



The Future of the Army Profession

Phase II ■ Senior Leader Conference XLI

by Dr. Don M. Snider '62 & CPT Leonard L. Lira PHOTOS BY DOIM

On the evening of 3 Jun 2004, Superintendent LTG William Lennox '71 commenced the 41st Senior Conference to which he had invited university researchers, civilian policymakers, and senior Army professionals to focus critically once again on the Army as a profession.

MG James M. Dubik, Director of the Experimentation Directorate (J-9), Joint Forces Command, began the conference by articulating the immense changes affecting the Army profession, changes that the conference was convened to consider. Dubik stated, "Two major historical shifts have been occurring in the past decade: first, the end of the Cold War and the shift to the yet-to-be-determined new strategic arrangement; second, the emergence of the Information Age and the social, cultural, political, economic, fiscal, corporate, religious, and military shifts required to adjust to this new age. These two historical shifts will continue to have profound, practical effects on our profession."

Dubik likened these changes to two huge *tsunamis* hitting the profession at the same time. "When everything settles," he went on to say, "our professional landscape will be different from what it is now. But, no doubt, when the waters of change recede, not everything will have changed—the nature of war will remain the same." He clarified this statement with examples such as the root causes for war; the fear, fog, friction, sacrifice, comradeship, courage, leadership, and adaptability necessary in the conduct of war; and the use of war as a political instrument. What will change, he

stated, "is that our understanding of war and the conduct of war will be different. And therein lies the difficulty: as a profession, we have to think through what should change and what should remain the same. Bureaucracies don't do well at this; professions do."

MG Dubik was describing how the Army, as a producing organization, had "long-developed organizational habits of mind and behavior" to accommodate the exigencies of the bi-polar security arrangements of the Cold War. "The tactical, doctrinal, and strategic systems we use," he said, "are how we interpret our portion of reality—war and its conduct. These systems help the profession identify what to believe and what to doubt; what is true and what is false. And these systems help our bureaucracy carry out the actions resulting from our beliefs and truths. These are the true 'sacred cows' of our profession...But as a former commandant here, retired GEN David Bramlett '64 told me, 'Sacred cows make good shoes.'"

Dubik left his audience sharply focused on the immense issue he had described, and to which the remainder of the conference was dedicated. How will such enormous change which requires nothing less than "a Defense Transformation during war" affect the Army as a profession? As Dubik alluded in his opening speech, adapting to that change should not to be an "either/or" process. Choosing one extreme or the other (war or non-war) to solve current problems this new strategic arrangement presents is a type of thinking held over from the Cold War; an Industrial Age, bi-modal frame of reference. In the globalized Information Age in which the Army operates today, it "must be able to win any war against any kind of enemy, under any condition." More than one approach or perhaps a little of all possible approaches will be required for success.

This proposition underscores a component missing at the strategic level of the Army. The question, "Who is responsible to study the





Panel discussions. The Future of the Army Profession Phase II Research Director, Dr. Don Snider '62, is on the top right.



MG James M. Dubik, Director of the Experimentation Directorate (J-9), Joint Forces Command.



LTG Buster Hagenbeck '71, Army G-1.



Army as a profession?" best illustrates the point. Where is the Department of the Army's "Center for the Army Profession," like the Army's Center of Military History?

It does not exist. There is no designated headquarters or agency for the Army to study itself in order to ensure it is able to properly meet the shifting and unknown environment of this new strategic context, as a vocational profession rather than just a bureaucracy. One must surmise that only an Army whose warriors see and evaluate themselves and their work as professionals will meet success against the challenges presented in the future environment. To that end, LTG Lennox, the faculty at West Point, and invited guests took on that role as they began work the next morning.

Background of the research project, "The Future of the Army Profession." Phase I of this project began when West Point's faculty initiated a research project in 2000 to renew within the Army, after a 30-year absence, the study of military professions and specifically to analyze the effects of the "build-down" of the 1990s on the Army as profession. The focus of analysis was that of the U.S. Army as a modern profession providing expert work within a highly competitive ecology of other professions and competitors—private contractors, foreign armies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and forces of various coalitions. That phase of the project culminated in the publica-

tion *The Future of the Army Profession* (McGraw-Hill, 2002), now used at the Academy and within several Army schools and leader development programs.

Seven major conclusions were drawn by the project directors, Drs. Don Snider '62 and Gayle Watkins of the Dept. of Social Sciences.

■ First, by the end of the 1990s, the Army's bureaucratic nature outweighed and compromised its professional nature; bureaucratic behavior and ethos was dominant and even found acceptable to a wide range of officer-leaders.

■ Second, the Army needed to redraw the map of its expert knowledge and then inform and reform its educational and developmental systems accordingly. The development of professionals was unfocused and lagging the changes in the external environment of the profession.

■ Third, the members of the Army profession, the soldiers and their leaders, should be the uppermost component of its expert knowledge, but the knowledge of human development was found to be considerably behind other fields of less important knowledge, and even behind the developmental knowledge found in some places within the private sector.

■ Fourth, the most important management concept needing realignment with the new demands on the Army profession was the concept of "career;" it simply had lost relevance for many in the junior officer ranks.

