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GENERAL CREIGHTON ABRAMS: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

General Creighton Abrams:

Ethical Leadership at the Strategic Level

by

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ABSTRACT

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Ethical leadership is the foundation upon which the United States Army is built. The Army has faced many ethical challenges in its history. Present challenges are indeed much like the ones that General Creighton Abrams faced when he was the Army Chief of Staff. This study describes General Abrams' ethical strategic leadership style during his Army career and examines the extent that his ethical principles and examples affected his soldiers and the Army. This paper also explores the impact that General Abrams' ethical strategic leadership still makes upon the Army today.

General Abrams's ethical leadership impacted all levels of the Army. His leadership positively influenced soldiers and leaders at the battalion through the Corps level in Germany. His ethical strategic leadership was instrumental in the Army's handling of the racial issues during the civil rights movement in

1962-1963. General Abrams' leadership in Vietnam enabled the military to conduct an orderly withdrawal from the war. His most lasting contribution came when the Army rebuilt after Vietnam. His ethical strategic leadership is still evident today in the organization and the Army's current leadership.

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful wife Mary, for all of her understanding and support, and especially for allowing me to attend the Army War College.

GENERAL CREIGHTON ABRAMS: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

The United States Army's culture revolves around the culture of our senior leaders. They set the tone for ethics and leadership in the Army. Today's Army is facing many problems associated with force structure issues. The downsizing of the total force, both active and reserve, has given rise to increased parochialism. The latest round of sexual misconduct issues in the force has caused many to question the Army's ethical and moral climate. These issues only highlight the need for ethical leadership at the strategic level.

Army doctrine deals specifically with ethical leadership. Consider the following definitions from Military Leadership (FM 22-100):

> Ethics are principles or standards that guide professionals to do the moral or right thing—what ought to be done.
>
> As a leader, you have three general ethical responsibilities. First, you must be a good role model. Second, you must develop your subordinates ethically. Finally, you must lead in such a way that you avoid putting your subordinates into ethical dilemmas.[1]
>
> Leadership is the process of influencing others to accomplish the mission by providing purpose, direction, and motivation.[2]

These are the guiding principles of the Army. They set the ethical standards for Army leaders. General Creighton Abrams

(1914-1974) used and perfected these skills throughout his long and dynamic military career.

Today's armed forces are being held to a higher standard than in the past. An Air Force general was passed over for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs for an affair he had almost twenty years ago. The Sergeant Major of the Army is currently facing court-martial for sexual misconduct. Our political leaders and journalists continually question the Army about its ethical standards. So Army leaders must set the stage for ethical leadership in the Army.

These problems are not new to the Army. In many ways these are the same problems that General Abrams faced when he became the Army Chief of Staff in 1972. The Army was recovering from the Vietnam war, during which its moral character and leadership were questioned. Also, the Army was undergoing a major reduction in troop strength. Abrams was implementing the transition to an all volunteer force. He also faced the challenge of rebuilding the forces in Europe and improving the morale throughout the Army. He instituted the Total Force concept to more closely tie the reserves to the active forces.

General Abrams was a member of the West Point Class of 1936, when he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Cavalry. He

displayed great leadership as the commander of the 37th Tank Battalion 4th Armored Division during World War II. The confidence that his superiors had in his leadership was shown during the battle for Nancy in September, 1944. Combat Command A of the 4th Armor Division was attempting to cross the Moselle River, while the Germans were counterattacking to close the bridgehead. The Corps and Division Commanders were discussing the situation with the commander of Combat Command A, considering the possibilities of conducting a crossing. They were unable to reach a decision about the crossing. They all turned to LTC Abrams, commander of the 37th Tank Battalion, and asked his opinion. "The battalion commander, pointing to the east across the river, [said] 'Colonel, that is the shortest way home."[3]

General Abrams' leadership and ethical behavior in WW II are legendary. He is most famous for his relief of Bastogne. But this was at the tactical level; it wasn't until after WW II that he revealed his true potential as an ethical strategic leader. After the war he was reduced from colonel to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Then in 1949 he returned to Germany and assumed command of the only tank battalion in Europe, the 63rd Tank Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division. He already was

displaying the values that would serve him later at the strategic level.

