



CASE STUDY NO. 9  
COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

## **Leading Healing in a Broken Unit**

Edward H. Powley  
Naval Postgraduate School

Scott N. Taylor  
University of New Mexico

**KAREN GUTTIERI**  
SERIES EDITOR  
Naval Postgraduate School



## 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**

Edward H. Powley  
Naval Postgraduate School

Scott N. Taylor  
University of New Mexico

### **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 of 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.

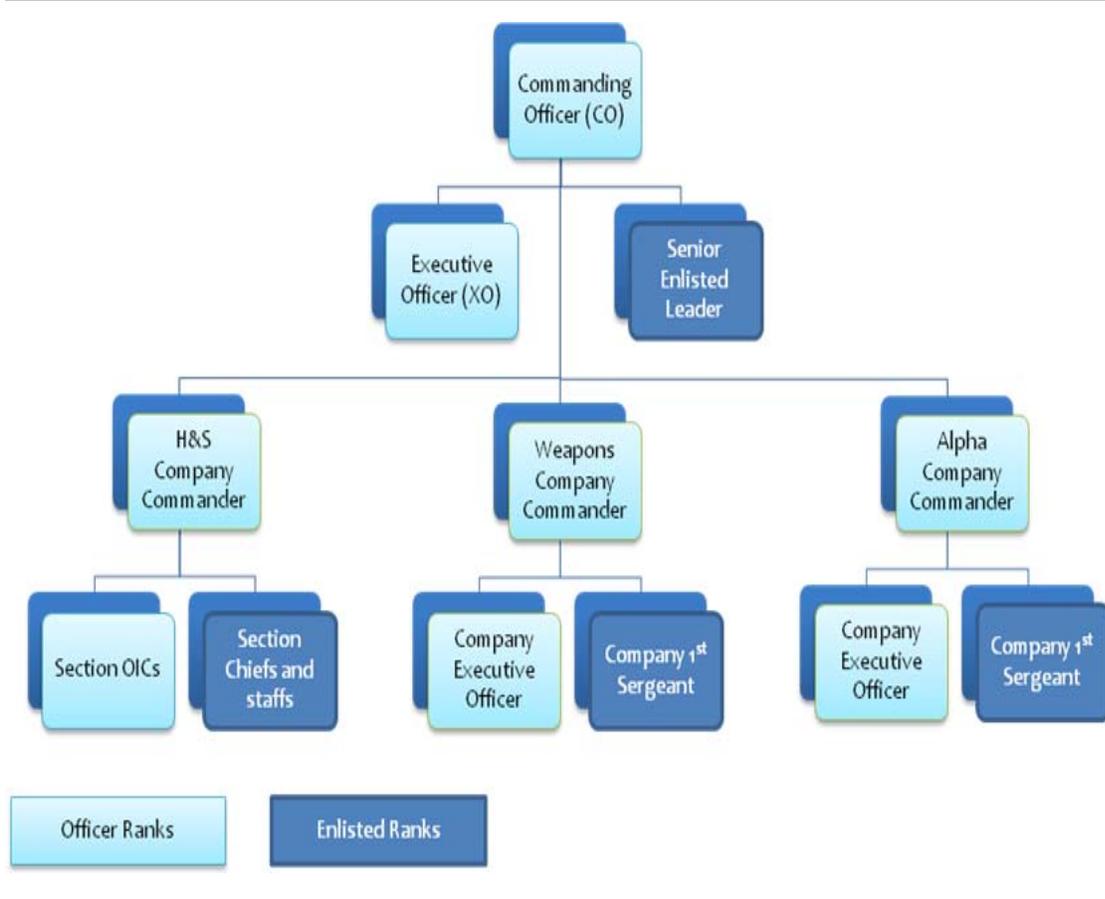
The commanding officer knew Selden well. They had worked together in previous assignments. His assessment speaks to Selden's deep commitment to serving his men:

"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.

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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.

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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?

