

RESTORING THE SHIELD: WESTMORELAND AND THE RECOVERY OF MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Art of War Scholars

by

JOHN M. ZDEB, MAJOR, U.S. ARMY
M.A., University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 2013
B.S., United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, 2004

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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Name of Candidate: MAJ John M. Zdeb

Thesis Title: Restoring the Shield: Westmoreland and the Recovery of Military Professionalism

Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Jonathan M. House, Ph.D.

_____, Member
Dean A. Nowowiejski, Ph.D.

_____, Member
LTC Joseph E. Donalbain, MA, MSSI

Accepted this 10th day of June 2016 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

RESTORING THE SHIELD: WESTMORELAND AND THE RECOVERY OF MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM, by Major John M. Zdeb, 118 pages.

During his tenure as the Army's Chief of Staff, General Westmoreland was one of the architects of the post-Vietnam Army's reforms. Westmoreland's candid recognition of the debilitating effects of the Vietnam War on the Army's moral-ethical climate led to a series of internally-focused initiatives, which established the foundation for the Army's critical reforms that would lead to an overwhelming victory in the Persian Gulf in 1991. This study examines Westmoreland's performance as the Chief of Staff in four parts. First, it assesses the historiography and offers insights into why soldiers and scholars have deliberately excluded Westmoreland from the post-Vietnam narrative. It then examines Westmoreland's initial vision for Army reform, and why he failed to discern the looming threats to professionalism. The third part analyzes Westmoreland's recognition that his initial assumptions were invalid, and his realization of the full extent of professional discontent. The remainder details Westmoreland's specific actions to address the growing institutional malaise, and his initiatives to prevent the Army from surrendering its professional soul. Overall, this study illustrates that without Westmoreland's contributions, the reforms of the post-Vietnam era would have lacked the human capacity necessary to capitalize on the doctrinal and technological reforms that historians already recognize.

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ACRONYMS

CONARC	U.S. Army Continental Army Command
CSA	Chief of Staff of the Army
FORSCOM	U.S. Army Forces Command
OPMS	Officer Personnel Management System
USAWC	U.S. Army War College
TRADOC	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the United States Army went through one of the most significant periods of reform in its history. While the Army had undergone reforms during a conflict or after a defeat in battle, this was the first time the institution attempted reforms in the wake of a national defeat in war. Furthermore, these were perhaps the most comprehensive reforms in the Army's history, and would ultimately lead to the creation of the "Army of Excellence" that achieved a stunning and decisive victory in the First Persian Gulf War just two decades later in 1991. The defeat in Vietnam and victory in the Persian Gulf are two of the most polarizing moments in American military history, and the stark contrasts between the two conflicts are seared into American public memory.

The scant attention that scholars have given the post-Vietnam Army contains three important points. The first is perhaps the most well known change, that the Army abandoned the draft and became an all-volunteer force. The second was that the Army designed and fielded the "Big Five" fleet of military vehicles that typified the new American focus on obtaining a technological advantage on the battlefield. The third is perhaps the least well known outside of military circles, the renaissance in doctrine that the Army went through. This renaissance began with the creation of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) in 1973, and under the guidance of its successive commanders TRADOC synthesized the all-volunteer force and the Big Five into a new American way of war that purged the Vietnam malaise and achieved a decisive victory in the Persian Gulf.

While this narrative contains a fair amount of truth, it is also emblematic of the artificial order historians impose on the past to create distinct events in time and space. By beginning the narrative with the birth of TRADOC in 1973, such historians deliberately exclude General William Westmoreland, the Army's 25th Chief of Staff (CSA) from 1968-1972. This exclusion is not surprising, as Westmoreland served as the senior commander in Vietnam from 1964-1968, and the majority of historians and of the first round of critics analyzing the Vietnam War associate and blame him for the U.S. defeat in the conflict. Thus, beginning the narrative of the post-Vietnam Army in 1973 allows historians to create a clean break-away from the lone American military defeat as well as the general that one historian unabashedly cites in his title as "The General Who Lost Vietnam."¹

However, history is rarely neat and tidy. The reality is that Westmoreland was not only involved in the genesis of the post-Vietnam Army's reforms, he was one of the original architects. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate Westmoreland's performance as the Army's Chief of Staff and to illustrate his role in saving the Army from its path to self-destruction. Although many soldiers and scholars have greatly underappreciated Westmoreland's contributions, his recognition of the debilitating effects of the Vietnam War on the Army led to a broad series of initiatives that grew into one of the greatest series of peacetime reforms in the history of the U.S. Army. Without General Westmoreland's actions as the Chief of Staff, the post-Vietnam Army's efforts to convert

¹ Lewis Sorley, *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011).

from a conscript to a professional force in a little over a decade would have struggled to gain traction in an era of dwindling resources and public support.

To that end, this study will have four parts. The first chapter will assess the historiography of both the post-Vietnam Army and General Westmoreland, and will illustrate how scholars have created an artificial separation between Westmoreland and the post-Vietnam Army. The second chapter will assess Westmoreland's first two years as the Chief of Staff, with specific focus on his initial vision for reform. Chapter 3 will examine how repeated instances of gross misconduct that culminated with the exposure of the My Lai massacre prompted Westmoreland to reevaluate his assessment of the Army's professional health. The fourth chapter will examine Westmoreland's responses to the findings in the Army War College's *Study on Military Professionalism*, and how his subsequent actions paved the way for the continuous rehabilitation of the Army's professionalism through the 1970s. By the conclusion, a very different image of Westmoreland emerges, an image that his detractors may find difficult to rectify with their criticisms of his performance as the senior commander in Vietnam. But history is replete with these complexities, and to ignore them in favor of creating a cleaner narrative is simply ignorance in its highest fashion.

Historiography

An assessment of Westmoreland's performance as the Army's Chief of Staff has to consider two different historiographies. The first is a fairly small but emerging field that includes biographies, assessments of Westmoreland's performance as the commander of United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam (USMACV), as

well as assessments of his successor General Creighton Abrams. The second field is the scant and fractured historiography of the post-Vietnam Army.

The first field includes works that directly address either Westmoreland's entire career or his performance as the commander of USMACV. Westmoreland's autobiography *A Soldier Reports* provides limited insights into his time as the Chief of Staff, as it focuses primarily on his time in Vietnam. However, Samuel Zaffiri's biography *Westmoreland* dedicates a fair number of pages to Westmoreland's tenure as the Chief of Staff, as well as the challenges the Army faced from 1968-1972.

Lewis Sorley's works *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedies of America's Last Years in Vietnam* and *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam* are complementary works. Throughout both volumes, Sorley argues that the Vietnam War did not have to end in defeat, and he consistently compares Abrams' qualities with Westmoreland's shortcomings. In *A Better War*, Sorley argues that Abrams' stellar generalship nearly overcame the gross inadequacies of Westmoreland's previous tenure as the commander of USMACV. He continued this assessment in *Westmoreland*, where he argues that Westmoreland's inadequate generalship was the primary reason for the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. Furthermore, Sorley argues that during his tenure as the Chief of Staff, Westmoreland only focused on trying to salvage his legacy, and that General Bruce Palmer, the Vice Chief of Staff, was the driving force behind reform efforts.

While Sorley's works dominate the field, other works are emerging to challenge his assessments of Westmoreland. The most recent work is Gregory Daddis's *Westmoreland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam*. Daddis argues that

Westmoreland did not base his strategy solely on attrition and that he created a comprehensive strategy that included counterinsurgency tactics. Furthermore, Daddis argues that scholars have placed too much blame for American failure in Vietnam on Westmoreland's strategy and generalship.

The historiography of the Army between the Vietnam War and the First Persian Gulf War is both limited and disjointed, almost certainly the result of the polarizing connotations of defeat and victory that each conflict seared into the American public memory. An excellent example of this effect is within The Center of Military History's two volume *American Military History*. The two volumes total nearly one thousand pages in length, yet they devote only 35 pages to cover the Army's history from 1973-1989, and half of those pages detail military operations in El Salvador, Grenada, and Panama. The result is a field that rarely engages with the post-Vietnam Army in a direct fashion, and contains no scholarly works that attempt to address the reforms in a synthetic fashion. Hence, the limited narrative that emerges from this historiography, largely shaped by U.S. Army command historians, gravitates around doctrine, technology, and the all volunteer force. Almost as a universal rule, this narrative begins in 1973 with the creation of TRADOC and the ascendance of Abrams as the 26th C. In their quest to simplify and shape the narrative, scholars have overlooked, ignored, and obfuscated General William Westmoreland's contributions to establishing the foundations for the post-Vietnam Army's reforms during his tenure as the Army's 25th Chief of Staff (CSA) from 1968-1972.

With a few exceptions, scholars have ignored the Army's reforms in the post-Vietnam era. The first exception, published in 1993, was James Dunnigan and Raymond

Macedonia's *Getting it Right: American Military Reforms after Vietnam to the Persian Gulf and Beyond*. Dunnigan, a civilian strategist, and Macedonia, a retired officer from the Army's War College, argue that the Yom Kippur War in 1973 was the catalyst for the Army's reforms. While the work is informative, it contains no references and reads more akin to a policy paper than a historical study.

James Kitfield, a journalist by trade, published *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* in 1995. He based his work on interviews with several of the leading military personalities in the First Persian Gulf War, and offers their perspectives on how the U.S. military reformed from 1965-1991. Although the works by Dunnigan & Macedonia and Kitfield are useful, the lack of references places limitations on their utility to the historiography. Each of these works is also emblematic of the trend to use the Army's performance in Vietnam as a foil to measure the greatness of the Army in the First Persian Gulf War.

The last exception, published in 2009, is Beth Bailey's *America's Army: Making the All Volunteer Force*. By detailing the growth and development of the all-volunteer force from its inception, Bailey provides insights on the changing dynamics of the relationship between military service and citizenship. While her work is well documented, its approach is more focused on how the Army changed its recruiting strategies throughout the era, and deals very little with the other facets of military reform.

Aside from these limited selections, the historiography of the post-Vietnam Army falls into four distinct groups or fields. The first is a collection of works published from 1973-1981 by former military officers that blame the Army's leadership for the defeat in Vietnam and the turmoil within its ranks. Each of these works provides a unique vantage

point into how devastating the defeat in Vietnam was to the military community. The second is a collection of micro-histories by the Army's historians. Although each of these describes individual components of the Army's reforms in incredible detail, none provides an overarching narrative. The third field is a litany of works on the First Persian Gulf War and biographies of its leading figures. These works typically make a general reference to the reforms, but pay homage to arguments that abandoning the draft, fielding new technology, and creating new doctrine cured the Army of its Vietnam malaise. The final group, emerging in the last decade, is a collection of scholarly papers published by military officers and historians seeking to detail the importance of the reforms of the post-Vietnam Army.

Before the defeat in Vietnam was complete, several scholars and soldiers were beginning to explore the concept of defeat in Vietnam and the impending crisis the Army faced in the aftermath. Edward L. King, a retired Army officer, published his work *The Death of the Army: A Pre-Mortem* in 1972, the first of several works detailing the debilitating effects the Vietnam War was having on the Army's readiness, morale, and combat capability.

Three additional works quickly followed in 1973. *America's Army in Crisis* by William Hauser was the first attempt by a serving Army officer to explain the impact of the several issues confounding the Army. George Walton, a retired Army officer, also published his work *The Tarnished Shield* in 1973. Both Hauser and Walton describe the Army's major crisis points—racial tensions, discipline, drugs, and professionalism—and offer their critical evaluations of the Army's performance in responding to the crisis. Whereas Walton is highly critical of the Army's efforts, a position he can more easily

assume with the distance and separation afforded by retirement, Hauser is far less critical and believes the Army is already on the path to self-correction, a position that in retrospect was far more accurate. Hauser's work provides a critical insight into early Army reform efforts after Vietnam, beginning with the fact that the Army sponsored his research and authorized his publication. A cynical view would interpret his work as tempered out of fear of reprisal, but a progressive view armed with hindsight identifies that Army leadership was genuinely interested in reform while it was still engaged in the Vietnam War.

Stuart Loory's work *Defeated: Inside America's Military Machine* acknowledges and describes in similar fashion the same issues identified by Walton and Hauser, yet his argument takes a macro approach to the failure in Vietnam and subsequent Army crisis. He contends that the defeat in Vietnam was a symptom of the massive military buildup since the Second World War, and that this buildup created a military bureaucracy where the officer corps prioritized advancing their individual careers over and destroyed the practice of military values they were meant to espouse.²

While each of these authors generally identified the same problems, none agreed on the solutions. King advocated a complete removal of the Army as an instrument of foreign policy, Hauser believed the Army was already correcting the issues and did not require outside assistance, Loory was more concerned about the unchecked growth of the military-industrial complex, and Walton wrote, "What then is the answer? Perhaps there

² Stuart H. Loory, *Defeated: Inside America's Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1973), 20.

is none. All that can be done is to batten down the hatches, ride out the storm, and hope for the day when the Army will again become the shining shield of the Republic.”³

The effort to illustrate the issues confronting the Army continued over the next decade. Maureen Mylander’s work *The Generals* and Douglas Kinnard’s *The War Managers* both utilized surveys and interviews with the officer corps to offer insights. Mylander, the daughter of an Army officer, was highly critical of the Army as a bureaucracy, and argued that the Army’s promotion system and selection for key billets continued to reinforce an environment where officers chose to hide their defects and mistakes over their integrity. Kinnard, a retired brigadier general, conducted a survey of numerous general officers and found results similar to Mylander. He claimed that the majority of general officers were opposed to the methods used in the Vietnam War and that they were extremely critical of the Army’s performance in the war.⁴ He concluded that the central issue to the Army’s crisis was the poor communications between its senior leaders and civilian officials, and faults them for choosing career advancement over challenging poor policy.

Richard Gabriel and Paul Savage, both retired military officers, continued the criticism of the Army in their work *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army*, published in 1978. While they acknowledge the diligent work of previous authors in detailing the Army’s struggles with drug addiction, race relations, and discipline, Gabriel

³ George H. Walton, *The Tarnished Shield: A Report on Today’s Army* (New York: Dodd, 1973), 255.

⁴ Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers: American Generals Reflect on Vietnam*, 3rd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), 158-60.

and Savage argue that the blame for the poor state of the Army, and its defeat in Vietnam, rests solely with the Army's leadership. The central theme to their argument is the careerism and managerial approach that permeated the officer corps' attitudes and decision-making. Gabriel and Savage provide compelling arguments in their descriptions of the Army's rotation policies, statistical analysis of the number of senior officer casualties, and the dedication of career advancement over addressing the numerous issues that confronted the Army. Cincinnatus, an anonymous author later revealed to be an Army chaplain named Cecil Currey, continued with Gabriel and Savage's argument in his work *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam War*, published in 1983. Currey, in his capacity as an Army chaplain, conducted numerous interviews with officers concerning their experience in Vietnam. Based on these interviews and building upon the arguments of previous scholars, he cast even greater condemnation on the Army's leadership for the crisis of its failures. Currey criticized the Army as an organization dedicated to career advancement, ignorant of lessons learned, unwilling to openly communicate its issues, and ethically bankrupt.

While these soldier-scholars offered a wide variety of interpretation and opinions regarding the reasons for defeat in Vietnam and the Army's subsequent crisis in the aftermath of defeat, certain threads of consistency exist emerge from their narratives. The first is that the Army had lost confidence in its ability to prepare for and fight wars. The Army faced a loss of confidence not only in its leaders, but also in its tactics and equipment. The second is that the Army was a reflection of the society it defended, and as such suffered from the same issues plaguing American society: drug addiction, racial tension, and refusal to submit to unquestioned authority. Additionally, the Yom Kippur

War in 1973 had a profound effect on Army leadership. The employment of large mechanized forces using American and Soviet equipment on an open battlefield confirmed that the future of conventional warfare would require technological and tactical innovation, protection from ever more lethal weapons, and the ability to win the opening battles. Compounding the issue of creating effective reforms to address these issues was the end of conscription and the transition to an all-volunteer Army.

