

Command Screening

by Gen Carl E. Mundy, Jr.

Last October the Gazette published a brief news item on the Corps' newly adopted Command Screening Program; in January (pp. 8-9) two letters appeared commenting on that initiative. Published here is the Commandant's White Letter No. 1-92, dated 21 January 1992, which discusses the program and outlines his views on it.

In September of last year, the Marine Corps conducted the first Command Screening Board for colonels. The purpose of the Command Screening Program was to ensure our organizations and Marines have proven, effective leaders as their commanders; that those same officers considered best suited to command were slated to command; to guarantee all officers would receive fair and equitable consideration for command; and to eliminate the perception that our informal system of selecting commanding officers was unduly influenced. Screening officers for command is an important initiative, and the results of the board substantiate that we did a number of things correctly the first time.

I am comfortable that with a well-prepared plan, precepted boards of general officers, and a comprehensive slating process of those officers selected, command screening for both colonels and lieutenant colonels will become an essential element in the

management of our officer corps. The perceptions of sponsorship must be supplanted by the idea that the Marine Corps is dedicated to selecting objectively from among its best field grade officers to determine who should command and lead its operational and supporting units. I believe that we have developed a precedent for doing just that with this first command screening board.

Although we did a number of things correctly with this first try, there are aspects of the process that require refinement. Initially, it was envisioned that the command screening process would transition to a command selection process. I am no longer convinced that we need to take that step. I believe that the command screening program as it is currently designed, with a few minor alterations, is adequate for our requirements. As I mentioned before, we need to select top quality officers for command and eliminate the perception that sponsorship is required to

attain command; however, I also believe we stand to gain a great deal of insight from the involvement of our commanding generals as the command slate is prepared and approved. Accordingly, as was begun last year, commanding generals will be afforded an opportunity to comment and offer advice on the draft slate, proposed from officers screened for command, before it's approved by me.

Current projections call for the FY93 Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel Command Screening Boards to convene in July and August of 1992, respectively. These boards will consider officers for assignments to commands that will become available between June 1993 and May 1994. Manpower planners are presently working to coordinate the times for the Lieutenant Colonel Command Screening Board and the Top Level School Board. We will issue an ALMAR in the spring that will describe the eligibility criteria and other administrative details.

Now, more than ever before, the screening requirements for joint duty assignments, command screening, professional military education, and a wide variety of other competing demands require that the careers of our field grade officers must be properly managed—not just monitored. Command screening will require several iterations before the procedures are purified, but as I see it, the process is here to stay. With your patience, continued assistance, and advice, we will develop a first class system that will ensure our formations are led by officers screened from among the best available for such an important assignment.

USMC

The Case for DNA Identification

by LCdr Kent G. Knudson, DC, USN, and Maj Victor W. Weedn, MD, USA

The Department of Defense has recently adopted a system of individual identification that promises to be far more effective than any of techniques used in the past.

For each of the four major wars of this century, the Nation has interred the remains of an unidentified Servicemember at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington Cemetery. Despite the best efforts of experts to identify remains, thousands of Servicemembers were unidentifiable from World

War I to the Vietnam War because of limitations of forensic techniques. Exemplified by Army efforts during the Civil and Spanish-American Wars, the United States was the first nation to attempt individualized identification and burial of its war dead. This tradition of "taking care of our own" continues to-

day with the commitment of significant resources and endeavor to provide the families of our deceased with timely and accurate information about their loved ones. In order to facilitate expeditious and unerring identification, the use of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) technologies for identification purposes has recently been authorized with the establishment of a registry and DNA specimen repository for the Armed Forces.

Positive identification of all dead has become essential in an increasingly litigious society where there is less tolerance for unidentified remains and a greater ability to challenge identification methods. The following tech-