

CHAPTER 6

LTC HAROLD G. MOORE, 14-16 NOVEMBER 1965

In a nationwide address on 28 July 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced "I have today ordered to Vietnam the airmobile division..."¹ The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), activated on 16 June 1965 after an extensive period of experimentation and training in the fledgling airmobility concept, was to be the U.S. Army's first division-size unit to deploy to Vietnam.² Within 90 days of its activation order, the 1st Cavalry Division closed into its base camp at An Khe, prepared to conduct combat operations.³

At the time of the arrival of the 1st Cav Division at An Khe, the North Vietnamese government was putting the finishing touches on its "Dong Xuan (Winter-Spring Campaign) of 1965-66." The campaign called for an "army corps" to achieve four specific objectives: (1) destroy all U.S. Special Forces camps in Pleiku and Kontum Provinces, thereby removing the long-standing impediment to North Vietnamese Army (NVA) operations; (2) seize the city of Kontum, site of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) 24th Special Tactical Zone headquarters; (3) destroy the Le Thanh District Regional and Popular Force (RFPF) headquarters at Thanh Binh, a village mid-way between Pleiku City and Duc Co; and (4) seize Pleiku City, the site of the ARVN II Corps headquarters and the

location of the ARVN reserves for all of the western plateau.⁴

By 12 October 1965, BG Man's 32d and 33d Regiments had completed the planned infiltration from North Vietnam to the Field Front assembly area at ANTA Village. Sited on the eastern slope of the Chu Pong Massif, a 450-square-kilometer mountain mass just inside the Cambodian border, ANTA enabled Man's regiments to stage at a location virtually equidistant from the campaign's first targets - the Special Forces camps at Plei Me and Duc Co. With the 32d and 33d Regiments assembled, and the 66th Regiment due to arrive in late October or early November, BG Man opted to initiate his campaign in mid-October with a two regiment attack on Plei Me. Located twenty-five miles south of Pleiku City, this garrison of Montagnard Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) troops guarded the southern flank of Pleiku City - Man's real objective - and overwatched the principal NVA infiltration route from Cambodia. Man's attack on Plei Me would directly result in the momentous clash at LZ X-Ray on 14 November 1965.⁵

At 2300, 19 October, the 33d Regiment began the Field Front's three phase attack on Plei Me. Hammering the camp with intensive mortar, small arms, and recoilless rifle fire, the commander of the 33d Regiment sent barely enough NVA riflemen and sappers in the assault to make the Montagnard defenders believe they would soon be overrun. The 33d Regiment was applying just enough human pressure

to "lure" a relief column from Pleiku City for the second phase of the operation, the 32d Regiment's ambush.⁶

However, the anticipated relief column did not present itself as rapidly as expected. Unable to close the trap, the 4th Field Front limped back to the Chu Pong staging area on 25 October. BG Man's first offensive had been repulsed, with severe losses.⁷

The 1st Cav Division had initially conducted restricted reinforcement missions in support of the ARVN relief of Plei Me. On 26 October GEN Westmoreland visited the forward command post of the division's 1st Brigade and after a short conference with MG Larsen, First Field Force Commander, and MG H.W.O. Kinnard, 1st Cav Division Commander, Westmoreland dramatically changed the scope of the 1st Cav mission. Instead of reinforcing ARVN II Corps operations, the 1st Cav now had the freedom of unlimited offensive operations to seek out and destroy the remains of the NVA 4th Field Front.⁸ Ordered by Westmoreland to conduct a classic cavalry pursuit of the retreating NVA, Kinnard dispatched LTC Harlow Clark's 1st Brigade into the Ia Drang Valley on 28 October.⁹

The Ia Drang Valley consisted of about 2500-square-kilometers of "no-man's-land". Thickly jungled, with trees 100 feet high, and "open" areas covered by elephant grass almost six feet high, the valley contained no passable roads and no inhabitants. Bordered on the west by the Chu Pong Massif, the valley was viciously cross-

compartmented by the Ia Drang, Ia Meur, and Ia Tac rivers which flowed from northeast to southwest. Along the Ia Drang River, within the vicinity of the Chu Pong, the area was eerie, haunting, and "spooky beyond belief".¹⁰ Blazing daily heat and frigid night temperatures produced sinister, contrary mists which kept the best of soldiers "perpetually and increasingly on edge".¹¹

