

people meeting them with flowers, and only a little information leaked out about the fact that coffins were returning from there. Now what did you feel when you were a soldier in a nonexistent war?

(Gromov) You know, not only I but everybody felt resentment, great resentment as a matter of fact. The resentment was felt in a purely human way, because we were carrying out a difficult job. It was a difficult job in the beginning, I mean during 1980, 1981, 1982, although it was difficult later too, but particularly at the beginning because it was a new job for us and therefore it was twice as difficult.

Later in his interview, General Gromov went on to recount his emotions on crossing the bridge at Termez into the Soviet Union:

On the bridge, I fully realized and felt joy for being the last one out, knowing that no one who made up the limited troop contingent was left behind. On the other hand, there was a sense of bitterness. At the risk of sounding trite, there were tears in my eyes.

Throughout the interview, Gromov's central thesis remained the sense of honor and duty found among Soviet soldiers. For example, when asked, "What qualities underlie the words *Afghan veteran*?" Gromov replied:

I think first of all honesty, nobility, and love for people. Not just towards a friend or comrade, but generally love towards

people. This foremost. Of course there is also another important quality which is the ability to do more than you can, more than your strength allows.

There are some dangers in comparing the Soviet experience in Afghanistan with the U.S. experience in Vietnam. First, the two are not morally equivalent. The United States was, in my judgment, morally right in Vietnam; our cause was a just one. The Soviet Union's actions in Afghanistan, however, were unjust. They wanted to install forcibly an authoritarian Marxist-Leninist regime on the Afghan people. Second, it is fair to say that the level of both popular and governmental support for prosecuting the Afghan war was significantly higher in the Soviet Union than such support was in the United States for our involvement in Vietnam.

Nevertheless, there are parallels. Neither nation achieved a victory in the manner the public had come to expect—that is, the complete, unconditional defeat of an adversary. Both nations found themselves involved in long, drawn-out guerrilla wars of attrition. Furthermore, the returning soldiers encountered a populace that was either hostile or indifferent to their sacrifices.

The trauma of Vietnam caused the U.S. Army to enter into a period of introspection that led to heightened concerns over issues of ethics and questions of management versus leadership. For

the Soviet Army, this process of introspection has just begun.

General Gromov, as the last commander of the Limited Contingent in Afghanistan, is the natural point man in this process of reevaluation. He must deal with the charges from people such as Nobel Laureate Andrei Sakharov, who, before the Supreme Soviet and on national television, charged that the Afghan war was a "criminal adventure." On the same rostrum, Sakharov also repeated stories that Soviet gunships fired on and killed surrounded Soviet soldiers rather than permit their capture.

For many in the Soviet Army and especially among the Afghan veterans, General Gromov is the one best suited to do battle against that army's detractors, especially those who would disparage the skill and courage of the Soviet soldiers. General Gromov's essay "They Defended, They Learned, They Built" and his other statements should be viewed in this context. The coming months and years will ultimately tell us how well the Soviet Army has come to terms with its Afghan experience.

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Change of Command Inventory

CAPTAIN CHARLES J. McKEEVER

When you are designated to command a company, the first thing you will have to do—along with the outgoing commander—is to conduct a joint 100 percent inventory of all the unit's proper-

ty and report the results to your battalion commander. This is a task that you cannot afford to take lightly. (See also "Platoon Inventory," by Major Curtis R. Rogers, *INFANTRY*, January-February

1982, pages 35-36.)

When you sign the company's hand receipt and assume command, you are saying in effect that all of the company's property is on hand and accounted for

and that you accept responsibility for preventing its loss, damage, or destruction. (As General Bruce Clarke once said, "Property shortages, without proper documentation, make tracks on your pay records that are hard to eradicate.")

You will also be responsible for establishing a command supply discipline program. (See AR 735-5, Basic Policies and Procedures for Property Accounting; AR 710-2, Supply Policy Below the Wholesale Level; and FM 10-14-1, Commander's Handbook for Property Accountability at Unit Level.) Supply discipline means adhering to regulations, achieving supply economy, and controlling property.

A thorough inventory process, in addition to allowing you to see all of your unit's property before you sign for it, will also help you establish a command climate that stresses the importance of safeguarding and maintaining equipment. In addition, it will enable you to assess, from the condition and layout of the equipment, the organization's state of readiness, property accountability, and discipline. And if you are thorough and well organized, it will help establish your credibility with your new soldiers as well.

I would like to share some lessons I have learned about the 100 percent inventory and describe an orderly and effective method of conducting it that is not found elsewhere. This method consists of three steps—preparation, inventory, and reconciliation—and good planning is the key to success.

First, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to complete the inventory, usually two weeks. During the preparation phase, first get your battalion commander's guidance, and review the local SOP covering change of command inventories, if there is one. Then visit your property book officer (PBO) and obtain copies of all the current hand receipts, shortage annexes, SOPs, technical manuals (TMs) or supply catalogs (SCs), and authorization documents to use during the inventory.

The PBO and members of his team will provide information and helpful hints concerning your duties as a hand receipt holder. Heed their advice and don't be



afraid to ask questions. You will receive a current hand receipt to use for your current inventory. Make sure the PBO updates all hand receipts, posts any changes, and freezes supply transactions during the inventory period.

Do your homework. Study all of the applicable regulations, SOPs, hand receipts, and your unit's authorization document—table of organization and equipment (TOE) or table of distribution and allowances (TDA)—which prescribes the unit's mission, structure, personnel, and equipment. To identify valid equipment shortages, compare the quantities shown on the hand receipt with what you are authorized.

The most important supply reference to use in conducting this inventory is Supply Bulletin 700-20. It lists Army-adopted items and other related items in alphabetical order or by line number matched with the applicable current reference. SB 700-20 can be found in DA Pamphlet 25-30, Consolidated Index of

Army Publications and Blank Forms, both of which are on microfiche. (If your hand receipt is maintained on an automated system, your PBO—given enough notice—can run a computer printout listing of all your nonexpendable items of property in line number order with the appropriate supply publications cross referenced.)

Next, obtain an up-to-date component listing on a Hand Receipt DA Form 2062 for every hand receipt item. Assemble an inventory file of notes and references, and study the results of earlier inspections to identify potential problem areas. Visit the battalion S-4 for more information on such things as budget status, property on order, shortage annexes, and the like.

Compare hand receipts to verify that the outgoing commander has properly sub-receipted all the property he is signed for. Tally all the sub-receipts to make sure they equal the number shown on the unit's hand receipt. If they don't, there is a problem somewhere. Annotate any

discrepancies you find so you can fix them later.

During this process, use your new XO and supply sergeant (three pairs of eyes are better than one) to help you check and inspect the accuracy and format of your unit's hand receipts. If you find that the hand receipts are incorrect, redo them immediately to save time and headaches later. (The senior man in each platoon, section, or vehicle should sign the hand receipt for his equipment. When the senior leader is made responsible, property accountability improves greatly, and your later 10% monthly inventories will go much more smoothly.)

At this point, recall all unit property. (The outgoing commander will probably recall the property and conduct his own inventory before the joint inventory to resolve any accountability problems and update recent property transactions.)

Schedule your inventory by type of equipment, not by sub-hand receipt holder. For example, plan to conduct a complete layout of all your unit's personnel carriers at one time instead of conducting individual platoon layouts separately. For one thing, this will keep one platoon from borrowing from another to cover shortages.

LETTER OF INSTRUCTION

Publish a change of command letter of instruction that lists all the key information, including dates, locations, times, references, responsibilities, and reconciliation procedures. Coordinate the schedule with the present commander to make sure sub-hand receipts will be present for the inventory. To receive more guidance, and to increase your own understanding of the process, brief the battalion commander and the key leaders on your concept of the joint inventory.

During the inventory itself, the property should be divided into three categories: organization property, installation property, and organizational clothing and individual equipment. If the outgoing commander is responsible for Class I and V basic loads and a prescribed load list, these items are also inspected.

The outgoing commander is responsi-

ble for seeing that all the property is laid out correctly and that equipment users and leaders are present with their sub-hand receipts.

Make sure a current component listing and a supply publication with illustrations of the items are on hand. If no pictures are available for an item, a good description with the item's dimensions will do. Take your supply sergeant with you and be sure he has the hand receipts, annexes, and the component listings along with his other records. Make annotations on the component listing.

Make the actual count yourself. Do not assume that an item is there just because it is supposed to be there. Make sure all COEI (components of end items), BII (basic issue items), and ITIAL (items troop installed or authorized list) are either on hand or on order. Inventory completely all sets, kits, and outfits (SKOs) instead of just seeing that they are present.

Make sure valid documents are available to account for the disposition of items that are not on hand—laundry tickets, maintenance work orders, and the like. Verify that all property exists and that it belongs to your unit. Check out equipment loss or damage as you discover it. Be suspicious when property is not physically located in the unit but is said to be in maintenance or on loan to a sister unit.

Make sure that vehicles are not dispatched, and that they are present on the day of their inventory. Have tools laid out for quick count against the appropriate manual or circular. Use any tool kit diagram mats that are available, such as the one in the general mechanics tool box, for example. Clothing and individual equipment often can be folded and stacked for quicker counting—sheets, flak vests, and the like.

Make sure that all unit property is listed on the hand receipt. The excess will be collected for turn-in, if applicable. Update and sign all sub-hand receipts at the completion of each type of inventory—NBC, arms room, tool truck, for example.