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

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**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*)

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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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## **Leading Healing in a Broken Unit**

Edward H. Powley  
Naval Postgraduate School

Scott N. Taylor  
University of New Mexico

### **ABSTRACT**

The announcement of increased deployments meant additional preparations for many military units that anticipated deployment to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of operations. This case is about one ground combat element for a Marine Air Ground Task Force deployed into the CENTCOM area of operations. Excitement for the mission remained high, but extended deadlines well beyond the return date caused marines and sailors to become wary. On top of their fatigue, a suicide bomber detonated himself at an entry control point, significantly affecting the morale and welfare of the unit. The blast killed several individuals and severely wounded nearly a dozen others. One of those killed in the blast was the well-known and well-respected senior enlisted leader of the ground combat element. In life, as in death, his presence affected the morale and productivity of the entire unit. Would his loss paralyze the unit? How would the unit rebound, pick up the pieces, and return with honor? How would the officers lead the unit toward healing in the remaining weeks of the deployment? These questions were in the forefront of the officers' minds as they struggled to keep the unit moving forward.

Source material for this case comes from the first-hand experiences of an officer embedded within the ground combat element of a Marine Air Ground Task Force, reports on the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Iraq and Afghanistan, and first-hand knowledge of military officers recently returned from combat operations. Specific names, dates, and locations have been changed and descriptive background information added.

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

To know an organization's culture requires knowledge of basic assumptions that anchor norms of thought and action, which are apparent in largely unquestioned patterns that describe a group of people.<sup>1</sup> Organizational cultures enable their members to have relatively clear ways to frame and thus act within situations that might otherwise be ambiguous or confusing. Cultures are thus repositories of answers to questions that were once asked, and resolved in certain ways to the point that members often are no longer aware of the originating questions themselves. The culture of a military unit, for example, contains answers to the following sorts of unspoken questions:

- How do we maintain routine procedures developed in predeployment exercises and remain alert (not becoming complacent) for events that go horribly awry?
- How do a leader's leadership styles and the differences among unit members translate into the unit's need to learn about itself and its practices?
- How do we learn from tragedy and the loss of a leader?

Military unit leaders are central figures in helping to create and maintain cultures that represent some form of resolution to these and other crucial questions. When a military unit's leader is lost in combat, a sense of stability and continuity in the organizational culture is threatened. Those who were under the leader's influence can feel vulnerable and abandoned.

While much of the attention goes to leaders who are on the front line in extreme and complex contexts—the platoon or company commander, the firefighting captain, the SWAT team leader—this case provides an important look at the leaders of units in which such teams operate. The case looks for ways to manage tensions and dilemmas created when military units lose their leaders who play an important part in creating and maintaining the organizational cultures. Organizations must learn to adapt, and new leaders (junior officers in this case) must know how to respond in crucial moments. Both officers and enlisted leaders have the responsibility to create systems, structures, processes, and relationships that maintain clearly defined routines that minimize the extent and effects of unpredictability.<sup>2</sup> They also must create units capable of identifying and learning from both near misses and actual errors.<sup>3</sup> *How should those "next in command" respond to the loss of a team leader? How might they respond to the context of a deep-seated anxiety running beneath the surface of their units about the painful costs of loss and uncertainty about the future?*

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this case are threefold:

1. To increase the ability to handle organizational dilemmas faced by military junior officers, peacekeeping forces, or individuals and organizations dealing with acute emergencies involving trauma;
2. To develop analytical skills that armed forces professionals can use to make sense of leadership in complex operational conditions (e.g., loss of life, loss of leadership, loss of personnel, and so on); and
3. To examine how organizational managers or leaders might demonstrate how to lead recovery and healing in the face of difficult operational challenges (e.g., enabling organizational units to recover).

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

This case should work particularly well for new leaders or officers in a military context and, perhaps more importantly for senior officers charged with supervising new leaders (the CO, XO, or SEL). It may be useful for emergency medical personnel, fire-fighter units, and other homeland security personnel who may face similar questions of rupture that affect teams, organizational culture, and effectiveness. The aim is for these individuals to better train and prepare for complex operational environments. This case offers one approach to improve efforts to train officers more clearly on unit healing after attacks; dealing with extended, ambiguous timelines; or the like.

