

# Commandant's Note

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## “THESE ARE MY CREDENTIALS”

Some of the most bitter fighting of World War II in France centered on the city of Brest, whose port facilities were essential to sustaining our invading armies. Barely two months after the Allied landings at Normandy, General George Patton's Third U.S. Army isolated German forces on the Brittany peninsula, and the U.S. VIII Corps was diverted to there to secure the port before the Germans could destroy the harbor facilities as they had at Cherbourg. After prolonged house-to-house fighting, elements of the U.S. 8th Infantry Division captured the headquarters of German Lieutenant General Hermann-Bernhard Ramcke. The Assistant 8th Infantry Division Commander BG Charles D.W. Canham confronted Ramcke to demand his surrender. Stalling for time as his last report from Fortress Brest was being wired to Berlin from an adjacent room, Ramcke demanded that BG Canham show him some credentials as a condition of the surrender. Gesturing toward the well-armed and grimly determined U.S. Infantrymen who had accompanied him, Canham simply replied: “These are my credentials.” Fortress Brest had fallen. The *New York Times* reported an account of the event, and BG Canham's superb tribute to the U.S. Infantryman later became the motto of the 8th Infantry Division.

Credentials may take many forms, but the bottom line is that they offer evidence which attests to one's authority, confidence, or credit. To members of our profession, the most common and earliest credential to be attained is a copy of one's enlistment orders, an academic degree, or a commission in the armed forces of our nation. Qualification badges, certificates of professional training, assignment and promotion orders, and other proofs of achievement reinforce the bearer's credibility among peers, superiors, subordinates, and adversaries alike. They tell people who we are and what we are made of. The credentials of the Army have been hard-won, often at staggering cost, but the nations we have liberated, defended, and in many cases rebuilt can attest to the reliability of this nation, our people, and the U.S. Infantryman. But it is not enough to establish credentials; we must continually revalidate them because the challenges to our way of life are continually changing in response to enemies' doctrine, technological advances, and motives. The phenomenon we hail as globalization carries with it yet newer opportunities for international crime, identity theft, human trafficking, spread of diseases such as Ebola, the MERS virus now in the U.S. for the first time, and uncontrolled immigration by groups and cultures whose values are incompatible with our own.

Today, we are examining a number of ways to instill in our agile, adaptive leaders the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes to win on battlefields that we can only begin to envision. One of these will be underground, and the

subterranean fight may well be in the subway tunnels, sewers, and passages of urban areas such as we saw in Berlin and Stalingrad during World War II. We are already fielding initiatives to prepare for the subterranean fight, and the database we have assembled includes material as diverse as the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529, tunneling operations during our own Civil War and in World War I, Vietcong tunnel complexes, North Korean excavations to move men and materiel, and drug-related tunneling along the Mexican border.

We are the best Army in the world because of the initiative, professionalism, and selfless service of our NCO Corps, and one way we prepare our Soldiers and leaders for the new challenges of future wars is by increasing the rigor of courses at the Infantry School. Demolitions and combatives training are again part of the Ranger School program of instruction (POI), Officer Candidate School will include tougher physical training standards, Advanced Situational Awareness (ASA) is now part of a number of courses (including Sniper School and the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course), and ASA, already taught by largely civilian cadre, is evolving to where the course will develop Soldier instructors and facilitate ASA principles across the force. We are examining ways to improve marksmanship by considering the possibility of integrating some form of robotic human-type targetry into our small arms training that will include a diverse array of target scenarios. We need to create more realistic and challenging scenarios that include moving targets at varying speeds and simulated enemy fire teams in engagements. We have also not forgotten the conditioning and bonding potential of the long-used bayonet assault course and are reexamining the bayonet training that was integral to how we trained Infantrymen from World War I through Vietnam and well into the Cold War.

The challenge is great: continue to defend the nation, our people, and our interests at home and abroad against an adaptable and implacable enemy at a time of increasingly constrained resources. Things are tough all over: our allies in the European Union and other regions have their own problems, but one thing is certain, when the wolf is at the door, they will turn to the United States as they always have. They turn to us because our credentials are — and must remain — impeccable.

One force, one fight! Follow me!

