

**Dark Leadership in the Ranks:
How the U.S. Armed Forces Can Address
Narcissism and Toxic Leadership**

by

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Abstract

The armed forces have always reflected the greater society in the United States and so in the age of the “selfie” photo image many military leaders also exhibit such narcissistic behavior. All too often, narcissistic behaviors can manifest themselves in toxic or “dark” leadership that can ruin careers and even lives. This article documents the growing research into these threats to good organizational leadership in the Army and the Navy, as well as ongoing efforts to address them. The authors make recommendation ten strategies for the armed forces to adopt to mitigate and hopefully eliminate dark leadership in the ranks.

Keywords: Narcissism, toxic leadership, dark leadership, military leadership

*“Ban, then, such thoughts, Beowulf, dearest, best of men,
and choose the better part, eternal profit;
and temper your pride.”*

~ From the epic poem, Beowulf

Introduction

In Greek mythology, the young hunter Narcissus, cursed by the goddess of revenge, Nemesis, for having jilted the mountain nymph Echo, becomes obsessed with his reflection in a pool of water, to the point where he drowns in it. Today, countless people around the world are similarly obsessed with their electronic visage, taking “selfie” images and posting them to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. “The United States is suffering from an epidemic of narcissism,” says Jean Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, authors of *The Narcissism Epidemic* (2009), and “the rise in narcissism is accelerating.”¹ This trend began, they say, with the “Me Decade” of the 1970s and a move toward – and ultimately a societal value placed upon – self-admiration.²

The ranks of the U.S. Armed Forces are renowned for leaders who exhibit particular skill areas, including strategic vision, communications and message-management skills, and general management practices – some of the very behaviors that Jay Conger says “also have the potential to produce problematic or even disastrous outcomes for their organizations.”³ Indeed, says Conger, “The very qualities that distinguished the visionary leader contained the potential for disaster.”⁴ It is in the nexus of narcissism and toxic leadership that the armed forces have seen commanders and senior noncommissioned officers relieved for everything from cruelty and maltreatment to poor judgment inconsistent with core values to physical and mental abuse.

This paper discusses narcissism and toxic leadership in the U.S. Armed Forces, particularly the Army and the Navy (the largest of the armed services), the nexus between the two, and ways the military is dealing with the problem. The authors recommend ten strategies that the armed forces can adopt or formalize in order to mitigate and hopefully eliminate dark leadership in the ranks.

Review of the Literature

There is ever-mounting research on the nature, definition, and prevalence of narcissism and toxic leadership in the organizational leadership/ranks of the armed forces.

Toxic Leadership

“You want toxic? I’ll show you toxic.”

**~ Remark attributed to
Army Lt. Col. Tammy Baugh**

Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, promulgated in 2012, defined toxic leaders, in part, as those who “consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves.”⁵ This was the first time the Army defined this type of leadership which, over time, has become less and less acceptable.

In midsummer of 2013, Army soldiers under the command of Lt. Colonel Tammy Baugh were through with her toxic leadership, leading to her temporary relief from command by Fort Carson, Colorado commanders who ordered an investigation into the command climate of her Apache attack helicopter battalion. “Her command style is toxic and it bleeds from the highest-ranking to the lowest, promoting contention among all members of the unit,” said one captain in an article by Tom Roeder of *The Gazette* in Colorado Springs.⁶ Yet, while the investigative report noted that “Too many soldiers and

leaders in the battalion, across all ranks, have been negatively impacted by her belittling, disrespectful and caustic interaction, and the results of that interaction have been detrimental to morale, effectiveness and climate of the organization and the morale and well-being of soldiers,” Baugh was returned to her command.⁷ In her defense, Baugh maintained that “My passion can sometimes be confused with anger” and admitted to making “spot corrections.”⁸

Regarding this type of leadership, Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently told West Point cadets, “At one point or another in your career, you will work for a jackass, because we all have. People who are terrible to their subordinates may be perfectly civil and respectful up the chain of command.”⁹ Gates also commented on the terrible impact on morale a toxic leader has and the difficulties in identifying them because they hide their actions from senior personnel and junior personnel won’t report them for fear of retaliation.¹⁰

