

REMARKS BY MG P.F. GORMAN
TO OFFICERS OF THE 4TH BRIGADE, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
WIESBADEN AFB, 30 MARCH 1979

I am grateful to Colonel RisCassi for this opportunity to share with you some ideas on officership, on which I have put a lot of thought over the past 30 years. These ideas have governed conscientiously or unconscientiously virtually everything I have done as Division Commander. The policies on officership within the 8th Infantry Division have not been well understood by officers in USAREUR at large, and to my disappointment, not well enough understood by officers within the 8th Division. Through my various feedback mechanisms--for instance, from my OESO's and my Inspectors General--I hear frequently enough to cause me concern, expressions of disappointment from officers, and particularly young officers, to the effect that the division emphasizes the role of the noncommissioned officer to the exclusion or to the serious disadvantage of the officer, to the effect that we have left the lieutenant and the captain in the lurch with all of the lipservice and written emphasis that we have placed upon the centrality of the noncommissioned officer.

Let none of you suppose that in combat there is ever much difficulty in sorting out the roles of officer and noncom. When the bullets are flying, no matter how green the lieutenant, no matter how inexperienced he or she may be, no matter how recently he has arrived in the combat theater, under fire all eyes in the platoon will turn toward the gold bar for orders. No problem then over who is in charge. If you disbelieve me on that point, I would urge you all, if you haven't already done so for your professional education, to read the analysis of the American soldier during World War II by Doctor Stauffer et al, the famous set of books analyzing the behavior of the GI in combat. Or read any of S.L.A. Marshall's analyses of combat in World War II, or in Korea, or in Viet Nam. Little problem evident therein on who gives the orders. If there is a difficulty over officer-NCO roles, it seems to obtrude most particularly in the sort of undertaking in which we find ourselves today: in garrison, in peacetime. It is most important that you sort that issue very early in your career, and keep it sorted in everything you do as commanders and staff officers.

There are four basic reasons why today more than ever before NCO's are the "backbone of the Army": decentrailization, sustainability, force modernization, and unit cohesion.

DECENTRALIZATION

To understand the fundamental importance of the noncommissioned officer to the Army, and therefore to you as officers, you have to back off a ways, and look at the Army as compared to the Air Force or the Navy. I would urge here that you regard the problem from the perspective of three flag officers, all wearing three stars. Let's take first an admiral commanding in the Mediterranean. He commands at any given point in time 60 to 100 maneuverable entities--ships and planes. He can walk into his flag plot at any hour, day or night, and see exactly where those entities are in real time. He can pick up a radio-telephone and talk instantaneously to any or all of those entities. Every one of those maneuverable entities is commanded by an officer, and via officer-to-officer communication, the admiral can alter mission, change course or direction, cancel instructions, or otherwise affect the flow of action, all in real time.

Compare that admiral with an Air Force three-star, a lieutenant general commanding a tactical air force here in Europe. For combat, he repairs to a bunker, where there is a large radar-generated display on which is portrayed every aircraft under his command. He might have as many as 400 to 1000 maneuverable entities on the board at any given point in time. Like the admiral, he can see exactly where they are. He knows from the posting their location, their speed, their altitude, and he can ascertain what their mission is. If he doesn't like what he sees, he can change all or part in real time, because he can talk directly to those entities. And once again, every single one of them up there is under command of an officer.

And compare the circumstances of those two three-stars with the circumstances of the Commander, V Corps. At any given point in time, he has some tens of thousands of maneuverable entities under his command--tanks, communications teams, maintenance contact teams, artillery survey parties, command groups, rifle platoons, company teams, cavalry patrols, OP's, etc., etc. There is no radar, no satellite system which can provide him a display of the location of these maneuverable entities. In fact, he doesn't know where they are, or at least he doesn't know for sure, because he must work from reports on where they were, reports which could be up to 48 hours in arrears of the actual situation. He cannot talk with most of those entities. If the Corps Commander can communicate directly with as many as 10 commanders of maneuverable entities, he is stretching his resources. No, he doesn't know where they are, can't talk to them, and therefore, can't influence directly in real time what most of them are doing. And the status of the division commander beneath him is not

much better, nor is the position of the brigade commander, or the battalion commander, in any significant way, different. Each, to lesser degrees, lacks information on exactly where his maneuverable entities are; he cannot talk to most of them, and cannot, therefore, alter their instructions in real time. Most importantly, the overwhelming majority of those maneuverable entities are under the command of a noncommissioned officer. The Army's modus operandi must be categorically different from the modus operandi of the Navy and the Air Force. Those latter two services can and should operate using centralization as an organizational principle. The Army must in contrast, operate via decentralization. We have to. There is no other way.

