

From the Editor



At Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, I recently met a remarkable Army Soldier. A young troop sitting near me noticed my Air Force uniform and wings. He asked, “Sir, what kind of pilot are you?” At the Officer’s Club, I might have said, “the best” (or something equally brilliant and punch worthy). But he was genuinely

interested, and we talked a bit about military aviation. I wanted to hear about his experiences, so I steered the conversation to why he was visiting the hospital.

The Soldier had returned from battle over a year ago, after he was injured in combat and spent about a year in rehabilitation. Unfortunately, his wounded leg caused him tremendous pain. At 20 years old he faced potential medical retirement with little prospect of regaining much use of his damaged limb.

Stryker Brigade Combat Team loading into Stryker vehicle in Mosul, Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom



56th Signal Company (Joy C. Randall)

So what does this have to do with the principal topic of this issue of *Joint Force Quarterly*, transformation during war? Undaunted, this Soldier has chosen a courageous route, one only recently viable. After consultation with his doctors and thoughtful consideration of his options, he requested to have his leg removed—so he could get back to work! Refusing to be deterred by his wound, he not only wanted to return to his job in the Army, but he also hoped to become an Army aviator. Amazingly, based on the transformation of America’s military, I think he could have a shot.

This Soldier’s decision is a perfect metaphor for transformation, and it exemplifies the commitment, culture of selflessness, and sophistication of those serving in the Armed Forces.

He is also emblematic of the transformation that the Chairman describes in his message and our contributing authors explore in this issue: New thinking, new technology, and new partners create new ways of providing for the common defense. This Soldier wasn’t simply a casualty; he is an experienced combat veteran, and his leaders recognize both his sacrifice and his continuing value to the Nation, the mission, and the Army.

By providence or destiny, we find ourselves in a time when free men and women, even those who have suffered grievous injuries and other sacrifices and privations, can look beyond impairments and continue to devote their efforts to sustain and cultivate liberty. Leaders and followers alike understand that the secret to successful transformation lies not in the newest rifle, satellite, or ship. Those are helpful tools, but they are still simply tools. As the 2005 *National Defense Strategy*, Chairman, and Secretary of Defense have stated, America and like-minded nations are integrating and blending the instruments of national power in new and potentially useful ways. Transformation is thus a growing process—one of realization, assessment, and reassessment, and ultimately, its unlimited potential resides in the hearts and brains of the men and women who defend the Nation and its allies.

COLONEL MERRICK E. KRAUSE, USAF
jfq1@ndu.edu