There is little discussion in the literature of the cost of toxic leadership in the military except that it is costly and problematic to determine. What is known is this type of leadership can drive military members out of their service either through desertion or failure to reenlist. In addition to losing experience, the costs to recruit and provide basic training to one replacement are over \$100,000, not including any specialized training required.¹¹ In 2007, almost nine of every 1,000 Army service members deserted, many due to the stress of toxic leadership.¹² At a Houston army recruiting command, a poor command climate was found to be a contributing factor in four suicides of soldiers stationed there.¹³ Clearly, there is no price which can be put on this type of loss caused by a toxic leader.

The corporate world has come a little closer to putting a number to the cost of what they refer to as “workplace bullying.” CBS *MoneyWatch* estimated that workplace bullying has cost U.S. companies \$64 billion while *Psychology Today* reported the number to be closer to \$200 billion.¹⁴ Included in these estimates are excessive absenteeism, reduced productivity, increased health care costs, reduced loyalty, workers’ compensation, high turnover, and associated hiring and training costs. It is estimated that 35 percent of the U.S. civilian workforce has experienced bullying including intimidation, insults, threats, unreasonable work demands, and more.¹⁵

The Army is the only branch of the armed forces to estimate the number of soldiers impacted by toxic leadership. A 2010 survey of Army leadership found more than 80 percent of Army officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians surveyed had directly observed a “toxic” leader in the last year and another 20 percent of the respondents said that they had worked directly for one.¹⁶ A recent survey conducted at the Command and General Staff College estimated up to 18 percent of Army leaders could be considered toxic.¹⁷

Retired Army Lt. General Walter Ulmer served as the chief executive officer for the Center for Creative Leadership and has written about the problem of toxic leadership in the Army. Additionally, he compiled the following observations which toxic leaders frequently display:

- They rarely take blame or share glory.
- They are not toxic all the time, or to all people.
- They are rarely if ever toxic when in the company of “the boss.”
- They sometimes have good ideas and accomplish good things.

- They can be charming when the occasion fits.
- They are frequently described as extremely bright and hard-working.
- They often have a coterie of devoted “fans” who keep appearing on their staffs.
- Most have been seen as toxic by subordinates since early in their career.
- Their boss either does not know or pretends not to know, and almost never records, their abuse of subordinates.¹⁸

Through interviews, surveys, literature, as well as reviews of numerous real-life cases, General Ulmer summarized that “Toxic leaders are individuals whose behavior appears driven by self-centered careerism at the expense of their subordinates and unit, and whose style is characterized by abusive and dictatorial behavior that promotes an unhealthy organizational climate.”¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the first part of General Ulmer’s definition noted toxic leaders are “driven by self-centered careerism.” This supports studies of toxic leadership completed by retired Army veterans Joe Doty and Jeff Fenlason which found most, if not all, toxic leaders suffer from narcissism.²⁰ It appears that narcissism is, in most cases, a precursor to toxic leadership. Since narcissism has also been found to bring some “productive” attributes to leadership, it will be discussed more fully to determine exactly what it is and how early identification of this trait in leaders may assist the military in the fight against toxic leadership.

Narcissism

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

~ Proverbs 16:18

Narcissism is defined by the Mayo Clinic staff as a “mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance and a deep need for admiration.

Those with narcissistic personality disorder believe that they're superior to others and have little regard for other people's feelings."²¹

Michael Maccoby notes that "today's business leaders have higher profiles than ever before...business plays a much bigger role in our lives than it used to, and its leaders are more often in the limelight. Another is that the business world is experiencing enormous changes that call for visionary and charismatic leadership."²² Maccoby identified these larger-than-life leaders as closely resembling the personality type that Sigmund Freud dubbed *narcissistic*. Quoting Freud, "People of this type impress others as being 'personalities.' They are especially suited to act as a support for others, to take on the role of leaders, and to give a fresh stimulus to cultural development or damage the established state of affairs."²³ In his book, *The Productive Narcissist* (2003), Maccoby called this new brand of visionary and charismatic leader, a "change the world" type of personality.²⁴

It is not too much of a stretch to include military leaders in Maccoby's suggestion that today's leaders have a higher public profile than ever before. Generals like Norman Schwarzkopf, Colin Powell, and David Petraeus can certainly be characterized as "visionary and charismatic," as well as "larger-than-life." Let us now look at the "productive" and "dark" sides of the narcissistic personality.

