



CASE STUDY NO. 9
COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

Leading Healing in a Broken Unit

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COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

Complex operations encompass stability, security, transition and reconstruction, and counterinsurgency operations and operations consisting of irregular warfare (United States Public Law No 417, 2008). Stability operations frameworks engage many disciplines to achieve their goals, including establishment of safe and secure environments, the rule of law, social well-being, stable governance, and sustainable economy. A comprehensive approach to complex operations involves many elements—governmental and nongovernmental, public and private—of the international community or a “whole of community” effort, as well as engagement by many different components of government agencies, or a “whole of government” approach. Taking note of these requirements, a number of studies called for incentives to grow the field of capable scholars and practitioners, and the development of resources for educators, students and practitioners. A 2008 United States Institute of Peace study titled “Sharing the Space” specifically noted the need for case studies and lessons. Gabriel Marcella and Stephen Fought argued for a case-based approach to teaching complex operations in the pages of *Joint Forces Quarterly*, noting “Case studies force students *into* the problem; they put a face on history and bring life to theory.” We developed this series of complex operations teaching case studies to address this need. In this process, we aim to promote research and to strengthen relationships among civilian and military researchers and practitioners.

The [Center for Complex Operations](#) (CCO) emphasizes the importance of a whole of government approach to complex operations and provides a forum for a community of practice and plays a number of roles in the production and distribution of learning about complex operations, including supporting the compilations of lessons and practices.

Dr. Karen Guttieri at the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) provided the research direction and overall leadership for this project.

Leading Healing in a Broken Unit

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LEADING HEALING IN A BROKEN UNIT

What began as an orderly process to allow local civilians to pass through a crowded entry control point (ECP) ended when a lone man detonated explosives strapped to his body. The blast killed several marines and severely wounded nearly a dozen others. Military personnel had been processing civilians as usual that afternoon when the suicide bomber entered the checkpoint. Standing between the barriers, he raised his arms in preparation for a search when he triggered the explosive device. The blast radiated in front of him on the interior side of the ECP, causing harm to those in close range.

Characteristic of his command style, the senior enlisted leader (SEL), Roger Selden, was working directly with his men at the ECP. Their mission was to secure a small but significant city in their area of operations (AO). At the checkpoint that day, he had noticed the nervous and agitated behavior of the apparent suicide bomber, and at the last moment he positioned himself in front of one of his men, shielding him from the blast. Selden's act preserved the lives of several of his men, but he was killed.

ROGER SELDEN, SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER

Selden was an integral part of the day-to-day operations that led the ground combat element (GCE). This was his third tour to the Middle East. He had spent most of his time in reconnaissance units and had moved up the enlisted ranks, earning respect from his superiors and subordinates alike. Earlier in his career, he had been deployed to the Middle East for Operation Desert Storm. Now, with twenty-plus years in the service, he was months away from retirement to take up a new life with his family. He loved the military, but he now felt he was being called to serve his country in a different way. He also wanted to complete his education and go into business or local

politics because of what he had learned in the military. After much discussion with his family, he had decided it was time to make the move.

Selden was blessed with an outstanding wife, Julie. The two had known each other since kindergarten when, after the second day, she threw a toy airplane at him that cut him just above his left eye. Selden enjoyed telling others that after twenty-two years of marriage, Julie still “knocks his block off” when he gets out of line. Roger and Julie were the parents of three children.

As a leader of other enlisted men, Selden understood that not everyone felt compelled or called to join the military. And yet, he found ways to help them discover what they wanted to become as a result of their decision to join, regardless of what it was initially. He was known to ask questions like, “As you think about your life, who has helped you become who you are today?” and “What do you want to become regardless of what happens in your life?”

“Selden was like an experienced weatherman,” said a former commanding officer who had known him for more than ten years. “It was as if he could look at weather patterns and with accuracy anticipate what a storm would do and when it would hit. Selden had an uncanny ability to predict how his men would receive his leadership.”

On one occasion while with his men on patrol, he noticed their watch conditions and its effect on their morale.

“You’ve been working long hours out here,” he said, “and it’s not the most exciting place to spend long hours. Looks like you need more rotations and variability in your watch schedules.”

“Yes, sir. We’re kind of feeling burned out,” said a junior enlisted person.

“Sir. Not much happening here, and we’re getting pretty bored.”

“Remember to stay vigilant. Everyone’s depending on you. Tell you what, though, I’ll check with the OIC [officer in charge] and see what we can do about some rotations.”

