

INFORMATION PAPER

ATZL-MCE
10 May 18

SUBJECT: Army Culture and Trust in the Army Institution and Profession

1. **Purpose.** To discuss perceptions of a “culture of compliance” and its effects on Mission Command and mutual trust.

2. **Methodology.** To discern perceptions of balance between cultural expectations of compliance and mutual trust in the Army as an Institution and as a Profession, we conducted a review of literature and reports from the Army Profession Campaign (2012), Army Profession Forums (2013-2017), Army Profession Seminars (2012-2017), Junior Leader Army Profession Forums (2011, 2015, 2016), and *Not in My Squad* workshops (2015-2017). We also reviewed the CAPE Assessment of the State of the Army Profession (CASAP FY15, 16, 18). We gained operational perspective from US Army Pacific, 25th Infantry Division, and US Army Europe. Finally, we consulted USAWC faculty and subject matter experts with prior military service who have remained focused on military affairs.

3. Discussion.

a. Our Army is both a military department of government and a military profession (ADRP 1). The Institution’s inherent hierarchy requires Army professionals to willingly obey legal and moral orders. Concurrently, the Army Profession, operating through mission command, requires mutual trust, cohesive teamwork, and disciplined initiative (ADRP 6-0). To foster a *Culture of Trust*, the Army must find and maintain the proper balance between expectations of compliance and expectations that Army Professionals will do what is right in the absence of direct supervision.

b. In this context, senior leaders’ directives, policies, programs, and systems have the greatest influence on Army culture. If Soldiers and Army Civilians perceive the institutional bureaucracy dominates the profession, they can become cynical and disengaged. This condition compromises the Army *Culture of Trust*.

4. **Assessment.** Beginning with the most recent Army Profession Campaign, insights concerning the nature of the balance within Army culture between “trust” and “compliance” are summarized as follows:

a. Army Profession Campaign (2011). In our Army, trust is the bedrock of a culture where honorable service and duty are the highest ideals. However, it is unlikely for the Army to have endured an extended trial of war without some fraying at the edges of its professional ethic (Army Profession Campaign Report, Apr 12). The Army *Culture of Trust* is a strategic leader responsibility and cannot be taken for granted.

b. Army Profession Forums (Jul 14, Nov 14, Jul 15, Dec 16, Dec 17). We aspire to a culture of trust, but we resort to compliance to ensure we answer to higher and external audiences,

are satisfactory on inspections and evaluations, and avoid risk. Turnover within key positions inhibits senior leaders' ability to effect strategic (cultural) change.

c. Army Profession Seminars (Oct 12 – Apr 18). Soldiers and Army Civilians embrace the doctrine of the profession and their identity as *Trusted Army Professionals*. However, they express frustration with requirements to complete tasks that do not appear to directly support mission readiness. This is acute in the National Guard and Reserve Component, where drill time is often dedicated to mandatory training in lieu of collective and MOS training. A frequent observation is that the Army preaches profession and practices bureaucracy. Soldiers and Army Civilians also relate tensions between their ethical responsibility to “strive for excellence” and the reality that lack of time and resources encourage sufficing with what will “get by.” In addition, doctrinal guidance to “accept prudent risk” contrasts with “zero tolerance” for honest mistakes or outcomes that fail to meet the standards.

d. Junior Leader Army Profession Forums (Nov 11, Feb 15, Apr 16). Leaders are overloaded with mandated training and bureaucratic procedures. Last-minute taskings compromise trust by changing approved activities on the training schedule. Requirements that cannot be fully accomplished within the time available can lead to misrepresenting the truth. Allowing commanders to use their professional judgement to concentrate on mission readiness promotes trust. Proper exercise of training management and planning are essential.

e. *Not in My Squad* (Jul 15 – Dec 17). This Sergeant Major of the Army initiative is focused on building mutual trust and cohesive teamwork within squad-size organizations. Feedback indicates that NIMS is well-received and supported by the chain of command. Attendees frequently express the same concerns as those at Army Profession Seminars; these include: excessive focus on mandatory training, failure to honor the training schedule, “mission command in words, not deeds,” and the importance of building trust through candid two-way communication creating shared intent and situational understanding.

f. CASAP is a recurring Army-wide survey of Soldiers and Army Civilians. Its design, is based on doctrine of the Army Profession and includes indicators of trust, cohesion, stewardship, and esprit de corps. Respondents' moderate confidence in senior Army leaders to be honorable servants, Army experts, and stewards of the profession suggests the need to improve communications explaining the rationale for strategic decisions. CASAP respondents noted, “[An unbalanced] culture of compliance undermines trust through excessive reporting, conformity, micro-management, and maintaining appearances.” This opinion reflects dissonance between the ideals professed in Army policy and doctrine and the realities experienced by Army professionals in the performance of duty.

g. USARPAC, 25th ID, and USAREUR. Feedback included illustrations of the benefits of mission command in action during Operation Pacific Pathways, Cobra Gold, and Atlantic Resolve. Leaders at all levels exercised disciplined initiative and accomplished the mission in the absence of direct guidance. Leaders accepted risk and solved complex problems based on shared understanding of their commander's intent, knowing they were both trusted and expected to do so. Most importantly, leaders were confident they could report the

situation as they saw it, including shortcomings and setbacks. In professional organizational climates, mutual trust and cohesive teamwork resulted in mission accomplishment. When Soldiers and leaders trust each other they can exercise mission command, be accountable, and meet the standards expected of Army Professionals.

h. Command Initiatives. Numerous 2- and 3-Star-level commands across the Total Force are acting on Sec Army and CSA intent to mitigate or remove administrative and training requirements that interfere with readiness. For example, within the ARNG, CGs are eliminating training that is non-mission essential. Active component Division Commanders are “filling and resourcing” only “mission critical additional duties.” Within TRADOC, Commanders have instructed subordinates to streamline administrative reporting and extended the time for renewal of mandatory training on non-mission essential subjects. These actions are intended to right the balance between expectations of compliance and the essentiality of mutual trust and disciplined initiative to achieve mission readiness.

i. Academic Subject Matter Experts. The monograph “Lying to Ourselves, Dishonesty in the Army Profession” (Wong and Gerras, February 2015), cited examples where the Army was “quick to pass down requirements to individuals and units regardless of their ability to actually comply with the totality of the requirements.” Within the Army there is a necessary expectation of achieving standards and striving for excellence that must be tempered by avoiding a “zero-defects mentality.”

5. **Summary.** The Army Profession Campaign affirmed that our *Culture of Trust* requires continuous attention and strategic stewardship. In the Army Profession Forums, senior Army leaders recognized challenges to mission command at their level and noted that turnover frustrates cultural change. Army leaders attending Army Profession Seminars and NIMS workshops voiced concerns with excessive mandatory training and changes to training schedules. CASAP findings identified the need to strengthen trust in the senior leader cohort. Feedback from the field affirmed that mission command depends on mutual trust.

6. **Conclusion.** Strategic leaders are responsible to sustain the proper balance between expectations of compliance and the essentiality of mutual trust. This ideal is achieved through directives, policies, programs, and systems that reflect and enable the practice of mission command. The recent revision of AR 350-1 and the Sec Army, CSA MEMO, SUBJ: Prioritizing Efforts, dtd 13 Apr 18, are examples of actions that will strengthen the Army *Culture of Trust*. Our senior stewards are responsible to ensure that Soldiers and Army Civilians never perceive that the "Army preaches profession but practices bureaucracy."

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