

THE
PENTAGON LABYRINTH:
10 SHORT ESSAYS TO HELP YOU
THROUGH IT



FROM 10 PENTAGON INSIDERS,
RETIRED MILITARY OFFICERS AND SPECIALISTS
WITH OVER 400 YEARS OF DEFENSE EXPERIENCE

STRAUS MILITARY REFORM PROJECT
CENTER FOR DEFENSE INFORMATION

The Pentagon Labyrinth

10 Short Essays to Help You Through It

From 10 Pentagon Insiders, Retired Military Officers and Specialists
With Over 400 Years of Defense Experience

Edited by Winslow T. Wheeler

Center for Defense Information
World Security Institute
February 2011

Essay 5

“Careerism”

by G.I. Wilson

This essay attempts to make it easier for you to identify the quality and character of military officers and civilian bureaucrats you meet, socialize and work with - to increase your awareness and recognition of careerism and its consequences. As Americans, we all must exercise more care and caution in our appraisal of our senior military officers and the Washington “suits” that exert dominating influence on the cost of defense and the conduct of American national security policy.

The Department of Defense (DOD) that I have observed all too closely for over three decades is an overgrown bureaucracy committed to standing still for, if not actively promoting, poorly conceived policy agendas and hardware programs funded and supported by Congress. Coupled to that is the task of attracting the blind loyalty of senior military and civilian actors on the Washington, D.C. stage. For the careerists in America’s national security apparatus, it is all about awarding contracts and personal advancement, not winning wars.

Careerists serve for all the wrong reasons. They weaken national defense, rob the military of its warrior ethos and drive away the very highly principled mavericks that we need to reverse the decay. This can only be remedied by rekindling the time honored principles of military service (i.e. duty, honor, country) among both officers and civilians.

What Is Careerism?

In the DOD today, standard bureaucratic behavior is focused on conniving with politically focused congressional advocates and their counterparts in industry and think tanks to advance selected hardware and policy agendas. Once the careerist generals, admirals, colonels and captains exit active military service, they perpetuate their inside baseball by re-materializing as government appointees, political candidates, DOD contractor shills, so-called Pentagon “mentors,” and network talking heads. All are raking in money, peddling influence, exerting pressure for vested interests, all the while collecting retired pay, healthcare, commissary privileges and more at taxpayer expense.

For example, Gen. Jim Jones, U.S. Marine Corps, ret., occupied a big chair in the White House as the president's national security advisor. Adm. Joe Sestak, U.S. Navy, ret., went to Congress as a member of the House of Representatives seeking promotion to the U.S. Senate. Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, U.S. Army, ret., is the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. Many others dot the boards of the big defense contractors. As author Bob Woodward points out in *The War Within*¹, many of the uniform-to-suits careerists made themselves cozy with political circles in Washington, D.C. in ways and to a degree that did not exist before 2001. As for the senior careerists in the ranks of the civilian bureaucracy, there is a similar variation of take-this-job-and-flip-it among public, academic and private sector positions. While it's distasteful observing this in civilian quarters, it is the "self-fixation" of our top military leadership that this author finds most disturbing.²

The Problem as Described by Others

What is wrong with retired officers populating civilian government offices, industry and politics?

Author Edward N. Luttwak explains that it means a lifelong path of political correctness, playing it safe, making only decisions that create no waves, or – better yet – waves that promote the selected agenda. Worst of all, careerists leverage the bureaucracies in DOD and Congress to dilute any personal accountability and responsibility - the very essence of careerism. Luttwak warns "If careerism becomes the general attitude, the very basis of leadership is destroyed."³ That era of pseudo-leadership is upon us.

Careerism is also artfully described by Robert Coram and Col. John Boyd of the U.S. Air Force. The careerist's singular aspiration is "the desire to be, rather than the desire to do. It is the desire to have rank, rather than use it; the pursuit

¹ Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008* (Simon & Schuster, 2009).

² Journalist Bryan Bender wrote an extraordinary analysis of this behavior in the December 26, 2010 *Boston Globe*; see "From the Pentagon to the Private Sector" and related materials at http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2010/12/26/defense_firms_lure_retired_generals/

³ Edward N. Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

of promotion without a clear sense of what to do with a higher rank once one has attained it."⁴

The etiology of careerism stems from a shift in the basic values within the officer corps as described by Samuel P. Huntington in his classic work *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*.⁵ Huntington contends the most important feature that distinguishes military personnel from all others is the view that the military is truly a “higher calling” in the service of one's country.

