

Back to the basics in the united states military

[Government](#), [Military](#)



In these past 10 years, our military has been constantly engaged in fighting two wars; as such, it seems as if we have been doing nothing but preparing to deploy, redeploy, reset and prepare to deploy again. There has not been much time for any of us to really focus on teaching our Soldiers what the Army Values really mean and what they stand for. We have not had time to focus on these topics as the stress and vital importance of wartime action has directed our focus elsewhere. Accordingly, things such as daily uniform inspections, barracks inspections, drill and ceremonies, proper counseling, and many similar items have, at least to a certain extent, been disregarded in favor of more pressing needs and goals. However, these performance duties are referred to as “the basics” for a reason; as such, it is our duty to get back to them. Because of the lack of focus on these points over the past few years, our junior NCOs and Soldiers are suffering and we as senior NCOs are responsible for correcting these deficiencies. Emphasis should be placed on the importance of sitting down with junior NCOs and showing them the proper ways to lead soldiers. Perhaps one reason for the current lack of concern is the fact that many NCOs appear to be only interested in promotion. This fact coupled with the self-interested notions of making more money has taken away from the prime directive of leading and protecting the soldiers under one's supervision. This lack of concern is illustrated in the fact that few SGTs really know where to take their Soldiers if they have pay issues, family issues, budget issues, etc.? There are many who would have no idea. This results from several reasons, not the least of which is the fact that as soon as the promotion board is complete, these soldiers often do a brain dump and purge their minds of all the information they accrued while

studying for the board.

In order to get back to these basics, there are several steps that must first be implemented. First, we must recognize that the Soldiers standing in our formations have performed their duties to the highest standards and have accomplished any and all missions. We have deployed more often and for a longer duration than at any time since Vietnam; we fought counterinsurgency and counterterrorism wars in two separate countries, simultaneously, while maintaining our readiness and capabilities to deter our enemies in other theaters. No other nation could expect as much from its men and women in uniform and their families. The second thing we must do is explain why the Army needs to change. Our job is to recognize what has changed and adapted our tactics, techniques, and procedures to the environment in which we must operate. Before 9/11, we were a peacetime Army, fighting for resources while monitoring various threats around the globe. Units down to company level selected the critical tasks required to support the higher headquarters' mission. Sergeants down to the individual team level selected, resourced and conducted to standard common task and crew drill training for their Soldiers. First-line leaders made sure their Soldiers were getting paid properly, living inadequate housing and prepared to conduct training. These leaders also made sure that their Soldiers were counseled for promotion and training readiness. After 9/11, the entire nation recognized the terrorist threat from southwest Asia, and the Army adapted accordingly. The Army Force Generation, or ARFORGEN, the process was developed to prepare units as quickly as possible for deployment into an unfamiliar area of operations to accomplish a nonstandard mission against

an irregular enemy who fought with ever-evolving tactics. For the better part of the decade, most units were either continuously in theater or preparing to return to the theater. The selecting, planning and resourcing of training was all done for the unit. The role of the first-line leader was the same, but the things the first-line leader had to focus on changing. The planning horizon only went as far as the current mission, and execution, not training, became the most important factor. After more than a decade of war, now it is necessary to transition again. The problem is that anyone who joined the Army in the last 10 years has only experienced the way the Army works at war - or the ARFORGEN model. A generation of leaders has grown up without ever receiving the training required to read a Soldier's Leave and Earnings Statement, or LES; to conduct monthly performance counseling, or to plan, resource, rehearse and conduct squad-level training. The environment in which we find ourselves is similar to the environment prior to 9/11. We can only expect resources to become scarce, our personnel end-strength to shrink, and equipment and training dollars to evaporate. We must adjust the program of instruction in our Noncommissioned Officer Education System. More importantly, senior leaders with the resident experience in the areas of training management and garrison operations must actively train, mentor and counsel Soldiers. The general responsibilities of the first-line leader have not changed — accomplish the mission and the welfare of the Soldiers. But in our move “back to the basics,” we must ensure that our first-line leaders have all the tools they need to adapt to the changing environment. Then, we must trust the “backbone” to support all the other parts, just as it always has.

Upon joining the United States Army over twenty years ago, I remember that NCOs carried leaders books with Soldiers data cards and Family information. However, after 9-11, we have (the Army) gotten so good at deploying Soldiers, equipment and units, that we have gotten away from the “ Garrison Army.” We have got to get back to the basics, and it starts with you.

The four key elements of this are:

- Sponsorship- Getting back to the roots of Leadership
- Knowing your Soldiers
- Enforcing Army Standards