The second collection of works consists of studies published by Army historians, a great many of them serving as Training and Doctrine Command's historians. John L. Romjue, Susan Canedy, and Anne W. Chapman co-authored *Prepare the Army for War: A Historical Overview of the Army Training and Doctrine Command 1973-1993*, which provides a general overview of every TRADOC initiative and commanding general during its first twenty years. Chapman also published four additional works, *The Army's Training Revolution 1973-1990: An Overview*, *The Origins and Development of the National Training Center 1976-1984*, *The National Training Center Matures, 1985-1993*, and *Mixed Gender Basic Training, The U.S. Army's Experience, 1973-2004*. The first provided a detailed overview of how the Army fundamentally altered its methods of training for the all-volunteer force, while the next two described how the Army's development of the National Training Center integrated those reforms with developing Army doctrine. The final work provided critical analysis into how the Army integrated female soldiers into the all-volunteer force with the abolishment of the Women's Army Corps in 1978. Romjue also published two other works, *The Army of Excellence: The 1980s Army* and *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982*, both of which provided detailed accounts of the simultaneous

development of Army doctrine with a compatible force structure. Overall, these works provide useful insights and justification of several of the individual TRADOC components of the Army's reform efforts, but none of them provide any form of synthesis of the Army's efforts in a comprehensive fashion.

The third field contains notable works such as *General William E. DePuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* by Henry G. Gole, and *Camp Colt to Desert Storm: The History of U.S. Armored Forces* by George F. Hofman and Donn A. Starry. Gole's biography contains chapters on DePuy's numerous interactions with Westmoreland, and Hofmann and Starry's work provides chapters on the development of the Abrams tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle, as well the development of AirLand Battle. The field also contains two influential works on the First Persian Gulf War, *The Whirlwind War: The United States Army in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm* by Frank Schubert and Theresa Kraus, and *Certain Victory: The US Army in the Gulf War* by Robert Scales. Both works open with chapters detailing the Army's reforms after Vietnam, and detail how these reforms were critical to the Army's success in combat operations. While each of these works is instrumental in their respective topics, they also reduce the importance of the Army's reforms to opening chapters for combat histories. Clearly, the Army's massive reform efforts, unparalleled in American military history, deserve more than introductory salutations and filler chapters.

The final historiographical group includes scholars that are attempting to address this gap. The Strategic Studies Institute, also part of the Army War College, has recently published papers detailing the transformative years of the post-Vietnam Army. The most recent and relevant example is *An Army Transformed: The U.S. Army's Post-Vietnam*

Recovery and the Dynamics of Change in Military Organizations by Suzanne Nielsen.

Nielsen's paper makes four central arguments, the first being that Army leadership was essential to its reform efforts after defeat in Vietnam. Additionally, she argues that the Army's reform efforts went beyond simply creating new doctrine; they required an organizational entity such as TRADOC to synchronize reforms in force structure, development, and procurement with developing doctrine. Finally, she argues that the development, implementation, and institutionalization of these reforms took several decades to accomplish. Overall, her paper indicates that independent histories of doctrine, technology, or the implementation of all-volunteer force are insufficient interpretations of this period of reform.

Sources

Part of the challenge to assessing the reform efforts of the post-Vietnam Army is acquiring the sources. Previous scholars have focused their assessments predominantly on historical publications completed by various Army institutions and their respective historians. This study would not be possible without the considerable amount of material preserved by the U.S. Army War College and the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. The complete collection of Westmoreland's official papers and the War College's studies on professionalism and leadership form the core of the primary sources used throughout each chapter. Additionally, the Army Heritage Center's oral history program contains several insights from officers who served during the era. The eleven-volume collection of Westmoreland's speeches as the Army Chief of Staff kept at the Combined Arms Research Library at Fort Leavenworth are an invaluable source of insight and material. Finally, the Army's annual histories compiled by the Center of Military History

are particularly useful in gaining context for each of the issues the Army dealt with in a given year, and provide statistical references for several categories. The nucleus of this study is a reassessment of these primary sources in order to challenge the conventional historiography of Westmoreland's performance as the Chief of Staff, and to offer new insights regarding Westmoreland's contributions to the post-Vietnam Army's successful reforms.

Conclusion: Challenging a Misguided Historiography

Soldier-scholars published numerous works from 1973-1981 that blamed the Army's leadership for the defeat in Vietnam and its struggles with race relations, drug abuse, and ethical dilemmas. Furthermore, they claim that the Army's leadership paralysis disintegrated the Army and that the process continued unabated until the end of the 1970s.⁵ Several factors contribute to the vitriol of these soldier scholars. The first is temporal proximity to the Army's defeat in Vietnam. Many of the authors either served in Vietnam or knew soldiers who died in the war, and all of them felt intimately connected to the U.S. Army's first defeat in war. They were understandably irate, and Westmoreland was the lightning rod for their anger. However, their decision to conflate Westmoreland's generalship as the commander of USMACV with his conduct as the Army's Chief of Staff is irresponsible. An examination of Westmoreland from this angle

⁵ Examples of these works include *The Death of the Army: A Pre-Mortem* by Edward King (1972), *The Tarnished Shield: A Report on Today's Army* by George Walton (1973), *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* by Richard Gabriel and Paul Savage (1978), *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era* by Cincinnatus/Cecil Currey (1981), and *Military Incompetence: Why the American Military Doesn't Win* by Richard Gabriel (1985).

reveals that many of the Army's successful reforms in the post-Vietnam era experienced their genesis under Westmoreland's tenure as CSA. Abrams and the generals that succeeded him rightly deserve credit for implementing the reforms and bringing them to full fruition, but the credit for conceiving of the need for widespread reforms to address the professional capacity of the Army and the nurturing of those reforms in their nascent state belongs to Westmoreland.

The second issue was their use of sources. Each work relied primarily on anonymous interviews in order to protect their sources from negative consequences for speaking their minds. More importantly, the only government publication they utilized was the USAWC's *Study on Military Professionalism* from 1970, which contained a summary of criticisms from 450 officers. None of the works incorporates data from the more comprehensive *Leadership for the 1970s* or *Leadership for the 1970s Monograph Series*, which drew on data from over eighteen hundred and thirty thousand personnel respectively. This makes sense for the works published from 1972-1973, but the authors who published their works after 1975 have no excuse for ignoring the Army's detailed analysis on its state of leadership. At a minimum, these authors ought to have acknowledged and attempted to address the more comprehensive studies; their neglect instead gives the appearance that they ignored data that contradicted their arguments. The USAWC's *Study on Military Professionalism* and *Leadership for the 1970s*, published in 1970 and 1971 respectively, both clearly indicated that Army soldiers of all ranks had lost confidence in the Army's leadership capabilities towards the end of the Vietnam War. However, the USAWC's *Leadership Monograph Series*, published from 1973-1974, indicates that the Army had turned the corner and was already recovering

confidence in its leadership capabilities. The same holds true for their criticisms that the Army was ignoring the impacts of racial tension, drug abuse, and the loss of discipline. Beginning during Westmoreland's tour as CSA, and fully developed and implemented during Abrams's tour, the Army devoted significant energy to reducing and limiting the damage these issues were having on good order and discipline. The authors in this field did a remarkable job in portraying the issues, but they also did a remarkable job in failing to acknowledge and address the Army's attempts to address them.

The third issue is one of perspective. The general attitude in the historiography that the Army in the 1970s was broken and destroyed is simply misguided. Broken armies do not devote tremendous amounts of time, energy, and talent to the identification of problems, the development of plans to overcome the challenges presented, and the implementation of reforms in the aftermath of their first experience with devastating defeat in war. From 1969 through 1972, the Army identified and began to address its most significant hurdles for reform. The organizational reforms from 1969-1973 that culminated in Operation Steadfast ensured that the Army would be capable of enacting doctrinal reforms, galvanizing the Army's methods of training, and maintaining readiness for future contingencies. Furthermore, this restructuring created the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), which would ultimately build the framework for the Army's development into a professional fighting force unparalleled in conventional capabilities at the onset of the First Persian Gulf War. The identification of significant leadership deficiencies in 1969 served as the catalyst for leadership development programs that would eventually restore the American soldier's faith in the Army's leadership.

The prevailing narrative of the development of the Army that fought and decisively won the 1991 Persian Gulf War focuses on the development of superior doctrine and technology, and the implementation of the all-volunteer force as the critical components to the Army's success. While these elements certainly were certainly key ingredients, without the Army's commitment to organizational reform, leadership development, and commitment to improving good order and discipline within the Army community, they may have been irrelevant. Furthermore, without Westmoreland's steadfast determination to confront the Army's deficiencies in professionalism and leadership, the lauded reforms of the conventional historiography would have lacked the human dynamics essential to their successful implementation.

CHAPTER 2

MISSING THE PROBLEM, 1968-1970

“We look to the past for our lessons . . . and we remain flexible in our approach to meet our future problems head-on. In this manner, hopefully, we can improve our capabilities instead of making ourselves better able to re-fight the last war.”⁶

Westmoreland's remarks to officers at Fort Eustis in March 1969 are in many ways symbolic of his first two years as the Army's Chief of Staff. After enduring some significant public and private turmoil, he began with an initial vision of the Army's condition and organizational health, and established priorities based on that vision. Westmoreland's initial reform efforts centered on what he called the “Four M Program”, which emphasized mission, motivation, modernization, and management.⁷ This organizational vision reflects Westmoreland's initial belief that although the Army was enduring some challenges associated with the Vietnam War, it was not at risk of becoming a broken force. Although Westmoreland did not realize it during his first year as Chief of Staff, the Army was not simply experiencing some organizational turbulence, it was increasingly at risk of failing as a professional institution. As stated in the introduction, the My Lai investigation was a catalyst for what would become a

⁶ William C. Westmoreland, “Remarks to the U.S. Army Transportation School” (Fort Eustis, VA, March 18, 1969), in *Addresses by General W. C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, Volume II: 6 February 1969 to 26 March 1969* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 104.

⁷ William C. Westmoreland, *The United States Army—In Defense of the Nation: A Report by the Chief of Staff, July 1968–June 1970* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1970), 130.

revolutionary change in perspective for Westmoreland. Therefore, in order to understand the change and its significance, some discussion of what Westmoreland's initial assumptions and vision for reform is required.

Beginning with President Johnson's announcement on March 23, 1968, that Westmoreland would be the Army's next Chief of Staff, speculation began that the promotion reflected the administration's displeasure with the Tet Offensive, and sought to remove Westmoreland from command in Vietnam and chart a new direction for the war. Despite the speculation, Westmoreland's departure from Vietnam was in the works prior to the Tet Offensive. General Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, had discussed his next assignment with Westmoreland in December 1967, and the main determinant in when the move would occur was the retirement date of General Harold Johnson, the incumbent Chief of Staff.⁸ Following a series of farewell tours throughout South Vietnam, Westmoreland departed on June 3, and Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor swore him in as the Army Chief of Staff on July 3, 1968.⁹

Westmoreland's tour as the Chief of Staff began under ominous circumstances. On the morning prior to his swearing in, he received a back channel message from General Abrams informing him that his brother-in-law, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Van Deusen was killed in action in Vietnam.¹⁰ The news hit Westmoreland and his wife

⁸ Samuel Zaffiri, *Westmoreland: A Biography of General William C. Westmoreland* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), 314.

⁹ Sorley, *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam*, 207.

¹⁰ Abrams to Westmoreland, 3 July 1968, *William C. Westmoreland Collection* (Carlisle, PA: USAHEC), Series I, Box 10, Folder 1.

Kitsy hard. The stress of four years of command in Vietnam combined with the grief over his brother-in-law's death resulted in a bout of pneumonia and a one week stay in Walter Reed Army Medical Center before Westmoreland could even move into his quarters or office.¹¹

The prevailing narrative is that Westmoreland accomplished little during his first six months as Chief of Staff. According to reports he denied vociferously to his biographers, Westmoreland was often unengaged during meetings with the Joint Chiefs and resented General Wheeler's influence over the selection of General Bruce Palmer as the Army's Vice Chief of Staff.¹² Westmoreland also spent a considerable amount of time defending his actions as the previous commander in Vietnam. Nearly every time Abrams changed a policy or order in Vietnam, the media confronted Westmoreland for a response. Despite his feelings that the press was maligning him, Westmoreland took the high ground and reaffirmed his support for Abrams. However, at one point his desire for public approval did nearly overcome his loyalty to the Army as an institution. Increasingly frustrated, Westmoreland considered holding a press conference to illustrate how the Abrams' gains in 1968 and methods were actually begun under his tenure. Westmoreland's friends convinced him not to do so in order to prevent the Army from suffering from a perceived feud between him and Abrams.¹³

¹¹ Zaffiri, 323.

¹² Ibid., 324. Zaffiri argues that Westmoreland "wanted his own man" for the job of Vice Chief, but does not state who Westmoreland wanted for the job. Furthermore, Zaffiri argues that it was Wheeler who convinced Secretary of the Army Resor to select Palmer over Westmoreland's objections.

¹³ Ibid., 327.

Three other important factors limited Westmoreland's ability to achieve meaningful progress during his first six months. The first was the 1968 Presidential election, and President Johnson's decision not to seek reelection. His final months as a lame duck President created a political environment of uncertainty for the Joint Chiefs during the remainder of 1968. The second factor was that Westmoreland had yet to assemble a staff with personnel he trusted implicitly. When Westmoreland became the Chief of Staff, the majority of the principal staff officers at Army Headquarters were holdovers from his predecessor General Harold Johnson. During Westmoreland's tenure as the commanding general in Vietnam, he had a very tenuous relationship with both General Johnson personally and the Army staff in general.¹⁴ By September 1969, Westmoreland had assembled a team that some would refer to as- "the best ever assembled by the Army."¹⁵ He appointed Lieutenant General Walter "Dutch" Kerwin as the G1, Lieutenant General Richard "Brilliant" Stilwell as the G3, and Lieutenant General Joseph Heiser as the G4.¹⁶

Another factor worth consideration involved Westmoreland's relationships with both Presidents Johnson and Nixon, the Secretaries of Defense, and the other Joint Chiefs of Staff. In short, his relationship with each of these strategic leaders is difficult to

¹⁴ Westmoreland frequently clashed with General Johnson over several issues, including appointment of senior officers to his command in Vietnam and command and control of forces in Vietnam.

¹⁵ Henry G. Gole, *General William E. DePuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 214.

¹⁶ William C. Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army: 1 July 1968–30 June 1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1977), 174-177.

discern. Historians that have commented on these relationships typically fall into two camps. In the first, Westmoreland has poor relationships with all of these strategic leaders because he is incompetent and they have no confidence in his abilities. In the second camp, by contrast, Westmoreland has ineffective dealings with national leadership because they viewed him as political dynamite.

However, much of the criticism of his relationship with the White House and leaders in the Pentagon focuses on his first few months. Upon his return from Vietnam, Westmoreland gave a series of briefings to political and military leaders on the status of Vietnam and his recommendations for future actions. Overall, Westmoreland's presentation and advice were out of balance with the realities of American domestic politics, and national leaders were not impressed.¹⁷ Both historical camps view Westmoreland's intransigence during his first months back from Vietnam as characteristic of his entire tenure as the Army's Chief of Staff. Furthermore, these same historians assert that Westmoreland spent as much time as possible giving speeches throughout the country in an attempt to salvage his reputation instead of attempting to implement meaningful reform.¹⁸

There is little record of interaction between Westmoreland and national military and political leaders regarding reforms internal to the Army. The bulk of Westmoreland's interaction with the White House, the Secretaries of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff focused primarily on issues that had impacts beyond the Army. The primary issue

¹⁷ Zaffiri, 321.

¹⁸ Sorley, *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam*, 210.

throughout his tenure, along with the rest of the Joint Chiefs, was the ongoing war effort in Vietnam, with particular emphasis on the progress of Vietnamization. Other main issues included the operational readiness of other Army forces throughout the world, the implications of converting the Army to an all volunteer force, and the Army's attempts at reinvigorating its modernization programs. Civilian leaders, focused on Vietnam, had relatively little interest in such matters except for the draft. Thus, it appears that Westmoreland did not discuss the Army's internal reforms that this study examines with national political and military leaders.

Initial Vision for Reform: The Four M Program

The Vietnam War dominated the first two years of Westmoreland's tenure as Chief of Staff. As Westmoreland himself stated in a 1970 report, "The Vietnam war has been the dominant factor in all Army programs in the past two years, as indeed it has since 1965."¹⁹ Despite the enormity of tasks associated with supporting the ongoing war, Westmoreland developed a vision for Army reform immediately after assuming duties as the Chief of Staff that he called the "Four M Program". As noted above, the program outlined his initial priorities along four lines of effort: mission, motivation, modernization, and management.²⁰ Some discussion of these priorities is useful in understanding the context of how Westmoreland viewed the Army's challenges, and more importantly, to understand how his paradigm would shift by the summer of 1970.

