



The Ground Combat Soldier

The paramount concern of the Army is the ground combat soldier. He is the focal point of all our efforts. Organizing, equipping, training, sustaining and supporting him so that he can perform his indispensable role in combat is the Army role.

This role is equally significant in any kind of war—hot or cold. It is just as important in general war as it is in limited war. For our Nation to entertain any notion to the contrary would be dangerous.

The danger could be social as well as military.

More than any other category of personnel in the Armed Forces, the ground combat soldier comes from the general populace. He is the private citizen under arms—the clenched fist of his people.

It is by no idle chance in the history of mankind that the course of democracy parallels the importance accorded the ground combat soldier in the military forces of nations. It is no exaggeration to say that the basic freedoms we now enjoy are closely related to his ascending importance on the battlefield since the Battle of Crecy. Nor is it an exaggeration, in my opinion, to say that the preservation of those freedoms will continue to be oriented by his place in the sun.

Only when men from all of the people are willing and ready to fight and die for freedom does freedom have meaning for them. Only then does democracy thrive. That is the inexorable lesson of history.

Beguiled by the mechanical marvels of an age, it is easy for people to forget the true character of the ground combat soldier's role in war. When free men have been so beguiled in the past, they have slipped back into vassalage. For the ability of the ground combat soldier to play his part in the social scheme of things depends upon the part he is given in the military scheme of things.

It will be a sorry day for all mankind in this supersonic nuclear age of ours should the ground combat soldier ever be deprived of his rightful place in the hearts and minds and military forces of his people.

In our efforts to avert this danger, a one-Army attitude must pervade all ranks. The ground combat soldier is not a guardsman, nor a Regular, nor a reservist, nor a selectee. He is simply the American fighting man on the one-Army team. I appeal to every member of the team—civilian and military—to give his cause the enthusiastic support merited by its vital importance to our country.

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