

Senior NCOs at Points of Friction

CSM NEMA MOBARAKZADEH

In 1815, the British Army, led by Lieutenant General Pakenham, suffered a decisive defeat at the Battle of New Orleans. In preparation for the battle, the American forces created a large trench and a seven-foot-tall rampart that ran from the bank of the Mississippi River to a swampy area to the northeast.¹ On the west bank of the Mississippi, a battery of American artillery oversaw the battlefield. The British Army planned to send a formation to seize the American battery and then attack the trench using two columns of Soldiers. The first column's attack failed when the commander died, leading to a disorderly retreat. The unit responsible for emplacing ladders and fascines was late, delaying the second column. Pakenham chose to personally retrieve the unit, leaving the rest of the formation without a commander. In Pakenham's absence, a subordinate commander decided to reinforce the position, resulting in half of the formation dying and later Pakenham himself. It is easy to imagine how the battle may have gone differently if the British had placed senior NCOs at crucial locations. A senior NCO could have acted on Pakenham's behalf, leaving him to command the second column or to reorganize the panicked first column. The Battle of New Orleans's outcome may have been a British victory if Pakenham had better employed his NCOs.

Senior NCOs play a critical role during combat operations.

They benefit organizations in numerous ways, but identifying and lubricating friction points is one of their most critical functions. Like a Pro Bowl free safety, senior NCOs roam the field cleaning up mistakes. While officers and junior leaders position themselves to best control their element, senior NCOs should be at the point of maximum friction. Senior NCOs at points of friction free commanders to command the overall operation. Every mission has friction: operational risk due to adjacent unit convergence, complexity, enemy actions, poor planning, inadequate intelligence, or a lack of experience. Friction is often self-inflicted, desynchronizing an operation before the enemy has voted. In his 2015 article "Identifying Strategic

Friction Points," Douglas R. Satterfield paraphrased Carl von Clausewitz: "The good general must know friction in order to overcome it whenever possible, and in order not to expect a standard of achievement in his operations which this very friction makes impossible."² While quoting Clausewitz may elicit eye rolls from some readers, the quote highlights an important question: How can a commander mitigate operational friction?

Senior NCOs are adept at reducing friction. As respected members of an organization, senior NCOs can influence Soldiers and leaders through presence. To maximize their impact, senior NCOs must make deliberate decisions about where they position themselves on the battlefield, rather than relying on doctrinally suggested positions. Some senior NCOs struggle to identify points of friction or ways they can influence their formation. By understanding the operational plan, communicating with the commander, and applying a friction rubric, senior NCOs better posture themselves to make informed decisions. Additionally, understanding historic points of friction for common tactical operations will aid a senior NCO in identifying risk. Senior NCOs can maximize their operational effectiveness by carefully considering their optimal placement rather than arbitrarily going to where they are comfortable or have always gone.



Photo by SGT Sarah D. Sangster

Soldiers in 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, prepare for a daytime air assault mission at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, LA, on 14 October 2020.

Senior NCOs are Optimal for Lubricating Points of Friction

Senior NCOs are generally among the most experienced Soldiers in a formation. The platoon sergeant (PSG), first sergeant (1SG), or command sergeant major (CSM) have years of experience and military education. Commanders expect senior NCOs to identify and solve problems during all phases of an operation. As seasoned Soldiers, they are calm in the face of adversity, thinking through problems as chaos ensues on the battlefield. Placing senior NCOs in the correct location on the battlefield can significantly reduce risk and optimize productivity. Leaders solving issues before they become an impediment to success can be the difference between success and failure. Placement of senior NCOs on the battlefield should be rooted in doctrine.

