

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

Messenger

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 39, NO. 2



Freedom's Front Door

Western Sector

Eastern Sector

San Juan

Messenger

Sharing information to reach a vision



Helping our neighbors

Army Capt. Kevin Lopes, Sioux Falls operations officer, nails a piece of siding in place. MEPS staff members volunteered to help Habitat for Humanity build a home. Page 20.



Special night

Army Brig. Gen. Richard J. Torres, deputy commanding general of U.S. Army South, administers the oath of enlistment during the San Antonio Spurs Military Appreciation Night. Page 14

- 8 All applicants now take same drug test as active duty
- 9 The oath of enlistment is more than just a promise. It's a sacred vow.

17 Senior officials conducted enlistment ceremonies at Tampa and Chicago

23 Anchorage applicants run with the reindeer

U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

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Commanding
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Messenger

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This edition of the *Messenger* includes an article from *Proceedings*, the magazine of the U.S. Navy Institute. Although the article primarily addresses the oath of office for military officers, the significance applies equally to the oath of enlistment we are privileged to administer to applicants every day in our 65 dignified ceremony rooms across the country as they voluntarily enter "Freedom's Front Door."

While I have always regarded the words of the oath of enlistment with the utmost respect, I have gained an even greater appreciation for its binding commitment and solemnity as I have taken part in many enlistment ceremonies since assuming command of USMEPCOM.

USMEPCOM members are privileged to conduct these ceremonies daily. We must guard against allowing the commitment young Americans make to become routine. I believe the oath is extraordinarily meaningful to the person taking it, so we should make every effort to honor their vow to the nation.

Last year, nearly 250,000 young men and women with a desire to serve their nation stood in our ceremony rooms, raised their right hands and solemnly took this oath:

"I, (state your name), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the

Commander's Commentary

orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

The oath of enlistment for the United States military is unique in the world, as American service members swear their allegiance to the Constitution rather than an individual or particular office.

Service members are, therefore, charged with the responsibility to follow legal orders. This is particularly important as it sometimes leads to conflict with civilian leaders who see things differently. Service members must always be able to distinguish between disagreements over policy and constitutional violations. He or she must understand the principles of the Constitution with respect to civilian control of the military. Those in positions to issue orders, be they civilian or military, must also follow the Constitution's guidance. They very rarely veer into questionable territory.

Bottom line: We swear an oath to the Constitution. Although we are loyal to our superiors, subordinates, service and organization, our highest loyalty and sacred duty are to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

When the oath of enlistment (and oath of office for officers) was established during the American Revolution, oaths were taken even more seriously because they were considered a sacred act. Even today an oath is more than a promise. It is a commitment to adhere to a set of standards which will govern a person's actions in the future.

Even today, as it has throughout our nation's history, the oath taken by Americans upon entering

the military retains its significance and solemnity in that it is a vow to make sacrifices – perhaps even the ultimate sacrifice – in defense of our way of life.

When applicants raise their right hand and vow to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic" they are making a life-changing obligation that traces its roots to the very founding of our armed forces.

Although the oath has been an obligation I have taken very seriously throughout my military career, it has taken on even greater significance since I assumed command of USMEPCOM.

Every day, we shepherd young men and women, mostly millennials, through the process of becoming the newest members of our armed forces. It waters my eyes when I reflect on the idea that these young patriots are committing to serve during uncertain times when they may be called upon to perform dangerous duties in the face of hostilities around the world.

Thanks for what you do every single day to help us accomplish our mission of getting young men and women into one of our dignified ceremony rooms, raise their right hands and take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. Remember, we are Freedom's Front Door!

David S. Kemp
Captain, USN
Commanding

USMEPCOM forms Freedom's Front Door Chapter of Adjutant General Corps Regimental Association

By Lt. Col. Evangeline G. Rosel
Former Chicago MEPS and
6th Battalion Commander
and Maj. Crystal R. "CJ" Jones
Kansas City MEPS Commander

The geographically dispersed nature of the Freedom's Front Door Adjutant General Corps Regimental Association, known as AGCRA Chapter poses many challenges which require the chapter's executive board and chapter members to be innovative and dedicated to reaching out to the human resources leaders and professionals at USMEPCOM's 65 MEPS across the United States and Puerto Rico.

Through its challenges and experiences, the executive board became empathetic to the difficulties faced by other remote organizations and split operations between garrison and forward-deployed, so Freedom's Front Door reached out to other local human resources leaders and professionals, and to units in theater to see how it could bring chapter members closer together.

Instantly noting that there is so much added value in bringing people together, the executive board decided it was time to reach out other AGCRA chapters to stay connected to all our core functions, while also sharing the

unique adjutant general-led military mission. These interactions with others strengthened the chapter's commitment to closing the geographical distance and making a difference.

The Freedom's Front Door Chapter of AGCRA is a growing virtual chapter with 63 members from 65 MEPS and other organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico. Although the chapter is not very large, virtual events typically have around 100 attendees. The goal over the past two years has been to engage HR team members, including

Army civilians.

The executive board added a civilian vice president in hopes of gaining support from the 2,800-person workforce at USMEPCOM, of whom 80 percent are Army civilians.