Now it may be, in some millennium not yet foreseen, not yet provided for in Army research and development, there will materialize some magic command and control system that will equip some of the captains and lieutenants in this room when they wear three stars with an alternative to decentralization. Instrument them to see what's going on on the battlefield in real time, to talk and otherwise direct, as can the Navy and the Air Force of today. And it's possible that in such an era the role of the officer and the noncommissioned officer will merge and more officer leaders will be necessary--something like what we see in the warrant officer pilots flying our attack helicopters, operating with something like real-time communications. Yes, it's entirely possible that the Army will find itself a technological alternative, and move to a more centralized command organization. But that won't happen on my watch, and I suspect not on Colonel RisCassi's, or LTC Goldsmith's, or LTC Byrd's--those aging and rusting hulks who should have long since been salvaged. What most of us are going to have to work with in our career is this principle of decentralization. And we have to recognize that the noncommissioned officer is pivotal to making that principle work on the battlefield.

But there are at least two other reasons which you should understand: sustainability and modernization.

SUSTAINABILITY

It is not well understood in the Army today that the principal role of the NCO in combat is training. Once more, remember from your readings, and those of you who have been in combat from your experience, that most of the people who do the fighting have not been trained for the job that they find themselves doing. They have not been trained because some professional like you or I failed them in peace, and did not adequately prepare them for the exigencies of the battlefield. Or more likely, they came to the unit in which they are serving out of the replacement stream, and they found themselves in a set of circumstances for which their previous

experience simply did not equip them. Any of you who have reflected on the loss statistics of our recent exercises are well aware that, should, God forbid, this group of officers have to go to war, we will not, many of us survive the fifth day of combat. There will be somebody else leading in our stead. Many of the soldiers whom we lead into combat on day one will, by day five, be casualties: dead, or wounded and evacuated. That's the reality of the modern battlefield. And that means that the 4th Brigade depends on a stream of replacements.

Now there has been a lot of talk in the press lately about the paucity of replacements for the Army in Europe. LTG Berry made a statement on the subject to Drew Middleton which recently appeared in the paper. The Chief of Staff of the Army made a similar statement to the Congress recently, to the effect that we lack sustainability. The Individual Ready Reserve which had heretofore been available is now dwindling in numbers, and therefore the Nation lacks the personnel wherewithal to provide that stream of trained individuals to replace the fallen which units here in Europe require for sustainability. That's what that term sustainability is all about. Now, let's first of all recall that, even if we were back a few years ago in the days when we had 500,000 individuals in the Individual Ready Reserve, all categorized by the training that they had received, these would be soldiers who had come in, received a short shot of active duty training, and then returned to civil life for four or five years. Just think of the changes that have occurred in the profession in just the past 2 years--introduction of the attack helicopter, activation of the 8th Aviation Battalion, modernization of the tank fleet, introduction of the TOW and the DRAGON, new artillery munitions, new communications equipment, and crypto gear. Those IRR soldiers would never have heard in their training, nobody would ever have mentioned that sort of weaponry or equipment to them. And today we are moving rapidly through a profound technological revolution--thermal imagery with its concomitant super-cooled, light-emitting diode, digital-electronic technology. In the maintenance field, there are whole new technologies to be mastered by direct support and general support technicians. No 63C trained three years ago is adequate for that. And even if the Chief of Staff is successful in his request to revive the draft for the purposes of filling out the Individual Ready Reserve, we're talking about soldiers in that IRR, men or women, who will get 6 months of training and then go into the Individual Ready Reserve, their skills to be refreshed perhaps once or twice during their remaining tenure of service in the IRR in 2 week bursts. No way of training them up to war readiness, you see. Would that kind of training equip the IRR soldier for what he might have to master in the 2-20th Artillery, were he deployed to fill a gap in the ranks of that battalion? It seems entirely unlikely. Or that a tanker trained under that system would be prepared for the tactics and techniques of the 1-70th Armor, the 2-22d Infantry, or the Black Lions? Very low likelihood.