Today, this is no longer the case. Morris Janowitz observed in *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*:

Those who see the military profession as a calling or a unique profession are outnumbered by a greater concentration of individuals for whom the military is just another job For a sizable majority - about 20 percent, or about one out of every five - no motive [for joining the military] could be discerned, except that the military was a job.⁶

Maj. Michael L. Mosier posits in “Getting a Grip on Careerism” in *Airpower Journal* how military sociologists theorize that the idea of a higher calling has diminished as institutional values deteriorate.⁷ While institutional values deteriorate, careerists exhibit traits of psychopathy replacing the higher calling with ambitions of personal gain and unaccountability.

Babiak and Hare's *Snakes in Suits*, a book about psychopaths in the workplace, may seem foreign when juxtaposed with national security, but is instructive in the recognition of character traits the careerists exhibit and the wreckage they leave behind. (The writer is not suggesting that all careerists are psychopaths; however, the behavior of both has much in common.)

Consider the behavior of psychopaths described by Babiak and Hare: Glibness, superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth, deceitful, cunning, manipulative, lacks remorse, callous, lacks empathy, does not accept

⁴ Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2002).

⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957).

⁶ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: Free Press, 1971).

⁷ Maj. Michael L. Mosier, “Getting a Grip on Careerism,” *Airpower Journal* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 52-60.

responsibility for own actions, and impulsiveness.⁸ Look for these behavioral markers in careerists and what psychologists call the “paradox of power.”

Jonah Lehrer writes about the “paradox of power” in *The Wall Street Journal* contending that the very traits that help leaders accumulate power and influence in the first place (being polite, honest, outgoing) all but disappear once power and authority are achieved. Positive leadership traits are replaced with impulsiveness, recklessness and rudeness. Lehrer further notes that authority coupled with the power paradox leads to flawed cognitive processes that in turn “distort the ability to evaluate information and make complex decisions.”⁹

As one who has worked in and around the Pentagon bureaucracy for a few decades, other characteristics come to mind. In addition to placing one’s self in a position of accelerating personal gain, careerists also collect accoutrements of rank and position, perks and lists of biographical achievements, defined as positions, ranks and titles held. It is not about what they achieved but rather the positions and titles they held.

It is appalling that so many senior officers think that the military is all about getting promoted and accumulating as many signs of rank and status as possible, completed with a host of perks. What is lost on careerists is that they are getting the opportunity to actually do things that most people only dream of, or get to see just in the movies.

They are so prevalent because bureaucracies are in effect designed by and for careerists propagated by reams of regulations and layers of superfluous commands. Bureaucracies give careerists a place “to be somebody” rather than an opportunity to do something. They are promoted because of a zero defect record of playing it safe, making no controversial decisions and requiring others to do the same.

Recognizing Careerists

Careerists in both uniforms and suits thrive on hardware programs. It is not a matter of whether a weapon system works but whether it survives. One might point to the failed programs like the A-12 bomber or the Sgt. York “DIVAD” gun which saw billions wasted before they were cancelled. But look more skeptically at the programs that survive, even prosper, that are irrelevant to the

⁸ Paul Babiak and Robert D. Hare, *Snakes In Suits* (New York: Collins Business, 2006), 27.

⁹ Jonah Lehrer, "The Power Trip," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 14-15, 2010.

wars we fight, double in cost (or more), are delivered years late and break promise after promise for performance.

Even for the so-called successful programs, the improved performance is never commensurate with the increase in cost. What manager among the orchards of low hanging fruit of Pentagon procurement fiascos has been held accountable? What senior DOD acquisition “Czar” has not found himself a huge pay raise from industry upon retirement? Congress and DOD often reward poor program performance and cost escalation. In 2010, Defense Secretary Gates replaced the general in charge of the Joint Strike Fighter program, but the action was a remarkable exception, and nothing fundamental to the program’s problems was changed.

Recognizing the Ego Factor

The careerists are not interested in fostering people and ideas or developing good personnel and education programs. The rewards are in hardware issues, not people issues - except that one human factor does predominate: self.

