordinates serves as an important factor in subordinate development. One of the most frequent complaints from Career Course captains and Intermediate Level Education majors is that their superiors never took the time to counsel them—the interaction is desired and cannot be replaced by experiential learning.

In my experience, junior leaders will, in turn, exercise candor in feedback engagements they lead if they see it modeled by seniors. What may appear to be a routine and expected duty for the senior can become more daunting than combat for those unskilled or inexperienced in providing feedback. Investing in a subordinate through candid feedback and counseling is not a skill conferred through rank; it is difficult and requires proper modeling, education, and frequent practice through training.

Mentorship, an important facet of leader development in the Army, shares this facet of senior candor. Whereas most common mentoring relationships focus on career development and navigation, senior leaders infrequently take the time to invest in more junior leaders by providing the blunt comments essential for a healthy mentoring relationship.[13] Mentoring is not simply providing a navigational chart for clear waters in a similar career path. It involves the courage to speak forthrightly and provide the mentee guidance *and* correction. Mentors serve best when in a role that encourages development through revelation, reflection, and periodic correction.[14]

Peer Candor.

Peer candor is exercised routinely through informal interpersonal interaction. Given the locus of such conversations, it is difficult to make an assertion of how well developed this form of candor is in the Army, and it almost certainly varies widely. During the past year, peer candor has taken a more formal shape in the Army's Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) tool, which provides concrete feedback through a less-used form of peer candor.[15] In

my experience, the feedback delivered through this masked mechanism is candid and includes valuable information because of the maturity and experience of the peers who participate.

In September 2006, retired General Jack Keane rendered his unvarnished thoughts to Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and General Peter Pace regarding the Iraq War's trajectory. His subordinate candor was a rare interaction with a secretary known for his distrust of senior generals.[16] Three days later, Keane met with Pace who bluntly asked Keane ". . . how do you think I'm doing as Chairman after 1 year on the job?" What followed the unusual question was Keane's routine display of candor: "I would give you a failing grade."[17] Keane was known then as he is today for his forthright candor.

Peer candor dwells in a sense of loyalty to a person with an established relationship and a desire to constructively contribute to his or her development. Indirectly, the loyalty invested in a peer may also be to the organization because of the need for correction. As Sarah Chayes aptly wrote, action may be necessary ". . . as uncomfortable as it may be to intervene."[18] For some leaders, peer candor may have been completely absent throughout their careers, posing a serious obstacle to exercising self-candor.

Self-Candor.

Self-candor, a construct infrequently discussed, may be the wellspring from which the other three forms of candor are generated. It is the leader's ability to have self-understanding through introspective "discussions" of their own position that makes the candor they provide to others valued. Authenticity

within oneself allows candor with others. A leader's motives, intent, feelings, and emotions are fully realized through self-candor. Through self-candor, leaders can more accurately assess their strengths and weaknesses, measure effectiveness as they lead others, and provide forthright feedback and advice at strategic levels. Directors at the Center for Creative Leadership and coaches within the Army's MSAF both note that toxic leaders inflate their self-assessments and humble leaders tend to underestimate their leadership attributes.[19] The abusive leader is delusional, and the humble leader may not fully realize his potential, but both require a better grasp for candor when understanding themselves.

All four facets of candor are directionally different but in substance the same—a forthright and transparent way of presenting information.[20] Candor may reveal itself in many ways in a profession but is best understood through the examples in common communication. To further develop the topic of authentic communication from an Army perspective, recent literature serves as a strong starting point.

THE ARMY'S VIEW OF CANDOR: INDIVIDUALLY VALUED, ORGANIZATIONALLY UNCOMMON

> The trust between all levels [of interaction] depends on candor.[21]

The beginning quote from Secretary Gates is complemented by his *Reflections on Leadership*, which outlines candor, credibility, and dissent as key dimensions exercised by Army leaders with uncommon agility. Although war and the environment where the fight

resides may change, he still encourages ". . . men and women in uniform to call things as they see them and tell their subordinates and their superiors alike what they need to hear, and not what they want to hear."[22] Gates' espousal of subordinate and senior candor is an embrace for authentic communication at the most senior DoD level. As Gates writes of the disservice to "themselves and the institution," he is detailing loyalty (to the institution—the nation or DoD—and fellow soldiers) while establishing trust and reinforcing it.