Well, then, how in the world can a unit take somebody coming in from the replacement stream and get them up to speed in battle? The unit will do it the same way that we have done it in all the wars of our past: a soldier replacement comes in, a sergeant takes him in hand, and shows him both how to survive, and what it is that he is supposed to do for the unit. Now some sergeants will do this better than others. But it is imperative that we as officers train sergeants in peacetime to do this, and do it well, in order that the sergeant can discharge that vital function efficiently in war. It is, I assure you, the stuff of which successful organizations are built, organizations that can be sustained on battlefields.

All of the emphasis that we have put in the 8th Division on Soldiers' Manuals, on Job Books, on Training Proficiency Tests to prepare for the Annual General Inspection, on SQT and related individual training in units conducted by sergeants, on evaluating the role of the sergeant in the maintenance program, in the supply program, or in the individual clothing and equipment of the soldier--all that emphasis is designed to build sergeant-trainers for wartime sustainability. That is not, gentlemen, a fobbing-off, a devolution of officer responsibilities. That is a very functional attempt to train in peace as we will have to operate in war. There is no way that the lieutenant or the captain in war can take the time and effort to train the individual replacement for his duties. On the battlefield, officers must, deal with tactics, and with the larger aspects of managing violence on the battlefield. Sergeants must carry the burden of individual proficiency. Therefore, the sergeant-trainer of peace prefigures the sergeant-fighter in war, who will assure survivable, sustainable, disciplined units. Here I use the word "disciplined" in the sense of taught, "discipline" in the sense of teaching. The sergeant who looks in peacetime to Soldiers' Manual skills, to the haircut, to the appearance, to the mode of address, to the individual clothing and equipment, to the work habits, to the management of tools, to care of individual weapon, that sergeant in peacetime is learning the rudiments of how to discipline, is disciplining soldiers as he will have to discipline them in war.

FORCE MODERNIZATION

There is little prospect of the Army taking on the enormous numbers of new weapons systems and new materiel items that are inbound to the Army without some much more efficient and widespread system of individual training in units. The Army's vast investment in materiel now underway, reaping the fruits of years of high expenditures on research and development since the phase-down of the Viet Nam war, since about 1972, are only now reaching procurement, and portend profound change. Look at your latest Army magazine if you don't believe me; you will be staggered at the array of new systems coming in, each described with some scattering of letters from the alphabet, each promising great new capabilities,

but each posing a unique new training problem. For example, this brigade is soon going to have to be much more precise. The VINSON cryptologic gear that we're about to field can't be hooked onto a radio set that is aligned as inexpertly and imprecisely as we align our current family of radios. We can get away with imprecisions with the current, more forgiving NESTOR equipment, but we can't with the VINSON. Unless each set is very precisely aligned and peaked, the associated VINSON will not function. How in the world are we going to bring that about? It's going to demand of our signal noncommissioned officers, signal mechanics and radio operators a much greater degree of precision than we have expected in the past. Virtually every one of the new systems similarly provides great new capabilities, but similarly imposes a new series of demands for training. An analogue, I would hold, of the sort of stress and strain that we will face on the battlefield. And the recourse of the Army must be the same: we've got to train the NCO to be able to train the soldier to accept, to operate, to maintain, to repair, that new gear. There are no schools for those sergeants; we won't be able to send them off to TRADOC or Vilseck, except in very rare instances, so as to bring them up to speed on the new materiel. Nor can you expect TRADOC to train completely our replacements either in peace or in war. The Administration has consciously cut-back training time in both basic and advanced individual training, and in any event, we will have such a mix of old and new materiel in the force that the chances will be low that soldiers will come to us trained on our equipment. The answer must again be the sergeant-trainer. And those sergeant-trainers must be developed here, in your unit, by you.

I suggest to you that you have the apparatus you need in the system of individual training which we have fielded--Soldiers' Manuals, TPT, Job Books, etc. The wherewithal is here. As each new item of equipment comes in, there must be work by officers to express the tasks, conditions, and standards relevant to the new equipment. Then these must be put in the hands of the sergeants in the form of Soldiers' Manuals, Job Books, TPT and the like. Then the sergeants have got to be trained to discipline, to teach the soldiers to use the new gear. The NCO's must be given the backing of the officers--commanders, training managers--so that they are able to bring the soldiers together with the equipment, to teach them repetitively, and to evaluate them to see whether in fact learning has occurred. If you do that you can modernize the force. If you do not, I hold out little hope.