There are a few occasions during the year when all the command's commanders and senior enlisted advisors come together in person. The chapter believes quality time is often more important than the quantity of time. When USMEPCOM leaders gather, the chapter recognizes its outstanding chapter members.

Dispersed chapter

The chapter's approach for fiscal 2017 embraced expanding leadership and professional development sessions to include civilian venues spearheaded by the civilian senior vice president position, themed calendar of events and kicking off the membership drive with the new National Adjutant General Corps Regimental Association president, retired Army Col. Robert Manning Chapter and Mr. Ortiz as the opening event.

In an attempt to network with other installations, the executive board extended the chapter's invita-



Freedom's Front Door Chapter president, Army Col. Christopher J. Beveridge, greets veterans as they check in for their Honor Flight at Chicago's Midway Airport.



Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey J. Snow, commanding general of U.S. Army Recruiting Command, asks a question during a briefing from the USMEPCOM staff on MHS Genesis, the military health system the command will field in the first phase of its strategic plan. Pictured left to right, are Suzanne Kirchhoff, Clinical Quality Division of the Medical Plans and Policy Directorate; Army 1st Sgt. Shenecqua Mouzon, former senior enlisted advisor for the 6th Battalion and Chicago MEPS; Army Lt. Col. Evangeline G. Rosel, former commander of 6th Battalion and Chicago MEPS; Snow; and Navy Capt. David S. Kemp, USMEPCOM commander.



Army Maj. Crystal R. "CJ" Jones, Kansas City MEPS commander, and Army Command Sgt. Maj. Joanne M. Cox, former Command Sergeant Major for Western Sector and Freedom's Front Door Chapter.

tions to all AGCRA chapters, including several high visibility events, supporting leadership, professional development, and informational sessions with leaders from the National AGCRA, Soldier Support Institute, Human Resources Command, Washington D.C., the Command and General Staff College, garrison AG commands, and other key groups.

Over the last two years, Freedom's Front Door Chapter coordinated and simultaneously executed

more than 17 teleconferences and 17 defense collaboration sessions at the same time to offer different venues and diverse experiences to attract a wider audience. More than 1,600 attendees called or logged in from throughout the Department of Defense.

Chapter members encouraged all USMEPCOM and other local units' HR professionals to join all leadership and professional development sessions, which helped bolster interest and membership numbers for Freedom's Front Door Chapter.

In just the last few months, Freedom's Front Door hosted sessions led by numerous subject matter experts out in the field including Col. Angie Holbrook, Fort Belvoir garrison commander; Col. Neal McIntyre, Adjutant General School commandant; Command Sgt. Maj. Nyeedra Edwards, regimental command sergeant major and many others. The chapter will host events

with Army Col. Hope Rumpy, Col. T.J. Edwards, Lt. Col. Kelly Steele and others.

Unique experience

With USMEPCOM's unique mission, stations often have the opportunity to host prominent Department of Defense officials.

For the first time in its 40-



Army 1st Sgt. Marie L. Dunson, Oklahoma City MEPS senior enlisted advisor, receives the Horatio Gates Bronze Medal from Army Col. Christopher J. Beveridge, Eastern Sector commander, and president of the Freedom's Front Door Chapter of the Adjutant General Corps Regimental Association.

year history then Secretary of Defense Ash Carter visited one of USMEPCOM's stations. Carter's visit was part of the Department of Defense's Force of the Future Initiative to transition to an all-electronic record in the near future.

Chicago and other MEPS also host numerous other DoD officials and recruiting services commanders to ensure the stations maintain open lines of communication to provide the best red carpet treatment to all of USMEPCOM's stakeholders.

Volunteer initiatives

As USMEPCOM continues to evolve in support of its accessions triad partners and their missions, the Freedom's Front Door Chapter also continues to develop and mature under the keen watch of its president, Army Col. Christopher Beveridge.

Though virtual, the chapter has numerous initiatives it hopes to execute – thinking outside the box to pro-

mulgate activities chapter members can conduct during similar time periods. This spring, Freedom's Front Door launched an effort to support Honor Flight Veterans as they travel to Washington D.C. Honor Flights transport America's veterans to the nation's capitol to visit the memorials dedicated to honor the service and sacrifices.

Honor Flights leave from 42 states for World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans. Freedom's Front Door Chapter members with MEPS in those 42 states will volunteer to assist these veterans as they board their flights.

The chapter is looking to identify some shared interests among chapter members and support similar events at the same time.

Freedom's Front Door Chapter is committed to showing community support in the coming months by participating in nationwide Adopt a Highway initiatives to improve the environment and possibly a nationwide USMEPCOM school supply drive to support the nation's youth.

Despite being virtual and having a high turnover of personnel each summer, the Freedom's Front Door Chapter will continue to strive. With one Army sector commander, five Army battalion commanders, 26 Army MEPS commanders, 40 Army senior enlisted advisors and numerous Army operations officers and processing NCOs, USMEPCOM and Freedom's Front Door Chapter is the premiere home for adjutant general corps leaders in a joint organization.

Forging relationships with different services in USMEPCOM and with its partners is a vital part of Freedom's Front Door's mantra to Remember the F.L.A.G. With Beveridge leading the chapter, it will continue to sustain those relationships and keep what is paramount at the forefront of our organization's mission and the chapter's purpose - Family, Leadership, Ambassadorship and Growth.



