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Training For Uncertainty

A Monograph
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ABSTRACT

TRAINING FOR UNCERTAINTY by MAJ Frederick B. Hodges, USA, 51 pages.

Uncertainty and confusion in warfare make decision making a challenge. Every commander must determine whether or not the information he has is valid or complete, and whether or not he should wait for additional information which may arrive at any moment. The analytical skill and courage to make this determination are essential for successful combat leadership.

This monograph examines the theoretical and doctrinal advantages of junior leader initiative and delegation of decision making authority within a decentralized system of command in a battalion. It analyzes a model for implementing a decentralized system of command which is based on encouraging and teaching risk taking, initiative, and independent decision making. The monograph's main feature is a series of training techniques and exercises which will enable a battalion to achieve each of the five conditions called for in the model.

This monograph acknowledges that adopting this model entails risk. Any commander who fosters initiative within his young, inexperienced subordinates is bound to see mistakes and errors. In order to train young leaders who are willing to take risks and make independent decisions, however, providing such opportunities is the commander's duty. This monograph will help commanders and S-3s better understand <u>how</u> they can fulfill that duty.

I. INTRODUCTION

> War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty.
>
> Clauswitz, On War[1]

The "fog of uncertainty" makes decision making a challenge. Every commander must determine whether or not the information he has is valid or complete, and whether or not he should wait for additional information which may arrive at any moment. The analytical skill and courage to make this determination are essential for successful combat leadership.[2]

The Army's warfighting doctrine charges commanders with the responsibility to foster their subordinates' skill and courage for initiative and making independent decisions.[3] There is, however, no definitive and comprehensive "how to train" source that focuses on training leaders to use their initiative and make decisions in a realistic training scenario. Mission Training Plans (MTP) and the training centers, which exist primarily for unit collective training, do not ignore leader training. However, a commander who wishes to focus on fostering leader initiative, risk-taking, and independent decision making must use his own imagination and experience and search through several sources to develop his own program.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine the

theoretical and doctrinal advantages of junior leader initiative and delegation of decision making authority within a decentralized system of command; analyze a model for decentralized command in a battalion; and present a number of leadership and training exercises and procedures with which a commander can successfully implement a decentralized system of command in his battalion. Though the focus is predominantly the infantry battalion, the concept and the implementing techniques are applicable to virtually any unit and at most echelons.

In this century alone warfare has changed considerably. Frederick the Great once said, "If my men began to think, not one would remain in the ranks."[4] Soldiers today must be able to think quickly while under stress and in conditions of uncertainty that would dismay even Frederick. The model for decentralized command and the implementing measures described in this monograph will provide a commander the framework and program he needs for training his leaders for uncertainty.

II. THE NATURE OF WAR AND DECENTRALIZED COMMAND

> Every soldier should know that war is kaleidoscopic, replete with constantly changing, unexpected, confusing situations.
>
> Adolf von Schell, Battle Leadership[5]

Martin Van Creveld wrote in Command In War that modern commanders are not much better than their World War II predecessors at penetrating the "fog" of war, despite incredible technological advances in data processing, communications, and information collection. Uncertainty is ever present because war is a human struggle in which moral factors of fear, hatred, and danger impede rational thought and because it involves two independent wills trying to outwit, deceive, confuse, and kill each other.[6]

A factor which further contributes to the chaos and confusion in war is what Clauswitz called friction. "Everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and end by producing a kind of friction that is inconceivable."[7] These difficulties include human error, garbled communications, misperceptions due to enemy efforts which cause poor or conflicting intelligence reports, and the loss of vital equipment or leaders at critical times due to fatigue or enemy action.

Field Manual 100-5, Operations attributes the chaos and uncertainty of the modern battlefield to increased weapon capabilities, the speed with which operations will occur, and the dramatic advances in electronic warfare which will seriously degrade communications and intelligence gathering efforts.[8]

The realization that not even the latest technology can assure the commander of certainty in combat leads to the demand for a system of command and control capable of adapting to rapidly changing situations. Further, it cannot be tied to rigid, overly-centralized decision making procedures and communications. In short, a commander needs a system that has the right balance of centralized and decentralized procedures, structure, and thought.[9]

The realization mentioned above is not a new one. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and German Army have long recognized the necessity and value of a decentralized system of command. Reuven Gal wrote in Portrait of An Israeli Soldier that "the extensive freedom of action enjoyed by on-site commanders derives from the Israeli belief that on the battlefield things seldom go exactly as planned."[10] Albert C. Wedemeyer wrote of the Wehrmacht's high expectations for junior leader initiative and the institutional requirement for low-level initiative and decision-making which he observed in 1938 while an exchange student at the Kriegsakademie.[11]

Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, the German Army has evolved a decentralized system of command known as Auftragstaktik. The common American translation, "mission tactics", is somewhat inadequate; the concept is actually a holistic approach to tactical

leadership. Fundamental to this system is a common understanding of terminology and tactical concepts and the expectation that subordinate leaders will exercise their initiative in order to accomplish their mission. Auftragstaktik presupposes extensive training and focuses much effort on leader development. Finally, it requires commanders, when issuing orders during tactical situations, to clearly state their intent, the purpose or desired end state for the mission, which gives their subordinates the latitude and confidence to use their initiative.[12]

