

# Soldier Readiness

## Some Thoughts on Leadership

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Although leadership is normally viewed as an art, there is sufficient latitude for individual development. With the right motivation, good common sense, and total dedication, a solid leadership style is within the grasp of anyone. The main job of infantry soldiers is to be prepared to deploy and fight a war tomorrow. It is up to us as leaders to see that they are prepared.

Four important factors must be considered when shaping up combat readiness—soldier confidence, cohesion, motivation, and pride. The thoughts on leadership issues that are presented here are workable and have been tested over a period of time in various types of infantry units.

**Confidence.** Winners have a certain way about them that is infectious and exciting. Everyone likes this feeling, and it is one that can be planted, nurtured, and harvested in a unit through a variety of programs designed to increase each soldier's confidence and help him develop an inner belief in his own potential.

Personal and unit physical fitness programs are an excellent beginning point. Physical fitness is too important to be an after-duty individual option, because there is a correlation between physical toughness and mental toughness. The "right" standard is some type of daily physical training. It is important that leaders participate in this training along with their soldiers, because this

demonstrates a willingness to share their hardships.

Another important part of instilling confidence is training our troops to man their increasingly sophisticated weapons and training our small unit leaders to employ them. In fact, this is where our soldiers have their greatest opportunity to gain confidence—with their weapons, as members of a winning team, and under conditions closely approximating battle. Night firing of individual and crew-served weapons and night operations (mounted and dismounted) under combat-related conditions are tremendous confidence builders. Individual and crew or squad battle drills that are conducted over and over until correct execution is a habit or a reflex also build the soldiers' confidence in their equipment and their leaders. (The Infantry School has provided outstanding battle drill "playbooks" for the squad leader to use in training his unit.)

### CORNERSTONE

Individual training is the cornerstone of our combat readiness. Our soldiers deserve good coaching in the Basic Skills Education Program (BSEP) and the Skill Qualification Test (SQT) program. In addition, there is a direct relationship between individual soldier tasks and unit collective tasks, because the individual soldiers must reach a certain level of proficiency in the fun-

damentals before a unit can make progress with collective training.

Senior leaders must have enough confidence in their junior leaders to decentralize responsibility down to the lowest level leader who is able to handle it. If a leader habitually bypasses his chain of command and belittles the importance of his subordinate leaders, they will fail him in a critical situation. But if he uses and trusts those leaders he will add to their prestige and confidence, and they will not fail him.

A well-known aspect of leadership is taking care of the personal problems soldiers cannot solve themselves, such as mail, pay, and hot rations. But a less well-known aspect is making soldiers live up to their potential. When a road march is tough and they want to quit, it is up to their leaders to make them take that one more step. When the day ends, they can look back and recognize that they are better soldiers than they had ever thought possible and had overcome obstacles they previously had considered insurmountable. And when a soldier has done well, he should be praised, preferably in front of his peers.

**Cohesion.** The *purpose* of leadership—which is to accomplish a given task—has been called its very essence. It involves putting people, things, time, and effort together to accomplish that task. Army leadership is different from other kinds, in the final analysis, in

that the front line leader must be prepared some day, some place, to lead his soldiers to accomplish tasks no one else wants to do—including killing and dying. This, then, is the essence of "service" as well, and the foundation of the whole idea of military "duty."

The essence of leadership, service, and duty all come together when the chain of command calls for these ultimate tasks and says, "Attack." The artillery shifts, small arms crack, soldiers tremble, and the platoon tenses for the final assault. The leader gives a signal and they go.

Various studies on the human element of successful combat leaders and what causes soldiers to fight well in combat have revealed that much of it has to do with unit cohesion: A soldier knows his buddies are counting on him to do his job; he has learned that his leaders know the right thing to do; following orders and squad battle drill have become automatic; he knows his unit will never leave dead or wounded behind; he knows his family will be taken care of if he is killed; he has confidence in his individual weapon and his squad crew-served weapons; he and his fellow platoon members are in top physical condition; his platoon leader has said, "Follow me. When you reach the top of the hill, I will be there—up front."

Historically, we find the American soldier, when he believes in his unit and his leaders, follows his leader any time, any place, even to almost certain death. Cohesion is therefore too closely related to unit performance to be ignored when shaping up unit readiness. This is why COHORT companies have become the new method of overseas replacement for combat arms soldiers.

Maintaining unit integrity during such activities as guard duty, support details, and sports competition helps build unit cohesion. When support tasks are assigned to squads and platoons as missions, support jobs gain training value instead of

being merely chores. Really good squads and platoons are those that work training into their support periods.

Unit sports programs make the most of participation and teamwork (platoon size teams are best). At the end of pushball, basketball, volleyball, and flag football seasons, the best platoon teams—not composite teams—should be sent to represent the company and the battalion.

Leaders must also fight to keep their talented athletes in the unit. Having outstanding soldier athletes on special duty attached to a community staff (having a winning post team) may be good for the military commander's ego, but it erodes cohesion in the squad that must pull the absent athlete's share of the work.

