

CHAPTER 7

SMALL UNIT LEADERS

Section I. General

7-1. Leadership Traits

a. The traits, qualities, and abilities requisite to good leadership in any theater of operations assume their greatest importance during operations in cold weather areas. Leaders must be impressed with and made clearly aware of this fact. With proper training, leadership, and discipline, few men will be unable to meet the rigid standards and the difficult service required of northern operations.

b. Military leadership is the art of influencing and directing men to an assigned goal in such a way as to obtain their obedience, confidence, respect, and loyal cooperation. The individual who demonstrates the traits of a leader and applies the fundamental principles of leadership will be a successful leader of men in cold weather areas.

c. All leadership traits as outlined in FM 22-100 are of importance to the leader assigned to units operating in cold weather areas. Peculiar conditions of cold increase the necessity for certain traits to a marked degree. Traits of utmost importance to the leaders are-

- (1) *Initiative.* The energy or aptitude displayed in the initiation of action, self-reliance, enterprise and self-initiated activity must be an outstanding characteristic of leaders who are involved in such operations, especially when units may become isolated. This requirement is more pronounced in the North than in other theaters of operation. In all training of leaders, initiative and improvisation must be carefully encouraged.
- (2) *Endurance and mental and physical*

stamina. Extremes of climate and the vastness of the area increase the necessity for strong mental and physical endurance. These conditions may cause early physical and mental fatigue, but can be overcome by determination, forcefulness, and aggressiveness.

- (3) *Unselfishness.* This is exemplified by the leader who does not take advantage of a situation for personal gain or safety at the expense of the unit. The physically competent, vigorous leader who can resist the natural desire of first providing for his own comfort will be a successful and respected leader of his unit.

7-2. Leadership Principles

As in leadership traits, all leadership principles as outlined in FM 22-100 apply to leaders directing operations in cold weather latitudes, with particular emphasis placed on the following:

a. Know the Job. Every leader must know thoroughly the job at hand. The leader's actions must demonstrate to his subordinates his capabilities as a leader and his genuine desire to accomplish the mission with a minimum of effort expended by the men. The leader should frequently visit isolated units in adverse weather and show the men that he is a member of the team. He must earn the respect of the men and the right to command by a thorough understanding of the technical and tactical aspect of the task.

b. Know the Men and Look Out for Their Welfare.

- (1) The small unit leader must know the mental and physical capabilities of each of his men. Knowing this, he will be able to utilize them effectively. As an example, a strong stable soldier should be matched in the "buddy system" to guide and assist a weaker soldier.
- (2) In isolated areas recreation facilities normally are not available. It will be the leader's responsibility to insure that, during periods of rest or off-duty hours, men are not allowed to become psychological casualties. A good leader will gainfully employ his men, but not run the risk of "hounding" them. The good leader will, with ingenuity, devise projects which will occupy their minds and at the same time improve their professional qualifications as soldiers during periods of inactivity in isolated places.
- (3) In cold weather areas the problem of obtaining supplies assumes major proportions. Supply economy must be enforced at all times. Clothing and equipment must be checked frequently and maintained in first class condition. Continuous individual supervision on the part of the leader is mandatory.
- (4) Under adverse conditions the standards of personal hygiene and group sanitation will gradually become lower if not carefully supervised. These lowered sanitation standards are a sure indication that supervision is lacking and that morale is slipping. Men must not be allowed to become lazy about their personal habits. Rules of personal hygiene and sanitation must be enforced by the leader at all times.

c. Insure That the Task is Understood, Supervised, and Accomplished. Orders issued must be well thought out. When required the leader must be prepared to take the leading part in carrying them out. Issuing an order is only the first and relatively small part of the leader's responsibility. The principal responsibility lies in supervision to insure that the order is properly executed. Cold regions can be friendly, but at the same time do not allow for errors or carelessness. An effective commander leads, not drives, therefore he must be able to differentiate between the two.