The U.S. Army implicitly adopted a system similar to Auftragstaktik when it published the 1982 edition of FM 100-5, Operations. This manual introduced the concept of AirLand Battle which acknowledged the near impossibility of centralized control on the modern battlefield and, hence, the need for leaders who could act independently within the higher commander's intent and make decisions.[13] This doctrinal endorsement of decentralized command was carried into the 1986 edition which said that commanders should "decentralize decision authority to the lowest practical level because over-centralization slows action and leads to inertia." FM 100-5 included a caveat with this passage, warning decentralization could lead to a "loss of precision in execution...but that loss of precision is usually preferable to inaction."[14]

Doctrine alone, however, cannot institutionalize a decentralized system of command in a unit. Nor can an officer establish such a system by decree upon assumption of command. A commander who wishes to establish a decentralized system of command in which subordinates will be expected and empowered to make decisions on their own, must insure that the loss of precision in execution does not cause the unit to fail its mission. Decentralized command should never be interpreted as a license for anarchy and mayhem.

The prerequisites, then, for a decentralized system must be "a training and education process, a common outlook, mutual trust and a uniform perspective in tactical operations."[15] Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) James Dubik, a former infantry battalion commander and 1992 graduate of the Advanced Operational Studies Fellowship, has developed a model consisting of five conditions which must exist in a battalion in order for decentralized command to succeed and which satisfy the prerequisites for decentralized command described above. The five conditions are listed below.

A. The battalion leaders must have a common approach to analyzing and solving tactical problems.

B. All elements of the battalion, down to squad level, must be able to execute their assigned tasks to standard.

C. The battalion's leaders must be willing to

exercise t' r initiative and be skilled in making timely decisions within the commander's intent.

D. Mutual trust and respect must exist throughout the battalion.

E. The battalion must perform its garrison duties and functions with the same philosophy it intends to use in the field.

The battalion commander is the key to successful implementation of this model. The model is a useful framework for developing a command philosophy and training programs for the tenure of his command.[16]. But selecting the model is only a beginning. Through his command philosophy the commander will formally identify his goal of decentralized command and the conditions which he believes he must establish to achieve it. Once published, the command philosophy provides continuity throughout the commander's tour as he and the battalion grow together.[17]

Even more significant than his command philosophy is the commander's function as a role model. His personal actions--what he does and does not do--will determine to a large degree whether or not the battalion achieves the goal of a decentralized system of command. The commander should show innovation, risk-taking, and creativity if he wants his subordinates to do so. He will need to be supportive of young leaders who attempt to follow his example yet

may not be successful during their first few attempts.[18]

The next section is an analysis of LTC Dubik's model for establishing a decentralized system of command. A description of various exercises and techniques for implementing each of the five conditions that make up the model will accompany the analysis.

III. IMPLEMENTING DECENTRALIZED COMMAND

CONDITION ONE: Battalion leaders must have a common approach to analyzing and solving tactical problems.

> The root of directive control [Simpkin's translation of Auftragstaktik] lies in the sharing of ideas and interpretations by minds well-attuned to one another.
>
> Richard E. Simpkin
> Race to the Swift[19]

A common framework for analyzing and solving tactical problems already exists in U.S. Army doctrine. It is the Troop Leading Procedure (TLP), which is the Army's process by which missions are received, analyzed, and executed. The steps of the TLP include: receive the mission, issue a warning order, make a tentative plan, start necessary movement, reconnoiter, complete the plan, issue the complete order, and supervise.[20]

The estimate of the situation, the actual process used for analyzing a tactical situation and developing

a course of action, is conducted in step three, "make a tentative plan". The analysis is performed using the acronym, METT-T, which identifies the factors which should be considered in the analysis: mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time available. The estimate process requires a mission analysis, an evaluation of the remaining factors of METT-T, development of one or more possible courses of action, evaluation of each course of action based on the METT-T analysis, comparison of each course of action, and then a decision on which course of action is best.[21] The amount of time required to complete the steps of the TLP depends in large part on the skill and experience of the leader executing the mission. This doctrinal process should form the basis for the battalion's common approach.

A common approach also means that there is a common understanding of doctrinal terminology, tactical concepts, military theory, and the foundation of U.S. Army doctrine, all of which contribute to the unity of thought needed for decentralization.[22] There are innumerable opportunities in which a battalion commander can pursue his objective of a common approach to analyzing and solving tactical problems. Field training exercises provide two in particular: rehearsals and after action reviews (AAR).[23] These are certainly nothing new. When Major Evans Carlson of

the United States Marine Corps travelled to China as an observer of the Chinese revolution in the 1930's, he had the chance to see the Chinese Communist 8th Route Army conducting both. The units would rehearse prior to actual combat missions and then conduct AARs afterwards to improve their common understanding and solidify their standard operating procedures (SOP).[24] It is during these activities that the commander has the best chance to observe, ask leading questions using the estimate of the situation as a framework, and reinforce his objective of a common approach. Therefore, it is important that every training exercise have a tempo that allows for both to occur. It is more beneficial to spend time in rehearsals and AARs and train on just three tasks, for example, than to train on four or five tasks without rehearsals and AARs.[25]

