

# LETTERS

**To the Editor—**In “Who Is a Member of the Military Profession?” (*JFQ* 62, 3<sup>d</sup> Quarter 2011), Colonel Matthew Moten, USA, brings up some valuable points in his discussion of the professionalization of career enlisted Servicemembers, but it would be useful to know his data points. His final arguments are directed at the noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps (not petty officers), so I would like to know if his data are based on his experiences *across* the Services, or mainly based on his observations and study *within* his own branch.

Though observant of and an occasional researcher of other Services’ use of their professional enlisted forces, I speak only about the modern U.S. Army NCO corps when addressing Colonel Moten’s point that “their [the NCO corps] professionalization is incomplete in the areas of formal and theoretical education, accumulation of specialized expertise, and autonomous jurisdiction over a body of professional knowledge. The NCO corps is professionalizing, but not yet professional.” I understand that this assertion is not the same as stating the “NCO corps is unprofessional,” which one could easily and incorrectly conclude. I imagine a parallel could be drawn with the theory that an individual found *not* guilty of a crime is not saying he is innocent.

I would suggest that the Army began professionalizing its NCO corps in October 1975 when the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel started phasing in the Enlisted Professional Management System (EPMS). Before that, career programs for enlisted Soldiers were spotty at best, and most have heard the story that a Soldier’s stripes resided in the regiment. If an NCO were to move, it was often at a loss of rank. Not only was EPMS a major jumpstart to professionalizing the enlisted force, but 3 years earlier, an NCO college had been created: the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. I would be curious as to what length Colonel Moten went through to evaluate the current curriculum in determining the breadth and width of the sergeant major course, particularly in how it relates to his definition of “formal and theoretical education.”

One would have to ask what the measure of the “attainment of specialized

expertise” is, and how one would know when the Army NCO corps (or any other professional enlisted force) has achieved specialized expertise, and by whose standards. Is there an established peak or defined scale by which one measures individual or group progress, other than to say, “You are progressing”? It seems that comment would be nebulous at best considering that Colonel Moten never seems to point out anything where the Army NCO corps lacks specialized expertise. Nor does he contrast how other groups have mastered specialized expertise over the NCO corps. Army NCOs draw their skills, knowledge, and attitudes from policies that lay out their roles and responsibilities. I try to use *Army Command Policy and Procedures* (Army Regulation [AR] 600–20) as a guideline, which has been influenced by a successive group of Army leaders who have laid out the responsibilities of the NCO corps vis-à-vis the NCO Support channel. A quick look shows the current 10 functions of the NCO Support channel as:

- transmitting, instilling, and ensuring the efficacy of the professional Army ethic
- planning and conducting the day-to-day unit operations within prescribed policies and directives
- training of enlisted Soldiers in their Military Occupational Specialty as well as in the basic skills and attributes of a Soldier
- supervising unit physical fitness training and ensuring that unit Soldiers comply with the weight and appearance standards of AR 600–9 and AR 670–1
- teaching Soldiers the history of the Army, to include military customs, courtesies, and traditions
- caring for individual Soldiers and their families, both on and off duty
- teaching Soldiers the mission of the unit and developing individual training programs to support the mission
- accounting for and maintaining individual arms and equipment of enlisted Soldiers and unit equipment under their control
- administering and monitoring the NCO professional development program, and other unit training programs

- achieving and maintaining courage, candor, competence, commitment, and compassion.

If this is what is expected from the NCO corps, one would have to measure against these tasks to determine when expertise has been achieved. Of course, if the problem is that these are not the correct 10 functions of the NCO Support channel, that is an entirely different discussion, which is not addressed in Colonel Moten’s article.

I believe recent developments in the Army NCO corps have mostly negated the remainder of his argument. We recently celebrated the second year of the Institute for Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development (INCOPD), which is dedicated to the advancement of professional military education for NCOs. Additionally, the Command Sergeant Major Corps was entrusted with leading the development and education of NCOs with the appointment of an enlisted Commandant of the Sergeants Major Academy. Recent efforts—such as the INCOPD program of life-long learning, structured self-development (SSD), and career tracker—bridge “the operational and institutional domains of Army training for enlisted Soldiers. From Private to Command Sergeant Major, SSD will ensure learning is continuous and enduring.”

