

Vietnam and After: The U.S. Army, 1976

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By Major General Paul F. Gorman, USA
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Even for those of us who have been close to the profound changes which have occurred within the United States Army between 1971 and 1976, the contrasts are scarcely believeable. Let me start with two glimpses of that Army, separated by five years, and by half the globe:

In February 1971, I stood on a sandbagged parapet atop a hill overlooking the Ashau Valley, talking to the members of a rifle company who were about to assault a jungle-covered mountain close to the Laos border. The scene is vivid in my memory's eye: a sky of purple clouds against a red sunset, the foliage wet from fog, but the ground dry from lack of rain. Upturned faces, young, anxious, questioning, but willing. It struck me that almost all of them were the same age, and that they all had come into the Army at the same time--the lieutenants out of Officer Candidate School, the noncoms out of NCO training programs ("shake and bake" sergeants, plucked from basic training, and force-fed three stripes. By 1971, the U.S. Army had all but exhausted its cadre of experienced infantry noncommissioned officers--in 1971 fully half of the platoons I ordered into combat against the North Vietnamese, the toughest light infantry the U.S. Army ever fought, were comprised entirely of very young men from the same year group.) And then there were the riflemen themselves--the most unfortunate of the unfortunate. Unfortunate enough to have been drafted in the first place, when virtually anyone with the academic ability or the money to get into college enjoyed draft exemption. Having been drafted, unfortunate enough to have been assigned to the infantry, who in a highly technical Army comprised a distinct minority, but nonetheless still exercised its dread monopoly on blood and mud--and 90% of the dying. Unfortunate enough, having been trained as infantrymen, to be assigned to Vietnam when there were infantry divisions to be manned in Europe and in the United States. Unfortunate enough, having been assigned to Vietnam, to be sent to one of the few sectors where combat was likely. Unfortunate enough to be ordered into battle at a time when almost all other U.S. soldiers in Vietnam were

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preparing for departure, when the orange nylon mail bags dropped into jungle clearings were stuffed with press clippings heralding the end of the American involvement, attached to bewildered letters from loved ones. And yet, those unfortunate American soldiers were among the best I have seen in battle in two wars, in three years of combat.

In February 1976, I talked with another group of American soldiers in very different, but equally memorable circumstances. We were again on a hill. Had the swirling fog permitted, we could have overlooked the Taunus Mountains in Germany. It was a bone-aching day, with chill, boot-top mud, and wet patches of snow. The troops had just completed several hours of mock combat between tank and mechanized infantry platoons, and were hotly debating who had won or lost, and why. My mind went back to 1971, and I counted how fortunate these men were: fortunate that they were in the Army of their own choice. Many of them had elected to come to Germany in preference to other assignments, and others had volunteered to be an infantryman or a tanker. All had just spent the day plying their chosen trade, and they were animated, even enthusiastic as they reviewed their triumphs and mistakes. They were fortunate in that they had NCO's in abundance--older men with the sagacity and resilience bred by years of service. Fortunate in that their families knew what they were doing, understood why, and supported them. Fortunate in that the press they read, and the television they watched generally approved their undertakings, even lauded them. Fortunate in being well paid and admirably trained, equipped and officered.

But, it is fair to ask, are the soldiers of 1976 of the same mettle as the soldiers of 1971?

To understand the American Army today, one must understand something about the attitudes and convictions of the American people. An army is, above all else, a reflection of the people from which it springs. The war in Vietnam puzzled, frustrated, and angered our people. Dissent was widespread. It is true that the opposition to the war in Southeast Asia can be compared historically to dissent during the War of 1812 against Great Britain or the War of 1848 against Mexico, to internal dissension in the North during the Civil War, and to opposition to American counter-insurgency during the Philippine Insurrection, in the opening years of the Twentieth Century. But the extent of public support during World War I and II ill-prepared the U.S. Army for Vietnam--Gary Sadler and John Wayne were no substitute for George M. Cohan and Blue Star Families. There can be little doubt that in 1971, after five years of casualty lists--50,000 dead, four times that number wounded--the Nation was fed up with war. The U.S. Army was in disrepute, its leaders reviled, its mores mocked, its institutions under attack from within and without by

libertarians of every ilk--its officer training programs, its courts-martial, the very authority of its commanders under severe challenge. And that low esteem stemmed not alone from the flag-draped coffins and the young soldiers smiling from the obituary page, but from TV pictures of Detroit and Kent State, and grim soldiers confronting marchers in Washington.