¹⁹ Westmoreland, *In Defense of the Nation*, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

Westmoreland's strategic view of the world remains essential to understanding his view of the Army's role in American national security. He believed that the United States faced a communist strategy that was attempting to harness all of its political, economic, and military strength to expand its influence over global affairs. Therefore, the USSR, China, and their proxy communist states represented a collective effort to limit and destabilize American prestige and power in international affairs. As the Army's Chief of Staff, Westmoreland believed that the Army's forward deployed forces and its capacity to mobilize reserves were essential to the nation's capability to deter communist aggression and defend American allies.²¹ Westmoreland recognized that the Army's ability to accomplish all of its missions in Vietnam, several overseas locations, and in the continental United States required a delicate balance of capabilities. After spending four years viewing the Army through the lens of Vietnam, his new perspective as Chief of Staff demanded his understanding of the Army's responsibilities to meet its national security obligations on a global scale.

The First M: Mission

The first component of the "Four M Program," mission, recognized the need for a balanced force posture throughout the world and the organizational flexibility to conduct military operations in a spectrum that ranged from guerrilla to high intensity conflicts. The reality of this broad and ambitious vision was that the Army had to balance and prioritize its resources between the ongoing efforts in Vietnam without sacrificing its readiness in other parts of the globe. This effort would grow increasingly challenging

²¹ Ibid., 1.

from 1968-1970. In particular, 1969 represented a watershed and somber year for the Army. The Army reached its greatest personnel strength since the Korean War, received its highest budget since the Second World War, and suffered combat deaths exceeded those resulting from the Korean War.²²

At the same time, the proverbial writing was on the wall that this trend would not continue. In 1969, President Nixon ordered the withdrawal of 25,000 American troops from Vietnam, followed by an additional 59,000 in 1970, and he pledged to withdraw another 150,000 in 1971.²³ Despite the withdrawals from Vietnam, the pace of operations and casualties continued. American forces were still suffering nearly 1,000 casualties per month in 1969 and 500 per month in 1970.²⁴

Westmoreland's greatest challenge during 1969-1970 was sustaining operational readiness despite a turbulent personnel system. During 1969, the Army began the first of many decreases in its overall end strength, while trying to sustain operations in Vietnam and readiness throughout the world. From 1969-1970, the Army decreased its end

²² The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1970*, ed. William Gardner Bell (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 3.

²³ The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1969*, ed. William Gardner Bell (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 3. This is also addressed on page 26 of the 1970 DA Historical Summary.

²⁴ National Archives, "Statistical Information about Fatal Casualties of the Vietnam War" [database online], accessed 5 February 2016, <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html>.

strength by over 200K soldiers and inactivated three divisions and one separate brigade.²⁵ Aside from the sheer challenge of managing numbers, Westmoreland had to contend with how to prioritize competing interests. The increasing emphasis on Vietnamization and high demand for quality officers to serve as advisors increased in importance from 1969-1970, but it was not only the demand.²⁶ The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 demanded quality officers and resources for the NATO defense of Western Europe, the North Koreans appeared more hostile than at any time since the signing of the armistice in 1953, the posturing of capable forces in Alaska to deter Russian aggression required continued emphasis, and the Army retained the responsibility for the aerial defense of the Continental United States.²⁷ Although Vietnam remained the priority, Westmoreland hoped that as the war's high demand on human and fiscal resources drew down, that the Army could, "capitalize on the lessons learned in Vietnam while looking ahead toward a variety of possible future uses of land forces."

The Second M: Motivation

The second component of Westmoreland's "Four M Program" was motivation. Westmoreland believed that after every war in American history, there was a predictable

²⁵ The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary for Fiscal Year 1969*, 34. Also addressed on page 54 of the 1970 DA Historical Summary.

²⁶ The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary for Fiscal Year 1970*, 55.

²⁷ Westmoreland, *In Defense of the Nation*, 130.

decline in the Army's morale, esprit de corps, and in prestige.²⁸ He was certainly cognizant of the increasing unpopularity of the Vietnam War with the American public, and to a small extent, the war's growing unpopularity within the ranks of the draftees. Westmoreland's initial goal was not to repair, reform, or rebuild a decline in motivation, but to enhance "the dignity, pride, and motivation of the members of the Army."²⁹ While assessing the word selection in a 1969 address to officers at Fort Eustis may seem trivial, his remarks indicated that he did not believe that there were any motivation issues within the ranks of the Army's professionals.

Westmoreland sought to enhance the Army's motivation through an extensive public speaking schedule. He believed that the main issue with motivation in the Army, especially for the draftees who were fighting in Vietnam, was the lack of public support for the war. Westmoreland sought to improve public support by speaking at several venues. His public speaking tour included supportive organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars posts, Rotary Clubs, and Union Leagues. But the tour also included university campuses, where there were many protests.³⁰ With hindsight, it is painfully obvious that Westmoreland underestimated the extent of public dissatisfaction with the war, and the impact it had on soldier motivation. While he was aware of some levels of

²⁸ Westmoreland, "Remarks to the U.S. Army Transportation School" (Fort Eustis, VA, March 18, 1969), in *Addresses by General W. C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, Volume II: 6 February 1969 to 26 March 1969* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 105.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ William C. Westmoreland. *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976), 364-367.

dissent in the enlisted ranks, Westmoreland had an unshakeable faith in the officer corps' commitment to the Army and that leadership at all levels continued, "to work tirelessly to give it [the Army] a moral tone worthy of the quality of youth that is entrusted to its ranks."³¹

Westmoreland also established a special committee to investigate the extent of soldier dissent in August 1968. One is left wondering how extensively the committee probed, for Westmoreland's speaking tour during his first year as the Chief of Staff consistently demonstrated that he was clearly not seeing the entirety of the problem. At the end of 1969, the Army leadership estimated that, while dissent ranged from soldier griping to occasional complaints, the actual number of dissenting soldiers who were organizing disobedient activities was only around 100.³² Furthermore, by 1970, the Army believed that the number of dissenting incidents was trending downward, and that the incidents were not adversely affecting readiness or morale.³³

Part of the inconsistency between Westmoreland's vision, speeches, and the Army's activities and reporting rests with Westmoreland's perspective on the impacts of the Vietnam War. He argued that four strategic policies from 1965 for Vietnam were having a disastrous effect on the Army's morale and readiness. The most crucial was the

³¹ William C. Westmoreland, "Remarks to the National Convention for Disabled American Veterans" (Philadelphia, PA, August 22, 1968), in *Addresses by General W. C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, Volume I: 3 July 1968 to 28 January 1969* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 25.

³² The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary for Fiscal Year 1969*, 44-45.

³³ The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary for Fiscal Year 1970*, 61.

decision to fight the war only with the active Army. This decision to support the war with a draft, instead of mobilizing the reserves, had several second and third order effects. First, the Army was required to create several new units, which necessitated accelerated promotions for both officers and non-commissioned officers, many of them from the personnel who were only under two year service obligations. The second was that it created an annual personnel turnover of nearly 100 percent. The priority of filling requirements in Vietnam with two year draftees often led to mismatches of skill sets and positions, both in Vietnam and upon return to the United States.³⁴

The second and third policy decisions both relate to the procurement of equipment. In 1965, the Army's budget for procurement was fixed at the levels expected for the peacetime Army after the Vietnam War. In order to meet the growing demands for equipment in Vietnam from 1965-1968, the Army had to defer procurement for reserve and active units throughout the Army, and at times withdraw equipment from them. The prioritization of effort in Vietnam created a cycle where the rest of the Army paid the bill in men, money, and material. The result was decreasing morale and readiness in active and reserve formations.³⁵

The fourth policy decision was to continue to limit all hardship tours to 12 months, which included Vietnam, Thailand, and Korea.³⁶ This policy had the best of intentions, as it sought to achieve for equity so that soldiers of all ranks took turns

³⁴ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army*, 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

performing hardship tours that required separation from their families. The problem was not solely the policy, but its combination with the Army's personnel system. During 1969-1970, roughly half the Army's commissioned officers and over two-thirds of its enlisted force were serving two year commitments.³⁷ The net result of personnel serving two year commitments with a near certain guarantee of a one year hardship tour was that personnel would serve their remaining few months in units either in Europe or the United States. Often, the best case scenario for these units was that these terminal soldiers provided little value but remained out of trouble. The worst case scenarios were the soldiers who made headlines for disobedience, drug trafficking, and other forms of dissent.

Overall, Westmoreland recognized some of the growing dissatisfaction and challenges to motivation. Three important factors limited his ability to combat them. The first was that he believed the issues were limited to the personnel who were serving two-year commitments. Due to many reasons, Westmoreland believed that the strategic policies created personnel turbulence that was insurmountable for him to compensate. Therefore, he believed that the lack of motivation was a direct reflection of declining public support for the war in Vietnam. The only method of recourse for him was to attempt to engage the public and drum up support for the war. Westmoreland's greatest error in judgement during this time period was not recognizing that the Vietnam War and its debilitating effects were not limited to his two year draftees, they were also affecting the career soldiers. The consequences of Westmoreland's oversight manifested in a rash

³⁷ The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary for Fiscal Year 1969*, 36.

of incidents of serious misconduct by career officers and non-commissioned officers during 1969-1970.

The Third M: Modernization

The third component of Westmoreland's focus during his first two years as the Army's Chief of Staff was modernization. As with personnel and operational readiness, the Army's ongoing efforts to continue to conduct research and development regressed due to the priority of the Vietnam War. The urgency of the conflict in Vietnam led Westmoreland's predecessors to purchase new equipment "off the shelf" to conduct rapid fielding. The consequence of these actions was that the development of the next generation of Army equipment suffered from increasing budgetary droughts. However, as the fiscal requirements for Vietnam tapered off, Westmoreland sought to use the opportunity to spur the development of Army equipment for future conflicts. He referred to this program as the "Big Eight", which in many ways was the predecessor of the more widely acknowledged "Big Five" during Abrams' tenure as Chief of Staff.³⁸ The "Big Eight" sought to accomplish four things: enhance the Army's ability to conduct airmobile warfare, develop systems capable of defeating Soviet armor, improve commander's ability to exercise command and control on the battlefield, and expand air defense capabilities.

The first program under the "Big Eight" was the enhancement of airmobile warfare. Westmoreland was convinced that the Army's rotary capabilities proved their

³⁸ Abrams's "Big Five" included the development of the Abrams tank, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the Blackhawk helicopter, the Apache helicopter, and the Patriot missile.

worth in Vietnam, but he was concerned that their heavy usage rates were going to prevent their employment in a post-Vietnam military. His goal was to replace the UH-1 Huey transport helicopter by developing the Utility Tactical Transport Aircraft System (UTTAS) and to phase out the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter with the continued development of the AH-56 Cheyenne attack helicopter. Westmoreland's plan was to add an air cavalry squadron to every Army division, which would enable both aerial transport, close air support, and anti-armor capabilities.³⁹

The second program was the development of improved armor and anti-armor capabilities in order to increase the Army's capabilities to defeat Soviet armor. The ultimate goal was the development of the XM-803, an improved variant of the Main Battle Tank 70 project. In the interim, Westmoreland emphasized the continued development of the Shillelagh missile (capable of being fired from the M551 Sheridan and the M60A1E2 tanks), the continued fielding of the TOW heavy anti-tank missile system, and the development and fielding of the Dragon medium anti-tank missile system.⁴⁰ In many ways, the third effort to improve conventional munitions is an extension of the second. Recognizing that the priority threat was shifting back to the Soviet Union, Westmoreland sought to enhance the ballistic, penetration, and explosive qualities of the Army's grenades, mortars, artillery shells, and missiles.⁴¹

³⁹ Westmoreland, *In Defense of the Nation*, 114-115.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 115-116.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth programs of the “Big Eight” all emphasized increasing situational awareness on the battlefield and enhancing command and control. One of these efforts was the continued development of Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Night Observation (STANO) equipment and doctrine. Recognizing that the Army was going to continue to downsize its manpower, Westmoreland sought to use sensors and optics to offset the loss of people.⁴² Another effort was the development of an Integrated Battlefield Control System (IBCS). Westmoreland envisioned a command and control system that would improve a headquarters’ ability to acquire and process data using human and automated systems. He believed that through this system, “the ground force commander will have an improved ability to consider intelligence and the status and location of his units and analyze and compare alternative courses of action. He will also be able to issue instructions through this systems and monitor the execution of his decisions.”⁴³ A critical component for both of these efforts was improved communications capabilities. The sixth component of the “Big Eight” was to improve the Army’s strategic and tactical communications networks. Westmoreland sought to increase the fielding of high frequency and multi-channel radios, to continue development of a tactical satellite terminal, and to improve the capacity of the Defense Communication System networks.⁴⁴ The goal of these three efforts was to establish a prototype system for fielding and evaluation at Fort Hood from 1972-1976.

⁴² Ibid., 117-118.

⁴³ Ibid., 119.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 119-120.

The last two programs under the “Big Eight” both sought to increase the Army’s capabilities to provide strategic and tactical air defense. President Nixon directed the Army to proceed with the development of the Safeguard anti-ballistic missile system in 1969 in order to defend America’s nuclear assets. Safeguard was an ambitious system of five components: a centralized data processor capable of controlling the entire system, two radar systems for both long and short range tracking, the Spartan missile system for destroying targets outside the earth’s atmosphere, and the Sprint missile system for targets at lower altitudes. However, the Safeguard system was only part of the project. The other major aspect was the selection of sites. Westmoreland’s goal was to have five sites operational by 1971, and to move to twelve operational sites by the end of the decade.⁴⁵ The Chief of Staff also wanted to improve the Army’s tactical air defense capabilities, and specifically to overcome a gap in low-altitude air defense. He wished to continue the deployment of the Chaparral short range missile system the Vulcan Gatling-gun system plus development of the SAM-D missile and improvement of the Hawk missile system.⁴⁶

Overall, the “Big Eight” was an aggressive and ambitious plan to overhaul and modernize the Army’s equipment and systems. While many of these programs would not rise to fruition, Westmoreland’s efforts in modernization are significant for three reasons. First, they illustrate one of his major focus points during his first two years as the Chief of Staff. Part of the reason he missed the mark on the decay of professionalism

⁴⁵ Ibid., 120-122.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 116.

throughout the ranks was because he was so invested in developing and fielding the force of the future.

The second reason is that along with personnel management and operational readiness, Westmoreland's "Big Eight" are illustrative of how he sought to accomplish the Army's missions with less people. The bulk of these systems reflect the use of technology to offset the downsizing of the Army. This aspect becomes more important when synchronized with the Army's efforts to transition to an All-Volunteer Force, since the more advanced equipment would require more professional, capable, and competent soldiers.

Last, the "Big Eight" is an excellent example of how the lauded "Big Five" of the Abrams era had their genesis during Westmoreland's tenure. Although the Army never fielded the majority of these weapons systems, the research and development of them was crucial to the eventual fielding of the "Big Five". The XM-803 would influence the development of the M1 Abrams tank, the UTTAS would evolve into the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, the AH-56 Cheyenne was cancelled in 1972 but was reborn as the AH-64 Apache helicopter in 1975, and the improvements to the Hawk missile system would evolve into the Patriot missile. Despite never achieving the "Big Eight" he envisioned, Westmoreland laid important cornerstones for his successors.

The Fourth M: Management

The last concept of Westmoreland's "Four Ms" program was management. In many ways, the idea of managerial reform was evident in the plans for mission, motivation, and modernization. In order to achieve reforms in those areas, especially during an era where Westmoreland knew that the Army was going to downsize its

personnel and lose funding, the Army would have to develop ways to become more efficient with its available resources. Westmoreland himself described this concept as, “Our ultimate goal is to achieve maximum effectiveness from resources made available to us. Resources in terms of money, in terms of people, and in terms of equipment and supplies. In other words, we are seeking to improve whenever and wherever possible the return on every tax dollar for defense.”⁴⁷

Westmoreland’s approach to reforming the Army’s management capabilities had six focus areas. The first was the Army’s Decision Process which determined how it would spend its appropriations. By 1970, the Secretary of Defense increased the latitude with which the Army could make fiscal and force structure decisions. In order to do so efficiently, the Army began to use the process known as the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS).⁴⁸ The intent of this program in 1970, “to provide for better analysis of the entire program and better, faster financial decisions,” endures in its current form in the 21st century.⁴⁹ The second focus area was to vastly increase the use of computers for management of Army processes and modeling of Army systems. Westmoreland intended for computers to assist the Army in its decision making with regards to modifying force structure, accounting, and planning at the Department of the Army level, and for similar purposes at the corps and division levels. Overall, he believed

⁴⁷ Westmoreland, “Remarks to the U.S. Army Transportation School” (Fort Eustis, VA, March 18, 1969), 106.

⁴⁸ The Army still uses this process in the 21st century, but the acronym has changed to PPBE (Planning, Programming, Budget, Execution).

