Dear Leaders:

Thank you for accepting our invitation to serve as mentors during the United States Military Academy's Mission Command Conference (MCC) hosted by the William E. Simon Center for Professional Military Ethic (SCPME) and West Point's Class of 2013 from 21-24 April 2013. This is our 16th conference. We are grateful that you will share your professional wisdom and experiences with the Cadets who will soon take their place in the line with our Nation and Armed Forces at war.

We began this program in the Fall of 2000, conducting one or two conferences per year. Since 2001, these sessions took on more relevance as our Nation and our Armed Forces engaged in this current war. The theme for this year's conference is "Mission Command in Transition." I would like to pass along our intent, which may help you prepare your thoughts on how to share your professional wisdom, knowledge, values, and beliefs with over 1,200 West Point and ROTC Cadets and USNA Midshipmen.

A primary mission of SCPME is to develop a professional self-concept of Officership in each Cadet. Cadets have done much to achieve this self-concept. Our intent is for you to have an exchange with small groups of Cadets, from four or five to upwards of 20-30, on what it means to be a professional military Soldier/Marine leading men and women in a constantly changing operating environment. This intent includes discussing how the major elements of Mission Command – and the framework of Character, Competence, and Leadership – worked for you to prepare and lead Soldiers/Marines in battle and during other operational missions. End state is for Cadets to better understand concrete application of these principles so they can better prepare themselves and their units. Please reference the attached framework for an understanding of some topics and questions that may arise during your discussions with Cadets. We also ask that you consider these frameworks as a guide for your interactions.

We define Officership as a composite of four shared identities: Warrior, Leader of Character, Member of the Army Profession, and Servant of our Nation. As you are well aware, the ethos of our profession governs behaviors and actions across these identities. That ethos is about disciplined performance of duty and honorable service. It is about winning our Nation's wars, the Army Values, the Soldier's Creed, and the Warrior Ethos. We want Cadets to understand that this Professional Military Ethic is more than an abstract discussion of individual behaviors. It is at the very core of how each of us performs our duty in honorable service to our Nation in war and peace.

Feedback from previous conference attendees and Cadets indicated that they wanted more time to interact with mentors. Cadets will be excused from a full day of academics in order to participate in a full day of Mission Command events, and you will have the entire afternoon of April 23 to spend with the cadets from your assigned company. Additionally, there will over 80 ROTC Cadets in attendance, representing colleges and universities across the United States, as well as senior Midshipmen from the Naval Academy who are branching into the Marine Corps.

Thanks again for developing others by passing the torch to the next generation of Leaders. To our Cadets, you represent a living link across the generations of combat veteran professionals. Through your own experiences, you can offer them unique perspectives on the enduring truths of Mission Command across Character, Competence, and Leadership. I look forward to seeing you at the MCC Mentor Dinner on 22 April 2013 in the Regimental Room of the Cadet Mess. We offer many thanks and great respect for your service as combat Leaders, as well as to your Soldiers for their courageous service and sacrifice.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Franks, Jr.
General, US Army Retired
Class of 1966 Chair, SCPME
Character
- Live Army/USMC Values
- Demonstrate Moral Character & Personal Courage in an Ambiguous Environment
- Deal/Cope with Casualties even as you Continue the Mission
- Expand Resiliency and Overcome Adversity
- Treat Others with Dignity and Respect and Conduct Ops IAW ROE and LOAC
- Build No Quit, Resilient, Teamwork in your Unit
- Understand that Mission Commanders Retain Responsibility for Developing Character in both Self and their Unit

Competence
- Think Creatively and Increase Capacity to Adapt ‘on the fly’ (Creative Problem Solver)
- Increase Confidence when Operating with Incomplete Information in a Rapidly Changing Environment
- Understand the Appropriate Time to Make a Decision (Decisiveness)
- Maintain Situational Awareness & Be at the Right Place on the Battlefield
- Exercise Risk Mitigation, But Still Know When it is Proper to Assume More Risk to Create New Opportunities
- Practice Deliberate Time Management
- Build Trust and Mission Effectiveness when Training Partnered Security Forces

Leadership
- Gain and Sustain Trust Between You and Your Soldiers and Marines
- Lead by Example
- Exercise Sound Judgment in Making Decisions
- Exercise Mission Command
- Exercise Servant Leadership: To lead is also to serve
- Listen to and Reward your Soldiers/Marines

4/10/2013
Constantly Focus on Training, Development, & Learn from Experiences
Mission Command Principles:

➤ Mission Type Orders
  • Commanders use mission orders to assign tasks, allocate resources, and issue broad guidance.
  • Mission orders are directives that emphasize to subordinates the results to be attained, not how they are to achieve them.
  • They provide subordinates the maximum freedom of action in determining how to best accomplish missions.
  • Mission orders seek to maximize individual initiative, while relying on lateral coordination between units and vertical coordination up and down the chain of command.

➤ Clear Commander’s Intent
  • The commander’s intent is a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state that supports mission command, provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander’s desired results without further orders, even when the operation does not unfold as planned.
  • The higher commander’s intent provides the basis for unity of effort throughout the larger force.
  • Each commander’s intent nests within the higher commander’s intent.

➤ Mutual Trust
  • Mutual trust is shared confidence among commanders, subordinates, and partners.
  • Effective commanders build cohesive teams in an environment of mutual trust. There are few shortcuts to gaining the trust of others.
  • Developing trust takes time, and it must be earned. It is the result of upholding the Army values and exercising leadership, consistent with the Army leadership principles.

➤ Shared Understanding
  • A critical challenge for commanders, staffs, and unified action partners is creating shared understanding of their operational environment, the operation’s purpose, problems, and approaches to solving them.
  • Shared understanding and purpose form the basis for unity of effort and trust. Commanders and staffs actively build and maintain shared understanding within the force and with unified action partners by continual collaboration throughout the operations process (planning, preparation, execution, and assessment).

➤ Disciplined Initiative
  • Leaders and subordinates who exercise disciplined initiative create opportunity by taking action to develop the situation. Disciplined initiative is action in the absence of orders, when existing orders no longer fit the situation, or when unforeseen opportunities or threats arise.
  • Commanders rely on subordinates to act. A subordinate’s disciplined initiative may be the starting point for seizing the tactical initiative.
  • This willingness to act helps develop and maintain operational initiative used by forces to set or dictate the terms of action throughout an operation.

➤ Prudent Risk
  • Commanders accept prudent risk when making decisions because uncertainty exists in all military operations.
  • Prudent risk is a deliberate exposure to potential injury or loss when the commander judges the outcome in terms of mission accomplishment as worth the cost.
  • Opportunities come with risks.
  • The willingness to accept prudent risk is often the key to exposing enemy weaknesses.