Accession policy director visits headquarters

Top left: Navy Capt. David S. Kemp, USMEPCOM commander, and Stephanie Miller, director of accession policy in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, enter the auditorium before Miller's all hands meetings with the USMEPCOM Information Technology and Resource Management Directorates. Top right: Scott Hutchins, chief of the Enterprise Customer Service Branch in the Information Technology Directorate, speaks with Miller after the all hands. Left: Mario Porter, Resource Management director, adds his thanks to his staff after Miller thanked them for their hard work on the command's budget issues. Above: Kemp introduces Miller before the all hands and Miller addresses the gathering. Miller addressed the two directorate staffs during her visit the USMEPCOM headquarters June 14 to thank them for their hard work on a host of important projects in their areas.

Applicants now take same drug test as active military

By Lisa Ferdinando
DoD News
Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON – Drug testing for all applicants for military service has expanded to include the same 26-drug panel used for active military members, the Defense Department's director of drug testing and program policy said.

The change, effective April 3, is due to the level of illicit and prescription medication abuse among civilians, as well as the increase in heroin and synthetic drug use by the civilians, Army Col. Tom Martin said.

Previously, military applicants were tested for marijuana; cocaine; amphetamines, including methamphetamine; and designer amphetamines such as MDMA – also known as “Molly” or “Ecstasy” – and MDA, also known as “Adam,” he said.

The expanded testing includes those drugs as well as heroin, codeine, morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, hydromorphone, oxymorphone, and a number of synthetic cannabinoids and benzodiazepine sedatives, Martin said.

The new standards apply to all military applicants, including those entering through military entrance processing stations, appointees to the service academies, incoming members of the ROTC and officer candidates undergoing initial training in an enlisted status.

With drug use incompatible with military service, the expanded testing is meant to ensure readiness by admitting only the most qualified people, Martin said. Incoming service members will be held to the same standards as current military members, who are subject to random



Army photo by David Vergun

Army Maj. Gen. Bruce T. Crawford, commander, U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command, performs a ceremonial swearing-in of Delayed Entry Program enlistees at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Jan. 11.

drug testing up to three times a year, he said.

“Military applicants currently are tested on a small subset of drugs that military members are tested on,” Martin said. “Applicants need to be aware of the standard we hold our service members to when they join the service.”

About 279,400 applicants are processed for entry into military service each year. Roughly 2,400 of them test positive for drugs, Martin said. Data indicates that about 450 additional people will test positive using the expanded testing, he said.

The updated policy allows applicants who test positive to reapply after 90 days, if the particular service

allows it, Martin said. Any individual who tests positive on the second test is permanently disqualified from military service, he said, but he noted that the services have the discretion to apply stricter measures and can disqualify someone after one positive test.

Current policy allows for different standards for reapplication depending on the type of drug, Martin said. The updated policy is universal and allows only one opportunity to reapply for military service regardless of drug type, he said.

The update to Department of Defense Instruction 1010.16 was published Feb. 27.

United States oath of enlistment, oath of office nearly unique

By Lieutenant Fleet Russell White
United States Navy

Reprinted with permission of the U.S. Naval Institute.

When an officer swears to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic” he is assuming the most formidable obligation he will ever encounter in his life. Thousands upon thousands for men and women have died to preserve for him the opportunity to take such an oath.

Admiral Arleigh Burke¹

Because it establishes the hierarchy of an officer's loyalties and a profound and sacred covenant with the American people, the oath of office is the defining standard for a naval officer in making leadership decisions throughout his or her naval career. Although the oath has endured several congressional revisions since its creation in 1789, it remains a testament to the American experiment in constitutional republicanism and civilian control of the military.² The oath is unusual in the Western political and military tradition because, in contrast to those of other nations, it pledges martial obedience to a fundamental set of laws unencumbered by sworn loyalties to a monarch, potentate, religion or dogma.

Modern relevance

As a public trust, the U.S. military is responsible for upholding the Constitution, and the oath is the key expression of an officer's covenant with the American people

and the enlisted men and women under his or her command. Officers must conduct themselves in a manner that justifies the people's trust. Because officers swear an oath to the Constitution, they must keep the Constitution as their highest loyalty when making difficult ethical decisions. This is particularly important because enlisted personnel have sworn an oath to follow their officers' orders.

Officers, by contrast, have sworn an oath to the Constitution and therefore are expected to disobey unconstitutional orders. This can lead to disagreements between military officers and their civilian leaders, because the oath does not specify how an officer is supposed to support and defend the Constitution. Rather, the officer is left to determine the constitutionality of a given situation based on his or her own values and ethical beliefs. This problem has led to confrontations between military officers and the president over matters of policy, such as those between Gen. Douglas MacArthur and President Harry S. Truman and Gen Stanley McChrystal and President Barack Obama. These examples show the fragility of civil-military relations and underscore the importance of an officer's ability to distinguish violations of the Constitution from disagreements over policy. The ability to discern such violations must be based on an understanding of the principles of constitutional republicanism and with deference to civilian control of the military as embodied in the oath of office. Thus, in terms of leadership with respect to the oath,