Productive Narcissism.

Narcissism, noted Maccoby, has become synonymous with self-centered behavior, need for attention, and overall arrogance; however, those characteristics do not paint a complete picture of the personality type.²⁵ In 1931, Freud coined three "normal" personality types: *erotic* (not a sexual term; rather, it denotes a person for

loving and being loved are the most important thing), *obsessive* (a conservative character who prefers order and maintains moral values), and *narcissistic* (an impressive personality who effects transformational change).²⁶ Productive narcissists, says Maccoby, are independent thinkers and risk takers who “use everything they can, including people, to implement their vision...charismatically drawing others into their internal dialogue.”²⁷

Dark Narcissism.

Narcissism is not unlike Freud’s other personality types in that it like they can become problematic if taken to extreme. Just as the erotic can care or love too much, and the obsessive can become compulsive, so too can the productive narcissist step over the line to a dark side, invariably becoming a toxic leader. Said Maccoby, “So it is with even the productive narcissists – their weaknesses are intimately tied to their strengths; the very things that got them to the top are the qualities that can bring them down.”²⁸ Imagine the charismatic leader who effects transformational change in an organization, but soon thereafter stops listening to people, becomes more isolated, sensitive to criticism, and even paranoid. Writing about the rise of narcissistic leaders in the *Harvard Business Review*, Stanford University’s Jeffrey Pfeffer offered that fallen charismatic leaders like John Edwards, Bill Clinton, and Harry Stonecipher of Boeing may be evidence that “we are choosing more narcissistic leaders and the misbehavior is not just the consequence of power but also of excessive narcissism.”²⁹ Perhaps the best example in U.S. military of narcissistic and even toxic leadership is General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, of whom his foremost biographer, William Manchester, wrote, “there was something disturbing about MacArthur’s thespianism [narcissistic need to

always be performing].”³⁰ Robert Gilbert of Illinois Wesleyan University conducted a “psychohistory” of MacArthur which found the general met the diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, including his “obsessive need to always be right...pervasive pattern of grandiosity...requires excessive admiration,” and concluded that “MacArthur’s narcissism led to his removal from command [by President Truman] of the U.S. Army during the Korean War.”³¹

The Nexus of Narcissism and Toxic Leadership

As discussed, most toxic leaders are also narcissistic. There is a clear overlap of certain characteristics shared by both types of leaders which is displayed in the nexus in Figure 1. Every leader is different and characteristics outside the nexus on each circle can still be attributed to either type of leader, but generally they fall out as shown.

