



The Institute for National Security Ethics and Leadership (INSEL)



The Compass

2011 Issue 1

Conference on Military Professionalism Held at NDU

A continuing project on military professionalism kicked off at NDU on January 10, 2011, with a conference entitled “Military Professionalism: Introspection and Reflection on Basic Tenets and the Way Ahead.” At the request of Admiral Mike Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, INSEL invited active duty and retired leaders and educators to take stock of the health of the military profession after a decade of war. The conference was sponsored by INSEL and organized with the assistance of the Center for Strategic Conferences, which is part of NDU’s Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS).

Conference objectives were to encourage introspection and reflection on the part of members of the profession—to ask: “Where are we?” and “Where do we want to be?”—and to stimulate more, and more thoughtful, consideration of military professionalism across the spectrum of military education and training. The format was a series of panels, interspersed with keynote speeches and presentations. The topics covered included: the meaning of military professionalism and the military ethos; the question of membership in the profession; challenges involved in providing professional military advice to civilian leaders; the challenge of expressing professional disagreement on policy issues; and acceptability of political activity by retired military officers.

After the NDU President, Vice Admiral Ann E. Rondeau, USN, welcomed participants to the conference, Admiral Mullen opened the proceedings with a [keynote address](#). He noted that

the profession had to stay on course, “guided fair” by its underpinnings and principles. The military profession cannot afford to be out of touch with the American people, he said. Junior leaders must be engaged now in the conversation about where the profession is heading because they will be the ones who shape it in the future.

The first panel attempted to define military professionalism and the military ethos. Brigadier General Sean MacFarland, Deputy Commandant of the Army Command and General Staff College, outlined the Army’s efforts to answer questions from the Army Chief of Staff about the nature of the profession of arms and what it means to be a professional Soldier. A provisional answer was provided in a December 2010 [white paper](#). Rear Admiral Michelle Howard, Chief of Staff, Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, J5, argued that the military needs to teach and to inculcate in their junior leaders a strong moral framework for making decisions, to later guide commanders in complex operations, when ethics or morality may limit the full use of available force. Admiral Rondeau talked about the nature of the military ethos and recommended focusing on what unites military



CJCS Admiral Mike Mullen speaks at conference at NDU about military professionalism.

members in a common identity rather than what divides them.

In the second panel, the emphasis was on defining which members of the armed forces can be considered professionals. The key question was whether or not it remains useful to follow traditional definitions and historical precedent for defining professional status when considering the status of serving officers, noncommissioned officers, retired personnel, contractors, and DOD civilians. Can such a line be drawn, and if so, should it be? Do these distinctions serve to divide rather than unite the profession? Colonel Matthew Moten, Deputy Head of the Department of History at West Point, contended that historically noncommissioned officers have not been considered professionals, nor should they be lest the educational component of professional identity be weakened. Sergeant Major Bryan Battaglia, Command Sergeant Major of Joint Forces Command, argued for including

Inside this edition:

- A conference at NDU on military professionalism kicked off this ongoing project.
- INSEL assists with continuing work on this topic.
- The conference generated comments and coverage in the media.
- INSEL’s Senior Military Fellow Chaplain Eric Wester writes about preliminary findings in a study that examined correlations between spirituality, ethics, and resiliency.

Conference Held at NDU (Continued)



Panel explores how to define professionals.

noncommissioned officers as professionals. Dr. Joseph J. Thomas (LtCol, USMC Ret.), Distinguished Military Professor of Leadership, U.S. Naval Academy, noted that the original definitions of a professional may be anachronistic since the concept of professionalism has evolved with the development of a modern, all-volunteer force, many more technical specialties requiring special skills, and post-modern warfare, which requires more autonomy in executing orders. All of these factors, he argued, suggest that commissioned officers do not have a monopoly on professionalism.

In the luncheon address, General Richard B. Myers, USAF (Ret.), former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Colin Powell Chair in INSEL/NDU, reflected on relevant experiences in his career. He stressed that trust is critical in civil-military relations, and that the primary responsibility for establishing that trust rests on military advisors as they educate their civilian leaders about the military profession. Disagreement, he said, should always take place in private and not be done in anger. He said that, in his experience, senior officers are given many opportunities to express dissent during policy formulation. Finally, he found resignation by a senior officer who disagrees with the final policy to be problematic because it is always interpreted as a political statement.