LTC Clark's 1st Brigade fanned out to the west of Plei Me, operating on a broad front in the hope of regaining contact with BG Man's illusive 32d and 33d Regiments. During the last two days of October, Clark's troopers began to find and engage the NVA in frequent but widely separated contacts.¹²

MG Kinnard was generally satisfied with the results of 1st Brigade's operations in pursuit of the NVA. But LTC Clark's troopers "had been flying and fighting continuously for over two weeks", so Kinnard pulled the brigade out of the line for a few days' rest and sent in COL Tim Brown's 3d Brigade to continue the pursuit.¹³

COL Tim Brown's "Garry Owen" brigade consisted of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 7th Cavalry, and the 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry, attached from 2d Brigade. LTC Harold G. Moore commanded 1/7 Cav, LTC Robert A. McDade commanded 2/7 Cav, and LTC Robert B. Tully commanded 2/5 Cav.¹⁴ COL Brown deployed these three fresh infantry battalions on 10 November in vigorous saturation

patrolling south and southeast of Plei Me, in accordance with MG Kinnard's instructions.¹⁵

When Brown's patrols failed to make contact with the NVA, MG Kinnard directed his 3d Brigade commander to turn westward toward the Cambodian border. MG Larsen's Field Force intelligence staff believed that the NVA were still concentrating along the Cambodian border. Brown opted to reinvestigate the heavily jungled Ia Drang valley at the base of the Chu Pong Massif, a spot where previous combat had occurred but where no follow-up ground sweep had been conducted.¹⁶ To Brown this location might contain the staging area for the 32d Regiment, so far unaccounted for after Plei Mei.¹⁷ In addition, Brown had seen "a big red star" on the division G-2 situation map indicating a possible assembly area for NVA regiments infiltrating through Cambodia.¹⁸ Brown also knew this site had been a Viet Minh bastion during the French Indochina days and it was likely to be "recycled" for the current NVA operations.¹⁹

Meanwhile, BG Chu Huy Man was also making an estimate of the situation. Interpreting the change of Kinnard's brigades as the beginning of a 1st Cav Division withdrawal from the central highlands, BG Man decided to resume operations.²⁰ Though he had failed with his initial lure-and-ambush tactics against Plei Me, and had incurred heavy losses, BG Man decided to conduct a second assault against Plei Me. This time, he would employ the

remnants of the 33d Regiment with the 32d Regiment and the slightly bloodied 66th Regiment in a coordinated, division-size attack on Plei Me on 16 November.²¹

By 11 November BG Man had staged his assault echelons in the Ia Drang Valley. The depleted 33d Regiment had formed into a single, composite battalion and was assembled in the valley between the Ia Drang river and Hill 542, the most prominent peak of the Chu Pong mountains. Thirteen kilometers to the west, along the northern bank of Ia Drang was the formidable 32d Regiment. The 66th Regiment, spoiling for a fight, had its three battalions sited astride the Ia Drang River just a few kilometers west of the 33d Regiment. One 120-man mortar battalion and one 14.5mm antiaircraft gun battalion were still infiltrating on the Ho Chi Minh trail in Cambodia, but were due to close in to the Field Front assembly area before 16 November.²²

Around midnight, 12 November, the NVA "conveniently confirmed their continued presence west of Plei Me"²³ mortaring COL Brown's brigade command post at the Catecka Tea Plantation, a few miles southwest of Pleiku. Although the attack proved inconclusive,²⁴ Brown's CP was shaken up by the close call. This action added impetus to Brown's decision to move a battalion into the fifteen-square-kilometer, oval shaped zone named Area Lime - the foot of the Chu Pong Massif.²⁵

At 1700 on 13 November COL Brown met with LTC Harold G. Moore, Commander of 1/7 Cav, at the Company A, 1/7 Cav command post about seven kilometers south of Plei Me. Brown ordered LTC Moore to execute an airmobile assault into AREA LIME and conduct search-and-destroy operations around the Chu Pong Massif from 14 November through 15 November.²⁶ Brown's guidance to Moore included the precaution of keeping rifle companies within supporting distance of each other during the search and destroy mission because of the great possibility of landing in the middle of a NVA assembly area. Brown allocated sixteen of the brigade's twenty-four helicopters for Moore's insertion. Fire support would come from two 105mm howitzer batteries of 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery, firing from LZ Falcon, nine kilometers east of the Chu Pong mountains. Lastly, Brown shared with Moore his concern that 1/7 had yet to be tested in battle against a large enemy force.²⁷