⁴⁹ Westmoreland, *In Defense of the Nation*, 132.

in increasing the usage of computers for two reasons: to enhance efficiency in all operations and so that, “Managers will devote time and effort in the future to determining what information they need to manage their activities more effectively.”⁵⁰

Westmoreland’s third effort in managerial reform was Automatic Data Processing and Operations Research/Systems Analysis. While the second effort focused on obtaining more computers for the Army, this effort focused on how to utilize them effectively. Westmoreland charged the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff with the establishment and direction of a new organization, the U.S. Army Computer Systems Command (USACSC), whose mission was to design, coordinate, and control all of the Army’s automatic data processing. From 1968-1970, USACSC developed computer programs such as the Force Accounting System (source for force structure data), the Army Authorization Documents System (source for unit equipment and personnel requirements), the Personnel Inventory Analysis Model (projected personnel distribution and training two years forward), and the Procurement of Equipment and Missiles for the Army (PEMA) Cost Impact Model (estimates impacts from force structure or logistic changes).⁵¹ While at first glance these systems are an assemblage of horribly long acronyms, in practice they were essential to helping Westmoreland make decisions on how to downsize the Army effectively.

Westmoreland focused the fourth effort in the realm of management on Army intelligence developments. He recognized that the vast stream of national intelligence

⁵⁰ Ibid., 134.

⁵¹ Ibid., 134-136.

apparatuses created and overwhelming amount of information for commanders to process efficiently. To overcome this challenge, Westmoreland insisted on the development of, “an effective, integrated, all-source battlefield intelligence capability for the commander in the field.”⁵² The purpose of this program was to develop and utilize an automated system that would streamline all of the intelligence through one system, and that it would be available at every echelon of command.⁵³ Simultaneous with the development of this system was Westmoreland’s emphasis on the careful screening, placement, and education of intelligence officers in order to maximize the system’s capabilities.⁵⁴

The fifth component to Westmoreland’s managerial reform was the Logistics Offensive, which sought to maintain logistical support to the Army in an era of dwindling budgets and resources. Begun in 1969, the program was an Army-wide effort to place renewed emphasis on logistical programs, improve existing techniques, and add clarity to training and career management goals.⁵⁵ From his experience as the commander in Vietnam, Westmoreland had concerns about existing capabilities to deliver supplies to soldiers efficiently. He reported, “Having plenty in stock in a supply depot does not necessarily mean that the soldier will get what he needs. We must insure that he gets exactly what he needs, when and where he needs it.”⁵⁶ Under the broad rubric of the

⁵² Ibid., 137.

⁵³ This system is still used by the U.S. Army in the 21st century.

⁵⁴ Westmoreland, *In Defense of the Nation*, 138.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 141.

Logistics Offensive, the Army conducted several initiatives to strive to meet Westmoreland's goal. The first was Inventory in Motion, reduced the Army's storage of items in Vietnam from 297,000 items in July 1967 to 106,500 by June 1970. A second initiative was Project Clean, which eliminated \$450 million worth of excess items in the Army's supply system in Vietnam. Project Streamline was a similar operation to Project Clean, except that the focus was on the remainder of the Army's combat commands and also focused on improving maintenance procedures and faster delivery. The final initiative under the Logistics Offensive was the Maintenance Support Positive program. Recognizing that the Army would have to increase its maintenance capabilities, the program was an overarching attempt to increase maintenance efficiency and to increase the skill sets of the Army's maintenance personnel.⁵⁷

The final component of Westmoreland's managerial reforms was a full review of the Department of the Army's organization. As Westmoreland juggled the competing requirements for all of the Army's theater commitments, he was also concerned with determining the requirements for manning in the future. This endeavor required several committees, the first of which was the Keystone Management Systems Steering Committee. Established by Westmoreland in 1969, and chaired by the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, the Keystone Committee examined all of the Army's existing requirements and reporting systems. Additionally, the Keystone committee spawned another study group that focused on forecasting the mid-range (2-10 years) and long range (11-20 years) requirements for all Army installations in the continental U.S.,

⁵⁷ Ibid., 139-141.

Alaska, and Hawaii.⁵⁸ The underlying objective of these working groups was to reduce overhead costs via consolidation and elimination of duplicative efforts. The final effort was the Special Panel for Review of Department of the Army Organization, which provided the same rigor of analysis to the Department of the Army Headquarters. Overall, Westmoreland's efforts to reform and vitalize the Army's managerial programs was extensive and worthy of consideration for two reasons. The first is that many of these initiatives endure into the 21st century. While a cynic may argue they continue to exist because of bureaucratic staunchness, the pragmatist can argue that they endure because they remain efficient. The second reason is that Westmoreland's attempts at managerial reform were crucial to his looming constraints: the downsizing of the Army's personnel and budgets.

Impact of the Four M Program and Consequences of Missing the Mark

Westmoreland's first two years as the Chief of Staff were productive and visionary. The traditional narrative that he accomplished little beyond traveling around the country giving speeches overlooks both the Herculean effort that went into attempting to bring his "Four Ms" vision into fruition and how several of his initiatives were the genesis of many of the reforms that would succeed under the stewardship of Westmoreland's successors. Overall, an assessment of Westmoreland's "Four Ms" program reinforces the argument that Westmoreland's greatest accomplishment was establishing the foundation for significant reform for the post-Vietnam Army. While the operational readiness of the Army declined during his first two years, there was little he

⁵⁸ Ibid., 142.

could do to surmount the obstacles of the vast requirements for men and material for Vietnam, and the detrimental effects of the enduring policy for short tours in hostile areas. His efforts in promulgating the “Big Eight” demonstrated his understanding that the post-Vietnam Army would require a significant overhaul to negate Soviet ground forces, and several of the initiatives were essential to the eventual fielding of Abrams’s “Big Five”. The same could be said for his initiatives to improve both the efficiency and stewardship of the Army’s dwindling resources.

The one area where Westmoreland erred in judgement during his first two years as Chief of Staff was his evaluation of the Army’s morale and motivation. Whether it was due to Westmoreland being consumed by the other three priorities, his assumption that the morale issues were limited to short duration soldiers and not the career professionals, or a combination of the two, the Chief of Staff missed the mark. Throughout the Army, morale was collapsing under the weight of the institutional constraints of the demands of the Vietnam War and the absence of a professional military ethic by several officers. During a graduation address to the West Point Class of 1969 he stated, “As young officers about to embark on a military career in the midst of an unpopular war, you are aware of public attitudes . . . I believe that the voices of dissension and dissent represent a minority view.”⁵⁹ By September of 1970, events would confront and turn Westmoreland’s assumptions about the morale and professional health of the Army upside down.

⁵⁹ William C. Westmoreland, “Address at Graduation Exercises for the West Point Class of 1969” (West Point, NY, June 4, 1969), in *Addresses by General W. C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, Volume III: 1 April 1969 to 24 June 1969* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 100.

CHAPTER 3

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Beginning in May 1969, Westmoreland discovered the depth of the Army's declining professional health through a series of events and introspective studies. The most famous of these events was the My Lai massacre, but the Army was also suffering from a rash of issues of professional misconduct. Furthermore, the massacre itself only represented half of the issue. As heartless as it may sound, the failure to report the massacre and attempts to cover it up represented a greater threat to the Army's moral-ethical compass as the conduct of the troops at My Lai. Regardless, the massacre prompted a series of actions from Westmoreland that culminated in the U.S. Army War College's *Study on Military Professionalism*. This study laid bare all of Westmoreland's assumptions regarding the motivation and morale of the Army at all echelons, and laid the foundation for the professionalism of the post-Vietnam Army. Westmoreland's decision to order and then embrace the findings of the study may well be his greatest contribution to the Post-Vietnam Army.

Cracks in the Foundation: Initial Indicators of Officer Misconduct

While My Lai represented the worst of the Army's major misconducts in 1969, several other issues also revealed cracks in the Army's professional armor. The first of these was best known as the "Green Beret" case. Sometime between late April to early May 1969, a unit from the 5th Special Forces Group whose mission was to collect intelligence on North Vietnamese activity near the Cambodian border began to notice that all of their Vietnamese agents were refusing to provide information. As they began to

investigate over the next few weeks, the Special Forces soldiers realized that one of their agents, a Vietnamese man named Thai Khac Chuyen, was working as a double agent and providing information to North Vietnam. On June 20, the Green Berets killed the double agent, apparently with the approval of their commander, Colonel Stephen Rheault. The apparent murder became worse because all of the involved parties invented a story that Chuyen was on a secret mission into Cambodia in order to cover up his disappearance. For unknown reasons, the CIA reported the discrepancy to General Abrams, who had Rheault and all of the involved soldiers arrested.⁶⁰ The “Green Beret” case would remain a charged issue, as the Army dropped all of the charges against the soldiers three months later. The Army claimed it could not prosecute them without testimony from the CIA, who cited national security concerns as preventing them from cooperating.⁶¹

Other issues gained less press but still evidenced the rapidly declining professional health of the Army, especially amongst the Army’s career professionals. In one case, a senior officer used his position to obtain several Army weapons for personal use while claiming that he intended to turn them into Army custody.⁶² The Army investigated Brigadier General Earl Cole, the officer in charge of all morale services and post exchanges in Vietnam, for using his position to obtain personal favors and gifts from several parties. Furthermore, the Army determined that Cole had demonstrated willful

⁶⁰ Frank McCulloch, “A Believer in Self-Reliance and Elitism,” *Life*, November 14, 1969, 36.

⁶¹ The Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary for Fiscal Year 1970*, 28.

⁶² Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 56.

negligence in ignoring the growing scandals in the Army's club systems.⁶³ In a related case, numerous non-commissioned officers under Cole's supervision were collaborating in larceny and theft of government funds, and were using their positions in the Army's club system for personal profit. In isolation, each of these cases could have simply represented individual anomalies that were not representative of the Army's professional health and morale. However, events spurred by the My Lai massacre and subsequent investigation indicated that the Army's issues were becoming widespread.

Shattered Assumptions: The Investigation into My Lai

In April 1969, a veteran named Ron Ridenhour sent a letter to President Nixon, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and several other prominent politicians from both political parties. Ridenhour's letter detailed how several of the soldiers he served with in Vietnam had openly discussed their participation in and knowledge of the killing of several hundred Vietnamese civilians in what would become known as the My Lai massacre. In addition to the killing of several hundred non-combatants, Ridenhour claimed that members of the chain of command had issued instructions to never discuss the event.⁶⁴ General Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, immediately forwarded the letter to Westmoreland for consideration and action.

⁶³ Clark Mollenhoff, "Army Scandal: Ranking Officers Face Probe in Servicemen's Club Affair," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 2 January 1971, 4.

⁶⁴ William R. Peers, *The My Lai Inquiry* (New York: Norton, 1979), 4-7. Peers includes a fully copy of Ridenhour's letter in his work.

Westmoreland initially, “found it beyond belief that American soldiers, as he [Ridenhour] alleged, engaged in mass murder of South Vietnamese civilians.”⁶⁵

Westmoreland’s first step was to check with the Military Assistance Command Vietnam headquarters in Saigon, whose inspector general conducted an initial investigation of Ridenhour’s allegations. They probe revealed that Ridenhour’s letter had some veracity. Soldiers from the Army’s 23rd (Americal) Division had conducted operations in My Lai in the dates specified, although they had not reported any atrocities. Rather than having the military command in Vietnam investigate, Westmoreland responded by ordering the Army’s inspector general, Major General William Enemark, to launch an immediate formal investigation.⁶⁶ The investigation lasted for roughly three months, and led to the initial set of court martial charges against the leaders directly involved with the killings. As troubled as Westmoreland was by the actions of the massacre, he was equally disturbed that not a single officer in the chain of command had reported his knowledge of the event. Suspecting a cover-up, Westmoreland met with the Secretary of the Army to discuss appointing a separate investigation to work in parallel with the criminal investigation.⁶⁷

Before Westmoreland could launch a subsequent investigation, he would first have to overcome political pressure to cease further inquiries into the events at My Lai. Throughout the initial investigation, several members of Nixon’s staff attempted to

⁶⁵ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 375.

⁶⁶ Zaffiri, 334.

⁶⁷ Peers, 8.

pressure Westmoreland to whitewash any further probes into the military chain of command's negligence in order to prevent any additional political fallout. Westmoreland persisted, and informed the involved parties that if the pressure did not stop, he would go directly to the President.⁶⁸ The opposed members of Nixon's staff relented, and after evaluating options, Westmoreland decided that Lieutenant General William Peers would lead the inquiry. He selected Peers for several reasons. The first was that Peers had experience in Vietnam, having served as both a division and field force commander. Thus, he was familiar with the terrain, requirements, and conditions of the environment. The second was that Peers had a sterling reputation throughout the Army for being objective and fair. Westmoreland knew that the Army's prestige and reputation were likely going to suffer as a result of this inquiry, and he hoped that by having Peers lead the investigation it would prevent additional criticism of whitewashing. The last quality was that Peers was not a West Point graduate, so no one could accuse him of attempting to protect the careers and reputations of any of the numerous West Point graduates in the chain of command.⁶⁹

On November 26, 1969, Westmoreland and Secretary Resor formally tasked Peers to conduct his investigation and to focus on two key issues. The first was to determine the accuracy and scope of the original investigations and reports within the chain of command. The second was to determine if the chain of command had suppressed or

⁶⁸ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 375.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 376.

ignored any information regarding the massacre.⁷⁰ Peers assembled a team and over the next five months conducted his inquiry, and in March 1970 he delivered the staggering findings to Westmoreland and Resor. With varying degrees of culpability, Peers's investigation determined that 28 U.S. Army officers, "had known of the killing of non combatants and other serious offenses committed during the My Lai operation but had not made official reports, had suppressed relevant information, had failed to order investigations, or had not followed up on the investigations that were made."⁷¹ Among the 28 officers Peers implicated were the division commander, the assistant division commander, the division chief of staff, the division chaplain, the brigade commander, and two battalion commanders. As a result, the Army issued court-martial charges against twelve officers, although none of them were convicted.⁷²

Despite the lack of convictions, the Peers inquiry had several important consequences for the Army and Westmoreland. In the immediate aftermath, the entire episode made it clear to the Army that it had to overhaul the training regimen for the laws of war. Westmoreland directed a complete revision of its law of warfare lesson plans to add clarity to the complexities soldiers faced in Vietnam with regards to obligations and

⁷⁰ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 56.

⁷¹ Peers, 212.

⁷² The charges against 11 of the officers were dismissed during pre-trial investigations, and the remaining officer was acquitted during his court martial. Although the eleven officers all received varying degrees of administrative punishments, Peers and many of the members of his inquiry team were particularly upset at the lack of judicial action.

reporting.⁷³ Beyond training, the incident inspired various sources to come forward and make over 180 additional allegations of war crimes committed by American soldiers in Vietnam. Through the course of subsequent investigations, forty-three of these were determined to warrant additional investigation. Of these, seventeen resulted in adverse administrative punishment, five resulted in convictions, and nine resulted in acquittals.⁷⁴ While the gravity of these additional instances of war crimes did not approach the extent of My Lai, the message was clear. The prolonged war in Vietnam was destroying the Army's professional credence and deteriorating its moral-ethical compass.

Westmoreland was well read into the problem by the conclusion of Peers's report. In addition to the findings, Peers submitted a separate memorandum solely to Westmoreland that summarized his feelings on the role of leadership within American units in Vietnam. As disturbing as the reports in the primary investigation were, Westmoreland was equally concerned by the supplemental memo. Peers concluded that numerous factors contributed to the occurrence of the massacre. He cited the insufficient training of the Americal Division prior to deployment, the tolerance of soldiers' attitudes that regarded Vietnamese people as sub-human, and the permissiveness of similar behaviors in lesser instances prior to the massacre.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the nature of the fighting and the guerrilla enemy heightened psychological frustration and fears.

⁷³ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 61-62.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁷⁵ Peers, 229-235.