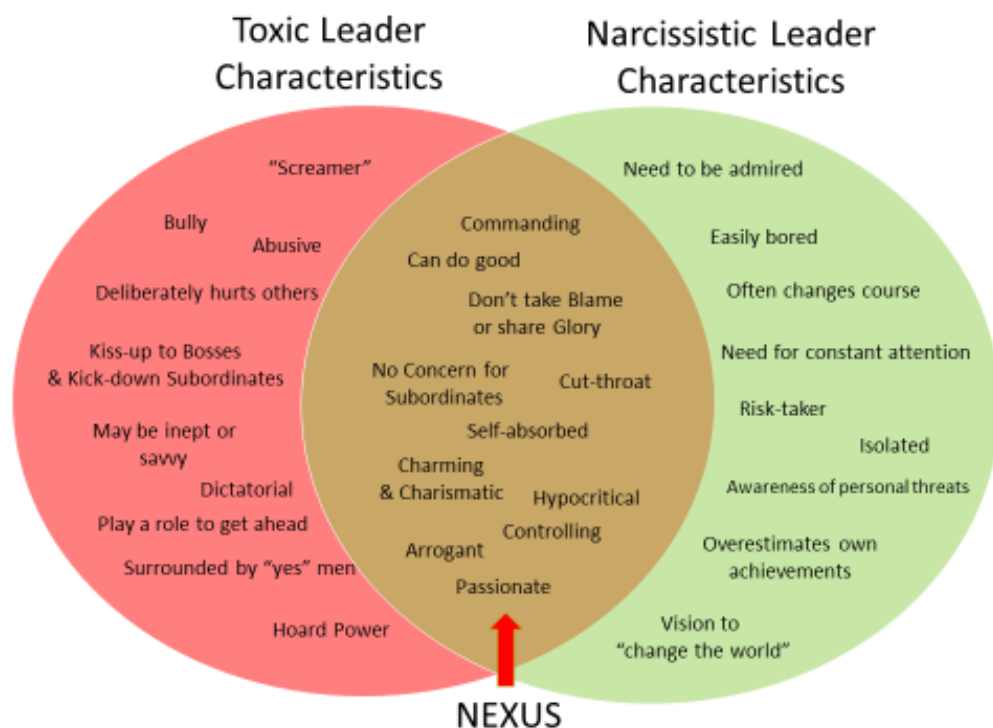


Figure 1. Toxic and Narcissistic Leader Characteristics

Avoiding the Pitfalls of Narcissism

While leaders with narcissistic personalities have little ability or inclination to reengineer themselves, Maccoby nevertheless recommends three practical ways in which productive narcissists can avoid the dark side:

1. **Find a trusted sidekick.** This should be a trusted colleague who is unafraid to tell the productive narcissist/boss what he needs to hear – vice what he wants to hear.
2. **Indoctrinate the organization.** Productive narcissists can motivate the organization to identify with them, to think the way they do, and to become the living embodiment of their companies.
3. **Get into analysis.** Psychotherapy has been effective in providing productive narcissists with the tools to overcome character flaws.³²

Addressing Dark Leadership in the Ranks

On his first day as Army chief of staff in 2011, General Raymond Odierno outlined his priorities in a speech which asserted, "We can't have leaders who are risk averse, we can't have leaders who are micro-managers and don't trust their subordinates -- [that's] the kind of toxic leadership that we can't afford."³³ Such dark leadership can have deadly results. According to anthropologist Dave "Doc" Matsuda who was charged by Army leadership to investigate the high rate of soldier suicides – almost thirty – in Iraq in 2010, "every victim also had a leader who also made his life hell – sometimes, a couple leaders."³⁴

Current Efforts to Mitigate

Former defense secretary Robert Gates has briefed many flag and general officers on the problem of toxic leaders and noted “the only way you can really find out is for somebody to talk to their subordinates and for their subordinates to be willing to talk about — and even document — cases of abuse by these toxic leaders.”³⁵ Stanford University professor Robert Sutton suggested this is difficult because of the tendency of toxic leaders to “kiss up” to bosses while they “kick down” subordinates.³⁶ Bosses of toxic leaders who are senior or considered special for some reason may not believe the stories of abuse they hear, instead believing that the complainers are exaggerating or whining. For example, when Rutgers University basketball coach Mike Rice physically attacked and verbally belittled his players, a mid-level manager reported the abuse to higher-ups at Rutgers.³⁷ Unfortunately, because Rice was considered a “hot commodity” and a “high-profile coach,” no action was taken until the story broke in the media.³⁸ There is no one “right” answer in mitigating toxic leadership and narcissism in the military; instead a multi-pronged attack should be waged against it.

This article breaks mitigation efforts into two categories: environmental concepts and reporting or feedback processes. Environmental concepts deal with making known and upholding service-wide standards which should govern the actions of leaders while feedback processes are those instruments available within the system to identify or report abuse. Additionally, some special considerations are discussed which may be helpful in the future battle against narcissism and toxic leadership.

Environmental Concepts.