Another technique for improving mutual understanding and teaching the common approach is the terrain board or sand table exercise. The commander may have all of his officers or just company commanders attend. The point of the exercise is to spend time on a regular basis, perhaps once or twice a week, discussing particular concepts or missions in an environment in which soldiers' time is not wasted and leaders can begin to better understand their roles and how the battalion commander thinks. Admiral Nelson

conducted similar sessions in the early 19th century with his ships' captains whom he called his "Band of Brothers". Through these meetings, he insured that every captain understood how he thought and what he would expect them to do in a particular situation, without the benefit of signals.[26]

Lieutenant General Wayne A. Downing, the former commander of the 75th Infantry Regiment (Ranger) and now the Commanding General, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, recommended a technique called the OMEGA concept which offers an excellent means of developing a common approach.[27] It is based on an officer "platoon" with the battalion commander as platoon leader, the executive officer and command sergeant major as platoon sergeant and observer/controller (O/C), company commanders as squad leaders, and all other officers (including the fire support officer, chaplain, and physician's assistant) filling the remaining roles within the platoon. The platoon deploys to the field for three to five days to train on selected missions. As the platoon leader, the commander shows his officers exactly how he expects them to use the TLP, how he personally analyzes the factors of METT-T, what his standard is for rehearsals and AARs, and how he deals with each tactical situation. This is the ultimate in leading by example. Some commanders may consider it a big personal

risk because every officer there will know when the "Old Man" makes a mistake. Yet this risk seems small when compared to the progress the battalion will make in developing its common approach.

The battalion commander can further enhance mutual understanding if his junior leaders have some appreciation for what goes on at the next higher levels. He can accomplish this by periodically training his subordinates at least one level above their normal position and in some cases even two levels up. The German Army, widely respected for its small unit tactical skill, has a long tradition of training its leaders one and two levels up.[28] Wehrmacht NCOs were trained to act and think like officers so that they could assume command of the company or battalion, a frequent requirement in World War II.[29] NCO-led FTXs without officer involvement, afford sergeants and corporals a chance to practice at the next higher level, as well as giving the officers a chance to conduct a TEWT or OMEGA exercise. Another technique is to "kill" the actual leader so that the next in command has to take over. Regardless of the particular method, the purpose is to create multiple opportunities for leaders to practice at a higher level, all for the sake of improving mutual understanding and reinforcing a common approach to tactical problem solving.

The commander's reading program will help achieve a

common approach. It is only useful though if it includes a thorough discussion of the assigned books or articles. This discussion can be in an officer's call, in the messhall, or one on one at a range. The point is to select readings that support and reinforce the approach the commander wants and then make sure that officers gain an appropriate depth of understanding from those works.[30]

The measures described above, by no means all inclusive, provide a foundation for improving the mutual understanding needed to build a common approach to analyzing and solving tactical problems. Without this common approach, the commander must use more detailed orders with long explanations for what he wants accomplished, or risk misunderstandings that result in failure.

CONDITION TWO: The subordinate units down to squad level must execute their assigned tasks to standard.

> Habit breeds that priceless quality, calm, which, passing from hussar and rifleman up to the general himself, will lighten the commander's task.
>
> Clauswitz, On War[31]

Risk-taking and independent action, within a decentralized system of command, demand competence and

reliability of subordinate units and leaders.[32] Only then can a commander have any confidence that those units will be successful without his presence and tight control. In order to achieve the necessary degree of reliability a commander should train his unit on a small number of critical tasks during any particular training exercise.[33] This will allow enough time to conduct rehearsals and AARs and also enable the unit to retrain on those tasks at which it is not yet proficient.[34]

Clauswitz wrote that "constant practice leads to brisk, precise, and reliable leadership, reducing natural friction and easing the working of the machine."[35] In order to develop the "brisk, precise, and reliable leadership" it needed for World War II, the U.S. Army instituted a series of small unit training programs, each tailored to the specific needs of that particular unit.

Colonel William O. Darby's Rangers prepared for combat while in England under the tutelage of the British commandos. Their training program was designed to develop subordinate leader initiative since the Rangers would frequently be called on to perform small unit, independent operations. It was based on a "trilogy of training": physical training (including road marches and bayonet training), weapons training, and small unit tactical problems. These tactical

problems often included three-day exercises over great distances to improve the Rangers' ability to perform difficult tasks at the end of extreme physical exertion.[36]

The 101st Airborne Division, under the command of Major General William Westmoreland, developed its RECONDO program in the late 1950's in an effort to develop small unit leader initiative (found to be a major shortcoming in a force on force exercise with the 82nd Airborne Division). RECONDO included land navigation, field crafts, field expedient techniques, and various force on force tactical problems at the squad level.[37]

Merrill's Marauders used innovative range firing, battle drills, small unit force on force exercises, and plenty of roadmarches to develop the reliability necessary for independent action.[38]

Each of the above historical examples is provided to show the importance successful commanders placed on small unit proficiency and physical toughness as a necessary step to developing initiative in their subordinate leaders. What follows now is a description of some specific exercises and techniques that can contribute to the ability to execute assigned tasks to standard.