Despite all of these factors, Peers argued that the lynchpin for the responsibility of the massacre came down to inadequate leadership. In his supplemental memorandum, Peers took a unique approach to outlining the Army's leadership deficiencies in Vietnam. Rather than discussing what was missing, Peers described what the Army ought to expect from its officers, thereby implying that the severe deficiencies in each category are what led to the My Lai massacre. Peers outlined four salient points regarding the requirements of Army leadership. The first was that commanders must accept and cannot delegate responsibility for the actions of their soldiers. Furthermore, they cannot remain passive and use lack of knowledge as an excuse. The second was that officers must be willing to lead their soldiers in person, and not rely solely on electronic communications. Third, leaders must be willing to enforce unpopular regulations and judgements on their soldiers, not in spite of the harsh conditions in combat but because of them. His concluding point starkly criticizes the professionalism of the Army's leadership: "An officer's highest loyalty is to the Army and the nation. On those rare occasions when people around him engage in activities clearly wrong and immoral, he is required by virtue of his being an officer to take whatever remedial action is required, regardless of the personal consequences."⁷⁶ Leaders at every echelon had permitted the soldiers attitudes, outlooks, and responses to the environment to fester until they boiled over in the massacre. Worse still, these same leaders then attempted to hide their failures in an attempt to mask their culpability and to protect their careers.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 247-249.

The combination of numerous acts of misconduct, the My Lai massacre, and Peers's findings prompted Westmoreland to take action. His immediate reaction was a letter sent to every officer in the Army in November 1969 that stressed integrity, duty, and leadership.⁷⁷ In the letter, Westmoreland acknowledged that officers were facing significant and increasing challenges adhering to and enforcing the Army's ethical standards. Regardless, he still placed the onus of responsibility on the officer corps, and stated, "I want to make it clear beyond any question that absolute integrity of an officer's word, deed, and signature is a matter that permits no compromise."⁷⁸ Additionally, the letter suggested that continued ethical lapses were eroding officers' moral authority, which was the underpinning of their role as leaders. Westmoreland reminded officers that they earned their moral authority from professional competence and integrity, which he viewed as inseparable qualities. Lastly, "The officer who sacrifices his integrity sacrifices all; he will lose the respect and trust of those he seeks to lead, and he will degrade the reputation of his profession."⁷⁹ While the letter was clearly a reaction to Westmoreland's unease with the Peer's report, it also indicated Westmoreland's growing awareness of the Army's professional malaise.

⁷⁷ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 109.

⁷⁸ William C. Westmoreland to the Officers of the Army, November 1969, *Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army: 1 July 1968–30 June 1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1977), 178.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Catalyst for Reform: The War College Studies Professionalism

On April 18, 1970, Westmoreland sent the Army War College a memorandum directing them to analyze the moral and professional climate of the Army, and to present their findings by July 1, 1970. This memorandum offers clear insight into Westmoreland's state of mind concerning the increased occurrences of officer misconduct. His opening statement that, "Several unfavorable events occurring within the Army during the past few years have been a matter of grave concern to me," reinforces the notion that the misconduct leading up to and through the My Lai scandal were increasingly revealing to him that the Army's professional health was suffering. Yet, at the same time, it is clear that Westmoreland still did not understand the full extent of the problem when he followed his opening statement with the remark, "By no means do I believe that the Army as an institution is in a moral crisis."⁸⁰

Regardless of Westmoreland's depth of understanding in April 1970, his decision to order the War College to investigate the climate of discipline, integrity, morality, ethics, and professionalism in the Army was vital to framing the full extent of the problem. The product of Westmoreland's directive, the *Study on Military Professionalism*, was perhaps the most introspective effort the Army has ever conducted and was the foundation for the next decade of professional reform. Upon receiving the directive from Westmoreland, the

⁸⁰ William C. Westmoreland to Army War College, 18 April 1970, *Study on Military Professionalism* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army, 1970), 53.

War College developed a study that had three purposes: assess the professional climate of the Army, identify problem areas, and to formulate recommendations for improvement.⁸¹

The first step was to assess the Army's professional health through a series of surveys and seminars. In total, the War College surveyed 415 Army officers and conducted discussion seminars with 250 of the survey population. The primary population of officers in the study were from the various service schools. The War College did this for two reasons. First, they believed that the service schools fostered an environment that would promote objectivity in the responses, and that officers would not feel inhibited by direct supervisors or unit loyalty to speak candidly.⁸² Second, the populations in the service schools were primarily composed of officers who proven that they were above average performers.⁸³ The rank population broke down into roughly three equal populations: captains and majors (32 percent), lieutenant colonels (37 percent), and colonels (29 percent). The remainder included a handful of lieutenants and one brigadier general.⁸⁴

The survey they issued was comprehensive, and asked participants to evaluate the Army's professionalism in numerous categories and to provide narrative responses in a

⁸¹ U.S. Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army, 1970), 1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, iv.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Annex A, Appendix 3, 1-2.

survey that was nine pages long.⁸⁵ The questions and categories focused on five basic questions:

1. What are the professional standards or ideal values which traditionally have been set forth for the Army officer?
2. What are the actual standards—and, if differences exist between the ideal and the actual, what are they?
3. Of the existing differences between ideal and actual standards, which have major significance for the Army?
4. What factors, conditions, and situations (both internal and external) underlie the significant differences between ideal and actual standards?
5. By what means can the Army, the officer corps, and the individual officer make the ideal and the actual standards more nearly identical?⁸⁶

The results of the survey were both inspiring and frightening, and presented four significant issues the Army's officer corps had to face. The first was the wide variance between how the Army's ideal of professionalism and the existing performance of its officers. Next was the lack of communication between senior and junior leaders. Third was the over-reliance on statistical indicators as measures of unit progress and individual efficiency, and their second and third order effects on morale. The final and perhaps most significant challenge was that the issues were not a result of factors external to the

⁸⁵ Ibid., Annex A, 1-2.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 3.

Army's control, and that they were not self-correcting without significant reforms from senior leaders.

The first impression of the survey team was that company grade officers who participated had a, "vigorous, interested, intelligent outlook . . . they reflected as a group a deep commitment to the ideal of Duty-Honor-Country."⁸⁷ Furthermore, this group neither questioned nor protested the Army's tradition of authoritarian methods or organization. While junior officers saw themselves as committed to the Army's ideal of professionalism, they were also deeply intolerant of officers who strayed from the ideal, and demanded that the Army should dismiss such officers from the service. All of the officers who participated in the survey felt that their superiors consistently abandoned their integrity in their quest for personal success. Overall, the officer surveyed were adamant that the Army had a, "significant, widely perceived, rarely disavowed difference between the idealized professional climate and the existing professional climate."⁸⁸

The survey revealed that there was no disparity between ranks as to what the idealized climate entailed. While the authors of the report chose to abbreviate it with West Point's motto of Duty-Honor-Country, the expanded characterization of the ideal includes the demand for individual integrity, mutual trust and confidence, technical competence, and the free flow of information throughout the chain of command. While the impressions of the existing climate had some marginal disparity between junior and senior officers, they agreed that the performance of the officer corps deviated

⁸⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 13.

significantly from the ideal. Instead of the ideal, they believed that the existing climate consisted of selfish behavior that prioritized the individual over the good of the Army, overemphasis on the pleasing of superiors at the direct expense of caring for subordinates, an affinity for focusing on short term objectives without thought to the long term impacts, a gross lack of communication between junior and senior leaders, and a severe drought of competence amongst senior leaders. Overall, officers of all ranks frequently described their immediate superior as, “an ambitious, transitory commander—marginally skilled in the complexities of his duties—engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk with or listen to his subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks at the expense of the sweat and frustration of his subordinates.”⁸⁹

The survey’s identified issues of lack of communication and over reliance on statistics are closely related. Communication between senior and junior officers had many formal and informal forums. Orders, memorandums, and evaluations represent a few of the formal methods, whereas sensing sessions, promotion trends, and rewards represent some of the informal methods. The survey revealed that the majority of the breakdowns in communication were occurring in the informal lanes. A great majority of the officers claimed that the seminar sessions of the survey were the first time a senior officer had ever requested their opinions on anything. While the majority of the junior officers did not place importance on whether their recommendations were put in place, they did place

⁸⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

significant importance on wanting senior leaders to at least ask for their opinions.⁹⁰

Additionally, the majority of officers believed that the senior leaders of the Army were communicating through rewards and promotions. The surveyed officers widely believed that to thrive in the existing system, an officer had to abandon ideal practices in favor of behavior they knew was unethical and detrimental to discipline and morale. Therefore, by rewarding such performance with key assignments and promotions, the Army's senior leadership was encouraging the deviation from the ideal through informal communication.

The over reliance on statistical measures of performance was closely related to the lack of communication. The Army had good reasons for adopting the use of statistics in the 1960s. The rapid turnover of personnel combined with the increasing awareness of the complexity of the war in Vietnam and the Cold War made the Army's demand for quantifiable data natural. However, the survey revealed that officers felt that the Army's embrace of statistics had gone too far. Rather than serving as a complement to qualitative data and human judgement, the Army's reliance on statistics had evolved into a quest for perfection and zero-defect environment. This had two important consequences. The first was the environment enabled ambitious officers to submit exaggerated and false reports to increase their chances of recognition. The second was that statistics were becoming a means for inexperienced or incompetent commanders to cover their deficiencies.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid., 17-18.

⁹¹ Ibid., 20.

Overall, the surveyed officers understood the value of quantitative measurements, but they felt that the Army was misusing statistics in a form of willful organizational suicide.

The authors of the study believed that the combination of poor communication, over reliance on statistics, and short leadership tours were the key causative factors in the increasing variance between the ideal and actual professional state of the Army's officers. The requirement, whether real or perceived, that command at every echelon was necessary for promotion to the next grade resulted in several sub-par officers commanding units beyond their expertise. The rapid turnover of personnel typically resulted in a six month command tour for officers at nearly every tactical echelon. The rapid rotation fostered an environment where commanders were not willing to try new ideas through trial and error, demanded a perfect record, and executed centralized control. Additionally, even skilled commanders did not have the requisite time to learn their organizations, thereby relying on statistical data that could measure short term goals. Overall, the system favored only reporting good news, a willingness to only receive good news, a lack of long-term goals, and poorly informed superiors.⁹²

The fourth and final substantive result from the survey was that the Army's senior leaders needed to shoulder the blame for the issues, as opposed to blaming factors external to the Army's control. The study acknowledged the presence and existence of certain social factors: the requirement for increased use of data processing technology, the requirement to centralize control of increasingly limited resources, and the increasing social angst over the conduct of the Vietnam War. However, the study's authors strongly

⁹² U.S. Army War College, *Study on Military Professionalism*, 22.

asserted that none of these conditions, either individually or collectively, were responsible for the variance between the ideal and the actual standards of conduct. Furthermore, “there is no externally imposed rationale for the seemingly prevalent uninhibited quest for personal success at any price . . . the isolation of senior officers . . . for the seeming penchant for rewarding those who don’t rock the boat.”⁹³

The study proclaimed three salient points in defense of their assertion that the Army was the problem and not external factors. The first was that the junior officers, those who would be the most likely to sympathize with the American social and cultural shifts of the late 1960s, still overwhelmingly subscribed to the traditional ideals of professional conduct. In a similar vein, none of the survey’s participants recommended that the ideal standard needed revising. Third, the organizational and inclusive practices that were creating the discord were created by the Army’s senior leaders. Therefore, the study proclaims that the blame for the Army’s issues, centered on professional conduct widely diverging from the ideal, rests with the Army’s senior leaders.⁹⁴

In addition to accepting the blame, the study also argued that the existing system was incapable of self-correcting, and that attempting to wait out the issues would only exacerbate the problem. Despite the willingness of junior and mid-grade officers, the Army’s ability to make effective reforms was already hampered by the simple fact that the senior leaders of the Army were the same officers who had thrived in the existing system. If the Army’s course continued unabated, the Army would suffer continue

⁹³ Ibid., 27.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 28.

degradations of its ability to fight and win the nation's wars. Talented and innovative officers would continue to leave the service, leaving only those willing to condone ethical lapses in their stead. The Army's credibility, already suffering in the wake of the Vietnam War and especially the My Lai massacre, would continue to corrode.⁹⁵ Therefore, the study argues that not only did senior leaders need to make significant changes, but they needed to demonstrate a newfound sense of introspection in doing so. Superficial changes would not change the climate, the only avenue to meaningful change was, "Concrete modification of the systems of reward and punishment to support adherence to the time-honored principles of an Army officer is required."⁹⁶

The *Study on Military Professionalism* did not just define the problem, it also offered a total of thirty-one recommendations for senior leaders to consider for implementation. While Westmoreland neither considered nor implemented all of them, the recommendations can be condensed down to four main areas of emphasis: transparency, career progression, accountability, and communication.

The first recommendation was that the Westmoreland should disseminate the study throughout the Army. The study specifically recommended distributing the report to all of the Army's general officers, and adding discussion of the report to the next Army Commanders' Conference.⁹⁷ The intent of this recommendation was transparency. The

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 38-39.

authors of the study believed that dissemination would demonstrate senior leaders' awareness of the issues and their willingness to listen and conduct reforms.

Beyond dissemination, several of the recommendations requested changes by the Department of the Army to promotions, command selection, and career progression. The study recommended that the Army conduct a centralized selection of all battalion and brigade commanders, establish stability in command assignments, and simplifying the assignments required for promotion.⁹⁸ These recommendations sought to ease the issues associated with "ticket-punching", whereby officers prioritized advancing from one assignment to the next over the actual mission or the welfare of their subordinates.

The third theme of the recommendations was accountability. The study recommended that senior officers needed to enforce adherence to standards. To accomplish this, senior leaders needed to take immediate disciplinary action against officers who violated ethical standards, and simplify judicial procedures as appropriate. Additionally, they recommended the creation and promulgation of an Officer's Creed, the elimination of vague standards of appearance, and communiques from Westmoreland to the officer corps on the expectations of professional conduct.⁹⁹

The final theme of the study's recommendations stressed the need for improved communication between senior and junior officers. While the study's findings determined that officers of all ranks identified with the issues, the study also found a significant degree of disparity as to the extent of the issues. The higher ranking an officer was, the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 42-45.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 40-41.

less the perceived extent of the problem. Therefore, the study advocated that the solution was to create professional working environments that were conducive to honest communication, and add clear standards for the counseling of subordinate officers. Additionally, the study emphasized the need to remove, “wherever possible statistical competition or fixed quotas within organizations . . . and resorting wherever practicable to the pass-fail system of formal rating without having numerical scores for organizational inspections or tests.”¹⁰⁰

The authors of the study, Lieutenant Colonels Walt Ulmer and Mike Malone, traveled to the Pentagon and delivered a comprehensive report on their findings and recommendations to Westmoreland and other Army senior leaders in July 1970. To this day, Ulmer and Malone are the only participants in the briefing to offer testimony as to its proceedings.¹⁰¹ According to the two officers, the briefing did not go well. One unnamed three star general was outraged at their findings and exclaimed, “That’s not the goddamn Army that I know!”¹⁰² Other general officers acted defensively in regard to Ulmer and Malone’s recommendations, for “every recommendation gored a sacred ox in the herd of the generals present.”¹⁰³ Meanwhile, they claim that Westmoreland sat through the entire briefing in a perpetual state of shock, and keep repeating, “I just can’t

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰¹ James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 107-113.

¹⁰² Ibid., 110.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 111.

believe that.”¹⁰⁴ The most heated debate centered on whether or not to disseminate the findings. While several senior leaders agreed with releasing the findings, they also expressed concern about the negative press the study would generate for the Army. In the end, they settled on a limited distribution to general officers, and that the War College could brief their findings at military schools.

Thus ends the traditional narrative of the *Study on Military Professionalism*. The majority of works that cover the post-Vietnam narrative include some version of this account, and end by claiming that the Army ignored the recommendations, buried them in security classifications, and that Westmoreland remained aloof and ignorant of the problems. In this narrative, Westmoreland ensures that the Army’s dirty secrets remain shrouded from the possibility of reform, and he personally fades into obscurity by remaining aloof during his last two years as the Chief of Staff.

Challenging the Narrative: A Reinterpretation of Westmoreland and the Study on Military Professionalism

Unfortunately, Westmoreland never directly addressed the briefing or his reaction to the findings in any of his personal or professional papers. Therefore, his reaction to the findings may very well have been one of shock. Westmoreland may also have been secretly hoping that all of the incidents leading up to the War College study were isolated anomalies, and not indicators of larger collective decline of the professional health of the Army’s officer corps. His public and private remarks during his first two years clearly indicate that his assumptions about the state of morale and motivation were off target.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 112.

Regardless of Westmoreland's reaction to the briefing on the *Study on Military Professionalism*, the traditional narrative ignores some salient points.

