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Military and Civilian Corrections: The Professional Bond

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I am pleased to introduce this month's issue of *Corrections Today* and thank American Correctional Association Executive Director James A. Gondles, Jr. for the privilege of writing about our great young men and women in uniform and the civilian staff serving in the military corrections field. The professional collaboration between the Department of Defense and ACA dates back to 1870, when Maj. Thomas A. Barr attended the American Prison Association's first conference. The first ACA-accredited military prison was the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks (USDB) at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., in 1988. The Military Affairs Committee, which provides interface with ACA to promote and foster understanding of the Military Corrections Program, has been active ever since.

As the provost marshal general of the Army, I have had ample opportunity to observe our soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen, as well as the civilian employees of the Department of Defense, serving at military correctional facilities in the United States and overseas, both at established U.S. confinement facilities and temporary operational detention facilities. Since Sept. 11, 2001, many of those serving have been activated reservists. We simply could not handle all our current missions without the significant contributions of these soldiers from the Army Reserve and Army National Guard. One article in this issue highlights civilian correctional officers of the U.S. Army Reserve serving in support of

Operation Enduring Freedom (Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom. I recently returned from a trip to Iraq and can personally attest that our soldiers are performing honorably and admirably in a very challenging environment. The sacrifice of each service member, in addition to the daily sacrifice of their families back home, humbles me and makes me exceptionally proud to be an American soldier.

In the midst of our overseas commitments in support of the global war on terrorism, the Department of Defense Corrections System continues to meet its responsibility to hold members of the armed forces in pretrial confinement or incarcerate those who have been sentenced to confinement by courts-martial. Consistent with Title 10 of the United States Code and our *Manual for Courts-Martial*, the military takes seriously its responsibility to provide programs for work, education, training, rehabilitation, and clemency and parole. If a military service member is not returned to duty, we are committed to releasing that individual from military custody as a productive, law-abiding citizen.

Mirroring the fiscal challenges of federal and state correctional systems, the Department of Defense is seeking to build further efficiencies in the military correctional system, to be better stewards of tax dollars and, more importantly, do everything possible to safeguard America's sons and daugh-

ters in uniform. One recent project came to fruition Oct. 1, 2002, when the oldest federal prison in continuous operation transferred its operation from the historic "castle" at Fort Leavenworth to the new USDB. The professional staff at USDB actually ran both facilities simultaneously for about 30 days while transferring the inmates from one to the other. During last summer's 133rd Congress of Correction, the new facility received its ACA reaccreditation certificate following a May 2003 audit. This was a proud day for USDB staff and reflected a lot of hard work on their part.

Though I personally serve on the Army staff and am only responsible for the operation of Army correctional facilities, within this issue you will read about numerous examples of professionalism and ingenuity among all our military departments, including the Consolidated Naval Brigs at Miramar, Calif., and Charleston, S.C.; Marine Brigs at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and Camp Lejeune, N.C.; Army regional correctional facilities; and the wide array of smaller, short-term confinement facilities from all the military branches. I hope this issue serves to build on the existing professional and warm relationship between the military and civilian correctional communities. In closing, I appreciate ACA giving us this opportunity to highlight the military correctional system and its wonderful service member and civilian staff. ♦