



Ejército Argentino

In 1990 Argentina began a transformation of the land component of its armed forces based on assessments of current and future defense needs, national objectives, economic conditions, and a changing international situation. This historical challenge was met by the Argentine army which implemented actions to achieve that end. The army is a disciplined and cohesive institution that performs its mission with composure, perseverance, motivation, devotion to duty, and faith in a future which it deems bright. It has also adapted to structural changes undertaken by the nation and shared in the sacrifices which these difficult reforms have imposed on the Argentine people. This has led to the first changes in force structure since a reorganization in 1964. Both geopolitical developments and extraordinary technological advances during the 1980s precluded the army from responding to demands posed by this national challenge.

The Malvinas War clearly indicated the failure of our doctrinal and operational framework. Budget policies and cost reductions embraced by the Argentine government, like other countries, compounded structural problems. To meet this reality, studies were required to guide development of the army. Thus, a long-range goal was implemented by a comprehensive and ambitious project, "The Military Ground Component of the Future," which spanned over twenty years (until 2010). That project, with subsequent revisions and adaptations, has become synonymous with the army's future. From the start the effort has been focused in a coherent and coordinated manner. Its most distinctive characteristic is that it is not static. On the contrary, it is flexible enough to assimilate changes deemed necessary by the defense establishment while also ensuring room for evolution.

Notwithstanding the lack of additional funding to embark on this evolutionary process, by the end of 1991

CHANGING

Argentine Military Culture

By MARTIN ANTONIO BALZA

Teniente General Martin Antonio Balza is chief of staff of the Argentine army.

the required actions had been taken and continue to be systematically implemented. The concept behind restructuring the army was a process of transformation which implicitly had to start with cultural modernization. Our actions had to lead to profound changes in the corporate culture of the army including:

- respect for and subordination to the constitution and the law
- a positive attitude toward community service to integrate the army into society
- a call to excellence
- command based on shared objectives
- encouragement of higher levels of responsibility, participation, and initiative among subordinate levels of command
- assignments based on competence
- promotions based on merit
- modification of seniority throughout a military career
- modernization of the army's educational system
- replacement of mandatory military service with a voluntary army.

Qualitative changes in the education provided to personnel is fundamental to the process of transforming

implementation of a voluntary army was a historical milestone and our greatest challenge in the 1990s

any organization. In this sense educational requirements were raised in an effort to gradually adjust the professional skills required for the 21st century during the course of training and development. With that in mind the curricula at institutions such as the military academy now enable graduates to earn university degrees. Non-commissioned officers graduate with high school diplomas. This transformation also includes establishment of military institutes of higher education for civilian personnel, which has led to a paradoxical situation at our military university where the majority of the students are civilians.

Likewise, the implementation of a voluntary army was a historical milestone for Argentina and our greatest challenge in the 1990s. The idea was to address the formation of the



George Beauchamp

soldier of the future, defense needs, resource availability, and demands posed by society. Its adoption led to profound changes, both cultural and structural, ranging from education and training volunteers to the operation of units, equipment, personnel practices, legal developments, etc.

We should underscore that the army implemented this particular recruitment system without any prior experience or a transition period—an

Argentine peacekeeper, Croatia. unprecedented situation among nations which have introduced a volunteer force. The possibility for individuals to voluntarily choose to join the army as an officer or noncommissioned officer is an innovative and invaluable recruitment alternative not previously employed in Argentina. Another remarkable change is the fact the army decided to offer women the same recruitment opportunities as men, opening a series of positions which will be gradually expanded as the system is consolidated.

At the same time the Argentine army has maintained and continues to stress the importance of ethical values that are fundamental to the military profession. Discipline, honesty, devotion to duty, loyalty, obedience, self-sacrifice, courage, and individual example have been emphasized in the past and will continue to be objectives for developing the Argentine soldier.

Defense is a function of state that can only be entrusted to the military for implementation. Our primary mission is and will continue to be the defense of vital national interests, regardless of the existence of internal or external threats. The challenge for the future is to identify threats that may arise in the international order. In this new world order our traditional mission remains valid. It essentially consists of having a credible deterrent. However, new dangers have resulted in new subsidiary

Torpedo boat *Indomita* at Ushuaia.



Robert L. Scheina



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Super Etendard,
Espora Naval Air Base.



George Beauchamp

Argentine and Spanish
observers monitoring
Cuban withdrawal
from Angola.

roles that armies—as the institutions with the greatest aptitude—have assumed.

The Argentine army has conducted peacekeeping operations among various other missions in an effort to help maintain international order and balance in compliance with resolutions of the U.N. Security Council. Our military has thereby gained national and international recognition for its professionalism, devotion to duty, and discipline evidenced while participating in multinational peacekeeping forces. This motivation has enabled us to overcome other difficulties and strengthen our commitment to world peace, in keeping with the objectives of Argentine foreign policy.

This would not have been achieved without the active, intelligent, and selfless participation of our servicemen and women who, in turn, are able to count on the understanding and support of Argentine society. The respect of the army for republican institutions and constitutional power has deep roots, which is one of the most important achievements of the modernization process.

Additionally we have been able to overcome barriers that isolated us from the community. Society as a whole now has the political will to attain peace and well-being. This has been possible through mutual understand-

ing and the establishment of civil-military relations which are devoid of prejudice and misconceptions. The first step was to abandon our apocalyptic vision and arrogance and begin accepting the right of dissent and respecting the will of the people. We have been doing that for several years to leave the past behind and to build the Argentina of the future—a nation that has found maturity in pain, and one that someday will come together in a fraternal embrace.

The Argentine army will meet and exceed all these expectations. It is prepared to fulfill its commitment while upholding the traditions and ethical values that are fundamental to the military profession. Our human as well as spiritual heritage, solid and virtuous, is consistent with the truth and with the values, interests, and objectives of Argentine society.

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