■ Fifth, the moral character of the members of the profession and the profession's ethic remained the foundation for the trust the American people place in their military and the foundation for the trust Army officers place in their profession. Some things were unchanged by the build-down of the 1990s!

■ Sixth, the internal "trust gap" between junior and senior members of the profession had reached dangerously dysfunctional levels.

■ Finally, the Army faced increasing jurisdictional competitions, particularly with civilian contractors, who wanted to do the expert work the Army had been doing.

Thus, the Army's jurisdictional boundaries needed to be renegotiated constantly and clarified by strategic leaders comfortable at the bargaining table and skilled in dealing with professional boundaries.

The last chapter of the book then concluded with a good segue to the current phase of the project by stating, "Transformation cannot be just about technology, hardware and software. As a quintessentially human institution, Army [Defense] transformation must be about people, professional people."

Thus, Senior Conference XLI—newly a part of the Army Chief of Staff's Eisenhower National Security Series 2004—was designed to provide a unique venue for researchers, civilian policymakers, and Army professionals to continue the study of Army as profession by focusing critically on the potential impact of Secretary Rumsfeld's

"Defense Transformation." Participants came from U.S. Joint Forces Command, the Army Futures Center, the Combined Arms Center, Army Accessions Command, the Army War College, and the Army General Staff as well as Academy faculty, civilian scholars, and high-level policymakers. Once again, the initiative of the Academy's faculty will culminate in early 2005 with the inclusion of several additional scholarly analyses and a new set of findings in the second edition of *The Future of the Army Profession*.

The conference was organized around three specific areas of analysis: (1) the Army's expert knowledge; (2) its development of practicing professionals; and, (3) its utilization of those professionals.

Within the six panels, individual research papers covered topics ranging from the future alignment of the Army's expert knowledge and its early 20th Century branch structure, to how operations in Afghanistan and Iraq should change the Army's expert knowledge, to how best to develop professionals in the Reserve components.

Phase II's Research Results.

Project Director, Dr. Don M. Snider '62, and his team of faculty members from multiple academic departments and defense researchers from the greater defense policy community still are consolidating and processing the results from Phase II of the research project. Several preliminary findings, however, were apparent by the end of the conference.

With respect to the profession's expert knowledge, conferees agreed that, in future conflicts as in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and in spite of the focus on rapid decisive combat operations (known as Phase III operations), post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction operations (known as Phase IV operations) are likely to prove decisive. Integrating the expert knowledge of stability operations into the Army's core appears demanded.

But there are downsides to such a radical change—it may degrade

focus on warfighting; it may seize jurisdictions from interagency organizations better suited for the tasks; it may not be fully resourced, thus causing diversions of Army resources; and developing such expertise may encourage its extended use. Nevertheless, many conferees believed the Army will bear the brunt of Phase IV operations even if it does not develop the expertise.

Discussion made clear that the expert knowledge of the Army urgently needs clarification and reprioritization. The Army simply cannot be expert at all tasks on the battlefield, thus the profession's leaders must become much more adept at renegotiating its operational tasks, based on the profession's core expertise, particularly within the emerging joint community which Army leaders correctly seek to support fully.

From the analysis of the Army's development of its practicing professionals, the following insights were generally confirmed: current developmental practices are hindered by lack of a common, agreed-upon development model for professional development and by over-attention to competency-based learning theories. Such processes in the future must go beyond extensive lists of competencies (an Industrial Age approach) to a greater appreciation and application of new and different developmental contexts. One process offered as a successful example was the recent experiences (last three decades) in the SOF profession that many thought could usefully inform directions that the Army and Joint Profession should consider for development of leaders.

A second discussion focused on the moral development of leaders, now of much more urgency given the nature of terrorist methods. Several asked, "What establishes the moral center of joint forces? Who is responsible for articulating a joint professional military ethic?"

Lastly, the analysis of how the Army utilizes its professionals

produced equally insightful and, perhaps, contentious exchanges. One major discussion focused on whether or not a new profession—a joint warfare profession—was now emerging based on the new expert knowledge of (and joint architectures for) command and control of joint forces and their logistics at the strategic and operational levels.

A second discussion focused on why our volunteer soldiers fight and whether the reasons really are different from the reasons earlier generations fought—primarily for their buddy next to them. To the surprise of many, new research indicates that additional factors now are in play, particularly a sense of the basic "rightness" of democratically-based governance and the need to see that established as a result of Army combat actions.

In addition to MG Dubik, Representative Jim Marshall (D-GA) provided insights on the Congressional view of Defense Transformation and his personal views as to how the Army as profession should adapt to the torrent of change. Given his experiences as an Army Ranger in Viet Nam, and his current position on the House Armed Service Committee, his views have merit.

To wrap things up, LTG Buster Hagenbeck '71, Army G-1, apprised the conferees as to the most recent adaptations in Army human resource programs, many already addressing some of the issues addressed at the conference. Conferees left West Point with a new perspective—Transformation as a profession begins with understanding how the profession's expert knowledge must change, and then flows to the human resource programs used to develop the professionals with that knowledge... not exactly the way the Army has approached rapid change in recent decades. But then, as the historians present noted, this is not too different from the very successful transformations under the Root Reforms of the early 1900s and the post-Viet Nam reforms under GENs DePuy and Abrams '36.