

The Army Transformation Meets the Junior Officer Exodus

Mark R. Lewis

© Mark R. Lewis. Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Presented to Security for a New Century 107th Congress Discussion Group 30 Aug 01

Introduction: This is not really another attempt to discuss why junior Army officers are choosing to leave the service in increasing numbers. I think the Army's own The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study Report to The Army, released in the summer of 2001 does a pretty good job of summing it up:

*“Army Culture is out of balance. There is friction between Army beliefs and practices. Over time, that friction threatens readiness. Training is not done to standard, leader development in operational assignments is limited and does not meet officer expectations, and **officers and their families elect to leave the service early.**”*

This confirms what a lot of us have been trying to communicate. The Army does not have a problem with junior officer retention. Instead, it has a problem that is *reflected* in the rate of junior officer retention. The difference may be subtle, but it is significant.

A lot of people have spent a great deal of effort advocating that the Army ought to take bold steps to correct this cultural schism for the simple reason that it's the right thing to do. I can only judge the emphasis the Army puts on this situation through evidence of their efforts to address it, and so far, those efforts do not reveal any meaningful attempt at understanding and addressing the deeper issues.

So instead, I thought I'd try to articulate why the stopping exodus is important. Why should we care?

Administrative notes:

- I gave this presentation on 30 Aug 01 in the Rayburn building on Capitol Hill, to a group of about 40 people as part of the regular Security for a New Century, 107th Congress discussion group.
- This annotated briefing is drawn from my independent research. I'll be happy to provide a copy of the paper on which this presentation is based - it goes into greater detail and documentation - for those who ask.
- My data cut-off point, unless noted, was mid-April 2001. I don't have access to official Army data that is not publicly available.
- As an ex-Army captain, I am aware of a self-justification pitfall. I think I've kept an eye on the larger issue, but ultimately the audience will have to be the judge. Sour grapes or real reason for concern?
- Points of Contact: Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Voicemail: (703) 234-3954 x2876

The Vision - 1994

*"The concept for [the future Army] is centered around **quality soldiers and leaders** whose full potential is more closely realized through **information age technologies** and by **rigorous and relevant training and leader development.**"*

General Frederick M. Franks
Commanding General
U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)
In **TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5: Force XXI Operations** (01 Aug 94)

© Mark R. Lewis. Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Presented to Security for a New Century 107th Congress Discussion Group 30 Aug 01

On October 12, 1999, newly appointed Chief of Staff of the Army, General Eric K. Shinseki addressed an audience at the Association of the United States Army's annual meeting. He called for change:

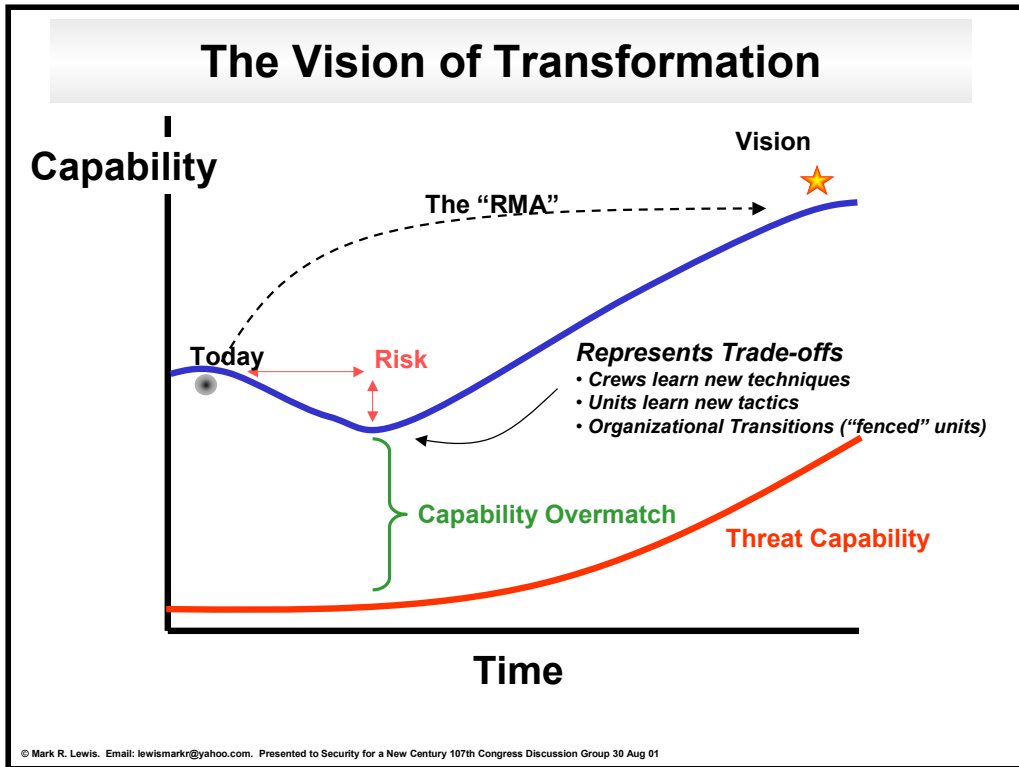
"This commitment to change will require a comprehensive transformation of the Army. To this end, we will begin immediately to turn the entire Army into a full spectrum force which is strategically responsive and dominant at every point on the spectrum of operations."

The "transformation" effort, however, really had started several years before. In 1994, then-Chief of Staff, General Gordon R. Sullivan announced his plan entitled "Force XXI." In August of that year, the Army published the U. S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet (hereafter TRADOC PAM) 525-5 Force XXI Operations. It encapsulated the vision of a transformed Army.

Force XXI Operations was the framework around which Army would grow into a future force. That vision spoke to two complementary developmental axes - technology and leadership. The cornerstone of that vision was organized around new digital communications equipment that would provide a common view of the battlefield, coupled with a new standard of leader and soldier competency to accompany the development of that technology. Clearly, the success of General Shinseki's vision is predicated upon the Army successfully attaining goals defined by General Sullivan's Force XXI endeavor.

Since 1994, the development of technology has proceeded generally in line with that vision; the developmental history has proceeded about as well as one could expect. It has suffered the occasional setback, but it is fully supported by funding from Congress, and the Army Leadership is the driving force behind its progress. If nothing else, the recent results of the Division Capstone Exercise (April 2001) demonstrated that the electrons generally flow as designed and the potential is there for it to mature into a system that meets all expectations.

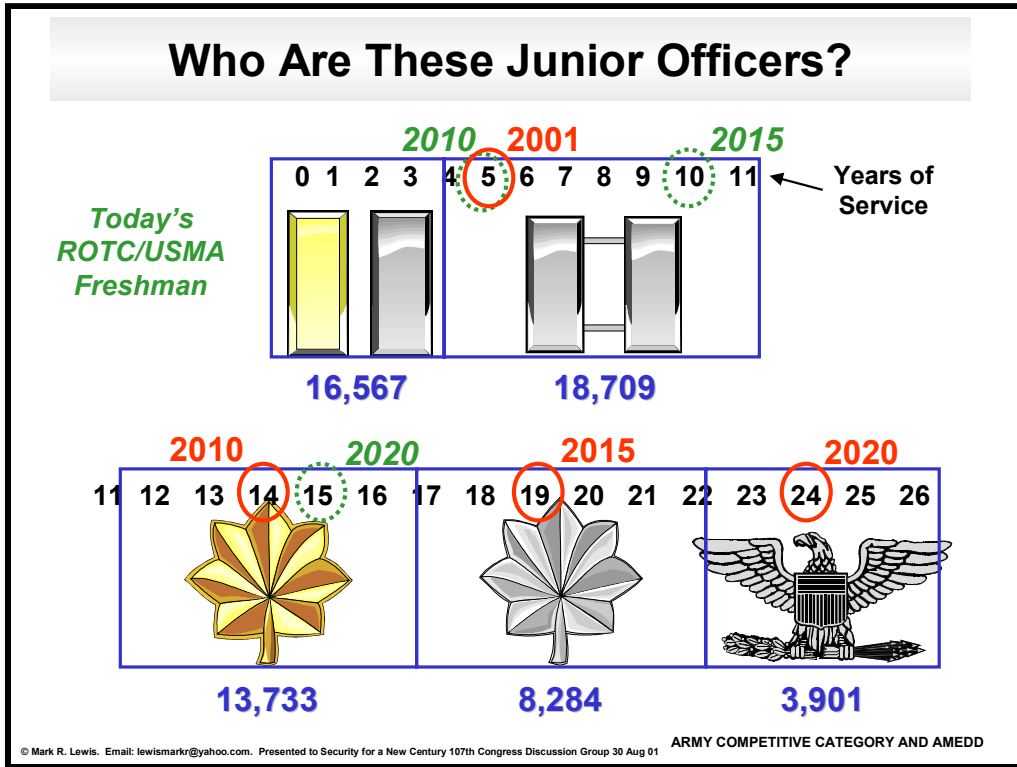
The focus of this discussion is what's happening to the leadership component of that vision.



First, as a means of orienting the discussion, here is a brief, simplified look at why transformation is important. What's the expected pay-off?