My last point is on the concern of a lack of “autonomous jurisdiction over a body of professional knowledge.” I suggest the triad of the Sergeant Major of the Army, the NCO-led Sergeants Major Academy, and INCOPD, under the direction of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command’s Command Sergeant Major, fills the bill for the “autonomous jurisdiction,” but in a hierarchical organization such as the Army, who truly self-governs or acts independently? I suggest those three positions act autonomously as a platoon leader on patrol or a company commander maneuvering his forces.

—Daniel K. Elder  
Command Sergeant Major, USA (Ret.)

**To the Editor**— I applaud Colonel Matthew Moten’s effort to define who is a member of the military profession (“Who Is a Member of the Military Profession?” *JFQ* 62, 3<sup>d</sup> Quarter 2011), but I am concerned that his definition is too historically based (it is probably an occupational hazard).

The future security requirements of the Nation demand a broader definition that includes civilians. For example, the intelligence field has many civilians educated at the National Defense Intelligence College who are actively participating in military operations. Is the person who identifies the target any less a part of the process than a person who pulls the trigger? Most modern enemies would not stop to differentiate as strictly as the colonel seems to want.

I remember General George Joulwan’s motto for the Bosnian operations: “One Team, One Fight.” Recently, civilian instructors from Fort Leavenworth demonstrated this again by deploying to U.S. Africa Command for involvement in recent contingency planning. As Colonel Moten notes, the military profession is a lifelong calling, and I would add that it is a broad-based collegial effort.

—James Crick  
Instructor,  
U.S. Army Command and  
General Staff College

**To the Editor**— I write in response to William F. Owen’s letter (*JFQ* 61, 2<sup>d</sup> Quarter 2011) regarding my article co-authored with David Kilcullen in *JFQ* 60 (“An Actor-centric Theory of War: Understanding the Difference Between COIN and Counterinsurgency”).

Our analysis is indeed built upon a taxonomy of warfare rather than a new theory of warfare. However, we never purported to provide the latter, but simply to open the debate on a new theory that better reflects the realities of conflict in a decidedly post-Westphalian world. (Alas, authors rarely choose the titles for their work; that is in the purview of the all-mighty Editor, so if Mr. Owen feels hard-done-by given

the title of our article, that is a matter for him to take up directly with the editors of *JFQ* and not us!)

As for the remark that irregular warfare is solely conducted by irregular threat groups, I think SEAL Team Six, the heroes of Abbottabad, would strenuously disagree. Irregular warfare describes a type of warfare, not just a type of actor. (This is in fact recognized in the official Department of Defense Joint Operating Concept for Irregular Warfare.)

With regard to our discussion of irregular versus regular or conventional warfare, the main point was not simply to note that irregular warfare occurs three times as much as regular conflict but to illuminate what the word *regular* implies and how it distorts development of doctrine and planning for future capabilities. Surely, if history demonstrates conclusively—as the Correlates of War Database proves—that nations most often go to war with nonstate actors, then this reality should be reflected in not only how we think about war, but also how we prepare for it. This is far beyond semantics.

I am mystified by Mr. Owen’s comment, “I am struggling to think of any useful description of warfare ‘based on putative generational changes in warfare or the asymmetry of combatants’ that is in common use.” Really? A casual Google search for the terms *fourth generation warfare* and *asymmetric warfare* generates 126,000 and 656,000 hits, respectively (and that is without using quotation marks to limit the search). In fact, both the U.S. Army and Department of Defense have organic elements that use the phrase *asymmetric warfare* in their official titles.

While I too am a great admirer of the strategic master Colin Gray, he must be recognized as planted firmly in the Clausewitzian camp, a fact the good professor openly admits. All I would suggest is that since the Prussian master himself only devoted five pages of his *On War* to the topic of irregular warfare—and was not a great fan of it at all—his work is of most general application in the interstate arena of war and has decidedly limited use

in nuanced analysis of globally motivated violent nonstate actors such as al Qaeda (not to mention nonkinetic threats such as the Muslim Brotherhood). For a modest reworking of Clausewitz’s “wondrous trinity” for use in the current threat environment, Mr. Owens could refer to my piece entitled “The Age of Irregular Warfare: So What?” (*JFQ* 58, 3<sup>d</sup> Quarter 2010).

Finally, General Sherman did indeed also state that “war is war.” However, our analysis was not focused on civil wars (which fall under a special category all their own), but on the unique challenge posed by nonstate actors such as al Qaeda or the Taliban. That is why General Ospina’s version of the phrase was chosen, given that he is recognized as dealing the death blow to the FARC of Colombia—a threat that far more resembles the numerous challenges that the United States faces today than do the forces of the Confederate South.

—Dr. Sebastian L.v. Gorka