The Washington Post wrote a review of Gen. Wesley Clark, U.S. Army, who was relieved of command in Europe in 2000 shortly after the ineffectual military campaign he commanded against Serbia in 1999. (Not long thereafter he immersed himself in presidential campaign politics.) The article revealed much about the man’s careerism and its characteristics. The reporter for *The Washington Post* explains with details the animus against Clark: His leadership was “undercut by his relentless need to be front and center, to always make it all about him winning -- rather than the mission.”¹⁰

Clark’s deep infatuation with the word “I,” which runs through the veins of all careerists, was evident in his own explanation to the reporter:

“How do you think I could have succeeded in the military if everybody didn't like me? It's impossible," he said. "Do you realize I was the first person promoted to full colonel in my entire year group of 2,000 officers? I was the only one selected. Do you realize that? . . . Do you realize I was the only one of my West Point class picked to command a brigade when I was picked? . . . I was the first person picked for

¹⁰ Lois Romano, "A Hero To Some; To Others, Headstrong," *The Washington Post*, October 19, 2003.

brigadier general. You have to balance this out. . . . A lot of people love me."¹¹

If Clark blames himself at all for the abrupt ending of his career after 34 years in the Army, he has never let on. More than one friend has quoted him, when trying to comprehend his forced retirement, as saying plaintively, "But we won the war..."

Without question Clark, like most careerists, has little love for subordinates, peers and others whom he sees as impediments to his career. *The Post* reported "In an institution filled with ambitious men, some viewed Clark as over the top, someone who would do or say anything to get ahead -- and get his way."

Placing self above the interests of one's military service, DOD, and even national security is *de rigueur*. The *Taipei Times* of Sept. 9, 2010, wrote of retired U.S. Navy Adm. William Owens the following:

Retired US Admiral William Owens — the former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who wants to end arms sales to Taiwan — is now aiding an effort by China's Huawei Technologies to supply equipment to Sprint Nextel and operate in the US.

A team of eight US senators has written to the administration of US President Barack Obama warning that the move by Huawei could "undermine US national security."

A national carrier in the US servicing 41.8 million customers at the end of the second quarter, Sprint Nextel is also a supplier to the Pentagon and US law enforcement agencies.

And later,

If our electronics are compromised, we are cooked," [China expert Arthur] Waldron said in his e-mail sent to a wide circle of China watchers.

"Who is to say that subsystems bought from China will not have back doors and hidden links to their suppliers? We would be mad to think otherwise. The Chinese are not stupid," he wrote.¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

Recognizing the Silence of Careerism

The same careerist system rewards those who ignore hardware but promote, or fail to stand up against, gigantic policy mistakes. Ambassador Paul Bremer, who was awarded the presidential Medal of Freedom, insisted on the disbanding of the Iraqi army in May 2003. This put an estimated 350,000 to 400,000 Iraqi soldiers out of work, and available to help foment the violence that followed.

Many serving officers and retirees are not forgetting that when senior commanding generals of America's expeditionary ground forces assembled in Baghdad in May 2003 to hear Ambassador Bremer announce the decision to dismantle the Iraqi state, army and police and occupy much of Arab Iraq with U.S. and British forces, not a single general officer raised any objection.¹³

It is impossible to know whether the refusal of general officers commanding American forces in the field to implement such a misguided and disastrous policy would have allowed American forces to avoid the expensive occupation of Iraq. Speaking out or retiring immediately certainly would have given officials in the government an opportunity to consider places a thousand times more important than Diyala or al-Anbar, starting with the United States itself.¹⁴

The apologists for this behavior deceptively ascribed their ruthless climb of the Pentagon ladder as an artifact of doing the right thing. But it is actually a lack of professionalism and an abandonment of the principles of military service. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan provide the most painful recent examples. They have severely tested and frequently compromised the U.S. officer corps' traditional values of duty, honor and country. This is obvious in the selective

¹²William Lowther, "Owens' links to PRC firm ring alarm," *Taipei Times*, September 9, 2009, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2010/09/09/2003482460>.

