



by Benjamin Phocas

After twenty years of counterinsurgency, with some spending entire combat deployments in an air conditioned office on a city sized forward operating base, it has become easy for soldiers not at the tip of the spear to treat the Army as a simple nine-to-five job. Simply stated, an attitude of complacency became pervasive. Peacetime has worsened this attitude for every branch, with the true purpose of the Army, fighting our nation's wars, taking a backseat as everyday priorities pile up.

This mindset is extremely dangerous and detrimental as the Department of Defense (DoD) prepares itself for high intensity conflict. Combat support soldiers need to be prepared to face not only the combat related [stresses](#) and the 'friction' of war, but the distinct possibility that they themselves will become directly involved in combat. The idea that rear echelon soldiers will be somehow separated and spared from the horrific realities of combat, and that our enemies are incapable of reaching deep behind our lines to strike vital supply lines is tactical and strategic narcissism. What happened to the [507th Maintenance Company](#) will

certainly happen again in the future to other unprepared units, in the face of an enemy who is better trained, equipped, and motivated than the vaunted Iraqi army ever was. Looking back further, T.R. Fehrenbach's book, [‘This Kind of War’](#) provides a grim account of what happened to poorly trained units in the Korean War.

Since the War of the Austrian Succession in the 1740's, the concept of maneuvering around the main body of an enemy force to attack their logistics, has been a guiding principle of war. This is maneuver warfare... the so-called 'American Way of War'. In a future war with China, American forces would have to fight expeditionary campaigns in the South China Sea. Over the shore logistics from forward bases in the region, as well as from the US mainland, will be the only thing keeping combat troops in the fight. The enemy knows this, and will be actively targeting our logistics, as they too are capable of engaging in maneuver warfare against us. While we can mitigate this by predicting likely enemy maneuvers and interdicting with our own combat troops, there will be times when rear-echelon soldiers will be facing enemy infantry, special operations forces, or even armor. To even survive, American support troops will be expected to pick up a rifle and defend themselves.

For example, in wars past, clerks and cooks were often called on to fight when the situation became dire. On Saipan in 1944, Army dentist [Ben Salomon](#) won the Medal of Honor posthumously for single handedly defending a field hospital being overrun by the Japanese. His body was discovered with 76 bullet and bayonet wounds and the bodies of nearly one hundred Japanese soldiers around him.

Looking at today's support branches, one must ask: are these soldiers ready to react to an L-shaped ambush, would they be able to effectively perform combat casualty care on a wounded comrade, would they then have the physical fitness to drag or carry that wounded comrade to a casualty collection point possibly hundreds of meters away. Could they then call a 9-line for the casualty, or for fire against the enemy? If the answer to any of these questions is no, then it is time for a change.

To combat this ever-growing divide in our force, the Army must humble itself and look to the Marine Corps for advice. While the Marine Corps also faces this divide, the 'Every Marine a Rifleman' concept has brought their combat support units to a much higher level of proficiency and readiness for combat than their Army counterparts. The Army must adopt a similar attitude.

Every soldier is a warrior. The enemy will not discriminate between an 11B and a 92Y. Every soldier wears the uniform, and thus is an equal target to the enemy. As such, it is the duty of every soldier to be physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in their

[warrior tasks and drills](#), as we swear by in our [creed](#).

The Army is not just any job. Lives depend on us.

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