The Army's doctrine both directs and frees senior NCOs to find the best location for them to leverage their talents. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, establishes the leadership requirements model and identifies that leaders should possess the attributes of "character, presence, and intellect."³ Simply put, senior NCOs cannot solve problems if they are not present. Senior NCOs build credibility when they demonstrate competence during routine functions and lower echelon training. Leaders are more apt to listen to a credible senior NCO. Doctrine suggests some locations where senior NCOs can position themselves. Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-21.8, *Infantry Platoon and Squad*, proposes that a PSG be at the support-by-fire (SBF) position or with the assault element. ATP 3-21.10, *Infantry Rifle Company*, recommends that the 1SG be heavily involved in medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and sustainment operations. As NCOs move up the NCO support channel, their roles become more opaque. This ambiguity is liberating for senior NCOs, allowing the freedom to position themselves at the most critical locations. This freedom enables senior NCOs to have an enormous impact on mission success.

A senior NCO from a higher headquarters (HQs) provides several advantages to the formation. A CSM can provide companies a fresh perspective and detect problems others do not see. Additionally, a CSM has access to more information, understands the larger operation, and has the means to affect other elements. The CSM is not directly responsible for controlling a specific element during an operation, which frees him or her to observe enemy actions, friendly elements, and battlefield effects. This freedom allows the CSM to keep formations on task and avert issues before they arise. The CSM will understand subordinate units' strengths, weaknesses, and task proficiency. Senior NCOs' positional power, and personal power built through previous engagements, allows them to provide instructions that Soldiers will follow without hesitation. While a 1SG from one company may hesitate to reposition his or her element at the request of another company, that same 1SG will move without question when ordered by the CSM. Senior NCOs are adept at risk management and intuitively understand how conditions

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such as fatigue, darkness, terrain, and poor weather affect operations.

The summation of a senior NCO's intuition is a concept known as thin-slicing. Thin-slicing is a psychological methodology that allows people to dissect situations quickly and accurately. According to Jeff Thompson, PhD, thin-slicing is when a person is "observing a small selection of an interaction, usually less than five minutes, and being able to accurately draw conclusions in the emotions and attitudes of the people interacting."⁴ Senior NCOs regularly thin-slice situations by applying their breadth and depth of knowledge and experience. Some leaders mention a gut feeling or their "spidey sense," but they are unknowingly referencing the thin-slice concept. Presence is necessary for thin-slicing to work. For example, a CSM walking through a vehicle marshalling area may identify a Soldier without a night vision goggle (NVG) mount on his or her helmet. The CSM can quickly surmise that the unit did not complete pre-combat checks (PCCs) and pre-combat inspections (PCIs) to standard. Understanding the risk of a driver or leader operating a vehicle in black-out conditions without NVGs will lead the CSM to investigate further. A small investment of time to scrutinize the depth of the problem, along with other potential safety shortcomings, could save Soldiers' lives and prevent an accident that could derail the operational timeline and reduce combat power. Thin-slicing helps senior NCOs identify common points of friction.

Methods of Identifying and Overcoming Friction

Every operation has numerous points of potential friction, and they vary by phase. Senior NCOs can use differing tools and methods to identify and subsequently lubricate friction. Senior NCOs have to assess each potential point of friction to position themselves at the most critical location. Furthermore, CSMs must help coordinate subordinate senior NCO placement, ensuring adequate coverage of anticipated operational friction. In order to identify points of friction, senior NCOs must assess the overall operation.

Senior NCOs should consider several criteria before deciding the maximum point of friction. Before they can decide where they should be, they must understand the plan and the commander's intent. A senior NCO's participation during the planning process can prevent problems later. Additionally, understanding the plan will allow the senior

Criteria	Type of Operation	Unit Proficiency	Leader Proficiency	Risk Mitigation	Conditions * if applicable	Score
Location						
SBF	1	1	3	1	1	7
Assault	3	2	1	2	1	9
Breach	4	4	2	4	1	15
MEDEVAC	2	3	4	3	1	13
Location 5						
Location 6						

Friction Rubric

NCO to examine and weigh critical factors systematically. Much like a writing a college essay, a rubric or matrix can aid in determining points of friction (see table above).