MTPs describe situational training exercises (STX) which provide leaders with various scenarios for

training specific tasks. The standards for each MTP task should generally be left unaltered. Once a unit has achieved the MTP standard for a task, the conditions should be altered or toughened to further develop the unit's ability to meet the desired level of proficiency.[39]

Battle drills are a fundamental building block for developing small unit tactical proficiency. They are not the end all for infantry training but they do provide a very useful vehicle for squad and platoon training. Battle drills are a key to success in combat because they help a leader through the initial surprise of a situation until he can start making decisions.[40] They provide a bridge from contact to developing the situation until the leader is able to begin estimating the situation and reporting as appropriate. Drills do not replace the estimate--they help the leader get to it.[41]

Live fire exercises (LFX) play an integral role in developing small unit proficiency because of the added realism they offer in terms of sights, sounds, danger, and stress. The purpose of LFXs is to train integration of fire and maneuver against a realistic target array; train crews and squads to employ their weapon systems; and enable effective evaluation of the leaders' ability to control and distribute fires.[42]

Another exercise with great utility for a

commander seeking to improve the proficiency of his smallest tactical unit is a battalion-directed squad Army Readiness and Training Evaluation Program (ARTEP).[43] Each company is responsible for one or two of the lanes or missions, with guidance from the commander on any particular conditions he wants included, in addition to what the MTP recommends. Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants are the O/Cs while company commanders have overall responsibility for their missions, to include the enemy force, objective preparations as necessary, appropriate orders, and all other support. First Sergeants insure their own squads are supported. The squads go through each part of the evaluation based on a master schedule; normally all of the squads from the same company complete the same tasks on a given day.

The squad ARTEP program will produce, among other things, NCOs who are accustomed to controlling their squads, moving them from mission to mission, conducting the TLP, and performing their missions all without the supervision of their platoon leader or platoon sergeant. Increased self-confidence is accompanied by increased sense of ownership and responsibility for the squad's mission accomplishment. Unit cohesion is also enhanced since a natural side effect of this rotation is that every squad leader in the battalion will be known by name, face, and skill to all the officers and

senior NCOs and vice versa. The squad ARTEP will build platoon leader and platoon sergeant tactical expertise and confidence as they evaluate squads. Company commanders improve their training skills as they strive to develop realistic, challenging lanes and scenarios for the squad evaluations. A battalion-wide effort also reinforces the common approach, discussed earlier, because each evaluator will have AAR opportunities as well as guidance from the commander to look for certain indicators of leader initiative, innovation, and application of the Troop Leading Procedure and estimate. With such an extensive application of resources, rehearsals, and attention by the battalion, this focused training effort cannot help but improve the squads' ability to perform their assigned tasks to standard.

The squad ARTEP format is equally useful at the platoon level with similar benefits. The operations officer who will plan and coordinate this exercise, however, may have to get some evaluator support from outside the battalion if all platoons are going through the process during the same period.

The support for company and battalion level evaluations usually comes from external sources. However, it is still possible to develop worthwhile exercises using only internal assets to train the companies and the battalion as a whole. A "shadow

staff" is especially helpful for improving the battalion staff's proficiency. The shadow staff is the assistant S-2, assistant S-3, an operations NCO, and signal support. It serves as the battalion's "higher headquarters" and issues orders and intelligence reports as appropriate. The shadow staff forces the battalion commander and staff to do an estimate and staff planning, based on the information from "higher" and their own reconnaissance, rather than using a Master Events List and canned orders and intelligence reports.[44] Using a shadow staff improves the proficiency of the assistant staff members, the "second team" so often cited at the training centers for their inability to back up the primary staff which leads to sleep deprivation problems in a rotation.[45]

CONDITION THREE: Leaders must be proficient in making decisions, acting, and using their initiative within the commander's intent.

> The most difficult but also the most crucial part of a commander's varied duties is the making of a decision.
>
> Generaloberst Lothar Rendulic
> The Command Decision[46]

> When your orders have not gotten through, assume what they must be.
>
> Israeli Command Directive[47]

A leader requires intuitive and creative skills to be able to analyze a tactical situation and develop a course of a action for each unique situation.[48] General Balck and General von Mellenthin were two renowned Wehrmacht officers who were consulted extensively by the U.S. Army at the conclusion of World War II for their views on battle leadership. They both believed that another essential attribute of the leader for decision making was self-confidence, the "wellspring from which flowed his [the leader's] willingness to assume responsibility and exercise his initiative".[49] Major General Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven wrote in The Power of Personality in War that mental flexibility was key. The leader had to be able to adjust from his original plan because the situation would always be different from what was expected in some degree, thus rendering that original plan at least partially irrelevant.[50]

Each of the above skills and attributes can be bolstered through training. Experience and practice provide leaders with the skill, self-confidence, and mental flexibility they need to make decisions and use their initiative in the face of uncertainty.[51] A battalion commander must provide his junior leaders as many challenging, realistic opportunities to practice as possible if he wants to improve their decision making proficiency.