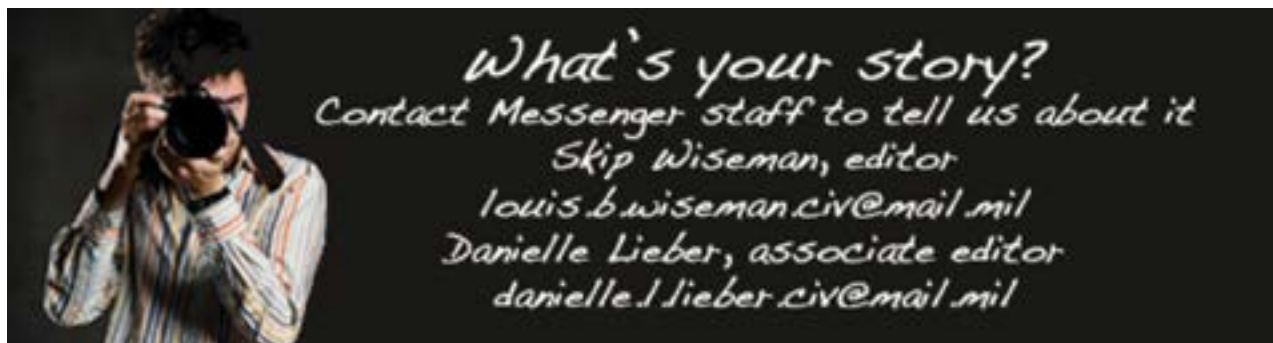
character is the essential element of leadership at all levels of command.

As commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, George Washington prevented a potential military coup by reminding his men that their efforts were a direct reflection on republican government and freedom. At the end of the Revolutionary War in March 1783, officers of the Continental Army began to speak openly of mounting a military coup as they grew disenchanted with the Continental Congress, which had fallen behind in paying the troops and seemed to disregard the army's wartime sacrifices.³ Where Napoleon had exploited such sentiments, Washington did not succumb to the temptation to hijack the republican fervor of the revolution to wrest power from the legislature. Instead, he eloquently articulated to his officers the need to support Congress to show the world that the American military was committed to the success of the republican government.

“You will give one more distinguished proof of unexampled patriotism & patient virtue, rising superior to the pressure of the most complicated sufferings; And you will, by the dignity of your Conduct, afford occasion for Posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to mankind ‘had this day been wanting, the World had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining.’”⁴

His commitment to republicanism was motivated in part by his wish to fulfill his oath to obey the orders of the Continental Congress when he accepted his commission in 1775. Author Glen Phelps explains, “As sympathetic as Washington was the genuine sufferings of the army, he could never condone using it to undermine republican government and the rule of law. This would be a betrayal of his oath to Congress and also of his own reasons for supporting the Revolution in 1775.”⁵ As heirs to his legacy, today's naval officers must uphold Washington's noble

As commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, George Washington prevented a potential military coup by reminding his men that their efforts were a direct reflection on republican government and freedom.



tradition by cherishing the oath to our founding document, particularly because today's officer wields more power and influence than the founders could have imagined.

Officers should routinely reflect on their oath and employ the oath's principles as a tool for motivating subordinates by reminding them they are an integral part of the American experiment in constitutional republicanism. In doing so, officers nurture the leadership the founders likely envisioned in a citizen-soldier. Then Lt. James Stavridis wrote in the August 1983 Proceedings "In the final analysis, the leader's role in both peacetime and wartime is to do more and sacrifice more to make men larger than themselves, to give them the ability to transcend themselves, to do more than they would ever believe themselves of."⁶ Officer and enlisted oaths of office, and the principle of constitutional republicanism they convey, are the key to inspiring sailors to transcend themselves.

In the 21st century it is particularly relevant because officers today possess unprecedented power and responsibilities. Indeed, today's naval division officers are charged with the operation of multibillion-dollar warships, aircraft and nuclear

submarines capable of tremendous destruction. The founders generally were wary of standing armies and, based on their experience in the Revolutionary War, believed warfare should be waged by citizen-soldiers who would return to civil life following their service. They could not

ty in an otherwise relativistic world. To ensure the American people's trust in the military as an institution, officers must always cherish the oath and the tremendous responsibility it entails.

Conclusion

Throughout our country's history, the oath of office has been an enduring confirmation of the U.S. military's commitment to constitutional republicanism and civilian control of the military. It represents the naval officer's sacred covenant with the American people and an acknowledgement of the paramount importance of the ideals written into our Constitution. In light of the United States' evolution from colony to military superpower, the oath also should be seen as an officer's duty to act as a defender of peace and basic human rights for the global community. As leaders of the world's most powerful military, officers swear an oath to the Constitution because it is a safeguard of corruption that results from pledging fealty to instruments

of arbitrary power.

1. Arleigh Burke as quoted by Thomas Reese, "An Officer's Oath," *Military Law Review*, July 1964.

2. The current U.S. oath of office for military officers reads as follows: "I AB, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will



Lt. Gen. Gina Grosso, Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, administers to oath of enlistment to applicants at the Tampa MEPS.

have conceived of the emergence of a professional officer class at the head of a massive peacetime army. Given the global reach of today's military, where a junior officer is expected to make complex decisions of unparalleled consequence, often in distant lands, the oath is a source of certain-

The American Revolution, in contrast, saw the creation of civil and military oaths that pledged allegiance to a fundamental set of laws.

bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office I am about to enter. So help me God."

3. Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 147.

4. Edward G. Engel, ed., *This Glorious Struggle: George Washington's Revolutionary War Letters* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 270.

5. Glenn A. Phelps, *George Washington and American Constitutionalism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 42.

6. James Stavridis, "Leadership Forum: War, Peace, and Leadership," *Proceedings* 109, No. 8 (August 1983). Lieutenant White graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2012 with degrees in economics and history (honors). Following completion of submarine officer training, he reported to the USS Olympia in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, completing a Western Pacific deployment and a Chief of Naval Operations docking selected restricted availability. He has served as the ship's electrical assistant, chemistry and radiological assistant, and now as communications officer.

Oaths to persons

Although France and Germany are constitutional republics today, both countries saw periods of totalitarian governments led by military figures who required oaths of loyalty to their person.

The French Revolution saw a desire to establish republican government, but the French experienced tremendous setbacks in that quest, which manifested in numerous convoluted constitutions and oaths. Initially, the revolutionary armies went to extremes to pledge loyalty to republicanism. During his conquest of Italy while still a general in the French Revolutionary Army, Napoleon told his troops they would return to France "to maintain the constitution, defend liberty, and protect the government and the republicans ... let us swear upon our colours, war against the enemies of the Republic and of the constitution of the year!"¹ Soldiers embraced Napoleon's espoused radical republicanism and supported his rise to power; however, Napoleon's repub-

licanism gave way to his assumption of dictatorial powers. Napoleon established a new military oath of office that included a pledge of loyalty to him as emperor.²

Following World War I, Germany's Weimar Republic established an oath emulating that of the United States. The rise of Nazism in the 1930's, however led to an oath pledging allegiance to Adolf Hitler. The German military oath from 1919 to 1933 read: "I swear loyalty to the Reich's constitution and pledge that I as a courageous soldier always want to protect the German Reich and its legal institutions, (and) be obedient to the Reichspräsident and to my superiors." By contrast, Hitler's oath required the military to swear fealty to him.⁴

1. Somerset de Chair, ed., *Napoleon's Memoirs* (New York: Howard Fertig), 1988, 244.

2. "I swear obedience to the constitutions of the Empire and fidelity to the Emperor." *Constitution of the Year XII*, 18 May 1806, *The Napoleon Series*, http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/legislation/c_constitution12.html.

3. German Military Oath, 1919-1933 as quoted in Damon Armeni, "A Question of Legitimacy," *Small Wars Journal* (16 December 2011).

4. I swear I shall be faithful and obedient to the Führer of the German Reich and People, Adolph Hitler; I shall observe the laws and fulfill my duties conscientiously, so help me God." As quoted in Peter Hoffman, *Hitler's Personal Security* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1979), 38.

Roots of the Oath

American colonists, as subjects of the British Empire, were bound by oath to support the monarch. Because oath-taking was considered a sacred act, the American Revolution's defiance of the colonial oath to the British Crown held tremendous weight. By the second half of the 17th century, Europe was characterized by the rise of absolute monarchs who exploited their oath-bound subjects to sustain power.¹

The American Revolution, in contrast, saw the creation of civil

and military oaths that pledged allegiance to a fundamental set of laws, ultimately embodied in the Constitution. In Federalist 27, Alexander Hamilton lent his support to the proposed constitution and expressed his belief in the significance of swearing an oath to such a document. Echoing the language of the 13th-century English Magna Carta, he wrote that the laws of the proposed constitution would become the "SUPREME LAW of the land; to the observance of which all officers will be bound by the sanctity of an oath."² In this way, the founders hoped to orient the loyalties of all federal officers to the Constitution, which would be consolidated into a single document instead of the common laws and customs that comprised English law.

The founders considered the Constitution the surest means to establish republican government that would promote popular sovereignty while guarding against tyrannical government, which they associated with standing armies loyal to the executive. In the Declaration of Independence, they cited the presence of King George III's standing armies in the colonies as part of his design to place Americans "under absolute Despotism. ... He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures. He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power."

As an indication of the importance they attached to the oath, the founders emerged from their initial U.S. congressional session with a law regulating administering the oath. On June 1, 1789, the U.S. Congress passed its first law stipulating that every government official must take the following oath: "I, A.B. do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) that I will support the Constitution of the United States." This seemingly simple oath was significant because it represented a departure from oaths dating back to classical antiquity that pledged loyalty to a single individual or campaign.

In recognition of its status as a distinct institution within the fed-

eral government, the U.S. military was granted an oath for noncommissioned officers and privates with the passage of congressional legislation on Sept. 29, 1789. Unlike earlier oath, this oath for enlisted servicemen did not mention but required allegiance to the nation and obedience to the orders of the president and their respective officers.