> He established his ethical stance early on in the assignment, then demonstrated it in his own example and insisted on it in the conduct of others.
>
> He set standards of performance that were tough and demanding, then coached and counseled his young subordinates on how to meet those standards.
>
> He gave people room to develop, to make mistakes, and to learn from them....
>
> He cast his lot with the unit, subordinating any personal ambition to his aspiration for the whole.
>
> And finally—a crucially important point—he made it fun. A lieutenant from the battalion, one of those who later became a general officer, said "in Abrams's battalion I didn't go on leave for two years. I was afraid I'd miss something."[4]

Nonetheless, General Abrams was not thrilled with this assignment. He had already commanded a tank battalion during combat. The 63rd had only recently been formed, and many of the soldiers had been transferred from other units who were getting rid of their problems.

> In his first couple of weeks with the battalion, Abrams kept a very low profile. He walked around, greeted people politely, was courteous if gruff. He said nothing. From time to time he would make a few notes... Then one day he convened a session that was to become part of the folklore of the outfit. The company commanders and their executive officers were assembled, and Abrams told them that he would like to take a little stroll. "I have a stick here" he said, "and we are going to walk through the battalion area. I will say nothing. But if I raise my stick and point at something, if I see it again I'm going to relieve the company commander."

> Three days later he retraced his steps. The one thing he found uncorrected was the jeep trailer with a flat tire. Abrams relieved the company commander on the spot. "Then," recalls another company commander, "it became evident to those of us that were privileged to be there that he meant goddamn business. There was no more fooling around. I mean it just stopped."[5]

This type of shock treatment was essential for turning the battalion around.

General Abrams also showed that he could set the example with his ethical leadership while with the 63rd. "He had the courage to blow the whistle when he found a few officers and men in his battalion selling monthly nearly 100,000 gallons of gasoline on the black market—the courage to track down the problem to its source and bring the offenders to trial."[6] The leadership in the division and the soldiers in his battalion never questioned Creighton Abrams' ethics. One of his company commanders in the 63rd, Hap Haszard, said of him: "Abe never talked ethics—he just exampled it."[7] General Abrams turned the 63rd around and made it one of the best battalions in the division. As he frequently told his soldiers, "Nobody on the face of the earth can take honesty away from anybody; he's got to give it up himself."[8]

General Abrams continued to impact the Army and the people. When he took command of the 3rd Armored Division in 1960, the

training guidance was very detailed: It dictated training down to the company level. Then he decided that it was too restrictive—it gave the leadership no chance to develop their own training programs.

> Bautz ran down the hall, got the training program, brought it back and laid it on Abrams' desk. The document was fully two inches thick.
>
> Abrams drummed the stack of paper with his fingers, flipped it a couple of times. Then he handed it back across the desk. 'Colonel Bautz, I want you to re-do that training program on two pieces of paper.' Bautz was a hell of a soldier, but he choked out: 'Sir, there's no way you can put that division training program on two sheets of paper'...
>
> Abrams looked at Bautz, 'Colonel, I'll go over this for you one more time. I want you to re-do that training program',... With a faint smile he said, 'Say, Eddie, you can use both sides of the paper.'[9]

He was the right person at the right time to make these changes. This is an example of how General Abrams displayed his leadership at the strategic level. His changes to a division training program would have major effects on how divisions trained in Europe. The Army has not been able to stay with his guidance of two sheets of paper for yearly division training guidance, but company training is no longer dictated from the division level. It took Creighton Abrams' ethical leadership to make that kind of a change—and the Corps commander's support his initiative.

In 1962 General Abrams was designated the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations for Civil Affairs, then he became very involved with the 1960s' civil rights crises. He served as the Army's man on the ground during civil rights operations. Abrams was involved three of the five times federal troops were used to respond to civil disturbances between WW II and 1965. His leadership and guidance were instrumental in developing the civil disturbance guidance for the Army. He handled matters so well and became so important to the Kennedy administration that he had a hard time leaving Washington.