That disdain has almost disappeared today. The bitter memories may be there, at least for the older generations, but they seem to have been relegated to the attic of the national memory--seldom remembered, little talked about, scarcely related to current events.

The ups and downs of the Army's Reserve Officer Training Corps are to point. In 1965, enrollment was 177,000, and in many colleges and universities, membership was mandatory for male freshmen and sophomores. By 1971 the program was in eclipse. ROTC had become a storm center for student protest movements of all kinds, and even a target for terrorist violence. Mandatory ROTC had to be eliminated. Harvard, Dartmouth, MIT, Princeton and other prestigious schools had cancelled out altogether. Enrollment overall had dropped 80%. But then the pendulum swung back. By 1976, the Ivy League had rejoined, and ROTC found itself basking almost everywhere in campus approval, even popularity. By 1976, enrollment was up to 55,000, and officer production reached 6000 per annum.

The difference in attitudes toward the Army is encapsulated well in a recent report by Potomac Associates, a nonpartisan research organization sponsored by the Rockefeller and Kettering Foundations, among others. Working through the Gallup Organization of Princeton, researchers polled a representative sampling of Americans in May, 1976, to determine "trust and confidence in the American system"--the degree of faith in various institutions or groups. To quote from the survey report:

"We now come to what we consider one of the most unexpected findings in our survey. When members of our sample were asked how much trust and confidence they had 'in the leadership of our armed forces,' these are the results that emerged:

A great deal	27%
A fair amount	47%
Not very much	17%
None at all	2%
Don't know	7%

The composite score of 68 was the second highest of all institutions and groups we covered...* It is, nonetheless, striking that Americans uniformly expressed a high level of trust in the upper echelons of the armed services... U.S. citizens may see in their military leadership one of the few groups within the federal establishment that has emerged from Watergate and other Washington scandals with relatively clean hands, and feel that it is doing precisely what it should be doing. Beyond that, their response may stem in part from a certain sense of national frustration shared with our military establishment in the wake of Vietnam, and also may be a reflection of the increased desire for security and heightened sense of nationalism..."

Respondents to the survey rated their confidence in the military 40% higher than that for the CIA or labor unions, 20% higher than that for Congress or the White House. Here is the survey's hierarchy of "trust and confidence:"

American people	70%	Federal legislature	55%
Military leadership	68	Federal executive	55
Young people	67	Business and industry	54
Mass media	62	Government officials	53
Federal judiciary	59	CIA	48
Politicians	57	Labor unions	45

Assuredly, it is in fact easier to wear stars on an Army green uniform today than six years ago. But it is difficult to account for the shift in public attitude, except by such vague observations as those of the survey report, or by citing Bicentennial fervor.

The most obvious change between the Army of 1971 and the Army of 1977 is, of course the absence of the draft. Between January 1, 1946 and the end of the draft, over 5 million American males were involuntarily inducted into the armed forces, comprising 28% of the nearly 18 million men and women who served in that period.

*It is interesting that the Washington Post's coverage of the survey did not remark on the choice for second ranking.

In 1969, during one of the peak periods of dissent against the war, President Nixon's Administration promised to end the draft, and on June 27, 1973, within hours of the signing of the Paris Accords, Secretary of Defense Laird told the American military:

"I wish to inform you that the armed forces henceforth will depend exclusively on volunteer soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines."

The issue of conscription in the American democracy has been emotion-laden and politically sensitive at least since 1861. But not until the U.S. undertook land warfare in Europe and Mainland Asia did it become dependent upon draftee manpower. While in the Civil War conscription furnished only 6% of Federal troops, in World War I the draft provided 67%, in World War II 58%, in the Korean War 41%, and in Vietnam 40%.

