

# Leadership

***Leading soldiers is hard work, long hours, often dangerous,  
under grueling conditions – and tempers the steel of the Nation’s resolve***

You are a Noncommissioned Officer — a leader. The stripes you wear set you apart from other soldiers. Every soldier must know and do his job, but not every soldier is an NCO. An NCO leads — from the front. The Army must fight and win the Nation’s wars. It cannot succeed without qualified, tough and dedicated NCOs. Your unit may be called upon to execute a wide range of different missions from supporting relief operations to peacekeeping to actual combat in a war. Across the full spectrum of conflict, the Army’s success begins with you, the NCO.

*Leadership is influencing people – by providing purpose, direction and motivation – while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.*

As a noncommissioned officer, you are **the** first line of Army leadership. Considering the Army as a whole, NCOs outnumber commissioned officers nearly three to one. NCOs directly supervise about 80 percent of the soldiers in combat divisions. You will spend more time with soldiers than your officers do. With this in mind, you must always lead by example. Earn the respect and confidence of your soldiers, as well as that of your officers. Respect and confidence don’t come automatically with the stripes – you will have to work hard at earning them.

*“Think about what it means to be a sergeant. It boils down to two things ... you have to train soldiers and you have to lead soldiers.”*

SMA Robert E. Hall

Noncommissioned officers gain the respect and confidence of soldiers in two basic ways – by demonstrating technical and tactical proficiency and by caring for soldiers and their families. You have to care for your soldiers and still accomplish the mission. This is not as hard as it seems at first – one naturally leads to the other. Understand that caring for your soldiers does not mean giving them more time off or allowing them to execute tasks below standard because they are tired. It does mean training them to standard, not to time. It means ensuring they know their individual skills and making hard but correct decisions. It means helping them through problems – personal and professional – so they can fully concentrate on their training and duties and, above all, it means leading by example – doing all that you require your soldiers to do and treating soldiers with dignity and respect. All these actions create in your soldiers the determination to win and that determination is essential to accomplishing difficult missions.

*“The American soldier is a proud one and he demands professional competence in his leaders. In battle, he wants to know that the job is going to be done right, with no unnecessary casualties. The noncommissioned officer wearing the chevron is supposed to be the best soldier in the platoon and he is supposed to know how to perform all the duties expected of him. The American soldier expects his sergeant to be able to teach him how to do his job. And he expects even more from his officers.”*

General of the Army Omar N. Bradley

## **LEARN**

Leaders are not born, they are molded – by training, practice and experience. There are many excellent books and manuals on leadership; however, Field Manual 6-22 (22-100), *Army Leadership*, is the Army’s capstone publication on leadership. You should study FM 6-22 and apply what it says, particularly regarding direct leadership. Read and reread books by or about combat leaders. Their experiences will give you some insights on how to approach problems you face. Knowledge of military history is a good confidence builder.

*“A man cannot lead without determination, without the will and the desire to lead. He cannot do it without studying, reading, observing, learning. He must apply himself to gain the goal- to develop the talent for military leadership.... Leaders are developed! They are guided by others; but they are made largely self-made.”*

MSG Frank K. Nicolas

Observe other leaders in your unit, especially those who are successful. Learn from them by observing and asking questions. Study yourself too, learning from your own successes and failures. Everyone who wears the uniform of the US Army must be a WARRIOR, first and last. In today's operational environment, there are no front lines; there is no secure rear area. Every soldier must be prepared to attack or defend and win regardless of the conditions. That means conducting full spectrum operations including offense, defense, stability and support. Our Nation depends on the NCO to prepare soldiers to do so.

## **BE – KNOW – DO**

Noncommissioned officers lead by example. You must BE, KNOW and DO to be effective. However, there are some basics involved here: Character — Competence — Actions.

### **BE**

Character is an inner strength that helps you know what is right and what is wrong. It is what gives you the desire and fortitude to do what is right even in the toughest situations and it gives you the courage to keep doing what is right regardless of the consequences.

*"The test of character is not 'hanging in' when you expect light at the end of the tunnel, but performance of duty and persistence of example when you know no light is coming."*

ADM James B. Stockdale

Others see character in you by your behavior. What you do speaks louder than what you say — set the example. Understand Army values and live them. Develop leader attributes and teach these to your soldiers. This may or may not be easy, but it is vitally important to the success of the Army, your unit and your soldiers.

*"The Army [depends] on competent people who have the strength of character to secure our vital national interests and the foresight to continue change to remain the world's best."*

GEN John N. Abrams

One of the most obvious ways to demonstrate character is to be honest. Tell it like it is – not how you think someone wants to hear it. The Army and your soldiers want, need and deserve the truth. If you make a mistake, admit it; don't sacrifice your integrity. If something is wrong, you must be willing to say so, even to superior NCOs and officers. Do so in an objective, straightforward manner; present the facts. This often takes moral courage. What you have to say may not be easy or even welcomed, but your candor is necessary to develop and maintain trust. It is also necessary for soldiers to know whether they have met the standard and for leaders to know the true status of units. A mark of loyalty is a burning desire to help the unit and one's soldiers get better at their tasks. That demands honesty. Make it a habit to be candid – in battle, lives will depend on it.

*"It has long seemed to me that the hard decisions are not the ones you make in the heat of battle. Far harder to make are those involved in speaking your mind about some hare-brained scheme which proposes to commit troops to action under conditions where failure seems almost certain and the only results will be the needless sacrifice of priceless lives."*

GEN Matthew B. Ridgway

### **KNOW**

You need to know a great deal to properly lead soldiers. You must have a number of skills to train soldiers and to lead them in tough situations. Know how to talk to your soldiers and get them to talk. Be able to think and plan ahead and be able to visualize events before they occur. Know everything about your equipment and tactics and how to make decisions based on the information you have available.