The friction rubric is a tool that helps leaders determine operational friction and, subsequently, senior NCO placement. An adapted decision matrix, the rubric weighs criteria across each considered location.⁵ The unit can score the rubric in either descending or ascending order. Identical to weighing courses of action during war-gaming, leaders can assign a multiplier as appropriate. The current conditions of the unit and environment may have negligible impacts on the considered locations. For example, if the unit is at full strength and rested, and the weather is favorable, then the concern is low. Conversely, a unit attrited to 75-percent combat power that has 50 percent of its combat load — in addition to the fact that it has moved a great distance over several days and it has now started to rain — will increase risk and need accounting for in the rubric. The rubric lists each criterion across the top of the rubric. The left column contains the tentative locations. This example scores friction in descending order, meaning the highest number contains the most friction. Since leaders are considering four locations, they assign each criterion a score between one and four. The highest score is the tentative location for a senior NCO. If the unit prefers, leaders can use probability and severity rather than a numbered score.

Senior NCOs should determine evaluation criteria that will comprise their friction rubric. Much like the war-gaming phase of the military decision-making process, the commander’s planning guidance will help determine the weight of each criterion. It is best to start with the risk assessment. Senior NCOs should identify the most dangerous hazards and determine if the risk mitigation measures are adequate. Furthermore, senior NCOs should focus on who is supervising the mitigation measure. A clear sign of friction is where the risk assessment identifies the supervising individuals as all leaders, leading to an economic theory known as the tragedy of the commons.⁶ This theory asserts that a lack of ownership encourages others to neglect resources or tasks.⁷ If someone is directly responsible, the probability of comple-

tion to standard increases. After assessing risk, senior NCOs should look where units converge.

When units are in close proximity or share the same terrain, there is sure to be friction. Whenever units rub, they will create friction regardless of the type of operation. Imagine two companies opening a breach in a wired obstacle so they can attack an objective. The S3 or commander will likely command and control (C2) the fight, but friction typically

arises as the units converge. While a company understands the details of its portion of the fight and the concept of the adjacent unit, a CSM with an understanding of the whole operation can synchronize efforts directly at the point of friction. Delays in reporting and the chaos of battle can make it difficult for commanders positioned behind the fight to make effective decisions. A CSM at the breach site understands the current fight better and can direct spacing, force flow, and security; improve reporting; ensure all conditions are set; and immediately address issues as they arise. Senior NCOs must understand the capabilities of their units and leaders as well as the effects of the current fight.

A unit and its leaders’ capabilities and limitations, the current environmental conditions, and the organization’s readiness can create or reduce friction. Continuing down the friction rubric, the senior NCO must understand the capability of the formation. The unit’s frequency and proficiency at completing the assigned mission will influence risk. Furthermore, the senior NCO should consider the competence and tendencies of the formation’s leaders. Additionally, the senior NCO must evaluate the unit’s current level of fatigue, assigned strength, maintenance, and weather conditions. Within the friction rubric, leaders summarize these factors under the conditions column. Finally, the type of mission is an important consideration. Each mission comes with a varying degree of difficulty and risk. The more demanding the mission, the more these factors will matter. After considering each criterion in the friction rubric, senior NCOs will have tentative locations that need leader supervision. The next step of determining senior NCO placement is a conversation with the commander.

The commander understands the overall mission and has concerns about specific aspects of the operation. Senior NCOs, armed with an understanding of the mission and an assessment of potential friction, can have an informed conversation with their officer counterpart. Many command teams forgo this step. Officers often trust that their senior NCOs will select the correct location. While senior NCOs are experienced, they often lack repetitions at their current echelon. Imagine a newly assigned battalion CSM. He or

she may be the most experienced 1SG in the battalion but does not have practice serving as the battalion CSM. Many senior NCOs revert to where they are most comfortable, or where tradition places them, rather than at the point of maximum friction. Understanding these factors, coupled with the commander's concerns about crucial aspects of the mission, can lead the command team to a better decision.