> General Harold K. Johnson confirmed the problem, saying that Abrams had been delayed in going to Europe to take command of V Corps 'because the civilian officials were unwilling to release him because of the manner in which he had performed in conjunction with activities associated with the civil rights, and that had been a really superb performance'.[10]

During these missions, Abrams handled some highly sensitive matters. His superiors' knowledge of General Abrams high ethical stands made his assessments more believable. Years later when he was asked about his experiences he admitted that: "I can't recall any situation when the opportunities were greater to slip off the gangplank into the quicksand."[11]

When General Abrams became Commander of V Corps in Germany in 1963, he once again showed that his leadership could energize a

unit. General James V. Galloway, who served in the V Corps at that time, made a revealing observation about General Abrams' leadership: "Well, it worked; it's amazing how rapidly that shaped the Corps up and particularly with General Abrams personal touch on visiting units and his personal touch with letters that he wrote afterwards."[12]

When he was leaving to become the Vice Chief of Staff, General Abrams addressed a group of senior leaders in Germany about professionalism:

> I believe that these special aspects of the leadership, guidance and training of our young leaders frequently become lost or overshadowed by our routine cares and problems. This business of cultivation and development begins with our own self-examination. If we are honestly and sincerely discharging our duties as commanders...we cannot help but be contributing to the fundamental and healthy motivation of our junior officers. It is mandatory that we seriously concern ourselves with their careers, to include their morale, the welfare of themselves and their families, their attitudes and their thoughts, and their development problems...It should be a work of love and from the heart.[13]

Thus General Abrams expressed his deepest feelings about the responsibilities that senior leaders had for the development of ethical leadership in the officer corps. He believed it was the leadership's responsibility to develop a climate in the Army that made ethical behavior the norm.

When General Abrams became the Army Vice Chief of Staff he was responsible for building the Army that would fight the war in Vietnam. President Lyndon B.Johnson's refusal to call up the reserves for the Vietnam expansion astonished the defense establishment. President Kennedy had called up the reserves for the Berlin crisis in 1961, but now President Johnson was preparing to fight the Vietnam war with only the active forces. This decision led to the Army's professional leadership being depleted over and over again to fill new units. This decision also had a devastating effect on the reserves who had trained to fight the nation's wars. The reserves thus became a dumping ground for people who did not want to go to Vietnam. In a briefing to a newly appointed civilian official, General Abrams was very critical of the decision not to mobilize the reserves and to rely on the draft:

> "Mr. Secretary," he told him, "the only Americans who have the honor to die for their country in Vietnam are the dumb, the poor and the black."[14]

General Abrams felt that the Army's professional soldiers were being sacrificed for the war. He struggled with the problems of building units for Vietnam. General Abrams knew that the units that were being formed for Vietnam would be filled with new recruits right out of training. He took the training issues very

seriously. To address this issue, in 1965 he wrote an article for the Army Digest entitled "Basic Facts on Basic Training." He declared that:

> Training men to become professionals in the art of land combat and preparing them for war are the responsibility of professional military soldiers. This responsibility cannot be delegated or shifted to others outside of the military profession. We who are professional soldiers have always and will continue to fulfill this obligation to our men, for they are our most valuable resource.[15]

The Army was growing very rapidly; General Abrams worried that the rapid growth would cause the quality of leadership and soldiers to suffer.

> Basic training companies were increased and increased again to process the thousands and thousands of draftees, as many as 35,000 a month, while Officer Candidate Schools geared up to turn out as many as 3,500 graduates a *month* (West Point was at that time producing 500 graduates a *year*).[16]

General Abrams visited an Officers Candidate School as the Vice Chief and was disappointed with the amount of time they spent shining floors. "I thought of what we wanted in our officer corps: character, integrity,... professional competence..." He felt too much time was being spent on things that had nothing to do with leadership.