While Gates' bold style displays his own individual appreciation for candor, Army literature—both doctrinal and white paper references—are not as assertive. From a recent historical perspective, the *Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-68, The Bedrock of Our Profession*, White Paper from 1986 outlines what the Army previously referred to as the four individual values: commitment, competence, candor, and courage.[23] As late as 1986, when candor was addressed as an individual value, the paper lightly defined it as "honesty and fidelity to the truth."[24] The authors grazed the subject but struggled with fully describing candor and its importance to establishing trust in a professional setting.

In the 2010 *The Profession of Arms White Paper* approved by General Martin Dempsey, then the Commanding General of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the Profession of Arms with a professional culture is codified.[25] The *White Paper* serves as the basis for *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP)-1* and *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP)-1* (draft dated September 25, 2012) and makes the first purposeful step forward on the Army as a profession since the late 1990s discussion on Army Values.[26] Notably absent is the role of candor as an individual con-

struct. Candor appears once in the 21-page document in a commonplace reference, ". . . committing Soldiers and leaders to disciplined candor when advising and interacting with civilian officials or public audiences." The sentence reflects an example of senior candor, but the document never develops why candor is essential in communication—to build trust and create transparency.[27]

The Army's current work, "The Army Profession" in ADRP-1 outlines the five essential characteristics of the Army Profession: trust, military expertise, honorable service, *esprit de corps*, and stewardship of the profession.[28] Trust leads the publication and is heralded as "The Bedrock of our Profession." As part of trust, and the means by which Army professionals build trust in their units, the document outlines three certification criteria: competence, character, and commitment.[29] Sound familiar? The organizing construct seems clear and simple, but trust and the means by which the three certification criteria are put into practice require something more. Assuming trust is the end-product of skilled, ethical, and committed professionals, it lacks the source from which it is created, communicated, and modeled. Candor is essential in this role.

Why is Candor Muted in Army Professionalism Writing?

Simply recognizing that candor is muted in the Army requires an explanation of the key causes. Admittedly, candor creates discomfort, it can be attributed to several factors present in doctrine, systems, and culture. Trust and candor show no relationship to one another in Army literature. Recent Army writings

make a valued step forward in establishing the characteristics of the Army as a profession but fail to link candor and Army trust. ADRP-1 details that:

> . . . trust serves as a vital organizing principle that enables effective and ethical mission command and a profession that will continue to earn the trust of the American people.[30]

That trust is maintained by:

> . . . doing our work each and every day in a trustworthy and effective manner, one the American people judge to be ethical according to the beliefs and values they hold dear.[31]

Granted, there are many ways of earning trust and enshrining it as a part of the Army Profession, but Army doctrine and supporting literature must be more direct on the role of candor. Doctrine provides a common foundation for the concepts that unite professionals; with no mention of the role of candor, however, it is rare in practice and training.

Major General (Ret.) Dennis Laich and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Charles Young argue that contrarian views, often expressed with candor, are often hammered into conformity due to a top-down rating system combined with a rigid retirement system that produces group-think.[32] They submit that if a culture of conformity exists, then espoused values such as candor, courage, and integrity are overwhelmingly strained. Although separately conceivable, the combined effect of rigid systems and an absence of candor in doctrine double the impact. It is also likely that the Army's myopic focus on the seven Army Values has created an institutionalized blindness to other vir-

tues.[33] Even though candor is nearly absent in Army doctrine, it can only be reinforced, not established, by doctrine. Interaction with candor is personally experienced and *then* reinforced through doctrine. Doctrine plays a supporting role, not the lead.

An equally plausible, yet rarely expressed, reason for the lack of candor can be found in the Army "can-do" culture itself. The duty-driven Army that never accepts defeat and never quits might find it heresy to admit that the 2006 strategy in Afghanistan was not working or that in 2003 the Army in Iraq was not prepared to fight an insurgency. Is it culturally acceptable to admit mission or operational shortcomings when you are the commander? When candor is not embraced, how long does it take for leaders from company to coalition level to candidly assess their current situation? An inability to properly understand conditions and admit errors is equally as damaging to the Army as thoughtless pretense that accompanies "can-do" approaches that lead down the wrong course.