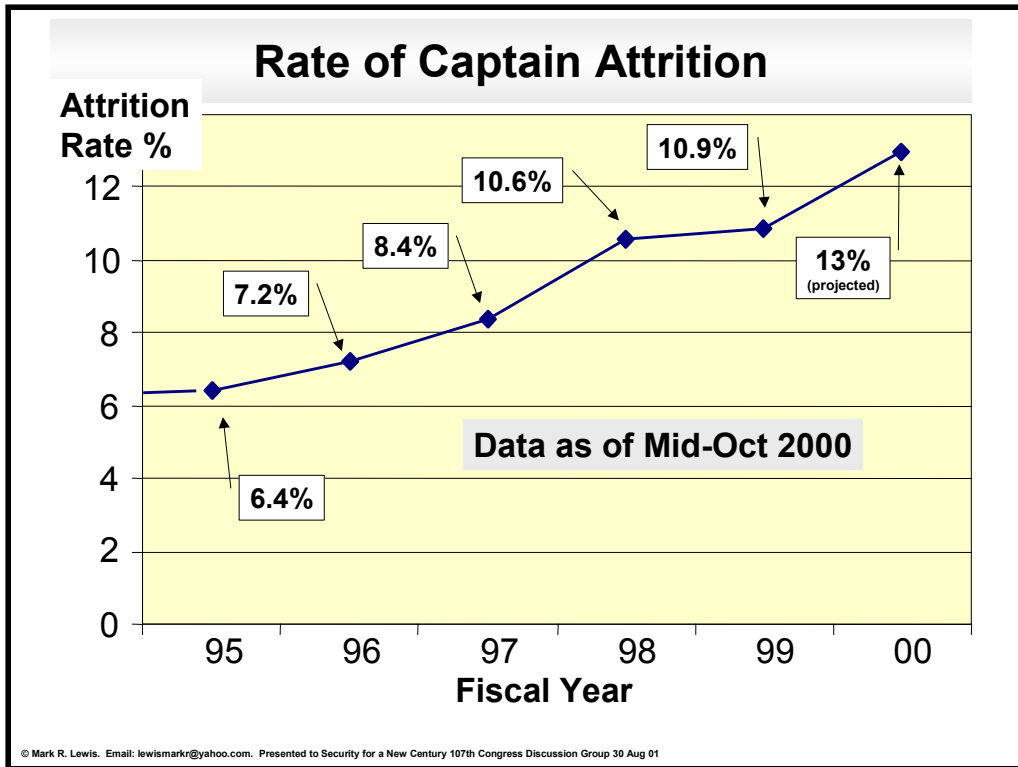
The slide above is a conceptual diagram of the leap in potential the Army expects to achieve through this holistic approach to technology and leader development. It is directly related to the oft-used phrase "Revolution in Military Affairs" or RMA, that implies a great leap forward in military capability. In this diagram, Capability is along the Y Axis, and Time along the X Axis. There is a slight dip in the Capability curve early in the timeline to represent transition, but soon thereafter the Capability begins to increase dramatically. That dip is a conceptual representation of the managed risk associated with transformation on 3 levels.

That Threat line represents the sum of all adversaries and conditions that would challenge the Army, and the fact that it is rising drives the need for transformation. Always, we see that the blue Capability curve maintains a comfortable barrier of capability overmatch above the rising Threat Line.



This is also an orientation slide. The black numbers from 0-26 are the Years of Service since the time of commissioning. The boxes around each rank show generally show the time frame each officer arrives at, and spends in, each rank. The blue numbers below each rank are the approximate numbers of officers in that rank. The red circle around the "5" labeled 2001 is designed to orient the viewer to a captain at 5 years of service today, and where he/she will be at certain intervals in the future. For instance, today's captain will be a lieutenant colonel, commanding a battalion in 2015, and a colonel commanding a brigade in 2020. Similarly, the dotted green circles are to orient the viewer to the time line of the cadet entering the commissioning pipeline today will be at similar periods in the future.

The point of this slide is to emphasize how important today's cadet and junior officer is to the future of the Army. Those in the system right now are exactly the ones who will make transformation a success in the future. Put another way, the system that exists today is the one preparing the leaders of tomorrow.



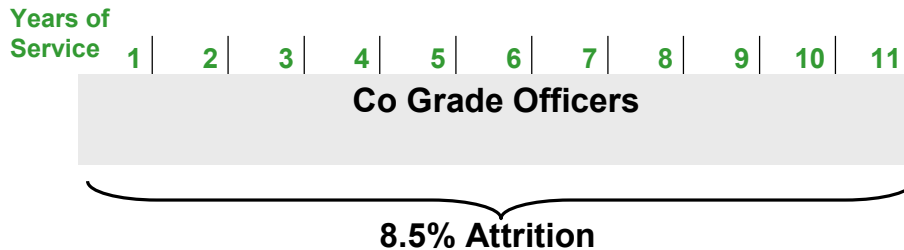
This is simply the reported rate of captain attrition from 1995 to 2000 (projected). Note that the attrition rate begins to climb almost immediately after the publication of Force XXI Operations.

See also back-up slide #26.

“Junior Officers Not Leaving In Droves”

- “Company-grade officer attrition is about **8.5*** percent, while the ideal is **7.5 percent** -- the difference is the loss of about an extra **350** officers a year.”
- Some “**personnel management challenges**”
 - not causing great alarm on the DA staff.

LTG Maude, deputy chief of staff for Personnel
30 January 2001

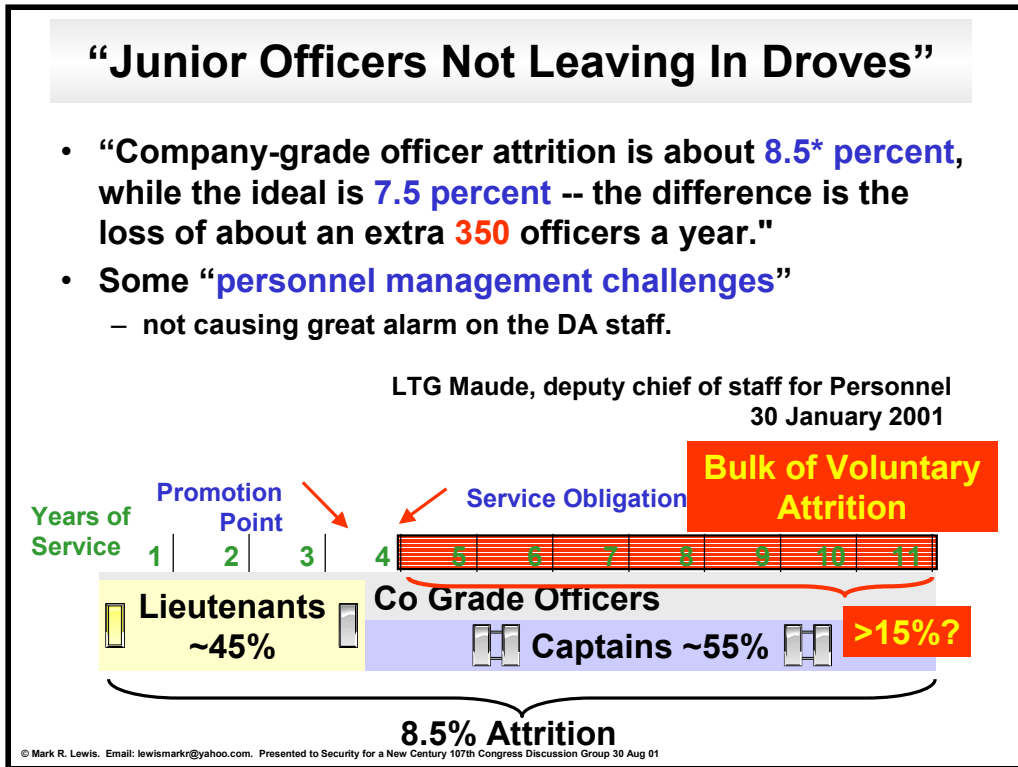


© Mark R. Lewis. Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Presented to Security for a New Century 107th Congress Discussion Group 30 Aug 01

In February 2001, the Army issued a news release entitled “Junior Officers Not Leaving In Droves.” In it, the Army’s most senior personnel manager, Lieutenant General Timothy Maude, reassured the Army and the nation that any apparent problems stemming from a shortage of captains were simply the products of misperception (see <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/Feb2001/a20010214dcsperside.htm>).

General Maude puts the attrition rate of junior officers at about 8.5%, (in March 2001, Personnel Command amended that to 9.9%) and says that the Army is not overly concerned. Instead, they are merely dealing with “personnel management challenges.” He also said that the shortage of captains really stems the fact that they did not assess enough lieutenants in 1991-1994.

In this slide, the gray box represents the entire population of junior officers, with Time in Service numbers running across the top of the box in green.



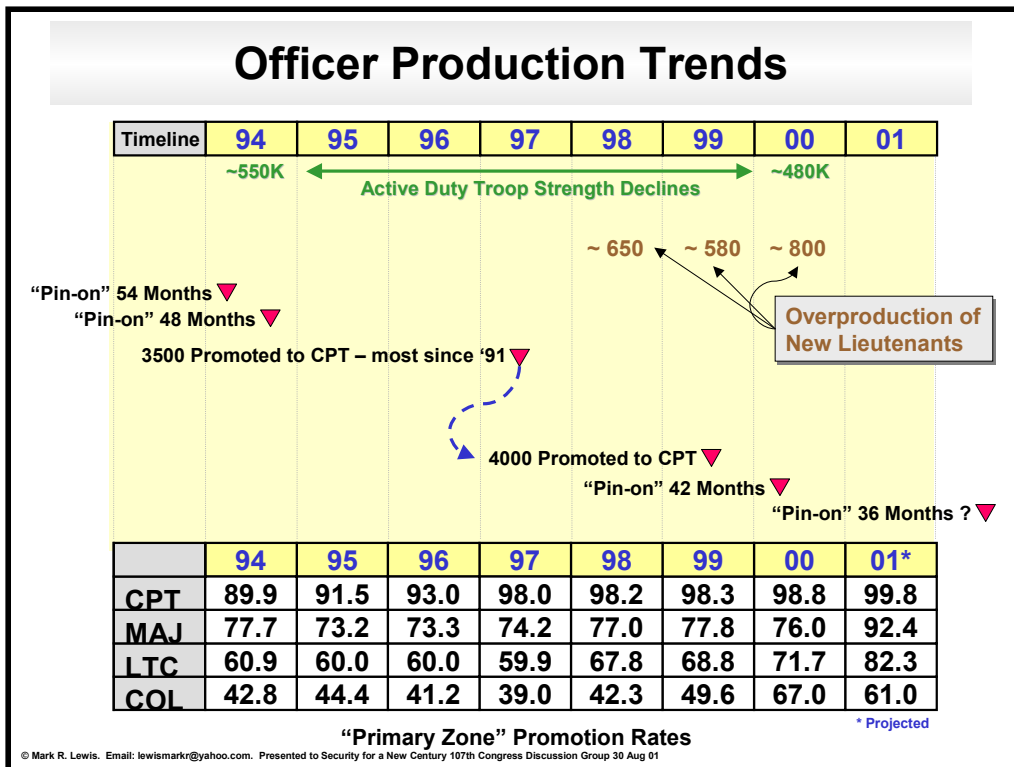
But I have several questions about LTG's Maude's statement.