Another method is for commanders to ask themselves two questions: "Where do I have to be?" and "Where do I wish I could be?" They might have to be in the C2 aircraft during an air assault because it provides the most advantageous location to synchronize the fight; however, they may desire to be at the landing zone (LZ) because they know there will be two separate companies landing together with junior command teams. This is a potential location for the CSM. Ultimately, the command team should vet the CSM's tentative location during the rehearsal.

Rehearsals are a critical component of mission success. While the command team may have a specific location in mind for the senior NCO, the rehearsal may reveal a better location. Following the rehearsal, the most senior NCO should speak with subordinate NCOs about their placement. This conversation allows for proper dispersion of the most senior leaders across the battlefield. This is also an opportunity for the more senior NCOs to coach subordinates on discerning the maximum point of friction for their portion of the mission.

After the mission, units should conduct an after action review (AAR). The AAR will reveal positive and negative aspects of the mission. The leaders should invest time in determining if senior NCOs were in the correct locations. During training, senior NCOs should experiment with their placement. Training at different locations will build experience and confidence, which allows leaders to make better decisions about where they should place themselves during future missions. The unit can use this information to inform future missions or drive preparation for collective training.

CSMs must educate their subordinate NCOs before unit training. Leader professional development (LPD) sessions are a crucial component of NCO development. While LPD sessions often coach tactics, some sessions fail to discuss points of friction or NCO placement. Furthermore, NCOs should engage trusted mentors about NCO placement and methods of identifying friction. Finally, leaders should amend professional military education to coach officers and senior NCOs on methods of identifying and reducing operational friction. It is important for these NCOs to understand common points of friction during combat operations.

Common Points of Friction

There are many points of friction during combat operations. Newly promoted senior NCOs are often unsure of their place on the battlefield. Instead of thinking critically about the friction in the operation, they default to conventional wisdom such as the PSG is always at the SBF position or the 1SG should always remain at the casualty collection

point (CCP). It is important to understand the positive and negative effects of positioning a senior NCO at a specific location. Additionally, senior NCOs must identify transition points where they can move from a lubricated friction point to the next area of risk. Considering these factors will allow them to maximize their impact on the operation.

While a unit may conduct countless types of missions, this section will only discuss the friction found in some of the most common operations, starting with uncoiling from the tactical assembly area (TAA). Uncoiling from the TAA is time consuming, complicated, and dangerous. Uncoiling is rife with friction. A large collection of units, equipment, and vehicles, regularly operated by novice crews, converging in tight spaces lends itself to accidents. Movement plans are often inaccurate and lack detail, further complicating operations. Simply lining up a chalk or serial of vehicles can be difficult. Weather conditions, maintenance, radio communications, PCCs/PCIs, and information dissemination further complicate matters. Senior NCOs can solve problems by placing themselves at the points of friction. Placing an operations sergeant major in a staging area will significantly buy down risk. 1SGs and CSMs spot-checking vehicles, weapons, equipment, and observing ramp briefs can lead to positive outcomes. Similarly, many of these same concerns carry over to air assault operations. There are many factors to consider, but senior NCOs play a crucial role in keeping the operation safe and on time. Uncoiling is not complete until all units have unloaded in their area of operation.

De-trucking, or unloading helicopters, is dangerous and can desynchronize an operation if executed poorly. Troop movement operations usually involve a strict timeline, allowing convoys or helicopters to deliver subsequent chalks or move to their next mission. Riding in a helicopter or in the back of a truck is disorienting, especially for sleep-deprived Soldiers. While unloading, Soldiers often become intermingled with other elements, move slowly to establish security, leave equipment behind, or move in the wrong direction. Taking too long to dismount causes supporting vehicles or aircraft to deliver other units late. There is risk of injury as Soldiers linger in the road and convoys attempt to maneuver. During combat training center rotations, it is common for brigades to take 24 hours longer than they planned to deploy their units into the area of operations. Senior NCOs at critical locations can greatly reduce friction in the operation. Senior NCO placement within an airlift or convoy, on an LZ or de-trucking point, and at link-up locations is essential.