List all the problems such as shortages, mistakes, and unserviceable equipment, and verify the serial numbers on all sen-

sitive items. (Appropriate adjustment actions can be taken later.) Ensure that all component shortages are listed on hand receipt shortage annexes.

END ITEMS

Keep in mind that an item authorized by MTOE and CTA may also be a component of another end item. For example, a storage cabinet for tools and repair parts may also be authorized by MTOE as an end item while a similar cabinet may be a component of an end item. Stencil items with your unit's address to help mark them. (During the inventory is a good time to talk to soldiers about their knowledge of supply procedures. Note any property that is kept in a high state of maintenance so that you can recognize deserving individuals later. Your soldiers will appreciate your attention and concern.)

Do a reconciliation at the end of each day's inventory, and resolve any discrepancies at that time. Cross-level overages to fill valid shortages. (Excess property should be prepared for turn-in within 10 days after it has been identified.) When property loss or damage is discovered during the joint inventory, a report of survey should be initiated so that liability questions can be answered and relief-from-accountability actions can be started. Minor adjustments to hand receipts, such as correcting serial numbers, can be made with an administrative adjustment report. Review the progress of your inventory daily.

The final step in the process is the post-inventory reconciliation, in which you compare your hand receipt with the sub-hand receipts to verify that all the property is accounted and signed for. This is a time consuming but necessary task.

Make sure all shortages are deducted from the hand receipt balances before signing the receipt. Do not accept the outgoing commander's inventory shortages without written documentation. He is the one who is liable for them.

When you are completely satisfied that you have accounted for all of the unit's property, sign the commander's property hand receipt. Then, along with the

outgoing commander, prepare an after action review on the joint inventory and brief the battalion commander on the results.

Using this three-step method, you will be able to conduct a good joint change of command inventory and assure 100

percent property accountability. When the inventory is completed, you will know what property your unit has, where it is, and who is signed for it. Then, as you receive the unit's guidon, you will be confident that your first mission as a commander has been successful.

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Drewry's Bluff

A Blocking Position

CAPTAIN KEVIN J. DOUGHERTY

A blocking position (according to Field Manual 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols) is "a defensive position so sited as to deny the enemy access to a given area or to prevent his advance in a given direction."

The mere denial of an enemy avenue of approach is not an end in itself, though; a unit will usually be instructed to establish a blocking position as part of a larger operation. For example, a reserve unit may be ordered to establish a blocking position to secure a flank or rear until the situation develops and the unit is committed to the attack. Likewise, a fixing element may be tasked to establish a blocking position to allow a maneuver element to envelop the temporarily halted enemy.

Because Soviet offensive doctrine is characterized by a high rate of advance to develop penetrations leading to the enemy's rear, all units must be prepared to establish effective blocking positions.

The success of a blocking position depends upon three key factors: a detailed analysis of the terrain and enemy intentions to determine likely avenues of approach; the careful use of natural and manmade obstacles to channel the enemy into the engagement area and prevent a bypass; and the accurate emplacement of

key weapons to bring the greatest possible firepower to bear on the enemy while still affording the best protection for friendly forces. If these prerequisites are met, a blocking position does not require lengthy preparations or a large force.

A good historical example of a blocking position, particularly one that did not have the benefit of extensive time to prepare and a lot of resources, is the one at Drewry's Bluff during the Civil War.

RIVERBEND

Drewry's Bluff, sometimes called Fort Darling, was a small earthen fort that Chesterfield County, Virginia, farmers had begun constructing in 1861. Lightly defended and only partly finished, it stood less than eight miles south of Richmond, Virginia, on the James River. Fortunately, at this point the river bent sharply to the east for a short distance and then turned again to the south.

The work on the fort had been haphazard, but in May 1862 the unchecked Union advance gave the workers a new sense of urgency. In fact, the fort was the last line of defense protecting the Con-

federate capital from a flotilla of Union gunboats.

The likely enemy avenue of advance was the James River, which ran between Hampton Roads and the Union objective of Richmond. Union commander General George McClellan had shipped his 150,000 troops from Alexandria to Fort Monroe and had then begun a methodical advance toward Richmond in his long-awaited Peninsula campaign. His plan was to send the Union Navy to open up a river route to Richmond as other naval forces had earlier opened such a route to New Orleans. The Confederate commander, General Joseph Johnston, had withdrawn every step of the way until his troops were backed against Richmond and there was simply nowhere else to go.

The first step for the Confederates to take at Drewry's Bluff in May 1862 was to improve the natural obstacle created by the bend in the river. They sank several stone-laden hulks and drove piles at critical points to narrow the channel. Now, any Union gunboats making the turn would have to expose their flanks to the fort. The river banks themselves prevented a bypass.

The Confederates then placed guns from the scuttled ironclad *Virginia* and other weapons 100 feet above water