S.L.A. Marshall wrote in Men Against Fire that the purpose of all training should be directed towards developing the mental skills necessary in modern warfare and that the emphasis had to be on "how to think, not what to think".[52] In practice, this means that the commander focuses as much on his subordinates' rationale for their decisions as on the decisions themselves.[53] The commander must also stress the timeliness of the decision.[54] A young platoon leader or squad leader cannot be allowed to wait on perfect information in training exercises - he has to be able to recognize the correct moment for decision and act on what he knows and what he has deduced.[55]

The estimate of the situation, described earlier, is a useful framework for analyzing a subordinate leader's rationale and the timeliness of his decision. For example, when used in an AAR, the commander can ask the sergeant or lieutenant what implied tasks he determined from his mission analysis, what terrain offered the best overwatch position for his support element, what enemy vulnerability did he detect, or how did time available affect his course of action?

Training scenarios should also place subordinates in situations which may require them to retask themselves, or even violate their control measures, in order to accomplish their commander's intent.[56] This

is a critical part of the training process. If leaders are to use their initiative and make decisions on the spot, then they have to understand that the commander's intent--the purpose of the mission--takes precedence over everything else.

Successful commanders have always recognized the importance of this understanding. General Mathew Ridgway would cite Napoleon who demanded his subordinates make decisions in such situations saying, "Blind obedience is due only to a superior present on the spot at the moment of action".[57] Helmut von Moltke also expected subordinates to think for themselves and take responsibility for their situation. He often told the story of his visit to the headquarters of Prince Frederick Charles during the war with Austria. Moltke had arrived just in time to see the Prince berating one of his staff officers who was attempting to explain his failure by saying that he was only following orders. The Prince angrily responded, "His Majesty made you a Major because he believed you would know when <u>not</u> to obey his orders!"[58]

It is possible to construct any number of training exercises and scenarios for training initiative and decision making. What is critical, however, is that the conditions should incorporate as much ambiguity and friction as the commander believes is appropriate.[59]

Inherent in Marshall's charge to trainers that they

should teach subordinates how to think is the understanding there can be no school solution for any tactical problem. Every situation in war is unique in some aspect and no training exercise can completely replicate all of the fog and friction that characterize combat; there can be, therefore, no approved or ideal solution. A solution is irrelevant if the focus is on why a decision was made rather than what decision was made.[60]

Sand table or terrain model exercises in which the commander presents a brief situation, hypothetical or based on an actual combat situation, and requires his subordinates to develop a course of action, are easy to conduct and require little overhead. They offer a great deal of flexibility for portraying various situations and teaching points. The commander's discussion of the decisions made, using the format for the estimate of the situation, is the most important part of these exercises. General Heinz Guderian was noted for his "purposeful questions" as he trained his XIX Panzer Corps prior to the invasion of France in 1940. He would ask company commanders "what if" or "what now" type questions as a way of training their ability to make rapid assessments and decisions.[61]

Orde Wingate was the imaginative commander of the Chindits, a British Army unit specially trained for extended light infantry operations against the Japanese

forces in Burma. He posed situations to his cadre and walked through possible courses of action with them on a 400 meter squared terrain model as a means of training their decision making skills.[62]

An IDF technique for training rapid decision making and mental flexibility is to give a commander a mission and several hours to prepare a plan. At the end of that period the commander announces he is prepared to brief his plan at which time the controller provides him with a major intelligence update which may force the commander to significantly alter his plan. However, the commander gets only one hour to adjust his plan. After one hour, the somewhat frustrated commander returns with his revised course of action only to receive another intelligence update and this time only ten minutes to make adjustments.[63] Another IDF technique is to prohibit the use of any traditional or obvious solutions to a tactical problem, thus forcing the leader to accept greater risk with his course of action and be more innovative.[64]

Retired colonel Charlie Beckwith related his training experiences with the British Special Air Service (SAS) which were designed to increase individual initiative and decision making skills. Long range, cross country land navigation courses developed the confidence and self-reliance necessary for independent action. The teams which negotiated these

courses were only allowed to do a map reconnaissance, make a sketch of their intended route, and then turn in the original map before departing. If they missed their rendezvous time the next morning, it was several more kilometers to the emergency pick-up point which added considerable stress to the young sergeant in charge of the team.[65]

The Rangers in World War II developed a training technique designed to foster initiative in junior leaders. It consisted of giving a squad a mission with completion time--and nothing else. The squad leader was allowed no opportunity to ask questions and was left to his own devices for resources. The result was a set of junior leaders who were creative, innovative, and extremely self-reliant--critical attributes for a decentralized system of command.[66]

A patrol lane full of surprises is an ideal method for training quick decision making skills in squad and platoon leaders. The lane could consist of any number and type of problems and might include: obstacles, enemy soldiers attempting to surrender, potential fratricide situations, enemy contact, refugees, contaminated areas, unexploded ordnance, friendly casualties, or any other situation the battalion commander might want to place along the lane. The point is to create ambiguous situations for the leader to handle, force him to make decisions on his

own (by injecting communication failures), and then conduct a thorough AAR at the conclusion which focuses on the rationale and timeliness of the leader's several decisions.[67]

Force on force exercises offer the best conditions for fog and friction and for forcing rapid, low-level decision making.[68] They present a thinking enemy who is constantly trying to outwit his opponent. The battalion can conduct internal force on force exercises at squad and platoon level by creating lanes or boxes within which the units are given opposing missions such as an area ambush for one and movement to contact for the other.

