**Movies that Matter: The Lost Battalion**

**1-16 IN Leader Development Event**

1. Purpose: The purpose of 1-16 IN Movies that Matter: The Lost Battalion event is threefold: to conduct small group leader development, to facilitate professional discussion amongst the officer corps of the battalion, and to use lessons learned from a movie to improve our organization.
2. Overview of Program: This event is a facilitated discussion group using a movie as a vehicle to discuss leaders and leadership. Movies are selected by the Leader Development Council and are presented to the Battalion Commander for approval. Movies are military or leadership movies in nature and are purposely selected to be ones that are not as necessarily well-known or as popular as recent military classics. This allows the discussion group to be relatively fresh and new to the majority of participants.
3. Execution: This event can be done as a small group or as a large group. The movie facilitator or facilitators watches the movie before the event and selects several points on leaders or leadership to ask during the event. A venue is determined for the group to watch a movie and is reserved. The event starts with the facilitator leading an introduction, the group watches the movie to the midway point, the facilitator pauses the movie at the midway point to ask 2-3 open ended questions to the group to get discussion going, the group then watches the rest of the movie and at the end the facilitators ask 2-3 open ended questions. The event ends with a final thought from the facilitator and then the group ends the event. It is best to remind the participants in the event that the movie and history are (of course) slightly different and that the leader development event is based upon the story presented in the movie and not necessarily historical fact.
4. Selected Movie: *The Lost Battalion* (2001) Running Time 1:40
5. Movie Synopsis: October 5, 1918. The Germans gave them two options. Surrender. Or die. A Battalion Commander must find a way to lead his unit out alive. Cut off from food, water, ammunition, they managed to hold on for five days until they were rescued.
6. Introduction: The War Department authorized the formation of the 308th Infantry Regiment August 1917, assigning it to the 154th Infantry Brigade of the 77th Infantry Division. It was composed of men drafted from predominately immigrant communities throughout the greater New York City area. Its members spoke 42 different languages or dialects. Upon reaching Europe, the 77th Division was assigned to the British command where it trained with the British army until early June 1918. Following the completion of this additional training, the Regiment was moved up to the front near the town of Badonviller. In doing so, they became some of the first units of the National Army to take front line positions. The Regiment remained there until the end of August, resulting in losses equal to nearly one third of its strength. The extensive losses were replaced by recruits from the American West, some still largely untrained. The battalion was soon ordered back to the front partake in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive is known as the bloodiest operation of World War I for American forces. The American Expeditionary Force lost 26,277 Americans killed in action and 95,000 wounded in action. For the “Lost Battalion” of the original 554 troops involved in the advance, 107 had been killed, 63 were missing and 190 were wounded. Only 194 were able to walk out of the ravine.
7. Main Character: MAJ Charles Whittlesey was born in Florence, Wisconsin, where his father worked as a logger, and he attended school in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He moved with his family in 1894 to Massachusetts, where he attended Williams College and was a member of St. Anthony Hall. He earned a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1908. Soon after graduating he formed a law partnership in New York City. Influenced by his friend and roommate at Williams, Max Eastman, Whittlesey spent several years as a member of the American Socialist Party before resigning his membership in disgust over what he viewed as the movement's increasing extremism. Whittlesey took a leave from his partnership at the start and joined the U.S. Army commissioning into the Army as a Captain in the 308th Infantry.
8. Discussion Questions Overview: These questions are a guide event facilitators and are to provoke conversation not direct it.
9. Discussion Questions:
   1. Before Movie Discussion:
      1. What do you do when you’re given an order you disagree with? Think about this question as we start the movie we will come back to it.
   2. Mid-Movie Discussion: Pause movie at 308th Officers Meeting (47 min mark as it transitions to scene at 77th ID HQ
      1. What do you do when you’re given an order that you disagree with? Why do we still follow orders we personally disagree with?
      2. How would you describe the leadership of MAJ Whittlesey?
      3. Why do you think MAJ Whittlesey focused on minute details in this battalion?
   3. End of Movie Discussion:
      1. When an NCO disagrees with an order we give or brings a concern about the mission how do we address it?
      2. How did the 308th hold out against all odds? What made them pull together as a unit and continue to fight for five days?
      3. Reflect back on the dogtags that MAJ Whittlesey carried with him. What is the burden of leadership? How do we justify the cost of war?
10. Postscript: Whittlesey received a battlefield promotion to lieutenant-colonel and returned to the United States as a war hero, receiving one of the first three Medals of Honor awarded for valor in the war. (One of the other two went to his second-in-command, George G. McMurtry.) In November 1921, Whittlesey acted as a pallbearer at the burial of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, along with fellow Medal of Honor recipients Samuel Woodfill and Alvin York. A few days later he booked passage from New York to Havana aboard a passenger ship. He was reported missing at 8:00 a.m. the next day. He is presumed to have committed suicide by jumping overboard, although no one reported seeing him jump and Whittlesey's body was never recovered.