UNIT COHESION

And then there is one final point to consider on the centrality of the noncommissioned officer that has to do with the creation of cohesive units. No one who reads the history of combat can avoid the conclusion that the ability of any unit to stick together on the battlefield discriminates the victor from the vanquished, and determines which of two adversaries will leave the field in good shape. Units that disintegrate, that lose their cohesion in combat, are those who suffer grievous loss. To lose cohesion is to face decimation. And therefore, all of us have to think seriously about the steps that we can take in peace to build toward cohesive units. Recently, there was published, I guess in a sort of Xerox or mimeograph form, a paper drafted by a group of psychologists from the Medical Command who were invited into V Corps to examine stress in artillery units. The question asked of this group was how well can we expect artillerymen to stand up under the stress and strain of firing at the rates we anticipate shooting on the modern battlefield. Can the soldiers physically manhandle that much ammunition? The MEDCOM group, which was headed up by Doctor (Major) Manning, concluded very interestingly that the soldier ammunition-humper was far more resilient, could be depended upon to perform far longer, than the officers and NCO's in those artillery units; the leaders were likely to lose effectiveness much faster than would the soldiers. Of course, this is another way of saying what we have all known, have been taught throughout our training as officers, that "there is no such thing as tired soldiers, only tired leaders". And those of you who have not read the Manning paper ought to get it because it contains some very valuable insights on the profession.

The Manning paper goes on, somewhat gratuitously, to offer a series of observations on the artillery units that the MEDCOM team lived with and worked with during the period that they were doing this study. They noted perceptively that the primary divisive influence in these units was the drug culture. They opined that the Army, in its efforts to suppress drugs, had in fact been operating to the disadvantage of unit cohesion, precisely because the suppressive effort divided the unit into abusers and NCO-officer suppressors. The abusers found common cause with, and socialized among themselves. Abusers became the "we" and the "they" became the officers and NCO's who were carrying out the anti-drug program. So said the study group, the Army's drug suppression program is dysfunctional for purposes of preparing the unit for combat in that it drives a wedge between the hierarchy of the unit, and the soldier drug-abusers. It went on to point out that the soldier who is being suborned into drug abuse by contemporaries needs, requires as a counter, identification with a larger group, a cause, some form of socialization. He needs exactly what the unit hierarchy denies him, and the abusers are offering.

While this is a superb diagnosis by the doctors, their prescription was, in my view, somewhat pallid. They went on to say that the best thing going for those artillery units investigated was battery-level athletics. These worked because they put the soldier into touch with his sergeants and his battery officers in a common endeavor, built unit esprit and so forth. Now, I strongly endorse battery-level, company-level, troop-level athletic programs, and I believe with those doctors that such a program can operate to counter drug subornation and to build unit cohesion. But I think it would be irresponsible to expect the weak reed of athletics to carry all the load from a problem as serious as the drug culture. No, I would say that a unit needs an athletic program, but must have something much more powerful. I hold that the professional association of sergeant and soldier implicit in that system of individual training for which this division has become widely regarded can establish a soldier-sergeant relationship that can operate effectively to counter a pull towards drugs. In some instances at least, it can give a soldier that sense of identity with his unit, that feeling of belonging and of support he needs to withstand the pressures, the peers, that would drag him toward drugs. It surely can do much to break down "we"- "they" barriers. The soldier who can look upon his sergeant with professional regard, as the source of information on how to do the job, how to handle the machinery, how to cope with the Army's supply or administrative systems, is far more likely to seek his counsel on matters that are non-military or personal in nature. It is upon such soldier-sergeant relationships, resting fundamentally on professional interactions. that cohesive units are built in peacetime.

In asserting the importance of soldier-sergent relationships, I do not deprecate the usefulness of sound officer-soldier relationships. I do not denigrate in the least the charismatic battalion commander's, or the sharp captain's, or the brilliantly effective lieutenant's contribution to unit cohesion. You know, like LTC Rowe, who spends most of his spare time cutting out stencils of Black Lions, or those tank battalion and company commanders who effect wierd hats, jackets and boots to get the attention of followers. All of that can contribute to unit cohesion. But somewhere down in the motor pool or in the supply room, in all the nooks and cranics of this kaserne, at any given hour of the day, it's more likely to be a sergeant dealing with that soldiers. It is therefore crucial that soldier-sergeant relationships be developed, broadened, deepened to the degree that we officers can possibly foster them. Because from those relationships flow the pulling together of the unit in peacetime, and that is the very stuff of which cohesive units are built in war. Units that are built systematically by officers upon soldier-sergeant relationships are resilient in combat. They will hang together in battle.

