

Commander's Notes

— thoughts on leadership and mission

*From the Commander of the
Second "Warrior" Brigade*

It is only appropriate that I, COL Carlton R. Smith, as new commander of the 2d Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division (Light) take time to communicate my philosophy on senior-level leadership. The procedure I will use is to explain the main ideas found in FM 22-100 and FM 22-999 and relate them to my thoughts on senior-level leadership and the mission of the "Warrior" Brigade.

I specifically address my comments to the three battalion commanders along with their primary staffs. However, you have my permission to circulate these notes among the company commanders, junior officers, and senior noncommissioned officers.

Also, I have directed my adjutant to furnish copies to the "slice." The ideas expressed here will form the basis of a professional development seminar I want to have with you to discuss my ideas and the role you will have in implementing them. The Brigade staff will schedule the seminar. It will take place within the next 30 days.

FM 22-100 defines military leadership as the procedure by which one soldier influences others with the outcome being the successful accomplishment of the mission. The individual carries out this

procedure through the application of the attributes of leadership. These attributes include beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills.

They are best explained as to what the leader must "BE, KNOW, and DO" in order to be effective. To "BE" is at the heart of what the leader is and believes in. It is a combination of his ethics, beliefs, and values. The leader must "KNOW" the strengths, weaknesses, and limits of both his unit and himself. He must be knowledgeable in the employment of his unit as well as the current tactical situation. The "DO" involves his giving guidance and direction and creating a climate of motivation. The "BE" and "KNOW" dictate what the leader can "DO." Every good squad leader should know this. These are the fundamentals of direct leadership. On the other hand, senior-level leadership is more complex. FM 22-999 defines senior-level leadership as:

The art of direct and indirect influence and the skill of creating the conditions for sustained organizational success to achieve the desired result.

The manual goes on to redefine this idea of senior-level leadership as the art of reconciling or satisfy-

ing competing demands according to priorities set by a clearly defined vision, implemented by a clearly communicated intent, and enforced by the courage of toughness to see matters through. My definition is that I will give you battalion commanders the resources as well as the essential guidance needed, and you will command your battalions as you see fit in order to best accomplish the mission.

Using these three definitions as a starting point, I will cover five general areas which I believe encompass senior-level leadership. These areas include leadership vision, professional ethics, professional skills, command process, and the organization.

Leadership Vision

I have a vision! Before you start thinking that the Old Man is losing his mind, let me point out that vision is my concept of what the 2nd Brigade must have in the near future.

You all know that our mission is to fight and win in any conflict we are sent to. A soldier prays for peace but must be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for his or her country. No doubt exists in my mind that our soldiers will give a good showing of themselves in bat-

tle. However, we must be able to get to the war, adequately prepared, in order to win it.

I am not convinced that the 2d Brigade could be prepared for deployment within the 18-hour time limit the commanding general has set. This is not an appropriate place to go into great detail on deployment. The Brigade S3 is updating the Readiness Standing Operating Procedures (RSOP) and will soon have it ready for staffing. However, I will give out the following guidance to aid in the development of your battalion deployment "vision":

- When alerted, there is no time for additional training.
- We (the Brigade) deploy with the personnel and equipment in hand.
- We (the Brigade) concentrate on the tactical mission and other elements (DISCOM, G3, and so forth) handle the support of the deployment.

Let's explore the idea of vision in greater detail. In order to form their vision, senior leaders must possess certain attributes or qualities and perspectives and adhere to specific leadership imperatives. Leaders must be standard bearers, developers, and integrators. This means they must establish an ethical climate, teach and mentor their soldiers, and focus the energy and activity of the unit. A leader's historical, operational, and organizational perspective lets him know that his vision is correct.

Finally, imperatives focus the unit's action and energy and sustain the will to win. To summarize leadership vision—it lets the senior leader know what is possible. Thus, he is able to establish task, conditions, and standards that will guarantee that the vision becomes reality.

Professional Ethics

From what I have seen and heard, there is a strong ethical

climate within the Brigade. It is obvious that the enlisted personnel as well as the officers are well versed in the letter of the law as well as its practical application. They know that the US Army's ethical system is a blending of values—both values that were instilled in them in high school, college, and by their parents as well as values taught them during the "Soldierization" process which occurred in basic training, AIT, or ROTC training.

It is this system of values that has led and will continue to lead the American fighting man to victory. You battalion commanders, as senior leaders, have three ethical responsibilities to your units. They include:

- The responsibility of being a role model.
- The responsibility to teach and mentor subordinates in order to promote their ethical development.
- The responsibility to develop and sustain a healthy ethical climate.

Whether or not you like it, you are the role models for the battalions and I am the role model for the brigade. The same is true, although to a lesser degree, for the primary staffs and the sergeants-major. I do not intend to dwell on this subject; however, you must be aware that subordinates will attempt to imitate all you do—good or bad!

Set the proper example at all

times. Don't let your staff "get over" or even give the appearance of "getting over." Whether on the PT field or in actual combat, share the hardships with your troops. When possible, explain the "why" of the mission as well as the "when" and "where."

Also, don't forget your families. I have always felt that we paid much lip service to the family and not much more. Afford the family quality time. If you must train over weekends and holidays, do so by all means. However, this should be the exception and not the rule. My bottom line is that I want the soldiers and the leaders to spend more time with their families.

It is your responsibility, as battalion commanders, to teach and to counsel subordinates in order to promote their ethical development. I would encourage you to take every opportunity to do this. This must be more than just a topic for professional development classes.