Indeed, 8.5% may not be alarming, until one looks a little closer at what those figures indicate. Company grade officers are lieutenants and captains. Many - even most - commissioned officers have an initial service obligation of four or more years. They are being promoted to captain at less than four years. Some lieutenants can leave after a 3 year period of service, and some are out-processed early, but still it seems that the vast majority of the voluntary company grade officer attrition must come from the captain population. Captains are a little more than 50% of the company grade officers.

The red block “Bulk of Voluntary Attrition” corresponds to officers in their 4th through 11th year of service. If we take an 8% rate of attrition, but lay it over only about 55% of the company grade officer population - the part that can actually elect to leave - then it is entirely possible that their rate of departure is actually increasing (recall 2000 the projected rate was 13%). I put 15% as an estimate, remembering that PERSCOM reported a 9.9% rate of loss for 2000 in March 2001 (vice Maude's rate of 8.5% in January 2001).

Similarly, while it may be factually true (just as an 8.5% rate of attrition may be factually true, but still deceptive) I think that LTG Maude's claim that low accessions in '91-'94 is a root cause of a captain shortage may be a red herring. If you know you are short officers in a certain year group from the outset, then it seems misleading to be talking about an ideal rate of loss. An ideal rate of loss only holds if the system is healthy, but low accessions mean that the year groups start out behind the power curve to begin with. If the starting population is less than the systemic ideal, the desired rate of loss has to be less than the systemic ideal as well.

Even if the 7.5% ideal rate accounts for those low accession years (I bet it doesn't, but I could be wrong), if you know you are already short in a year group, then it would seem that the loss of each officer in that year group becomes even more critical. When you have four or more years to attempt to influence their retention, one might think perhaps we'd see an increased effort to retain officers in short year groups. I was YG92, and it didn't happen with me, but maybe that's because my retention was not desired. You never know.



This slide summarizes some of the means by which the Army is striving to overcome the shortage of captains. The starting point is 1994, because that corresponds to the publication of Force XXI Operations and also the first upward swing of the captain attrition rate.

For reference, the approximate active duty strength is in green across the top. The point is to show a declining force structure juxtaposed against the increasing number of captains promoted. Along the bottom are the promotion rates, and we can see a clear trend toward less and less selectivity.

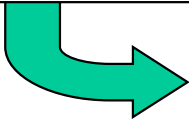
"Pin on time" refers to the number of months from the date of commissioning that an officer reaches the rank of captain. Note that going into 1994, that time was at 54 months. In 1994, it dropped to 48 months, and it dropped again in 2000 to 42 months. Reading the House Armed Services Committee mark-up of the FY02 defense appropriations bill (available at www.house.gov/hasc/pressreleases/2001/01-08-01markupsummary.html), it is clear this trend will drop to 36 months in 2002.

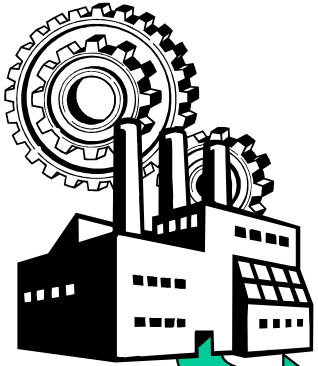
Also note that the number of captains promoted per year has increased, despite that decline in force structure. In 1997, the Army promoted more captains than any year since 1991 - and in that year the Army fought a major war and was up at about 700K in size. But, even so, they topped that number two years later, promoting more than 4000 in 1999.

Furthermore, beginning in 1998, in an attempt to make up the short fall of company grade officers, it appears that the Army has commissioned more lieutenants than it needs. See back-up slide #25, entitled "What's Happening to the Inventory", for a discussion on how I arrived at those numbers.

Army Response

Commission More
+
Promote More
+
Promote Faster





No Problem!

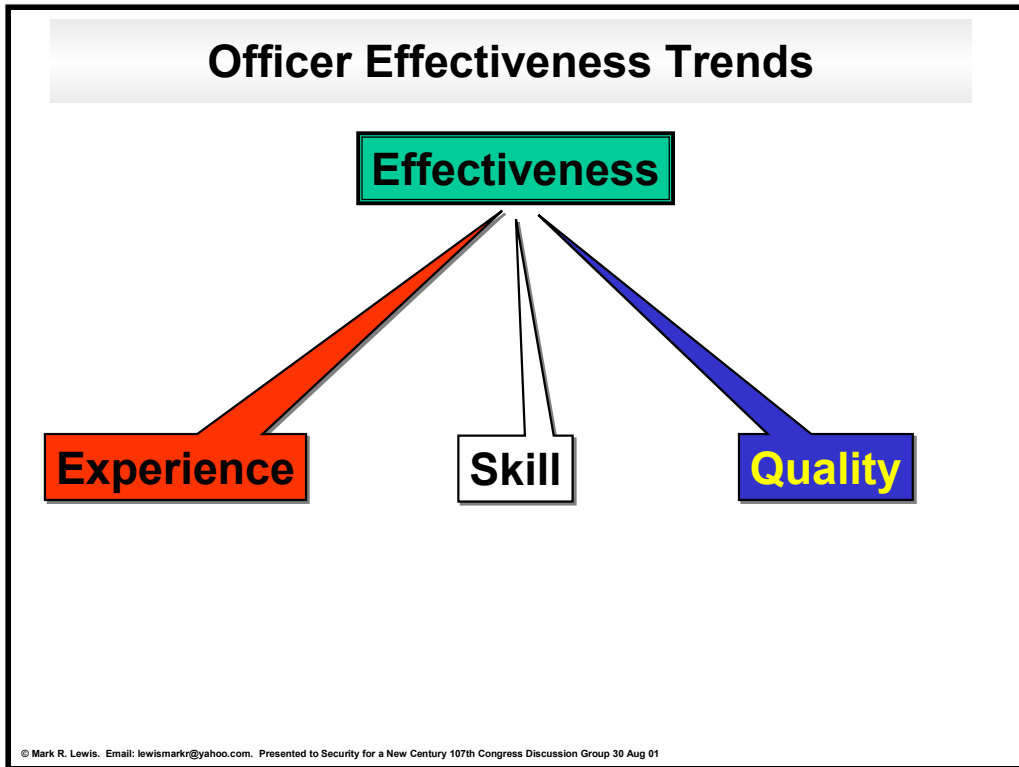
The Army “machine” equates 2LTs with ZERO years of experience to CPTs with 10 years of experience

© Mark R. Lewis. Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Presented to Security for a New Century 107th Congress Discussion Group 30 Aug 01

The Army's approach toward a solution is clear from the preceding slides. Commission more (over assessment of lieutenants), promote more (as trends in 1997 and 1999, combined with a decrease in selectivity in promotion rates indicate), and promote them faster (as Pin-on time trends show). It makes sense if you understand that Army's industrialized approach to making manning numbers. Short a component? Manufacture more. See also slide #25 for another indication that this industrialized mindset.

Recall LTG Maude's statement from slide #6 that the Army is only short about 350 company grade officers a year. This statement confused me. Obviously one wonders about how many years in a row the Army can sustain a shortfall of 350, but there seemed to be a different dimension to this. If we use the approximate numbers of lieutenants and captains in slide #4, then it is true that the difference between 8.5% and a 7.5% of the total of about 37,500 company grade officers is about 350. But, if they're losing about 15% of the 18,700 captains, then that works out to about 2,700 a year. While I understand that there is a pyramid shape to the rank structure, the loss of 2,700 captain seems tough to absorb.

Then I remembered that LTG Maude is talking about junior officers in the **aggregate**. And in at least 1998, 1999, and 2000, they over assessed lieutenants. So after the exodus took its toll in 2000, for instance, the Army came up short a certain number of junior officers. Remember that the vast majority of those leaving were **captains** but the Army partially made up that shortfall by assessing about 800 more brand new **second lieutenants** than they needed. Even still, they were short LTG Maude's 350.



All the preceding slides have set the stage for my discussion of what I think is the real cost of this exodus.

Indeed, since the publication of Force XXI Operations, the Army has refined its vision for what the future battlefield might require of its junior officers. One of the Army's spokesmen for leadership development during the Transformation, Brigadier General (retired) Huba Wass de Czege, has written that "doctrine, training and experience will be even more important in the future."

[C]ompany commanders are becoming increasingly important. They ought to have seven or eight years' experience in a battalion before taking command because they need to gain experience to be truly effective. Also, the Army must conduct a more thorough assessment and selection process, choosing only the best and leaving the officers in position longer."*

But, in fact, the trends since 1994 are markedly different. If one looks closely at officer effectiveness, as indicated by the combination of separate trends in the experience, skill, and quality among junior officers since 1994, there is significant reason to be concerned.

* (Brigadier General (retired) Huba Wass de Czege and Major Jacob D. Biever, "Soldiers - Not Technology - Are the Key to Continued Superiority," Army, March 2001, 1.)

Experience

- “Active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill.”

“Pin-On” Time To CPT

94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01
----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

Annual Training Opportunities

50% Decline

1990
 1998

Example: Junior armor officers were conducting nearly **50% less live-fire training** and **50% less maneuver training** annually in 1998 than they had in 1990.

AND they are spending less time in developmental positions (such as Platoon Leader) because.....

More LTs than jobs means rapid turn-over

Displaced LTs fill vacant CPT jobs.

For Army officers, as with any other professional, experience is the "active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill." In general, when officers move rapidly through the ranks they have fewer opportunities to fully learn the basic skills that form the foundation of further development. This is particularly true for the junior officers, as they have no source upon which to rely to compensate for missed training opportunities.

Take a moment to consider the implications of reducing pin-on time to captain. By 2002, the time to captain will have decreased by a third in just 8 years, but there has been no corresponding decrease in the responsibility associated with that promotion. Indeed, BG Wass de Czege, among others, gives us reason to believe it is growing more difficult. When junior officers in the field ask their chain of command about this trend, they're told not to worry, because pin on time to captain was at two years during Vietnam. But they know enough history to understand that inexperienced officers in command in combat cost lives and it concerns them.