He also knew when it would be most helpful to push or persuade, to be strict or to be more democratic, and how the person he was working with would respond. One time out with his men, he noticed them slipping.

“I’m not real happy with what I’m seeing here,” he told them. “You’re being lazy when discharging weapons. That’ll lead to mistakes, and it’s going to cost someone. Safety is a top priority around here! And I don’t want to be in a position where I’m standing against you when it comes to being reprimanded.”

Selden had not always had a strong awareness of others and his impact on them. It was something he had intentionally started working on not long after he and Julie started dating steadily. Some of the biggest difficulties he and Julie had experienced in their relationship centered on Selden’s tendency to think he was being helpful when Julie did not see it that way. For example, Julie would talk to him about a frustrating day at work, and Selden would jump in and try to “solve her problems,” or he would try to encourage her, when all she wanted was someone to listen.

A fellow marine who knew both Julie and Roger well commented on Roger's growing ability to understand others: "Early conflicts taught Roger to learn to look more outward and try to understand others enough so that when he did interject or try to help someone, he knew them enough to know whether what he said or did would be appropriate and more accurately fit what they really needed."

It was routine before deployment for Selden to order his men to spend their time taking care of family needs and expressing their confidence in those they were leaving behind. While away from home, he would often ask his men when the last time was that they had spoken to their family and when the last time was that they had heard from them. He encouraged his men to tell him "the latest." He had an ability to remember the details and would often follow up on the events they shared weeks after the fact.

Since the beginning of the current deployment, Selden had felt that his men needed to keep focused and engaged so they would not get distracted and discouraged with too much down time. Selden would show up in the administrative section (in the Headquarters and Service Company, or H&S Company) and order his junior enlisted men to work a particular task, but this would often occur without first contacting the officer in charge of the section, usually an O-3 rank. The OIC of the section had less experience than the SEL, so violations in the command structure were not uncommon, but the OIC used his authority and chain of command on several occasions to set things right. It was ultimately the OIC's responsibility to maintain the prioritized schedule in his section and ensure that requirements from any source first be presented to him. He met with the senior enlisted leader as well as the GCE commanding officer (CO) and often with the executive officer to correct inconsistencies in the chain of command.

The CO or XO [executive officer] routinely called on Selden for advice when dealing with enlisted matters. Selden would first counsel his own men before he sent them to the CO, who, on recommendation from the SEL, would demote individuals based on their behavior. Likewise, when he saw an opportunity to praise his men, Selden would recommend awards or promotions to the CO. He was known to make more recommendations for awards and promotions to the CO than any other leader; yet, Selden always had convincing documentation to back up his recommendation. As a result, almost all of the requests were granted. When training future leaders, Selden would tell them, "It is important to catch your men at their best, and acknowledge it when you see it. Be specific with them so there is no doubt in their minds about the good you see in them." If inspections were coming and he knew about it, he would tell his men to show their best and be their best. He then would expect solid feedback from those conducting inspections on what could be done better. Selden's philosophy was that the best developmental feedback was built upon and took you beyond the best you could show.

When not in combat, Selden was known for recommending lighter punishments when he saw a need to maintain morale over creating frustration

4 GROUND COMBAT ELEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

among the enlisted ranks. Before entering the AO, sometimes the enlisted men missed curfew. Those involved were to receive some degree of reprimand for not abiding by the rule, but it was Selden who would step in and, using his judgment, recommend a less severe sentence. What often was not generally known was that Selden would later meet alone with the enlisted man who had received a lighter punishment and tell him, "I know who you are, and I know what you are capable of." Selden believed mistakes in non-critical areas were tolerable and could serve as "teachable moments" for his men. Few would ever disappoint Selden a second time. In the combat zone, however, Selden had little tolerance for lax behavior. He often shared his discipline philosophy with his men and the officers: "There is a time to learn and a time to perform, and a time to learn about how you performed. The combat zone is not the time for lighter punishments when avoidable mistakes are made."

Selden was often with his men on combat patrols, working at the ECP, or simply spending down time with them and joking with them openly. He wanted to be approachable and not only knew the names of his men but also knew their spouses and families or girlfriends.