**TEACHING THE CASE**

Unlike prescriptive leadership books and practitioner articles, the purpose of a case study is to raise questions in the students' minds about what constitutes effective practice. Case studies should not present clear conclusions or a checklist of things one must do to resolve the dilemmas presented in a case. Instead, we have designed this case study to help students to begin establishing their own ideas about how they might personally respond if found in a context of adversity, tragedy, or crisis. For these reasons, this case is descriptive of the events before and after the death of a SEL (Roger Selden) but does not make value judgments about the officer's actions or those who took control after his death.

We recommend that the students come prepared for the case discussion by having read the case and one or two supplementary readings (see potential readings in the references section). The article "Values and Leadership"<sup>4</sup> is a good place to start. It outlines an approach to values-based leadership where an organization faces a major crisis and provides a general framework by which to analyze leadership behaviors during and after traumatic incidents affecting subordinates and superiors alike. Students may use the framework by R. E. Quinn<sup>5</sup> to discuss how the junior officers might handle

the aftermath of the bombing. Quinn suggests that effective leaders are both internally directed and outwardly focused; that is, they make decisions based on core values (such as those espoused by the U.S. Marines), yet they direct their attention toward enabling and building others. Other references include K. Weick's *Managing the Unexpected*,<sup>6</sup> and E. H. Schein's *Organizational Culture and Leadership*.<sup>7</sup> These provide students an opportunity to reflect on principles related to leadership, healing, crisis management, and organizational culture.

One leading the discussion might ask students to consider some of the following questions before the case discussion:

### Opening Questions

- What are the core values of the Marine Corps?
- What does it take to be a Marine Corps leader?
- Was Selden a leader?
- What leadership values did he exhibit?
- What were your goals as an officer?
- What is the importance of predeployment exercises?

### Middle Questions

- Can leadership respond to/mitigate combat fatigue? Was fatigue (mental and physical) a factor in how Selden's subordinates responded to his death?
- How do you prepare for the unexpected?
- How should those "next in command" respond to the loss of a team leader?
- Was leadership successful in responding to Selden's death? Headquarters staff, commanding officer, executive officer, junior officers? Lead to questions on what leadership values are presented or not presented in the case.
- How might they respond in the context of a deep-seated anxiety running beneath the surface of their units about the painful costs of loss and uncertainty about the future?
- How does Selden's loss affect the unit?

- To what extent does his loss paralyze the unit?
- What impact does a bombing of this nature and the subsequent over-extended deployment have on the unit's focus?
- Would a new leader be able to facilitate recovery and healing in the unit?

### Ending Questions

- How do you instill values-based leadership in officer training?
- Can the values of the Marine Corps be aligned with a values-based leadership approach?
- What does an organization do to build a culture of values-based leadership?
- How do you foster an organizational culture that is more likely to experience healing after trauma?

### TOPICAL DISCUSSION AREAS

The purpose of the case is to have students address dilemmas related to at least three subject areas: (1) leadership under conditions of uncertainty and decreasing morale; (2) culture and healing; and (3) values. Students may note what made the officers' leadership exemplary and how their leadership created routines that led to effective functioning of the unit. In doing so, students should begin to map out how leaders can positively affect team and organizational culture.

The case lends itself to a discussion of values at the individual team and organizational level. It can be used to engage students in a discussion of how teams and those who must step forward to lead them could ideally respond to adversity or crises, such as the tragic loss of a leader, as well as dealing with decreasing morale and fatigue, challenging external pressures, and particularly threatening environmental concerns. In doing so, students will be exposed to principles of organizational resilience and healing and how to reestablish and further develop a team's culture following a tragic event.

Research on leadership has equated top performance with economic imperatives such as organizational effectiveness and financial performance.<sup>8</sup> For example, leadership in crisis has focused on how to lead through a business failure, unethical practices, downsizing, bankruptcy, or economic downturns.<sup>9</sup> "Good" leadership in these situations often means organizations are effective at leading change, generating positive financial returns, operating efficiently, and maintaining high productivity. Leaders' actions

reflect the prevailing logic of their position. Action based on economic imperatives alone, however, has led a number of organizations to financial ruin and overall economic downturn. Leadership from this perspective may be viewed as amoral, individual value-based, and ideological.