After receiving his brigade commander's guidance, Moore returned to his command post at Plei Me to issue warning orders and conduct a careful, doctrinally sound mission analysis.²⁸ Working with his S-3, Captain Gregory "Matt" Dillon, Moore began a thorough map reconnaissance of AREA LIME and tentatively selected three potential landing zones he named "Tango", "Yankee", and "X-Ray".²⁹

For the tactics of this operation, Moore decided to deviate from the normal techniques employed thus far by the 1st Cav Division. Instead of landing each company in a separate LZ, he opted to land his entire battalion in one LZ and conduct the search and destroy mission from that secure LZ. This plan was simple, took into account COL Brown's guidance about enemy contact, and provided Moore with enough flexibility to react to unforeseen circumstances. To find an LZ large enough to accommodate ten helicopters at one time, Moore arranged for a first light leaders' reconnaissance of the tentatively selected LZ's at first light on 14 November. This would be followed up by an operations order at 0830.³⁰ Moore radioed a warning order to his company commanders, issuing instructions for Companies A and C to recall their saturation patrols and concentrate for pick-up for the air assault. Company B, having just spent a sleepless night securing COL Brown's CP, would be shifted from Catecka Plantation to Moore's CP at Plei Me to begin the operation. Company commanders would fly with Moore on the leaders' recon at dawn to confirm the battalion LZ.³¹

By 2200 Moore had supervised the accomplishment of as many of the details of the operation as could be done prior to the reconnaissance. He had two primary concerns. First, his mission in the Chu Pong area would be conducted with his battalion at only two-thirds strength.³² 1/7 had been hard hit by malaria and

individual rotations back to the United States. Fortunately, almost all of Moore's twenty officers going into the operation had been with the battalion since its air assault testing days at Ft. Benning.³³ Second, Moore wanted to make sure that every available fire support asset was coordinated to back up the air assault. Air Force close air support, air cav aerial rocket gunships, and field artillery preparations would give him the combat power advantage if he ran into big trouble.

14 November dawned bright and clear and promised to be another typically scorching day in the Central Highlands.³⁴ Company B had been repositioned from Catecka to Plei Me by 0630. CH-47 Chinooks were consolidating Batteries A and C of the 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery at LZ Falcon to support 1/7 Cav. LTC Moore finished his briefing on the mission and flight route of the recon party and the group boarded two UH-1D Hueys. "Few units that have a rendezvous with destiny have an inkling of their fate until the historical moment touches them. So it was with the 1/7 Cav on the morning of 14 November."³⁵ Twenty-three kilometers to the west, elements of the NVA 32d Regiment uncoiled from their base camps at the foot of the Chu Pong Mountains and began moving east. The 66th Regiment and the remnants of the 33d Regiment remained in ANTA, preparing to move on Plei Me the next day.³⁶ Moore's rendezvous with destiny was only two hours away.

The leaders recon revealed that only two of Moore's three map-selected LZs were large enough to land a platoon and a half in the initial lift. Deciding on LZ X-Ray as the tentative battalion LZ, Moore directed the scout section leader from C Troop, 9th Cavalry, to conduct another over-flight to confirm LZ X-Ray. This time, the reconnaissance would be at low-level and would search the slopes of the Chu Pong mountains for NVA.³⁷

Back by 0855, the scout section reported LZ X-Ray as capable of accepting ten UH1s in trail formation. Also, the section had spotted communications wire running along an east-west trail a few hundred meters north of the LZ. Moore decided on LZ X-Ray as the primary battalion LZ, with Yankee and Tango as alternates to be employed only with his permission.³⁸