First, if Westmoreland truly wanted to ignore the Army's issues, then why did he order the War College to conduct the study? Nothing in the official documents suggests that someone urged or pressured Westmoreland to conduct the study. In fact, all of the documentation indicates that the study was a direct result of Westmoreland's initiative to determine the extent of the Army's issues. Second, the account that Westmoreland was in a perpetual state of shock during the briefing of the report seems hyperbolic. His letter to the Army's officers from nine months before the briefing addressed many of the same issues as those raised in the *Study on Military Professionalism*. Therefore, a more accurate description might entail that Westmoreland was shocked at the extent of the problem, whereas the traditional narrative gives the impression that he was just learning about the problem. The third point is that the traditional narrative over-embraces the notion that Westmoreland classified the report, and oversimplifies this term to obfuscate readers into believing that Westmoreland buried the report in a War College bathroom.¹⁰⁵

The final point is that the narrative never actually addresses whether or not Westmoreland attempted to implement any of the report's recommendations. In the quest for a narrative with a clean break, several accounts of Westmoreland's tenure end at this point and move on to Abrams and his programs of reform. Contrary to the current of the traditional narrative, Westmoreland would take immediate and enduring action on the findings and recommendations of the *Study on Military Professionalism* over the last two

¹⁰⁵ Sorley, *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam*, 223.

years of his tenure as Chief of Staff. Therefore, his decision to initiate the War College study and his actions to address the report's findings represent his most significant contributions to the reforms of the post-Vietnam Army.

CHAPTER 4

FRAMING THE SOLUTION

Prior to receiving the U.S. Army War College's briefing on the *Study on Military Professionalism*, General Westmoreland was clearly already aware of some of the issues the report presented. He included a letter to all of the Army's general officers in his weekly summary on 05 May 1970 titled "Leadership, Management, and Morale: Putting First Things First." In the letter, Westmoreland cited his increasing awareness of the growing levels of dissatisfaction amongst junior officers, and implored his subordinate generals to develop solutions to alleviate subordinate frustration in five key areas.

The first was the continuing overemphasis on inspections, which directly correlated with the second point of utilizing statistics as an end in themselves. Officers' desire to gain recognition through statistical reports summarizing their inspection results in a quantitative fashion was not only damaging morale, it was contributing to the temptation to, "operate on the thin skin of honesty."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Westmoreland advocated abandoning rigid, dogmatic approaches to training schedules, and emphasized training to completion of tasks instead of to a predetermined time of day. Fourth, he encouraged them to cease holding formations purely for tradition, and instead to only hold them for a mission related purpose. Last, he instructed the Army's generals to cease the violation of junior officers' ability to coordinate and plan their tasks out of a desire for administrative efficiency. Overall, Westmoreland charged the Army's leaders with,

¹⁰⁶ William C. Westmoreland to Army General Officers, 5 May 1970, *Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army: 1 July 1968–30 June 1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1977), 185.

“reexamine get our approach to our mission and to our people, to our regulations and procedures, and to our attitudes across the board. We must take some of the statistical and inspection pressures off our commanders so that we can exploit their judgement and experience and permit them to put first things first.”¹⁰⁷

After receiving the U.S. Army War College’s briefing on its *Study on Military Professionalism*, Westmoreland decided that the Army would not disseminate the report to the public and the entire force. Instead, he decided to distribute the report to general officers and to allow the U.S. Army War College to brief its findings to all of the Army’s professional schools.¹⁰⁸ Here is where most commentary on the dissemination of the *Study on Military Professionalism* ends. There exists widespread agreement that Westmoreland disseminated the report to general officers; conversely, there is little discussion on what the Army’s general officers did with the report or its findings. Perhaps many of them read it and had the same reaction as Lieutenant General Jonathan Seaman, who at the time was serving as the II Field Force commander in Vietnam. Rather than take action on the report in line with Westmoreland’s intent, Seaman stated, “After I read that study, I locked it up in my safe and said it was to be opened only by the CG or a General Officer of the Headquarters because there are statements in there that are so damning to the Officer Corps . . . I felt that if it ever got out into the public, it would really do the Army a lot of harm, and no doubt it’s true.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 186.

¹⁰⁸ Kittfield, 112.

¹⁰⁹ Gole, 172.

First Steps to Reform: Forcing a Dialogue

While the effectiveness of the dissemination of the *Study on Military Professionalism* may have lacked resolution, it did not deter Westmoreland from taking steps towards reform of the officer corps. In the month after Westmoreland received the briefing from the War College, forty junior officers signed a letter sent to President Nixon protesting the American policy decisions with regards to the Vietnam War. The forty officers claimed to represent the widespread opinions of the junior officer corps, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted soldiers, and that, “it is obvious that America is not willing to go all out to win the war.”¹¹⁰ Furthermore, they expressed their disgust with the Army’s issues with ethical lapses, they identify and sympathize with the widespread protests against the war, and they suggest that the President end the war as soon as possible if the nation is unwilling to take the actions required for victory. Despite their misgivings, the officers insist that they will fulfill their obligations to serve in Vietnam, and accept the possibility that they will receive reprimands for sending the letter. Rather than punish the officers for sending the letter, Westmoreland had their names removed and forwarded the letter to the Army’s senior commanders for consideration. In his dispatch, Westmoreland wrote, “The extent to which this letter may represent the state of mind of many other young officers and men that you are receiving is of deep concern to me . . . what is now apparently dissatisfaction and lack of motivation could rapidly become disaffection.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Kerwin to Westmoreland, 1 September 1970, Series I, Box 14, Folder 1.

¹¹¹ Westmoreland to Polk, Woolnough, Haines, Chesarek, etc., 3 September 1970, Series I, Box 25, Folder 3.

Over the next two weeks, many of the Army's senior commanders responded in a manner that reflected their mature understanding of the issues raised in the letter and the *Study on Military Professionalism*. Lieutenant General Forsythe, then serving as the commander of Combat Developments Command, agreed with Westmoreland's assessment of the severity of the issue. Additionally, Forsythe asserted that junior officers were more serious, sophisticated, skeptical, and critical than their predecessors; the key to maintaining their satisfaction with the profession was clear communication and meaningful assignments.¹¹² General Haines, the commander of U.S. Army forces in the Pacific, acknowledged that the letter was indicative of growing frustration within the ranks. Furthermore, Haines stated, "I believe that strong leadership I will influence and assist in countering any dissatisfaction and lack of motivation that exist. We must encourage and develop improved and more personal communication between higher levels of command and our junior officers."¹¹³

In addition to responding, Haines also forwarded the letter to his subordinate commanders for their evaluation and feedback. General Michaelis, commander of U.S. Army forces in Korea, also affirmed the presence of growing dissatisfaction amongst his troops. From Michaelis's vantage, the poor training young officers and recruits were receiving was part of the problem, and the only way forward was to inspire professional conduct and develop strong unit esprit de corps.¹¹⁴ Brigadier General Ott, commander of

¹¹² Forsythe to Westmoreland, 10 September 1970, Series I, Box 14, Folder 3.

¹¹³ Haines to Westmoreland, 11 September 1970, Series 1, Box 14, Folder 3.

¹¹⁴ Michaelis to Haines, 9 September 1970, Series 1, Box 14, Folder 3.

U.S. Army forces in Thailand, also concurred that over his twenty months of command, the lack of motivation, indiscipline, and dissatisfaction had continued to rise. His recommendation was to continue to search for and remove minor sources of irritation, and to provide more stable and predictable assignments for officers.¹¹⁵ The commander of 4th Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, stated that, “I believe the lieutenants’ letter quite accurately assesses the current attitude of too many junior officers and junior troopers. If, and as, this latent hostility increases with the passage of time, there will be mounting potential for a most serious confrontation.”¹¹⁶ Finally, LTG Lampert, commander of U.S. Army forces in Okinawa, acknowledged Westmoreland’s concerns. He also advocated increased levels of dialogue between senior and junior leaders, as well as renewed emphasis on the quality of training in the United States.¹¹⁷

Perhaps the most thoughtful and well articulated response came from General Woolnough, the commander of Continental Army Command (CONARC) which had direct responsibility and oversight of all Army training in the United States. Woolnough acknowledged the issues the officers raised in their letter, but offered his perspective that the Vietnam War was only part of the issue for the Army or the nation. The remainder of the issues stemmed from race relations, drug abuse, the decline in professionalism, and public perception in the wake of ethical lapses. More importantly, Woolnough emphasized that withdrawing from Vietnam would not solve the issues. His first

¹¹⁵ Ott to Haines, 8 September 1970, Series 1, Box 14, Folder 3.

¹¹⁶ Commander, 4th Brigade–25th Infantry Division to Sternberg, 5 September 1970, Series 1, Box 14, Folder 3.

¹¹⁷ Lampert to Haines, 9 September 1970, Series 1, Box 14, Folder 3.

recommendation was, “I think we must be candid with ourselves as the public and face up to the fact that this is how it is. I recommend that you reply to each of them personally. . . thanking them for letting their sense of duty to their nation overcome their personal disagreements with our national policy.”¹¹⁸ Second, Woolnough proposed that Westmoreland needed to prioritize assigning top performers for stabilized tours leading soldiers, instead of sending all of them to serve in top level staff jobs, as advisors in Vietnam, and recruiting. He believed that this continued practice ensured that, “Our troop units bear the entire brunt of such mediocrity as exists in the officer corps. . . we must put our best and most experienced people in the local decision spots now.”¹¹⁹

Woolnough also provided an overview for how his command was attempting to address some of the issues in initial training for recruits and junior officers. First, CONARC was continuing to place increasing emphasis on eliminating unnecessary events from the basic training cycle, reinforcing respect for the dignity of the individual trainee, and instituting programs to improve the caliber and training capabilities of its drill sergeants. Second, CONARC was revising the basic and advanced individual training curriculums to include increased and updated programs on the Army’s mission in Vietnam, the trainee’s obligations as a soldier, the Army’s historical roles, and the reasons and traditions of military training. However, Woolnough was also realistic in his response, and emphasized that any efforts to address the issues would not succeed in a

¹¹⁸ Woolnough to GEN Westmoreland, 10 September 1970, Series 1, Box 14, Folder 3.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

few months. The key to success was improving the quality of leadership and maintaining fiscal support for the Army's training establishment.¹²⁰

Westmoreland acknowledged the replies of several of the Army's senior commanders, and thanked them for their forthright responses and recommendations.¹²¹ More importantly, as the Chief of Staff he sent a clear message to the Army's general officers. Addressing the concerns raised by the officer corps were and would remain a priority. Shortly after his thank-you note, Westmoreland sent an additional memorandum informing the Army's senior generals about the key topics of discussion for the 1970 Army Commander's Conference. Westmoreland's overall objective for the conference was, "to bring about quality improvement in every aspect of the Army, to include attitude, ethics, and standards. Every policy, concept, and procedure must be reexamined and brought up to date."¹²² The conference would have three major agendas: the implementation of the Modern Volunteer Army, the Army's problems with dissent and career dissatisfaction and proposed solutions, and the *Study on Military Professionalism*. Additionally, Westmoreland expected each senior general attending the conference to present a summary of how their command had implemented his guidance in the past year, and what actions they were planning in the future

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Westmoreland to Polk, Woolnough, Haines, etc., 24 September 1970, Series 1, Box 25, Folder 4.

¹²² Westmoreland to Army General Officers, November 1970, Series 1, Box 25, Folder 5.

Second Step: An Introspective Study on Leadership

In a span of six months, Westmoreland had undergone a personal revolution. The Peers Report and the *Study on Military Professionalism* had shattered all of his assumptions regarding the state of morale and motivation throughout the Army. Contrary to the popular narrative, Westmoreland neither ignored nor dismissed the raging issues with Army's professional health. He kept his subordinates informed of the issues, demanded that they initiate actions to address them, and insisted that they provide him direct feedback and input on how to move forward. By the conclusion of the 1970 Army Commander's Conference, Westmoreland had decided that the key to restoring the Army's professional ethic was to determine the form and type of leadership the Army required for the upcoming decade.

Westmoreland would not wait long to take action. In January 1971, roughly one month after the Army Commander's Conference, Westmoreland directed the U.S. Army War College to evaluate current leadership techniques, provide recommendations to commanders on how to identify problems, and offer insights into improve leadership climates throughout the Army.¹²³ The results of this intensive effort would be *Leadership for the 1970s: USAWC Study of Leadership for the Professional Soldier*, which was the foundational document for what would evolve into a four year program focused solely on improving leadership capabilities.

When he assigned the study to the War College, Westmoreland provided three specific points of guidance. First, he wanted the study to cover a much wider base than

¹²³ U.S. Army War College, *Leadership for the 1970s: USAWC Study of Leadership for the Professional Soldier* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army, 1971), ii.

the *Study on Military Professionalism*. Second, Westmoreland wanted the War College to use the same methodology as the previous survey, which used quantitative data from surveys as well as qualitative data from interviews. Last, Westmoreland insisted that the study produce, “utilitarian results which could be applied readily to Army leadership without the requirement for additional studies or extensive interpretation of theoretical findings.”¹²⁴

The War College complied with all three of Westmoreland’s directives. Regarding Westmoreland’s guidance to expand the scope of the study, the War College surveyed nearly five times the amount of Army personnel in comparison to the first. Whereas the *Study on Military Professionalism* surveyed 415 commissioned officers, *Leadership for the 1970s* surveyed a total of 1800 personnel. Furthermore, instead of just surveying officers, the War College expanded their aperture to gather input from every enlisted, warrant, and commissioned rank, as well as West Point cadets and Department of the Army civilians. They also diversified their survey pool by traveling to seventeen different installations, and ensured that their survey population included Army personnel from fifteen different types of units.¹²⁵

In many ways, the methodology for *Leadership for the 1970s* utilized the same approach as the *Study on Military Professionalism*. In accordance with Westmoreland’s guidance, the War College repeated their emphasis on the collection of quantitative and qualitative data for their analysis. Recognizing that one of the key findings from the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 7.

Study on Military Professionalism was the significant gap between the ideal and actual displays of professionalism, the War College focused their questions on identifying the perception gaps of effective leadership. For example, “the impact and effectiveness of leadership vary greatly as a function of the perspective from which leadership is viewed. The company commander’s view of the leadership of the platoon leader may differ markedly from that of the men of the platoon.”¹²⁶ Therefore, the study emphasized a “tri-focal” view of leadership, where the perspectives of the leader, his superiors, and his subordinates form a composite assessment of the quality of leadership at a particular echelon.

The War College did its best to meet Westmoreland’s directive to present its findings and recommendations in a utilitarian context. While the report at times extracts from some of the psychological rhetoric of 1971, the War College also summarized its findings in simplified terms that Army leaders and trainers could incorporate into their methods.

Over the course of five months, the War College faculty conducted its evaluations throughout the Army, and briefed Westmoreland on their findings in April 1971. While the overall results of the study were better than the *Study on Military Professionalism*, the study still revealed that the Army had significant challenges to improving the capabilities of its leaders. On the positive side, the War College determined that the majority of Army personnel were satisfied with their leadership and believed that the Army’s traditional principles of leadership were and would remain valid through the the 1970s. However,

¹²⁶ Ibid., 5.

the report also reinforced the negative aspects of the *Study on Military Professionalism*. There still existed great disparity amongst the ranks as to how effective leaders were in the application of leadership principles, as well as a wide aperture in the perception of how effective individual leaders were in communicating with their subordinates.

The first substantial finding was that the satisfaction with the performance of Army leaders varied significantly by rank. While 98% of general officers were satisfied with their own performance, by comparison 63-70% of junior non-commissioned officers, senior non-commissioned officers, and junior company grade officers were generally satisfied with their leaders' performance. However, the significant disparity between the ranks was only slightly present when comparing combat and non-combat conditions, and did not vary between racial groups. Thus, the War College determined that the main determinant in perceptions of leadership was rank, and that perceptions of leadership did not vary between combat nor between races.¹²⁷

A second finding was the Army's eleven principles of leadership were viewed as valid, and more importantly, that they would remain valid for the next decade. Two aspects of the study gave the War College high confidence in this finding. The first was that when the the survey respondents had to identify the most and least important principles, they found it difficult to select principles as least important. The second aspect was that in the free response portion of the survey, participants were asked to provide any

¹²⁷ U.S. Army War College, *Leadership for the 1970s*, 14.

recommendations for changes to the principles of leadership. Of the 1800 respondents, only three proposed any changes.¹²⁸

The most significant finding of *Leadership for the 1970s* was that the application of the principles of leadership was defective in nearly every rank, and the major obstacle to their application was the frequent misperception of how well individual leaders were meeting their subordinates' expectations. Whereas the *Study on Military Professionalism* revealed that officers were failing to live up to the ideal ethical standards of the profession, *Leadership for the 1970s* indicated that leaders at all ranks were failing to perform their duties in accordance with the Army's chosen principles. As the War College stated, "The problems of leadership appear to lie not in the principles themselves, but rather in the application of these principles."¹²⁹ The greatest hindrance to this deficiency was perception. While leaders at all ranks self-identified some of their own leadership shortfalls, the study revealed the existence of wide disparity as to the magnitude of the shortfall between the leader, his subordinates, and his superiors.¹³⁰

This particular aspect of the study yielded several interesting data points. The first was that leaders with the greatest proximity to enlisted soldiers (non-commissioned officers and junior company grade officers), were the groups who soldiers perceived as being critically unaware of issues that affected morale. Another point was that junior non-commissioned officers and colonels were perceived by subordinates and superiors as

¹²⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 20.

highly reluctant to stand up for their subordinates. A third was that subordinates and superiors believed that majors and lieutenant colonels displayed openly ambitious behaviors far too often.¹³¹ These three points of reference were not blinding insights, rather they are examples of hundreds of reference points for every echelon of leadership in the Army. *Leadership for the 1970s* provided a critical resource for leaders of all ranks, and especially for instructors in the various Army professional military schools. For every rank, the study provided forty-three aspects of leadership where leaders could view how they perceived themselves, and how they were perceived by superiors and subordinates.