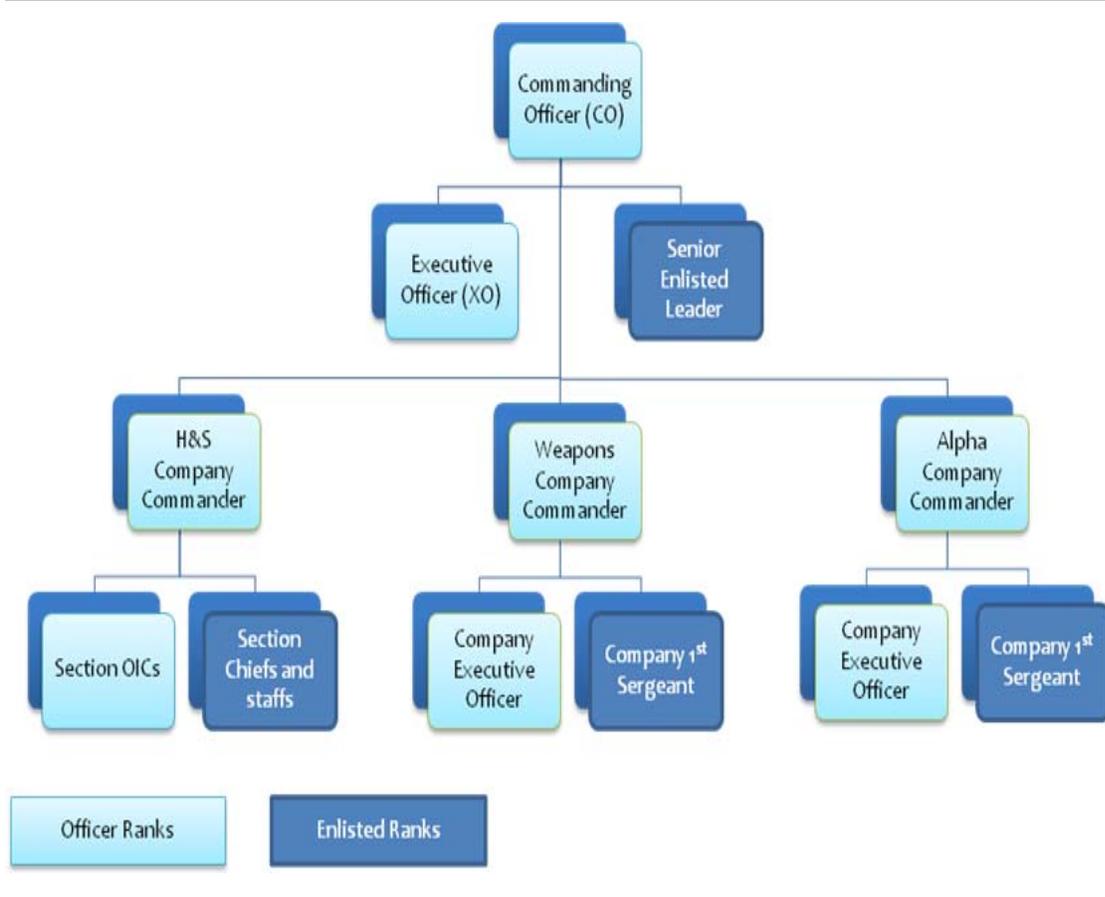
The commanding officer knew Selden well. They had worked together in previous assignments. His assessment speaks to Selden's deep commitment to serving his men:

"Selden helped his men draw on the legacy of the Marine Corps, a legacy of honor, courage, and commitment. Selden embodied these qualities. He upheld honor, exemplifying the ultimate standard of ethical and moral conduct, maintaining unflinching personal integrity, and holding himself and others accountable for their actions. He demonstrated courage and moral strength, which sustained him when faced with tough choices, hardships of combat, and adverse consequences. He was fully committed and dedicated to being a Marine. He voluntarily accepted assignments. In fact this was his third deployment to the AO."

GROUND COMBAT ELEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

The GCE is one element of a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) comprised of both marines and sailors. The GCE includes its own headquarters staff (H&S Company) with several sections, and at least two companies (see Exhibit 1). At the senior level is the commanding officer (CO), followed by the executive officer (XO), who works for the CO and spends most of his time managing the day-to-day business of the sections, primarily in the H&S Company. The CO's counterpart on the enlisted side is the SEL. An officer (designated as the officer in charge, or OIC) over each section had responsibility for his staff. The structure of the two companies is similar; each has a company commander, a company XO, and a first sergeant with a

Exhibit 1. Ground Combat Element Organizational Structure.



number of platoons. The administrative section in the H&S Company was the important player after the suicide bombing.