To be sure, I have seen organizations, good fighting units, who were officer-dominated and officer led. A good lieutenant can pull a platoon together by force of his own personality and take to to the top of the hill. But altogether too often I have personally witnessed a lieutenant reaching the top of the hill with no one along. And there you are. The captain is told to get a rifle platoon up there, and he ends up with one gold bar and a carbine. The trick is always to preserve that officer leadership, but to generate the enormous underpinnings for it that sergeants can assure in the unit. And the unit that does that can take an enormous amount of battle stress and strain and survive. You will save lives if you do it that way.

Some of you have heard me say that in the brigade of the 101st Airborne Division that I commanded for one year in Viet Nam, half of the rifle platoons that I sent into the jungle against the North Vietnamese infantry--the finest light infantry in the world, and certainly one of the most capable forces that the American Army has ever tangled with--half of those platoons that went into the jungle were commanded by OCS graduates, and had for NCO's kids who got their stripes from an NCO school, who were pulled out of the stream of draftees, made an instant noncommissioned officer. By and large, the platoon all entered the Army the same year, were all the same age group. These platoons were unleavened by any experience with the Army. There was little or no communication into those groups from any of the training of the Army in peace. There was little or no capability to take the new replacement in hand, and teach him the art of surviving in the jungle, or of fighting the NVA. There was little institutional memory in those platoons--maybe 90 days, 6 months at the outside. Now, you can field organizations like that, and some will fight well; there were some damn fine leaders among those lieutenants and sergeants. But, what a desperately bad situation, what an enormous strain on company commanders and battalion commanders and brigade commanders in that sort of circumstances. From that experience, I say to you: treasure your sergeants, teach them to be good sergeants. Demand that of them. Discipline them for that. Never, never believe, for even one moment, that you are thereby surrendering any of the prerogatives, privileges or satisfactions of officership. To the contrary, you are doing the work for which the Army hired you, work of which you can be proud.

Now in closing I want to tell you that we were visited by two four-star Army leaders. One was the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Rogers, who came to Baumholder, and caught some glimpses of the training underway there. The Chief's parting comment was to the effect that Baumholder breathes professional excitement. The second visitor was the Commander-in-Chief, USAREUR, General Blanchard, who met with brigade commanders and the DIVARTY Commander for his parting shot at us. What he said was that

this division has established itself as Pathfinding for the 7th Army in how to handle the new weapons systems, and we've discovered a lot that is very important to the other divisions. He said the problem now is how to get the other divisions interested in pursuing the things that we have been working on. As General Blanchard was on the way in, I had pointed to a 292 antenna mast with a DISCOM-made yagi head on it, designed by a SP4 in the 415th ASA Company, and remarked that we were talking on low power to Bad Kreuznach from the airfield there at Baumholder-- a very significant advance in electronic warfare. The CINC picked that theme up in talking to the colonels, and told them that all 7th Army had to be able to elicit that kind of inventiveness from soldiers. Well, I communicate that to you both as a compliment, and as a challenge. I think the CINC meant to say that he was very proud of what you of the 8th have accomplished, and as a challenge because I genuinely believe that there is a lot more good ideas out there that we have got to bring to bear.

In any event, let it be said that the 8th Division and its 4th Brigade are commonly regarded, here in Europe, back in the Pentagon and around among the division posts of CONUS, as the front runners, the Pathfinders, in the field of training and readiness. That should be a matter of profound professional satisfaction to every officer in this room. I can assure you that I am deeply grateful to each of you for your contributions to that state of professionalism. It's not good enough, and as I frequently tell you, we have to try harder. But we have achieved what few other organizations in the Army have attempted. This brigade in particular has made the Army proud.

General Blanchard asked me what I had done to document the system which produced such achievement. I replied not much. I said documents cannot in any sense communicate what is going on here. To get that, you have to do what General Rogers did the other day: you have to visit training, and to sit down with a group of tankers who have just been through Table XI, or to converse with a group of officers and NCO's who have just led their unit in one of our REALTRAIN battles, or to get out on one of those infantry live-fire ranges where a lieutenant has just led his platoon in the attack or the defense against a rolling array of targets. Talk to those sergeants, talk to those soldiers, talk to those officers. That more than anything else I believe documents what has been done, and that more than anything else will convince the doubters. I told him--and you will forgive me, I am certain, for my old age and somewhat maudlin mood induced by impending departure--I actually told General Blanchard that, as my predecessors in the command of this division have said before me, don't look to some paper or compiled record, go look at my soldiers, for "These Are My Credentials".