Studies of leadership are often concerned with descriptions or characteristics of a leader.<sup>10</sup> Who and how a leader responds—aspects we believe are important for values-based leadership—are captured in various conceptualizations such as servant leadership,<sup>11</sup> spiritual leadership,<sup>12</sup> authentic leadership,<sup>13</sup> resonant leadership,<sup>14</sup> the fundamental state of leadership,<sup>15</sup> or the 8th habit.<sup>16</sup> In each, leader attributes are markedly similar: Leaders are more in touch with their personal identities, their values, and their ideal aspirations, and they focus attention on others rather than themselves. These internal resources then serve as guides to dictate how leaders lead others. R. E. Quinn, for example, describes leading with values as being internally directed, other-focused, externally open, and purpose-centered. His view is one where the leader turns toward others to transcend self-serving needs:

“In the fundamental state of leadership, we . . . become less externally directed and more internally directed. . . . We begin to transcend our own hypocrisy, closing the gap between who we think we are and who we think we should be. In this process of victory over self, we feel more integrity and we feel more whole. Our values and behavior are becoming more congruent. Our internal and external realities are becoming more aligned. . . . We also become less self-focused and more other-focused.”<sup>17</sup>

R. E. Boyatzis and A. McKee’s *Resonant Leadership* is consistent with Quinn’s perspective: leaders are “awake, aware, and attuned to themselves, to others, and to the world around them.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, research has shown that empathy is positively related to perceived leadership; that is, leaders are thought to be more empathetic.<sup>19</sup> Resonant leaders are also mindful, seeking to “live in full consciousness of self, others, nature, and society”; face challenges with hope, inspiring “clarity of vision, optimism”; and “face sacrifice, difficulties, and challenges, as well as opportunities, with empathy and compassion for the people they lead and those they serve.”<sup>20</sup> For Boyatzis and McKee, values-based leadership is built on both personal awareness and social awareness. The first impacts the second, so the individual can better manage relationships.

A values-based leader first possesses a high degree of self-knowledge and social awareness. The leader has a deep understanding of his/her emotions, weaknesses, strengths, wants, needs, and drives. These individuals, who are more in tune with themselves (i.e., have more self awareness), have an attitude that is not too critical or unrealistically confident and tend to be honest with themselves and with other people. Awareness of strengths and weakness leads to effective planning and execution of goals, because the leader knows how one’s own feelings will affect oneself and also how one’s feelings

will affect other people. Moreover, these leaders' self knowledge then enables them to work well with and manage others.

Values-based leadership is based on one's character and ability to foster and create positive social connections. Anyone, regardless of managerial position, can display values-based leadership, because it manifests itself primarily in relationships and interactions between organizational members. In particular, values-based leadership in extreme situations, such as war or terrorism, is focused on helping the unit and its members toward restoring unit cohesiveness and effectiveness. The psychological literature refers to these attributes as the "character" of the leader,<sup>21</sup> character defined as "the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race; mental or moral constitution; moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed."<sup>22</sup> We are particularly interested in the character strikingly and consistently displayed by values-based leaders in moments of extreme crisis. D. A. Bednar effectively describes this leader behavior as:

"[The] capacity to recognize, and appropriately respond to other people who are experiencing the very challenge or adversity that is most immediately and forcefully pressing upon [the leader]. Character is revealed, for example, in the power to discern the suffering of other people when we ourselves are suffering . . . [and] is demonstrated by looking and reaching outward when the natural and instinctive response is to be self-absorbed and turn inward."<sup>23</sup>

We believe the behavior described by Bednar, Boyatzis, Quinn, and others is consistent with how military leaders operate under extremely stressful situations. Their behavior is a manifestation of their unique character. Due to the complexity and difficulty of fighting nontraditional warfare, training leaders involves an imperative based on values, especially when desired outcomes for leaders rest on relationship and coalition building, managing multiple fronts, and dealing with a high degree of uncertainty in the situational environment. As S. G. Yackley notes, "The leader's character is a strategic source of power for infusing the culture of his/her organization with a code of ethics, moral vision, imagination, and courage."<sup>24</sup> The Army War College *Strategic Leadership Primer* states that the strategic leader is "The Values Champion—the standard bearer beyond reproach." Thus, training for readiness involves not only training to specific situations but also developing strong character and moral values.