### **Know Your Job**

To be a good noncommissioned officer you must know your job exceptionally well. This means you must be proficient in the employment, care, cleaning and maintenance of vehicles, weapons and equipment assigned to your unit — technical skills. As Army Transformation progresses, you may receive new equipment, learn new doctrine, or undergo organizational changes. You will certainly have to absorb and pass on larger and larger quantities of information. Know all the tactics your unit uses in battle. Realize that in the contemporary operational environment, there are no secure areas – an enemy might attack a logistics site in the rear areas as readily as a frontline combat arms unit. That means being adaptive to the situation and responding appropriately.

Understand and conduct the day-to-day requirements of soldiering in the field and in garrison. Show your soldiers each day that you can do everything they do. If you're a really good NCO you'll be better at all those things than any of your soldiers. This is the first step in leading by example.

### **Know Fieldcraft**

Being an expert in fieldcraft reduces the likelihood your soldiers will become casualties. The requirement to do one's job in a field environment is one of the differences between soldiering and most civilian occupations. Likewise, the requirement that Army leaders make sure their soldiers take care of themselves and provide them with the means to do so is unique. *The Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks* lists the individual skills all soldiers must master to operate effectively in the field. FM 3-21.75 (21-75), *Combat Skills of the Soldier* is another good source. Those skills include everything from how to stay healthy, to how to pitch a tent, to how to run a heater. Some MOSs require other skills, too.

*"Fieldcraft, fieldcraft, fieldcraft. Training your soldiers to fight the enemy and not the elements will keep them focused and conserve their energy for warfighting."*

GEN Eric K. Shinseki

You gain proficiency in fieldcraft through schooling, study and practice. Once learned, fieldcraft skills are not difficult to accomplish. But they are sometimes neglected during exercises, when everyone knows that the exercise will end at a specific time, sick and injured soldiers are always evacuated and the adversary isn't using real ammunition. During peacetime, it's up to you to enforce tactical discipline to make sure your soldiers practice the fieldcraft skills that will keep them from becoming casualties later. Soldiers need to be confident in their ability to take care of themselves and their equipment in the field to continue the mission.

### **Know Yourself**

As a noncommissioned officer your job requires you to accomplish tasks with your soldiers and your equipment under the most difficult conditions: uncertainty, confusion, stress and fear of battle. In those challenging circumstances your courage and that of your soldiers will be tested to the limit. You can also expect your own fear and that of your soldiers to complicate getting things done in crisis situations – in battle, in military operations other than war, or in training. But be positive, especially with your soldiers and always exhibit the determination to prevail no matter what the odds or how desperate the situation may be.

*"Display the WILL TO WIN by your actions, words, tone of voice, by your appearance and by the look in your eyes. Pay no attention to the noise, the smoke, the explosions, the screams of the wounded, the dead lying around you. That is all NORMAL in battle!"*

LTG Harold G. Moore

Courage in battle doesn't mean an absence of fear. Fear is a natural reaction to combat and unknown situations, but courage is getting the job done despite the presence of fear. This is a very hard thing to do. This ability derives from many contributing factors, but one of the most important is self-confidence. The hard work you do to master required skills and train your soldiers becomes a conviction that you'll act correctly and properly even under stressful conditions. Know your own capabilities and believe in yourself and your training. Understand right now that courage – yours and your soldiers' – is not a substitute for proper training, working equipment or firepower. Putting rounds on target quickly and accurately is the best antidote to fear, but it requires well trained, disciplined soldiers to accomplish.

The ambiguous nature of the operational environment requires Army leaders who are self-aware and adaptive. Leaders with self-awareness understand their operational environment, can assess their own capabilities, determine their own strengths and weaknesses and actively learn to overcome their weaknesses. Adaptive leaders must first be self-aware; they must have the ability to recognize change in their operating environment, identify those changes and learn how to adapt to succeed in their new environment. Self-awareness and adaptability work together. A leader who fails to adapt cannot learn to accept change and modify behavior brought about by changes in the operational environment.

Today's operational environment demands more from Army leaders than ever before. The Army needs adaptive leaders—leaders that can successfully operate across the range of military operations. It needs adaptive leaders who can be home one day and, within hours, conduct military operations anywhere in the world. The Army needs adaptive leaders who can operate in all dimensions of the operational environment—from hand-to-hand combat to offensive information operations.

### **Know Your Soldiers**

A key part of your job as a noncommissioned officer is to know your soldiers. It is essential that you know how your soldiers will behave in battle under stress and uncertainty. To do this you must know how well trained they are, how well they work together as team members and how they react to fear, uncertainty and stress. As a leader, you should demonstrate genuine concern for the well-being of your soldiers and for their personal and professional development, progress, problems, concerns and convictions. Know them. Know their goals and meet their families. This is not to coddle or cater to the soldiers but that you might, in a soldierly way, build a team of confident, well trained individual soldiers who operate as one and whose dedication to accomplishing the mission overrides any other concern.

*“There is only one way for NCOs to get to know their soldiers and that is through constant communication and not putting up invisible walls that soldiers are afraid to pass. We must let our soldiers know that we are always there for them and they must know they can come to their leaders with any problem... Bottom line: NCOs must be user friendly.”*  
CSM Mary E. Sutherland

### **DO**

Do means to take action.

*“As an NCO, you have to make split-second decisions. When you're a combat oriented NCO, you don't have to stop and think – you're thinking all the time.”*

MSG (Ret.) Roy Benavidez

You make decisions every day. You rely on your judgment and experience to do so but you also have to consider the information you have available on any specific problem. While new technology and information systems provide larger amounts of information more quickly than ever, leaders must sift through all that information and ultimately make accurate assessments and timely decisions.