The GCE was one with a long history in both world wars, the Korean War, Vietnam, various places in the Pacific (i.e., Guam, the Philippines), and later in the Middle East. Those attached to the unit took great pride in being a part of it. Known for its courage, honor, and cohesiveness through challenging operations, the unit had a deeply embedded culture that caused marines to identify strongly with the mission, purpose, and decades-long history. As an organization, the unit instilled a sense of purpose and a high degree of excitement for their missions.

Selden spent considerable time with the H&S Company but also, as mentioned, worked alongside his men from the other two companies in the field. Their mission was to oversee ground security operations, train local forces, and search out insurgents. Their rules of engagement were clear: If a marine felt threatened by an enemy force or by an incident that was taking place, he was authorized to engage. The officers leading the various sections and combat elements held ultimate responsibility for the actions and activi-

ties of their individual units. These officers and their enlisted counterparts motivated and disciplined them and ensured high morale and cohesion despite potential challenges.

PREDEPLOYMENT

Senior military officials organized the MAGTF several months before deployment into CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command). The predeployment workups took nearly six months before leaving homes and families. The MAGTF organized the GCE in May—comprised of approximately 1,200 individuals across several units. They did not depart until October. Early on, they spent time organizing the unit and integrating new members who would be deployed with them. They took time to get to know each other up and down the chain of command and used daily personal fitness and physical training sessions to build camaraderie. Through these activities, the ground, air, and logistics elements became increasingly familiar with each other. Each exercise in the workup cycle served as a building block to facilitate troop readiness and integration with all the command elements of the MAGTF.

Throughout the entire six-month workup, the unit trained as though their destination were the combat zone, even though they knew this deployment would be noncombat. The workup cycle was physically demanding and, during the training exercises, troops were away from families more than usual. The often dangerous and life-threatening hardships early on helped them establish mission purpose. For example, the unit preparations included simulated training and live fire exercises, as if the unit were living and working in the area of operations. The training command organized live fire zones complete with realistic simulations of IED attacks, house-to-house combat, and mortar attacks. The purpose of these exercises was to develop individual-, team-, and unit-level war-fighting skills. The urban warfare simulations provided practical applications for dealing with close quarters battle, urban reconnaissance, and surveillance training. Moreover, as they trained, the marines endured heat exhaustion, sleep deprivation, and the psychological effects of facing enemy combatants. While difficult, these exercises bolstered the unit's collective confidence—the unit even achieved significant training certifications and awards designating them as combat ready.

Leadership discussions in the predeployment phase established performance standards and reinforced a strong command-and-control military culture. Even though officers in the unit had less combat experience than the senior enlisted leader, the CO encouraged them to work closely with their enlisted counterparts, gain their support, and draw on their experience. Junior officers responded positively to these recommendations, often deferring to the senior enlisted leader on matters dealing with the enlisted men in the unit. Junior officers were instructed to guide the teams and ensure

adherence to policy and procedures from a command perspective. Junior officers had responsibility for operations in the forward operating base, and the CO reinforced this in leadership discussions: “You are the leaders in these units. You will be called upon to manage crisis. You are to be strong in the face of these challenges. Your example and courage will not be lost on those you serve.”

Selden respected the senior officers’ leadership counsel and help. He listened to and willingly accepted feedback from senior leadership and junior officers with whom he worked closely, and he always found ways to improve the performance of his men. As a result, he motivated his force from the get-go. Throughout the predeployment period, Selden was often seen encouraging his men and motivating them when they felt dejected and beaten. On one particularly difficult training day, the simulated enemy combatants had foiled their attempt to discover a weapons store, and they were nearly “killed” when the combatants planted an IED in their access road. After the training, Selden could sense the frustration of his men. He spoke with them frankly about their mistakes and then provided them some new strategies for facing the enemy. He shared stories of his own failures, particularly his own experiences in combat and how he had made it through tough situations.

At the end of the predeployment cycle, the unit began training with their navy counterparts. This involved transferring gear and equipment back and forth from their home base to port where they loaded and debarked to sea several times over a six-week period. The at-sea training exercises tested core capabilities and shipboard interoperability between the navy vessels and the MAGTF. Transitioning from land to sea introduced additional challenges, particularly for new marines who had not been at sea. The “Blue-Green” integration meant marines learned “ship life,” became familiar with new routines in a unique environment, experienced what it was like to deal with small quarters onboard, and integrated with a different service. Navy sailors and marines worked alongside each other loading ships, perfecting routines to place on board equipment and supplies, and organizing ships for the deployment. Their initial mission was not a combat deployment but rather a strategic force protection.