## Leadership

Three related issues point to important considerations about leadership: (1) leadership styles; (2) physical and mental fatigue that comes with deployment; and (3) fatigue that comes from not knowing when the deployment will end. Given the delayed redeployment, this incident caused morale and motivation to dip even further. Section chiefs and officers in charge were unsure how the unit as a whole would cope with this loss and the decreased

morale, but more importantly with how they would be affected and how it would affect their performance during the rest of the deployment. The incident itself only lasted a few seconds, but the consequences of the incident had great potential to create additional adverse impacts on performance and behavior for the remainder of the extended deployment. Analysis of the case might address several ongoing, simultaneous issues:

- Leadership is a messy activity and not always straightforward, not always top down.
- Leadership, more than ever, requires leaders be prepared to manage under circumstances that are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.<sup>25</sup>
- Unit cohesiveness and resilience are essential for sustained leader effectiveness.
- Leaders must be emotionally competent—aware of their own emotions and those of others and able to use their emotions to manage themselves and others.<sup>26</sup>
- Effective leaders are purpose centered, internally driven, and focused on others rather than on themselves.<sup>27</sup>
- Emotional and physical challenges are inevitable, given unexpected circumstances.

Questions related to effective leadership might include:

- What did Roger Selden do that made him an effective leader?
- Was Selden an emotionally competent leader? Explain your answer with evidence from the case.
- Were the officers effective in their leadership? Explain your answer with evidence from the case.
- How differently would you have led, under the circumstances?
- What do emotionally competent leaders do to lead effectively?
- What did the leaders in this case do to maintain/improve positive morale? Explain your answer with evidence from the case.

In the case of the senior enlisted leader, effective actions or leadership attributes included:

- Taking the time to get to know his troops by name and learning about their lives;
- Commanding respect not because of his status and position but because of his example as a leader, his tough love, and his straight-shooting leadership style;
- Speaking about his values and why he joined the military;
- Creating aspirations in many of his subordinates to achieve his position because of what they saw and admired in him;
- Acting immediately when he saw the suicide bomber, and did not hesitate to consider his actions or the moral foundation for the war; instead, when he saw a threat to his men, he stepped out to lead;
- Understanding his mission: to fight for his country and protect his men at all costs;
- Developing respect for his candor and strength in working with the enlisted ranks;
- Calling for advice in dealing with enlisted matters;
- Understanding his troops and their motivations, standing by them, and recommending lighter punishments where he saw a need to maintain morale over creating more frustration among his ranks;
- Was approachable because of his hard work ethic, combined with his lighthearted temperament, which made it easy to seek him out, to request his help, and to know what to expect when something went well or did not go well;
- Preparing seriously for sorties;
- Taking work seriously because of the honor and integrity taught him by being in the marines; and
- Staying with his men on the day he was killed; working alongside them, and training and leading them up until the last moments of his life.

The case intentionally leaves much to doubt regarding junior officers' leadership ability. The predeployment workups offered an important source of leadership development. The junior officers and officers in charge had set two goals for their sections and individual units. They felt they had accom-

plished these goals during the predeployment training exercises. Officers took action in a number of ways:

- Allowing the enlisted men to take some time to digest what had taken place and not have to deal with the intimate details of the aftermath;
- Felt it necessary to take on the added workload and carry as much of the burden as they could;
- Ensuring that the lines of communication were open, e.g., directly following the incident, the section chief sat the enlisted men down and addressed the issue with them;
- Expressing their own feelings to the troops and stating they were sympathetic and available if they ever needed to talk;
- Making clear that the mission remained the top priority and emphasizing the need to stay focused;
- Allowing anyone who desired to pay his or her respects to the senior enlisted leader and to share what they remembered about those who died and why they looked up to or admired those killed; and
- Holding a ceremony where they burned the senior enlisted leader's approved retirement pack.

