

Character, Competence And Commitment

Ethic Compatible With Mission Command

By Lt. Col. Peter C. Kinney III, U.S. Army retired

The Army exists as a profession for one reason: to serve the nation by supporting and defending the Constitution in a way that upholds the rights and interests of the American people. The Army Ethic defines what it means to serve honorably ... in the conduct of missions, performance of duty and all aspects of life. Living by and upholding the Army Ethic is the foundation for mutual trust and cohesive teamwork—the first principle of Mission Command.

The following vignettes illustrate how soldiers and Army civilians have served and fought honorably, demonstrating the Army Ethic in action.

Character: Blocking Republican Guard

On the night of Feb. 25, 1991, the al Faw Special Forces Division of Iraq's Republican Guard was trying desperately to get out of the way of 1,500 Abrams tanks crashing through the Iraqi defenses in Kuwait and southern Iraq. Their Mercedes trucks were squirting up Highway 8 headed for Baghdad. In ambush positions along Highway 8, the troopers of the 2nd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), were attacking the Iraqi trucks with AT4 recoilless weapons, machine guns and small-arms fire. Following the withering fires from the "Rakkasans," Staff Sgt. Steven P. Edwards, a squad leader in Company B, led his men across the kill zone to check the enemy dead and

A U.S. soldier trains with night-vision gear in Djibouti, Africa.

U.S. AIR FORCE/STAFF SGT. AMY PICARD



treat their wounded.

An injured Iraqi NCO who spoke English, surprised that the men who had just tried to kill him were now tending to his wounds, asked, "Aren't you just going to shoot us?" Edwards replied, "We're American soldiers; we don't do that."

The wounded Iraqis were safely evacuated from the ambush site and their dead buried with respect. Edwards was awarded the Bronze Star for valor by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf.

According to the Army Ethic, "In war and peace, we recognize the intrinsic dignity and worth of all people, treating them with respect." Even those who threaten the rights of others are

entitled to just treatment according to law, regulations and rules of engagement. American soldiers, molded by their character, lead by example, serve honorably and do what is right to prevent abusive treatment of others.

Following Edwards' example, American soldiers protect noncombatants who are threatened and demonstrate their morality by treating our enemies humanely. We do not tolerate mistreatment of people or their property. American soldiers fight to win—in the right way.

Competence: Servant of the Nation

In June 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew war was coming to America. France had fallen to Hitler and the British were alone facing the Blitz. America needed to rapidly expand its armed forces and ramp up its armaments production. Roosevelt called an

old friend, Bernard Baruch, who had led U.S. war production during World War I, and asked him to return to the post. Baruch replied that he was too old for the task. The president then asked his friend for the names of the top three industrial managers in the U.S. capable of leading American war production.

“That’s easy,” Baruch replied. “Bill Knudsen, Bill Knudsen, Bill Knudsen.”

William S. Knudsen was a Danish immigrant and the 61-year-old president of General Motors. He was a genius in industrial engineering. He knew how to build factories that mass-produced things. His technical competence in mass-production was unrivaled. Roosevelt called Knudsen and asked him to leave Detroit and come to Washington, D.C. Knudsen accepted without hesitation.

While packing his bags that night, his wife asked him why he was giving up the presidency of General Motors and a life of wealth and privilege to go to work as the civilian manager of war production, at a salary of \$1 per year. Knudsen’s answer: “Honey, this country has been very good to me. It’s time to pay it back.”

Knudsen went on to build the “Arsenal of Democracy” as the director of war production, serving first as a senior Army civilian. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declaration of war, Knudsen became the only Army civilian to be appointed by the president directly to the rank of lieutenant general. His extraordinary management of America’s industrial might greatly contributed to U.S. victories in World War II.

Knudsen was sought out by the president because of his technical competence and just as important, he was a



man of character, a selfless servant to the nation. Knudsen embodied the professional competence of thousands of today’s Army civilians who, alongside their uniformed partners, are bound together in our shared identity as trusted Army professionals who serve with character, competence and commitment to accomplish the Army mission as expressed in its historic motto: “This We’ll Defend.”