The last noteworthy discovery in *Leadership for the 1970s* was the identification of seven factors that were inhibiting leaders from adhering to the principles of leadership. While each of the seven had subtle variations, they all boiled down to the essentiality that communication between senior and junior leaders was broken. The toxic effects discovered in the *Study on Military Professionalism* were creating a leadership pyramid where every echelon perceived their superiors as unwilling and unable to trust, train, and lead their subordinates.

The first four factors all stem from micromanagement techniques and a lack of trust in the judgement of junior leaders. First among these was a widespread perception that the existing system of military justice prevented lower echelon leaders from enforcing standards. Non-commissioned officers and company grade officers both displayed strong levels of animosity towards Judge Advocate General Corps officers,

¹³¹ Ibid., 22.

whom they perceived as the personification of a bureaucratic maze of regulations designed solely to impede their abilities to enforce regulations. The second and third were closely related, the habitual tasking of soldiers to perform duties outside their military occupations and the concurrent misuse of their time on tasks perceived to be unrelated to their mission. The fourth factor in this realm was that, in addition to the first three, junior leaders felt their superiors did not trust their judgement. When they fought in Vietnam, junior leaders had the authority to make life and death decisions concerning their subordinates. Yet, when they returned to garrison, they lacked the authority to reward soldiers with time off.¹³²

The fifth factor was junior leaders' perception that they were unprepared for the complexities of leadership in a garrison environment in a post-war Army. While they felt their experience in Vietnam left them well prepared to lead soldiers into combat, they viewed leadership in garrison as a more complex system of rules and regulations. Overwhelmingly, junior leaders wanted and expected mentorship from senior leaders on how to navigate the garrison environment. The next factor was the disappointing sibling to the fifth. Instead of providing clear guidance to junior leaders, senior leaders were demonstrating a wide variation in their expectations of standards of conduct from junior leaders. Not only did junior leaders feel uncomfortable with their new environment, but senior leaders were increasing the amount of complexity and uncertainty in the system. The War College conducted interviews with forty-six general officers for the study and found that, "Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge from a review of the entire

¹³² Ibid., 26.

interview series was there apparently exists a wide range of attitudes toward several relatively fundamental concepts of leadership, personnel management, and command.”¹³³

The final factor was one that was well known and established in the aftermath of the *Study on Military Professionalism*, the poor professional climate of the Army and the continuing presence of the “ambitious, transitory commander.”¹³⁴ While the War College had established this damning portrayal the previous year, they noted that every discussion seminar about leadership inevitably treaded into the topic of professional conduct, and that the lack of professional trust and confidence continued to impede Army leaders at all levels.

Unlike the War College’s briefing on the *Study on Military Professionalism*, their briefing to Westmoreland on *Leadership for the 1970s* appears to have occurred without any of the dramatic tension. The briefing left several impressions on Westmoreland that would shape his actions on reforming professional conduct for his remaining year as the Chief of Staff. The first was that the Army had great discord as to how leaders should apply the principles of leadership. Furthermore, Westmoreland realized that the greater the disparity in rank between Army personnel, the greater the disparity in their perspective on the quality and efficacy of existing leadership practices. These impressions led him to believe that the most significant finding of *Leadership for the*

¹³³ Ibid., 27.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

1970s was that the Army's instruction on leadership was failing at every institutional level.¹³⁵

Westmoreland initiated several actions in the immediate aftermath of the War College's briefing, and continued to take action on initiatives he had begun while the War College was conducting their research. The first action was to order the publication of the entire study and its findings with no restrictions, which the War College accomplished in October 1971. His second action was to write another letter that summarized his reactions to the findings in *Leadership for the 1970s*. The overarching theme of the letter is the roles and responsibilities of leaders at every echelon of command. Westmoreland reassured non-commissioned officers that they were still the backbone of the Army, but that he expected them to demonstrate competence, firmness, and a genuine interest in the welfare of soldiers. Company grade officers were to create command climates that made soldiers proud of their service, and were cautioned against engaging in popularity contests with their soldiers. Westmoreland charged senior officers with examining their training methods, to actively seek feedback from subordinates, and to tolerate mistakes as educational experiences. Above all, Westmoreland implored senior officers to take an active role in the development of their subordinates: "If your subordinates are fair, firm, and competent, support them; if they need guidance, counsel them; if they cannot meet our standards after counseling, replace them."¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 109-110.

¹³⁶ William C. Westmoreland to all Officers and Noncommissioned Officers of the Army, April 1971, *Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army: 1 July 1968–30 June 1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1977), 179-180.

Westmoreland did not just merely send off the message and wipe his hands. Instead he took two additional actions. The first was that he included a supplement to the letter with his guidance on officers ought to develop the noncommissioned officers in their commands. The supplement included fourteen points emphasizing the officers' role in developing, supervising, and supporting non-commissioned officers, and the critical importance of their relationship to unit success. Westmoreland concluded his letter with the reminder, "As officers, you are responsible for morale, efficiency, and mission accomplishment. Your resources are both material and human. The key to your success is your noncommissioned officers."¹³⁷

Westmoreland's second action was reinforcing his letter with a back channel message to all of the Army's commanding generals with the additional caveat, "I consider it an exceedingly important document that deserves special, personal distribution and frequent discussion."¹³⁸ Beyond stressing the importance of the letter, Westmoreland specified instructions for a plan of action to accompany the letter's distribution. First, he expected commanders at every echelon to hold a conference with their immediate subordinate officers and their senior non-commissioned officers to discuss the contents and leadership philosophy, and to determine how to implement the guidance into their formations. Westmoreland expected this process to repeat itself in a downward spiral all the way to the company level. The second requirement was for additional conferences to be held every four to six weeks on the same topic in order to

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Westmoreland to Commanding Generals, 7 April 1971, Series I, Box 25, Folder 7.

evaluate implementation and to discuss progress. The third and final requirement was for every officer and non-commissioned officer to watch an accompanying film titled “Building a Better Army,” and then to use Westmoreland’s personal message in the film as a springboard for discussion with their soldiers.¹³⁹

While Westmoreland’s letter and accompanying instructions provided some immediate balm to the Army’s festering leadership challenges, there was clearly a need for a complete overhaul to the Army’s education and leadership philosophy. In the immediate aftermath of the War College’s briefing on *Leadership for the 1970s*, Westmoreland directed General Haines, the commander of Continental Army Command (CONARC) with developing a leadership training package for the entire Army. Westmoreland established clear guidance for what he wanted CONARC to accomplish in a messages to Haines in May 1971. He specified that CONARC was to create a modern leadership seminar package for presentation at every Army installation with at least five thousand personnel. First, CONARC would establish multiple three man training teams that would undergo a three week training course at Fort Bragg beginning in June 1971. There, they would receive instruction from qualified leadership instructors from the United States Military Academy, the Army War College, the Command and General Staff College, and the Infantry School. Upon completion of the training, CONARC would send the teams to each installation, who would assist local commanders with conducting the training for a period of two to three days.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Additionally, Westmoreland instructed installation commanders to select one of their best officers to assist the CONARC teams with the training. He further specified that the trainers selected had to be intelligent field grade officers who, at a minimum, had graduated from the Command and General Staff College and had commanded troops in combat. Above all, Westmoreland specified that officers had to be, “highly articulate, able to think on their feet, and motivated toward improving Army leadership to meet contemporary challenges.”¹⁴⁰ Although Westmoreland wanted participation from the units going through the training, his intent was clear. Rather than allow every installation commander to run their own personal seminar on leadership, something that *Leadership for the 1970s* identified as a significant point of friction, every installation was going to get a standardized training seminar on leadership from officers trained by the best leadership experts in the Army.

Haines’s first step in this process was to establish a Leadership Board led by Brigadier General Henry Emerson. This body, officially titled the Continental Army Command Leadership Board, but often referred to as the Emerson Board, would build off the War College’s work and conduct one of the largest collections of leadership studies in the history of the U.S. Army. Recognizing the success of the USAWC’s study and its appeal to the officer corps, the CONARC leadership panel adopted the USAWC’s methodology and findings into the development of its own leadership seminar program. From mid-1971 through 1972, the CONARC panel conducted leadership seminars at every U.S. Army installation with a population size of at least five thousand personnel,

¹⁴⁰ Westmoreland to Haines, 12 May 1971, Series I, Box 16, Folder 1.

and interviewed and collected data from over thirty thousand personnel. At the conclusion of these seminars and data collection, the CONARC panel had amassed the world's largest database on leadership. The data collection was unique not only because of the massive size of its survey population, but because the study allowed the Army to analyze perspectives on leadership in numerous categories such as rank, age, location, race, and branch. The CONARC panel analyzed and summarized the collected data for every major command, and the reports often inspired Army units to take further action. The 82nd Airborne Division, the United States Military Academy, the U.S. Army Infantry School, and the newly developed Sergeants Major Academy all utilized the initial analysis of the data collection to develop new programs of instruction on leadership.¹⁴¹

Third Step: Maintaining Momentum with Concurrent Actions

The War College's findings in *Leadership for the 1970s* reinforced several of Westmoreland's ongoing initiatives. The first was a complete overhaul of officer assignments and career expectations. Westmoreland briefed the initial concept for reform, titled Top Star, at the Army Commander's Conference in December 1970, and would continue to refine it with feedback from other senior generals in the early months of 1971. Top Star's first point of emphasis was that, "it sets promotion to colonel as a goal of a normally successful career."¹⁴² Given this new emphasis, one of the first refinements Westmoreland made was to change the name from Top Star to Officer

¹⁴¹ U.S. Army War College, *Leadership Monograph Series: Consolidated Army War College Monograph Series 1-5* (Fort Benjamin Harrison, IN: United States Army Administration Center, 1975), v.

¹⁴² Goodpaster to Westmoreland, 2 January 1971, Series I, Box 15, Folder 11.

Personnel Management System (OPMS).¹⁴³ Under Westmoreland's guidance, this system sought to, "improve professional standards through better utilization of individual interests and attitudes and, accordingly, through development of greater competence."¹⁴⁴

OPMS established combat command as the premier assignment for officers, and the selection and development of officers for these assignments would become a top priority. Additionally, OPMS directly challenged the "ticket-punching" system by changing guidance for promotions to emphasize an officer's performance in key positions over just his assignment to them. Finally, OPMS centralized the selection of battalion and brigade level commanders at Department of the Army Headquarters. Prior to this, lieutenant colonels and colonels could simply request command through their personnel officers, who sought to rotate officers through these positions as quickly as possible.¹⁴⁵

Westmoreland's implementation of OPMS had three important consequences. The first was the overhaul of the Officer Evaluation Reporting (OER) system. Revisions included revising the assessment methods for performance and potential, as well as the addition of a section on professional attributes. Westmoreland also sought additional transparency for the evaluation system, and added a periodic publication of the average report scores. This not only provided raters a benchmark to determine for evaluating average performance, but it served as an indicator as to whether or not the system was suffering from rampant inflation. The last major revision was the inclusion of the

¹⁴³ Goodpaster to Westmoreland, 2 January 1971, Series I, Box 15, Folder 11. Westmoreland did so upon the recommendation of General Goodpaster.

¹⁴⁴ Westmoreland to Goodpaster, 21 January 1971, Series I, Box 26, Folder 10.

¹⁴⁵ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 116.

requirement to provide rated officers a copy of their evaluation, mandatory counseling sessions throughout the rating period, and Army-wide training on the new OER system. Westmoreland's intent with the new OER was to force senior officers to use the evaluation as a tool for development of their subordinates.¹⁴⁶

The second major consequence of OPMS was the increased importance of the accuracy of an officer's personnel records file. In order to place emphasis on selecting competent officers for command positions, the Department of the Army selection boards required accurate records to examine. When Westmoreland directed an initial survey in October 1971, the results revealed gross discrepancies between the records and actual performance. Due to poor regulation over the preceding years, officers were deliberately withholding discriminatory information from going into their personnel files. Westmoreland quickly directed policies that required the placement of all administrative punishments and evaluation reports into an officer's personnel file.¹⁴⁷

The third major consequence of Westmoreland's implementation of OPMS was the stabilization of command tours. Through 1970, the average command tour for battalion and brigade commanders lasted approximately six months. Turnover rates at the company and platoon levels were much higher, sometimes lasting only two to three months. While the requirements for sending officers to Vietnam was the leading cause of this instability, the results of the War College studies clearly indicated the pressing need for stabilizing key leaders for longer periods of time. Westmoreland began this process in

¹⁴⁶ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 116.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

October 1970 when he directed Lieutenant General Kerwin, the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, to determine the requirements for stabilizing battalion and brigade commanders in Europe for a minimum of eighteen months.¹⁴⁸ Given all the Army's continued obligations to send officers to Vietnam and other ongoing missions, this was no easy task to accomplish. Despite the challenge, by the end of 1971 Westmoreland was able to establish policies that stabilized battalion and brigade command tours at a minimum of eighteen months, company level commands at twelve months, with corresponding tour stabilization for command sergeants major, sergeants major, and first sergeants.¹⁴⁹

Over the course of Westmoreland's third year as the Army's Chief of Staff, he had undertaken a whirlwind of actions to reform the professional conduct of the Army's leaders at all echelons. He came to terms with the grim realities in the *Study on Military Professionalism*, and more importantly forced the issues into the dialogue of the Army's senior leaders. Through dialogue and introspection, Westmoreland came to the conclusion that the best method for restoring professional vigor was to revitalize the Army's approach to leadership. The clearest manifestation of Westmoreland's prioritization of leadership was *Leadership for the 1970s*. Westmoreland's guidance in the design of the War College's research, his decision to openly distribute the complete report, and his immediate actions in response to the report's findings all demonstrate

¹⁴⁸ Westmoreland to Polk, October 1971, Series I, Box 25, Folder 4.

¹⁴⁹ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 113.

Westmoreland's active and determined participation in saving the professional well being of the Army.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

Westmoreland's tenure as the Army's Chief of Staff from 1968-1972 was replete with challenges, and he faced an uphill struggle from the very beginning. Popular support for the Vietnam War was plummeting in the wake of the Tet Offensive, the Soviets and North Koreans were increasingly demonstrating aggressive behavior, and political uncertainty clouded the future of American foreign policy. Westmoreland initially believed that his primary responsibility was to support the ongoing war in Vietnam. By the end of his first year, several factors would change his perspective on his priorities and responsibilities. The first factor was that Westmoreland simply acquired a new perspective. He had spent the previous four years as the commander of American forces in Vietnam, where he was the priority for personnel, equipment, and budget. Upon assuming duties as the Chief of Staff, Westmoreland quickly realized that the prioritization of Vietnam was destroying the moral and physical fiber of the rest of the Army.

Westmoreland developed and instituted his "Four M Program" in 1968 as his initial plan to reform and restore balance to the Army. The first component, mission, established the operational readiness of all of the Army's formations as a priority. The Army's policy of "robbing Peter to pay Paul" for several years had provided Vietnam with the men and material it required, at the expense of the operational readiness of the Army's units throughout the globe, had destabilized the training base, and degraded the capabilities of the strategic reserve. Furthermore, Westmoreland realized that the Army's

decreasing commitments to Vietnam would be coupled with cuts to its budget and end strengths. Therefore, he sought to find the means to restore stability to operational readiness throughout the Army.

The second major component of the Four M program was modernization. The Army had allocated the bulk of its budget over the past four years to its growing commitments to the war in Vietnam. Westmoreland sought to reinvigorate the Army's research and development with his Big Eight program. The intent of the program was to increase the Army's airmobile capabilities, design weapons and vehicle platforms capable of defeating Soviet capabilities, utilizing emerging technology to enhance command and control, and improve air defense capabilities. Overall, Westmoreland's "Big Eight" served as the progenitor for Abrams's "Big Five".