### **Culture & Healing**

We offer here a few observations on how junior officers built a culture that could enable healing. First, they wanted to ensure that the unit established strong ties among members of the unit's operational elements. The intense training did help them understand each other. They saw how each reacted to and handled stressful situations and began to experience what would be required in various anticipated situations. Squad leaders, platoon leaders, and company commanders strengthened ties with key officers and enlisted leaders, further enhancing the bonds between the troops at the lowest level in the chain of command. Officers developed important relationships with each other and established positive working relationships with the senior enlisted staff.

Secondly, they wanted their units to operate more systematically and interdependently. They believed that the training exercises not only forged a sense of camaraderie and cohesion between the services but also enabled them to work cross-functionally. Men in the unit understood important reporting relationships and with whom they needed to communicate to accomplish their day-to-day missions. Critical simulation exercises helped

units establish practices and strengthen coordinating routines horizontally across operational boundaries and vertically up and down the chain of command. One officer in charge noted: “Our units have developed organizational skills, learned to coordinate between the various elements of the Marine Air Ground Task Force, and practiced standard operating procedures. Throughout these preparations, members of our unit identified those they trusted and relied on to support and enable them throughout the deployment.”

Analysis of the case might address several parallel issues:

- Culture consists of the basic assumptions that anchor norms of thought and action, which are apparent in largely unquestioned patterns that characterize a group of people.<sup>28</sup>
- Team and organizational cultures enable their members to have relatively clear ways to frame and thus act within situations that might otherwise be ambiguous or confusing.
- Military unit leaders are central figures in helping to create and maintain cultures.
- This case provides an important look at the ways leaders create certain cultures that in turn influence the outcome of crucial moments.

Questions about a unit’s culture, resilience, and ability to heal might be used in a class discussion or paper assignment:

- Will the unit hold together and remain resilient?
- What is going to be required to keep them resilient so healing can take place?
- Are they going to be able to make it?
- What complex system issues need careful examination to enable healing and recovery?
- What relationships are critical?
- What emotions does this case evoke?
- What actions might leaders or senior enlisted leaders take to reintegrate the unit and to strengthen its culture?

### Values

Analysis of the case might address several parallel issues related to values:

- Values are basic convictions or beliefs about what is right, good, and/or desirable; they may be instrumental or terminal and are relatively stable and enduring.
- Paying attention to values is important, because they influence both attitudes and behavior.
- It is easier to be congruent to our character when we are clear about our values.
- If we remind ourselves of our values often and make them effectual in our lives, we are more likely to think before we act.
- We can choose our actions based on our values instead of reacting to our emotions and circumstances.

Questions related to values-based leadership might include:

- What role can values play when facing difficult circumstance or a crisis?
- What factors have influenced your values?
- How can you tell if someone is true to his or her espoused values?
- In your view, how important is it to be true to our values?

Each of these three categories, and others the student may discover, are present in the descriptions of Selden and the other leaders' actions. The instructor might ask students to identify these descriptions and discuss how they exemplified the three areas noted above. Alternatively, instructors might ask them to identify themes of their own from the leaders' descriptions and present why they are key to the culture of the military unit and the healing process.

These discussions can occur in the plenary with the entire class, or they might take place in smaller group discussions, perhaps with three-four students, and then can be presented to the class for general analysis and discussion.

### POTENTIAL EXPERIENTIAL ASSIGNMENTS

As a follow-up to the case discussion, instructors might ask students to do

the following as a way to further their learning about key principles of leadership during and after a crisis. These exercises are intended to be used over a longer period than for one class and may be integrated with other cases dealing with organizational crisis, leadership, and managing unexpected incidents.

- Interview a few people who know you well and have seen how you respond to adverse circumstances. Ask them to describe four examples of effective behaviors you demonstrated at a time of crisis. From these interviews, compose a list of key strengths that you possess in times of crisis or adversity.
- Interview someone you know who responded in an exemplary way to an adversity, tragedy, or crisis they faced. Ask the person you interview to tell you about the circumstances that led up to the adverse situation, describe what he or she was thinking and feeling during the adversity, and how the person responded to the adversity and why he or she responded the way he or she did. Finally, ask the person you interview what he or she learned from the experience. Write up a two- to three-page memo describing what you learned from this interview and how you will take what you learned and apply it to your own leadership opportunities/challenges.
- Write a short case study of an adversity you experienced and responded to successfully or unsuccessfully. Use the readings and the key learning from the case study covered in class to analyze what you did well or how you could have responded more effectively to your personal adversity.
- Choose one leadership behavior you would like to develop to be better prepared to lead effectively in times of adversity. Determine how you will develop this leadership behavior, and start practicing the behavior in all contexts of your life. Be prepared to share what you chose to work on, how you are working on it, and your assessment of how it is going so far.