During field planning, senior NCOs are often unsure where they should be located. While a unit is planning, numerous operations or tasks occur simultaneously. Brigades and battalions are always in a state of planning while also conducting operations. Companies and platoons are normally either executing a mission or planning/preparing for an operation. Deciding where senior NCOs place their attention is challenging. Imagine a company in a patrol base conducting troop leading procedures while the company commander plans. The 1SG must supervise rehearsals,



U.S. Army photo

A command sergeant major assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division and Regional Command (South) speaks with an NCO during a battlefield circulation in Zabul Province, Afghanistan, on 8 April 2012.

conduct resupply, spot check Soldiers and equipment, aid in planning, and enforce security, just to name a few responsibilities. How 1SGs split their time amongst their responsibilities is paramount. It is imperative the senior NCOs and officers of the company discuss priorities and leader coverage for supervising tasks. A published timeline aids the 1SG in keeping track of inspection priorities.

Helping the staff plan is a complicated endeavor for CSMs. Finding the right touchpoints during planning with the commander and staff is difficult for CSMs as they often have to spend time circulating the battlefield or reducing friction. CSMs must regularly speak with the commander, S3, and executive officer (XO) to understand priorities and concerns. CSMs should be involved in the course of action development and the war game, helping to vet feasibility and offering practical solutions. The operation order brief is too late for a CSM to shoot holes in the plan. Additionally, CSMs can serve as a bridge between current operations and future operations. Many plans fail because planners are unaware of a unit's current location, personnel status, and equipment readiness. Likewise, battle captains may direct units or enablers to objectives that take them too far from future mission locations, rendering the plan unfeasible. CSMs can share information between the two teams, reducing friction. Subsequent touchpoints with each warfighting function can produce opportunities to share information, lubricate friction, or identify issues the CSM can rectify. The information garnered during planning and these staff engagements will aid shared understanding as the CSM conducts battlefield circulation.

Battlefield circulation is a senior NCO's opportunity to

solve problems and share information. CSMs have a positive impact on an organization when they visit units during combat operations. Through the churn of reporting, planning, and combat operations, information gets lost in the shuffle. This is also an opportunity for the CSM to serve as the "camp counselor" by smoothing over personality conflicts, allowing subordinates to vent, or vetting plans. A CSM's presence can uncover problems the HQs personnel are unaware of, allow him or her to disseminate critical information, or return information to the commander. These engagements often uncover systemic problems. For example, a company may report it has not received any

casualty replacements. The CSM may thin-slice the situation and determine the brigade replacement cell (BRC) is the likely point of friction. While 1SGs must stay with their company, the CSM can drive to the brigade support area and investigate. Conversations at the mortuary affairs collection point and the BRC may uncover transportation issues. CSMs can use their positional power to cobble together and lead a convoy to deliver the replacement Soldiers. Additionally, CSMs can rectify shortfalls in the casualty replacement process. Finally, savvy CSMs keep additional supplies in their vehicle to address emergent materiel concerns.

Senior NCOs often place themselves at doctrinally suggested positions, such as the SBF position, rather than the maximum point of friction during tactical operations. Many senior NCOs gravitate to the SBF position. This may be the best location for a senior NCO, but the decision should be deliberate. Leaders must consider the composition, experience of the crews, complexity of the plan, and leader proficiency. A competent weapons squad leader can easily handle two machine guns but may struggle to manage four machine guns, a sniper, and handheld mortars. This complexity may require a senior NCO to synchronize the various elements. If not a senior NCO, the commander may have the best vantage point to see the entire fight, best control all of the elements, and employ enablers. Even a company XO at the SBF can free the senior NCO to move to other points of friction.