¹³ David Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (New York, NY: Perseus Books, 2005), 145. As if to reinforce his support for disastrous policies, General Petraeus, who was present for Bremer's announcement in May 2003, said nothing in response. Instead he insisted in an interview with the Iraq Study Group on May 18, 2006: "US Strategy over the last 18 months has been sound. The ongoing violence had made the mission more difficult. Nonetheless, no alternative strategy is better." Petraeus added the United States had "terrific people" assigned to the war, endorsing General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad and noted, "I would not break up the team of military and civilian leaders currently in Iraq." See Bob Woodward's book, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006-2008*, 44.

¹⁴ Edward Luttwak, "Errors of Backsight Forethought," *Politics*, October 2009, 31.

careerist- and agenda-ridden assertions to portray a false picture of events to the American public about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Recent examples from every level of command are:

- Americans were told Iraq was invaded to locate and destroy weapons of mass destruction. It was a lie.
- Americans were told former National Football League star Army Ranger Sgt. Pat Tillman died fighting the enemy. It was a lie.
- Americans were told Army Spc. Jessica Lynch fired her M16 rifle until she ran out of bullets and was captured. It was a lie.
- Americans were told repeatedly the rebellion against our military presence in Iraq was defeated and "security was improving." It was protracted lying punctuated by a daily diet of exploding bombs and mutilated bodies until massive cash payments to the Sunni Arab opponents bought cooperation.
- Despite numerous classified and unclassified accounts of brutality meted out to prisoners of war and the civilian population by U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan - reports that describe the chain of command as aware of the abuses but routinely ignoring or covering them up - not a single general officer was called to account.¹⁵
- In 2010, Americans are told Iraq is a "democracy," when in reality, Iraq is mired in corruption and violence,¹⁶ its oil is in Chinese hands,¹⁷ and Iran, not the United States influences Iraq's political destiny.¹⁸

¹⁵ Adam Zagorin, "Pattern of Abuse: A decorated Army officer reveals new allegations of detainee mistreatment in Iraq and Afghanistan. Did the military ignore his charges?" *Time*, September 23, 2005, 32.

¹⁶ Jane Arraf, "Iraq bomb before election has some fearing new civil war," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 18, 2010, 1. Also see Doug Bandow, "Bombs Away: Conservatives Embrace War," *CampaignforLiberty.com*, February 10, 2010. Also, see Scott Peterson and Howard LaFranchi, "Iran shifts attention to brokering peace in Iran. Details from a secret meeting between top Iranian and Iraqi officials signal Iran's aim to 'stop arming' militias," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 14, 2008, 1.

¹⁷ Kyle B. Stelma, "Report: Private Foreign Direct Investment in Iraq," (Washington, D.C. and Dubai: Dunia LLC, 2009), 13-14.

¹⁸ David Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (New York: Perseus Book), 145.

One can go on, especially now about Afghanistan, but surely the point is made: as the American people are told the conjured tales of the policy advocates, the senior military command stays silent; in fact, some assist, even fabricate, deceptive rationalization further underwriting deafening silence.

Effects

President Eisenhower's worst nightmare described in his January 1961 farewell address has become fulfilled. Today's consolidated defense industries have become inseparable from the government and hold political careers in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives at risk if sufficient tax dollars are not committed to the industries' expensive defense products.¹⁹ That the politicians succumb, holding their political well-being above the merits of any weapons debate, is the very definition of careerism. Unless and until the politicians realize their political fate hinges on a broader perspective, their votes on defense issues will be driven by their narrowly perceived short-term interest, mostly "pork" and campaign contributions.

The "revolving door" enriches civilian executives in the defense industry, and its supporting consulting businesses, for periodic service in the Department of Defense, and it rewards retired generals and admirals for their access to the men and women they left behind in the Pentagon and not coincidentally promoted to flag rank. Rewards are particularly plentiful for the three- and four-star officers who supported and defended expensive defense programs even when the usefulness of the programs was doubted inside their own service bureaucracies, among other places.²⁰

Consequently, it's no surprise that federal auditors, poring over the Defense Department's conflicting financial statements, missing data and accounting discrepancies, are unable to provide an accurate accounting of the Defense Department's books.²¹ According to a July 8, 2004 report by the Government

¹⁹ Micah L. Sifry and Nancy Waltzman, *Is that a Politician in your Pocket? Washington on \$2 Million A Day* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 6-9.