Accountability. In order to mitigate toxic leadership, leaders must be held accountable for its existence within their command or area of responsibility. In the Navy, all prospective commanding officers receive Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Memo 5370, "The Charge of Command," which outlines what is expected of a Navy commanding officer. It lists authority, responsibility, and accountability as the three principles that "are the heart and soul of command."³⁹ Without accountability, authority and responsibility have no teeth.

Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Joe Doty and retired Navy Captain Chuck Doty addressed accountability differences in the Army and Navy by asking to what extent commanders should be held accountable in cases such as high suicide rates, toxic command climates, incidents of sexual harassment, or war crimes.⁴⁰ As examples, two Army instances were cited where there was a clear lapse of responsibility but both commanders were not publicly held accountable by virtue of being allowed to stay in command. The first case involved four suicides which the investigators blamed on a poor command climate. Investigators in the second case cited a poor command climate which contributed to torture, murder, and rape.⁴¹ Doty and Doty reported Navy commanders have an expectation that they should and will be relieved of their duties when incidents of this nature occur on their watch while it may not be the same in the Army.⁴²

Training and education. Recently, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff identified six officer desired leadership attributes (DLAs) which are to drive the development of future leadership training and education in all the services. Although

toxic leadership is not specifically addressed, it would seem if these desired leadership attributes are demonstrated they would stem some of the problem. The six DLAs are the abilities to:

1. Understand the environment and the effect of all instruments of national power.
2. Anticipate and adapt to surprise and uncertainty.
3. Recognize change and lead transitions.
4. Operate on intent through trust, empowerment, and understanding.
5. Make ethical decisions based on the shared values of the Profession of Arms.
6. Think critically and strategically in applying joint warfighting principles and concepts.⁴³

For years, the Navy has had the Naval Leadership Continuum which provides career-long leadership training from junior enlisted petty officer to flag officer level. However, it has only been recently that case studies on toxic leadership were included in the Navy leadership training. The Navy also opened the Naval Leadership and Ethics Center which Rear Adm. Walter Carter Jr. said would serve "as an opportunity to take a more proactive approach in improving a culture of character development...our goal is improved leader development."⁴⁴

The Army has incorporated a large section on toxic leadership into the field grade course at the Command and General Staff Officer Course in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.⁴⁵ Additionally, the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania has incorporated strategic leadership into two of their five core curricula which teaches students to create

and maintain an ethics and values-based focus that reinforces the organization's vision.⁴⁶

Command climate and organizational culture. The difference between command climate and the organizational culture of a military organization was explored in a study of the organizational culture of the Canadian Army. The study reported 'climate' deals with the environment one works in which influences behavior while 'culture' consists of the underlying values and beliefs that shape norms in organizations.⁴⁷ Climate research "...requires quantitative methods of measurement to describe and measure dimensions of the construct, while culture requires qualitative techniques to explain processes that may underlie those dimensions"⁴⁸ Since climate is based on attitudes, it can change quickly. Culture is more ingrained and difficult to change.

As a practical example, before the 1991 Tailhook scandal, the Navy celebrated traditional "rites of passage" such as Chief Petty Officer initiations, Crossing-the-Line ceremonies, and Blue Nose ceremonies with activities that sometimes caused humiliation, emotional distress, and even physical pain. These were activities where toxic leaders could thrive. These initiations, or hazings, were considered a tradition – an underlying cultural value which negatively impacted the command climate of those experiencing them. The fact that they were an accepted practice reflected the culture of the Navy.

The Secretary of Defense signed out a memorandum recently which requires commanders of all services to conduct an annual command climate survey with a copy of the results provided to the next higher level in the chain of command.⁴⁹ For its part,

Navy commanders have been required to conduct command climate surveys annually for the past twenty years with all personnel.⁵⁰ The surveys are anonymous and sent directly to a separate joint command. If survey results indicate any unethical behavior such as toxic leadership is occurring, an investigation is conducted. If the behavior is substantiated, swift and appropriate action is taken. However, will having all the services conducting command climate surveys get to the root cause of toxic leadership? After all, the Navy appears to be doing a good job of identifying issues and holding people accountable, but annual climate surveys and training have not succeeded in eliminating the toxic behavior.

