

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**TRANSFORMING THE OPERATIONAL CAREER FIELD  
OFFICER PATH: PREPARING LEADERS FOR TODAY'S  
CONTEMPORARY OPERATING ENVIRONMENT AND  
TO LEAD THE ARMY INTO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

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## ABSTRACT

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The United States Army is, arguably, one of the most professional institutions in the world. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, there has not been nor is there on the horizon a conventional military peer-competitor. While the Army is equipped with the best military hardware and resources, it is the leadership within the Army that separates it from other institutions. Our hard working, committed, tactically and technically proficient, morally-ethically grounded officer corps deservingly gets credit for transforming a Vietnam era conscript Army into the model volunteer force the U.S. has today.

Army transformation is being executed at a rapid pace while its forces are simultaneously engaged in a multitude of combat type operations. The officer corps leading this Army today and into the future requires a complex set of skills that are intellectually different than previous generations. To succeed on today's battlegrounds, Army officers at every rank must be capable of simultaneously executing multiple, often times conflicting, missions. To prepare leaders for these uncertain environments, the Army must provide them the necessary intellectual tools and assignment opportunities throughout their careers. This paper proposes a fundamental shift in our officer career path policy by emphasizing more academic, fellowship and exchange opportunities earlier and throughout Army officers' careers. Additionally, eliminating the current officer branch qualification requirement, or expanding the positions that currently qualify as branch qualification, will provide Army officers the time they need to truly improve their skills and proficiencies at every rank. This is not a list of all or nothing propositions. In fact, they are just a handful of the "means" the Army can institute into its current officer professional development career path or "ways" to better equip leaders so they continue to lead the world's greatest Army to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; the ends.



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## TRANSFORMING THE OPERATIONAL CAREER FIELD OFFICER CAREER PATH: PREPARING LEADERS FOR TODAY'S CONTEMPORARY OPERATING ENVIRONMENT AND TO LEAD THE ARMY INTO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

The United States Army is, arguably, one of the most professional institutions in the world. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, there has not been nor is there on the horizon a conventional military peer-competitor. While the U.S. Army is equipped with the best military hardware and resources, it is the leadership within the Army that separates it from other institutions. The Army's hard working, committed, tactically and technically proficient, morally-ethically grounded officer corps deservingly gets credit for transitioning a Vietnam era conscript Army into the model volunteer force we have today.

The U.S. Army's leadership is constantly assessing how it can become better and more relevant to meet U.S. national security needs. Technology and information advancements combined with a new kind of enemy are driving a transformation of such great magnitude that all elements of the Army are being reviewed and modified to address the current and future operating environment. In the recently published 2004 Army Campaign Plan, Army Chief of Staff, General Peter Schoomaker and former Acting Secretary of the Army R.L. Brownlee sum up the challenges facing our leaders when they say, "...the norm will be short-notice operations, extremely austere theaters of operation, and incomplete information—indeed, the requirement to fight for information, rather than fight with information.<sup>1</sup>

Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom have offered Army leaders at every level new and unique challenges. Today's leaders are operating in a noncontiguous, constantly changing battle-space mixed with both combatants and noncombatants. The enemy is smart and very adaptable to the environment. He executes unconventional warfare and avoids conventional military operations at all costs. Again, citing the Army Campaign Plan, the Army's two senior leaders describe the enemy as...

asymmetric in means. They are asymmetric in motivation....Whereas our government is necessarily hierarchical, these enemies are a network. Whereas we develop rules of engagement to limit tactical collateral damage, they feel morally unconstrained in their efforts to deliver strategic effects. Highly adaptive, they are self-organizing on the basis of ideas alone, exposing very little of targetable value in terms of infrastructure or institutions. To better understand such a war, we must examine the broader context of conflict, the competition of ideas.<sup>2</sup>

As the enemy we are fighting has changed, so too have the missions Army leaders are required to execute. U.S. Army leaders must understand and train to execute a host of



missions including: counterinsurgency, nation building, humanitarian assistance, riot control, and homeland defense, just to name a few. Excelling in the environment described requires current and future Army officers to be agile, adaptable and culturally and socially aware throughout their entire careers. Understanding the “big picture” and executing complex missions oftentimes with little more than “commander’s intent” and in culturally alien environments are the new skills required by Army leaders.

