

COHESION

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The importance of cohesiveness in a combat unit has been recognized for a long time. Nearly 2,400 years ago the Greek general Xenophon observed that the successful unit in a conflict is the one that "goes into battle stronger in soul." To have a soul a unit has to be more than just a loose collection of soldiers who are supposed to fight together if the need arises — it has to be close. It has to have what we now call cohesion.

If we analyze the term "unit cohesion," it appears to be redundant: "To cohere" means, literally, to cling together, and the word "unit" refers to individual parts that do cling together. Many of our infantry units during World War II demonstrated a great deal of cohesion and, therefore, were able to withstand extreme hardships and to accomplish almost impossible missions. But during the years since the end of World War II, the Army's units lost that special quality of closeness, and it now has become necessary to reintroduce the idea by talking about "cohesion."

But talking about cohesion is not enough. Somehow we must analyze what it is and then look at how we should go about achieving it.

Cohesion is difficult to define in a meaningful way, because it is made up of such intangible qualities as trust, confidence, and sacrifice, which are defined in terms of feelings, needs, and values. For these reasons it may be more helpful to describe a unit in which these intangible qualities are found.

In a cohesive unit a soldier shares a feeling of belonging to a group and accepts the unit's mission as his own. Each member takes pride in his job performance and sees his efforts as contributing to the unit effort as a whole. Each member is tightly bound with the others in feelings of reciprocal trust and kinship. Each soldier believes that his leaders really care about him. Each is proud of his membership in the unit, because he has earned it through difficult basic and unit training.

IN BATTLE

In battle this feeling of cohesiveness compels the soldier to fulfill his obligations to his comrades even at great risk to himself. No matter how long a battle lasts or how much destruction has occurred, the surviving soldiers will try to get the job done the best way they can and with whatever means they can find.

A soldier in such a unit will endure hardships and jeopardize his own safety for the welfare of his comrades, and he will do these things because he believes they would do the same for him. A Dragon gunner, for example, will sight his weapon for several seconds, exposed and under fire, because he is confident that his buddies will protect him.

Victory, then, is decided by soldiers who have the spirit and will — the soul — to go on despite the odds, and Army leaders must strive to develop

that degree of cohesion in their units. To do this, they must focus on major improvements in the three most important areas: mission training, standards of performance, and leadership.

Too often, though, soldiers have difficulty seeing the importance of their unit's mission and, consequently, of their own jobs in the unit, because they are not given the resources they need. "Doing more with less" has become a too-common phrase in the Army. Resource shortages bring about shortages in time, and time shortages cause poor planning and last-minute changes, which further deplete resources, and the cycle starts over again.

Combat realism in training is often subordinated to the practical realities of the current peacetime environment, such as the high costs of maneuver damage, shortages in gasoline, and the expense of high technology, ordnance, and supplies. But when a soldier turns to his leader for reassurance, he often finds a person who cannot offer an explanation for the way things are and one who probably even has some doubts of his own. But regardless of how logical and well-meaning the explanations may be for the unit's shortages, soldiers will evaluate their role and their unit's mission on the basis of their own perceptions and no one else's.

Even if a soldier can understand that training restrictions are unavoidable results of pressures from the out-

s. e., he may not be able to understand his leader's lack of emphasis on solving such problems as camouflage and dispersion and chemical warfare training. He may feel deceived and cheated and may begin to doubt that his leader really cares about him. The soldier knows that these unsolved problems could quickly get him killed in combat; he is not a gullible fool.

This problem is complex, but it can be solved. First, a new method of operating within the Army is needed, especially for dealing with unit readiness. The Army should focus more on the squad and the platoon, considering everything from recruiting to weapon system procurement. A small-unit leader also needs more support from his chain of command if he is expected to conduct training, and he must be made to feel free to use his imagination in carrying out small-unit operations and adventure training.

Once its focus has been reoriented, the Army can start applying methods for developing cohesion — personnel stability, increased operating and training funds, improved equipment, and tougher training. The recent idea of keeping companies together for a three-year period is a good beginning, because it will emphasize personnel stability at company level and below and also because this effort may provide us with some fresh ideas on how to improve the small-unit cohesion we already have.

Another method of achieving stability may be to list all battalion-sized units by priority and to assign scarce resources only to high-priority units that can be kept at a level of readiness that is high enough to allow soldiers to practice their skills. Units that cannot be assigned enough resources should be deactivated or kept at cadre strength until sufficient quantities become available.

In addition, a better balance should be achieved between expenditures for operational readiness and for new equipment procurement. The resulting improvement in training would go a long way toward promoting unit cohesion.

If a unit is to be cohesive, its soldiers must believe that high standards of personal performance are both necessary to accomplish the unit's mission and desirable for enhancing their unit's prestige. If they believe this, the soldiers will also believe that high standards of professional conduct are worthy of their personal sacrifices. Each person needs to feel pride in what he is and what he does, and this pride is further improved by his affiliation with a group that he considers a winning team.