Current literature on the issue of toxic leadership in the military is replete with calls to change the organizational culture. Rear Admirals Martha Herb and Tony Kurta recently wrote that despite training which attempts to instill new standards, “this societal culture and the traditional Navy culture collide.”⁵¹ Though changing a culture is difficult and slow, the authors reported it must be done in order to reestablish trust in the fleet.⁵² Navy Captain Mark Light also suggests there are clear “cultural factors that work against the service’s efforts to improve behavior” and “the behavioral standards now in place are in competition with long-standing cultural norms.”⁵³ He uses the example of the Navy’s surface warfare community which is widely known for zero tolerance for mistakes and has cultural traits that include public degradation and bullying.⁵⁴

Understanding the organizational culture of a command or service is key as research has shown individual behavior within that unit is not solely controlled by the formal regulations, policies, and command and control. Instead, there are cultural norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions which provide unconscious guidance and

direction, and consequently, influence the subsequent behavior of individuals, including toxic leaders, within the organization.⁵⁵ The organizational culture is not always apparent, observable, or easy to determine and, as discussed, it is not the same as measuring an organization's climate. Studies conducted by the U.S. Army War College have arrived at a similar conclusion as the Navy regarding the impact of the Army's culture on toxic leadership.⁵⁶ Given the number of toxic leaders identified in both the Army and Navy, it appears the ingrained culture of these services along with their subcultures is not properly aligned with those "core values" which each service espouses.

Feedback Processes to Identify Toxic Leaders

Command Climate Surveys. These surveys anonymously assesses all command personnel's "perceptions of organizational effectiveness, equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, fair treatment, and sexual assault prevention and response."⁵⁷ Recently questions regarding favoritism, exhaustion or burnout, demeaning behaviors, and hazing were added.⁵⁸ These surveys have been helpful in identifying toxic leaders due to their anonymity and third-party and higher echelon review.

360° Assessments. In 2011, the Army began an initiative to reduce toxic leadership through a change to the Officer Evaluation Report (OER).⁵⁹ It requires all officers to initiate or complete a Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF), also known as a 360° assessment.⁶⁰ However, the Army has directed that it not be used as part of the formal evaluation of the officer.⁶¹ The Navy has experimented with 360° assessments for the last decade by disclosing "the results to the officer under review as well as a 'coach' or mentor who is assigned to guide the officer through the review

process and interpreting the final product.”⁶² While opening oneself to formal evaluation can be frightening for some leaders, the benefits outweigh the risks, according to Gary McIntosh and Samuel Rima, authors of *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership* (2007). “The reality is that others usually see the effects of our dark side long before we do. When we open ourselves to evaluation, we have the opportunity to address potential problem areas in their early stages, before they get out of control,” they said.⁶³

Inspector General Hotlines. Although each service has its own Inspector General to investigate matters of wrongdoing, complaints are normally made through the Department of Defense Hotline. Complaints about toxic leaders can be made by phone, letter, or online. Once the complaint is received it is reviewed for urgency and assigned to the proper service for investigation. The Department of Defense Inspector General is tasked with ensuring a timely and thorough investigation is conducted. Additionally, contact information for each of the services’ Inspectors General is available online.

Special Considerations

Deployments, Effects of Combat, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The military lifestyle is arduous. Deployments of six to twelve months at sea or up to a year “boots on the ground” in Southwest Asia away from family and friends can impact service members differently. The stress of combat, threats of suicide bombers and other dangers, and the loss of comrades weigh heavily on deployed and returning service members. What effect might these factors have on leaders that may cause them to demonstrate toxic behaviors? Recall the famous albeit fictional tale of Lieutenant Commander Philip Francis Queeg, captain of author Herman Wouk’s WWII destroyer-

minesweeper USS *Caine* whose increasingly bizarre behavior over missing wardroom strawberries was likely a manifestation of his previous heavy combat service in the Battle of the Atlantic? In her commentary on the film version of Wouk's novel *The Caine Mutiny*, Army Major Ann B. Ching noted that "a modern audience will identify, as did the captain's staff, his behavior as possible symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), paranoid personality disorder, or any of a number of other diagnoses out of the DSM-IV."⁶⁴