**References/Potential Prereading Assignments**

The following references present how organizations and their leaders can manage effectively in times of crisis. These readings present principles of leadership and effective organizing for analysis purposes and responses to the dilemmas presented in the case.

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- Spears, L. C., and M. Lawrence, eds. 2004. *Practicing Servant-leadership: Succeeding through Trust, Bravery, and Forgiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Taylor, S. N. 2010. Redefining Leader Self-awareness by Integrating the Second Component of Self-awareness. *Journal of Leadership Studies* 3(4): 57–68.
- Weick, K., and K. Sutcliffe. 2001. *Managing the Unexpected: Assuring High Performance in an Age of Complexity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *Managing the Unexpected: Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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### Videos to Show in Class

- Ernest Shackleton
- Gettysburg
- Apollo 13
- Remember the Titans Videos and other website information at PBS *Frontline*:
  - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haditha/view/extra.html>
  - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/company/>
  - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/woundedplatoon/>

### ENDNOTES

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11. L. C. Spears & M. Lawrence, eds., *Practicing Servant-Leadership: Succeeding through Trust, Bravery, and Forgiveness* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004).
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14. R. E. Boyatzis & A. McKee, *Resonant Leadership*; and D. Goleman, R. E. Boyatzis & A. McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).
15. Quinn, *Building the Bridge*.
16. S. R. Covey, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: The Free Press, 2004).
17. Quinn, *Building the Bridge*, p. 22.
18. Boyatzis & McKee, *Resonant Leadership*, p. 3.
19. J. Kellett, R. Humphrey & R. Sleeth, "Empathy and Complex Task Performance: Two Routes to Leadership," *Leadership Quarterly* 13(5) (2002): 523–544.
20. Ibid.
21. C. Peterson & M. E. Seligman, *Character, Strengths, and Virtues* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004).
22. *Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
23. D. A. Bednar, "The Character of Christ" (address given at Brigham Young University, Idaho, 2003), p. 2.
24. S. G. Yackley, *Leader Development for a Transforming Army* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2006).
25. B. Johansen, *Get There Early: Sensing the Future to Compete in the Present* (San Francisco, CA: Barrett Kohler, 2007).
26. Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, *Primal Leadership*.
27. J. Collins, "Level 5 Leadership: The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve," *Harvard Business Review* 83(7/8) (2005); 136–146; Quinn, *Building the Bridge*.
28. Schein, *Organizational Culture*.

**Epilogue**

*(To be handed out after the class discussion has taken place)*

The unit's mission was to secure a small but significant city in their area of operations. Paradoxically, their success, coupled with an overextended timetable, created frustrations among unit members. Now, with the death of Selden, the unit risked losing its focus, leadership, and unity. The junior officers leading the various sections and companies faced the challenge of maintaining a high-paced operational tempo to minimize any decrease in momentum as they completed their deployment overseas. Moreover, Selden's loss threatened the organizational culture he was so much a part of and the sense of stability and continuity he helped to establish.

The bombing itself and the loss of Selden particularly affected the enlisted men. This disaster, in combination with other casualties and an ambiguous return date, created a counterproductive environment that compromised effectiveness within the ground combat element. This became the main concern of the leaders as evidenced by their growing lack of consideration for the locals and disregard for safety rules. The junior officers were uncertain how to address the emotional issues facing the unit—no one had even considered that one of their most revered leaders would be killed in action.