Another common senior NCO location is at the CCP or controlling the MEDEVAC process. MEDEVAC operations are complex and, if done poorly, can distract from the objective. Clearly, senior NCOs can aid MEDEVAC. While

overseeing these operations is a common function of senior NCOs, this is not always the best place for them to be. For example, if the headquarters and headquarters company 1SG is very reliable, the battalion CSM may better serve the formation elsewhere. Many factors determine how complex MEDEVAC operations will be. The number of projected casualties, the distance of MEDEVAC, enemy array, number of competent medical providers, and unit leader proficiency are just a few considerations. 1SGs often place themselves at the CCP even though there are only a few casualties. They may better benefit their units by placing themselves at a greater point of friction. The 1SG can always move to the CCP if that becomes the greatest point of friction. Instead of focusing on MEDEVAC operations, 1SGs may help flow their company into an urban area and de-conflict units within the objective. After the objective is secure or the tactical situation permits, they can move to the CCP to take over the MEDEVAC process.

Senior NCOs can greatly benefit the unit's consolidation and reorganization. After heavy fighting, consolidating and reorganizing can become challenging. Finding defensible terrain, tying in adjacent units, distributing ammo, placing key weapons in advantageous positions, and all of the necessary tasks can become chaotic without supervision. CSMs can help units through this process with their experience and understanding of the larger mission. MEDEVAC operations may consume a 1SG's attention. The CSM is free to help the company defend the seized objective and ready the formation for the next mission. Likewise, a PSG relieving the 1SG of MEDEVAC duties allows the 1SG to tend to the entire company. Consolidation and reorganization often includes planned resupply missions. Distributing supplies after establishing a hasty defense is complex and something a 1SG may need to oversee, rather than a supply sergeant.

There are also numerous locations for a senior NCO during movement-to-contact missions. Controlling formations during a movement to contact can be difficult. Platoons or companies often cannot see each other because of the terrain, which presents further challenges when there are casualties. The company trains must stay far enough from the company to prevent enemy compromise, but this separation causes friction to C2 and security. The company trains frequently have the best communications, which requires a key leader to monitor and report from that platform. Movement through challenging terrain strains communication across the unit and with the higher HQs. Once a unit has reached its limit of advance, formations normally move into a hasty or deliberate defense. Finally, the unit will likely need a resupply, a common senior NCO task. There are many acceptable locations for a senior NCO, which vary by phase, during a movement-to-contact mission. The 1SG and CSM must decide where they can best help their unit by applying the friction rubric.

Senior NCOs play an important role in a deliberate defense, but they often struggle to define their role.

Senior NCOs can maximize their operational effectiveness by carefully considering their optimal placement rather than arbitrarily going to where they are comfortable or have always gone.

While preparing a defense, several tasks are happening simultaneously: offensive operations in the disruption zone, engagement area development, planning, and refit. Enemy incursions often interrupt progress as the unit repels attacks and deals with casualties. Senior NCOs must help plan casualty evacuation (CASEVAC), MEDEVAC, and sustainment operations all while ensuring Soldiers complete maintenance. The organization must unload important equipment from the company trains (for example, Javelin missile launchers and chemical protective equipment). Senior NCOs link up with and guide delivery crews to unload class IV materials at planned obstacle sites rather than having the team carry the items a great distance. Before dig assets waste time on unsuitable positions, senior NCOs can help the commander vet and mark fighting positions. Subsequently, senior NCOs must inspect fighting positions and the distribution of key weapons systems. Finally, overseeing rehearsals and receiving back briefs from Soldiers on alert plans, engagement/disengagement criteria, CASEVAC procedures, and the process for passing friendly units through obstacles are paramount. Frequent communication between key leaders, applying the friction rubric, a detailed timeline, and thin-slicing during inspections will inform senior NCOs where to place their attention.