Section II. PECULIAR PROBLEMS OF LEADERS

7-3. Mental Processes

a. Cocoon-Like Existence. Many men, when bundled up in successive layers of clothing and with the head covered by a hood, tend to withdraw within themselves and to assume what has been termed a "cocoon-like existence." When so clothed, an individual's hearing and field of vision are greatly restricted and he tends to become oblivious to his surroundings. His mental processes become sluggish and although he looks, he does not see. These symptoms must be recognized by leaders and overcome. The leader must realize that it can happen to him and must be alert to prevent the growth of lethargy within himself. He must always appear alert to his men and prevent them from sinking into a state of cocoon existence. The remedy is simple and basic: **ACTIVITY**. Throw the hood back and engage in

physical activity. Although the remedy is simple, the recognition of the condition requires leadership.

b. Individual and Group Hibernation. This process is again a manifestation of withdrawal from the surrounding environment. It is generally recognized by a tendency of individuals to seek the comfort of sleeping bags, and by the group remaining in tents or other shelter at the neglect of their duties. In extreme cases, guard and security measures may be abandoned and the safety of the unit jeopardized. The remedy is simple: **ACTIVITY**. The leader must insure that all personnel remain alert and active. Rigid insistence upon proper execution of all military duties and the prompt and proper performance of the many group "chores" is essential.

c. Personal Contact and Communication. It

is essential that each individual and group be kept informed of what is happening. Due to the normal deadening of the senses a man left alone may quickly become oblivious to his surroundings, lose his sense of direction and his concern for his unit, and in extreme cases, for himself. He may become like a sheep and merely follow along, not knowing nor caring whether his unit is advancing or withdrawing. Each commander must take strong measures to insure that each small unit leader keeps his subordinates informed. This is particularly true of the company commanders keeping their platoon leaders informed, of platoon leaders informing their squad leaders, and the squad leaders informing their men. General information is of value but greatest importance must be placed on matters of immediate concern and interest to the individual. The chain of command must be rigidly followed and leaders must see that no man is left uninformed as to his immediate surroundings and situation.

d. Time and Space. Northern operations require that tactical commanders be given every opportunity to exploit local situations and take the initiative when opportunity is presented. Because of the increased amount of time involved in actual movement and the additional time required to accomplish even simple tasks, deviation from tactical plans is difficult. Tactical plans are developed after a thorough reconnaissance and detailed estimate of the situation. Sufficient flexibility is allowed each subordinate leader to use his initiative and ingenuity in accomplishing his mission. Time lags are compensated for by timely issuance of warning orders, and by anticipating changes in the tactical situation and the early issuance of fragmentary orders. Recognition of time and space factors is the key to successful tactical operations in northern areas.

e. Conservation of Energy. Two environments must be overcome in cold regions; one created by the enemy, and the second created by the climate and terrain. The climatic environment must not be permitted to sap the energy of the unit to a point where it can no longer cope with the enemy. The leader must be in superior physical condition or he cannot expend the additional energy required by his concern for his unit and still have the neces-

sary energy to lead and direct his unit in combat. He must remember that there are seldom any tired units, just *TIRED COMMANDERS*.

7-4. Summary

a. The leader who is selected to lead troops in areas of the world where the extreme cold and rugged, trackless terrain make living and fighting more difficult, will face one of the greatest challenges of his lifetime.

b. He must possess the highest qualities of leadership and have the initiative, the confidence, and the endurance to utilize these qualities to the utmost. He must have the woods man's knowledge of bushcraft and be able to navigate over rugged, trackless terrain. He must be physically strong, mentally alert, and able to stand on his own two feet and make decisions when on independent missions.

c. He must be more proficient than others, not only in command but in actual doing. He must be able to improvise and to teach his men to do likewise. He must be able to endure greater hardships than his men and be quick to recognize indications of mental lethargy. He must know the weaknesses and strengths in his men so that he may pair them more effectively in the buddy system. He must be firm when issuing orders but must also realize that as the men become colder and more miserable the time required to accomplish a task will be greatly increased. He must have patience and understanding and be able to lead without driving. In short, he must be the prototype of all leaders.

d. Military operations can be carried out successfully under the extreme conditions arid over the difficult terrain conditions peculiar to the cold areas of the world. The task of the troop leader under conditions such as these becomes more difficult, but not impossible.

e. The leader must face up to his responsibilities and expend unselfishly and tirelessly of his time and his talents toward the betterment of the safety, the welfare, and the morale of his men.

f. The troop leader who knows his job and who makes proper application of the principles of leadership will earn the confidence and respect of his men and will be successful in the accomplishment of his mission.