Abrams repeatedly proclaimed the Army's obligation to develop the junior leaders. He shared some of his ethical views and beliefs with the Army by writing a number of articles during his

time as the Vice Chief of Staff. One article in particular addressed Army values, "Serving the American Dream". This was written in for the magazine ARMY and appeared in November 1966. He emphasized the importance of serving America. Abrams felt that the soldiers' sacrifices were preserving the freedom of the rest of the country. Abrams also felt that the Army was providing training and guidance for the youth of America. This in turn would provide a pool of leaders in all walks of life that would insure our nation's freedom.

General Abrams persisted with this massive undertaking of building the Army for Vietnam, which grew by more than 500,000 men during this time. Many new units were formed; this contributed to a shortage of leaders in the Army. Most of the increases were filled with draftees who returned to civilian life after two years, so this turnover created a never-ending cycle of new recruits. The one-year tour of duty also added to the turmoil and challenges for Vice Chief General Abrams. He continued in this assignment until May 1967, when he was sent to Vietnam as a four-star deputy to General Westmoreland, replacing a three-star deputy. He was informed that he would shortly assume command of the forces in Vietnam.

When General Abrams arrived in Vietnam, he started to influence the conduct of the war. He personally chose the chief of staff for Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV),a position that General Westmoreland should have chosen. There is also evidence that General Abrams was not thrilled to serve as General Westmoreland's deputy. "General Abrams later told an aide 'that he knew neither Westmoreland nor he would really enjoy that relationship much.'"[17] There was a marked difference in how Abrams addressed the progress of the war. General Westmoreland spoke in terms of how quickly the war would be won and how he could see the light at the end of the tunnel. General Abrams always declined to speculate on the length of the war; he let the events speak for themselves.

General Abrams started visiting units shortly after he became the deputy commander. He quickly addressed the training and morale of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). He visited units and talked to all ranks of soldiers from privates to general officers. He became very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the South Vietnamese forces. General Abrams believed that a new approach to the training of Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was required. He told commanders: "The tasks of improving RVNAF are not limited to advisors...who

are the unsung heroes of the war. It is everybody's job. Not until we adopt this philosophy will we proceed in a satisfactory manner."[18]

Under General Westmoreland the U.S. Army did the majority of the fighting. The ARVN forces had taken a secondary role in combat operations. General Abrams saw the need for the ARVN forces to play a much larger role in the war. They would have to become more involved in all operations if they were ever to win the war. General Abrams was taking his role as the senior advisor to the Vietnamese very seriously. This was a major change from the way it had been handled before he became the deputy commander.

The North Vietnamese Tet offensive of 1968 precipitated a major change in how the American public viewed the Vietnam War. For months they had been hearing that the light at the end of the tunnel was in sight; they believed that the war would soon be won. During Tet, MACV Headquarters came under siege. It took three days for General Abrams to get a helicopter to visit the other commands in Vietnam. General Westmoreland was not happy with the pace of the fighting in the northern part of Vietnam, in particular the Marine fight at Khe Sanh. So he established MACV

forward and put General Abrams in charge of the forces. His leadership had an immediate effect on their performance.

> Abrams' calm and competent leadership proved indispensable. Vietnamese General Ngo Quang Truong was commanding the ARVN 1st Division... The situation was critical, he said, but when Abrams arrived, 'he was decisive, he gave confidence. I remember very well the first time I talked to General Abrams on the battlefield in Quang Tri. He grasped the situation,... He was a pure soldier.' [19]

General Abrams was very concerned with effects of the heavy fighting and the distraction the Tet offensive had caused in the Vietnamese cities. He worried that these actions would alienate the Vietnamese population and undermine the good that combat operations were accomplishing. General Abrams was queried from Washington about the destruction during Tet.

> If somehow the sensing has developed that I have been in too many wars to be concerned and sensitive to its pain, or that I am too busy with plans or campaigns or something else to spend time on correcting the destruction of war, let me set the record straight. I recognize all of this as my responsibility. I live with it...[20]

He had the courage and the leadership ability to try and change the way the Army was fighting the Vietnam War. He felt that firepower was being over-used. Even as the deputy commander, he was trying to implement change. His initiative caused some confusion early in Tet: General Westmoreland advocated massive firepower, but General Abrams was trying to limit its use in

built up areas. In fact, the two generals issued conflicting orders on the use artillery and air power.