Whether candor's lack of value is a result of its absence in professional literature and discourse, the military's hierarchical structure with industrial pay and retirement systems, or the Army's unintentionally adverse can-do culture, the Army needs to reinvigorate candor in both concept and practice. But illuminating only historical examples comes with the ease of perfect hindsight and often ignores current and possibly contentious areas that need improvement. Instead, by focusing on two areas that currently need attention, the Army Reserve Components and the Army evaluations and feedback environment, I will describe areas where transparency and candor can make a positive impact and align Army trust with espoused values.[34] No one has to like or agree with the following ex-

amples, because one aspect of candor is respectful disagreement.

The Capability of the Army Reserve Components.

Authentic communication matters at the component organizational level as much as it does at the interpersonal level. A review of concerns in the Army Reserve Components will serve as the first illustration of the impact of muted candor. It may not have been obvious to the average American, but a controversial change occurred in the military during the early part of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Implemented in 2003 and formalized in a DoD directive in 2008, the Reserve Components shifted from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve.[35] In other words, the history of the mobilization of the Reserve Components for large scale wars, such as World War II, or partial mobilizations, such as Operation DESERT STORM, shifted to periodic deployments with longer stabilization periods, relative to the active component. There are notable exceptions, such as the frequent use of the Air National Guard prior to 2001 as a part of the U.S. Air Force overall mission, but my comments will focus on the two Army Reserve Components after 2003.

The decision to change to an Operational Reserve ushered in a new era for the Reserve Components. Throughout the Army Reserve and Army National Guard, training, material, and personnel or manning have significantly improved in the last decade. Judging by my experience, most of the brigade to detachment level units significantly enhanced readiness for deployment. Training has also improved, but the majority of training events remain exclusively Reserve Component activities. Under most circumstances,

units have the requisite amount of personnel assigned for the deployed mission, and most are trained in their assigned specialty. Similarly, today's material readiness replaced the previous paradigm in which the Reserve Components received secondhand equipment only after Active Component units received new equipment. The division between "have" and "have-not" was replaced by similar units receiving similar equipment, regardless of component. One facet of the Reserve Components, however, has not changed since the founding of the National Guard over 375 years ago—they are filled with dedicated professionals who deeply desire to serve their nation and Army.

Due to the absence or limited representation of candor, patriotism serves as the aegis in conversations when making recommended improvements about the Army National Guard and Reserve. Suggestions that reserve units are not as prepared after training or as capable when deployed are met with political and senior military attacks that make most leaders unwilling to present valid concerns. Congressional testimony and senior level conversations tend to focus passionately on the basic underlying assumption that, with the requisite amount of training and preparation before deployment, a reserve component unit will have the same proficiency as an active duty unit.[36] This may be true with some units, but in my experience it applies to less than one-quarter of the Reserve Component units I have served with in 27 years of service. The operational reserve has not been fully resourced to be "operational."[37]

Injecting openness into the professional discourse would give prominence to the stresses placed on the reserve components during the last decade. After commanding an engineer battalion in Afghanistan from

2005 to 2006 and an engineer brigade across the whole of Afghanistan from 2011 to 2012, with 50 to 60 percent of assigned units coming from the Army Reserve or National Guard, I noted areas of concern. Chief among them was that authentic communication was not a part of the dialogue at the tactical to operational level prior to deployment when determining the capability of fielded units. Of equal concern, some general officers, senior-level staff members, and those within a brigade-level peer network detailed deficiencies in Reserve Component units' capability while deployed.[38] These privately expressed comments exposed leader development shortfalls and training limitations before and during mobilization that periodically limited overall combat readiness. Units deployed from the Army National Guard ranged between 45 percent and 80 percent original members and required substantial individual fillers. Regretfully, the shortcomings noted privately were never expressed openly or, when publically expressed later, became less critical.

To the credit of many Reserve Component battalion and company commanders, they often expressed their concerns to superiors and trainers in a multifaceted way.[39] They understood themselves and where they required change, provided forthright comments regarding where they needed improvement, and did all they could during the combat deployment to focus on returning home a more competent unit. Concerns before deploying were met with focused comments regarding the requirement the unit must fill, an awareness of training limitations, and an expectation of what the unit would receive as they arrived in Afghanistan. There is an unrecognized disconnect between those who identify the shortfalls at battalion level and below and those senior to them who are cognizant of the capability of the reserve component units.