²⁰ Ann Roosevelt, "Future Combat System Is 'Real,' Army Will Work to 'Protect' It, Top Leaders Say," *Defense Daily*, October 10, 2007, 11. "I will tell you that it's real," Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey said at the same event." Two years later Casey was ordered by Secretary Gates to cancel FCS.

²¹ Rowan Scarborough, "U.S. Auditors Homed In on Hillah Contracts," *The Washington Times*, November 28, 2005, 4. Also, see Stephen Glain, "Cashing In on America's Wars: Waste, Fraud, and a Cast of Thousands," *The National*, July 1, 2009, 2., and Paul B. Farrell, "America's Outrageous War Economy! Pentagon can't find \$2.3 trillion, wasting trillions on 'national defense,'" *Market Watch*, August 28, 2008, 13.

Accountability Office, the generals in U.S. Central Command and Washington, D.C. lost \$1.2 billion worth of war materiel shipped to Iraq for the campaign to remove Saddam Hussein from power.²² More recently, a congressional staff report found aid to Afghanistan ending up in the hands of the Taliban.²³ This sort of thing would almost be funny, in an insane sort of way, if poor senior leadership did not result in the loss of American life in uniform, undermine American strategic interests abroad, drain the United States Treasury of its hard-earned tax dollars, and erode the economic well-being of the American people the nation's flag officers are sworn to defend.

Perhaps, the lack of accountability explains why supposedly objective, retired military officers retained as analysts by national television networks have little incentive to jeopardize their lucrative contracts with the political and industrial elites to tell the American people the hard facts about events in Iraq or Afghanistan? Nurturing the Pentagon money flow and the domestic political environment that supports it while influencing their chosen successors—often their former aides—to keep the money spigots open profoundly changes the message the retired generals and colonels send to the listening audience.²⁴

These behaviors help reinforce the myth that only generals and admirals can or should formulate the fundamental principles governing the application of American military power, or even military doctrine.²⁵ Today, this myth has transformed the president, as well as members of the House and the Senate, into

²² David Wood, "Auditors Despair over Pentagon's Books," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 21, 2004, 1.

²³ The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform released an investigation on contractor corruption in Afghanistan in June 2010; find it at http://oversight.house.gov/images/stories/subcommittees/NS_Subcommittee/6.22.10_HNT_HEARING/Warlord_Inc_compress.pdf.

²⁴ For example, see Tom Vanden Brook, Ken Dilanian and Ray Locker, "Retired military officers cash in as well-paid consultants Netvibes," *USA Today*, November 17, 2009, 1. See also Janine R. Wedel, *Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government and the Free Market* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), and David E. Johnson, "Modern U.S. Civil-Military Relations. Wielding the Terrible Swift Sword," McNair Paper 57, July 1997.

²⁵ Bill Roggio, "McChrystal to resign if not given resources for Afghanistan," *Threat Matrix*, September 21, 2009. Roggio writes: "Within 24 hours of the leak of the Afghanistan assessment to *The Washington Post*, General Stanley McChrystal team fired its second shot across the bow of the Obama administration. According to McClatchy, military officers close to General McChrystal said he is prepared to resign if he isn't given sufficient resources (read "troops") to implement a change of direction in Afghanistan."

doormats for the four-stars.²⁶ Secretary of Defense Gates and the Army and Marine Corps four-stars in U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) currently wield more influence over U.S. defense and foreign policy than any senator or congressman, and almost no one in the mainstream media is willing to challenge anything they say or do.²⁷

Renewed enthusiasm in the four-star ranks for pursuit of the presidency is surely also related to these trends. It's no secret that a four-star general who transforms himself into a political figure while still in uniform with the aid of political allies in the press and Congress can be so powerful the president may be reluctant to publicly oppose him.²⁸ After all, members of Congress are always willing to cultivate outspoken four-star generals for narrow partisan advantage.²⁹ Gen. David Petraeus, the current CENTCOM commander, is the latest in the succession of Army four-stars (including former NATO Commanders Alexander Haig and Wesley Clark) who clearly harbors, despite denials, aspirations to be president.

It is against this backdrop of tumultuous change in civil-military relations since Eisenhower left office that officers coming to Washington, D.C. for the first time - in many instances from arduous duty as company, battalion or brigade commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan - must be viewed. These are the officers that members of Congress and their staffs are likely to meet, and it is from their ranks that will spring the next generation of flag officers. Understanding what makes these officers tick is the real challenge.

