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Learning from Lewis & Clark

Thomas Jefferson wanted to arrange an exploration of the American West for many years after the United States won its independence. He was President when the expedition finally began as an Army venture under the command of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The year was 1804. In many ways this small expeditionary group resembles a small, modern-day military unit – a couple of officers, several sergeants, almost two dozen privates, two contractors, and two family members. In 2011 the Army is conducting a yearlong review of the Profession of Arms. We can use the conduct of members of the Lewis and Clark expedition to consider how Soldiers and Civilians in USASMDC/ARSTRAT should practice the Profession of Arms today and in years to come.

The Lewis and Clark party called themselves the “Corps of Discovery.” They demonstrated a half-dozen characteristics (among others) that this century’s military practitioners should share:

- Explore the unknown – push the boundaries
- Serve as an emissary
- Be a pioneer, a model Soldier, and serve as part of a team
- Thirst for knowledge
- Innovate and invent
- Maintain a good reputation

First, let’s review the Profession of Arms. The Center for the Army Profession and Ethic tells us that “an American Professional Soldier is an expert, a volunteer certified in the Profession of Arms, bonded with comrades in a shared identity and culture of sacrifice and service to the Nation and the Constitution, who adheres to the highest ethical standards and is a steward of the future of the Army profession.” The Profession of Arms is a long-standing international concept. In the United States, it is distinguished in three ways: (1) Service to the Constitution – instead of to an individual leader, group of people, government, or territory; (2) professionalism of our officer and noncommissioned officer corps; and (3) the proficiency in integrating technology. The creeds for the Army’s workforce highlight these distinctions. The Soldier’s Creed says, “I am an expert and I am a professional.” The NCO Creed declares, “I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget, that we are professionals, Noncommissioned Officers, leaders!” The Army Civilian Corps Creed says, “I support and defend the Constitution of the United States and consider it an honor to serve our Nation and our Army.” Professions develop and maintain distinct bodies of specialized knowledge and impart expertise through formal, theoretical, and practical education. Each profession establishes a unique subculture. We are currently drafting what a creed would look like for Army Space professionals.

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Today our command continues this tradition of exploring the unknown. We are expanding the knowledge and experience gained by the Army's six decades of involvement in Space and Missile Defense.

Understanding the Profession of Arms is important. It motivates American military professionals to work, study, and train throughout their careers to make sure our armed forces are ready and capable of meeting the call to duty. The Army was only 30 years old at the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Expedition members are early examples of military professionals. They bonded to their comrades in a shared purpose; made sacrifices in service to the Nation and the Constitution; and continued building the traditions and principles of the Army profession.

Explore the Unknown – Push the Boundaries

Historians are correct in pointing out that the Corps of Discovery didn't discover anything. All the plants, animals, and geographic features the expedition observed had been known to and used by Native Americans for hundreds of years. The expedition, however, was the first to create scientific records to document and share the knowledge of these new "discoveries." The explorers also probed river forks and mountain passes in hopes of finding the shortest, lowest, easiest path (sometimes making bad choices). They sent living specimens of a prairie dog and magpies back to Washington, D.C.

Today our command continues this tradition of exploring the unknown. We are expanding the knowledge and experience gained by the Army's six decades of involvement in Space and Missile Defense. USASMDC/ARSTRAT Soldiers control satellite payloads in the frontier of Space. The unknown areas are being investigated through research and development into advanced supercomputing; the SMDC-ONE and Kestrel Eye nanosatellites; high energy, solid state lasers; high altitude airships such as HiSentinel, Orion, and High Altitude Long Endurance – Demonstrator; and new exotic materials including advanced thermal batteries and carbon nano fabrics.

Serve as an Emissary

On the journey's outbound leg, the Corps of Discovery traveled 4,100 miles from St. Louis, Mo., to Astoria, Ore. Lewis obtained passports from France and Great Britain, because they previously had controlled or claimed much of that territory. The expedition encountered dozens of Native American tribes. Jefferson instructed the explorers to gather information about the tribes' languages, traditions, and involvement in agriculture, hunting, war, and other activities.