Lieutenant General James Dubik (Retired) and Colonel David Hodne recently wrote in the February 2013 issue of *ARMY Magazine*:

> Senior commanders, whether during their own battlefield circulation or via reports, rely heavily upon battalion commanders and command sergeants major for accurate—even brutally honest—descriptions and assessments. Such communications are absolutely essential to the coherency and efficacy of wartime command and form the grist for a fact-based dialogue among echelons of command, a dialogue that increases the probability that the organization as a whole has sufficient understanding and can, therefore, adapt its operations properly to the enemy and situation it faces.[40]

Absent the "descriptions and assessments" characterized as "brutally honest," it is impossible for the Army to fully understand the strengths and limitations of the Total Army. Assuming that the Budget Control Act of 2011 (Defense Sequestration of 2013) continues to the full 10-year term, the reductions in the Active Component of the U.S. Army will result in heavier reliance on the already stretched Reserve Components.[41] Now is a better time than ever, at a point of reflection and transition, to begin the discourse regarding the full magnitude of strain on the Reserve Components, limitations with the frequency of deployments, and realistic expectations within the current training model. The realized benefits of how the Total Army could better integrate training, personnel systems, and realistic pre-deployment assessment might yield the total force that the Army espouses but that is difficult to realize.

Culturally, it is unacceptable to make any comment that detracts from the esteem of Reserve Components.

Avoiding the point actually creates a greater concern as the Army prepares for increased reliance on the Reserve Components. Our nation needs leaders who are comfortable enough to properly project exactly how all units are prepared for deployment across all levels of capability. Simply expressing comments that tout the cost-benefit value of Reservists without also addressing the actual capability of Reserve Soldiers reinforces the need for accuracy.[42] My intent is not to create animosity between components; conversely, I advocate that assignments between components should be a requirement before reaching the grade of major. Joint qualification is required for colonels to be promoted to general because they must understand all services. Likewise, Army officers who master their profession should be fully experienced across both the Active and Reserve Components before they become field grade officers.[43] A greater blending of the components will be the best course for leaders who understand each component and have the ability to speak openly from experience.

The focal point in this candor example has less to do with the improvements still needed in the Operational Reserve Components and more with the gap between where the Total Army stands and how senior leaders' portray the capabilities of the Reserve Components. The organizational self-candor needed to present the forthright concerns within the Reserve Components is essential as the Army understands itself and then accurately depicts the Total Army outwardly, through subordinate candor, to the Joint Force and Congress.

Candor in Army Evaluations and Counseling.

The impact of interpersonal candor in evaluations and counseling is fundamentally as important as identifying shortfalls at the large organizational level. How leaders model communication within the Army reveals as much about the Army culture and profession as what is communicated outside of the Army. It is indisputable that integrity and forthright communication are espoused values. They are timeless, unbending, and essential for the Army as a profession and serve as a foundation of trust; yet the way most counseling sessions and evaluations are communicated, authentic communication is wanting. Evaluators use faint (untruthful) praise rather than explicitly describing poor performance in written evaluations after failing to provide periodic counseling and feedback. Empty praise has become the accepted written evaluative communication. More damning is the education of junior leaders, who observe that candor is not valued and, consequently, are condemned to perpetuate that misconception.

The importance of candor in evaluations could not be more evident than in the extreme example of the Fort Hood, TX, shooting. Major Nidal Hasan was identified by his supervisors and colleagues during his residency and post-residency fellowship as a chronically poor performer, was ranked in the bottom 25 percent of his class, and clearly exhibited escalating violent Islamist extremism.[44] His conduct disturbed many of his peers and superiors, yet Hasan was never disciplined, referred to counterintelligence officials, or removed from his otherwise successful career path.[45] Even though one of Hasan's supervisors twice attempted in counseling to encourage him to leave the

service after telling him, "I don't think you and the military will fit," Hasan was later promoted, placed in an elite fellowship, and "received evaluations that flatly misstated his actual performance."[46] Both of his evaluations from June 2008 and June 2009 were filled with the same flowery and empty praise that continues to plague evaluations across the Army.[47]