Understanding Military Officers

It's impossible to talk about officers in the armed forces without some mention of demographics. As in the past, the overwhelming majority of officers (roughly

²⁶ For example, see Robert Dreyfuss, "The Generals' Revolt. As Obama rethinks America's failed strategy in Afghanistan, he faces two insurgencies: the Taliban and the Pentagon," *Rollingstone.com*, October 28, 2009.

²⁷ Bob Woodward and Gordon M. Goldstein, "The Anguish of Decision," *The Washington Post*, October 18, 2009. "Bundy said that Johnson viewed the general as though he were a powerful constituency wielding vital legislative votes."

²⁸ "General David Petraeus tipped as Republican 2012 presidential candidate," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 19, 2010.

²⁹ James Parco and Dave Levy, *Attitudes Aren't Free: Thinking Deeply About Diversity in the U.S. Armed Forces* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, 2010), 408.

75 percent) are of European ancestry. However, regardless of their ethnic origin, American officers are more likely to be from high-income families and they are on average better educated than most American citizens.³⁰ This demographic profile is consistent with historic data in all, but one way. Today's officers are more religious than their predecessors were 20 or 30 years ago,³¹ and they've grown up inside a military bureaucracy that differs in important ways from the Reagan-era armed forces.³²

There are other factors as well. Today, the new paradigm of warfare (counterinsurgency) creates bureaucratic power bases and careerists that derive their relevance from the currently accepted view of war. Few, if any, military officers rose to prominence in the aftermath of the Vietnam War by arguing for an institutional doctrine that addressed the complexities of limited wars. Today, just about no one will rise through the ranks by raising issues about the U.S. armed forces' ironically new exclusive strategic focus on counterinsurgency. The overemphasis on counterinsurgency must be countered by candid debate and coming to grips with fourth generation warfare - the legacy of failed states and hybrid threats.

The tendency inside the peacetime military to advance officers who tell the boss what he wants to hear is well known,³³ being candid is not career enhancing. This chronic lack of professional candor is now a pervasive facet of political correctness and careerism that supports a new doctrinal orthodoxy inside DOD. That new orthodoxy is a doctrine based in part on a popular journalistic narrative that is deeply flawed but coincides with the careerist *modus operandi* of going along to get along. In practice, the advocates of this doctrinal orthodoxy are not telling U.S. ground forces to adapt to future strategic conditions and global hybrid threats. They are instead telling American forces to train and equip almost exclusively for future unwanted occupations inside the Islamic world.

³⁰ Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1959), 492.

³¹ Barry Fagin and Lt. Col. James Parco, U.S. Air Force, "A question of faith. Religious bias and coercion undermine military leadership and trust," *Armed Forces Journal*, January 2008, 40. "US military accused of harboring fundamentalism," *AFP*, February 13, 2008, 1. Also see: Headquarters, United States Air Force, "The Report of the Headquarters Review Group Concerning the Religious Climate at the U.S. Air Force Academy," June 22, 2005.

³² Robert Maginnis, "Distrust Corroding the Military," *The Washington Times*, March 2, 2000, 11.

³³ Leonard Wong, *Stifled Innovation? Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today* (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, April 2002).

Unfortunately, the officers advocating doctrinal orthodoxy and persistent warfare inside the Islamic world are as career-minded and oppressive as those who maintained the fiction that Operation Desert Storm validated warmed over “Blitzkrieg theory” in the form of air-land battle doctrine in 1991.³⁴ The use of the term “counterinsurgency” to describe conflicts inside the Muslim world creates the illusion the United States has “discovered” a military solution to societal misery. This assertion is untrue, and officers who’ve served for years in places where no sane American would voluntarily spend two minutes will make these points in private if asked.³⁵

Many officers today think America’s national security demands armed forces organized around the capability to fight enemies with the capability to fight back - enemies that look like our own conventional forces and are not optimized for counterinsurgency, or even split down the middle that try to do both.³⁶ A major with two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan summed up the problem that weighs heavily on the minds of many officers in the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines:

If we were to fight against someone who was capable and at least marginally equipped, we could, for the first time since the Korean War or World War II, find ourselves fighting on someone else's time schedule and initiative. No one in the force today knows what it is to fight on someone else's clock. If we were hit and hit hard during a build-up, if we faced a capable anti-air threat that knocked a few aircraft, manned or unmanned, out of the sky, against a naval threat that could actually threaten our surface combatants in coastal waters, or that had a ground force that could give battle and launch surprise attacks of their own, our collective psyche's would be shocked, and our forces paralyzed.³⁷

³⁴ This is explained in “Operation Iraqi Freedom: Third Infantry Division (mechanized) After Action Report, Final Draft,” May 12, 2003. The document is not available online but is in the author’s files.