On 10 April 1968 Creighton Abrams was made Commander of MACV. He was featured on the cover of TIME on the 19th of April with the caption "New Man in Viet Nam". There was already much anticipation of the withdrawal of US troops. The article predicted that "One way or another, through a negotiated peace or a phased U.S. withdrawal, Abe Abrams will likely be the man who presides over the end of the massive American presence in South Viet Nam."[21] The military leadership found that Abrams's style of leadership would be much different than Westmoreland's. General Abrams knew that time was running out for the US Army in Vietnam. He realized that public support for the war was drastically reduced after Tet. He faced the harsh reality that no more troops would be sent, so he had to finish the war with constantly diminishing troop strength. He told his staff at their first meeting: "The mission is not to seek out and destroy the enemy. The mission is to provide protection for the people of Vietnam."[22] Abrams initiated major changes in how the war would be conducted. He limited the amount of firepower that could be used on friendly villages and how the ARVN forces would be employed.

General Abrams steadily undertook the unglamorous task of bringing an end to a very long and controversial war. A magazine article written for The New York Times Magazine in 1969 was titled "General Abrams Deserves A Better War". He did deserve a better war to finish his career, but he made the best of what he was given. General Abrams was highly respected by both the civilian leadership and the news media. Journalist Kevin Buckley noted that "He is not part of the 'club' which had been running the war. The club was a collection of officers of similar personal style and professional approach."[23] General Abrams never seemed too worried what the news media said about him, in sharp contrast to General Westmoreland. He didn't get drawn into the trap that Westmoreland had by continually predicting how quickly the war would end. General Abrams didn't seem to care one bit about the media.

The forces in Vietnam were withdrawn at an ever increasing rate. General Abrams was gravely concerned that the morale of the soldiers would be affected. He knew that this would be a difficult time for commanders of combat troops as well as the troops assigned to rear areas. Abrams felt that as commander he needed to address these issues and assure the troops that their efforts would have an effect on the outcome of the war. He wrote

a letter to all commanders and, in January 1970, had it distributed with the order that no intermediate commander could change his wording. His one-page letter clearly articulated leaders' responsibilities:

> Leadership demands our constant attention, especially at the small unit level. It is here that a leader can influence most decisively and directly the conduct, performance, and welfare of his men....This does not mean that there can be any degradation of standards...The average American serviceman will believe what his leaders tell him as long as they do tell him...He must be told what is expected of him and what he can expect from his leaders...Our servicemen have met the test, and will continue to do so in the future...[24]

General Abrams thus continued to provide the ethical strategic leadership that was needed during this darkest phase of the war. The US Army's direct involvement would continue for another year and a half. The Cambodian incursion was conducted in May 1970, and the Vietnamese Army's attack into Laos took place during this time frame. These were not easy times for the Army, and Abrams' leadership was indispensable. U.S. forces continued to withdraw, and the soldiers left behind felt abandoned.

Abrams left Vietnam in June 1972, after serving five years in country. A journalist noted that "Unlike his classmate, Abrams emerged from the unpopular Vietnam war with praise for a difficult job well executed and with his military reputation unblemished."[25] He was called back to become the Army Chief of

Staff and to his most difficult assignment—rebuilding the Army after Vietnam. The draft had been discontinued; the Army was in transition to an all-volunteer force.