Post-Vietnam, the draft issue acquired economic and racial overtones. The proposal to drop the draft was carried through Congress by the Republican Administration against powerful resistance. Among the opponents were Senators Stennis of Mississippi, Nunn of Georgia, and Kennedy of Massachusetts. Joseph Califano, now President Carter's Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, also opposed the all-volunteer armed forces. Critics predicted that the volunteer force would be unrepresentative of the people at large, disproportionately poor, "excessively" black, and dependent upon individuals who were basically unemployable because of mental or educational limitations. Moreover, the volunteer force would be unreasonably expensive. Some opposed the all-volunteer Army with arguments harkening back to the Eighteenth Century French concept of the nation-in-arms--compulsory national service is good for the soul of the people. For example, the columnist Joseph Kraft has deplored the fact that a whole generation of the northeastern establishment has grown up without experiencing the leveling of the barracks, unseasoned by intimate association with red-necked sergeants, or poor boys from the rural south.

But the volunteer Army surprised most of us. In the first place, it has worked: thus far at least, the Army has been able to recruit to maintain its authorized active strength. And, the Army has turned out to be fairly representative of the nation in terms of region and family income.

The ten most populous states, wherein live 53 percent of service-eligible males, have produced exactly 53 percent of recruits since the

end of the draft. The 20 most populous states, wherein live 75 percent of service-eligibles, have produced 75 percent of the volunteers. Nor is today's Army a "poor man's" force. Within the United States, 26 percent of families have incomes less than \$8,000 per annum; that group produced 27 percent of the recruits. Twenty-nine percent of U.S. families have incomes in the bracket \$8,000 to \$14,000; from these families came 35 percent of the volunteers. Twenty-three percent have incomes from \$14,000-\$20,000; from these came 22 percent of recruits. Twenty-two percent of U.S. families have incomes over \$20,000; from these came 16 percent of the recruits.

Predictions that more blacks would enter the Army, however, proved accurate. The Army's intake in 1976 included 24 percent blacks, which is perhaps half again what one might expect based on blacks in the population at large. But given Federal legislation which guarantees to blacks equal opportunity to apply for any employment, no one can legally raise an issue over the racial composition of volunteers. And indeed, there is no reason to do so, in the total absence of evidence that blacks are less capable soldiers.

More women are serving in today's Army. In 1976, there was a total of 44,000, about 6.5% of the force, up from less than 4% at the end of the draft, and they serve in 371 of the Army's 406 military occupational specialties. Moreover, ROTC is now open to women, and 11,000 are presently enrolled.

The women soldiers are, on the average, somewhat brighter and better educated than the men. But the anticipated decline in overall mental quality has not materialized. Using the Army's five mental groupings, the composition of the male enlisted force has actually improved since the draft:

	Mental Category				
	I	II	III	IV	V
All U.S. Males	8.0	28.0	34.8	21.0	9.0
U.S. Army 1972	4.4	27.0	47.2	21.4	0
U.S. Army 1976	4.5	29.8	53.1	12.6	0

In 1971 only 70% of U.S. Army soldiers had completed high school. In 1976, 80% had at least a high school certificate.

The volunteer soldier has proven to be significantly better disciplined than his predecessor. Commanders throughout the Army report a steady decline in courts-martial, confinement facilities are closing for lack of prisoners, and even the ubiquitous drug problem seems more manageable. The traditional indicators of discipline, the rate of AWOL (absent without leave) and desertion (30 days or more AWOL) per 1000 soldiers speak for themselves: a 60% reduction in AWOL since 1971, a 75% reduction in desertion.

	Rate per 1000 Soldiers	
	<u>AWOL</u>	<u>Desertion</u>
1971	176.9	73.5
1976	70.3	17.7

Of course, the 1971 figures are a historic high for the U.S. Army, and the 1976 statistics are about the same as those for 1965, the first year of the U.S. Army deployment to Vietnam. To put the foregoing in perspective:

	Rate per 1000 Soldiers	
	<u>AWOL</u>	<u>Desertion</u>
WW II: '44	N/A	63.0
Korea: '52	181.0	22.0
RVN: '65	60.1	15.7
End Draft: '73	159.0	52.0

Still, the 1976 disciplinary indicators continued the consistent downward trend since the end of the draft, and the Army's experience was comparable to that of the U.S. Air Force in the same year, and better than that of the U.S. Navy.

