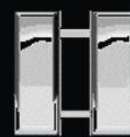




CompanyCommand

Building Combat-Ready Teams



To: Company-level Leaders
From: Company-level Leaders

Leader-Development Resources for Commanders

Most of us want to conduct regular leader-development sessions with our subordinate leaders, but few of us manage to do so. Our good intentions are overwhelmed by the relentless demands of command. Before we know it, weeks or even months have passed since we last gathered our key leaders and engaged with them in meaningful professional conversation about being Army leaders. This is not a problem of motivation; it is a problem of resources. Too often, we lack the time or expertise to develop leader-development plans and materials.

To assist our fellow commanders, the Company-Command Team recently launched an initiative to pro-

duce leader-development materials for company-level leaders. Called CCLPDs (Company Commanders' Leader Professional Development), each downloadable, mobile-friendly module is designed to spark professional conversation. The ready-to-use materials for each CCLPD typically include a short video clip of a company-level officer sharing an experience, sometimes a short related article and always suggested discussion questions. We envision commanders taking 15–45 minutes once a week, perhaps before PT or around a lunch table, to develop their leaders using CCLPDs, which are available in the CompanyCommand forum.

'Our No. 1 priority is, and will continue to be, leader development.'

—Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army

In this article, we share selections of materials from three of the CCLPDs, using edited transcriptions of the video clips. We invite you to make use of this article to conduct LPD sessions with your subordinate leaders. Please keep in mind that the following narratives come from real leaders describing their actual experiences in complex circumstances; do not expect to hear "school solutions" that have been staffed and sanitized. Instead, put yourself in their boots, reflect on the leadership challenges they describe, and gain a deeper understanding of those challenges by discussing them with your fellow professionals.

CCLPD #2: The Leader as Moral Compass (Controlling Emotions After an IED)

1st Lt. Stephen H., *speaking in January 2010 soon after completing a deployment to Afghanistan:*

"We're driving into the Tangi Valley [in Afghanistan], and that road is an IED hotbox. Let me paint the picture. The road runs parallel to a river. To our right is a steep cliff face, to our left is the river, and then farmland, and then another high ground. What the enemy usually does is run a command wire across the green zone [farmland], over the river and up to the road. Because there aren't many bridges, the river is an obstacle that makes it harder to catch the triggerman. So, we're driving in and my lead truck hits an IED. Well, every time an IED happens, obviously, all the Afghan civilians in the area run away. There's only one triggerman, but

lots of people run away. Soldiers always want to ... they would love nothing but ... if I just said, you know, open up with the .50-cals, no one would bat an eye and everyone would just do it.

"So, we hit an IED. My soldiers immediately traced the command wire to a spot, and they found a guy in the general area, but he didn't have anything on him—no incriminating evidence. When I arrived at the scene to question the detainee, a soldier was yelling and acting aggressively, with the squad leader looking on. I grabbed both the squad leader and soldier by their IBA handles, pulled them back, and told them to get the hell away from there right now and go sit in the trucks. Then I called another squad leader to the scene so I could start my TQ.

"That kind of stuff happens almost every time after an IED. Emotions run high and soldiers are angry—very angry. It's always the platoon leader who has to control the situation. Your responsibility to hold that line is something you absolutely cannot delegate. Soldiers are going to push as far as you'll let them, and if you let it happen one time, you're screwed. You'll have to re-establish the standard. So, as the leader you have to be at the point where you can avoid that. You *have* to be there with a detainee. Don't be on the radio while your squad leader is like, 'Hey, I'm TQing this guy.' Hell no—not after an IED! Get off the radio, get out there. I tell my platoon sergeant, 'Get on the radio. I'm going out there. I'm going to be there to make sure everything's OK.'"



The shock, devastation, and anonymity of IED ambushes can generate anger and a desire for revenge. 'You have to get control of that,' says 1st Lt. Adam Herndon, who survived this 2007 attack.