On occasion, senior officers had not followed the rules of engagement during the Vietnam war. The ethical conduct of the Army's senior leadership was sharply questioned. One case involved the Air Force bombing of a North Vietnamese airfield. This attack took place during Abrams' command. During his confirmation hearings his ethical conduct was questioned: He was asked by Senator Smith about following rules in Vietnam. His response reveals his character:

> You see, a lot of these rules looked silly to many of the men; there is no question about it. In a military in a pure military sense they appear silly but. They must be if you are going to hold it together they must be followed. And you learn that after a while. But it is the same any time. If you pick and choose among the directions that you get from your superiors, your subordinates will do the same thing from you. And they will know when you are doing it and then you have got nothing.[26]

His approach as the Army Chief of Staff would be the same as in all of his other assignments: lead by example. He did what was expected while he commanded in Vietnam not because he totally believed in all the directives from Washington, but because that was the ethical thing to do. He could have done as so many other people have done when faced with a difficult decision: He could

have taken the easy way out. That was not the way General Abrams conducted business. He did what was morally and ethically correct. Accordingly, he expected nothing less from his subordinates. General Abrams was an officer who set and enforced the highest standards for his command.

He set about rebuilding an Army that was beset with problems. The forces in Europe had been neglected for years. There were serious morale and equipment problems throughout the force. General Abrams' reputation and leadership ability were seen by many as the foundation for rebuilding of the Army. The Army's strength was decreasing. General Abrams envisioned the need to reorganize the Army and cut some of the headquarters strength as a way to save divisions and cut the "tooth to tail" ratio. He developed a plan to increase the force structure from 13 to 16 divisions with no increase in overall personnel. His direction for the Army on this issue was questioned by one congressional committee. He succinct reply cut to the chase: "In the three wars that I have been in, it was never very crowded at the front."[27] General Abrams saw that one way to accomplish this plan was to change the structure of the divisions by moving to the reserves supporting units that the Army only needed for the war-fighting missions. Thus the active force could concentrate

on its war-fighting mission. His new force structure would also insure that the President would not be able to send the Army to war, as had been done in Vietnam, without a call up of the reserve forces.

General Abrams thereby set a new course for the Army. Without kowtowing, he gained the support of the political leadership. Revision of the force structure enabled him to accomplish his primary goal. His plan embedded force structure in the reserve components that the Army didn't need for peace-time activities, but they were essential for the wartime missions. This was not an easy task. Many in the military thought that he was leading the Army in the wrong direction. But General Abrams' leadership prevailed. In October 1973 he wrote about readiness for Army, offering insight into how he was preparing the Army:

> Readiness must be more than charts...an attitude...shared by every member of our Army, including members of the active Army and reserve components—The Army National Guard and Army Reserve—alike. The Army is people..
>
> We must not be taken in by the misguided idea that our reserves can be made ready with indifferent support, or that they can get by with half-hearted attention. Getting by is not good enough, and indifferent support is not good enough for a ready and responsive reserve force. Our reserve components must be able to accomplish their mission now and at every moment, not in some dim, distant future.[28]

General Abrams was developing the fundamental Army concept that would be the basis for his 16-division active force.

Colonel Harry Summers, who worked on this plan, recalls Abrams' strategic vision:

> The post-Vietnam Army General Abrams sought to create was designed deliberately to form an interrelated structure that could not be committed to sustained combat without mobilizing the reserves. The structure became a reality by 1983, when 50 percent of the army's combat elements and 70 percent of its combat service support units...were in the National Guard and Army Reserve. General Abrams hoped that this...would correct one of the major deficiencies of the American involvement in the Vietnam War-the commitment of the army to sustained combat without the explicit support of the American people as expressed by their representatives in Congress.[29]

Abrams' leadership and approach to the reserve component issues would be his most profound and longest lasting legacy for the Army. His total commitment to the one Army concept and its continuing impact on the Army to the present is a true mark of his ethical strategic leadership. General Abrams' vision of one Army was realized during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, when the reserve forces were mobilized to support these actions. With the mobilization of the reserves, the support of the nation was also mobilized. It is unfortunate that the two roundout brigades were not mobilized and deployed with their divisions as General Abrams had planned. This would have been the ultimate test of his one-Army concept. If the Army had a

strong visionary leader like General Abrams at this point in history, maybe things would have been different. The failure to deploy the two roundout brigades will continue to taint the relationship between the Army and the National Guard, until a combat unit is mobilized and successfully deployed.