Hasan's "evaluations bore no resemblance of the real Hasan."[48] Yet Hasan's "candor chasm," the difference between his evaluations and his real performance, is commonplace in the Army today. In an effort to make all leaders feel as if their contributions to a demanding profession (especially during the last decade at a time of war) are valued, evaluations lack accurate narrative comments. Those who thrive on openness and want the best for the Army are dismayed when poor performers are promoted at the same rate as the talented. Ironically, in my experience, below average performers value candor as well, yet they rarely hear it. Initially, true comments may sting, but even a poor performer with a modicum of self-candor is repulsed to hear faint praise disguised as the truth. Some with below average potential have even expressed relief when the "candor chasm" is closed. Tragically, it may be mid-career before a leader receives candid comments, to the detriment of the Army and the individual.[49] Unsurprisingly, having been at war for over a decade and maintained a constantly rotating force, the Army retained even low performers, many of whom were promoted beyond their level of talent. The Army can benefit from the complementary mission of reinvigorating forthright communication while simultaneously restoring credibility to the retention and promotion system.

Evaluations and quality counseling form the cornerstone whereby leaders receive accurate performance feedback and assess their future potential in the Army. Junior and senior leaders alike thrive on forthright feedback but can become disillusioned when it is not provided. They are starving for bold leaders who speak candidly and are willing to show the courage to invest in subordinate leader improvement and establish a foundation of trust. On a more mechanical path, the Army has focused the last 3 years on another effort to improve the Officer Evaluation Report (OER) and Non-Commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOER). The effort to further refine how the top, middle, and bottom performers are identified through rote measure will improve, but the effort bypasses the importance of forthright communication, while assessing performance and leadership potential. The recent return of potential stratification (also known as "block check") for all company grade officers is a manifest sign that candor is absent in the narrative of evaluations and could only be corrected through the return of "forced candor" as the one clear indicator of how a senior rater evaluates potential.[50]

Forced candor is one means of identifying a leader uncomfortable with performing his or her duty. Jack Welch, the former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of General Electric, was accused of being caustic in his delivery of candor to his employees, but he believes that representing performance with candor is the most direct and respectful way of building trust, benefiting the organization, and letting people know where they stand.[51] Most Soldiers, too, would appreciate the Welch approach—they did not enter the Army to be mollycoddled and instead expect forthright leaders who have the courage to provide senior candor. Near-

ly all leaders, regardless of whether the senior leader feels comfortable providing it, value direct communication and want senior leaders to invest in counseling with developmental comments. Welch chastises supervisors who abdicate their responsibility with gut-punching directness: "Admit it—you're doing this for your own sake. You just don't want to have those conversations."[52] Motivated by the defense of the nation, Soldiers must communicate forthrightly because it is their duty, a sacred responsibility to invest in the Army between Soldiers at the interpersonal level and those who trust the Army to protect our nation's interests at the strategic and national security level.

Moreover, leader management lacks evaluative continuity, limiting the Army's ability to grow a leader from one organization to the next. Army evaluations are restricted from gaining organizations, limiting new supervisors' ability to effectively determine the development needs of newly arriving leaders. Receiving units and senior leaders then must relearn the developmental needs of recently arrived leaders because all counseling (even if conducted properly) is considered local and not shared with gaining units. The intent to provide impartial treatment and a fresh environment for development eclipses the Army's need to develop each leader with continuity. The combination of mediocre counseling, less than candid evaluations, and the lack of any established system of Army-wide continuity causes some unskilled leaders to drift upward through their career because there is little or disconnected evidence that they need further development before advancement. Additionally, the profession abdicates individual professional development to a centralized selection process; those promoted within the board process are assumed to possess

the skill required of the grade. This is not the case in all circumstances. The ill-effects resonate throughout the profession, and the shortfall of leadership most directly impacts the Soldiers led by the unprepared.