After the defense is established, senior NCOs must determine their role in fighting the defense. There are numerous points of friction in a defense. The natural position for a CSM during the defense is overseeing MEDEVAC operations. While MEDEVAC operations are worthy of a senior NCO's attention, other facets of the mission may contain more friction. Elements in the disruption zone often return to supplement primary battle positions, causing a risk of fratricide. Senior NCOs can play an important role in de-conflicting these two converging units. Anti-tank engagements are critical in the defense and may need a senior NCO's oversight. Soldiers must engage vehicles with the correct munition so the element has the appropriate munitions remaining to kill more significant threats. While subordinate leaders focus on their portion of the fight, they often lose sight of disengagement criteria. Disengaging from a primary position to an alternate fighting position can be disorganized and lead to additional casualties. Senior NCOs can help maintain security and direct fire and maneuver so the formation can occupy alternate fighting positions in an organized manner. Additionally, senior NCOs can help calm

and direct a formation in the event of a chemical attack. Finally, they can also play an important role in organizing elements to counterattack at the appropriate time. Using the friction rubric, conversing with the commander, attending rehearsals, and conducting battlefield circulation will inform senior NCOs of their optimal position.

Task-organization changes often produce friction. Senior NCOs should be interested any time there is a task-organization change. These changes are easy for a planner to write into an order, but they do not always account for the logistics of moving a formation. For example, a Sapper squad installing obstacles for a battalion will conduct strenuous manual labor for most of the day. Shortly after the squad finishes its work, the engineer battalion will move the squad to support another unit. When the Sappers arrive at the next unit, the leaders will expect them to start working immediately on their obstacles. No one considered that the squad is out of food, has not slept in 36 hours, is out of fuel, and low on ammunition. Task-organization changes add additional friction when they direct an element to traverse the battlefield across numerous unit boundaries. Whether it is a CSM at a tactical operations center or a 1SG on the ground, senior NCOs should involve themselves in task organization changes. Senior NCOs are responsible for inspecting and reporting the status of attachments when they arrive and depart. With countless points of friction during combat operations, senior NCOs must deliberately assess their location on the battlefield.

Conclusion

Senior NCOs influence operations in many ways. To maximize a unit's effectiveness, commanders and senior NCOs must carefully consider where the formation's most experienced leaders should serve during combat operations. While doctrine informs leader placement, commanders and senior NCOs apply the friction rubric, risk assessments, and understanding of operational risk derived from rehearsals to determine maximum points of friction. Senior NCOs improve their ability to assess friction by experimenting during training, participating in AARs, developing subordinates through LPD sessions, and coaching from mentors. Senior NCOs positively affect outcomes through presence and thin-slicing. Understanding historical friction points commonly found in routine combat missions will help

senior NCOs determine where they can best ensure mission success. Senior NCOs can maximize their operational effectiveness by carefully considering their optimal placement rather than arbitrarily going to where they are comfortable or have always gone.

Notes

¹ History.com, "Battle of New Orleans," 2019, accessed from <https://www.history.com/topics/war-of-1812/battle-of-new-orleans>.

² Douglas R. Satterfield, "Identifying Strategic Friction Points," *The Leader Maker: A Blog About Senior Executive Leadership*, accessed from <https://www.theleadermaker.com/identifying-strategic-friction-points/>.

³ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, July 2019, 1-15.

⁴ Jeff Thompson, PhD, "Thin Slices & First Impressions," *Psychology Today* (24 March 2012), retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/beyond-words/201203/thin-slices-first-impressions>.

⁵ Field Manual (FM) 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, May 2014.

⁶ Alexandra Spiliakos, "Tragedy of the Commons: What it is and 5 Examples," Harvard Business School, 6 February 2019, accessed from <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/tragedy-of-the-commons-impact-on-sustainability-issues>.

⁷ Ibid.

CSM Nema Mobarakzadeh currently serves as command sergeant major of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division at Fort Polk, LA. He is a graduate of Ranger, Sapper, Jungle, Airborne, Jumpmaster, Pathfinder, Reconnaissance Surveillance Leaders, and Military Free-Fall courses among others.



Photo courtesy of the Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group

CSM Jeffrey Loehr from 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, participates in live-fire training at the Joint Readiness Training Center on 28 March 2017.