The third panel focused on the challenges inherent in providing professional military advice to civilian leaders. Lieutenant

General Julius Becton, USA (Ret.) and Lieutenant General Jack L. Rives, USAF (Ret.) shared personal experiences about speaking truth to authority. As a senior commander, General Becton challenged the services' Combat Exclusion Policy for female Soldiers. General Rives, as the Air Force Staff Judge Advocate General, dealt with the Bush Administration's decision to exclude military legal professionals from discussions about the treatment of prisoners of war. General Becton commented that it is important to choose one's words carefully when disagreeing publicly, as complex ethical questions are inevitably reduced to sound bites by the media. General Rives voiced a theme that recurred throughout the conference, that officers swear an oath to the Constitution, not to a particular administration or political party. He noted that respectful disagreement with policy does not equal disloyalty.

Panel IV addressed professional disagreements with policy. Admiral Leon A. Edney, USN (Ret.) and Major General Paul Eaton, USA (Ret.) shared their experiences with dissent. During the Vietnam War, Admiral Edney found that he disagreed with the U.S. policy on the conduct of the war and submitted his resignation. Subsequently, he withdrew the resignation when a mentor suggested that, by leaving the service, he was not supporting shipmates still held prisoner. General Eaton was the first of seven retired general officers who called publicly for President Bush to fire Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld over the conduct of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. General Eaton focused on the activities of retired personnel and contended that his was a very specific case, when both the press and Congress had failed in their responsibilities to question Administration policy and no one was advocating for the ground troops. Admiral Edney, who focused on dissent while on active duty, noted that the time for disagreement is during the formulation of the policy rather than the execution. Once the decision is made, he opined, an officer who disagrees has three options: to comply, to resign, or to retire.

Dr. John Hamre, former Deputy Secretary of Defense, looked at military-civil relations from the perspective of senior civilian officials. He emphasized the importance of accountability to the people. In our democracy, civilians control the military, but allow it to exist as a separate hierarchical,

authority-based culture. Civilian control is the foundation that allows this relationship to exist, and the health of the profession depends upon the services remaining *America's* military. Hamre acknowledged the danger of civilians failing to listen to military views and the importance of military professionals making the relationship work.

The last panel of the day focused on political activity by retired officers. General John M. Loh, USAF (Ret.) believes that retired officers who want to go into politics should become political candidates themselves, rather than campaigning for others. Campaigning for others diminishes the profession, since the public does not distinguish between active duty and retired senior military officers. General Charles Boyd, USAF (Ret.) agreed, noting that once a senior officer enters the political arena, the response will be partisan and therefore harms professional neutrality. He postulated that it may be too late to change the behavior of officers already retired, but that the proper values can be developed in junior leaders now. He pointed out that the public approval enjoyed by the military is good but fragile and at risk, particularly after long wars and with the coming debate on how to reshape the military.

Dr. Albert C. Pierce, Director of INSEL, closed the day by thanking everyone for their active engagement and noted that this was just the beginning of the conversation. Looking back on the day's proceedings, he said, "We made significant progress on the two goals Admiral Mullen established: to stimulate introspection and reflection by the members of the profession and to stimulate further consideration of these issues across military education and training. There is much more good and important work to be done, but we made great progress today."

Continuing the Conversation

If the conference at NDU on military professionalism was part of an ongoing conversation, then INSEL is helping that conversation to continue by making educational materials available to others in the professional military education community.

INSEL has expanded its [website](#) to include the project on military professionalism. The materials on the website include a [paper](#) by Colonel Richard Swain, USA (Ret.) that was prepared prior to the conference as a read-ahead and an annotated [bibliography](#) on military professionalism. [Links](#) to videotaped presentations from the conference are also available.

A special section of *Joint Force Quarterly* is in the works, along with an anthology of readings through NDU Press.