Similarly, the second part of the experience equation - training opportunities - is declining as well. A RAND study entitled "Keeping the Warfighting Edge: An Empirical Analysis of Army Officers' Tactical Expertise Over the 1990s" determined that training opportunities for junior officers declined by 50% in the period of 1990 to 1998. That does not include the Gulf War train-up. There is a compounding effect of this decline in opportunities, when coupled with the decline in time as a lieutenant. Fewer years in grade and fewer training opportunities per year means we could be theoretically seeing a decline in training opportunities approaching 66% in the decade of the 90s.

And remember, that the Army is over-assessing lieutenants, which means they've got to shuffle them through lieutenant jobs to qualify everybody. And the window to do that before promotion to captain is shortening all the while, so they've got to do that shuffle faster and faster. This decline in experience carries over into the Battalion and Brigade staffs as displaced lieutenants fill vacant captain positions.

Note too that there is a second order effect on the enlisted soldiers and NCOs. They may be ready to advance to more complex collective tasks, but they are constrained by the inexperienced platoon leader. They bring the new lieutenant up to speed just in time to lose him/her and start all over again.

Officer Skill

- Declining Combat Skills at Combat Training Centers**

“Decline Over Last 5 Years”

94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01
----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

Army Inspector General Report

GAO Report

 - OPFOR ‘throws the fight’
 - “Don’t know what we don’t know”

Congressional Testimony

 - Performance and combat readiness ...has substantially declined the past 5 years.
 - Steep decline in the ability of battalions and brigades to... defeat [the enemy].

RAND Study
“Tactical Gap”

 - In 2000: 80% Army Training Centers **Unable** to Complete Mission. Of 33 Training Centers, 17 **C-4** and 12 **C-3**
 - “Intellectual Foundation” for Future Jeopardized

“We are graduating [officers] who have not received the comprehensive training we owe them in order to be successful.”

- Commanding General of an Army Training Center

© Mark R. Lewis. Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Presented to Security for a New Century 107th Congress Discussion Group 30 Aug 01

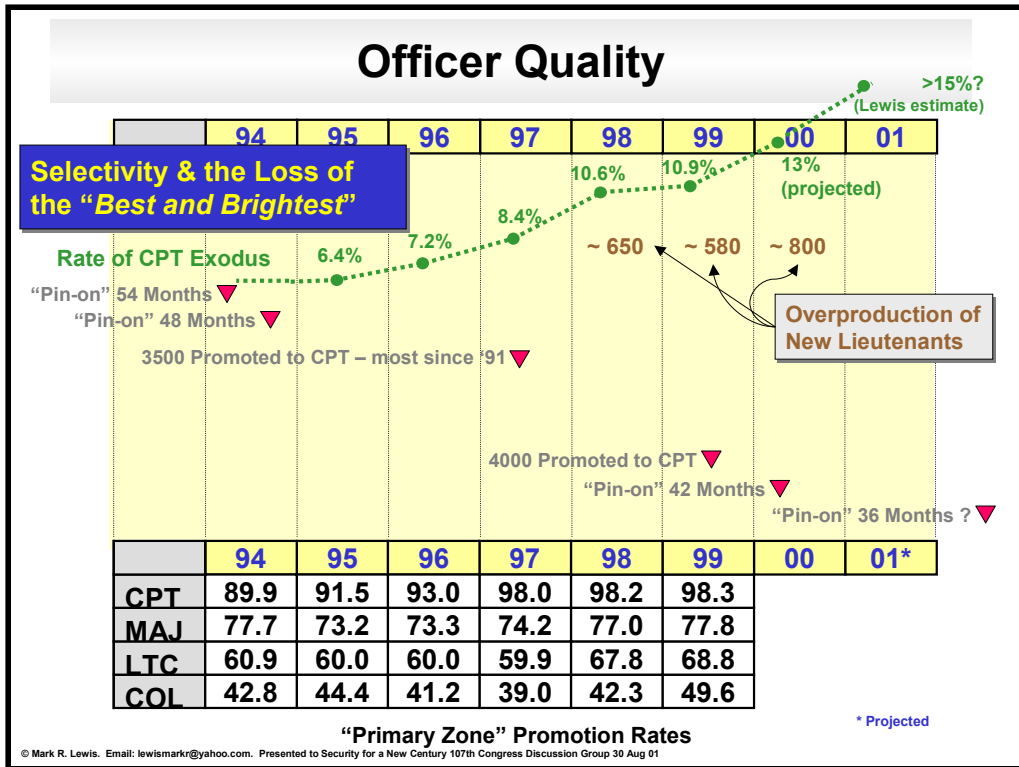
I use performance at the Combat Training Centers as a baseline indication of skill because it is simply the most demanding training environment and performance - if not winning - counts. But also, if the developing technology is expected to increase the lethality and survivability for units and weapons systems, and NTC is the testing venue, then how can we measure the effectiveness of technology without considering human performance in the equation?

In January 1999, the Army's Inspector General briefed senior Army leaders that leaders and units were unable to execute routine tasks at the same level of competence that comparable peers had just a few years earlier. The next month, several senior Army officers and NCOs testified about skill degradation in front of the House Armed Services subcommittee on military readiness. COL John D. Rosenberger, the commander of the NTC Opposing Force and extremely experienced in NTC operations, testified in detail that “Commanders, staffs, and soldiers at every level--platoon to brigade--display a decreasing level of knowledge, skill, and ability to plan, prepare, conduct, and sustain combat operations.”

In the September 1999 report entitled *Full Training Benefits From Army's Combat Training Centers Are Not Being Realized*, the GAO documented the steps the Army took to compensate for this decline in skill. "The centers," the GAO found, "routinely limit the capability of their opposing force by restricting its use of chemical weapons, mines, obstacles, artillery, and tactics." That report also noted that "many commanders come away from their training with an unrealistically high assessment of their individual and unit capabilities because they [think] that their units performed well, when serious unit weaknesses might have been uncovered had training conditions not been adjusted to reduce exercise complexity."

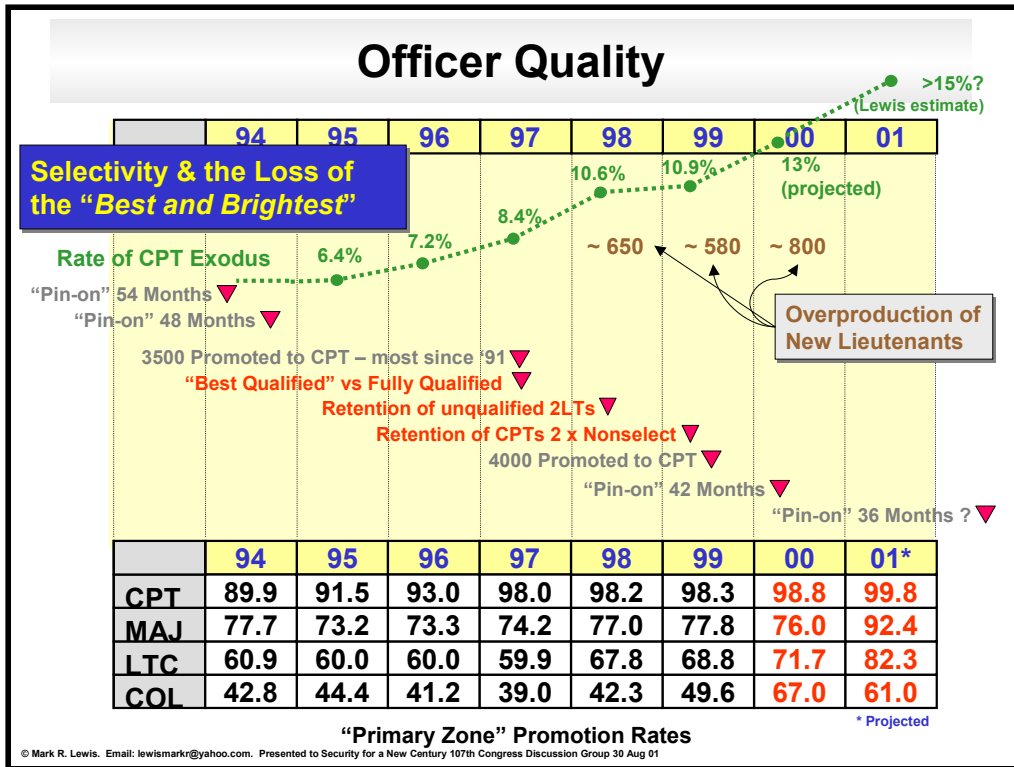
Furthermore, the Army's capability to produce skilled officers over the last half of the '90s has also declined. The slide shows the results of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) 2000 readiness report. Many training center commanders also reported that they are unable to conduct the Training Development, Doctrine Development, and Combat Development studies and analyses - the “intellectual foundation” - required to fully develop the doctrine needed for the future.

All of these reports generally concur that this decline took place “over the last 5 years” from time of publication. That corresponds with our starting point of 1994.



This is the first slide in a series that I use to discuss the possibility of a decline in junior officer quality. It is the same slide as #8, "Officer Production Trends," but I've also superimposed the rate of the captain exodus in green, as a point of reference.

In the next two slides, I'll discuss what these trends imply a little more specifically, and add some details. I've masked what's happened to selectivity in terms of promotion rates in 2000 and 2001 to make that point again in a later slide.