Hal Moore was well aware that he could be in a serious firefight shortly after landing.³⁹ Consequently, he integrated a deception plan to keep the NVA guessing as to which of the three likely LZs he would land. Briefing his operations order to his major subordinates around 0900, Moore outlined his scheme of maneuver. First, the 21st Artillery would fire an eight minute diversionary preparation on LZs Yankee and Tango to deceive the enemy. The 105mm batteries would then shift to LZ X-Ray and fire a twenty minute preparation, concentrating on the slopes of a finger that extended from the Chu Pongs just to the northwest of LZ X-Ray. Lifting

fires at H minus one minute, the artillery would enable the aerial rocket gunships to place fires on the northern and western borders of the LZ, closest to the mountains, and on the tree line that sliced into LZ X-Ray from the north. With the lift aircraft about to touch down the gunship escorts of Company A, 229th Aviation Battalion would lace the elephant grass of LZ X-Ray with rocket and machinegun fires.⁴⁰

Company B, commanded by CPT John D. Herren, would be the initial assault company, going in with sixteen helicopters right behind the gunship prep. Herren's unit would quickly secure the LZ for the follow-on lifts. The rest of the landing plan called for Company A, commanded by CPT Ramon A. "Tony" Nadal, to be the second unit to land. Company C, commanded by CPT Robert H. Edwards, was third in the order of movement. CPT Louis R. LeFebvre's Company D would be the last unit into the LZ.⁴¹

Once into the LZ, Companies A and B would move out and search north and northeast. Company A would move on the right of Herren's company. Company C, the battalion reserve, would assume Herren's LZ security mission and would be prepared to move north and northwest to search the foothills of the Chu Pongs once Company D landed. LeFebvre's Company D would form the "mortar battery" on LZ X-Ray. Companies A, B, C would bring in one 81mm mortar each and a maximum ammo load and place their guns under Company D control. Priority of fires, all platforms,

would be to Company B initially for the air assault, then to Company A for the sweep to the west.⁴²

1st Battalion, 21st Artillery commenced its preparatory fires at 1017. At 1030, Herren's four platoons lifted off from Plei Me. Moore was going in with the initial assault element. He felt confident of the prospects for success on the operation. His battalion was part of "the best trained, best disciplined division to go into combat since the Airborne Divisions of WWII."⁴³ He knew he had created a strong, cohesive unit. He had encouraged unit cohesion by directing his lieutenants to seek out the NCOs who were Korean War combat veterans to learn as much as possible from these experts. Likewise, his NCO's were charged to help the new officers.

Now it was time for the payoff. The twenty minute artillery prep concluded with a white phosphorous round (WP), and this signalled the approach of the aerial rocket gunships. The formation of sixteen helicopters carrying LTC Moore and the first lift of Company B were on "short final approach" as the gunships expended half their ordnance and then orbited near the LZ, on call for another run. Moore glanced out of his chopper as these gunships pounded the LZ and "had a renewed instinct that contact was coming."⁴⁴ In a matter of seconds the assault ships flared for landing. Snap firing at likely enemy positions on the landing zone, Moore led the first lift of Company B across LZ X-Ray.⁴⁵

Once on the ground, Moore saw LZ X-Ray from a different perspective. The terrain offered both advantages and disadvantages to the assault troopers. The landing zone was covered with hazel-colored elephant grass over five feet high, ideal for concealing crawling soldiers but detrimental to good communications between defensive positions.⁴⁶ Sparse scrub brush ringed the oval-shaped LZ. A grove of trees in the middle of the LZ forced the air assault aircraft to land in two side-by-side mini-landing zones.⁴⁷ Numerous anthills which dotted the LZ were excellent cover for crew served weapons positions.⁴⁸ The western edge of the LZ was creased by a waist-high, dry creek bed, a potential site for a defensive position.⁴⁹ The trees along the western and northeastern edges of the LZ signalled the beginning of the slopes of the Chu Pong Massif. The mountain, thickly vegetated, cast an imposing shadow across the LZ. A fight to extricate the NVA from the mountain, which rose five hundred meters above the LZ, would be a physically punishing mission.⁵⁰

As the lift helicopters began their thirty minute turn-around flight to Plei Me for the second serial of the battalion, Herren's troopers implemented Moore's new technique for securing the LZ. Retaining the balance of his force on the clump of trees in the center of LZ as a reaction force, Herren directed his 1st Platoon to sweep the tree line in squad size patrols.⁵¹ This

technique would enable Herren to make contact with the enemy with a small, economical force and then pile on with a heavy maneuver element. Moore saw that the air assault was running smoothly so far. "Although not visible," Moore recalled, "the enemy could be sensed. I had the feeling he was definitely there."⁵²