1st Lt. Adam Herndon, speaking at Camp Liberty, Baghdad, in May 2007:

"The other day when I was hit by an IED, I was pissed off. It's called being human. It's human nature to want to get revenge on the people that are trying to kill you. You have to get control of that.

"You have to be above that, you really do, and you have to make sure your soldiers are above that, too, because the second you start tolerating that kind of behavior, you open the door to war crimes. When you hear about things that happened in Haditha and Abu Ghraib—those black marks that, honest to God, I believe are isolated incidents—you realize how behaviors can get out of hand and come back to haunt you. And you cannot let this stuff happen because we have to operate on that higher, for-the-greater-good moral plane. Our enemy will do stuff that is completely unethical, stuff we can't do. We cannot fall into that, because that's what our enemy is trying to do. They're trying to sucker us in."

Recommended questions for discussion:

- What comes to mind as you listen to these leaders' experiences?
- How do the intense emotions whipped up in war challenge a unit's behavior?
- Why is it important to act ethically, even in war and if no one's watching?
- What are some things leaders can do—before, during and after an operation—to foster ethical conduct by our soldiers?

CCLPD #4: Fire Discipline and Minimizing Civilian Casualties

1st Lt. Mark B., speaking at Baghdad International Airport in May 2003:

"On Day 3 in Baghdad, we got the bright idea to reinforce success and roll out on another raid deeper into enemy territory. It was probably 2 kilometers into an enemy-held part of the city. As my scout platoon neared the objective, we made contact with about a squad-sized element that was securing an enormous cache located in the courtyard to a school. The cache was probably as big as the parking lot that you see here, a couple hundred meters by about 50 meters.

"We rolled in to secure the site and evaluate exactly what was in there and what it would take for us to blow it, if we wanted to blow it. We were cautious about chemical weapons and biological weapons being stored in there. We secured the cache, and as I got on the ground and was making my rounds, getting counts and identifying types of ammunition, the contact grew to about 30 personnel and just kept growing and growing and growing.

"My initial request for indirect fire support was denied. I tried to get a 'shake-and-bake' mission with a high-explosive/white-phosphorus mix to blow up and burn the cache at the same time. Battalion said it was too close to the civilian population for that. They authorized me to blow the cache in place, said it was my discretion. So we went ahead and rigged up demolition charges.

"As I was inside the cache, the enemy fired an RPG. It detonated next to me and started cooking off ammo. So I was in



Herndon led daily patrols in Baghdad during his 2006–07 deployment.

that courtyard with ammo cooking off all around. I had four or five charges set out there, and none of them had been initiated yet. So as I bounded back to the Bradleys, I popped the time fuses on each of those charges. That was one of the moments when I thought I was going to die, but thankfully didn't.

"We got out of there and the cache exploded. There were over 2,000 RPGs, 3,000 hand grenades and 30,000 rounds of small arms in that cache. We took a healthy bite out of the enemy's supply lines. The only bad part was that later we learned there had been a large number of civilian casualties due to our blowing the cache there. We also later found out that that site was protected by 150 *Fedayeen Saddam* who were located in the school that was right behind the courtyard. So we had a lot of contact there. And it was good that we took the fight away from the enemy. The 150 *Fedayeen* probably would have had a good chance of rolling up my flank the next day. But at the same time, it was bad to hear about the civilians. I had a lot of them come up to me, whose family had been killed, and explain to me that they don't blame us, they don't blame Americans. It was Saddam's fault for putting the weapons there. They completely understood, but it was still tough for me. The soldiers are still trying to get a grip on that one."

Capt. Buddy Ferris, *speaking at FOB Brassfield-Mora, Iraq, in June 2007:*

"A soldier's ability to turn it on and off is just amazing to see. I've seen it so

many times. A soldier smokes a bad guy 100 meters down the road, and at the same time he's picking up a baby and throwing it in a car and pushing a family aside, all as he's out there putting himself in front of those who are shooting at them. His ability to turn it on and off is just unreal.