Of course, the volunteer force costs more. Critics are fond of pointing out that by fiscal year 1977 personnel costs have risen to 58% of defense outlays. But even before Vietnam, in fiscal '64, they consumed 47% of the defense budget, and long before the end of the draft the government had felt obligated to raise service pay to alleviate the abject poverty of lower ranking service members. In 1971 Congressman William A. Steiger (R,WI), reporting on impoverished service families, wrote:

"The draft survives as a last vestige of the ancient custom whereby the rich and the powerful forced the poor and weak to provide service at subsistence wages. Conscription has been justified by the Supreme Court as a valid power of the State in times of grave emergency or of national peril. But the recent legislative history of military pay makes it plain that the primary function of conscription has been to depress military compensation to the point where a disenfranchised minority of the citizenry has been compelled to bear a grossly disproportionate share of the costs of defense..."

In 1971 the Nixon Administration raised service pay substantially, and did so again in 1972. By the end of the draft, the all-volunteer force was well compensated, with pay pegged to the national standard-of-living index. In 1976, a typical first term enlistee earned \$400-500 per month, up 30-40% from 1971. But even had the draft continued, given inflation and the question of economic equitability for draftees, it is doubtful that personnel costs would be much lower today. One calculation holds that if pay for low ranking enlisted members were reduced to the legal minimum wage, the total savings would amount to just \$1.7 billion per year--less than two percent of the U.S. defense budget.

In one sense though, the Army is giving the public better return on investment: more fighting power per soldier than heretofore. The Army of 1976 is a much leaner Army than the U.S. is accustomed to supporting. At the end of World War II, from some 6 million men the Army had managed to fashion 89 divisions, or roughly one division per 68,000 men. During Korea and Vietnam, that figure was even higher. Even the peacetime force of the early 60s was manpower intensive: authorized some 875,000, the Army manned 14 divisions--still well over one division per 60,000 men in the force. In 1976 the Army manned 16 divisions with 790,000 men--one division per 50,000 men in the force. This unprecedented economy of manpower per fighting unit has not been achieved without price, as shall be discussed later, but it is one of the hallmarks of today's Army.

A far less obvious change in the U.S. Army, but one much more important, is its mechanization. In all its wars, including Vietnam, the U.S. Army has built its forces afield around foot-mobile formations. But in 1976, one out of every two U.S. infantrymen served aboard an armored personnel carrier. And infantry composes an ever-declining percentage of the force: less than 5% of men in the U.S. armored or mechanized divisions in Europe would dismount for combat. Moreover,

U.S. forces have been liberally equipped with guided missiles which provide a more adequate defense against the tank, the nemesis of the foot soldier. To compare a 1976 U.S. division in Germany with one which confronted the Soviets during Krushchev's Berlin crises of the late 1950's or early 1960's, there has been a 300% increase in divisional tank and major anti-tank weapons.

It is possible to assert that the industrialization of warfare began with the American Civil War, and certainly the U.S. Army has long tried, as a matter of policy, to apply machines to war to decrease dependence on infantry soldiers. From the Civil War onward, as weaponry became more lethal, and as mobility increased, the Army thinned out frontline manpower. Ever fewer soldiers, with ever more firepower, controlled ever larger expanses of land. In World War II, the typical U.S. division masses some 2200 men per kilometer of front, and in a 30 minute fight could throw at the enemy 160 pounds of projectiles per man. In 1976, U.S. divisions in Germany deployed about 400 men per kilometer of front, but possessed the potential to throw 1600 pounds of projectiles per man per 30 minutes of battle--a five times decrease in men at risk, but a tenfold increase in per capita firepower, and a doubling of overall projectile weight. These trends will, in all likelihood, not only continue, but accelerate. The U.S. Army will absorb 44 major new weapon systems in the next decade--more than in any other era in its history, save 1940-1945--systems which will add to its firepower, its mobility, its intelligence means, and its ability to communicate and exercise command.