By and large, the unit was prepared for their overseas deployment. They proved they could work well together, and they had confidence in each other’s ability to handle important aspects of the mission. The enlisted marines were feeling the calm before the storm. Enlisted leaders had prepared their men with precision and exactness. The predeployment exercises enabled them eventually to achieve “special operations capable,” a highly coveted certification indicating readiness and ability to perform a range of specialized operations, particularly to deploy into combat in CENTCOM’s AO.

The well-conditioned unit, ready and anxious to pull out, embarked in October. Departure press releases captured enlisted marines’ enthusiasm, confidence, and mission-ready focus: “The operating tempo has been

unbelievable.” “The op tempo is as high as it has ever been.” “We’re prepared to execute any mission we’re assigned as the theater reserve.” “We’re ready for everything from sustained combat operations ashore to humanitarian relief operations and everything in between.”

DEPLOYMENT

All members of the command headquarters and the population of marines and sailors within the unit were hoping to deploy into combat. As the unit was deployed, several troops began to ask questions. One junior officer asked whether they would be sent to the front and how that information would be communicated to them. Another asked how long the deployment would be and what resources would be required to stand up an operating base. These questions were unclear at the time of initial debarkation and would only become clearer piecemeal. Unlike the last deployment, what the unit’s members knew they were headed to a combat zone, this time deployment was not a given unless CENTCOM requested the support. “As far as I know, that’s not going to happen this time,” said a staff sergeant, “but then, that could all change any time.” For the early part of the deployment, they spent time doing bilateral exercises with allied countries. These bilateral engagements, training-like exercises with other host nations, further enhanced the unit’s specialized expertise and increased their desire to be in the theater of operations.

While they were not planning to be in combat, the senior staff knew how much the MAGTF wanted to be sent to the combat area of operations. They sought the opportunity to be part of the action rather than on the sidelines. As a result, senior leaders were doing their best to see if they could be part of the troop buildup. Even after they pulled out of port and sailed toward CENTCOM, their higher headquarters were in a political struggle to decide whether or not to send them into combat, because they were only designated as “strategic theater reserve” in the outlying areas. Senior leaders in the unit attempted to convince higher headquarters their unit should be sent to the front lines, given their special training and exceptional readiness status. On board the ships, there was great anticipation about being in the combat zone; many were quite anxious to be sent into the area of combat.

Marines and sailors at the lower levels continuously asked whether they would be part of the troop buildup. The same answer always came back from their officers: “We don’t know,” or “We’ve not been told anything,” and “We are doing our best to get an answer to your question.” The tension mounted: originally, the unit knew its mission did not include combat operations, but as a unit they had trained *as if* they would be. Now the MAGTF senior officers were sending mixed signals, which resulted in some ambivalence about their ultimate mission.

One junior officer summed up the sentiments of many:

“You spend so many hours in preparation to execute on a mission. We are ready for that. I feel like I am in high school football again where you get tired of 2 and 3-a-day practices and hitting each other. There comes a point where you are ready to face someone else and put your training and preparation to the test.”

The uncertainty surrounding their deployment was exacerbated when their families read the newspaper headlines: “MAGTF Sent to Combat” before the men in the unit even knew. Families then contacted their marines, asking whether it was true or not and why they had not received the news directly from them—why had the leadership not used the proper communication channels to relay the information? The servicemen could not give their families an answer. While excited about the prospects of being sent into combat, the marines criticized the poor communications, which created a stir among the ranks: Junior officers and enlisted marines found out they would debark and begin operations before their superiors told them, and they wondered whether their superior officers were knowingly withholding information. Some marines expressed their dismay and loss of trust: “Do they know what our mission is?” “Don’t they think of these things before deployment?” and, “I’m not sure these leaders really know what they are doing.” And while the unit’s senior officers knew it was their duty to inform the men about the mission, they believed that someone at the Pentagon had leaked the information to the press. Yet, public affairs officials made no public statement about the leak.

Selden responded to these concerns by placing emphasis on being patient:

“Patience isn’t merely waiting for something to happen. You and I know we are ready to go, but being patient also requires actively working to take things as they come and trust that our senior leadership knows what is best for us, and when. Patience is not passive resignation, either. It is not simply enduring this wait but enduring it well. Let’s show them we can do that.”

