

Conference of European Armies
31 Oct 2008

First, let me say how honored I am to join all of you for your conference. Thank you Dan for the great overview of our panel and the kind introduction. I have enjoyed the panels so far very much – they've been informative and thought provoking, especially appreciate all of the discussions outside the room. I will take many of the points and comments back to Fort Leavenworth with me. Thank you General Ham for inviting me to participate.

I would like to explain the blue business cards in front of you. We are all very comfortable exchanging business cards, well we hand out cards that are not of a person but an organization. I will mention numerous manuals and publications in my comments this morning. Each of you can go to the website on the card and look at as well as other publications available for download. There is also a blog site where we are trying to get our officers comfortable with new media by interacting and exchanging in dialogue and challenging each other.

Before I begin I do have a disclaimer, much like my Canadian colleague – views that I'll present are those of the US Army and I passionately believe in.... UNLESS my Chief of the Army says otherwise, he is the last word!

I would like to speak about three broad areas this morning related to preparing our junior leaders for FSO. Each of these three areas alone are important but all three must be addressed and integrated to effectively prepare our junior leaders for what they will face in FSO. The areas I'd like to discuss are the desired leader characteristics, leader education and training and organizational aspects. Each of these plays an important role in the development and formation of our leaders, and it is incumbent upon us as senior leaders to serve as a forcing function to effect change.

The first area is the characteristics our junior leaders require. There are certain characteristics we have always sought in our leaders--many of us would categorize them as Type A- ambitious, competitive, winners and results oriented. Certainly we need all of these traits in our junior leaders but they alone are not sufficient in this era of persistent conflict. Our junior leaders must also be adaptable and agile as well as comfortable operating in ambiguous situations.

Our Army Leadership manual defines Adaptability as an effective change in behavior in response to an altered situation. This ability by junior leaders to "think on their feet" is critical in both Iraq and Afghanistan today, but may be even more in the future. There are numerous examples today of junior leaders making a critical decision based on the unique circumstances and limited information present that perhaps would not have happened 5 or 6 years ago --our leaders are learning to be adaptive in the environment and to understand the cultural implications associated with operating in Full Spectrum Operations.

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For example a young Lieutenant stated in a post Iraq interview :

“I am a combat infantryman. You want me to fire and maneuver; I can fire and maneuver—anywhere, in any terrain, anywhere you want to do it. Here, I have had to learn how sewage works. In my AO, I can brief you where all my pumps are, all my manholes, and where my sewage is broke.”

To operate effectively in this environment this junior leader had to adapt, yet while being adaptive is necessary..... it is not sufficient. Changing the plan or decisions based on the conditions is important, but having the ability to anticipate situations, to foresee circumstances not anticipated is even better, in other words, our junior leaders must be agile as well.

Our Army leadership manual states that leaders must possess the ability to stay ahead of changing environments and incomplete planning to preempt problems, especially in a complex and problematic setting as illustrated by another Lieutenant:

“You have to be flexible to what comes down. You could be doing a presence patrol . . . saying “Hi” to a kid and your vehicle is there a few hundred yards away getting mortared. Now you are talking to this little kid, and you hear on the radio that the rest of your platoon is over there getting mortared, and they want you to maneuver to try to catch the guy who just mortared. So you have to switch from one thing to another.”

I'm not sure anywhere in our history have we asked so much of our junior leaders. Possessing the mental agility to anticipate the problem, produce a unique solution, all within minute; while always mindful of the safety and security of civilians and their Soldiers clearly demands agile and adaptive leaders.

The final characteristic is our junior leaders must be able to operate in ambiguous situations. It is the ability to understand the commander's intent, and to be empowered to act based on changing situations.

As we all know the best plans do not survive first contact with the enemy, therefore it is inherent that our junior leaders understand the desired outcome. By incorporating the adaptable and agile traits, applying them to new, unique situations and still understand what the commander desires to accomplish is critical because the junior leader will be the one on the ground able to deal with ambiguity and make the critical decision that could have strategic consequences.

