

Army Spotlights Professional Ethic By Col. John Vermeesch

Since its inception, the U.S. Army has had an evolving set of laws, values and beliefs that have guided and shaped it into the trusted and revered profession it is today. Now, for the first time in its history, the Army has an articulated ethic.

On the occasion of its 240th birthday this year, the Army released the latest version of Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 1 *The Army Profession*, which includes a new Chapter 2, “The Army Ethic.”

This articulation of the Army Ethic was the result of a process that started in October 2007, when then-Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. directed that a center of excellence be established at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., for three main purposes:

- Assessing, studying and refining the Army’s professional military ethic

- Creating educational products and integrating knowledge about our ethic into new and existing training for soldiers and civilians

- Accelerating moral-ethical development in individuals, units and Army institutions to transform attitudes and remain sensitive to the nuances of operating among people in an era of persistent conflict

In 2013, the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic created ADRP 1, which expanded on the discussion that was previously published in Army Doctrine Publication 1, Chapter 2.

The Army Ethic has been called the “heart of the Army Profession.” Discussion of the topic was interspersed throughout ADRP 1, but it was soon realized that there was no specific articulation of that important tenet.

As one group of brigade commanders stated during a focus group discussion, “An unwritten Army Ethic cannot guide ... conduct.” So upon initial publication of *The Army Profession*, the center immediately began working on the Army Ethic Project to rectify “an omission in our doctrine—the absence of an articu-

lated, accessible and understandable expression of the Army Ethic,” as then-Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno stated in the *Army Ethic White Paper* in July 2014.

Guidance Needed

It was clear the Army needed a concisely verbalized ethic to inspire, motivate and guide its conduct—an ethic that all members of the Army could identify as their own in guiding them to make right decisions and take actions that are ethical, effective and efficient.

The intent of the white paper was to generate consensus on the need to articulate the Army Ethic in doctrine, and to promote Armywide discussion on how to express its fundamental nature and moral principles. With feedback from broad audiences—including senior Army leaders at the secretary of the Army and chief of staff’s Army Profession Symposium; attendees at the annual Fort Leavenworth Ethics Symposium; the chief of staff’s Solarium, a national-level strategy and foreign policy exercise for active duty, Reserve and National Guard senior captains from across the Army; and the Junior Leader Symposium—an understanding emerged. Specifically, the expression of the Army Ethic should be based on those underlying ethical principles that if embodied and lived, would maintain our shared identity as trusted Army professionals.

In July 2014, at the inaugural Army Profession Symposium at West Point, Odierno asked Army senior leaders to share their vision for the Army Ethic, and to inspire and motivate all Army professionals within their organizations based on the shared identity of trusted Army professionals.

“The professional ethic is not a 9-to-5 ethic. It’s a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week ethic,” Odierno said. “It has to be a life-long ethic. Everything a soldier does reflects upon the profession. It reflects on who you are, and reflects on those who rely on you to do very difficult missions.”

At the Senior Army Civilian symposium at the National Defense University in November 2014, Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh affirmed the vi-

THE ARMY ETHIC

The Heart of the Army

The Army Ethic includes the moral principles that guide our decisions and actions as we fulfill our purpose: to support and defend the Constitution and our way of life. Living the Army Ethic is the basis for our mutual trust with each other and the American people. Today our ethic is expressed in laws, values, and shared beliefs within American and Army cultures. The Army Ethic motivates our commitment as Soldiers and Army Civilians who are bound together to accomplish the Army mission as expressed in our historic and prophetic motto: ***This We'll Defend.***

Living the Army Ethic inspires our shared identity as trusted Army professionals with distinctive roles as *honorable servants*, *Army experts*, and *stewards of the profession*. To honor these obligations we adopt, live by, and uphold the moral principles of the Army Ethic. Beginning with our solemn oath of service as defenders of the Nation, we voluntarily incur the extraordinary moral obligation to be trusted Army professionals.

Trusted Army Professionals are

Honorable Servants of the Nation—Professionals of Character:

- We serve honorably—according to the Army Ethic—under civilian authority while obeying the laws of the Nation and all legal orders; further, we reject and report illegal, unethical, or immoral orders or actions.
- We take pride in honorably serving the Nation with integrity, demonstrating character in all aspects of our lives.
- In war and peace, we recognize the intrinsic dignity and worth of all people, treating them with respect.
- We lead by example and demonstrate courage by doing what is right despite risk, uncertainty, and fear; we candidly express our professional judgment to subordinates, peers, and superiors.

Army Experts—Competent Professionals:

- We do our duty, leading and following with discipline, striving for excellence, putting the needs of others above our own, and accomplishing the mission as a team.
- We accomplish the mission and understand it may demand courageously risking our lives and justly taking the lives of others.
- We continuously advance the expertise of our chosen profession through life-long learning, professional development, and our certifications.

Stewards of the Army Profession—Committed Professionals:

- We embrace and uphold the Army Values and standards of the profession, always accountable to each other and the American people for our decisions and actions.
- We wisely use the resources entrusted to us, ensuring our Army is well led and well prepared, while caring for Soldiers, Army Civilians, and Families.
- We continuously strengthen the essential characteristics of the Army Profession, reinforcing our bond of trust with each other and the American people.

sion for an articulated Army Ethic. “The Army Ethic has to be one shared professional ethic that informs and inspires all members of the Army profession—both uniformed and civilian—to motivate and guide decisions and actions to be trusted Army professionals,” he said.

The Army Ethic had to not only resonate with senior leaders of the Army but with junior leaders as well. To validate the draft Army Ethic, the chief of staff directed the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic to conduct a junior

leader symposium. These participants took on the challenge and provided invaluable feedback.

The intent of the Army Ethic is to guide the decisions and actions of all Army professionals, and thus the Army profession itself, through its inspirational motivations. The Army Ethic guides soldiers and Army civilians in making right decisions and taking right actions in the conduct of the mission, in the performance of duty, and in all aspects of life. To enable understanding

and facilitate our shared identity as trusted Army professionals, the Army Ethic has been expressed in a one-page summary and fully articulated in the second chapter of the new ADRP 1.

Three Supporting Roles

The Army Ethic is an identity-based ethic with three supporting roles: honorable servants of the nation, Army experts, and stewards of the Army profession, with each supporting role informed by associated moral principles.

In our role as honorable servants of the nation, we are professionals of character. In our role as Army experts, we are competent professionals. In our role as stewards of the Army profession, we are accountable to each other, the profession and the American people.

The Army Ethic and its moral principles are essential components of the Army culture of trust. Specifically, it informs and guides institutional and operational policy and practice by supporting honorable service in defense of the Constitution and the interests of the American people; military expertise to accomplish the mission in the right way (ethically, effectively and efficiently); and stewardship of soldiers, Army civilians, the Army family, other resources and the profession.

Leaders at all levels are responsible for implementing the Army Ethic in a culture of trust, inspiring and motivating soldiers and Army civilians to make right decisions and take right actions. Embodiment will lead to mission accomplishment and thus, maintain the trust we need to continue to be a military profession. Only then can the Army continue to accomplish any mission.

Odierno expressed the Army Ethic’s purpose quite concisely when he said: “We are American citizens whose character, competence and commitment exemplify the ideals espoused by the Army Ethic. In living by and upholding the Army Ethic, we are trusted Army professionals.” □

Col. John Vermeesch is director of the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic. He is a former battalion commander and served two tours in Iraq. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the U.S. Military Academy, and master’s degrees from Long Island University and the U.S. Army War College.