Study on Soldier Spirituality Shows Correlations with Ethics and Resiliency

By Chaplain (COL) Eric Wester, USA,
INSEL's Senior Military Fellow



In 2008, the U.S. Army initiated a survey about ethics, leadership, individual character, and spirituality among Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNFI). General Petraeus requested the study as he relinquished command of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq in September 2008. It was completed in 2009. The study had the backing of the Chief of Staff of the Army and was implemented by the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) with collaboration by INSEL, the U.S. Army Chaplains Corps, and a wide range of military and civilian academic partners. The study looked at ethical attitudes and behavior of U.S. Land Forces.

Army leaders hoped this ethics research might shed light on earlier findings by the Mental Health Assessment Team (MHAT IV and V) reports. These reports indicated significant percentages of military personnel who stated they would not report a fellow member of the military for “killing or wounding an innocent non-combatant.” Strategic leaders set a high priority on ethics and ethical decision-making in the face of sustained operational demands. Given this reality, ethical dilemmas abound, and Soldiers are constantly faced with demanding challenges.

Survey results reveal links between an individual's level of spirituality and ethics and resilience. Specifically, people who were spiritual also tended to have moral courage and moral confidence, as well as increased psychological and physical resilience.

This research looked at three factors as dimensions of spirituality for soldiers: connection to others, religious identification, and hopeful outlook. Those factors were used to calculate a total spirituality score. Interestingly, higher spirituality scores were found among soldiers with increased age and rank. Spirituality was higher in women. Also, those with more education, married soldiers, and those with children had higher spirituality scores. Regarding ethics, Sol-

diers with higher spirituality scores tended to have higher scores in moral courage/ownership, moral efficacy, and embracing Army values. To a lesser degree, someone with a higher spirituality score is also more likely to report ethical violations observed in others and to identify as a soldier. These findings show that character and spirituality can be understood as measurable dimensions.

Regarding resilience, higher spirituality scores linked to both emotional and physical well-being. Higher spirituality strongly went side-by-side with emotional health—specifically, resistance to risks of depression. Also, Soldiers with higher spirituality scores showed statistically significant differences in reports of physical well-being. Soldiers with higher spirituality scores had fewer bodily complaints (sore necks, backs, hips and knees) and reported measurable less fatigue.

Research findings will be published by Navy Medicine Institute and the Smithsonian Institution in the [Journal of Healthcare, Science and Humanities](#) in the Summer 2011 edition.



*The Institute for National Security
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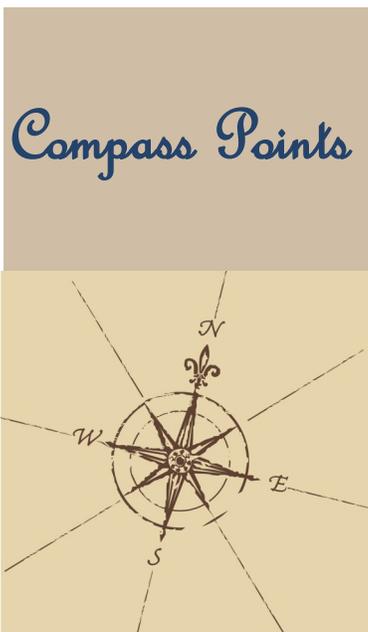
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The Institute for National Security Ethics and Leadership (INSEL) at the National Defense University (NDU) was created to be a nationally and internationally recognized center of excellence in ethics and leadership in national- and international-security affairs.

In 2007, General Peter Pace, USMC, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, authorized the establishment of the Institute for National Security Ethics and Leadership. General Richard B. Myers, USAF (Retired), also a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, plays an integral role in the Institute in his capacity as NDU's Colin Powell Chair of Leadership, Ethics, and Character.

The Institute for National Security Ethics and Leadership works in all three functional areas of NDU: education, research, and outreach. Its focus includes the qualities of the individual leader, the standards of the profession as a whole, the profession's relationship with society, and also encompasses a wider view of the ethics of national security.



Issues of Ethics in the News

January 10, 2011, Conference News and Comments

The conference at NDU on military professionalism was mentioned in the following news items:

[Mullen Calls for Military Self-Reflection](#)

[Leaders Emphasize Importance of Moral Courage, Candor](#)

[Reach Out to Fellow Americans Serving in the Military](#)

[Armchair Generalist: The Civil-Military "Disconnect"](#)

[Commission to Recommend Lifting Ban on Women in Combat](#)



Dr. John Hamre addressed civil-military relations.