Today’s senior Army leaders have spent the preponderance of their military careers serving in an army equipped, trained, led and educated to defeat a nation-state peer-competitor, preferably without firing a shot but with the full violence of total war if necessary. The officer professional development career path designed to defeat this threat is a rigid path that has evolved into a “best answer” process. The Army teaches its leaders from day one that there are almost always proven sequences of events that, if followed, will lead to the desired outcome. Facing a templatable enemy like our Cold War adversaries, adherence to Army Doctrine became the glide path into “how to think” and “what to do”. On one hand, this rigid approach to problem solving has been one of the largest factors for the Army’s rise to the top and a model for the world’s armies to emulate. On the other hand, this approach has resulted in the development of narrow, sometimes inflexible leadership qualities and decision making processes that are not necessarily suited for today’s contemporary operating environment.<sup>3</sup> Army leaders have been quite successful, over the years, putting conventional warfighting and leadership skills into a “black or white” category. The challenge faced today and in the future is reassessing and reorganizing these skills to operate just as effectively and efficiently in the ever-growing “gray” world. The U.S. Army’s Officer Career Path policy is too rigid to allow for the professional development of thoughtful, insightful, and macro-thinking officers needed to transform our Army and successfully dominate in the current and future operating environment.

In addition, current Army officer assignment requirements are rigid and designed to create and sharpen the skills required to command at the next level. Starting the day lieutenants arrive at their basic courses, officers know what positions they must hold if they want to advance to the next rank. Lieutenants need to be platoon leaders and company level executive officers. Captains need to be battalion or higher staff officers and must be company level commanders. Majors must be battalion level operations officers and/or executive officers. Lieutenant Colonels must be battalion level commanders. This series of positions summarizes the career path for an Operations Career Field (OPCF) officer who can compete for promotion to the rank of Colonel.<sup>4</sup> Build in the required formal training requirements into the above career path- Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC), Captains Career Course (CCC), Intermediate Level Education (ILE)

and the Senior Service College (SSC) - and you readily see that a large majority of the officers' career path is mandated by the Army, leaving very little room to develop competencies in other important areas.

The Army's Chief of Staff has articulated what he sees as important qualities for current and future Army leaders. According to General Schoomaker, Army leaders must be comfortable making decisions in ambiguous environments, understand the strategic implications of tactical situations, and demonstrate a resiliency to succeed in "irregular" environments.<sup>5</sup> He further states that our leaders must be pentathletes, proficient in many skills rather than only an expert in one skill.<sup>6</sup> Our leaders must have the flexibility to move from warrior to negotiator to diplomat to peacekeeper quickly, effectively and regularly.

So, what can the Army do to the current officer career path that will make it more apt to produce the agile, adaptable and socially aware leaders needed by a transforming Army? The task seems monumental but many of the pieces to this puzzle are already in place. In its basic form, depicted in Figure 1 below, the Army needs to reassess when and how its officers are filling their professional development "toolbox". Restructuring the U.S. Army Officers' educational focus and assignments process will result in a career path supportive of developing agile, adaptable, culturally and socially aware leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

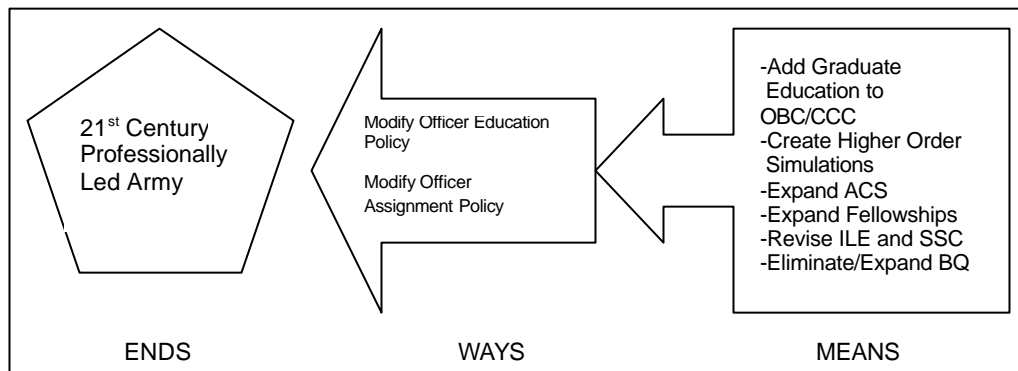


FIGURE 1 THE ENDS-WAYS-MEANS TO A SUCCESSFUL US ARMY OFFICER OPCR CAREER

## **HISTORICAL REVIEW OF OFFICER MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION**

Before launching into proposed modifications and additions to the current officer management and education system it is necessary to review changes made over the years to ensure the officer corps remained relevant and ready to win our nation's wars. The modern day Army Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) dates back to the Vietnam War. Since then OPMS has undergone several major reviews and modifications to keep personnel management relevant and consistent with a profession that consistently transforms.