Before a soldier can be proud of belonging to a unit, though, he must first feel that he has successfully negotiated a tough selection process that has done away with those who could not meet the prescribed standards. To build this individual and unit pride, the Army must start with a demanding period of basic training and then carry the same demanding standard into the rest of its operations. Basic, advanced, and unit training should become progressively tougher and more demanding on the soldier, requiring him to develop and maintain the strong personal discipline that he needs to foster pride.

Everything the soldier receives should be earned, and this should include branch insignia, medals, badges, promotions, and distinctive unit crests. As he works harder and earns more prestige, the tough regimen of unit training and testing should bring him even greater rewards: the intangible rewards of belonging, and the reciprocal affection and trust of the other members of what he perceives as the best unit in the Army. Without this pride in his unit, a soldier will not invest his efforts to set and achieve high standards of performance. Soldiers want to be a part of a winning team, and the Army can satisfy these ambitions by setting tough training and performance standards and by challenging its soldiers to meet them.

Tough unit training, then, continues to serve as a means of maintaining unit cohesion once it has been

attained. Since the goal of war can be described as causing the disintegration of an enemy's units, it is crucial that the Army train its units to resist disintegration. This will help build confidence and trust in the unit as a whole.

Once high performance standards and unit pride have been developed, one last item is required: a distinctive uniform. Proud soldiers want to be distinguishable as members of their units.

LEADERSHIP

Sound leadership is the cement that binds the other elements together to form a cohesive unit. In a cohesive unit the soldiers know that their leaders will see to their needs and share their risks. Seeing to their needs includes making sure they are well trained for their duties and are part of a unit of which they can be proud.

The crucial question of leadership is how to get good leaders and how to prepare them to lead the Army's small cohesive units. Today, there is little specific guidance available to our small-unit leaders that can help them develop unit cohesion. They are usually told to accomplish it but are seldom given the means with which to accomplish it. It is ironic that we expect the leaders with the least experience and the fewest resources to meet one of the Army's greatest leadership challenges.

To solve this problem, the Army must do two things: First, senior leaders must stop assuming that all young sergeants and lieutenants are leaders as soon as they are appointed and must do more to develop them into leaders. Second, professional development training and a leader's code of ethics should also be developed with small-unit leadership in mind. Some leadership is taught in Army schools, of course, but we must do much more. That training should teach more about group dynamics and principles of motivation, using historic examples found in such books as *The Face of Battle* and *Men*

in Arms. The objective of this leadership training should be to understand what makes people work together, what they expect of their leaders, and how leaders can create an environment that is conducive to building cohesion. We must also select the more promising leaders and make sure they are given leadership positions as early and as often as possible.

Professional development schooling should support the professional responsibilities of the leaders and not the perception that a large number of commissioned and noncommissioned officers need college degrees. A code of ethics that outlines what is expected of leaders should be adopted as a guide.

In the final analysis, I believe it is accurate to describe the leader that

most soldiers want as smart, flexible, caring, and brave. We should recruit and develop our leaders to match this description. Soldiers will put up with a lot of hardships if they believe that the tough "old sarge" and the smart "young commander" will take care of them and at the same time outwit and defeat an enemy.

A soldier will usually develop and emerge as a formidable warrior if he feels that he is well led, that he is valued as a respected member of a team, and that he has a vital job to do.

Military leaders must remember that their greatest weapon, even in this technological age, is the individual soldier. They must strive to develop and sharpen that soldier's skills. Leaders should work to

develop the American soldier's natural intellect and inventiveness, which have been labeled "Yankee ingenuity."

With good leaders and trained soldiers bound together in cohesive units, we can have renewed faith in our Army's competence to defeat all comers.



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Engineers and Infantry

COLONEL GERALD C. BROWN

In a recent issue of *INFANTRY*, Major John A. Bornmann, in "Ditch Diggers and Lead Slingers," concludes that engineers, to fight as infantry, must be heavily supplemented with combat systems and personnel. (See *INFANTRY*, November-December 1981, page 14.)

I disagree.

Certainly, when engineers must fight as infantry, the extra personnel and equipment that Bornmann recommends would help the effort. His list includes more Dragons, machineguns, TOWs, communication equipment, tanks or armored personnel carriers, artillery forward

observers, air liaison personnel, specialists in air defense, and scouts. But where is the maneuver commander supposed to get these resources to augment his engineers? Usually there are not enough of them for the units that are authorized to have them.

I believe that the engineer on the modern battlefield must be like the Minuteman of early American history. Whenever there was an Indian threat, or when the British were coming, the Minuteman would grab his musket from over the fireplace and join the fray. In short, in an emergency, the Minuteman respond-

ed as best he could with whatever he had available.

So it must be with combat engineers. Because they work on the battlefield where enemy contact is expected, they must be prepared to defend themselves at all times at their worksites, on the march, and in bivouacs. And they, too, must fight with the equipment and the supplies they have. In emergencies, when they are reorganized to fight as infantry and no extra resources are available, the engineers must still be ready to lay down their shovels, pick up their rifles, and man the ramparts. This they can do.