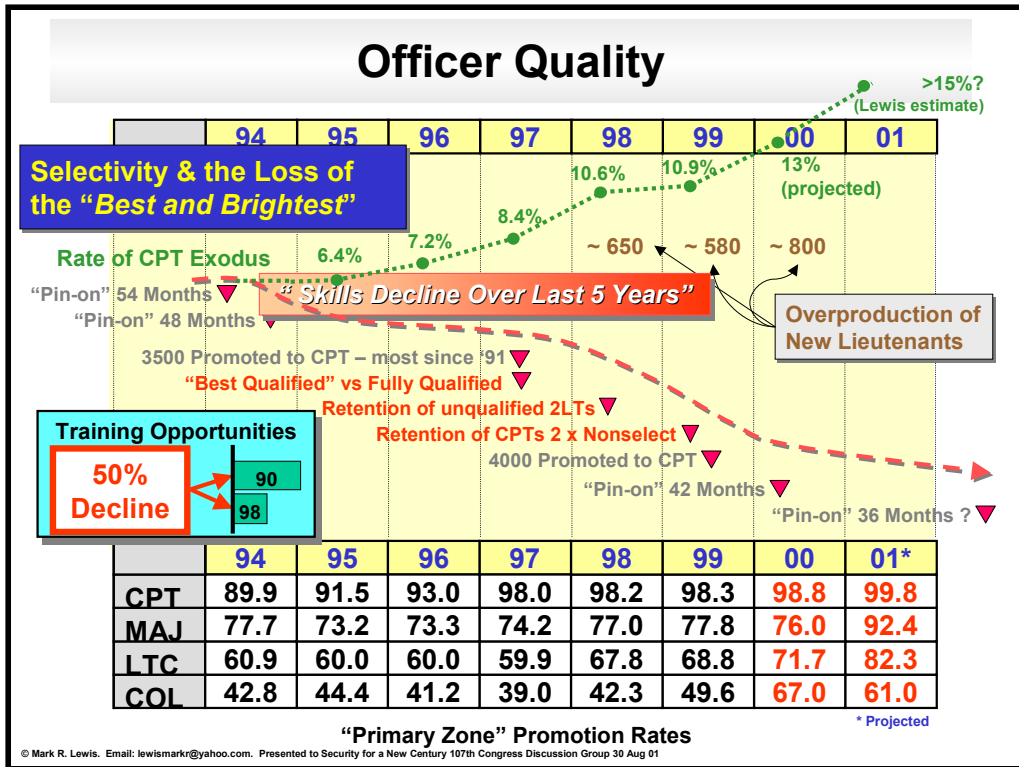


In 1997, the Army lowered its selectivity standards from "Best Qualified" to "Fully Qualified" as it promoted lieutenants in record numbers in an attempt to stem the tide of exiting captains. We can see a corresponding increase of in the promotion rates to captain from 1994 to 1997. Similarly, in 1998, the Army also began to retain second lieutenants whom their chain of command had actually found unqualified for promotion. These are officers who could not meet the most basic standards in performance and conduct. Instead of immediately separating them from the service, as had been the case in the past, the Army put them in a sort of "probation status" for a six-month period in an attempt to rehabilitate them. The Army was driven by necessity to keep those whom local commanders - commanders who knew these officers best - had deemed unqualified. You've got to work pretty hard to not be promoted to first lieutenant, but the Army still needs those officers.

The clearest indicator that quality was suffering severely was the Army's decision to retain captains that had been twice passed over for promotion. I've got a copy of the email authorizing this action in 2001, but I've also seen indications that this practice begun in 1999. What this means is that the Army again finds itself forced to keep officers who could not meet the basic standards for promotion – *in two chances* - instead of processing them out of the service. This is a considerable compromise; the selection rate to major is not very competitive and has been getting less so since the mid-nineties. When one considers that some officers are promoted early, and approximately 25-30% of the officers not selected the first time are selected at the second opportunity, that means only a group of about less than 10% of the original cohort are not selected at all. It is this population that the Army is forced to retain.

Take a moment to really consider what such high selection rates imply about the Army's ability to be selective about whom they promote. As an Army Times editorial noted in April 2001:

*Why are so many officers advancing? The main reason is that too many officers continue to flee the service, including many of the **best and brightest leaders**. When selection opportunity gets too high, the competitive nature of the promotion system is diluted.... Over time, **quality will have to erode**. Less competition can't mean anything else [emphasis added].*

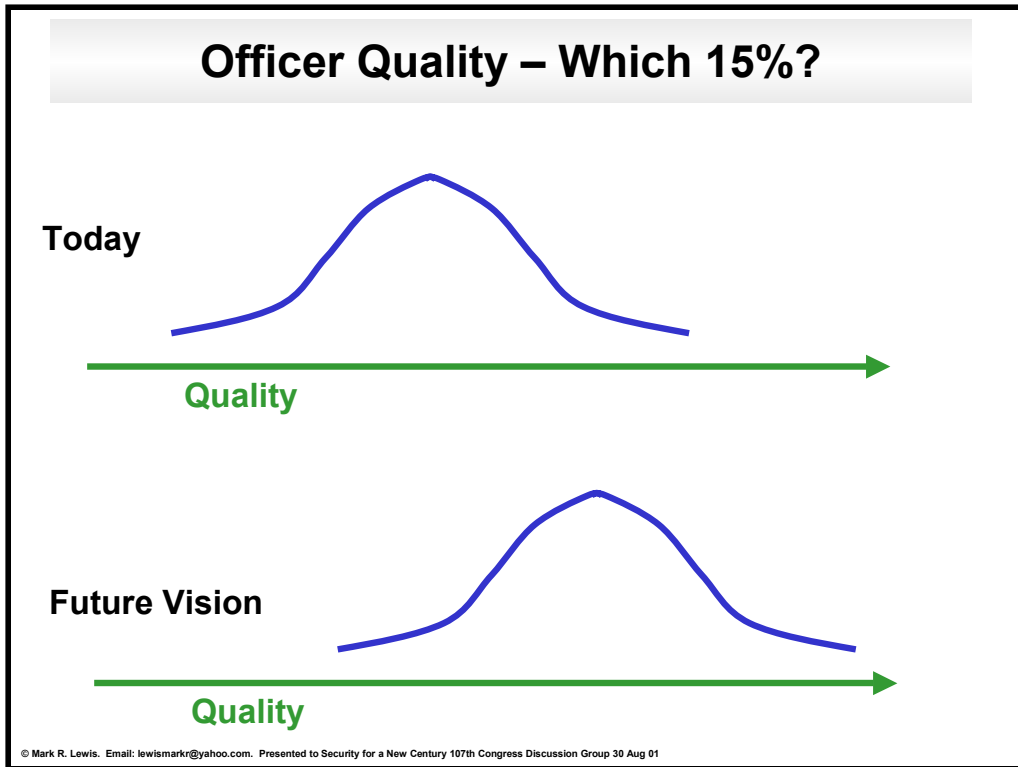


This slide summarizes the points I've made in the Experience, Skill, and earlier Quality Slides. Since 1994, when the vision of Force XXI Operations was published, "pin-on" times have dropped by 33%, promotion selectivity has decreased alarmingly, training opportunities have also decreased, and skills at the CTCs have dropped. Simultaneously, the Army began promoting more and more captains, faster and earlier, and when that effort still did not make up the shortage of captains, they over-produced lieutenants. When you consider all those factors, and they way they interact with each other, I believe its an indicator of a decline in officer quality. I've put a dotted red line in the slide as a symbolic representation of that decline.

I think the officers in the field intuitively understand what's happening. They may not put as fine a point on it as I have here, with the luxury of time to consider it all, but even in '97 we were talking about these trends in my brigade.

The question is - what really is driving what? If you take an industrial approach, then the means to produce more captains in the face of a shortage is clear. Commission more, promote more and promote lieutenants faster. That has been the Army's approach, in response (in part) to the rise in the green exodus curve. But I'd argue that the green exodus curve keeps pushing upwards in response to those steps to produce more captains. It manifests in an unhappiness - a job satisfaction problem - driven by trends in less time with troops before moving to staff, less time to train, and a lowering of standards for retention and promotion selection. The Army takes steps to overcome the shortage of captains, which in turn drives the rate of exodus higher, which, of course, means that the Army must take more aggressive steps to compensate. That's a loop worth spending some time understanding, I think.

But there is an even a more important question suggested by this slide, and that is: Which 15% of the captains are going?



This slide sets up a discussion about quality. Conceptually, quality is distributed across the force in a bell curve as above. Some are of lower quality - “below center mass” - while the bulk of the population falls comfortably in the fat portion of the bell. Some are of course of greater quality, and they are represented by the portion under the right side of the curve.

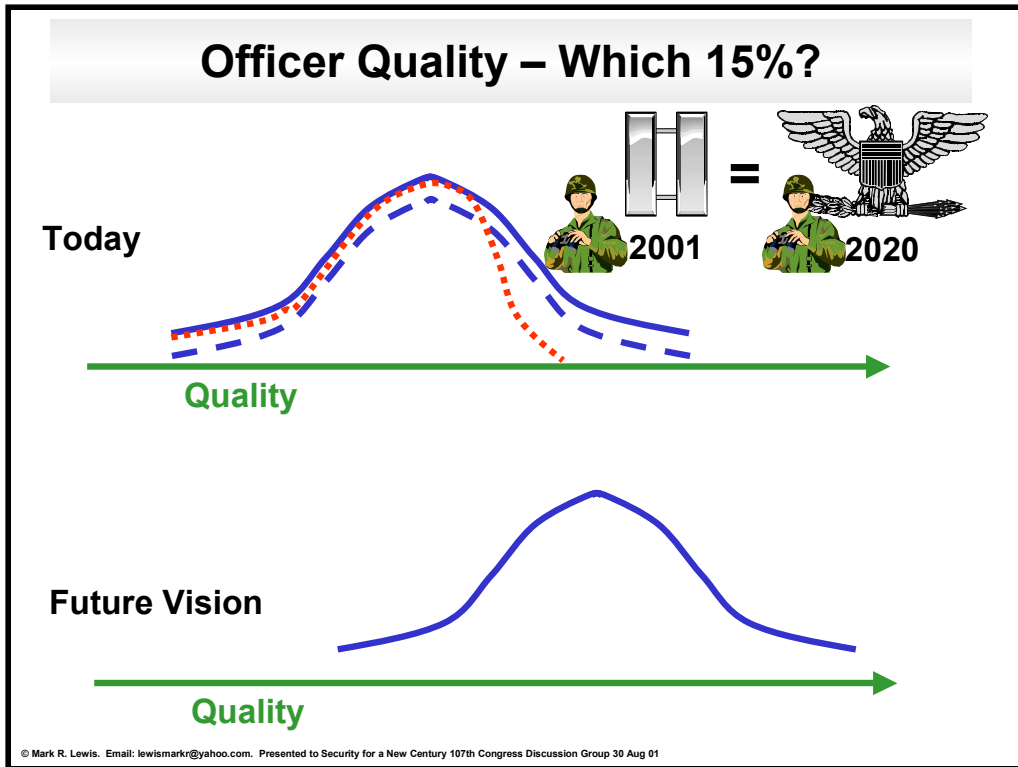
Recall slide #2 and BG Wass de Czege’s comments. The image of the Force XXI leader is dramatic. Clearly, the authors of *Force XXI Operations* envisioned a new standard of competence; the status quo of current day operations would no longer be adequate.