To draw a parallel, we are emissaries of Army Space and Missile Defense to many groups. There are opportunities to tell the Army and the command's story in many settings, whether that is a civilian in the airplane seat next to you or a high-school student thinking about joining the military. Our commander, LTG Richard P. Formica, encourages USASMDC/ARSTRAT personnel to use the command's three core tasks as a starting point in such discussions:

- Provide trained and ready Space and Missile Defense forces and capabilities to the Combatant Commanders and in support of the Warfighter;
- Build future Space and Missile Defense forces;
- Research, test, and integrate Space, Missile Defense, high altitude, directed energy, and other related technologies.

Be a Pioneer, a Model Soldier, and Serve as Part of a Team

Jefferson directed the expedition to search for a water route across the United States. His instructions mentioned traversing the known rivers of the time, going in keelboats or canoes, sometimes on foot or horseback. From the explorers' perspective, they were traveling through little-known or unknown territory.

The pioneering spirit still is found in USASMDC/ARSTRAT. The command is a leader in developing new ways of presenting photographic information gathered from Space, such as three-dimensional fly-throughs. In Alaska, known as "America's last frontier," ground-based missile defense crews stand watch 24/7/365. The launch and successful flight of SMDC-ONE last December built on the heritage of America's first satellite, Explorer I, designed, built, and launched by the U.S. Army in 1958.

We also can see that the expedition's Soldiers modeled many military skills. Competency in land navigation, physical fitness, and marksmanship was critical in the expedition's time. It still is. Today's Soldiers need to master the tools of their trade, just as Lewis and Clark recorded latitude and longitude at prominent points; measured distances; and mapped the rivers, plains, and mountains.

Soldiers must keep fit and be proficient in the care and use of their weapons – Soldiers first! By doing so, you will follow the example set by your predecessors in the Corps of Discovery.

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Those Soldiers were in shape for challenging physical exertions. They were qualified riflemen as well, always ready and capable of defending themselves against threats.

Thirst for Knowledge

A knowledge curve exists in every period of time, whether 1804 or 2011. Soldiers and Civilians should keep ahead of the curve through professional reading; selecting and using the best available technology; and identifying and being prepared for actual and potential threats. Lewis absorbed the best scientific and technical knowledge of the time through diligent reading and studying. Army weapon makers provided the latest model of rifles, gear, and even the iron frames of a collapsible, portable boat. Lewis also assessed the frontier's threats and planned accordingly – including illness, bad weather, lack of fresh food, and hostile action.

Innovate and Invent

This article has mentioned some American innovations and inventions used to explore land, water, air, and Space beginning 200-plus years ago. Those four places, plus cyberspace, are identified as combat domains. The time needed to carry out a military campaign – or even a peaceful exploration – across the domains has gone from years to days, minutes, and seconds. Members of the Corps of Discovery in 1804 would recognize the need of Space and Missile Defense professionals in 2011 for communications; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; weather; and positioning, navigation, and timing. We can tackle everyday and long-term challenges through innovation and invention. Keep your minds open to discovering, developing, and exploiting new methods and tools to accomplish our command's core tasks.

Maintain a Good Reputation

A couple of important events related to military professionalization occurred just before the expedition departed. Jefferson signed legislation creating the

U.S. Military Academy in March 1802, and the permanent federal Army was established in 1803. These steps continued the reputation for American proficiency, effectiveness, and loyalty established during the Revolutionary War. Some members of the expedition were familiar with that reputation, because their fathers or older brothers had fought in the war. Maintaining a good reputation folds together the five other concepts we have examined under the banners of the Profession of Arms and the Corps of Discovery. Today's Soldiers and Civilians create a worthy name for themselves when they explore the unknown, serve as emissaries and pioneers, thirst for knowledge, carry out their duties in a model fashion, and innovate and invent. They uphold the standards and traditions of the U.S. Army that began in the days of the American Revolution and the Lewis and Clark expedition. We all should be inspired to act likewise.

Conclusion

We have voyaged through time and examined six principles that illustrate the Profession of Arms. These ideas have value for all members of the military profession. Our command's focus, of course, is Space and Missile Defense – something of a frontier itself. I encourage you to remember these concepts as you review and perform your day-to-day missions on behalf of the Nation.

You can discover more about the Profession of Arms at <http://cape.army.mil/ProfessionOfArms.html> and the Lewis and Clark expedition at <http://www.nps.gov/lecl>.

The
Sun
Never
Sets on
USASMDC/
ARSTRAT