Congress revised this oath slightly April 30, 1790, adding the caveat that service members obey orders "according to the articles of war." This revision created a common oath for officers and enlisted members and, unlike the earlier oath, did not include a provision to support the Constitution. Thus, under the 1790 oath, service members were pledged to a relatively top-down system of loyalties that gave the president and his officers license to assume tremendous, and potentially unconstitutional, power.⁴

Civil war impact

During and following the Civil War, the oath assumed new importance to the survival of the Union and the Constitution by rooting out insurrectionists in the federal government. Historian Harold M. Hyman explained that oaths were not taken lightly at the time: "The conscientious individual with morale scruples pondered his words well before affixing his name to a loyalty oath. Many in the South excluded themselves from federal office than chance a lie."⁵

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln ordered all officers to renew their oaths, and Congress conducted "loyalty investigations" of the U.S. Naval Academy and U.S. Military Academy.⁶ To root out any rebels in the military and identify those who sympathized with the South, Congress created a new "Ironclad Test Oath" requiring service members not only to pledge current and future loyalty, but also to acknowledge any past allegiances.⁷

With the passage of a revised oath on July 11, 1868, Congress reinstated the Constitution in the military hierarchy of loyalties, and it remains the oath of office for officers to this day. Given the schismatic experience of civil war, the revised oath

demonstrated Congress' recognition of the Constitution's power to ensure the survival of the republic and to nurture leadership in the ranks. The 1868 oath kept the pledge of present and future loyalty to the Constitution but did away with renouncing past transgressions. In contrast to the 1790 oath, the current oath allows officers to exercise their discretion with respect to their superiors by swearing them to "support and defend the Constitution." Furthermore the oath commits the officer to his or her pledge for perpetuity because it specifies no period of time which likely explains why many former naval officer believe their oaths changed their lives, whether or not they continued active service.

1. Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 61.

2. Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist 27*, 25 December 1787, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18thcentury/fed27.asp>[4]

3. U.S. Statutes at Large 1 (1789), 23, http://constitution.org/uslaw/sal/001_statutes_at_large.pdf[5]

4. U.S. Statutes at Large 1 (1789), 96, and (1790), 121

5. Harold M. Hyman, *Era of the Oath: Northern Loyalty Tests During the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954), 76

6. Hyman, *Era of the Oath*, 16

7. "I, A.B., do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I have never voluntarily borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen thereof; that I have voluntarily give no aid, countenance, counsel, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto; that I have neither sought nor accepted nor attempted to exercise the functions of any officers whatever, under any authority or authority or pretended authority in hostility to the United States; that I have not yielded a voluntary support to any pretended government, authority, power or constitution within the United States, hostile or inimical thereto. And I do further swear (or affirm) that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God." U.S. Statutes at Large (1862), 503

Article leads USMEPCOM commander to write letter to editor praising subject

I am impressed by Lieutenant White's laying out the history of the oath we all swear (or affirm) and want to thank him for reminding us about the oath's importance. At U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command, we have the honor of seeing young men and women make individual and personal decisions to take this oath, and our team administered the enlisted oath more than 248,000 times during fiscal 2016.

I am fascinated by this concept of taking an oath. Our doctors vow to uphold specific ethical standards. Others take an oath as part of an organization they have chosen to join, such as the Boy or Girl Scouts. To quote ablogger an oath is "More powerful than a promise, and oath is an unbreakable com-

mitment about one's future behavior." And as in each example given here, it's stated aloud in front of witnesses – thereby further enhancing its power.

All readers should take a moment to think about the 248,000 men and women who, inside the 65 distinguished USMEPCOM ceremony rooms across the country vowed last year to faithfully serve in the U.S. armed forces. That oath is noble and could lead to the ultimate sacrifice. For those in our profession, it is why we are here. It is how we express our core values. And at USMEPCOM, it is the most important thing we do.

**Captain David S. Kemp, U.S. Navy
Office of the Secretary of Defense
United States Military Entrance
Processing Command**

Acting Army secretary visits Kansas City

The acting secretary of the Army visited the Kansas City MEPS and Northland Recruiting Center in April.

Robert M. Speer met with station and Army recruiting leaders to learn how the Army can help overcome recruiting challenges impacting the Army recruiting mission.

Most of the discussions were about ways to support recruiting at a national level.

Speer watched future soldiers demonstrate tasks

necessary to complete the occupational physical assessment test.

At the MEPS, Speer administered the oath of enlistment to eight applicants and recognized several station employees for the performance.

The visit was part of a trip which included a stop at the centennial commemoration of the National World War I Memorial and a visit to the Army Combined Arms Center.



Robert M. Speer, acting secretary of the Army administers the oath of enlistment to applicants at the Kansas City MEPS.



Navy Capt. Stuart C. Satterwhite, Western Sector commander and Speer, get a briefing on Air Force liaison operations.



Speer talks with applicants during his tour.

San Antonio applicants enlist at Spurs Military Appreciation Night

Applicants from the San Antonio MEPS took the oath of enlistment during the San Antonio Spurs Military Appreciation Night March 23.

Army Brig. Gen. Richard J.

Torres, deputy commanding general of U.S. Army South, administered the oath.

This is the third year the MEPS has participated in the event. The Spurs played the Memphis Grizzlies.



An applicant takes the oath of enlistment during the San Antonio Spurs Military Appreciation Night.



Army Brig. Gen. Richard J. Torres, deputy commanding general of U.S. Army South, congratulates new service members after their enlistment ceremony.



Army Brig. Gen. Richard J. Torres, deputy commanding general of U.S. Army South, administers the oath of enlistment during the San Antonio Spurs Military Appreciation Night.



