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By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28, 2014 – The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff believes enough time has passed to evaluate the effectiveness of his campaign to highlight the importance of the profession of arms.

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey began his campaign to highlight the profession even before he became chairman, beginning the effort when he served as the commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command.

The general was ahead of the power curve in looking to the profession. In 2012, he said he wanted to "assess how 10 years of conflict have affected us as we conduct transitions in our current wars, face resource constraints and get leaner as a force."

The chairman called on members of the profession to "institutionalize what we've learned."

Dempsey said he views the campaign in military terms -- a campaign in the military vocabulary implies a series of actions, all intended to converge on a desired outcome.

"The desired outcome in this campaign is that the force rekindles its understanding and resolve as a profession and then recommits itself to that which makes us a profession: our unique skills and attributes, commitment to continuing education, and the agreement to live to a specific set of values," he said during an interview on his way back from NATO meetings in Belgium last week.

Since he became chairman in September 2011, Dempsey has been refreshing U.S. joint professional military education curriculum. He also is working with service leaders to rewrite their professional military education curricula.

"We've reached out into academia for assistance in making these adjustments in the curriculum," he said. "These changes are not only in schools, but in courses we provide for rising general and flag officers -- Capstone and Pinnacle." The profession of arms always is a topic of conversation when he meets with the chiefs of staff, Dempsey added.

The effort includes training programs for the staffs of senior leaders so the staffs are aware of and empowered to help senior leaders, he said. Staff assistance visits further the effort. Training teams have visited U.S. Southern Command, and will move to other commands shortly. The team members are experts in policy, legal issues and ethical issues, and they spend a week at the combatant commands working with the staffs. They take a look at all aspects of senior leader support, from communications to transportation to gifts.

Now is a good time to examine the effort, the chairman said.

"We embarked on this about two and a half years ago, and we're at the point where it is possible to review our progress," he said. He said he will look at the number of incidents or problems with senior leaders. He also will measure the results of assistance visits, and will look at the results of command climate surveys.

"We put a spotlight on what it means to be a professional in a way that didn't exist five years ago," he said. "These initiatives that we are trying to knit together have much greater interest, and therefore much greater impact, today than five years ago."

Military personnel are serious about studying the profession, the general said. "When we first started down this path there wasn't active resistance that we should, after 20 years, take a good hard look at our profession," he added. "But there was an undertone of 'It's really not broke, so let's not fix it.' There wasn't universal acknowledgement that it was time to look at it.

"So perhaps I would suggest that there wasn't universal acknowledgement that it was time to relook what it means to be a professional," he continued. "I would say we've overcome that."

(Follow Jim Garamone on Twitter: @GaramoneAFPS)