It is no longer possible to visualize the U.S. Army in terms of Willy and Joe, dogged dogfaces, slogging, slouching riflemen. We have become a force as machine-dependent as the Air Force or the Navy. For every ten soldiers, there are now seven major items of equipment to be operated, maintained, supplied, or repaired--and that calculation excludes individual weapons altogether. We become more equipment dependent year by year. Comparison with the presumably more technical armed services raises a point of important difference, as well as the implications of similarity. The Army fights for control of land and people, amid the infinite variety of the earth's surface and the works of man which clutter it. There is available no technology which can detect and portray all the moving parts of Army in the field. But the Navy and the Air Force fight in homogenous environments within which current technology can readily pinpoint and display all maneuvering combatants. A three-star U.S. Naval or Air Force commander--heading a numbered fleet or air force--possesses maneuver elements (ships, aircraft) numbering in the range 10^2 to 10^3 (100-1000), has direct control over each in real time, and knows precisely where they are and what they are doing and therefore operates by centralization. Moreover, each of his combatant elements is in the hands of an officer--often literally. The fundamental operational principle of Air Force or Naval command is therefore centralization.

In contrast, a three-star U.S. Army commander--heading a corps--possesses many more maneuver elements, in the range 10^3 to 10^4 (1000-10,000), yet exercises only indirect control over each, knows only roughly where they are, and must cope with informational lags of up to 12 hours. Moreover, most of his combatant elements are in the hands of enlisted men. An Army commander must perforce operate by decentralization.

The foregoing observations point up the importance of doctrine and training in the Army, because decentralization as a modus operandi for modern battle is practical only if forceful, effective ideas on how to fight pervade the force. Concepts of shooting, moving, and communicating must be shared broadly among all combatants, infused and made operative by training. It is no longer possible to count on forging a doctrine after the shooting starts, and training in battle will be expensive indeed. Doctrine and training now constitute the Army's raison d'etre in peacetime.

It is my contention that the primary cause for the transformation of the U.S. Army from 1971 to 1976 was neither the establishment of a volunteer force, nor even the dimming of Vietnam memories. These may have been necessary conditions for change, but they are not sufficient to account for it. I maintain that the principal force for improvement has been the creation of effective doctrine and a resurgence of sound training.

After all, disaffection within the U.S. military profession in the late '60's and early '70's stemmed less from repugnance over the war or over conscription than from perceptions of purposelessness among the military hierarchy. The thirty-three members of the West Point faculty who resigned during the Vietnam War--select officers all--reportedly did so because they saw no future for themselves in the service. General David M. Shoup, once Commandant of the U.S. Marines, and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during President Kennedy's Administration, perhaps our most prominent professional detractor, wrote in 1969 that: "A career of peacetime duty is a dull and frustrating prospect for the normal regular officer to contemplate." Investigative reporter Stuart H. Loory began his analysis of the post-Vietnam U. S. military (entitled Defeated) by describing the U.S. Army as he had found it in 1973 in these terms:

"From remote Army camps in the Far East and Central Europe to stateside garrisons, Vietnam veterans from general to grunt--and newer recruits for whom the war is only legend--are caught up in a make-work boredom. They face a future rendered uncertain by a confusion over their mission. They are wondering, almost as one man, What am I doing here?"

It is certainly true that soldiers would have looked in vain for statements of Army doctrine in 1973 for a persuasive rationale for their service. In a very real sense, the Army came out of the Vietnam years with the needle of its professional compass spinning. What was it for? What did the future hold for it? What direction should it take?

As any student of American public administration would suspect, the institutional response was reorganization. In 1973, in its first fundamental realignment since 1962, the Army disbanded its Continental Army Command, and formed two new four-star commands. The Forces Command, Headquartered in Atlanta, was given jurisdiction over all troop units in the contiguous states, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal Zone. The Training and Doctrine Command was charged with operating the Army's service schools and training centers. A three-star command, the Combat Developments Command, was merged with the Training and Doctrine Command so as to bring work on future weapons, organization and tactics under the service school commandants. This move unified the Army's institutional interface with its future: the Training and Doctrine Command was to produce future leaders and fighters, and to state requirements for the future Army materiel and tactics. Most importantly, the Training and Doctrine Command began to lay down the first redefinition of U.S. Army goals and policy since the Color Plans of the 1920's and 30's, which in basic concept at least, persisted until 1973. What the U.S. had in 1973 was the traditional overburden of notions that mobilization was essential to fighting a major war. Though the Army had fought long and costly wars in Korea and Vietnam without substantial mobilization, it was still an assumption of its doctrine that the peacetime force was only a caretaker for a much larger, more effective army which would spring into being upon declaration of war, lending flesh and substance to an austere Regular Army. Beginning in 1973, General William E. DePuy, Commander of the Training and Doctrine Command, has labored to build a consensus in the Army that this was an imperfect concept for the U.S. Army of the 1980's. Using the powerful instrument of the service schools, and Army publications, and exploiting television to an unprecedented extent, TRADOC has conveyed to the Army a wholly new image of its mission. The basic tenets of this new doctrine included the following:

