

Speech: General Sir Nick Carter

It is a tremendous honour to share this very special day with you and all your families.in this your 70th year as the independent army of a sovereign country. It is a proud day and it is has been a fine parade. You have displayed outstanding precision and panache...you were immaculate.

I know that the pride etched on the faces of all of you stood on the parade square today is mirrored in the other faces in this audience. Not least your instructors, who recognised in you that spark of potential...that fighting spirit...those qualities that make a soldier and shape a leader...and who enabled you to get where you are today.

And your families and friends whose love and support have fortified you – and who will continue to be a source of strength.

And your international friends are proud of you too. For in a world with global problems no country is able to address all the challenges alone. Strong alliances and partnerships are more important than ever in preventing conflict, building stability and strengthening the rules-based international order.

And friends we are...

...our two Armies have a long and resilient relationship built on mutual respect and understanding. We have much shared history. Pakistan's soldiers proved themselves brave and valiant time and again when we fought side by side in the two World Wars – one only has to look at the tally of gallantry medals and battle honours awarded to be reminded.

While our soldiers and officers may have different backgrounds and different faiths, they are united by the same values and standards of courage, discipline, respect, integrity, loyalty and selfless commitment – we may use different words for them, but the effect is the same.

And they share the same hopes – for a secure and prosperous world in which we, our children and future generations can continue to live according to our belief in tolerance, freedom, justice and the rule of law.

You start your career in this honourable profession – the profession of arms – in demanding times. The character of conflict is changing and the operating environment is increasingly uncertain, complex and dispersed. Leadership has never been more challenging and the responsibility of being a leader has rarely been so profound.

But our Values and Standards as soldiers set us apart from other occupations and, often, from our enemies. They are the basis on which we commit ourselves unreservedly to the Service of our respective nations.

For those graduating, today represents a significant moment – it is about celebrating what you have accomplished so far. But it is also about the anticipation of what you can accomplish in a lifetime of selfless service.

You are about to accept a great responsibility to lead soldiers – an honour that demands unfailing competence, commitment, and character each and every day.

As officers, you have been selected, individually, to lead your fellow countrymen in battle in defence of the values you hold dear. And your country can do you no higher honour. Whatever happens to you, whatever rank you achieve, whatever honours are showered on you, you will never have a greater compliment paid you than that.

And, in return for that honour and that trust, you, when you go out from here, will live up to the traditions of leadership. However far your careers take you, always remember, where you started.

In the years ahead, your soldiers will look to you, for guidance and inspiration. They will want to know that you care for them, and for their families. They will model their behaviour on your integrity. They will get their courage from your steadfastness. Leadership is about getting people to do things – and getting them to do things willingly. And in the Army, it will be in situations of great personal danger. When your nation will be relying on you. Military capability and tactical brilliance will always be essential but they will not alone suffice. What qualities then must a leader have if he is to secure this willing acceptance of what he wants?

First – Courage. All soldiers must be prepared to use lethal force to fight. They may need to show restraint, even when doing so involves personal danger. This requires physical courage, and soldiers will depend on each other for it.

And there is another kind of courage you need as an officer. You must have moral courage. Moral courage is a much rarer thing than physical courage. Moral courage means you do what you think is right without bothering very much what happens to you when you are doing it – insisting on maintaining the highest standards of decency and behaviour – even when it may be unpopular, or risk ridicule or danger. Courage – both physical and moral – creates the strength upon which fighting spirit and success in the fight depend.

Second – Integrity. Integrity has a unique significance to soldiering and is an essential ingredient of good leadership. You have got to be honest, not only with yourself but with the men you lead and the people with whom you work. Honesty and integrity are things that you cannot compromise with – you cannot alter; it is the critical foundation for earning the loyalty and trust of those you lead and those you serve. It is about doing as you would be done by. And the standard you walk past without taking action is the standard that you accept – and how you will be judged.

Third – Judgment. The next quality that I wish to mention is judgement. You have got to have judgement. You have got to be able to assess a situation, and assess it quickly as judged against your values, and under difficult circumstances. And judgement is only learned by practice and experience.

You may face action day after day, week after week, virtually alone, with only your consciences as monitors. You will rely on your integrity and your judgment – especially on today's dispersed battelfields where it is the

quality of junior leadership which will count.

Fourth – knowledge and understanding. If you are to have the courage to take the initiative, to produce the will-power that is needed, you must have knowledge. And that is often the challenge of leadership – to keep the balance between strength of will and flexibility of mind. Keep your mind bright and flexible. If you command a small unit, a platoon or section you ought not be satisfied until you can do every task which you order each man in your small unit to do, as well as he can, if not better... ..and, by the way, the command of a platoon is, I think, the best command you will ever have. I have commanded everything from a section of half-a-dozen men to the entire British Army, and I still look back to the time when I commanded a platoon as the best command I ever had...

You have also got to have a different type of knowledge that is at least as important, if not more important – a knowledge of your men. It is not enough that you are the best soldier in your unit, that you are the strongest, the toughest, the most resilient, and the most intelligent. You must be their leader, their mentor even if you are half their age. That cultivation of human understanding between you and your men is the one art that you must yet master – but it is the understanding you have of your men on which great soldiering depends.

Know your job and know your men.

There are many other qualities that make a good leader. But these are the four I would wish to share with you that have served me well – courage, integrity, judgment and knowledge and understanding.

There is no man on this parade square who has not got these qualities. If you had not got them you would not be here. So by standing here today you have earned the right to be officers. And leaders of the next generation.

It is up to you now to invest in those qualities, nurture them and keep them close. Remember that good leadership is not imposed like authority. It is actually welcomed and wanted by the led. It is up to you to give your units – whether it is a tank crew, platoon, or becomes a company – leadership, every hour of the day, every day of the week.

Then you will be doing your duty and you will be worthy of the honour that your country does you by choosing you as a leader in this fine Army.

I will leave you with a last thought. There are many things I have learned throughout my service, but it was in the early years that the simplest proved to be the most important to me. And that is that soldiering is nothing without comradeship. It surrounds a man with an atmosphere of warmth and strength at the very moment when he is feeling cold and weak. It encourages his finest instincts, and the demands of friendship serve to strengthen him in battle.

So if I could have my wish as I stand here today, feeling honoured as I do in the tribute paid me, I would say this: If I could only meet you all somewhere in the future, with the world more stable due to friendships like ours, and our Armies standing side by side in comradeship.

So as you go, you go with all our hopes and prayers but also with our confidence that each one of you is ready to write the next chapter in your life – and the next chapter in your nation's history.