

Response to discussion about Confederate artwork

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A Sincere note to our Alumni, friends, and all concerned regarding questions about Confederate art:

Major General Tony Cucolo here, Commandant of the US Army War College. I'd like to address an issue that has come up based on a Washington Times web posting and article in its paper of 18 December 2013.

Even though last night's posting had a photo at the top of that article showing a picture of one of our entry gates with huge statues of Robert E. Lee and Thomas J. Jackson mounted on horseback on either side of the sign, and today's posting showed a dignified photo of Robert E. Lee at the top of the article, it might be misleading as to what is in question. For what it is worth, I must tell you there is only one outside statue on Carlisle Barracks and that is of Frederick the Great. There is no statue of Lee, there is no statue of Jackson; that picture is photo-shopped – I assume to attract attention to the article. We do however have many small monuments, mostly stone with bronze plaques, but those are for a variety of reasons. There are small memorials to the service of British units (during the French and Indian War), memorials of Army schools that had been based at Carlisle Barracks over the last two-plus centuries, memorials to Carlisle Indian Industrial School students and significant personalities of that period from 1879 – 1918, a memorial for US Army War College graduates killed in action since 2001 and more. We do not have any public memorials to the Confederacy, but we do have signs on the walking tour of the base that will tell you for a few days during the Civil War, three North Carolina Brigades camped on the parade ground and then burned down the post (save one building) as they departed on July 1st, 1863, to rejoin Lee's forces at Gettysburg. We also do not have any large stand-alone portraits of Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson.

So, no statues or big portraits, but a recent event here sparked the reporter's and other public interest in the topic of the article, which I find makes a good point – for topics like this, have a thoughtful conversation before making a decision.

Here is what happened: a few weeks ago, while relocating his office to a new floor in our main school building over the weekend, one of my leaders looked outside his new office location and simply decided to change the look of the hallway. He took down, off the wall, a number of framed Civil War

prints that depicted Confederate States of America forces in action against Union forces or depicted famous Confederate leaders. He did this on his own. There was no directive to “remove all traces of the CSA.” Since this is a public hallway with seminar rooms and offices, the sudden new look drew attention the following week. And since there was no public explanation of my leader’s action, some of my folks jumped to conclusions, even to the point of sending anonymous notes to local media. We have since attempted to clarify the action within our own ranks.

If it matters to any of you, you could walk into this building today, and see ornately framed paintings and even a few prints similar to the ones that came down off that hallway wall of Confederate forces and leaders mixed in among countless other paintings and prints of the Army (and the other services) in action from the Revolutionary War through the current fight in Afghanistan. I must admit, there are in fact a large number of Civil War paintings, depicting both North and South. I can only assume one of the reasons there are so many is that we are barely 30 minutes from Gettysburg, home to many renowned artists, a few of whom have been commissioned by US Army War College classes of the past to capture some iconic scene of that conflict.

Finally, and with ironic timing, I also must tell you that I am in the midst of planning a more meaningful approach to the imagery and artwork that currently adorn the public areas on the three primary floors of The War College. There will be change: over the years very fine artwork has been hung with care – but little rationale or overall purpose. Just today, I left the “George S. Patton Jr. Room”, walked by the “Peyton March Room” and nearby hung a picture of a sharp fight in Iraq, 2003, right next to a Civil War print, which was near a series of prints honoring Army Engineers, and a few feet further hung a painting of the Battle of Cowpens. We can do better; we’d like our students, staff, and faculty to walk through a historical narrative that sends a message of service, valor, sacrifice, and courageous leadership at the strategic level.

But I will also approach our historical narrative with keen awareness and adherence to the seriousness of several things: accurate capture of US military history, good, bad and ugly; a Soldier’s life of selfless service to our Nation; and our collective solemn oath to defend the Constitution of the United States (not a person or a symbol, but a body of ideals). Those are the things I will be looking to reinforce with any changes to the artwork.

Much more information than perhaps you wished to know, but this topic has the ability to bring out the extremes of opinion and discourse, and I at least wanted the facts of our own activities to be known.

Respectfully,

Tony Cucolo

Major General, US Army

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