"The first battle of our next war could well be its last battle: belligerents could be quickly exhausted and international pressures to stop fighting could bring about an early cessation of hostilities. The U.S. could find itself in a short, intense war - the outcome of which may be dictated by the results of initial combat. This circumstance is unprecedented: we are an Army historically unprepared for its first battle.

We are accustomed to victory wrought with the weight of material and manpower brought to bear after the onset of hostilities. The U.S. Army must, above all else, prepare to win the first battle of the next war.

The Army's basic purpose is to win battles. We cannot accurately foresee the time or place of battle, but we must expect to face a well-armed enemy, superior in number. We cannot count on either a long mobilization or a lengthy war. Rather, we must ready ourselves for early, costly, intense combat in which penalties for poor training will be high casualties and defeat.

Weapons dominate the modern battlefield. We need the best we can obtain. But no weapon can be effective unless the man behind it is well trained and motivated. And each weapon system must then be skillfully employed by competent tactical leaders. Ultimately, the Army's effectiveness will depend upon our ability to field powerful weapons in the hands of soldiers proficient in their use and under leaders skilled in employing weapons and crews to best effect.

An army is more than equipment and men. Its ability to destroy enemy forces or to secure land depends upon the extent to which its members share concepts of how to operate. Soldiers must accept common principles for action. This "doctrine" is the basis of the subordination and interdependence of individuals required in battle.

The army's need to prepare for battle overrides every other aspect of unit missions. This urgency derives from the danger present in the world scene, the lethality and complexity of modern war, and the ever present possibility that a unit in training today may be in action tomorrow."

On 4 February 1977, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army and the Secretary of the Army submitted a joint statement to the Congress on the Army's posture. It included the following passage, which it may be seen is drawn directly from the foregoing concepts:

"The main mission for the U.S. Army today is to prepare for battle in Central Europe against forces of the Warsaw Pact. The Army is structured and equipped primarily to participate in NATO's defense of that area, and most of the Army's divisions are stationed in or oriented upon Western Germany. The Army does not underestimate the difficulties it would face in the event of war there, fighting at the end of a long, vulnerable line of communication, against enemy forces with ultra-modern weapons, in greater numbers, operating from sources of supply close at hand. Much of the energies of the total Army have been dedicated to preparing its units to fight in such a battle, and to win though outnumbered."

The principal expression of current U.S. Army doctrine is Field Manual 100-5, Operations, which is the modern version of the old Field Service Regulations. Its counterparts of yesteryear stressed the primacy of leadership in battle, positing equal importance on inspirational, paternal exercise of command, and on proper application by the Commander of the Principles of War. But there is very little of such Jomini-isms in the current FM 100-5. The traditional discussion of the Principles of War has been deleted entirely, and although leadership and man management are accorded due importance, they are balanced by a new emphasis on weapon systems and their impact on battle tactics and logistics.

Here is one reviewer's comment on the emerging doctrine:

"Whether one agrees with all the propositions of FM 100-5 or even with General DePuy, one must acknowledge that it is a book which faces reality. That alone makes it significant. For too long the Army's doctrinal manuals read like a stock-broker's advice sheet - 'on the one hand'... 'but on the other,' type of weasel-wording. Not this time. The stark realities are laid out clearly. The leader who avoids them does so at his peril and the lives of his soldiers. But clearly this version should not be considered Holy Writ. Every sentence, paragraph, chart, and chapter should be examined and challenged; in the Army School System, from Basic Course to War College; in the units who have to do the fighting; and of course in the public eye in Congress and the press...."