³⁵ They might also reluctantly utter the words “Fourth Generation Warfare” to explain how failed-state provocateurs, non-state actors and terrorists prescribe that everything goes in war, including not playing by the rules of nation states. See William S. Lind, Keith Nightengale, John F. Schmitt, Joseph W. Sutton and Gary I. Wilson, “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1989.

³⁶ Col. Gian Gentile, U.S. Army, “The Imperative for an American General Purpose Army That Can Fight,” *Orbis* (Summer 2009): 457.

³⁷ The officer asked not to be identified. He is now a serving lieutenant colonel.

In sum, our armed forces today are tasked to fight occupational wars they cannot win and they are unprepared for the enemies we claim to be best suited for. That the voices you can faintly hear expressing concern about this (and the assertion that it is not a hardware acquisition question – i.e. a money-making issue) come from the middle of and beneath the officer corps shows how vacant the careerist minds at the top have become.

The Officer Corps in the Balance

In years past, it was easy to identify officers who spent their time checking with superiors or peers concerning whether or not to act. These types seldom pursued what was right. They were simply “staying in their lane,” as the saying goes. Officers with the moral courage to take a stand on the grounds that it was in the interest of the American people, even when it might contradict the service’s bureaucratic guidelines, were not easy to find, but not uncommon. Today, officers with these attributes still exist, but they are very hard to find. Officers who do so now must be extremely clever, as well as extraordinarily courageous. The erosion that caused this change is an important change that outsiders, including journalists and Hill staffers, must grasp and appreciate.

Officers’ disenchantment with the nation’s focus on hostile occupations and armed nation-building is matched by a growing lack of confidence in, and recognition of careerism among, the field-grade officers, i.e., colonels and generals, but also those senior enlisted who have opted for careerism - aping their officers.

My personal experience and recent surveys indicate that junior officers in the U.S. Army (and Marine Corps) feel a lot of dissatisfaction with the quality of senior leadership. This “disconnect” between junior officers, and their commanders, has been around for more than a decade. It's gotten worse with a war on, because, unlike past wars, there has not been widespread removal of battalion and brigade commanders who did not perform well. In World War II and Korea, it was common for commanders who did not deliver, to be replaced. With a war going on now and junior officers facing life and death situations because their commanders were not being aggressive or innovative enough, many have been leaving the service.³⁸

Lt. Col. Peter Kilner, U.S. Army, returned in 2009 from two months in Iraq where he interviewed young Army officers for a research project. His observation reinforces the comments above: "There is enormous pride among

³⁸ "The Boss Is An Idiot And Is Getting Us Killed," StrategyPage.com, December 23, 2009.

young officers in their units and in each other, but I see strong evidence that they are rapidly losing faith in the Army and the country's political leadership."³⁹ Careerism and political correctness in all the services may be taking a much greater toll (although a somewhat different one) on our personnel than the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Concluding Thoughts

The U.S. military is not led by a Centurion or Spartan class of hardened professionals. Perhaps it should be. The leadership of the armed forces looks bleak, save for a very few. The outliers among senior officers are those who are willing to take unpopular positions for the troops' or nation's benefit (not for their own benefit and career enhancement) on politically charged issues. For example, Generals Conway and Amos articulate opposition inside the Marine Corps to the repeal of the "Don't Ask; Don't Tell" policy regarding gay and lesbian service members (DADT), reflecting a sentiment in the Corps' ranks. Whether or not one agrees or disagrees with DADT, is not the issue. The point is Generals Conway and Amos have the moral courage to state their position as unpopular as it may be in some politically correct circles. This writer submits too many, unlike these generals, would rather go along to get along.