Torres and Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Daniel Balderas exchange salutes before the enlistment ceremony.

Photos by
Sgt. Guadalupe Campos
Marketing and Public Affairs
Marine Corps Recruiting Station
San Antonio



Applicants enter the arena for their enlistment ceremony.



Japanese visitors in El Paso

Above left: Army Maj. Mayra Diaz, El Paso MEPS commander, brief visiting officers of the Japanese army during a tour of the MEPS medical element. Above right: Diaz presents a gift to Col. Nobuhiro Tanaka. During the visit the officers learned how the station processes applicants for military service and watched an enlistment ceremony. The group toured the MEPS March 9. They also visited the local recruiting station during their trip to El Paso.

Little Rock training day features variety of topics

By Erika R. Plyler
Administrative Support Technician
Little Rock MEPS

The Little Rock MEPS' training day focused on processing transgender applicants, but also included additional training.

After an icebreaker, coffee and doughnuts, Army Lt. Col. Mark B. Howell, MEPS commander, introduced Inspector Stephen E. Smith of the Federal Protective Service. Smith conducted active shooter training as a follow-up to an active shooter exercise conducted a quarter earlier. Smith, who served more than 20 years in the Marine Corps, demonstrated his expertise on the subject.

Next up was training on Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, known as SHARP. Sgt. 1st Class Walatta G. McKenzie, MEPS unit victim advocate worked with the Little Rock Air Force Base SHARP office to have Linda Benjamin and Karen Hubbard speak on the program and the services their office provides.

Benjamin and Hubbard also spoke about changes to reporting procedures for civilian employees



Left to right: Linda Benjamin and Karen Hubbard of the Little Rock Air Force Base SHARP office, Army Sgt. 1st Class Walatta G. McKenzie, MEPS processing NCOIC, and Army Lt. Col. Mark B. Howell, MEPS commander.

and presented some vignettes for interaction and training.

The final part of the day was dedicated to transgender training. Vignettes presented after the briefing generated a lot of discussion from the staff.

USMEPCOM and the Little Rock MEPS are preparing to process transgender applicants when directed to by the Department of Defense. The vignettes explained DoD's vision

for processing transgender applicants.

Many employees asked about the status of the changes in policies and procedures, but understood they will have all the tools they need to process transgender applicants before the implementation date. Information is available on the Little Rock MEPS portal on SPEAR to address many questions addressed during training day.

Lt. Gen. Grosso tours Tampa MEPS, administers oath

Lt. Gen. Gina Grosso, Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, visited the Tampa MEPS Feb. 27, accompanied by Army Col. Christopher J. Beveridge, Eastern Sector commander.

Beveridge briefed Grosso on the spectrum of USMEPCOM operations.

Army Capt. Veronica Celiz, Tampa operations office and acting commander, gave an operational briefing on the Tampa MEPS with support from the station's staff.

During a tour of the MEPS, Grosso got an overview of daily operations, including applicant reception, security screening, testing, processing, medical, service liaisons and conducted an enlistment ceremony for eight people entering the Delayed Enlistment Program.

Grosso asked if the MEPS could handle the workload if recruiting mission increased and was told it

could, but the Air Force liaisons may need additional staff.

Beveridge highlighted Air Force commander and senior enlisted advisor billets throughout the com-

mand and praised the Air Force equal opportunity noncommissioned officers at the headquarters and sector staffs for establishing a positive command climate.



Lt. Gen. Gina Grosso, Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, speaks to applicants before an enlistment ceremony at the Tampa MEPS.

Navy deputy assistant secretary visits Chicago MEPS

The deputy assistant secretary of the navy for military manpower and personnel visited the Chicago MEPS March 14.

During her visit, Juliet Beyler received a briefing and toured the MEPS. She also sat in on a Red Cross family briefing and conducted an enlistment ceremony for seven applicants entering the Delayed Enlistment Program.

During the tour, the MEPS staff discussed several processes and programs with Beyler. Much of the discussion was on the Career Exploration Booklet, applicant checklists for each service and the transition to MHS Genesis, DoD's new medical records system.

Beyler asked for and received a copy of the Career Exploration Booklet and copies of the applicant checklists

She was very interested in the

medical aspect of the MEPS mission, and was referred to USMEPCOM Headquarters for a more in-depth description of MHS Genesis, the transition timeline and how it fits

into USMEPCOM's Strategic Plan.

Beyler also toured all the liaison offices and spent a few more minutes in the Navy Office discussing recent initiatives in Navy recruiting.



Juliet Beyler, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for military manpower and personnel, administers the oath of enlistment to applicants at the Chicago MEPS.

Pelicans host appreciation night

The New Orleans MEPS teamed up with local recruiters and the NBA's New Orleans Pelicans March 19 for Military Appreciation Night.

Army Maj. Christine A. DeSaine, New Orleans MEPS commander, administered the oath of enlistment to future service members.

The ceremony was recorded and played back to a crowd of more than 10,000 people during that evening's basketball game.

Local military units set up outdoor static displays during the afternoon outside Smoothie King Arena.



Army Maj. Christine A. DeSaine, New Orleans MEPS commander, administers the oath of enlistment to 50 new service members.



