

Command Philosophy

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1. The most important and sacred responsibility entrusted to an officer or noncommissioned officer is the privilege of leading American soldiers. Leading soldiers and being charged with the responsibility of their professional development, and possibly their lives, is an awesome trust. Your subordinates must understand what is important to you because, ultimately, this will become important to them. No organization can progress without this framework and, more importantly, it must be understood and practiced by all leaders within the organization. The command philosophy is this framework – a framework which will guide how I operate in all environments, in the field or in garrison.

2. For any command philosophy to work, it must be lived daily. It must stand on its own merits, easily understood by all. It must be the basic leadership standards which guide the organization. The commander must always keep in mind the importance of establishing high yet realistic standards which are met. High standards lead to professionalism, and professionalism should always be the hallmark of this Battalion.

3. I will focus my thoughts on the traditional four ‘glass balls’ of leading, training, maintaining, and caring.

LEADING

The old axiom, ‘lead by example’, will always serve you well. Soldiers and particularly leaders, are ‘on parade’ 24 hours a day. We are constantly being scrutinized by others, especially our subordinates. We cannot enforce selective standards. By that I mean we cannot have one standard for the troops, another for the NCOs, and another for the officers. Basic soldier standards whether in the field

or garrison, should apply to everyone. We as leaders should always set the example we would like others to emulate.

Effective two-way communication is essential to any organizations' success. In order for us to consistently accomplish the mission, our subordinates must know what it is we expect of them. They must also be able to transmit to us any constraints they have that keep them from accomplishing what we ask of them. Without efficient, two-way communications, our efforts will be wasted.

Treat your soldiers with the utmost respect and dignity; never humiliate them or publicly dress them down. Soldiers, if treated properly, will normally not let you down. They will fail periodically, but never intentionally. They will always give the leader who respects them that extra effort, which so often makes the difference.

Make your subordinates feel part of the team by keeping them informed and involved. Allow them to use their initiative. Capitalize on their unique skills and backgrounds.

Leaders who identify with their troops and the unit will have a better appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of the unit. Be genuine in your interest; soldiers can immediately detect when you are not sincere. Be approachable, but never cross that thin line that separates you as leaders. Knowing the capabilities and limitations of the unit leads to mission accomplishment and lower casualty rates.

Your soldiers will make mistakes; be prepared to underwrite these mistakes as professional development. Realize that an effective leader can help them to grow from a mistake and become a better unit after learning how not to do something. Accept responsibility for their mistakes; don't hang the fault on your subordinates. Stick up for your soldiers; they will repay you with loyalty and dedication.

Develop a sound counseling program. Do not reserve these sessions for only those who have faltered. Counseling sessions should be positive events bent on highlighting strengths and finding solutions to shortcomings. Remember, they will

emulate those who they perceive to be successful (by virtue of your position you fall into that category); ensure they take away good habits and practices.

Leaders must develop professional character. Some of this character can be acquired through the military school system. Whenever possible, allow your subordinates to attend these (keeping mind that the mission always comes first). Realize it is normally extremely difficult for us as leaders to attend schools. Most professional character, however, is learned through experience and studying your profession. Unit professional development programs stressing map and terrain exercises, reviews of field manuals, studies on operations planning, and after-action reviews are excellent ways to ensure subordinate leaders possess the necessary experience and/or insights to accomplish the myriad of tasks we assign them.

TRAINING

We must take an innovative approach to our training while still concentrating on the basic soldiers skills and battle drills at all levels. Never lose sight of the fact that our most important ‘system’ is the soldier. Train him wisely – use his brains, talents and dedication.

Training is meticulously planned, innovative and challenging in its approach. Training is centrally planned and de-centrally executed to well-defined, enforced standards. Training should be oriented to accomplish mission essential tasks. ‘High visibility’ training which has nothing to do with the unit’s mission is a waste of time. I expect a detailed training plan with stated objectives and measurable standards. All training will be performance-oriented and always have an evaluation plan.

In developing training, ask WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW AND WHAT RESOURCES are required and available. The training should be performance-oriented and progressive. It should be tough, challenging, multi-echelon combined-arms training designed to stress the soldier and promote individual initiative at the leader and troop levels. Concentrate on ensuring we can accomplish the mission.

If training is truly progressive (and it should be), then time must be allotted to correct deficiencies. It is counter-productive to move on to the next training event if the unit cannot successfully execute the previous one. Conduct detailed after-action reviews, analyze what went wrong, explain it to the troops, and then do it until it is accomplished to standard. Soldiers know when they have not done something right and will view the training as unprofessional if left uncorrected. Bad habits/techniques are easy to learn, but hard to correct. Troops will react instinctively in combat as they were trained in peacetime. Train right and train to standard the first time. Save their lives – do it right!!

The execution of any training plan presupposes that the leaders are prepared to conduct training, that the task, conditions and standards are properly articulated, and that proper planning was conducted. If this does not occur, then the training day is wasted. Good training starts at the top. Officer and NCO professional development classes are a start. Our leaders must be tactically and technically proficient; they must be skilled in weapons systems and know how to employ them. We are in the business of preparing for war – that responsibility cannot be delegated.

It goes without saying that physical fitness is paramount to a successful training program. Physical training will be routinely done and everyone will participate unless on a medical profile. Commanders will find out what type of physical activity profile personnel can do and develop a program for them. Physical fitness is one of the greatest combat multipliers on the battlefield. Physical fitness promotes mental fitness which promotes emotional fitness. Physically tough soldiers, trained to a tough standard will be the earmark of our Battalion – I will take the lead!