### **OFFICER PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM I (OPMS I)**

Focused on improving the professional climate of the officer corps, OPMS I laid the foundation for the current system. Then Army Chief of Staff, General William Westmoreland initiated a system that focused on identifying the most qualified officers for command while still allowing for specialization in some technical areas for other officers. Most important was General Westmoreland's commitment to creating an environment where a large body of officers could achieve satisfactory careers.<sup>7</sup> Formally implemented in 1974, OPMS I officer education requirements were defined by the Army Chief of Staff, General Bernard W. Rogers. As a result of General Rogers' directed study, entitled, A Review of the Education and Training of Officers, an Army officer's training and education requirements were formalized for the first time from pre-commissioning through retirement.<sup>8</sup>

### **OFFICER PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM II (OPMS II)**

In 1980 the U.S. Congress attempted to provide the foundation for a generally consistent officer career path across all Department of Defense (DOD) services. The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) became, and remains today, the congressional guidance for each service's officer professional management program.<sup>9</sup> With DOPMA approved, Army Chief of Staff, General Edward C. Meyers directed a study to ensure the Army's compliance. This study led to OPMS II in 1985 and set the conditions for officer career modifications such as single branch development, functional areas and multiple career tracks.<sup>10</sup>

During the period covered by OPMS II, the U.S. Congress passed the Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986. Among other things, this mandate forced all services to improve interoperability and joint warfighting capabilities by requiring officers to receive joint military education and to serve in joint duty assignments as a part of their career development.<sup>11</sup> OPMS II served the Army Officer Corps well throughout the remainder of the Cold War. During the 1990s, as the country and the Department of Defense struggled to identify their roles in the new

world created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became clear that another review of OPMS was needed.

#### OFFICER PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM XXI (OPMS XXI)

In 1996, Army Chief of Staff General Dennis J. Reimer ordered a review of OPMS II to determine its adequacy in developing officers for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This review was thorough and focused on three areas: Career Management, Structure and Force Distribution and Training and Leader Development. As a result, this review established four distinct officer career fields, Operations Career Field (OPCF), Information Operations Career Field (IOCF), Institutional Support Career Field (ISCF) and Operations Support Career Field (OSCF). Additionally, the study recommended extending resident Intermediate Level Education (ILE) to all officers selected for promotion to the rank of Major and resident Senior Service College (SSC) to all officers selected for promotion to the rank of Colonel.<sup>12</sup> Along with other recommendations, which primarily focused on promotion and officer inventory and authorizations, OPMS XXI was approved in 1997. Recently renamed OPMS III, it remains fundamentally in tact today.

In 2000, Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki also convened an Army panel to review, assess and provide recommendations for developing and training leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The CSA appointed Lieutenant General William Steele, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, as the panel's director.<sup>13</sup> General Steele's panel addressed several issues and provided two very profound conclusions. First, the panel concluded that the OPMS was focused on assignment gates at the expense of quality leader development. Lieutenant General Steele summarized that the personnel management system "...appears to focus not on leader development in organizational assignment but rather on placing faces in spaces."<sup>14</sup> Second, the panel concluded that the Officer Education System (OES) was being neglected. Again, summarizing this finding, Lieutenant General Steele states, "Largely untouched since the collapse of the Soviet Union and progressively under-resourced during Army downsizing, the OES is out of synch with Army needs today and the needs of the Objective Force tomorrow."<sup>15</sup>

Four years after General Shinseki's panel assessed OPMS the Army has made some progress such as working to implement resident ILE for 100% of the officers selected for promotion to major. However, it has yet to initiate the necessary overhauling needed to prepare our leaders for current and future challenges. Similar to the comments echoed by Lieutenant

General Steele, the OES remains a significant area within OPMS III that must be revised and made relevant.