General Abrams's goal was to make the Army more professional and to put the failures of Vietnam behind. He saw the junior officers as a way to accomplish this. The Vietnam war was over; its senior commanders had micro managed the U.S. operations. When there was contact with the enemy, higher level commanders would become directly involved with small unit actions. Abrams thus perceived the need for junior officers to be given the chance to make decisions and grow from their mistakes. He was worried that the Army was developing a stultifying zero-defects attitude. He pronounced that:

> To be fully ready, the Army must maintain a chain of command which provides freedom for junior leaders—commissioned and noncommissioned—to make decisions,...They must be granted a chance to operate without a senior looking over their shoulders, making decisions for them or second-guessing them.[30]

As the Chief of Staff, General Abrams welcomed his ethical duty to improve the leadership of the Army. Nurturing junior leadership was one way that he chose to do it.

In the midst of rebuilding the Army, General Abrams became ill. Doctors identified a spot on his lung. His left lung was removed. As soon as he was able, Abrams returned to work. He had much work to do, but he limited himself to dealing with the issues that mattered most to the Army. When he became too ill to work at the Pentagon, he continued to work at his quarters at Ft. Myer. General Abrams died on 4 September 1974.

However, General Abrams' influence on the Army did not end with his death. The officers he mentored went on to run the Army. His efforts are evident to this day. The present Army Chief of Staff, General Dennis Reimer, was an aide for Chief of Staff General Abrams. His one-Army concept is alive today, although still suffering from its growing pains, even as the Army is faced with more drawdowns. The percent of forces in the reserves continues to rise. The Army's deployments continue to increase, and reserve forces are involved with each mission. General Abrams' strategy that the President could not deploy the Army without involving the nation is alive and well.

General Abrams' is continually cited as an example of an ethical leader for the officer corps. Two of the guest speakers addressing the US Army War College Class of 1998 cited General Abrams as an example. Abrams left a wealth of lore and war

stories for future generations of leaders. "One of General Abrams' most quoted statements is his observation that people are not in the Army-people are the Army."[31] General Desbory recalled telling Abrams that a group of officers from Ft. Leavenworth were considering taking the battalion commander's tank out of the TOE. Abrams indignantly responded, "You go back and tell those son-of-bitches if they do that, I'll take the parachute away from the parachute battalion commander."[32] His strong commitment to the military and the country are shown evident in this pithily observation: "We've got to stop preaching that we're saving dollars. We're saving the Army—the country needs one."[33] We still have not learned that lesson, because we still talk of saving dollars instead of what is good for the country.

General Abrams' loss was mourned by the total Army. The following encomium was rendered at the Army War College in September 1974 by the Commandant, Major General Dewitt C. Smith, Jr. He observed that General Abrams possessed.

> ...Moral courage to go with the physical courage. Dignity, strength, a sense of humor, philosophical out look, total integrity and great wisdom. Above all, integrity and wisdom...his mark was everywhere on an Army which daily became both more professional and more human..'The root of the Army's purpose,' he said, 'is the security of the nation. Apart from that, we have no purpose.' 'Doesn't anyone out there want to do a good job, with that alone as his reward?'...In every

> leader who tempers his judgment and his justice with compassion -- General Abrams is there...In every soldier who thinks of the Army and others first, and himself last -- General Abrams is there...And in every look and word and roar and pounding fist, insisting above all on humanity and backbone and integrity -- General Abrams will be there.[34]

General Abrams' loss at the time seemed catastrophic. Certainly it is unfortunate that he was unable to finish the work that he started. But his strong influence remains.

General Abrams' service as the Chief was very difficult, perhaps more difficult than the issues that face the leadership of the Army today. What difference can one person make? Look at the difference that General Abrams made at every level that he served. He excelled as a combat leader. He turned the only tank battalion—a demoralized unit indeed—in Germany into a quality unit. His leadership in the civil rights movement changed the military's involvement with civil unrest. He built our Army for Vietnam, even though it was not the one he wanted to build. He lamented its lack of the reserves. He led the Army's successful withdrawal from the war. General Abrams left command in Vietnam—a bad war—with his reputation and honor intact. He was respected by both the military and the civilian leadership. The difference he made as the Chief of Staff is evident today. His Total Army concept has been successful in every deployment. His

ethical leadership still serves as a living example for the Army. His emphasis on readiness and professionalism is alive and well in today's Army.