Future leaders will have a higher level of doctrine-based skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experience ...In fact, the complex nature of future operations may require leaders of greater experience and rank commanding at lower levels than ever before.

Qualities such as "vision, innovation, adaptability, and creativity and the ability to simplify complexities and clarify ambiguities-all while operating under stress, " while always important, would receive even greater emphasis to enable future leaders to adapt to the incredible pace and lethality of the twenty-first century battlefield.

The formation of these leaders would need to evolve, as well; "Army's leader development initiatives will provide steady development of individuals who demonstrate potential for mastering the art of command. Institutions and commanders will train and develop leaders who are intuitive, agile-minded, innovative, and disciplined." (all quotes from TRADOC Pam 525-5).

Every source - doctrinal or philosophical - calls for a new standard in tactical leadership with deeper experience and greater skills than the battlefield requires today in order to bring about a transformation. The lower curve represents the concept of a future force that has shifted right - or “up” - on the quality scale. The bell curve distribution is still present, but the entire force is of higher quality than today.



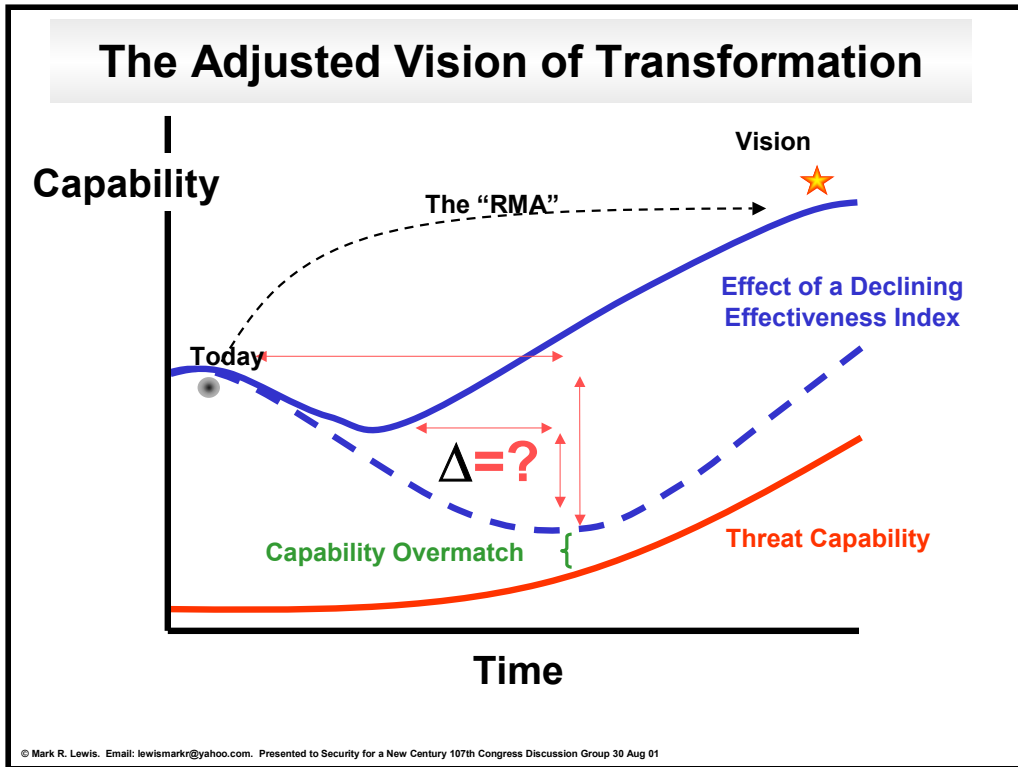
If the drain on captains is evenly distributed across the bell curve, as conceptually indicated by the dotted blue line, that's one thing. But there is a lot of anecdotal reason to worry that higher quality officers - some, not all - are disproportionately represented in the population punching out. That would cause a curve something like the red dotted line.

In June 1998, for instance, indications in an internal "Leadership and Assessment" survey and increasing anecdotal evidence began to imply that the Army was experiencing a drain of talented soldiers at a disproportionate rate. Over the next year and a half, the national press began to report that the "Army is losing some of its best future leadership." Attrition rates grew, and another internal Army survey taken in 1999 commented, "the best [captains] are getting out, leaving the mediocre to step into positions of command."

As selectivity drops and promotion rates skyrocket, it becomes a question of not only experience, but also quality. Would all of these officers have made the cut, if necessity had not forced the Army to promote them? Recall the quote from the Army Times editorial on slide #14. As a one of the authors of the Center for Strategic and International Studies study entitled *American Military Culture in the 21st Century*, Lieutenant General Walter F. Ulmer, Jr. (US Army retired), commented, "if we will need highly competent officers in the future--and we will--we should be concerned greatly about the loss of talent."

This is concerning for two reasons. The first is that, as shown by the little cartoon on the slide, the captain of 2001 is the colonel of 2020. If the Army loses talent at a disproportionate rate, it does not bode well for the selection of the leaders needed to make transformation a complete success in the future. Secondly, if the vision of the future is predicated on a population of a greater number of high quality people, and we are having trouble retaining that quality in relatively small numbers today, what makes us think that we'll be able to populate the bulk of the force with that same high quality in the future, without serious changes in the way we manage the force?

See back up slide #27 for another discussion of officer quality.



This slide revisits the concepts I introduced in slide #3. I have tried to show trends in officer experience, skill and quality in the preceding slides. Separately, these trends concerning, but when taken together as an overall sort of "Effectiveness Index," I think they have significant implications for the future of the Army. When the Army thinks about the changes it must make, the vision invariably encompasses advances in both technology and human effectiveness. The curve representing the change in capability over time assumes that the greatest gain in capability in the shortest time possible correlates to an Effectiveness Index that increases to keep pace with the technological development. But that's not happening.

Clearly, these trends are at odds with what the designers of the future Army have in mind. It is certainly tough to reconcile them with the idea that Army will produce future leaders with a "higher level of doctrine-based skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experience." In fact, there is no evidence to indicate that the downward trends are slowing, let alone reversing.

Of course, the relationship between technological advances and human interaction to bring about a RMA is incredibly complex. It is impossible to predict exactly how each of the myriad variables will play out over time. What a downturn in the Effectiveness Index suggests, however, is that the result will be less than anticipated. If we adjust the capability curve by extrapolating those Effectiveness Index trends out into the future as part of the envisioned process of the transformation, we see that the dotted blue line could represent the path of the Capability/Time curve as it factors in the consequences of decline in officer effectiveness over time. Note that it pushes the bottom of the curve down and to the right. How low and how far is impossible to predict, but the point is that it is lower and closer to the rising Threat line than anticipated. And if it is impossible to predict, it is also impossible to control.

Conclusion

- The Army will not be able to develop **experienced** and **skilled** officers until it is able to **hold them in positions longer** and provide them with a deeper set of training opportunities.
- It cannot be **discriminating** about whom it promotes until it can retain enough officers to allow for **some process of selection**.
- These trends will not be slowed, let alone reversed, until the Army **links experience, skill, and quality** of its company grade officers to **their retention**.
- But it has not made that connection

“First and foremost, officer attrition is not bad.”

LTG Maude, deputy chief of staff for Personnel
30 January 2001

This slide stands alone.

Recommendations

- **Is There A Problem?** [Need An Independent Review](#)
 - Which 15%? Who is really leaving?
 - What did the Army Training and Leader Development Panel Study (“Blue Ribbon Panel”) of 2001 really say?
- **If Yes - what are the implications?** [Time is of the essence](#)
 - For Transformation and the Future.
 - For Retention.

Beyond the Scope of Today’s Discussion

- **Overturn some rocks and see what crawls out**
 - Statutory requirements (DOPMA and US Code) and resulting pressures
 - Inherited Cold War assumptions still valid?
 - Is no officer better than a bad officer?
 - Contributing institutional pressures? “Army Culture is Out of Balance”
 - Promotions and Retirement
 - Profession versus Occupation

© Mark R. Lewis. Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Presented to Security for a New Century 107th Congress Discussion Group 30 Aug 01

I tailored my recommendations to the target audience for the 30 Aug 01 presentation – the Legislative Assistants of members of Congress. I told them not to just take my word on it - find out for sure.

Why is an independent review important? Recall the findings of the Army Training and Leader Development Panel Study (ATLDP) I mentioned in slide #1: “*Army Culture is out of balance. There is friction between Army beliefs and practices. Over time, that friction threatens readiness.*” I’ve said this is a tremendous step forward in dealing with the real problems the Army faces, and it is, but it doesn’t quite go far enough.

The authors of that study, probably intentionally, wrote that statement in the passive voice. It implies that the change in Army culture was some unavoidable evolutionary process, like an ice age overtaking the dinosaurs. Instead, it is the completely predictable result of a great many officers choosing a set of behavior that was directly in contrast to the Army ethic. If culture is the collection of behavior patterns, institutions, norms, and traits of a group, then how does the Army grapple with that? Can we really expect that some of the same officers who, at worst, are responsible for creating - and perpetuating - (or at best, tolerating it’s rise) this skewed culture will be the architects of it’s change? Is it reasonable to wait for them to have some sort of grand epiphany and say, “the behaviors I have adopted and have in turn made me successful, gotten me promoted faster than my peers, and put me in greater and greater positions of authority and responsibility over the last 20 or 25 or even 30 years, are misguided? And even though they’ve worked for me, and I have built my life around them, they’ve got to change?” That seems too much to ask - yet it’s exactly what has to happen. If you look around, I’ll bet you find no one taking ownership of this problem. Certainly no one claims responsibility. They are going to need some outside help.

Secondly, time is of the essence. Every moment the Army does not act decisively to reverse these trends puts the baseline from which it must start that much lower on the Effectiveness Index. They may talk about the need for future officers to be more competent than those today, but with every moment that goes by, the gulf between what the system is producing and what it must move to produce widens.

Because I’m already convinced, I included the Beyond the Scope Recommendations. Those are all based on the works of Vandergriff, MacGregor, and Tillson, et al, and can be found at www.d-n-i.net and Vandergriff’s book [Spirit, Blood, and Treasure](#).

The Army Transformation Meets the Junior Officer Exodus

Mark R. Lewis

Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com

voicemail: (703) 234-3954 x2876

The end.