Company force on force scenarios can be arranged by rotating the companies through missions that will bring them into contact with each other. An example scenario might be for one company to prepare a terrain-oriented defense; another company, part of the friendly force, is responsible for a screen or area ambush to the front of the defense. The third company is the enemy force which will conduct a reconnaissance and attack the defending company. The companies would then rotate to the next mission until all had performed each of the three missions to standard.

Battalion force on force training may necessitate a narrower scope. An example might be to focus on just the deliberate breach of a complex obstacle protected

by an active enemy force with security forward. The battalion still must do its reconnaissance in order to find the best place to breach, support, etc.

Training decision making and initiative can be extended to include LFXs. But the commander's dilemma is to balance safety requirements and thorough rehearsals with the need to inject ambiguity and uncertainty in the scenario to create decision making opportunities for the leader. The first step in solving that dilemma is to plan to train as you fight. The chain of command will be responsible for safety in combat so it should perform that function while maneuvering on a live-fire range as well. Do not allow white headbands on a maneuver range.[69]

The live-fire maneuver range can be set up to enhance the fog and friction of the scenario. Target arrays should be as realistic as possible, i.e., at odd angles, camouflaged, and difficult to detect. The range should replicate, as closely as possible, the dirty battlefield. Leaders attempting to control and distribute fires should have to deal with smoke, fire, explosions, simulated unexploded ordnance in the area, friendly casualties, and resupply problems.[70] Rules of engagement situations can create problems for leaders by using silhouettes of civilians and enemy soldiers attempting to surrender.

Regardless of the techniques used to create

uncertainty in a LFX, units must follow up the exercise with an AAR to discuss the rationale for decisions made during execution. LFXs contribute to initiative and decision making skills because they build self-confidence as the leaders become accustomed to integrating and controlling their unit's fires. They increase creativity and innovation if the commander is more interested in realistic training than in statistics and he communicates that interest to his subordinates. Finally, LFXs contribute to the cohesion, mutual trust, and respect within the unit as leaders gain confidence in their peers' and their superiors' ability to deliver accurate supporting fires without hurting their men.

If leaders are not skilled decision makers, the commander is forced to retain authority for most decisions. This bogs down execution since reports must travel up the chain and orders back down the chain.

CONDITION FOUR: The leaders and soldiers in a battalion must trust and respect one another.

> You must be able to underwrite the honest mistakes of your subordinates if you wish to develop their initiative and experience.
>
> General Bruce Clarke[71]

LTC Dubik identifies two separate but necessary

components of this fourth condition: treating soldiers with dignity and respect and conducting realistic, well-coordinated training which fully integrates all of the battlefield operating systems. This section will discuss how a commander can achieve those two components of mutual trust and respect.[72]

Treating soldiers with dignity and respect starts with establishing a "command climate which promotes learning, allows honest mistakes, and encourages open communications and disagreement without fear of retribution".[73] Soldiers and leaders in this type of environment view each other as "worthy members of the fraternity of arms".[74]

Treating soldiers with dignity and respect also means that leaders value the opinions, expertise, and perspectives of their subordinates. General von Mellenthin described an incident on the Russian front in which his division had been stymied by a particularly resolute pocket of bypassed Russian troops. After several days of ineffective attacks on the pocket, he called up a group of company-grade officers from front line units, presented them with the division's tactical problem, and asked them to see if they could come up with a solution. These young officers quickly developed a course of action which the division successfully implemented.[75] The commander in this case benefited from his trust in his

subordinates and reinforced in their minds their sense of value to the unit.

A subordinate's trust in his superior's willingness to support good faith efforts is another facet of mutual trust and respect within a unit. German NCOs and junior officers in the early stages of World War II knew their efforts would be supported so long as those efforts were intended to achieve the higher commander's intent. As a result, "action in the face of uncertainty and responsibility for that action was developed into a social norm".[76]

A sure indicator of a commander's trust and respect for his subordinates is his delegation of responsibility to them.[77] Delegation of authority must go hand in hand with that responsibility. This philosophy of empowering subordinates with authority, known as "Power Down", is based on the belief that subordinates will take ownership of their mission and will act on their own initiative to insure its success if they are properly encouraged and trained.[78] It requires the commander to explain priorities, goals, and reasoning for both so that subordinates can contribute intelligently.[79] This entire process is a necessary element of building mutual trust and respect so that the chain of command is prepared for the responsibilities it will have on a confused and uncertain battlefield.[80] Finally, "Power Down" also

includes stabilizing units as much as possible, though the ability to do this at the battalion level is admittedly limited. The command sergeant major and first sergeants should protect crews and squads so that the training foundation is preserved.[81] A squad or platoon leader ought to be able to trust that his chain of command considers his efforts at team building as important as the battalion or company commander's own efforts.