One of the key tensions was the need for grieving coupled with the need to maintain an operational tempo at a level commensurate with the mission at hand. The unit needed to continue their patrols, remain vigilant during watches, and search out insurgents. Letting the enemy detect their weakened state would only embolden enemy efforts to undermine the marines. One junior officer spoke about his experience with the death of Selden and the extended deployment. He said, "I believe that as time progressed during the deployment, we slowly made our way back to our standard operational tempo. We also accomplished all of the tasks given to us, and we never encountered any real lapses in performance." The mission did not go away with Selden, but his death came at the lowest point in terms of morale for the unit. There was little opportunity to take time off and certainly no way to step away from the job at hand. The officers and other leaders in charge were initially unsure of exactly how to address the situation to keep the unit on track and maintain their patrols and security work, all without being unemotional or too emotional about the situation and dwelling on the loss for too great a time. They did not see the need for much time off because, as one junior officer said, "We continued operating effectively without any significant issues arising from the incident."

After the blast, the junior officers leading the administrative section of the Headquarters and Service Company needed to decide how to deal with those most affected by the tragedy and the enlisted platoons. They were faced with several questions: Would they allow junior enlisted men time to digest what had taken place? Would they put them back into the action?

What were the advantages or disadvantages of doing so? Was working in the field the best method to help the men deal with the loss of their leader? And what was the best way for them not to deal with the most intimate details of the aftermath? As the leaders of the section, the officer in charge and the section chief took on the added workload and carried as much of the burden as they could. They wondered whether this was the most effective use of their time and energy. They, too, had to attend to their regular duties.

Another decision point for the leaders was how much of the details to communicate with the others in the section and the unit as a whole. Directly following the incident, the section chief considered whether he should sit down with the section and talk about the issue with them. He held off at first. He consulted the officer in charge, who left it up to the section chief. The officer in charge made it clear that the mission was priority number one and that their focus needed to remain as sharp as ever.

Last, as the dust settled and the unit resumed the normal daily operations as best they could, the officer in charge considered whether and how much time would be allowed for grieving. Eventually, the whole ground combat element had a memorial service in their combat outpost. Everyone from the unit was invited to attend the service. The officer in charge believed this was a good way for the entire unit to find closure to the events—even though he did not make the suggestion to the section chief. A few weeks after Selden's death, the administrative section (where Selden had spent much of his time) did have a small ceremony commemorating Selden's life and noting his effect on the section. People in the section then had an opportunity to share stories and experiences about Selden. The section had received the approved retirement package for Selden; he only had ninety days left to serve. Over a bonfire, each one of them held his package and commented about how he had affected them and then passed the package to the next person in line. Once the package reached the section chief and he finished his comments, they threw the paperwork into the bonfire, saying their final goodbye to their senior enlisted leader.

### **Reflections upon Returning**

The reactions of the junior officers who had served in the ground combat element were mixed. One junior officer in the GCE who knew Selden fairly well reflected on the feelings of the unit as they returned to the United States. Despite the fact that the unit was on its second deployment extension, with nearly a dozen men killed in action, no incident had affected the entire unit more than this one:

“Our most senior enlisted Marine. His death really sunk in when we embarked back onto the ships, and his absence during the float back home was pretty obvious to everyone. As a unit, I thought we handled the entire deployment well, but we had a few low points throughout—this was the one that stood out the most.”

Another junior officer made this assessment of the deployment:

“As a junior officer, I realized that all of the challenging training, preparation, and trust in those abilities that we developed during the predeployment workup were vital and necessary tools to rely upon in order to accomplish the mission. Although we feel like we took the right steps immediately following the death of Roger, it is unclear whether they really helped us to come together as a section. Perhaps we should have tapped more into the *esprit de corps* like Roger had done or drawn on our experience to help the unit stay on track and work more effectively during the most difficult circumstances that we faced during the deployment.”



Center for Complex Operations  
National Defense University  
300 5th Avenue SW  
Fort Lesley J. McNair  
Washington, DC 20319

Telephone

Commercial: 202-685-2529  
DSN: 325-2529  
Fax: 202-685-3581

Web Site

<http://ccoportal.org>

Dr. Karen Guttieri  
Naval Postgraduate School  
1411 Cunningham Road  
GE-306  
Monterey, CA 93943

Contact Information

831-656-2294  
[guttieri@nps.edu](mailto:guttieri@nps.edu)