What difference can one ethical leader make at the strategic level? Just look at the Army that was successful in Desert Storm, then you can see the difference that General Abrams made. The professionalism and integrity of the Army flows from the top. Therein lies the difference ethical strategic leadership makes. General Abrams was certainly not the Army's first ethical strategic leader. His value is that he came along when there was a desperate need for such leadership at the highest level.

Word count 5,987

ENDNOTES

[1]Department of the Army, Military Leadership, Field Manual FM 22-100(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 31 July 1990),30.

[2]Ibid., 1.

[3]The ideas in this paragraph are based on the after action report from Combat Command A 4th Armored Division, The Establishment and Defense of the Nancy Bridgehead (September 1985).

[4]Lewis Sorley, "Creighton W. Abrams and the Art Of Taking Charge," Friends of the West Point Library NEWSLETTER 22 (May 1993):

[5]Lewis Sorley, "The Art of Taking Charge," ACROSS THE BOARD, Vol.XXIX No.5(May 1992): 30.

[6]Donn A. Starry, "Dedication of ABRAMS LOOP at the US Army Command and General Staff College," Military Review LXI, no. 9 (September 1979): 40.

[7]Sorley, "The Art Of Taking Charge",34.

[8]Ibid., 34.

[9]Lewis Sorley, "Creighton Abrams and Levels of Leadership," Military Review LXXII (August 1992): 6.

[10]Lewis Sorley, Thunderbolt From the Battle of the Bulge to Vietnam and Beyond: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times (New York, New York:Simon & Schuster, 1992), 169.

[11]Ibid, 165.

[12]Major General James V. Galloway, interviewed by Col. John M. Collison and Ltc. Angelo de Guttadawro, 13 April 1977, 6.

[13]Sorley, Thunderbolt, 176.

[14]Ibid, 183.

[15]Creighton W. Abrams, "Basic Facts on Basic Training," ARMY DIGEST 21, no7 (July 1965): 11.

[16]Sorley, Thunderbolt, 186.

[17]Ibid, 194.

[18]Ibid, 201.

[19]Ibid, 215.

[20]Harris W. Hollis, "The Heart and Mind of Creighton Abrams," Military Review LXV 4, (April 1985): 63.

[21]"Changing of the Guard," Time, 19 April 1968, 25.

[22]Sorley, Thunderbolt, 236.

[23]Kevin P. Buckley, "General Abrams Deserves A Better War", The New York Times Magazine, 5 October 1969, 128.

[24]Albert H. Smith, Jr., "Leadership Abrams Style," Infantry, 76(May-June 1986), 14-15.

[25]Sorley, Thunderbolt, 332.

[26]U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Nomination of Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, U.S. Army, to be Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, 92nd Cong., 2d sess., 13 September 1972.

[27]Edwin M. Flanagan Jr., "A Man of 'Infinite Variety' Abe: His Wit and Wisdom," ARMY 27 (February 1977): 41.

[28]Creighton W. Abrams, "Readiness: To Fight a War, To Keep the Peace," ARMY 23 (October 1973): 19-20.

[29]Lewis Sorley, "Creighton Abrams and Active-Reserve Integration in Wartime," Parameters 2 (Summer 1991): 46.

[30]Abrams, "Readiness: To Fight a War, To Keep the Peace," Army 10, (October 1973): 19.

[31]Starry, 41.

[32] Lieutenant General William R. Desobry, interviewed by Ltc. Albin G. Wheeler and Ltc. Ronald E. Graven, 23 February 1976.

[33]Flanagan, 42.

[34]Dewitt C. Smith,"Tribute to General Creighton W. Abrams." US Army War College, 6 September 1974.

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