The second requirement for establishing mutual trust and respect is thorough, well-coordinated training which will build a soldier's confidence in his unit. Well-planned training demonstrates to the subordinate leaders and soldiers that the commander and staff respect their time and will not waste it with poor training.[82] Good training, as a result, contributes to the mutual trust and respect necessary to achieve a decentralized system of command.

The discussions of some of the training techniques in earlier sections, such as the OMEGA concept, LFXs, and squad ARTEPs, have already demonstrated these confidence-building benefits. The practice of training up one and two levels will also contribute to confidence in the unit because subordinates who may have to step up in combat will already be familiar with their newly assumed duties. This also increases the confidence of the squad members who might otherwise

be leaderless.[83]

The AAR is a very useful forum for increasing the mutual trust and respect within a unit. General Downing encouraged commanders to lead off the AAR with their own thoughts and mistakes first as a means of setting the right tone of candidness, openness, and honesty.[84] The amount of learning the leaders get from the AAR is directly related to this tone. The purpose of the AAR is to correct mistakes and learn from the training experience, not cover up mistakes for fear of public censure. Martin Van Creveld called the elimination of such fear "the first prerequisite for learning".[85] The German Army conducted remarkably frank and thorough AARs at the conclusion of their successful Polish campaign in 1939. They were very diligent in identifying problems in training, organization, and, particularly, in leadership, where they found a serious lack of small unit leader initiative. As a result they developed and instituted an extensive training program which focused on developing tactical leader initiative to which they credited much of their success in France in May 1940.[86]

The final component of developing mutual trust and respect within the battalion is the commander's consistent, visible, and firm commitment to his goal of decentralized command. A battalion commander will have

great difficulty if either the brigade or division commander does not practice a similar philosophy.[87] The commander puts himself at risk if his superiors are less tolerant of mistakes and innovative training ideas that do not turn out very well. He must also consider whether or not he is putting his company commanders at risk by encouraging them to be innovative and risk-takers, in accordance with the Army's warfighting and leadership doctrine, if the brigade commander--their senior rater--is not supportive. The Leader Development Study conducted at Fort Leavenworth in 1987 under the direction of then-Major General Gordon Sullivan, found that many commanders tended to centralize control over activities within their units because they were not confident that mistakes, by themselves or their units, would be forgiven.[88] A command climate like this obviously makes it difficult to give young leaders the necessary learning opportunities which will by definition result in mistakes and imprecision in execution. The battalion commander has to demonstrate to his subordinates that he is committed to achieving a decentralized system of command by visibly overcoming these perceptions of "zero defects". In doing so, he will earn their trust and respect and will contribute to the conditions necessary for successful implementation of decentralized command.

CONDITION FIVE: The battalion must use the same modus operandi in garrison that it uses in the field.

> The whole of military activity must relate directly or indirectly to the engagement. The end for which a soldier is recruited, clothed, armed, and trained, the whole object of his sleeping, eating, drinking, and marching is simply that he should fight at the right place and the right time.
>
> Clauswitz, On War[89]

Subordinate leaders should be accustomed to making decisions and being responsible for their unit's mission accomplishment if they are expected to do so in combat. It is therefore necessary to use every opportunity, including garrison duties, to reinforce and cultivate initiative and a willingness to accept responsibility.[90] This section will describe several such opportunities.

Retired lieutenant general Walter Ulmer, an avid proponent of "Power Down", wrote that the chain of command, not the unit armorer, should be responsible for checking weapon cleanliness. If the armorer habitually checks, the squad leader will naturally feel less responsibility for his squad's weapons, even though they will be his responsibility in combat. Certainly the armorer insures accountability of weapons and spot checks on behalf of the commander. But the

chain of command should be made to feel responsible for their unit's weapons. This also provides the commander with an assessment tool for evaluating his junior leaders.[91]

Decentralized physical training (PT) is another way to empower the chain of command. The battalion commander is always responsible for setting appropriate standards for his unit's physical fitness. But allowing the subordinates to plan and conduct their own PT programs gives them another opportunity to be innovative, exercise their initiative, and be responsible for their soldiers. Though there will sometimes be mistakes and imprecision in execution, such as a squad occasionally running down a busy road designated by the military police as off limits for PT, the benefit is that the commander is providing his subordinates yet another opportunity to be directly responsible for their unit.[92]

LTG Ulmer pointed out in his article, "Forging the Chain", that since the chain of command will be responsible for passing out information in combat, it should practice doing so in garrison. In other words, do not use company formations for disseminating details and routine information; it bypasses the chain of command and wastes soldiers' time.[93]

Another way to empower the chain of command is to make it responsible for safety at railheads rather than

designating an external or over-layed Safety NCO or OIC --the same principle as described earlier in reference to safety in LFXs.[94] Once again, the point is to inculcate the concept of leaders being responsible, at every opportunity, for their own unit so that they will be prepared to lead on a dispersed and confused battlefield.