### **EDUCATIONAL FOCUS**

The current Army officer educational program is designed to gradually educate Army officers from the basics of tactics and leadership emphasized in the Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC), to the eventual creation of strategic thinkers and policymakers through the Senior Service College (SSC). As stated before, this model works well for an Army whose senior leaders are primarily serving in positions where little guidance and uncertainty rule the day. In today's contemporary operating environment, however, junior leaders, lieutenants and captains, find themselves executing complex, high intensity operations in unfamiliar environments. As Professor Leonard Wong of the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute states "...OIF is unique in that a large number of junior officers are dealing with cultural intricacies that have potential strategic implications."<sup>16</sup> Professor Wong goes on to say that today's junior leaders find themselves simultaneously being warriors, peacekeepers and nation-builders. The Army's officer professional educational program must respond and restructure to provide these higher-level critical thinking skills to junior and mid-grade officers as well as senior officers. Five initiatives to address this referendum are:

- Add behavior science/cultural awareness curriculum to BOLC and the Captains Career Course (CCC)
- Leverage technology to create simulations that assess and evaluate agility and adaptability.
- Fund Humanities focused Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS) with a utilization assignment in operational units for mid-grade operational career field officers.
- Expand Interagency (IA) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Fellowships.
- Revise the Intermediate Level Education (ILE) and Senior Service College (SSC) curriculum.

### **BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE AND CULTURAL AWARENESS CURRICULUM**

As former Commandant of the U.S. Army War College, Major General (Ret) Robert Scales pronounced during a recent testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, "So far we have spent billions to gain a few additional meters of precision, knots of speed or bits of bandwidth. Some of that money might be better spent in improving how well our military thinks and studies war in an effort to create a parallel transformational universe based on cognition and cultural awareness."<sup>17</sup>

Today's junior leaders require a robust ability to understand and effectively influence individual and group dynamics across a wide spectrum of cultures. To arm junior officers and provide them the tools needed to succeed as platoon leaders and company commanders as well as negotiators and village mayors, Army training and education must provide them an advanced understanding of human dynamics. One way to fill this new requirement is to establish a voluntary graduate level education program, possibly a partnership program with local universities, which provides young officers the opportunity to study these critical skills while simultaneously acquiring the necessary military skills they receive at BOLC and CCC. Introducing this curriculum at BOLC and culminating it with graduation from CCC can be an educational combat multiplier for this population of leaders.

The concept of tying higher-level education and the Officer Education System together is not a new concept. In fact, the US Army Engineer School has developed several programs that combined with the officers' graduation from CCC, results in Masters Degrees from local universities. According to the Engineer school, 60% of the active duty students attending the Engineer CCC, formally titled Engineer Command and Staff Course, enroll in this program.<sup>18</sup> In exchange for remaining at Fort Leonardwood for an additional sixteen weeks after the CCC graduation these officers incur a two year active federal service obligation (ADSO). Between CCC and the sixteen weeks of intensive graduate level education, these captains are earning a Master's level education in disciplines ranging from Environmental Engineering to Public Policy and Administration.<sup>19</sup> Using the Engineer School template, the Army can tap into the existing academic expertise offered by colleges and universities to establish a graduate level education focused on behavioral sciences and cultural awareness. Offering this opportunity early in the officers' careers, the officer educational system would provide the academic foundation needed to effectively lead and succeed in the current operating environment. Armed with an advanced understanding of important behavioral and cultural theories and practices, these officers can take their knowledge to the field and apply it as they execute the multitude of complex missions awaiting them.

In addition to providing them the human behavior skills and understanding they require to be effective junior army leaders, there are several additional advantages to this initiative. First, this program will encourage junior leaders to accept, attend and graduate from CCC. With a two year ADSO, the Army creates more stability in its junior captain population and greater assignment flexibility. Second, securing a graduate level degree complements our junior leaders' motivation to earn a Master's level education early in their career. Third, this program can be leveraged to encourage junior officers to write for publications like branch and army level

magazines. Some officers are currently doing this via “lessons learned” and tactics, techniques and procedures development. However, publishing at the graduate level will give them an opportunity to translate their tactical experiences into an understanding of their potentially operational and strategic level implications. The end result will be highly motivated, better educated thinkers who are equipped to accomplish the challenging tasks required of young army leaders.