When they finally arrived and debarked, the MAGTF divided geographically and functionally. Over a period of several weeks, the GCE secured their area and set up their command outpost. Enlisted marines and officers lived in primitive conditions as they commenced operations. They immediately began conducting combat operations and took casualties while living in very austere conditions. They slept in shell holes and later filled Hercules Engineering Solutions Consortium (HESCO) barriers with dirt and sand to create makeshift quarters (see Exhibits 2 and 3). It seemed that this early period, while testing the unit’s previous training, helped establish stronger unit cohesiveness. They were far from home doing their duty and being proud of the difference they were making in their area of operations.

In large measure, the GCE achieved several visibly significant results early in their deployment. The area of operations had been a trouble spot for U.S. and coalition forces previously, due to its reputation for heavy violence

Exhibit 2. Hercules Engineering Solutions Consortium (HESCO) barriers.

HESCO barriers are expandable, wire-mesh cells shown here filled on site with earthen material for use in civil and military applications: entry control points, command outposts, and force protection, as well as flood control and other Homeland Security contexts. In this photo, seabees assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5 lift a HESCO barrier into alignment during a project at Camp Bastion in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, April 4, 2009.



Source: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Patrick W. Mullen III, released/090411-N-8547M-025.

and as a hideout for insurgents. This did not deter the unit from its mission. Based on lessons learned, they secured the area, swept through the town, and set up security checkpoints. They turned their attention to working with locals with the intent of building trust among the town leaders and prominent individuals, even training locals in counterinsurgency methods. Most importantly, they were instrumental, primarily through trust building, in helping the local population become weary of the intimidation and murder carried out by insurgents. In the weeks since they took over, the marines experienced a noted decrease in violence as local people grew tired of the insurgents. Ultimately the GCE forces were able to break the grip of anti-coalition forces in the AO.

DELAYED REDEPLOYMENT

Since arriving, the unit had experienced early excitement and visible accomplishments, but the deployment began to wear on as the unit spent Thanks-

Exhibit 3. HESCO Barriers Being Filled.

A Seabee assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5 uses an up-armored front-end loader to fill HESCO barriers during a project at Camp Bastion in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, April 4, 2009.



Source: U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Patrick W. Mullen III, released/090411-N-8547M-011.

giving, Christmas, New Year's, and Valentine's Day away from home. As the holiday seasons passed, the unit began to realize that the time was coming to wrap up their mission, but for some unknown reason higher headquarters postponed their scheduled departure. Earlier questions about the unit's leadership effectiveness surfaced yet again, this time with respect to the unit's extended deployment: "Maybe we're still here because we've been *too* successful." And, "There certainly seems to be a lack of forward planning and poorly outlined timetables from higher headquarters."

Regardless, casualties continued to mount, information of the return remained inconsistent, and those who had been motivated for combat lost steam. Anxiety associated with unclear timetables began to wear on everyone. Complaints from the men about the extensions increased. They simply wanted to go home, and the more time that passed, the more anxious they became.

The CO, junior officers, and the SEL watched the unit's morale decrease as the men lost sight of the mission and defied safety rules. They became complacent about wearing their gear inside the compound, putting on their helmets outside the compound, and discharging their weapons properly. In

some cases, they did not represent the United States with integrity and honor. There were incidences of stealing from each other and possibly disrupting the lives of and violating those they intended to protect. While nothing newsworthy occurred (such as an incident like Abu Ghraib), signs of disrespect for the local people increased. On several occasions when they used a local's home as a lookout point, the unit would leave a mess or move and damage personal belongings or not return them.

Selden was challenged with reining in their poor behavior. They continued to respect him and aligned their actions with his orders, especially when things were getting tough.

“Yes, things were tough, but Selden did not show any sign of cracking, and that is what I would say kept most of us going. Had Selden started to complain or even just show signs of irritation with the situation, we would have felt it was license to voice our frustrations and things would have started to go sour real fast. That did not happen,” said one enlisted marine.

Nonetheless, the unit felt as though it might never leave. Furthermore, many of the members of the unit were dealing with miserable living conditions while conducting combat operations twenty-four hours a day for three to four months, despite any efforts by Selden to alleviate stress from their patrols. As the days progressed, the lack of information on a return date and the physical and mental fatigue seemed to reach a peak when the suicide bomber killed their senior enlisted leader, Roger Selden.