"Personally, I was out there with Staff Sgt. Stanley's squad on a patrol going through a market in Samarra. We were getting drilled by an ambush—it was like a waterfall of tracers coming at us. And there we are, out in the middle of the street, and the insurgents—those total cowards—they were firing from behind a crowd of people. And you saw all of our guys moving to cover, holding their fire and waiting and yelling at people to move. I mean, we could have fired into that crowd at the enemy. And I can remember a particular image as I looked through my rifle sight, a look of horror on a mother as she's hiding her 1-year-old like this [cradling his arms across his chest] from the enemy's machine-gun fire. She's diving for cover, trying to protect her child, and all of our guys, not one of them fired indiscriminately. Some fired over the crowd's heads to get them down and at insurgents up on the roof, but not one of them fired into that crowd. They all stood there in the face of heavy fire, tracers hitting all over the place, and bravely waited until the space was clear—and then they let loose on the enemy. That whole squad ended up dying in an IED blast two days later."

Recommended questions for discussion:

- What comes to mind as you listen to these leaders' experiences?
- What are some factors that should be considered when there is an apparent trade-off between the risk to accomplishing the mission and the risk to protecting noncombatants?
- How much risk do you personally accept, and how much will you require or allow your soldiers to accept, in order to minimize the risk to civilians on the battlefield?
- 1st Lt. B's situation occurred during the 2003 attack into



Capt. Buddy Ferris in Iraq in 2007

Baghdad; Capt. Ferris' situation occurred during the 2007 surge in counterinsurgency operations. To what extent should the nature of the conflict (along the spectrum of conflict) impact the way we manage risks to civilians?

CCLPD #5: Withstanding the Initial Shock of Casualties

Capt. Rebecca Doak, 527th MP Co., speaking at FOB Salerno, Afghanistan, on Aug. 1, 2011:

"My company's QRF had gotten activated to take a wrecker out to an IED site. We had done that mission several times, so I didn't think anything of it. I was preparing for an upcoming operation when I received word that I needed to report to the battalion TOC with my first sergeant. I had no idea what we were going there for. As soon as we opened up the door to the TOC, I knew something was up because there were about 80 people in there. The ISR screen was up, showing some trucks, but I didn't see exactly what was going on. I walked forward to see the S-1, who was actually standing at the door waiting for me. He was holding one of my trip tickets.

"He said, 'Ma'am, I'm sorry. You lost a truck.'

"And I said, 'OK. Well, how are the soldiers?'

"He looked at me and said, 'No—they're all gone.'

"And I said, 'No, that's not possible. I just heard a request for a medevac, so they may only be injured. So you call back and you confirm.'

"He showed me a trip ticket and asked, 'Are these the battle roster numbers of your soldiers that were on the QRF today?'

"And I said, 'Yes, they are.'

"He said, 'They were killed in Zormat.'

"I replied, 'That's not possible because we support AO Strike, and Zormat is in a different AO. So go back and reconfirm.' So he reconfirmed, and I made him reconfirm four times before I accepted the fact that I had lost a squad leader, two soldiers and an interpreter in one catastrophic IED.

"When first sergeant and I finally determined that those four soldiers—well, three soldiers and the interpreter—were actually deceased, we had to go tell the soldiers. It was just before lunch. First sergeant put out an order to the company: 'Turn off your NIPRs [Internet connections], turn off your computers.' He didn't tell them why; he just made them turn them off. We have enough discipline in the company that they don't need to know why; they just execute. And then first sergeant called up the NCOs and told them to have all the soldiers go immediately to chow—no questions, no reasons why—but he wanted them to eat before we told them what had happened. Then first sergeant and I left the TOC to compose ourselves before we talked to the company.

"After chow, all the soldiers assembled in the chapel, with the chaplain and combat stress team also present. First sergeant started trying to tell our soldiers what had happened, and he got as far as, 'I called you all in here today ...' and then he couldn't say anything more. So I finished it. It wasn't graceful; I was crying as I spoke, but I had to explain to them that we had lost a truck. And the soldiers were the same way I was. They looked at me and were like, 'OK, why



On patrol in Iraq

are you calling us in for a truck?' Then I said, 'and all its occupants,' and you saw them all freeze—everybody was hoping it wasn't their soldiers. Then I started listing the names of the soldiers that we had lost.