#### BENEFITS

Dismounted drill periods also foster unit cohesion, and they have spin-off benefits of unit order and discipline and of leader confidence and command presence. A squad's prompt reaction to the leader's command of "Right face" correlates to the squad's reaction to that same steady voice saying "Move out" while under enemy fire.

Small unit field training develops teamwork. A unit placed in an X-period of training (prime time/mission related training) should schedule frequent field training. Small unit leaders should be given time during each X-cycle to train their squads and platoons as they see fit. Our leaders have been taught how to use the Battalion Training Management System (BTMS) and how to develop a training and evaluation plan for field training exercises. It is important, too, that they be allowed to road march (mounted or dismounted) out the back gate on their own. The strength of the U.S. Army has always been the wealth of imagination and talent it has in its junior leaders. Whenever possible, the "how" must be left up to them.

Decentralized training is not an abdication of a leader's responsibility. For there are a lot of coaching, planning, pre-briefings, and pre-execution checks he must accomplish before he can send a squad or a platoon on an independent mission.

Finally, loyalty is the cement that holds a unit together—a soldier's loyalty to those above, below, on the right and left, and lastly, to himself.

**Motivation.** The 1979 Army Commanders Conference—in attempting to find the answer to the question, How does the presence or absence of motivation affect the peacetime performance of individual and collective skills?—developed the following formula: Performance equals knowledge times motivation.

Thus, no matter how much effort we put into the training of a soldier, if he is not properly motivated the result will always be low performance.

Soldiers are motivated when they perceive that they have an important job to do; feel that they are doing that job well; and receive recognition for their efforts.

In building motivation, therefore, we must start by focusing on developing our junior NCOs and officers. The Army NCO corps was in jeopardy during the latter stages of the Vietnam war. Experienced World War II and Korean war veterans were retiring, many lieutenants were doing sergeants' jobs, and personnel turbulence was great. Fortunately, this has changed, largely because of the NCO Education System (NCOES). Slowly, painfully, over the years, with the help of the "Old Sergeants" who remembered how a good Army was put together, the young NCOs learned leadership skills.

This is vital, because our entire system of training, from the Skill Qualification Test to the Army Training and Evaluation Program, is useless if the NCO corps does not take the responsibility for hard, repetitive training. We must energize and train our junior leaders, coun-

sel the good ones—let them know we appreciate their efforts—and cause them to want to stay on the Army Team.

In fact, performance counselling is something we owe to all our soldiers—on-the-spot corrections while they are performing a task and critiques immediately afterward. When a soldier fails to perform to standard (whether it is in personal appearance, on a firing range, or during a field training exercise), he usually knows he is wrong and will respect his leaders more if they correct him. When he performs to standard and receives recognition for his efforts, he will feel like a winner.

When counselling our soldiers we should remember the words of Command Sergeant Major Ted G. Arthurs (who during his 13 years as a first sergeant gave many lieutenants their postgraduate education in soldiering):

*Don't destroy a soldier's self respect. Always leave a man you have counselled with the feeling that although he has done wrong, you really think he is a good man at heart and has the potential to do much better. If you make him seem like a complete dud, that is what he will become.*

We should also take General

Bruce C. Clarke's advice:

*The first step in motivating soldiers is to tell them the reason why. All your men want to do what you want done. When they do not, you have failed to instruct and motivate them. Awards that motivate only the top men are of little value in raising the ability of a unit. A unit is measured by the ability of the lower third personnel in it to carry their part of the load.*

Two good ways for leaders to communicate what they want done is to involve their NCOs in the weekly platoon, company, and battalion level training meetings and to publish company training schedules several weeks in advance. Company commanders and platoon leaders should address their units daily. And the best possible way for leaders to assess the training and motivation of their units is to inspect personally.

**Pride.** We must nurture within our infantry soldiers a pride in their units and in the jobs they do. The infantryman has more different types of equipment and systems to master than soldiers in any other arm, and he has the additional responsibility for correctly integrating his own systems with those of the rest of the combined arms team. Cleanliness, neatness, and orderli-

ness within vehicles and motor pools are evidence of individual and unit pride, and proud units are good units.

We must also pass on to our soldiers the traditions and the history of our units and our profession. Infantrymen have borne the brunt of our Nation's battles. They have suffered greater extremes of discomfort and fatigue than the other arms, and their casualties were heavier. The other arms and services have done their part, of course, but our infantry soldiers are special, and we've got to make them believe it!

Former Army Chief of Staff Edward Meyer once said, "Commanders must be able to juggle a lot of balls, but four of them are glass balls: maintenance, training, war plans, and people." The linch-pin of this big four is people. When our soldiers are confident, cohesive, motivated, and proud, they maintain their equipment, train hard, and are always ready to carry out the war plan.

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# Reporting

## Ground Order of Battle Information

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The missions of the Army's new long-range surveillance units (LRSUs) are similar to those of their predecessors, the long-range

reconnaissance patrol (LRRP) units. Their operational techniques in any war will be different, however, according to the demands of their

operational environments in terms of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time available).

The LRRP units that operated in