For this initiative to succeed, the Army must determine the impact on the operational force of extending the Trainees, Transients, Holders and Students (TTHS) account for up to sixteen weeks longer than the current CCC using the Engineer school's template. This is because every day an officer is held in a TTHS account is a day the Army is without him in a unit. Having acknowledged the need to verify the feasibility of this initiative, it can be a relatively low cost opportunity to filling a gap in our officer education program. Additionally, by making the program voluntary, the Army can regulate how many officers it will approve, thereby effectively managing the requirements of the operational army with the requirements to properly educate our officers.

#### TECHNOLOGY SIMULATIONS THAT ASSESS AND EVALUATE AGILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Investing in and expanding simulation technology can provide flexible, cost effective training aids that focus on the skills needed to develop junior officers. Today's junior leaders grew up educated and entertained by virtual reality simulations. Nintendo, Play Station, X-Box and Game Boy are just a few of the standard household name simulations. For years junior officers have been motivated to master the challenges provided by these increasingly lifelike games. In fact, the U.S. Army has created one of the most popular simulations on the market today, “America's Army”, which gives players a virtual experience of what it is like to be a soldier. The current video game market is flooded with first order warrior drills where the player is the “shooter”.

An opportunity exists to take this initiative to the next level and create simulations where leaders must execute missions emphasizing agile and adaptable leader skills which are the second and third order skills leaders need to develop. Simulations designed to add uncertainty to the situation, replicating the kinds of uncertainty faced by today's leaders in the contemporary operating environment, force junior officers to utilize, develop and sharpen their agile and adaptable leader skills.<sup>20</sup> One of the most important skills junior leaders need is the ability to be “Thinkers” under pressure and to react calmly to the unexpected.<sup>21</sup> In essence, implementing this initiative creates a simulation for leaders at the company level and below similar to the simulations currently used to develop and challenge battalion level and higher commanders and

staffs when they participate in the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) and warfighter exercises.

The University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) is currently developing simulations to develop junior leaders who can function in dangerous, unfamiliar, operating environments before they have to actually experience it.<sup>22</sup> ICT is utilizing the Case-Method teaching technique of learning from the challenges and mistakes of others. By synergizing the Army Research Institute's grasp of military leadership challenges with the latest simulation technology and relevant leader situations currently experienced during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, ICT is developing relevant simulations for junior leaders.<sup>23</sup> The most impressive aspect of this cutting edge simulation training is ICT's ability to take a current junior leader challenge and turn it into a case-method scenario in approximately ninety days. Their goal is to continue reducing the turn around time to replicate the dynamic experiences of junior leaders in the contemporary operating environment (COE).<sup>24</sup>

This is just one example of how technology can assist our military leaders in preparing for the challenges they face in the operational army. While institutes like ICT are only beginning to scratch the surface of this technology-based tool, it is definitely in the Army's interest to assist in developing the technique and injecting it into leader education and training programs.

#### HUMANITIES FOCUSED ADVANCED CIVIL SCHOOLING (ACS)

Senior combatant commanders will tell you they need junior officers with a macro view of the military's role in the national security strategy and an understanding of the complex issues faced while combating evil in a noncontiguous, fluid environment.<sup>25</sup> Today, more than ever in U.S. history, officers at all ranks must have an appreciation for the non-kinetic solutions available to accomplish multiple and often conflicting missions. In a recent Washington Times editorial, Major General (Ret) Scales states, "Soldiers today can no longer just practice the science of killing in order to win. They must understand and be sensitive to alien cultures. They must be skilled in the art of peacekeeping and stability operations. ... Thus, in this new and unfamiliar era of conflict, the military must prepare soldiers to think critically and analytically much earlier in their careers.<sup>26</sup> To assist young leaders in gaining the knowledge identified by our senior combatant commanders, the Army can leverage the fully funded advanced civil school program. Upon completion of this program, the officers return to the operational army and utilize their newfound skills in the field. Similar to the previous recommendation, this program should be humanities based and provide additional educational opportunities that expand officers' ability to operate effectively in uncertain environments. History, International



Relations, Philosophy, Behavioral Sciences, Law, Government, Journalism and Diplomacy are just a few of the disciplines upon which this program should focus. By returning these officers to the operational army upon completion of their program to serve their utilization tour, the Army would be essentially injecting high quality, adaptable, thinking, senior company grade officers into the field where these types of skills are needed to execute missions. The long-term benefits of this program will truly be realized by senior combatant commanders when these humanities educated officers apply their knowledge in the operational Army. The combination of education and application will assist us in making better, more flexible thinking senior officers for the future.