Surely, the "blistering operational tempo over the past 10 years" as noted by Army Colonel John Box in his war college thesis, *Toxic Leadership in the Military Profession*, has pushed some leaders over the line into toxic behavior, à la Captain Queeg.⁶⁵ The commanding general of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, General Robert Cone, admitted that the Army strayed for expediency's sake from its core values in the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, saying that the Army had gotten to a point where it had decided that "it had to get it right, to the point that we put delivering results ahead of the way those results were delivered."⁶⁶

For example, Lt. Colonel Tammy Baugh had just come out of a combat tour in the Middle East when she took command of an undermanned unit which reportedly had a tangled chain of command.⁶⁷ This was the command where she was accused of exhibiting toxic behaviors. Should the military provide some downtime, perhaps a service school, for those coming out of combat instead of placing them in another high stress position? There appears to be little empirical or clinical research available on this and thus may be an area ripe for further study.

The Corporate Approach. Leadership coach, Manfred Kets de Vries suggested many senior executives who may be considered toxic leaders have personality disorders, the most common of which is narcissism.⁶⁸ Within the corporate world, executive leaders with narcissistic and/or toxic leadership tendencies are oftentimes identified as such either by other executives or they recognize it themselves.⁶⁹ By utilizing an executive coach, leaders can be helped through understanding the issues and the extent to which unconscious, seemingly irrational processes affect behavior.⁷⁰ Currently, there is no such process for identifying military leaders who may suffer from personality disorders or a process by which they can receive help. To make it even more difficult, the military culture discourages leaders and subordinates from the self-identification of possible mental problems as it goes against the warrior ethos.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As the dangers of narcissism and toxic leadership and the destruction it leaves behind become more evident, the military must use every avenue to rid itself of this organizational contagion. Despite several mitigation attempts, none appear to have fully matured across all of the services. In order to facilitate the eradication of toxic leadership and the effects of narcissism, the following recommendations are offered:

1. **Accountability, responsibility, and authority** of leaders should be defined by the Joint Staff for all services. Once defined and promulgated, leaders should be held accountable for toxic behavior.
2. **Leadership education and training** at all levels in every service should be expanded to include robust sections on toxic leadership, as well as

introspection and self-assessment at recognizing the dark side of their personalities.

3. **Command climate surveys** may be conducted only by the Navy at the present time; however, all services should be conducting them as recently directed by the Secretary of Defense in order to identify toxic leaders.
4. Individual service **culture and subcultures** should be identified, evaluated, measured, and changed where appropriate. Even if prevention and identification of toxic leadership improves, without a concurrent effort to change the culture to align with espoused core values, the military will continue to wrestle with this problem.
5. **360° assessments** must be reevaluated and then expanded. Data collected from the assessments should go to the supervisor of the person being evaluated and the people providing input should not be selected by the person being evaluated. Information obtained from the assessments should be included in the annual performance evaluation of the individual being assessed.
6. **Hotlines** should be widely publicized and commanders should consider identifying a trusted individual (perhaps the chaplain) in the command to which people can go to with issues.
7. Further research into what the **effects of combat situations, lengthy deployments, and PTSD** are on toxic leadership is needed.

8. **Post-deployment assignments** for leaders coming out of combat intensive tours should provide an environment that does not exacerbate stress-related issues.
9. Options for the **early identification and “treatment”** of narcissism and toxic leadership must be explored.
10. Options, similar to the corporate world, for **executive coaching** of military leaders who exhibit signs of narcissism and/or toxic leadership should be considered.

While it is practically impossible to determine the cost of narcissism and toxic leadership in terms of dollars, mental health, and even lives, the price is unarguably extreme and unnecessary. Every tool in the box should be used to stem the tide of toxic leadership in the military. Until all members of an organization understand what it is, what it does to an organization, and how to report it without fear of retaliation, toxic leaders – including the narcissists who have drifted into the dark side of leadership – will continue to rear their ugly heads and remain detrimental and destructive to morale and esprit de corps.

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