Training generates confidence and trust up and down the chain of command. Soldiers gain confidence in themselves and their leaders while learning to be more resourceful. Leaders develop trust in their subordinates while becoming more proficient in their tactical skills. Good, challenging, realistic training promotes harmony and teamwork. Live-fire exercises and night training bring a unique dimension to training, and instill in the soldiers their ability to close with and destroy the enemy under any conditions. A unit which possesses the confidence to execute their mission under any conditions, has competent leadership, and have stressed itself in training, will survive on the battlefield.

MAINTENANCE

We will never have enough equipment or money, so what we do possess must be utilized wisely. Limited resources and a zero growth defense budget are constraints, but abuse/neglect of equipment impacts directly on the efficiency, effectiveness, and readiness of a unit. We have been allocated adequate funds and supplies to accomplish our mission, but there is no margin of error for waste. Ensure we use our resources wisely. Maintenance, property accountability, and resource management must be integrated into combat operations. We must train in these arenas just as we do in the tactical arena. We will not always have the luxury to ‘stand down’ to repair and refit. We must routinely maintain and account for our equipment.

We must be ready to go to war now. Develop a solid program and system to answer our maintenance demands. Zero-in on the user and the first-line supervisor. Well trained operators and supervisors who know how to conduct before, during, and after operations checks and services on equipment, are the foundation to any effective maintenance program. A sound maintenance program is a direct result of properly trained operators and direct leader interest and supervision.

Learn to properly maintain in the field under battlefield conditions. We routinely care for our individual equipment and weapons, but what about the special equipment we periodically employ? We must know how to maintain it, inspect it, account for it, and repair it to ensure mission accomplishment. Vehicles must have assigned, trained drivers who routinely conduct maintenance. Just as you cross-train your soldiers on weapons systems, develop programs to cross-train them on equipment maintenance and operation. It will pay big dividends.

We can have the best trained and best led unit in the Army, but if our equipment cannot support us in war, we will lose. The challenge and incentive is there – attack it with a vengeance.

CARING

Caring for soldiers is ensuring that they know and perform their duties, possess discipline and high standards, and are trained well enough to accomplish the

mission while ensuring their survivability on the battlefield. Caring for soldiers is ensuring they are provided the best leadership possible and that they are recognized for their efforts and rewarded. Caring is also seeing that quality soldiers reenlist. Always insist on the proper use of your troops – never abuse them.

One of our challenges is to maintain that fighting edge. We must remain at peak readiness. We can only do that by training wisely and ensuring adequate time is given to the soldier and his family. Strive hard to develop a dynamic, challenging, progressive training program which allows for weekends and holidays off. We know the soldier will do whatever he is told, whenever he is told to do it. Do not abuse his dedication; he will respond in kind.

Readiness is directly linked to soldier morale. A soldier with family or personal problems is not an effective soldier. It is the chain of command's responsibility to assist in the resolution of problems. Family support groups help as do the numerous social service programs that exist within the Army today.

It is imperative that our Battalion has an active family support group. For a family group to be successful, it must have the support of the commanders at all levels. Do not pay this lip service; a proactive family support group is an invaluable asset, but don't forget about our single soldiers. Caring for soldiers also means developing a commitment to them and their families. Be sensitive to their needs.

Caring for soldiers begins the day they join your unit or you receive notifications of their assignment. Develop a sponsorship and welcoming program. Assign an experienced soldier of equal grade as the new man's 'buddy.' The quicker we can integrate our new soldiers into the unit and make them feel welcome, the sooner they can begin contributing to the improvement of the organization.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Some final thoughts on which I will continually elaborate during my command, but that I will highlight now for your reflection.

Integrity is a non-negotiable attribute. I will not tolerate breaches of it. I will accept an honest mistake and take the heat rather than have you violate your high principles.

Loyalty must be both horizontal and vertical in any organization. I expect all leaders to positively support the chain-of-command. I will support my commander to the hilt. Given the opportunity, I will strongly represent the Battalion's position but when the decision is made, I will enthusiastically support it despite my personal feelings.

Discipline must be the hallmark of a Soldier. Remember who you are and what you represent. In the absence of guidance, do what you know is right.

Delineate NCO and Officer responsibilities. Respect the other's turf. No leader can be effective unless he understands what his responsibilities are and has the opportunity to execute them. The chain of command makes things happen and supervises the effort. Commanders, NCOs, and staff officers must work in concert for the good of the Battalion. The NCO support chain must work in concert with the formal chain-of-command. The Battalion cannot effectively function if the two operate separately.

Safety should always be in the forefront of our minds. Do not become paranoid about it, but do not take unnecessary chances. Be prudent.

Conduct your operations in a quiet, professional manner. Our accomplishments will gain us all the recognition we need. We want our soldiers to be aggressive, but this needs to be controlled aggressiveness.

Be enthusiastic, it is infectious!

Always be yourself and do your best; no one can expect more, and I will not accept less.

Remember, we are all accountable continually for not only our own actions but those of the people we supervise. If corrective actions are necessary, have the moral courage to take charge and fix what needs to be fixed. Your personal concern for your fellow soldiers and the Battalion will make this a better unit.

Be flexible and resourceful; two essential attributes to be an effective, efficient leader.

The Army has an overweight policy/standard which all – regardless of rank – must meet. The demands of our profession require that we meet the standard, and everyone will at all times.

Maintain a sense of humor and have fun in what you do.

In summary, let me say how honored and proud I am to be serving with this Battalion. This Battalion has an outstanding reputation, which is directly attributable to the superb leadership of each of you. Our nation depends on us and our missions demand confident leaders, tactically and technically proficient soldiers, and an aggressive, determined spirit. You have proven time and again that you exceed every expectation. I look forward to serving with you and meeting the challenges ahead.

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Commanding