"One of the soldiers ran out of the chapel. I stopped and made soldiers in his platoon go and bring him back in. And then I made the ground rule that nobody was allowed to be by themselves for the next 24 hours. These were our first casualties. A lot of my soldiers are young, right out of high school. They tend to catastrophize, so you have to watch them for suicidal thoughts right after you break some bad news like this. I told them that it didn't matter if they talked to each other, if they talked to the chaplain or to 'combat stress' or anybody else, or if they just sat in silence together, but for the next 24 hours, they had to be buddy-teamed. That way they had some kind of tie, some kind of account-

CompanyCommand Glossary

.50-cal: M2 Browning heavy machine gun

AO: Area of Operations

Bradley: M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle

CCLPD: Company Commanders' Leader Professional Development

FOB: Forward Operating Base

IBA: Interceptor body armor

IED: Improvised explosive device

ISR: Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance

LPD: Leader professional development

MP: Military Police

NIPR: Non-classified Internet protocol router

PT: Physical training

QRF: Quick reaction force

RPG: Rocket-propelled grenade

TOC: Tactical operations center

TQ: Tactical questioning



A memorial service held in March 2007 in Iraq honored six 82nd Airborne Division soldiers who were killed by an IED blast. Those memorialized were Spc. Ryan M. Bell, Staff Sgt. Justin M. Estes, Pfc. Cory C. Kusters, Sgt. Andrew C. Perkins, Spc. Justin A. Rollins and Staff Sgt. Robert M. Stanley. Spc. Joshua Boyd died later from wounds suffered in the attack.

ability to make certain that if one of them started having bad thoughts of suicide or something like that, they would go get help.

"I gave them the details as I knew them about how our soldiers had died, leaving out the more graphic stuff. I emphasized the fact that they didn't suffer, and then I explained what combat stress does. Using my psychology background, I explained that there are some stages of grief that are normal—the anger, the belief that it's not happening—so when they started going through those they would see it as normal and not be super stressed. I let them know that if they were having difficulties sleeping, there was no shame in going to get something to assist them, like a sleeping aid. From a command perspective, I wanted to ensure they knew about all the resources available to help them. And it worked. The platoon is actually tighter than it ever was before. NCOs have stepped up trying to take care of each other, and we're basically moving on and executing missions and doing the best that we can to honor our fallen soldiers' memories."

Recommended questions for discussion:

- What are some things leaders can do to prepare their units to respond resiliently to the shock of suffering casualties?
- What are some things that Capt. Doak did that you'd want to do in similar circumstances?
- What are your personal experiences with death? How might they influence how you respond to a death in your unit?

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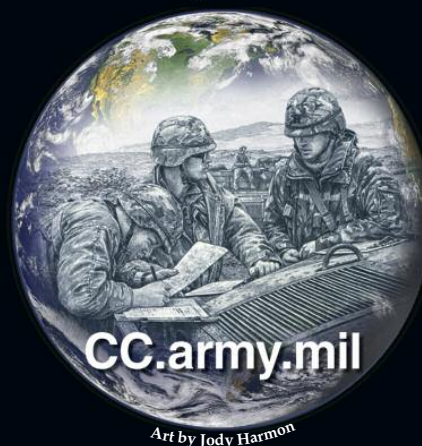
Leaders come and go; their enduring legacy is the leaders they develop along the way. Command is a privilege that

entails the awesome responsibility to develop the next generation of Army leaders. CCLPDs can be one tool in your leader-development kitbag. We also recommend the video case studies at <http://cape.army.mil/case-studies/>.

Company commanders: Share your own stories and learn from your peers' experiences in the CompanyCommand professional forum: <http://CC.army.mil>. Follow us on Twitter: @CoCmd.



**Connecting in conversation...
...becoming more effective.**



Art by Jody Harmon

Have you joined your forum?