AFTER THE BLAST

The suicide bomb detonated at the ECP rocked the surrounding area. The men back at their command outpost not only heard but felt the blast, too. In the chaos of the moment, radio chatter immediately increased as squad leaders, company leaders, and the command outpost worked to determine the location and seriousness of the bombing. Within minutes, the GCE commander, though wounded, took control of the airwaves, silencing the chatter. Back at the command, the administrative section's OIC heard from the marine reporting the casualties. They shut down communications and waited until the convoy arrived at the command outpost. Upon his arrival, the reporting marine quietly indicated that Selden did not make it. Immediately, a somber mood of disbelief filled the room.

An airlift quickly removed severely wounded men and those killed in action out of the area of operations, and the work of recovery began. For the next three days, the GCE administrative section made contact with officials stateside to let them know what had happened, who had died in the blast, and which family members to inform. Together they prepared packages for sending the deceased marine's personal effects. His unit memorialized Selden while still deployed, and those at home followed suit. Some state-

ments about Selden during various memorial services characterize his effect (see Exhibit 4).

The new SEL arrived a week or so later. His reception was rather cold. Regardless of his years of experience, he was not a member of the team. He had not trained with the unit and had not established the same rapport. One OIC said of the new SEL, “He was nothing to us. He did not even compare with SEL Selden. He simply filled a position and had really no leadership influence in the unit.” Of course, the new SEL was well aware of the big shoes he was filling—he did not even stand in the deployment picture with his men and those for whom he had direct responsibility.

Now the unit faced new questions: How would Selden’s loss affect the unit? Would his loss paralyze the unit? What impact would this death and the subsequent overextended deployment have on their mission focus? Would a new leader be able to facilitate recovery and healing in the unit?

Exhibit 4. Statements about Roger Selden from Fellow Marines and Family.

Marine Corporal

“Roger Selden saved my life. I am forever grateful for what he did for me.

All of his tours of duty weren’t mandatory; he volunteered. He was battle-tested and completely willing to do anything for his men, so much so that he stepped in front of the terrorist at the control point to save my life. When he saw the terrorist approaching, he didn’t hesitate to think about the political reasons for his actions, nor did he waste precious time to consider the moral foundations for the war. Instead, he saw a threat and responded to it.”

Close Friend

“He was not born into a military background. In fact, no one in his immediate family had ever served in the military. Yet, from as long as anyone can remember, his favorite holiday was the Fourth of July, and he deeply loved the freedoms he enjoyed in the United States. I’ve heard from others that Selden was an avid reader of American history early in his life, and this interest never waned. He was particularly fond of military history and felt a deep sense of patriotism. He regularly read the United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence, and copies of these historic documents were among his prize possessions. He kept them wherever he was stationed. He often recounted stories of bravery and unconventional wisdom shown by military personnel in the moments of combat.

“By the time Selden was in high school, he had decided to pursue a military career. When asked, he would tell you this decision made early in his life was not a choice but a ‘response to a call.’ He felt the military was what he was meant to

Exhibit 4. Statements about Roger Selden (*continued*)

do in life. It was more than a duty and more than a sense of responsibility to protect and to honor.”

Fellow Marine

“For Selden, his profession was about being true to himself and to something greater than himself. Hearing him speak about his choice to be in the military, his men would often joke, saying he sounded like he was talking about joining the ministry, not the military. He would admit it sometimes sounded this way, but he never apologized for it.”

Friend and Former Marine

“Selden was a great man. He did it all and asked for more. I served under him in infantry school. We all watched together the planes fly into the [Twin] Towers on 9/11. He made a huge impact on my life, personally and in the military. He was my friend. He always looked out for me. He used to ask me, ‘What did you do today, to prepare?’ He pushed us hard, because he knew it was his job. He loved the military, and he loved the men under him.

“To his family, I grieve with you. I am sorry for your loss. I will miss him dearly all the rest of my days. I pray that the Lord is with your family at your time of sorrow.”

Family Member

“Roger was always healthy and alive, a perfectionist in what he did and who made anything seem possible. I always thought he wouldn’t be one of those people who wouldn’t come home. In my eyes, he was Superman.

“He could have moved up even further as an officer, but he wouldn’t have been as hands-on. He just wanted to make a difference. Anytime he was asked to go somewhere, even times when he didn’t have to, he would. He wanted to be there for his troops.”

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