Back up slides follow.

Why Are They Leaving?

- **Zero-defects**
- **Micromanagement**
- **Mission confusion**
- **Quality of Life issues**
 - (OPTEMPO, housing, pay, etc)

© Mark R. Lewis. Email: lewismarkr@yahoo.com. Presented to Security for a New Century 107th Congress Discussion Group 30 Aug 01

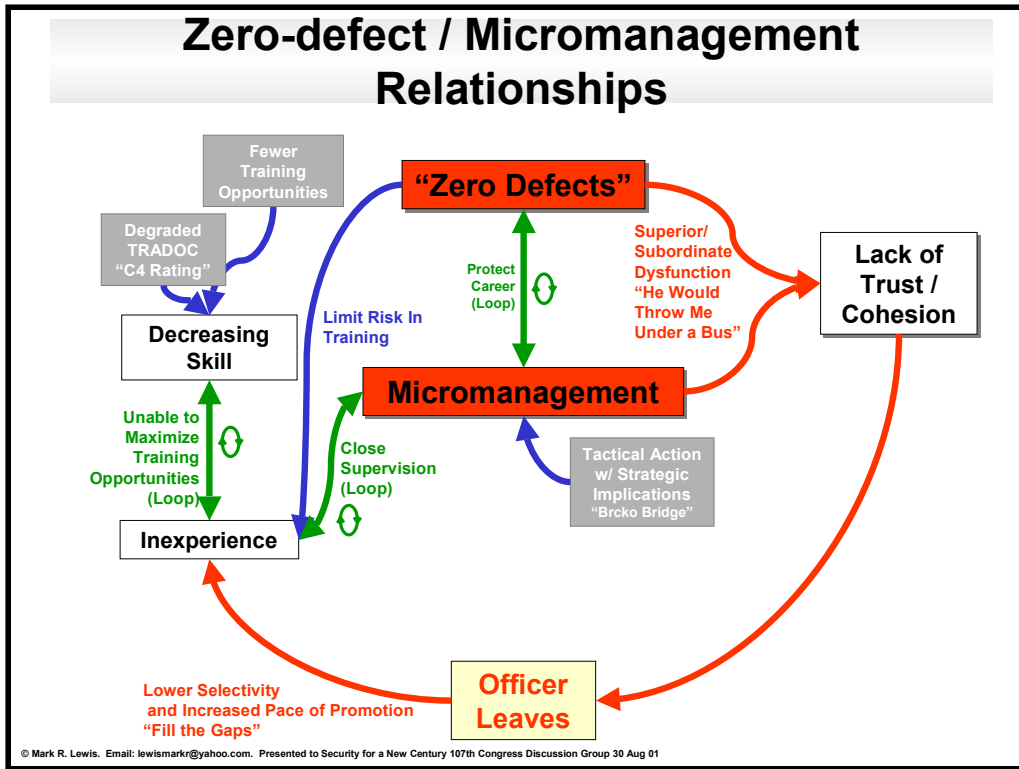
BACK UP SLIDE.

I referred to this slide and the next two during the Q&A.

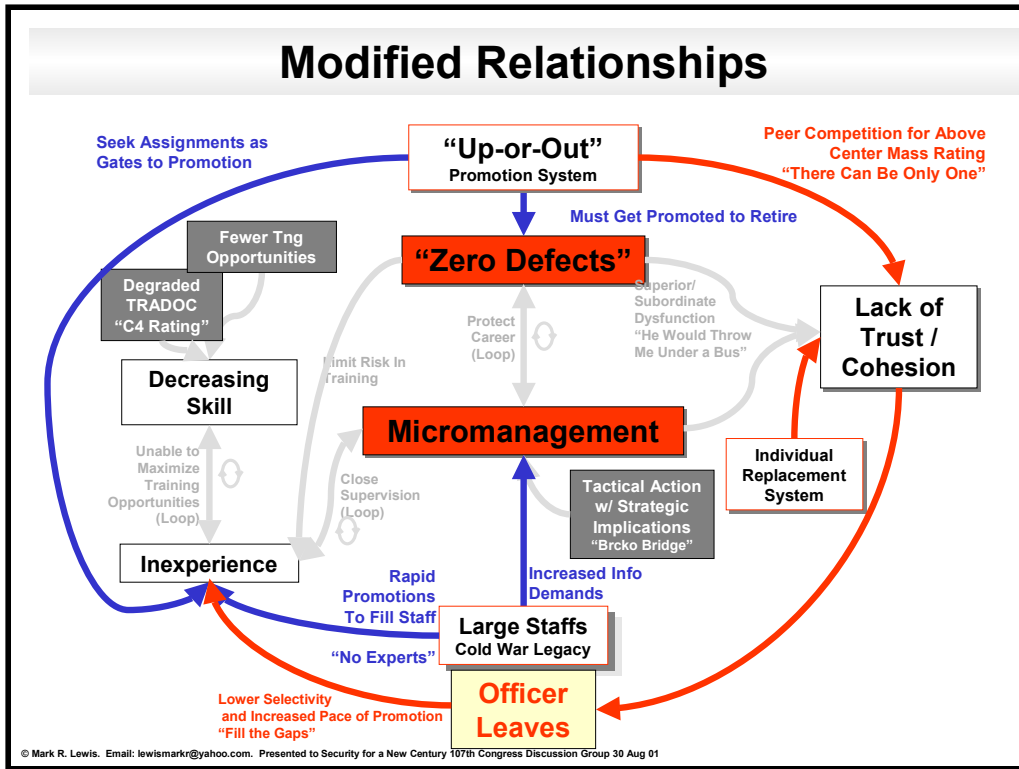
If, then, we can trace the roots of all three components of officer effectiveness – experience, skill, and quality – to the Army's struggle to address the shortage of captains, it seems reasonable to look at the reasons why they are leaving in the first place. Understanding the root causes of the exodus might provide insight into how to stop it.

The tremendous outpouring of service member emails in the later half of the 90s, each of the Army's surveys of 1997, 1999 and 2001, the "Major's Revolt" at the Army's Command and General Staff College in 2000, and a survey by the Center for Strategic and International Studies on Military Culture also in 2000 all explore several basic themes behind the captains' exodus. Some had to do with pay and benefits such as family housing. A lot of those surveyed were dissatisfied with the operational tempo and turbulence caused by repeated "non-traditional" deployments such as Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance missions. But the omnipresent theme was a crisis in faith with their leadership. Some times that crisis manifested itself in what young officers perceived as a Zero-defect mentality in their superiors, some times it was the phenomenon of micromanagement. Most often it took on the insidious moniker of "Lack of Trust," which is really summation of many factors leading toward total disillusionment.

Taken together, they describe a profound professional dissatisfaction for these captains. When one looks closely at this list, we see that external forces beyond the control of the Army drive issues such as Pay and OPTEMPO. Pay is a budget issue decided in Congress, and OPTEMPO is a by-product of executing the National Security Strategy, as defined by the President of the United States. Leadership, however, is a product of the Army's organizational culture, and as such, within the realm of what the Army could modify internally.



- BACK UP SLIDE.** I built this diagram to better understand the cause-and-effect relationship between a Zero-Defect (ZD) and Micromanagement (MM) organizational culture and a decline in Experience, Skill, and Quality
- ZD and MM are locked in a loop as one perpetuates the other. Seniors officers closely monitor junior officers to protect their career. Junior officers in turn live under a microscope, and resort to micromanagement of their subordinates as a matter of survival.
 - ZD leads to Lack of Trust/Cohesion in the Senior/Junior relationship as Juniors feel they are merely career-enablers for the Seniors
 - ZD leads to Inexperience as commanders limit risk in training to prevent mistakes that could inhibit their promotion.
 - MM is fed by the fact that tactical action today can be extremely sensitive, with strategic implications, amplified by the "CNN Effect."
 - MM is locked in a loop with Inexperience. When seniors closely supervise juniors, the juniors are not free to experiment and fully learn lessons. Similarly, commanders must compensate for lack of experience in juniors through restrictive control measures that limit freedom of action and must guide them to the learning objective more directly, and through less taxing training events (i.e. requiring the OPFOR to not play at full speed).
 - MM drives Lack of Trust/Cohesion issues.
 - Inexperience and Decreasing Skill are locked in a loop. Commanders are not fully trained (inexperienced) and therefore cannot fully train subordinates. And when units and individuals approach training opportunities without the full complement of skills, they cannot take full advantage of them
 - Degraded TRADOC training centers produce Decreasing Skill through less productive training exercises/individual training, and marginalized doctrine development
 - Lack of Trust/Cohesion is the Army cultural phenomenon that drives officers out.
 - Officer exodus feeds Inexperience as lower standards and higher promotion rates attempt to "fill the gap."

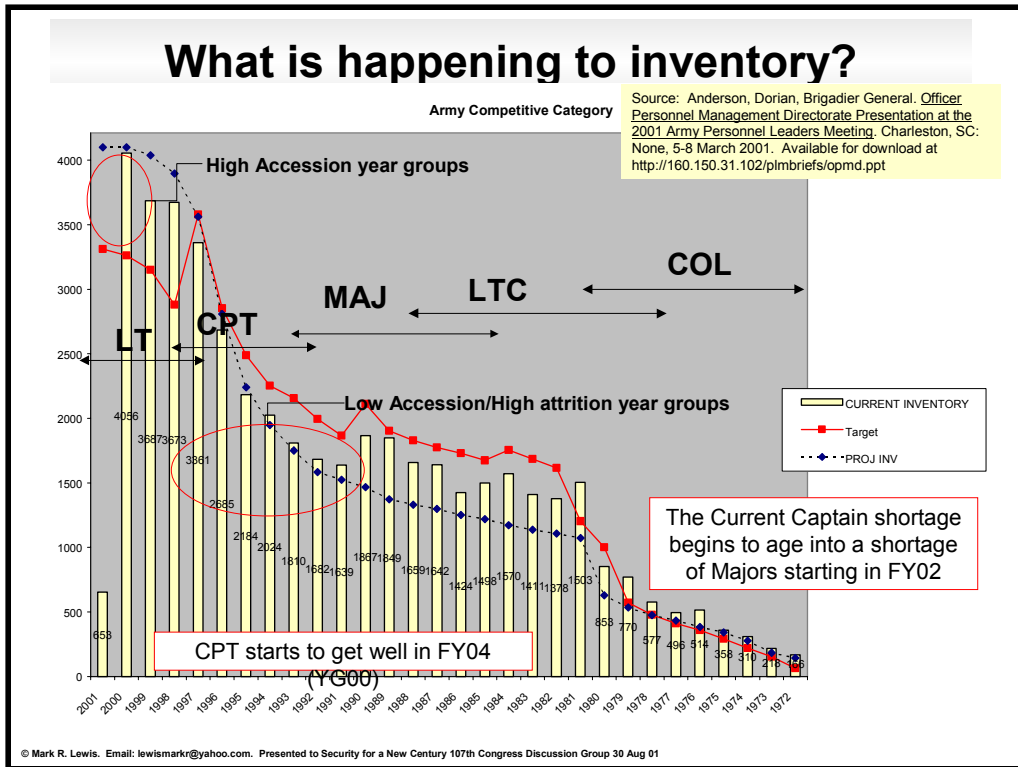


BACK UP SLIDE.