The example of Knudson illustrates the following principle stated in the Army Ethic: “We do our duty, leading and following with discipline, striving for excellence, putting the needs of oth-

ers above our own, accomplishing the mission as a team.”

Commitment: Chosin Reservoir

The Army Strategy directs that “The Army must be ready to conduct major operations and campaigns involving large-scale combat with Division and Corps-level maneuvers against near-peer

Then-Capt. Don Carlos Faith Jr. circa World War II.

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competitors.” Read Russia and China. We have fought the Chinese before. The North Koreans invaded South Korea in June 1950 and pushed U.N. and U.S. forces south to the Pusan Perimeter. The September Inchon Landing turned the tide of war and the North Koreans were routed northward to the Chinese border along the Yalu River.

In reaction, as U.N. forces approached the Chinese border, hundreds of thousands of Chinese of the People’s Volunteer Army (PVA) crossed into Korea to confront U.N. and U.S. forces and save their North Korean allies.

On Nov. 27, 1950, 120,000 Chinese troops encircled 30,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines at the Chosin Reservoir. U.S. forces broke out from encirclement and made a fighting withdrawal to the port of Hungnam, inflicting heavy losses on the Chinese. U.S. Marines were supported in their withdrawal by the Army’s 31st Regimental Combat Team, later known as Task Force Faith, which suffered heavy casualties and the full brunt of Chinese assaults from two PVA divisions. The weather was bitterly cold. That winter,

Soldiers of the Caisson Platoon, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), transport the remains of Medal of Honor recipient Lt. Col. Don Carlos Faith Jr. at Arlington National Cemetery in 2013. It took decades to identify and remove his remains from North Korea.

U.S. ARMY/SGT. JOSE A. TORRES JR.

45,000 Chinese soldiers froze to death due to a lack of winter clothing. The soldiers of Task Force Faith, suffering from frostbite and low on ammunition, fought their way down a mountain road through multiple Chinese roadblocks.

In the end, of the 2,500 soldiers of Task Force Faith, just over 1,000 broke through to friendly front lines, the majority wounded or badly frostbitten. Only 385 survivors were fit for duty.

Lt. Col. Don Carlos Faith Jr., wounded multiple times and killed in action, was awarded the Medal of Honor. His citation reads, in part: “Faith, although physically exhausted in the bitter cold ... ran forward under enemy small-arms and automatic weapons fire, got his men on their feet and personally led the fire attack as it blasted its way through the enemy ring. As they came to a hair-pin curve, enemy fire from a roadblock again pinned the column down. Lt. Col. Faith organized a group of men and directed their attack on the enemy positions on the right flank. He then placed himself at the head of another group of men and in the face of direct enemy fire led an attack on the enemy roadblock, firing his pistol and throwing grenades. When he had reached a position approximately 30 yards from the roadblock he was mortally wounded, but continued to direct the attack until the roadblock was overcome. Throughout the 5 days of action Lt. Col. Faith gave no thought to his safety and did not spare himself. Lt.

Col. Faith’s outstanding gallantry and noble self-sacrifice above and beyond the call of duty reflect the highest honor on him and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Army.”

The actions of Faith and his soldiers speak to their commitment and courage, fundamental qualities of trusted Army professionals and the Army Ethic, which states in part: “We lead by example and demonstrate courage by doing what is right despite risk, uncertainty, and fear ... We accomplish the mission and understand it may demand courageously risking our lives and justly taking the lives of others.”



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YOU IN ACTION

The Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) at West Point invites contributions to its effort to illustrate the Army Ethic in Action. It is asking you to share your stories and reflections that will inspire others to honorably fulfill their oaths of service. Contact retired Lt. Col. Peter C. Kinney III at peter.c.kinney.ctr@mail.mil. For more about CAPE, visit <http://cape.army.mil>