The question remains how best to reinforce candor in evaluations across the Army. I can personally attest to the value of the 360-MSAF as an adjunct tool to support evaluations. My feedback from selected subordinates and peers provided me with a level of candid feedback not normally received in routine conversations. Similarly, the senior feedback was equally candid, not comments I would expect in counseling or on an evaluation. Although I was originally not an advocate of 360 feedback on all Army evaluations, I fully support the initiative. I am convinced that the overriding value of the full perspective could be normed into the total evaluation process to further reinforce authenticity within the Army profession. Regrettably, the December 2013 change in Army evaluations will passively focus on the evaluation form and the "forced candor" imbedded therein, instead of stewardship of the profession through meaningful written narratives.[53]

Leaders not only thrive on candor through individual performance feedback but equally value forthright conversations regarding career assignments and future potential. For active duty Army leaders, the Human Resources Command (HRC) retains the only capability to provide continuity for a leader's developmental potential and make future assignments. Current trends to reduce the size of all three components of the Army have resulted in several personnel management changes across officer and enlisted populations. Previous retention practices that sacrificed quality are now changing in the face of budget constraints,

deployment reductions, and congressional desire to reduce defense spending overseas. The Army leadership is taking the opportunity to leverage the wise reduction in the size of the force after a period of moderate growth, and the net effect has been very positive.

The strategic shaping of the Army through policy changes is implemented as leaders interact with human resource managers. Transparency should always be at the fore in conversations with HRC—the only organization possessing individual career continuity. Interestingly, most human resource managers are not informally measured by the population they serve according to their ability to readily present statistics or divine the future, but whether or not they present career potential and personal information forthrightly. The "straight-shooter" establishes trust through openness and forthright conversation, not by making the managed population feel as if it is equally capable of filling any position. Leaders want to operate in a culture of transparency modeled by their supervisors as well as their career managers. This duo of frankness allows leaders to better serve as leaders, gauge potential, plan for the future, and improve through self-development. The multiplying effect can be further complemented by a mentoring relationship. With a triangulated representation of performance with candor from the supervisor, career manager, and mentor, leaders can develop in a manner congruent with their true potential.

Shortfalls across the Total Army within the Army feedback and evaluations system are just two of several challenges that the Army faces today that have their genesis in the absence of candor. Some things will not change. Communication among individuals and within organizations will always require leaders to

create environments that encourage openness and ensure it remains valued beyond their tenure. It remains a constant that will always include risk because it includes elements of human nature.[54] Candor requires attention and inculcation; it does not improve through hope but through leadership and frequent nurture of an environment that values authentic communication, making it transportable across a profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVIVING CANDOR IN THE ARMY PROFESSION

The Army again finds itself in a position where the most important mission after an extended period of war is to preserve and develop leaders.[55] After Vietnam, the Army grappled with the same issues of trust and professionalism while the All-Volunteer force emerged. Assuming that leader preservation and development during post-operation years remains important, then there are areas of leader development that would benefit from an infusion of the four types of candor into Army doctrine and culture. I propose three recommendations for doing just this: saturate professional discourse from top to bottom with opportunities to better develop open communication at the interpersonal and organizational levels; revisit the Army Values to include candor; and infuse candor into training and education.

First, tone and culture are set within the Army by the most senior leaders—the three- and four-star generals and the Sergeant Major of the Army. They create environments that host open conversation or conversely shunt the free flow of ideas. Candor will not enter professional discourse by Chief of Staff of the Army decree but through each engagement where

bluntness is encouraged and rewarded, yielding new fields where subordinates engage in a culture of candor. Conferences, routine meetings, and small group engagements all present opportunities to reinforce transparency. Those who display constructive candor should be heralded as Army folk heroes, outspoken advocates for what needs to be heard and who have the ability, as Secretary Gates put it ". . . to tell blunt truths or create an environment where candor is encouraged."[56] If Gates' "Candor, Credibility, and Dissent" were rewarded as bold character attributes essential for promotion instead of career-killers, the value of candor would spread; writing, professional discussions, blogs, and web sites would also percolate with new ideas and an uninhibited flow of thoughts.[57] More importantly, the impact of institutionally encouraged candor can build trust within the Army forestalling critical concerns such as the inhibition of sexual assault reporting.