Some senior leaders may raise concerns about increasing the size of the TTHS account and the impact on the operational Army. This recommendation, like some of the others, will require the Army to make tough decisions. But the truth is, the Army has been gradually moving away from the officers' professional education at civilian institutions for years. In 1974, for example, the Army sent 7,400 officers to fully funded graduate schools. In 2004, the Army has less than 400, half of those for officers in route to teach at the United States Military Academy. The other half are studying science and engineering in preparation for a career in the U.S. Army Acquisition Corps.<sup>27</sup>

#### FELLOWSHIPS TO THE INTERAGENCY (IA) AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGO)

Senior military and government leaders regularly visit the U.S. Army War College to share their knowledge and experience with the yearly class of officers who represent the next generation of operational and strategic leaders. While every visitor's message is unique, a consistent theme has been that the Department of Defense, and by default the U.S. Army, must improve its ability to operate effectively and efficiently within the IA and with NGO's.<sup>28</sup> Not only will all future operations be "joint" operations but they will involve close coordination and cooperation among the many branches of our national power. Once described as a requirement for our Army's senior leaders, understanding and leveraging the IA and NGOs is too important to wait until officers are lieutenant colonels and colonels.<sup>29</sup>

Placing mid-level officers (senior captains and majors) into these organizations can begin to fill in the gaps of ignorance that inhibit the Army's ability to effectively operate in today's complex national security environment. To better understand these essential components of national power, the Army would also be building a "bench" of experts who can return to these agencies and organizations and contribute again as senior officers. The players in today's and future national security operations extend well beyond the arms of the Department of the Army.

The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986 mandated the services to embrace and make central to our leader development the requirement to become joint warriors. Nearly twenty years later, a similar requirement emerges. The sooner the Army becomes knowledgeable of and embedded within the interagency process and cognitive of the role NGOs play, the better it will be able to accomplish our nation's most important national security challenges.

#### THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EDUCATION (ILE) AND SENIOR SERVICE COLLEGE (SSC) CURRICULUM

Today's Army requires Army officers who can think strategically and "out of the box" at the major and lieutenant colonel level. These mid-grade officers carry the bulk of responsibility to transform the Army from a service centric institution to a relevant member of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's joint and expeditionary force. Colonel Michael Flowers, Director, Center for Army Leadership, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College recently wrote, "Leaders must acquire operational and strategic level skills earlier in their careers to successfully meet future challenges".<sup>30</sup> Essentially, the Army needs SSC educated officers at the ILE phase of their careers. The solution to this challenge may be as simple as merging the SSC and ILE curriculums and providing this education during officer attendance at Command and General Staff College. Doing so will arm field grade officers with the skills and education they need to be effective operational and strategic joint warfighters.

The greatest challenge to this recommendation will likely be the pushback from the institutions responsible for the current ILE and SSC curriculums as there are many hard decisions that must be made to successfully merge the two programs. Some may argue that mid-grade officers do not possess the maturity or experience to deal with the complex issues tackled in SSC. Others might say there is not enough time in one calendar year to complete the ILE and SSC requirements. While this recommendation is aggressive, it is also possible and the right thing to do to equip officers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges they will face. In fact, the U.S. Navy has successfully educated their mid-career officers at the SSC level for years. The College of Naval Command and Staff (CNCS) curriculum mirrors the Naval War College (NWC) by requiring the student population, mostly Lieutenant Commanders (O-4), to study the following areas: Strategy and Policy, Joint Maritime Operations, and National Security Decision Making. Additionally, both the CNCS and NWC curriculums meet the requirements for a Master of Arts degrees in National Security and Strategic Studies as accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.<sup>31</sup>