The battalion staff must cooperate for this application of decentralized command to succeed in garrison. The basic unit documents, such as the quarterly training guidance, should allow as much latitude to the subordinate units as possible while clearly stating the priorities and standards.[95] Taskings to the companies for post support or other details could be done as mission orders.[96] Instead of tasking B Company to provide five soldiers and one NCO to report to range control for a detail, the battalion would ideally give the B Company 1SG the mission and allow him to coordinate with range control. The 1SG can figure out how he will accomplish the tasking and determine if he should send a fire team or a squad, whichever is appropriate, and each with its assigned team or squad leader. This will require patience and some work at first but it will contribute to a culture and mindset of decentralization and encouraging subordinates to use their initiative and creative skills. After all, what is most important--

that a certain number of soldiers report to range control or that the tasking is accomplished to standard? The techniques described above will all contribute towards developing subordinate leaders who are innovative, independent thinking, and willing and able to use their initiative. To insure mission accomplishment, minimize the confusion, and create a positive learning environment, however, it is incumbent on the battalion commander that he clearly state his priorities and standards and that he have a system for checking understanding and compliance.[97]

IV. CONCLUSION

> Decentralized command is the privilege of trustworthy leadership, while leadership which cannot be...trusted will...yield a centralized command.
>
> Reuven Gal
> Portrait of the Israeli Soldier[98]

The modern battlefield will be a scene of chaos, destruction, rapid action, and constant uncertainty. The U.S. Army's doctrine has rightly emphasized the importance of initiative in soldiers and junior leaders in order to be able to act independently. But the American tradition of ingenuity and personal initiative is only part of the solution. Martin Van Creveld stressed the need for a structure and philosophy that can best channel that individual energy into success on

the battlefield.[99] The structure he recommends is a decentralized system of command in which subordinates are trained and organized to make decisions and act independently within the commander's intent.

LTC Dubik's model for establishing a decentralized system of command encompasses the prerequisites Van Creveld addresses. A common approach to analyzing and solving tactical problems will facilitate quick transmission of reports and orders because each leader understands a common tactical language and methodology. Rehearsals, AARs, a well-thought out reading program, and focused training exercises give the commander numerous chances to reinforce correct terminology and clarify the SOPs and tactical concepts he wants used. Reliable squads, platoons, companies, and supporting elements give the commander confidence to allow his subordinates greater latitude and the freedom of action they will need to accomplish their mission. Only practice under tough, realistic conditions can produce this degree of proficiency and reliability. Leaders who are accustomed to using their initiative and are proficient at making timely decisions will be able to do so in combat when the situation is different, as it always will be, from what was anticipated. This proficiency comes from training how to think as opposed to what to think. Treating soldiers with dignity and respect and providing them with well-coordinated,

realistic training that has a clear purpose and does not waste their time will build a strong bond of trust and respect throughout the battalion. This trust enables a commander to loosen the controls on his subordinates because he knows they will always be trying to take action that contributes to the accomplishment of his intent. Decentralized command in garrison is imperative if the leaders are to make the transition to field training and even more so to combat successfully. They must be accustomed to responsibility, exercising their initiative, and making decisions if they are to do so effectively in the uncertainty of combat.

Decentralized command captures the tradition of American soldiers--initiative, innovation, and aggressiveness--and applies those characteristics to an effective, successful method for tactical leadership. But it can only happen if the five conditions described above exist in the battalion. If leaders do not have a common approach to analyzing and solving tactical problems, the whole command and control process is bogged down with detailed orders and explanations. If squads and platoons are not capable of performing their assigned tasks to standard, the commander cannot rely on them to accomplish those tasks independently and must, therefore, keep them under tight control. If leaders are not proficient at making timely decisions,

the commander has to retain decision making authority which will prevent a unit from taking advantage of opportunities or even averting a major crisis. Without mutual trust and respect in a battalion, authority to fulfill responsibilities will never be delegated and little will be accomplished without personal involvement of the commander. Finally, a unit cannot transform itself into a flexible, aggressive team, capable of acting independently on an uncertain and chaotic battlefield, if it has not been preparing itself to do so in garrison.

How does the commander know when he has achieved the five conditions for exercising decentralized command? Assessments from training center rotations, local training, and personal observations provide some of the answer. The commander's counseling program will help him gauge how much progress he has made since his initial assessment. In the end, though, it will be his subjective evaluation. The commander will exercise decentralized command when he is confident his battalion can execute it successfully, and when his estimate of the situation does not warrant a more centralized control for a particular set of circumstances. The commander, then, has to create enough situations to allow him to observe and assess his subordinate leaders in order to gain confidence in them and they in him.

There will be errors and rough edges in a battalion that decentralizes. The battalion commander can count on an occasional incident in which a lieutenant or squad leader is overly aggressive and errs in judgment or execution. Clauswitz offers good counsel to a commander who is hesitant about decentralizing because of the potential for those types of incidents: "Happy the army where ill-timed boldness occurs frequently; it is a luxurient weed, but indicates the richness of the soil."[100] It is up to the battalion commander to cultivate this "rich soil" and develop the thought and structure necessary to train subordinates for uncertainty.

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