Thus far, the Congress and the press seem to have had other concerns. The Army's doctrinal thrust has all but escaped public notice. But within the Army, from my perspective, there has been a very satisfactory revival of professionalism--and by that I mean exactly the intellectual coalescing of men dedicated to a common service. In my visits to American troop units and service schools, I have seen enheartening evidence that the officers and noncommissioned officers of the Army have accepted the concepts of FM 100-5 on the management of violence, have established personal goals consistent with these, and are working within their spheres to build now, in peacetime, an Army capable of meeting the challenges of winning the first battle. FM 100-5 has become the touchstone of Post-Vietnam professionalism in the U.S. Army. Learning how to fight outnumbered and win is a mission which has captured the imagination of the whole force, focused its energies, provided scope for its aspirations, and progressively extended its tactical reach and grasp.

To go back to the soldiers I visited in Germany in 1976, that day they had spent practicing the skills and knowledge requisite to winning

the first battle: learning how to use cover and concealment, how to employ suppressive fire, and how to build teamwork. They did so with training techniques unheard of in the U.S. Army in 1971-- another TRADOC contribution--using them to evident good effect. They themselves told me that, day-by-day in such training, they felt increasingly confident of their ability to fight, to survive and to conquer.

But let me be clear that I am not trying to persuade you that the United States Army has freed itself altogether from the incubus of Vietnam, or resolved finally all of the problems attendant to an all-volunteer force. Far from it. Let me recount some of these:

--Raising and maintaining an adequate reserve. If the Active Army seems to be finding a new ethos, the Reserve Components seem to be losing theirs. Both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve are encountering grave difficulties in recruiting to their authorized strengths.

--Recruiting. The nation's falling youth population means that numbers of prospective soldiers will decline 15% within the decade. Lacking the draft to induce interest in volunteering for military service to assure choice, the Army may not be able to sustain its strength. Broader use of women may become essential for the Active Army, and for the Reserves, some form of selective service. The "decline" can be attributed in part to the demise of the draft, i.e., the "persuasive alternative", hence a new freedom of choice open to youth. "Falling market" connotes a problem specific to the Army while in fact it's a reflection of the national phenomena of a falling youth population affecting the labor force of the entire nation and not just the potential manpower pool of the military services.

--Personnel turnover. The high ratio of numbers of divisions to total strength, together with lack of balance between units deployed overseas and those within the contiguous United States, coupled with the relative impermanence of most volunteers--only about 10 to 15 percent of volunteers stay in the Army longer than three years--adds up to a plaguing people-swirl, with all that connotes for disrupted training and lowered morale.

--Overwork and boredom. Punishingly long work weeks, and difficult work conditions are commonplace for many U.S. Army officers and noncoms. But equally as commonplace are idle and bored junior enlisted men. We are still a long way from finding a sure formula for translating the interests and energies of the middle and upper portions of the Army's pyramidal management structure into meaningful activity at the bottom. And yet some such a formula is demonstrably crucial to job satisfaction for the junior enlisted man, and job satisfaction is equally plainly related to his decision to re-enlist as a careerist.

Obviously, there are many other difficulties, possibly broader and deeper than those to which I have just alluded. But I am convinced that the Army faces its problems today with an unprecedented confidence, with a new sense of identity and of purpose, with what the Germans refer to as innere Führung. A historian would have predicted otherwise: the period after any major war has always been an era of doctrinal doldrums when senior U.S. Army officers impressed on a new generation lessons on how they had fought the last war. Moreover, historically, major reforms in U.S. Army thinking have always been generated outside the Army, and usually by thinkers more political than military. The thrust in U.S. Army training and doctrine today came from soldiers, and it involves a conscientious concentration not on wars past, but wars to come, a striving to discern the nature of future battle from a close study of evolving weapon systems. By this method, the Training and Doctrine Command has become a strong pole for the Army's professional compass, by which practitioners of the military art can steer a confident course into the future.

A German colleague, in the context of a discussion similar to the foregoing, remarked to me: "Never underestimate the utility of losing a war." I, of course, argued stoutly that the U.S. Army did not lose its war in Vietnam. But after all, we did not win. And in that observation may lie much of the explanation for the Army's openness to internal redirection and reform.