Simultaneously, the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) can redesign its curriculum and expand the current Advanced Strategic Arts Program (ASAP). Focusing on the art of strategic, joint warfare as well as national and theater level policy-making, the USAWC can provide its senior leader student population a more in-depth education, better preparing them for the environment they will face upon graduation. As it is currently constructed, only a handful of war college officers get to immerse themselves in the ASAP program. The larger population of students settles for the “mile wide, inch deep” curriculum which exposes them to the multiple working elements of national power but which falls short of providing an in-depth educational experience. Major General (Ret) Scales articulated a similar conclusion during his 2004 testimony to the Armed Services Committee by stating that, “Personnel policies affecting the purpose of senior military education have transformed these institutions partly into meeting places intended to achieve interservice, interagency and international comity. The price for socialization has been a diminishment in the depth and rigor of war studies within these institutions.”<sup>32</sup> Adjusting the ILE and SSC focus to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Army leader is a major academic undertaking that will require an overhaul of the current curriculums but it can be accomplished without additional resource investment. Most importantly, it addresses and provides the skills required by a population of officers charged to lead the Army as it simultaneously transforms and conducts complex national security missions.

#### **ASSIGNMENT MODIFICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

OPCF officers must currently serve in specific positions at every rank to be considered “qualified” by their basic branches. Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 specifies what positions meet each branch’s requirements. In theory, this policy makes sense as these specific positions prepare officers for increased responsibility at the next rank. Unfortunately, because these “branch qualified” positions are required to be performed by every officer, the time spent serving in these positions is insufficient, and in some instances, viewed as a “ticket punch” assignment. The most recent Infantry lieutenant colonels promotion board reported that officers selected for promotion performed Major “branch qualifying” duties for only 15.3 months.<sup>33</sup>

Eliminating the requirement to hold “branch qualifying” positions or increasing the types of positions that constitute branch qualification are the only solutions to this deficiency. Eliminating the need to branch qualify will reduce the current revolving door assignment policy and will accomplish two objectives. First, it will keep the officers serving in these critical, warfighting, positions for longer periods of time, up to 36 months, thereby improving their skills and

proficiency as well as the readiness of the units they serve. Second, it will free up a population of quality officers to perform other positions of great importance such as the joint duty and fellowship opportunities discussed earlier thus, complementing General Schoomaker's call for "pentathletes". Eliminating the branch qualification requirement will require, however, replacement guidance from DA PAM 600-3 that assists officers in mapping out career goals which meet the Army's needs and officers' desires.

Another option to eliminating the current revolving door branch qualification challenge is to increase the number of positions that officers can serve to achieve their qualifications. To do this the Army would need to thoroughly review other important positions that are being performed by its officers and extend the "branch qualification" umbrella over these billets. Both proposals provide our officers the time they need to truly improve their skills and their ability to serve the Army in the future. Additionally, both proposals address LTG Steele's observation that the OPMS XXI is more focused on meeting "gates" rather than quality leader development. In the end, eliminating branch qualification or expanding it at every rank will provide the necessary flexibility in officers' careers to expand their knowledge base and experiences for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Army.

Both approaches fundamentally address the problem because they add flexibility to the Army's current officer assignment process. Eliminating or expanding the "branch qualification" requirement moves the process from a bottlenecked, single lane career path to a dynamic multilane highway towards professional development.

## **CONCLUSION**

War is a thinking man's game and only those who take the time to study war are likely to fight it competently. Soldiers and Marines need time for reflection, time to learn, teach, research and write. In this new age of warfare we must do more to prepare soldiers to think as well as act.

- Major General (Ret) Robert Scales

Army transformation is being executed at a rapid pace while the Army simultaneously engages in a multitude of combat type operations. The officer education and assignment transformation discussed in this paper is similar to all the other transformation initiatives in that it has resource requirements which must be identified, validated and approved. With additional resources like funds for graduate school education and expansion of the TTHS account, this initiative can be a huge step in the right direction towards providing career Army officers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As Army Chief of Staff, General Schoomaker stated in the 2004 Army Campaign

Plan, "We're going to change some of the things that made us the best Army in the world. Our values are sacrosanct...everything else is on the table." The officer corps leading this Army today and into the future requires a complex set of skills that are intellectually different than previous generations. In the past our leaders trained to defeat a templatable enemy, one whose doctrine was understood and predictable. Adherence to written doctrine provided our leaders with the roadmap to success on the conventional battlefield. Today's leaders are engaged, near simultaneously in the full spectrum of military operations from high intensity conflict to counter-insurgency to peacekeeping.