Mid-level leaders—battalion and brigade commanders—are quick to sense the Army tone communicated by two-star commanders and the senior Army leaders. Their influence through NCO and Officer Professional Development presents strong opportunities to inculcate authentic communication. Mid-level leader reinforcement also presents an environment in the Army profession where candor becomes *transportable*, something routinely expressed and expected in every organization within the Army. Human nature will shape the environment in each individual unit across the Army, but after a campaign of reinforcement, candor should be an active expectation. Leaders who are aware that they are receiving restrained responses have the duty to publicly and privately pursue frankness, reinforcing it throughout the small group

as well as across the Army. Seniors create the open environment, but exercising candor is every leader's responsibility! Waiting for a senior to welcome or display openness is the antithesis of courage.[58]

Second, start injecting the value of candor into doctrine and practice by revisiting the Army Values. Reexamining *values* of the Army could serve as the first manifest characterization of how the sacrosanct can be discussed and further reinforce why candor must be among the final Army Values. Content value is more important than whether an acronym is cleverly crafted; "LDRSHIP" is catchy but cannot be an empty construct.[59] Rigorous reflection following two wars to review the values and determine the correct content is healthy. Open values dialogue will help senior leaders realize that a dysfunctional environment exists, one in which leaders are not as familiar as they should be with authentic communication. For example, in *Winning*, by Jack Welch, Nancy Bauer paraphrased Immanuel Kant by stating: "He believed that when people avoid candor in order to curry favor with other people, they actually destroy trust, and in that way, they ultimately erode society."[60] How can the Army reinforce Army Values built on a bedrock of trust if candor is absent? General Cone, the TRADOC Commander, reinforces the point best by reviewing information in his Leadership Studies Findings: current counselings reflect that "everyone is wonderful," 80 percent of junior officers believe they are in the top 50 percent (an obvious lack of self-candor) and junior NCOs believe that the most senior generals "don't have our backs."[61] The manifest points in one direction—candor is missing and must be revalued.

Candor must be more than a sideline subset of character that enters peripheral conversation. The end

result of the holistic campaign should yield a "Candor Culture" for Soldiers—a belief that a Professional Soldier instinctively speaks with candor—that is part of the Army's professional DNA. It should reside as one of the Army's underlying assumptions, from Capitol Hill to the squad in Afghanistan. Those who do not express frankness, do not reflect Army Values, and it is every leader's responsibility to reflect Army Values as a steward of the Army profession.

Third, inculcate candor as a separate part of interpersonal development and communication. It must start at the most basic level of military leadership training: officer accessions programs and the Warrior Training Course for NCOs. But it cannot stop there. Every educational opportunity thereafter must reemphasize candor as an underpinning for the characteristics of the Army Profession. Early inculcation is a start, but the act of putting frankness into action must be practiced at all training levels. Examples should include cadets interacting openly with a future platoon sergeant, junior NCOs understanding their time-honored role in counseling with junior soldiers and officers, and future battalion commanders practicing being candid with company and brigade commanders. Even at the most senior levels, general officers should practice the difficult task of bluntly testifying in congressional hearings or when in conversations with civil leaders. Obviously, these practice scenarios are a challenge for Army leaders, but embracing it and practicing candor will ensure success.

SUMMARY

Resurgence of candor in the Army is paramount. The Army will never serve as an authentic, trusted

profession without candor, and its absence can now be felt. The openness and palpable understanding that a person or an institution is authentic creates the foundation for trust. The Army as a profession is built on Trust (ADP-1) and defines it as the "core intangible needed by the Army inside and outside of the Profession."[62] But it is impossible to create trust if candor is not present. Some leaders choose to take risks by exposing their thoughts with candor, and those leaders have a profound impact on how trust is built on a daily basis. The impacts are felt from the interpersonal level as leaders conduct counseling, provide feedback, write forthright evaluations, and provide advice outside the Army profession. Each of the four different facets of expressing candor is critical: the prototypical form, subordinate candor; the form thought simple but rare in professional discourse, senior candor; a form that provides value to lateral relationships, peer candor; and the internal form where the genesis of candor comes from within oneself, self-candor.[63] All forms contribute to a professional openness in communication and provide the mortar that builds effective relationships, units, and operations.

Debating the role of the Army of the future and its character as a profession comes at a pivotal time with the conclusion of the war in Iraq and during the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan. The Army now needs fresh thinking on how to best reinstate candor into the Army's culture by the development of all leaders and their reinforcement of it through modeling and training. The more the leaders of the future Army are being developed through candor, the more they will embrace it because they will seek it wherever it can be found. Conversely, if the profession abdicates this profound responsibility, those same critical

leaders will be estranged from it. "Army Strong" is more than a current motto; it embodies how the Army stands when candor is routine.

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