Another component of Westmoreland's "Four M Program" was the managerial reform. This concept took many forms, but all of them focused on how the Army could best function with fewer people and less money. Westmoreland fought to gain increased control over how the Army spent its budget, implemented management systems and processes to maximize the efficiency of the Army's budget. He also sought to incorporate emerging technologies to supplement the loss of people, and initiated programs to increase the Army's efficiency in logistics.

While several of the aforementioned components of the "Four M Program" had lasting positive impacts on the reforms of the post-Vietnam Army, Westmoreland erred in his judgement on the fourth component, motivation. While he was keenly aware of some of the dissent and dissatisfaction within the ranks, Westmoreland made two poor assumptions in his initial vision. First, he believed that any of the Army's struggles with

motivation were limited to the draftees, and that the professionals of the force, the officers and career non-commissioned officers, were immune to the effects of sagging morale. Westmoreland's second poor assumption was that the Army did not require any significant reform in this arena. Therefore, he simply needed to remind the Army of its proud legacy and encourage commanders to enhance the esprit de corps of their units.

However, as Westmoreland's first year as Chief of Staff grew to a close, there were several indicators that his assumptions were invalid. Gross misconduct by career soldiers began to indicate an ethical breach: soldiers from the 5th Special Forces Group allegedly murdered one of their informants, a senior officer used his position to obtain government weapons, and a general officer and several senior non-commissioned officers were exhorting the Army's club system for personal profit. As important as these indicators were, the events surrounding the My Lai massacre led to a series of introspective studies that shattered all of Westmoreland's initial assumptions.

As the Army's initial investigation into the events at My Lai was still underway, Westmoreland began to suspect that leadership in the chain of command had attempted to cover up the massacre in order to avoid negative consequences to their careers. Westmoreland's decision to send Lieutenant General Peers to conduct a corollary investigation revealed that over two dozen officers in the chain of command had participated in the cover-up. Furthermore, Peers's inquiry concluded that the massacre was a direct result of poor leadership that had lost its ethical bearings. Westmoreland was stunned at the gravity of the findings, but he trusted Peers's judgement implicitly.

A few months after receiving Peers's report, Westmoreland directed the U.S. Army War College to conduct an assessment of the moral and professional climate of the

Army. The result of this directive was the *Study on Military Professionalism*, which became the cornerstone of Westmoreland's efforts to save the Army's professional well-being. The study had several critical findings, but the most important conclusion was that the Army's officer corps self-identified that they had sacrificed their integrity and ethical responsibilities in the quest for personal advancement. None of the officers who participated in the study had any issues with the traditional views on professional obligations, but they all clearly saw that their performance and actions were greatly out of alignment with the ideals they preached. Upon receiving the War College's briefing on the *Study on Military Professionalism*, Westmoreland had the report and its findings distributed to general officers. While Westmoreland did not authorize the War College to disseminate the report publicly, he did take a series of actions based on the report's findings.

Westmoreland's first action was to increase his emphasis on professional obligations in his interactions and dialogue with the Army's officers, especially senior leaders. Between speeches, letters to the officer corps, and back channel messages to general officers, Westmoreland sent clear messages to the Army's leaders at every echelon. He insisted that officers increase their dialogue with subordinates, remove activities that wasted soldiers' time, and to cease placing integrity on the sacrificial altar in a quest for statistical glory. Furthermore, Westmoreland required all general officers attending the 1970 Army Commander's Conference to brief him on their progress in addressing the issues identified in the *Study on Military Professionalism*. Over the course of his dialogue, Westmoreland committed to the idea that the best remedy to the officer corps' ethical malaise was revitalizing the Army's leadership.

The second significant action Westmoreland took was to initiate another study by the War College to evaluate leadership techniques and to provide recommendations on how to build effective leaders for the next decade. Under Westmoreland's direction, the War College utilized the same methodology as the previous study, but greatly expanded the scope to include personnel from every rank and multiple locations in order to gain a wider perspective. The second study, *Leadership for the 1970s*, produced similar results to the *Study on Military Professionalism*, but had greater specificity on perspectives on leadership. The War College concluded that the greatest disparities were in perspective and communication. Leaders at every echelon, their subordinates, and their superiors had wildly divergent perceptions from how effective they were leading their organizations. The result was poor communication between the ranks, lack of credibility in leadership, and poor unit performance. The issues identified in the *Study on Military Professionalism* contributed to the malaise when leaders falsified reports in an attempt to mask these deficiencies.

After receiving the War College's report on *Leadership for the 1970s*, Westmoreland took several actions to place the Army on the road to professional recovery. First, he authorized the publication of the study and its findings with no restrictions. Second, he continued his dialogue with the Army and published his vision on what the roles and responsibilities were for leaders at every echelon. Third, he gave specific instructions to senior commanders on how they were going to address the issues the War College identified. Last, Westmoreland directed Continental Army Command to expand the War College's studies, develop a complete overhaul on leadership instruction, and to conduct training seminars at nearly every Army installation.

In addition to the issues identified in *Leadership for the 1970s*, Westmoreland sought to reform some of the factors that were contributing to the Army's declining professionalism. Under his guidance, the Army developed and began implementing the Officer Personnel Management System, which prioritized performance in key assignments above and beyond simply serving in key positions. This new system demanded accountability and transparency in officer evaluations, accuracy in maintaining officers' personnel records, and the stabilization of command tours.

Future Impacts of Westmoreland's Initiatives

If the My Lai massacre was the impetus for shattering Westmoreland's assumptions on morale and motivation, then the *Study on Military Professionalism* was the catalyst for Westmoreland's actions to steer the Army onto a course of professional reform. His decision to continue the Army's introspection with *Leadership for the 1970s* was the first in a series of actions that defined Westmoreland's last two years as the Army's Chief of Staff. The findings in the second War College study not only galvanized the Army's emphasis on leadership reforms, they continued to influence the Army's emphasis on the primacy of leadership instruction for the rest of the decade. In the years that followed, the War College would continue to analyze the data from the Continental Army Command's study on leadership in order to publish guidance that would shape the development of the Army's future leadership.

After a year of evaluation and analysis, the USAWC published a series of six monographs on leadership, beginning with *Demographic Characteristics of US Army Leaders* in June 1973. The stated purpose of the first monograph was to establish the statistical foundation for the rest of the series, and to provide, "a reconnaissance of the

people who comprise the Army's leadership structure."¹⁵⁰ The first monograph provided a statistical breakdown of every rank group in seven different categories: level of education, U.S. region of origin, type of region (urban/rural), type of entry into the Army, years of active service, age, and rank. The intent was to increase leaders' capacity to communicate effectively with subordinates and superiors.

The USAWC published the second monograph, *Satisfaction with US Army Leadership*, in September 1973. The second monograph utilized the same methodology as the first, but offered an in depth examination of each rank group's assessment of leadership. Furthermore, it also analyzed the opinions of the corresponding superior and subordinate rank groups.¹⁵¹ The data collected from over 30,000 soldiers illustrated that between seventy-five and eighty percent of all white and non-white soldiers in these groups were at least somewhat pleased with their leadership, and roughly forty percent highly pleased. Examining the data on other rank groups yielded similar results, with marginal to non-existent disparity between whites and non-whites on their perceptions of leadership.¹⁵² Overall, the data in the second monograph indicated that the vast majority of soldiers, regardless of rank or race, were at least generally pleased with the Army's leadership capabilities.

¹⁵⁰ U.S. Army War College, *Leadership Monograph 1: Demographic Characteristics of US Army Leaders* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army, June 1973), 2.

¹⁵¹ U.S. Army War College, *Leadership Monograph 2: Satisfaction with US Army Leadership* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army, September 1973), 2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 4-7.

The USAWC published monographs 3 through 6 from October 1973 through August 1974. Each additional monograph gave specific attention to a particular rank group, so that junior NCOs, senior NCOs, company grade officers, and field grade officers each had their own guide. Although the second monograph found that the majority of the Army was generally pleased with its leadership, the USAWC published monographs 3 through 6 with the express purpose of further improving this perception. In each monograph, the USAWC examined the leadership of each group from four perspectives: most important, most frequent, and desired leadership behaviors, as well as leadership problem areas or shortfalls. In similar fashion to the preceding monographs, the USAWC examined how each group perceived their own leadership as well as how their subordinates and superiors perceived their leadership capabilities.

Overall, Westmoreland's series of decisions and actions led to the creation of the War College's *Leadership Monograph Series*, the culmination of four years of research into the challenges that the conditions of the Vietnam War imposed on the Army's ability to provide competent and capable leadership at all echelons. The *Study on Military Professionalism* confirmed that by 1970, the officer corps was losing confidence in the Army's leadership at the field grade and general officer level. In 1971, *Leadership for the 1970s* confirmed that the waning confidence in leadership was not limited to the Army's company and field grade officers; the enlisted ranks, the West Point Corps of Cadets, and Department of the Army civilians all shared similar perceptions. The War College's clear identification of the Army's leadership challenges inspired and shaped the CONARC Leadership Study, which surveyed over thirty thousand Army personnel in order to provide feedback to Army commanders on how to begin addressing their leadership

deficiencies. CONARC's collection of data, the largest collection of data on military leadership ever assembled, ultimately enabled the War College to publish their capstone plan for improving leadership throughout the Army in the *Leadership Monograph Series*. The six monograph series provided innumerable data points and recommendations for leaders at all levels to adjust and improve their techniques in order to lead their subordinates efficiently and effectively. The Army's four years of dedicated research and analysis were crucial to improving leadership, communication, and professionalism at all echelons.

In an interview during his last year as the Army Chief of Staff, Westmoreland stated, "Well, I've been living with crises a long time. To me our problem today is an exciting challenge. I feel fortunate to be able to play a key role in revitalizing the Army and rebuilding it at this important time in the life of an institution that I regard so highly. We're going to come out of this a much better Army; I have absolutely no doubt of this."¹⁵³ In many ways, this quotation summarizes Westmoreland's tenure as Chief of Staff. The aftermath of the My Lai massacre was the crisis that shattered Westmoreland's poor assumptions, leading to one of the most introspective periods in the Army's history. This introspection produced seminal studies that examined the Army's professional soul and laid bare all of its professional sins. Westmoreland's greatest contribution to the reforms of the post-Vietnam Army was embracing this crisis and dedicating significant intellectual and professional talent to charting a path to recovery.

¹⁵³ William C. Westmoreland, interview by George C. Wilson and Haynes Johnson, 9 August 1971, Series 2, Box 50, Folder 3.

Aspects for Further Study

While Westmoreland's contributions to professionalism and leadership were arguably his greatest achievements, he also exerted enormous influence over the genesis of other post-Vietnam Army reforms that are deserving of additional study. The first of these topics is training and education. At the same time Westmoreland was decisively engaged with the Army's issues with professionalism, he had also directed Brigadier General Paul Gorman to conduct a thorough review of the Army's training methods. Gorman's work at Fort Benning, better known as the Board for Dynamic Training, was instrumental in advising commanders in techniques for to develop training regimens that interested and challenged soldiers.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Board for Dynamic Training reinforced some of the core tenets in the professionalism studies by advocating for the decentralization of training down to the lowest echelon possible.

In addition to Gorman's work, Westmoreland convinced Major General Frank Norris to delay his retirement in 1971 and conduct a comprehensive overview of the officer education system. Whereas Gorman's study focused on the training conducted by operational units, Norris focused on the institutional training base with special emphasis on officer training. Overall, Norris concluded that basic officer courses were unchallenging and inadequate in content and duration, advanced courses lacked academic rigor, and the Command and General Staff College overemphasized instruction on command and operations. The Gorman and Norris studies are just two examples of Westmoreland's attempts to invigorate the Army's training methods, and are both

¹⁵⁴ Westmoreland, *Report of the Chief of Staff*, 115.

excellent inroads for a larger study on the Army integrated new training methods into developing doctrine in the post-Vietnam Army.

The second topic that demands additional study is Westmoreland's role in the development of the all volunteer Army. Beginning in 1969, Westmoreland began taking steps in preparation for the eventual transition away from a draft Army. Initially, Westmoreland was not very keen on the idea of the transition, which makes sense considering that he spent almost his entire career leading draftees. Regardless of his initial impressions, Westmoreland embraced the concept and consistently communicated that the Modern Volunteer Army initiatives were among his top priorities. As the Chief of Staff, Westmoreland always had to walk a tight rope between the demands of making the Army attractive to volunteer recruits, and ensuring that the pace of change did not disenfranchise the career officers and non-commissioned officers from embracing the concept. Westmoreland's selection of Lieutenant General George Forsythe was likely the critical lynchpin for the entire project, and he consistently endorsed and supported Forsythe's initiatives and stressed the need for senior commanders to do so as well. Westmoreland was at his best in this arena when he was synchronizing the Modern Volunteer Army initiatives with the issues identified with the War College professionalism and leadership studies, as well as the Gorman and Norris studies on training. A cursory look implies that the combination of these three elements was essential to the success of the post-Vietnam Army's ability to continue reforms.

A third topic for consideration is organizational reform. The creation of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Forces Command (FORSCOM) in 1973 is a moment of immense importance in the conventional narrative

of the post-Vietnam Army's reform movement. Historians consistently link this action to a renaissance in Army doctrine, the successful development and fielding of the "Big Five", and the integration of the all volunteer force. However, these same historians leave out an important detail. The plan to divide Continental Army Command into TRADOC and FORSCOM, known as Operation Steadfast, was conducted by the Army Staff from 1968-1972 under Westmoreland's tenure. General Abrams only had two important roles in the process. The first was to sign the order to make the previous four years of laborious staff work official. The second was to select the commanders for both organizations: General William DePuy for TRADOC and General Walter "Dutch" Kerwin for FORSCOM. DePuy's work at TRADOC is well established in the historiography, for the systems he established during his tenure became the architecture upon which the reformers of the post-Vietnam era attached their initiatives. Westmoreland's role in the overseeing of Operation Steadfast, as well as his role as a mentor to DePuy, demands further study.

The fourth topic worthy of additional attention is an evaluation of Westmoreland's entire "Four M Program". While this study places great emphasis on the motivation concept, senior political and military leaders would benefit greatly from an in depth study on how well Westmoreland performed in the other three components of his initial vision: mission, modernization, and management. Westmoreland's tenure as the Chief of Staff has remarkable similarities to the 21st century Army that is withdrawing from prolonged conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, while simultaneously confronting decreased budgets and end strengths. A thorough examination of how well Westmoreland maintained the operational readiness of the entire force, how he prioritized demands for

research and development, and how well he implemented to systems to improve efficiency in force management is an exceptional case study worthy of its own investigation and discussion.

The Enduring Power of the Narrative

A final point worthy of consideration by both military practitioners and academics is the power of the narrative. Westmoreland was clearly a controversial figure in his time, and became the poster child for every ounce of public vitriol against the Vietnam War. Academics and soldier-scholars demonstrated their sensitivity to this in the limited narrative they created that defines the post-Vietnam Army. They draw a clear line in the sand with the formation of TRADOC in 1973, which is a demarcation point that associates everything with the Westmoreland era as negative and corrupted, and everything that moves forward beginning under Abrams's tenure as the starting point for reform that ends in victory in the Persian Gulf in 1991.¹⁵⁵ As this study has shown, the reforms of the post-Vietnam Army did not begin with TRADOC. DePuy and his successors had tremendous impacts on the Army's recovery, but the reforms began while Westmoreland was the Chief of Staff and the Vietnam War was still raging. Furthermore, Westmoreland was not a passive, lame duck Chief of Staff around whom capable subordinates had to maneuver to accomplish critical tasks. He consistently had an active and guiding role in the reforms of his era. Westmoreland's critics need to disassociate

¹⁵⁵ A common theme in the numerous histories published by TRADOC is "Victory Starts Here."

their criticism of his performance as the commander of American forces in Vietnam from his performance as the Chief of Staff.

If viewed objectively, a Westmoreland emerges that is far different than the traditional historiography. He was complicated and he made some poor initial assumptions, but he also recognized when his assumptions were invalid and that he needed to chart a new course for the Army. His transformation and willingness to gain a new perspective inspired the Army as an institution to undergo intense introspection and began the arduous task of restoring the Army's shield of professionalism. Without Westmoreland's contributions, the post-Vietnam Army's reforms would have taken considerably longer to develop and implement, and the Army would have lacked the human capacity necessary for maximizing the doctrinal and technological reforms in the coming decades.

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