Succeeding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires Army officers at every rank capable of simultaneously executing multiple, often times conflicting, missions. To prepare leaders for these uncertain environments, the U.S. Army must provide them the necessary intellectual tools and assignment opportunities throughout their careers. This paper proposes a fundamental shift in the U.S. Army officer career path policy by emphasizing more academic, fellowship and exchange opportunities earlier and throughout our officers' careers. Additionally, eliminating the current officer branch qualification requirement, or expanding the positions that currently qualify as branch qualification, will provide officers the time they need to truly improve their skills and proficiencies at every rank. This is not a list of "all or nothing" propositions. In fact, they are just a handful of the "means" the Army can institute into the current officer professional development career path "ways" to better equip leaders so they continue to lead the world's greatest Army to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; the "ends".

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> R.L. Brownlee and Peter J. Schoomaker, *The Army Campaign Plan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 2004), available from <[http://www.army.mil/jec/2\\_strategiccontext.html](http://www.army.mil/jec/2_strategiccontext.html)>; Internet; accessed 28 September 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> R.L. Brownlee and Peter J. Schoomaker, "Fiscal Year 2005 Game Plan," memorandum for U.S. Army Major Commands, Washington, D.C., 1 November 2004, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management*, DA Pamphlet 600-3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1 October 1998), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Fiscal Year 2005 Game Plan, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Vandergriff, *The Path to Victory: America's Army and the Revolution in Human Affairs* (Novata, CA: Presidio, 2002), 107.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Webster, *Officer Professional Management System XXI Knowledge Accountability: Improving Company Commanders*. Thesis: Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1999, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Harry Thie, et al., "Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers" 1994, available from <<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR470/>>; Internet; accessed 03 February 2005, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986; available from <<http://www.ndu.edu/library/goldnich/9986ch1.pdf>>, Internet; accessed 28 January 2005, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Department of the Army, Officer Personnel Management System XXI Task Force, *OPMS XXI Final Report*, (Washington, D.C.: Officer Personnel Management System Study, July 1997), x.

<sup>13</sup> William Steele, "Training and Developing Leaders in a Transforming Army," *Military Review* (September-October 2001): 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Leonard Wong, *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Strategic Studies Institute (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College), July 2004, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Scales, "Army Transformation: Implications for the Future." Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, 15 July 2004, 2.

<sup>18</sup> COL Thomas E. O'Donovan, Director of Training, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers School, interview by author, 21 October 2004, Fort Leonardwood, MO.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Professor Leonard Wong, U.S. Army War College, interview by author, 27 September 2004, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>21</sup> T.O. Jacobs and Michael G. Sanders, *Principles For Building The Profession: SOF Experience*, 19; n.p., 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Randall W. Hill, Andrew S. Gordon and Julia M. Kim, "Learning the Lessons of Leadership Experience: Tools for Interactive Case Method Analysis", Institute for Creative Technologies, University of Southern California; From the Proceedings of the 24<sup>th</sup> Army Science Conference (2004), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Randall Hill, University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies, interview by author, 13 January 2005, Los Angeles CA.

<sup>25</sup> The requirements needed by today's senior combatant commanders in this section are based on remarks made by speakers participating in the Commandant's Lecture Series.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Scales, "Studying the Art of War", *Washington Times*, 17 February 2005, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Scales, "Army Transformation: Implications for the Future." 6.

<sup>28</sup> The need to improve our understanding of and cooperation within the IA and with NGO's is based on remarks made by several speakers participating in the Commandant's Lecture Series.

<sup>29</sup> Scales, "Studying the Art of War", 19.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Flowers, "Improving Strategic Leadership", *Military Review*, March-April 2004, 40.

<sup>31</sup> Department of the Navy, College of Naval Command and Staff, Newport, R.I.; available from <<http://www.nwc.navy.mil/academics/colleges/cnccs.htm>>. Internet, accessed 25 January 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Scales, "Army Transformation: Implications for the Future," 5.

<sup>33</sup> Human Resources Command, Infantry Officer FY04 LTC Promotion Statistics (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 2004); available from <[https://www.perscomonline.army.mil/OPinf/MAJ\\_promotion.htm](https://www.perscomonline.army.mil/OPinf/MAJ_promotion.htm)>. Internet, accessed 6 October 2004.

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