Coast Guard recruiters man their display outside the arena.



The Army put a howitzer on display.



A larger than life "Marine" watches over the Marine Corps display

Shreveport hosts outgoing commander of 8th Air Force

Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark, former commander of 8th Air Force at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, took a brief break from his busy permanent change of station schedule to visit the Shreveport MEPS before leaving for Germany.

The visit was designed to enhance the bond between the base and the MEPS.

Clark performed an oath of enlistment ceremony during his visit. After the ceremony, he shared his personal experience of joining the military to answer questions and calm the fears of the new service members and their families.

Clark also took a tour of the station during which supervisors individually introduced their team members. During the introductions, he got a synopsis of how the MEPS processes applicants and what each section does.

Before leaving, Clark expressed his thanks for the professionalism, dedication and teamwork of the MEPS staff.

Clark said he was impressed by the individual attention given to applicants and their families.



James Sanders, Shreveport education services specialist explains the Student Testing and Career Exploration Programs to Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark, outgoing 8th Air Force commander.



Clark chats with Shreveport MEPS Air Force liaisons.



Clark administers the oath of enlistment to new service members.

Sioux Falls lends a hand to Habitat for Humanity

The Sioux Falls MEPS helped Habitat for Humanity put the finishing touches on a house for a local family.

In addition to installing garage siding, MEPS volunteers helped install cabinets and doors, paint, and clean up the construction site over the course of the project.

Volunteers also attended the ceremony when Habitat for Humanity presented the house keys to the family.

MEPS staff members also volunteered to work on other Habitat projects as individuals.

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Sioux Falls builds and preserves homes for people who might otherwise not be able to have secure, safe homes.

New construction partners take part in a months-long application process and take classes covering home ownership and prove they can help with construction.

Neighborhood Revitalization families also follow an application process. Homeowners reimburse Habitat for materials and agree to partner with volunteers on work day.



Jordan Gray, husband of the Sioux Falls senior enlisted advisor, and Army Capt. Kevin Lopez, Sioux Falls operations officer, lift a piece of siding handed to them by Army 1st Sgt. Zulma Gray, Sioux Falls senior enlisted advisor.



Lopez nails a piece of siding in place.



Jordan Gray and Lopez consult while siding the garage.



Jordan Gray and Lopez add another piece of siding.



1st Sgt. Zulma Gray delivers a piece of siding.

Elementary school students perform at Shreveport MEPS

The winners of the Westwood Elementary School talent show performed at the Shreveport MEPS for the MEPS' Black History Month and Women's History month programs.

The MEPS has partnered with the school since 2015 to strengthen the bond between it and the community.

The partnership has included first and last day of school welcomes and send-offs, holiday celebrations, career days, luncheons with the faculty to plan events, and casual visits to the school by MEPS service members.

The school, also known to students and faculty as "The Ranch,"

provides an immersive Western themed environment where students take part in their own little "community." The methods promote effective learning and give students a sense of belonging. They have helped the faculty set higher standards, which have led to individual and organizational awards and recognition.



Students from Westwood Elementary School perform for the Shreveport MEPS' Black History Month observance.

First Quarter, Fiscal 2017

Category 1
Columbus
Phoenix
San Jose

Category 2
Cleveland
Kansas City
Minneapolis

Category 3
Spokane
El Paso
Sioux Falls

The MEPS of Excellence Program acknowledges military entrance processing stations that obtain a level of excellence based on criteria related to USMEPCOM core processes (medical, testing and applicant processing) and general military readiness.

The two requirements to become a MEPS of Excellence are:

- To be one of the top three MEPS in each category.
- To meet the overall threshold.

The 65 MEPS are divided into three categories, based on historical data. MEPS remain in the designated category the entire fiscal year.

The MOE points system measures up to 10 criteria per quarter. The criteria are:

- Timeliness of military evaluations and awards.
- Total students tested goal.
- Drug and HIV specimen processing.
- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Program.
- Physical fitness readiness.
- Height and weight standards.
- Electronic fingerprint capture station (unclassifiable fingerprints).
- Incidents of serious misconduct by military or civilian employees.
- Test loss compromise.
- Citibank travel card delinquency rates.



Reindeer are herded to the starting line in downtown Anchorage.

Anchorage holds enlistment at 'Running of the Reindeer'

The Anchorage MEPS conducted a public enlistment ceremony for 17 applicants March 4 during the "Running of the Reindeer" as part of the Fur Rendezvous celebration. The ceremony took place immediately before the Running of the Reindeer.

Anchorage holds an annual two-week winter festival named the Fur Rendezvous, or Fur Rondy, in its downtown area.

The Running of the Reindeer is a seven city block race in downtown Anchorage where participants run alongside reindeer to the finish line.

The MEPS coordinated with all services and asked them to support the event by including members of their delayed entry programs to participate in the enlistment.

The Army, Air Force and Marines supported the event with members of their delayed entry programs taking part.

Participating applicants were allowed to run in the Running of the Reindeer immediately following the enlistment.

Publicity for the Fur Rendezvous and Running of the Reindeer was provided by the Anchorage Fur Rondy and Greater Anchorage, Inc.



Army Capt John H. Panzer III administers the oath of enlistment for 17 future service members.



Human runners get a needed head start on the reindeer.



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