A partial explanation for an organizational source of the ZD mentality and MM may lie in friction inherent in a conflict between an industrial-age personnel system that is trying to remain relevant in an information-age Army. The Army, while stressing the need for tight knit, cohesive units, still practices an individual replacement system. This practice treats humans as interchangeable cogs; it does not grow leaders in the units that they then command, nor does it allow them to remain in place long enough to gain deep experience.

The Army is built around an “up-or-out” promotion system tied to a retirement system that only pays benefits when an officer reaches twenty years of service. In order to retire, an officer must make it to 20 years of service, and in order to make it to 20 years of service, he must continue to be promoted on schedule. This can create a conflict as officers begin to adopt behavior or pursue assignments that ensure high chances of promotion. Some of this behavior manifests itself as a ZD approach to MM.

People like Vandergriff tell us that the Army structure has far larger staffs than required, and a much higher ratio of officers to enlisted than is healthy. This was generally to provide a cadre of officers around which to build units in case of rapid mobilization during the Cold War. In practice, those large staffs have two effects. The first is that they drive decision-making up the echelons, as no one is empowered to make decisions. The second effect is that these staffs have a huge capacity for processing information. But peacetime units do not naturally generate as much information as do units in combat. Since these large staffs cannot remain inactive, they contribute directly to the MM phenomenon by their great demand for information.



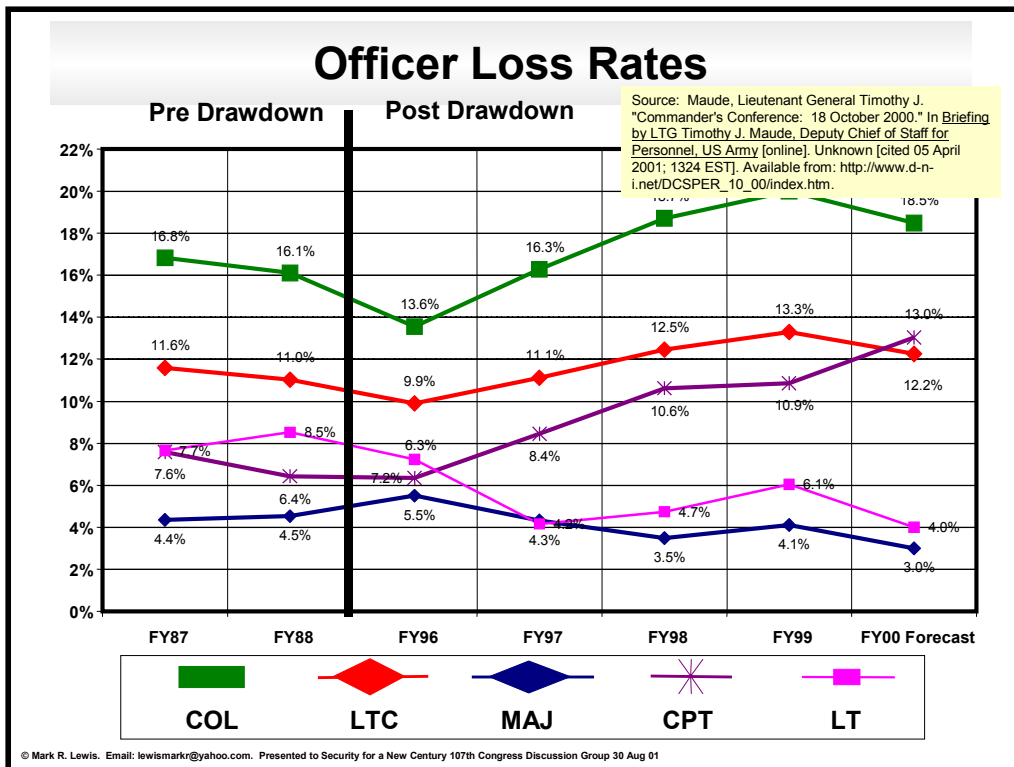
BACK UP SLIDE.

I did not brief this slide. Apparently, BG Anderson briefed it at an Army Personnel conference in March, 2001. I neglected to record the date I downloaded it, but it was early April 2001. The site has since disappeared. It contains a tremendous amount of information and deserves careful study.

Language reflects the culture from which evolves. There has been a lot of talk about the Army personnel system being stuck in an industrial age mindset. Note the title of the slide. It's not about population. It's not about people. It's about an inventory of components - in this case, officers.

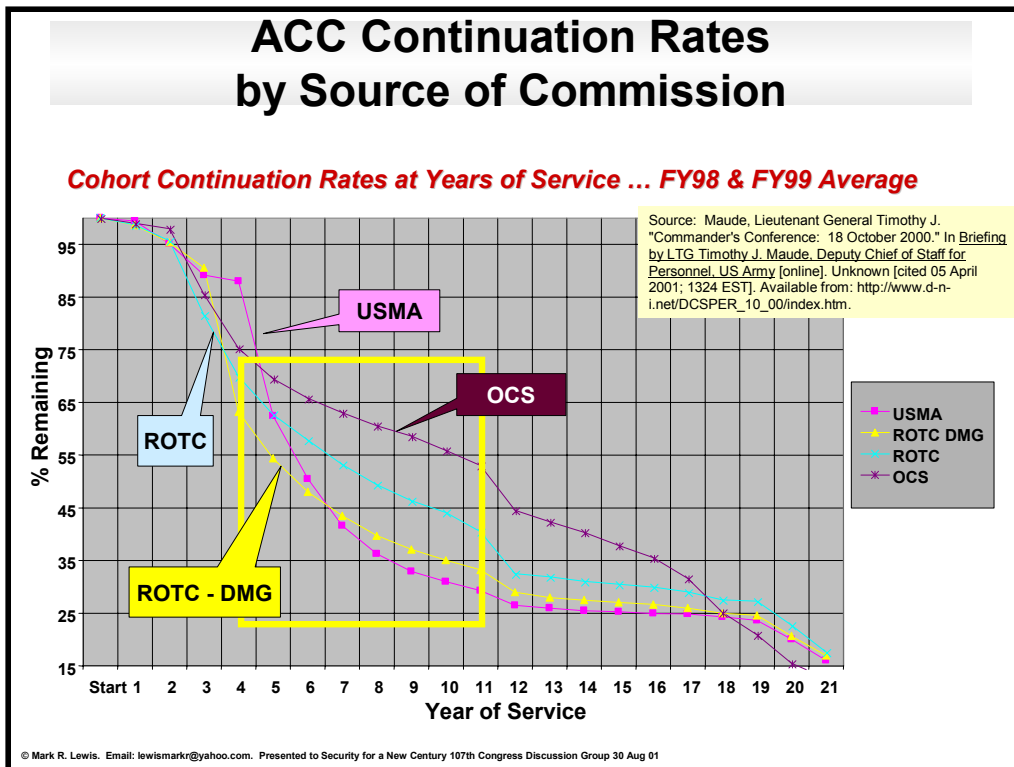
Note also the banner "CPT start to get well in FY04." They don't get well. They get the *opposite* of well. But the *number* of captains gets well by FY04, because of exactly the steps I've detailed.

Since I don't have access to bona fide PERSCOM data, this is where I got, among other things, the numbers of over-assessed lieutenants. The numbers are imprecise (but I bet the truth is within the bursting radius), because I *assumed* this slide came from an Excel spreadsheet. It's too neat to be drawn freehand. I based my numbers upon the labeling of the slide, and the way the bar graphs extend about the "target" lines in 1998, 1999, and 2000. On my paper copy, 1000 officers = 32.5mm. I then measured the distance above the target line, and computed the ratio. It's close enough to make the point.



BACK UP SLIDE.

I did not brief this slide.



BACK UP SLIDE.

I did not brief this slide. I had prepared it to dig deeper into the Quality issue, if pressed.

In October 2000, LTG Maude, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel presented this chart to senior Army commanders. It compares the rate of departure in '98-'99 for officers commissioned from different sources. It also distinguishes between regular ROTC and Distinguished Military Graduates (DMGs). I have added the yellow box to indicate captains. Note the data is prior to the Army dropping pin-on times to captains to below 4 years.

ROTC DMGs are the top 10% of their class, and their ranking includes both military aptitude and academic performance as measured by the ROTC program and their university. USMA graduates are products of a far more selective system than the one that produces the average ROTC cadet, both in terms of academic preparation and military instruction. While there is no way to tell the quality of the individual officers represented at the point in which they chose to leave the service, it seems reasonable to draw some conclusions about the selectivity of that population of officers in general. USMA and ROTC DMG captains showed a far greater inclination to leave than their peers.

Of course it is a broad generalization to say that ROTC-DMG cadets represent higher quality officers at the time of their separation, but I could not find evidence that the Army tracks officer quality versus propensity to leave any other way, and the fact that the DCSPER felt that it was important to brief these trends seems a compelling indication that a commissioning-source-exit-rate comparison has value. The only alternative I could think of is that this is a tool to advocate closing West Point (i.e.: they are expensive, and they don't stick around), which I somehow doubt.

I do not include OCS officers in this comparison because this chart tracks cohorts at years in service, and since candidates attend OCS after some years of service (as a general rule) one cannot make any assumptions about how far they have progressed as commissioned officers based on this chart.