For the moment, U.S. military culture and the essence of conducting warfare within clearly defined Constitutional and sensible strategic parameters are insidiously perverted by domestic political interests, political correctness and political constituencies inside the senior ranks of America's military establishment fused to the generals' and admirals' unabashed careerism.

The questions members of Congress and journalists should ask are the questions on the minds of many officers in the armed forces regarding these issues: Are the four-star generals and admirals merely military "caretakers" for the assigned mission without taking moral or professional responsibility for the assignment to which American military power is committed? Are conflicts with Islamic groups that have no armies, no air defenses and no air forces yet another avenue for generals, admirals and colonels to pursue selfish ends?

Lt. Col. Paul Yingling writes about the failure to resist utterly stupid and self-defeating policies conceived in Washington, D.C. Yingling contends that this failure is not the result of "individual failures, but rather a crisis of an entire

³⁹ Greg Jaffe, "Critiques of Iraq War Reveal Rifts among Army Officers. Colonel's Essay Draws Rebuttal from General; Captains Losing Faith," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 2007.

institution.”⁴⁰ America’s generals and admirals have failed to prepare our armed forces for war, yet they advise civilian authorities on the application of force to achieve the aims of policy.⁴¹

Meanwhile America's generals, colonels, admirals and captains blinded by the illusion of bureaucratic power, mimic the behaviors of the politicians, managers and policy advocates. Individuals preoccupied with their own internal goals are blind to what is happening around them: “Being in a position of power makes people feel they can do no wrong.”⁴² As a result of this intoxication with power, careerists unwittingly (and wittingly) underwrite a defense-industrial-congressional complex where the primary purpose is awarding contracts and shoveling power, perks and money in disparate forms, rather than winning wars.

How do we fix this? Part of the answer is military reform ushered in by drastic budget cuts to hardware programs (which are addressed in the essays addressing budget, acquisition and weapons in this handbook). Col. Michael Wyly, U.S. Marine Corps, ret., who is known to many of the authors of this handbook and held in high respect, seeks a culture where a warrior class of "mavericks" is accepted and those who place themselves above the time-honored principles of military service (duty, honor, country) find themselves on the outside looking in. Wyly observes of the consummate Pentagon maverick, Col. John Boyd (discussed throughout this handbook):

Yet it is unfortunate that we have to think of him as a maverick. He should have been the norm: an independent thinker who did his own research on a daily basis and espoused his views regardless of convention because he had the courage to do so. Courage is a virtue. In the military profession, courage tops the list of virtues required and demanded. My experiences in combat demonstrated that you can't have the physical kind of courage without the moral kind. Officers with Boyd's degree of moral courage need to be the norm, not the mavericks. Another way of putting it is that we all need to have the courage to be

⁴⁰ Lt. Col. Paul Yingling, "A Failure in Generalship," *Armed Forces Journal*, May 2007.

⁴¹ Statement of Dr. Janet Breslin-Smith, House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, May 20, 2009.

⁴² Jason Zweig, *The Wall Street Journal*, October 16-17, 2010.

mavericks when institutional thought stagnates. But we have a responsibility not to let it stagnate.⁴³

⁴³ Col. Michael D. Wyly, "In Praise of Mavericks," *Armed Forces Journal*.

The Pentagon Labyrinth aims to help both newcomers and seasoned observers learn how to grapple with the problems of national defense. Intended for readers who are frustrated with the superficial nature of the debate on national security, this handbook takes advantage of the insights of ten unique professionals, each with decades of experience in the armed services, the Pentagon bureaucracy, Congress, the intelligence community, military history, journalism and other disciplines. The short but provocative essays will help you to:

- identify the decay—moral, mental and physical—in America’s defenses,
- understand the various “tribes” that run bureaucratic life in the Pentagon,
- appreciate what too many defense journalists are not doing, but should,
- conduct first rate national security oversight instead of second rate theater,
- separate careerists from ethical professionals in senior military and civilian ranks,
- learn to critique strategies, distinguishing the useful from the agenda-driven,
- recognize the pervasive influence of money in defense decision-making,
- unravel the budget games the Pentagon and Congress love to play,
- understand how to sort good weapons from bad—and avoid high cost failures, and
- reform the failed defense procurement system without changing a single law.

The handbook ends with lists of contacts, readings and Web sites carefully selected to facilitate further understanding of the above, and more.