Finally, maintain the ethical climate you have established. Your soldiers are proud of their units and trust their leaders. Don't let them down! Maintain your sensitivity to ethical questions and reward correct ethical behavior. Continue to tolerate honest mistakes on the part of subordinates. I have every confidence in your abilities to command your respective battalions. Continue to be morally tough for

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this truly is the key to success in all our endeavors.

Professional Skills

When I speak of professional skills, I am talking about more than just knowing the maximum effective range of an M16A2 rifle or how to properly build a 463L pallet, although this is part of it. The professional skills of a senior leader are the main source of his effectiveness and the information base required to implement his vision. A senior leader's professional skills are founded on the basic leadership principles of knowing yourself, human nature, your job, and your unit. At the same time, they are different. Professional skills are divided into three major groups:

- Conceptual skills
- Competency
- Communicative skills

Conceptual skills allow a senior leader to focus on details while keeping the big picture in mind. For example, the knowledge necessary to properly build a 463L pallet is critical to a deploying infantry battalion. A working knowledge of the RSOP and the 18-hour sequence of events is also critical.

However, a battalion commander will direct that the necessary training on building the pallets be conducted while allowing subordinates to plan, coordinate, and supervise the execution of the

training. This same battalion commander will personally read and understand the RSOP. With the proper conceptual skills, a senior leader can integrate the efforts of the individuals, teams, and companies that comprise the battalion.

Whether a senior is competent can mean the life or death of the unit. His competency influences not only his judgment but all he says and does. Our soldiers know you are competent and so do I.

With the understanding that we all must be technically proficient as well as tactically proficient, the senior leader must also possess certain other skills. Chief among these is perspective. You must be able to see the big picture and understand it despite the distractions which surround you. You must have endurance—both physical and mental. You must be willing to take calculated risks. You must be able to coordinate with units or activities external to your battalions. Finally, you must be able to make honest assessments.

Senior leaders are good communicators. I am not talking about the ability to deliver flowery speeches. I am talking about getting a message across, either verbally or non-verbally, and having action or thought take place as a result of this.

Being able to listen and hear what is being communicated to you

is vital. Practice this. Work on increasing your attention span. Be careful of the language you use. Inappropriate jargon or unwarranted emotional phrases can have just the opposite effect of what you are trying to say.

Eliminate profanity from your vocabulary! At all times be a teacher. Teach with your deeds as well as your words. Be persuasive but above all continue to develop your interpersonal skills. This is one basis of trust in an organization.

I have tried to show that professional skills cover a very wide area. Not all skills are needed in every situation. However, their skillful use in the appropriate situation allows senior leaders to command more successfully.

Command Process

The days are long gone when an officer could successfully command a battalion or a brigade by the sheer force of his personality. Limited resources, astounding technological breakthroughs, current world unrest, and a host of other factors compel senior leaders to be a great many things and possess numerous skills. Successful senior leaders and commanders must be able to command, to control, to lead, and to manage.

The primary means of communicating the vision to the unit is command. The characteristics of command are complex and challenging. They include a focus on the future, emphasis on success, clearly understood goals and objectives, well formed vision that is clearly communicated, concept expression of tasks, and timely involvement which insures results.

Effective command gives direction which helps to produce the desired result. In our case, the desired result is to be able to deploy in a timely fashion. Control, on the other hand, is the means of dealing

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with uncertainties and is used to establish limits and provide structure. Control is characterized by coordination, structure, and efficiency. The primary means of control for deployments will be the RSOP and the Brigade Operations Center.

Being a leader—as opposed to a manager—causes some senior leaders problems. Soldiers cannot be managed into battle. They must be led! On the other hand, limited resources, budget constraints, and the imperative to obtain the maximum benefit from each dollar compel us all to be efficient managers.

My solution is to balance leadership and management. Maintain the warrior spirit necessary to fight and win while at the same time obtain the maximum bang for the buck. Instill this in your subordinates also.

In summary, senior leaders need to be able to command, control, lead, and manage. The secret to the skillful use of these four processes is to blend them in with your personality, put them in their proper perspective (primary versus supporting), and make them a part of your organization.

The Organization

The 2d Brigade is a complex organization. Its three battalions are frequently deployed literally over one half the earth's surface.

Yet, the personality of one individual—myself—influences how you all think, live, and operate. You, as battalion commanders, are the central figures in your battalions. This is the nature of senior-level leadership. To better achieve the vision, it is important that we understand the organizational context in which we must operate.

In order to be effective, an organization must be adaptive, cohesive, and resilient. To say our brigade must be adaptive is an understatement. Our mission is to be able to deploy, fight, and win. However, we could be called upon to deploy to American Samoa to assist in disaster relief or we could deploy to Japan or Korea to fight armored forces in an NBC environment. We must be prepared for these two extremes and anything in between. We must also be a cohesive team. Loyalty to the unit as well as its members must be strong. Finally, we must be resilient.

This structure, the led, and the leaders, are the three components of an organization. The structure is the form of the organization. It defines the parameter in which the soldiers and the unit will interact. This structure can be formal as well as informal. The led are the units as well as the individual soldiers. You and I are the leaders. The resources, skills, and competency we bring to the units dictate the man-

ner in which problems are solved and the mission is accomplished. We cannot achieve the vision alone. It is only through the skillful building and nurturing of teams within our units that this occurs.

Summary

The mission of the 2d Brigade is to be able to deploy to combat 18 hours after notification, fight, and win. This is my concept or vision of what must be done. I will give you battalion commanders the authority, guidance such as the RSOP, and the necessary resources to accomplish the mission. You are free to command your battalions as you see fit in order to accomplish the mission. I believe the principles of senior-level leadership I have covered in these notes show the way to bring my vision to fruition. We will discuss my ideas in depth and your part in implementing them at a professional development seminar I plan to have. 

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