Although we recognize these individual characteristics are critical for our junior leaders the attributes need to be refined and developed. There is an axiom that states “you train for certainty and educate for uncertainty” which brings me to the second area

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I want address--the two main mechanisms we use to build the characteristics of our junior leaders- training and education.

In order to effectively train for FSO we need to incorporate scenario based training into almost every training event our Soldiers conduct. Our Army Leadership manual states leaders must be comfortable with and get used to experiencing the unfamiliar through diverse and dynamic challenges. The feedback I get from almost every group of junior leaders I meet with state this training approach must be sustained for the future. By changing the conditions in almost every facet of training we are providing our leaders more experiences in ambiguity to develop their ability to adapt and anticipate situations.

These training conditions can come from experiences we have within our force right now, almost every leader has a story of "this is what happened when." Our Army Center for Lessons Learned collects these observations, insights and lessons learned and makes them readily available for training exercises. Additionally each leader has their own story to tell which personalizes the event, further shaping the new conditions for our most junior leaders. We use our experiences to help train the next generation within our units, but the educational system also plays an important role.

In this context education is the structured environment, academic type of education junior leaders receive within our Officer and Noncommissioned Officer Education systems. These systems must embrace new methodologies that include adult learning practices as well as emerging technologies. The time of the old lecture based instruction has passed. We need incorporate all the numerous forms of education that technology affords us while leveraging the hands on experience of the instructor. Whereas we used to focus on Combat Operations in our instruction, we now recognize we must begin to focus on Full Spectrum Operations. Before 9-11 we were lectured based, now we are seminar based; We used to teach "what to think," now we teach "how to think."

This "how to think" requires additional skills such as critical thinking. For example, the curriculum at our Army CGSC does teach critical thinking. However it needs to become a central component in all of our education at all levels for both the NCOs and the Officers.

The ability to critically think in today's FSO environment is paramount. We certainly know how to teach our leaders the technical skills they need, but because of the demands of FSO we recognize the requirement to also develop the mental capacity of our junior leaders.

There are some interesting initiatives taking place in our schools --for example the Maneuver Captains Career Course conducts an exercise call "FSO Gauntlet" in which the Captain's serve as company commanders and issues orders, the Lieutenants in the basic course serve as the platoon leaders for the training, and the Lieutenants must execute the tasks given, but the cadre continually change the conditions--make them

uncertain and ambiguous in order to place the Lieutenants in stressful situations to require them to use their mental capacity to make a decision, as well as comply with the Commander's intent for the overall mission. The Captains who have participated in this program after returning from Iraq or Afghanistan have empathically stated this exercise is providing valuable skills necessary for future platoon leaders.

Our goal of this type of fused training- the formal aspect of education, coupled with hands on application of critical reasoning will provide our next generation of leaders the necessary skills to operate effectively regardless of the conditions.

With education and training designed to equip our junior leaders with the individual and team skills necessary for functioning in ambiguous situations, the next area I would like to discuss is the institution itself.

Each month I engage with students at all levels and the prevailing comment is the necessity to continually empower subordinates. Today's complex environment demands senior leaders to delegate to junior leaders more authority while in theater. For Soldiers who have served in theater this is a positive culture and we need to find a way to continue this after redeployment.

But what will be the institutional barrier to sustaining this type of empowerment when the unit redeploys and after the current operations subside? It is imperative that our institution establishes a climate that empowers our junior leaders and rewards those who excel the traits with being agile, adaptable and able to operate in ambiguity

In summary, we have looked at the Desired Leader Characteristics, the ways we Build those characteristics and the barriers to institutionalizing those characteristics is important, and each could be a subpanel by themselves, but I just wanted to provide enough information to spark some discussion of how
"We Should Train, and educate, our Junior Leaders for the 21st Century."

I would like to leave you with a final thought that as Senior Leaders we need to:

Train for Certainty

Educate for Uncertainty

Empower for Ambiguity and Autonomy

Thank you