



Are We Really Ever Off Duty?

As we in the U.S. military continue to renew our commitment to the Profession of Arms, the title of this article asks a compelling question for everyone who wears the cloth of the Nation. While I believe the question has an easy answer, let us not downplay the significance of asking it at *every* level of professional development. Most serving in the Armed Forces understand the deeper meaning of the question, as well as the commitment to the profession and the American people that goes along with it. Therefore, most military professionals would provide the short answer: “No, we are never really off duty.”

Indeed, we are a more effective and a more disciplined force when we live by the high standard of *always on duty* or *never off duty*. You choose and use the

term that best resonates with you. I prefer the latter as it conveys a more subtle and steady narrative that is less prone to technical interpretations. To others, the short answer of *no* may not process as quickly. My hope for that particular audience is that by the end of this article, the meaning of the question and resulting answer shall provide a better understanding of why it is individually and organizationally advantageous for us all to live by such a standard of ethical, moral, and professional behavior. Maintaining a “never off duty” posture is not a new idea or the result of a recent study—it has been and should always remain an integral part of our total composition as members of the profession.

A disciplined, dedicated, and structured military career embodies certain individual traits and attributes, such as

professional behavior, integrity, respect, and bearing, which collectively provide an internal beacon to guide us. However, living by such a high military standard does not mean that we have to sacrifice every aspect of an otherwise normal life, such as neglecting obligations to family, exercising appropriate periods of rest, and so forth. But it *does* mean that regardless of time or circumstance, we are always fulfilling our obligations as professionals, whether during or after working hours.

To be human is to be imperfect and it is safe to say that none of us has been or will be consistently flawless in meeting a preeminent standard as *never off duty*. We all face temptation and periods in our careers (and personal lives) where we may be drawn to convenience, greediness, even luxury, resulting in shortfalls. It is an

individual decision to take the right or wrong road. When wrongful temptation overrides Servicemembers' decisions (the wrong road), our integrity should be immediately challenged by our better selves, our teammates, our profession, and even our nation's citizens. Depending on the severity of the decision made, significant setbacks can result for the profession, including degradation in faith and confidence with the public, injury, even loss of life. This is where those who act less than honorably tarnish and scar the reputation of our Profession of Arms. Maintaining a conviction of *never off duty* instills a disciplined standard of living and will help guide decisions that may in fact prevent or avoid a poor plan or a poor choice.

By virtue of qualifying to join the Armed Forces, I strongly consider those achieving the title of *Soldier, Marine, Sailor, Airman, or Coastguardsman* to have reached a *high watermark in their lives*, and the profession benefits greatly from the diversity, skills, and determination toward excellence our Servicemembers bring. We *all* want not only to be good in our service but also great in our duty.

The majority in our formations do it right. They challenge themselves to live by the moral and professional standard of *never off duty*, and most believe if this standard is not carried to its fullest, individuals and teams can break down in discipline, morals, and ethics, thereby drawing discredit, failure, or embarrassment to one's unit, Service, country, family, and self. A true serving professional understands the severity of that breakdown and will exhaust every effort to avoid it. Furthermore, I find that Servicemembers who truly understand *never off duty* become exceptional role models and mentors to all others.

At various points along our military career and glide path, maybe even as early as basic training, some key legacy phrases may help as reminders of why one is *never off duty*. "You get paid 24 hours a day," "You can be recalled at any time"—and the one I think resonates best—"Don't think the rules stop or the standards drop at 1700 just because it's the end of the work day; there is no time

card to punch." Each phrase conveys that when we volunteer to serve the Nation, it is a 24/7 obligation and our obligations and responsibilities as members of the Profession of Arms never expire.

All five Service branches have unique cultures and identities, and as such, they define, understand, and implement *never off duty* in different ways that ensure members achieve and maintain standards. But regardless of Service branch, duty assignment, geographical location, or individual occupational specialty, there are commonalities and consistencies for maintaining professional behavior, ethics, and proper representation of the Nation. Operating in a mindset of *never off duty* in our everyday lives should prove professionally lucrative. I would even go so far to say that allowing this operating principle into our professional lives will raise our ability to sidestep temptation and wrongful personal actions or choice.

Regardless of one's military status—whether taking annual leave or liberty, attending school, appearing at a social function, serving an internship, moonlighting an after-hours job, shopping for groceries, or conducting combat actions against an enemy force—*never off duty* provides that disciplined methodology to our military lives. It is a behavior rooted in moral soundness, high values, with cause and effect. It maintains a standard and positively impacts professional focus and conduct. It is reachable and sustainable for everyone, every day, every time. We are a much better organization with it than without it. We are *never off duty*. JFQ

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*The Defense Acquisition Trilemma:
The Case of Brazil*

by Patrice Franko



Brazil is a puzzling new strategic player. Currently, its economic clout is not supported by strong

operational military capabilities. To make its military instrument commensurate with its new geopolitical weight, Brazil is undergoing military modernization. But it faces a security trilemma: it must choose among long-held aspirations of sovereignty, integration into the global value chain, and economic sustainability.

With its new global reach, the Brazilian defense industrial base is not a continuation of the defense industry of the 1980s. Instead, complex industrial relationships and civil society engagement create a critical disjuncture from the inward looking pattern of the earlier phase. Strengthening legal frameworks between the United States and Brazil to support defense cooperation would allow private-sector initiatives to deepen bilateral ties.



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