The enemy was there. On the morning of 14 November, BG Man's division-size force had initiated its movement toward Plei Me for the scheduled 16 November strike on the Special Forces camp. The arrival of Moore's troopers caught BG Man by surprise. The Chu Pong Massif - ANTA, the base camp - was considered to be free from U.S. attack. With Moore right in the middle of the 66th Regiment's assembly area, Man immediately radioed the lead elements of the 32d Regiment to turn back. As he readied the 66th Regiment to pounce on the small Air Cav Division force, Man sent word to the H-15 Main Force Viet Cong Battalion, operating south of the Chu Pongs, for assistance.⁵³ By noon, Man intended to hit Moore with two battalions of the 66th Regiment, coming down from the mountain side, and the composite battalion of the 33d Regiment, who would attack from their positions just west of LZ X-Ray.⁵⁴

As the squads of 2LT Alan E. Deveny's 1st Platoon, Company B swept the perimeter of the LZ, Moore established his command post in the center of the LZ at the edge of the grove of trees. Moore selected a giant anthill, ten

feet high and twelve feet round which had withstood the artillery prep fires.⁵⁵ From this central location, Moore could command his companies as they fanned-out from the LZ and he could control incoming air assault lifts as they approached LZ X-Ray.

At 1120, with Company A enroute to the LZ, CPT Herren notified Moore that an NVA soldier had been captured by 2LT Deveny's platoon in the brush just fifty meters off the LZ. Moore immediately moved to Herren's location with his intelligence officer, CPT Metsker, and his Montagnard interpreter, Mr. Nik. The prisoner, a deserter or straggler, announced that there were three NVA battalions on the Chu Pong mountains "anxious to kill Americans."⁵⁶ To Moore, this piece of news confirmed his belief that the "long jump" executed by his battalion, instead of the "short airmobile moves" which would have inched toward the NVA, had been "the way to go for the enemy". "If he had been near Plei Me on the 13th," Moore later reasoned, "and moved west, I estimated we would hit him."⁵⁷

Moore was "elated" and "exhilarated" by the news that contact with the NVA was imminent.⁵⁸ But the reality of being struck by an enemy at least three times the strength of 1/7 Cav caused Moore to turn his attention back to the air assault operation. He now had to get the rest of his battalion quickly and safely into LZ X-Ray.

To Moore, additional security precautions involving the force currently on the ground would be imperative. Moore then gave CPT Herren new instructions for Company B. Due to the close proximity of the NVA, a buffer needed to be established between the Chu Pongs and the LZ. Moore directed Herren to intensify his reconnaissance efforts outside the LZ and to be prepared to assume the Company C mission of exploring the terrain at the foot of the mountains. In the event Herren was ordered to switch to the Company C assignment, he would orient his attention on two pieces of key terrain: the finger which emanated from the slopes of the mountains and pointed at the heart of the LZ; and the draw northwest of the LZ.⁵⁹

As Moore was issuing these instructions to Herren CPT Tony Nadal's Company A landed on the LZ. When CPT Nadal found Moore on the LZ, the battalion commander directed him to assume the Company B mission of LZ security until Company C arrived. Moore then ordered CPT Herren to execute his "be prepared" mission and proceed toward the finger at the base of the Chu Pong mountains.⁶⁰

Other than the incident with the deserter, things remained quiet around LZ X-Ray. At 1220, Herren began his movement to the northwest, with 1st and 2d Platoons abreast and 3d Platoon in reserve. The troopers of Company B "were tensed for an approaching fight."⁶¹

At 1245, Deveny's 1st Platoon ran headlong into elements of the 66th Regiment who were hurrying down the mountain.⁶² The lead elements of the NVA regiment, about platoon-size, quickly pinned down the 1st Platoon and began placing withering small arms fire on Deveny's front and flanks. Deveny immediately contacted Herren and reported he was taking heavy casualties and needed help.⁶³

Herren directed 2LT Herrick to move his 2d Platoon to regain contact with 1st Platoon and relieve the pressure against the right flank of Deveny's platoon. Herrick got underway but almost instantly ran into a squad of NVA who were headed for LZ X-Ray. As the NVA reversed course and headed back up the mountain side, Herrick gave chase. In a matter of minutes, Herrick's 2d Platoon was engulfed by enfilade fire from the right front. The NVA fire was especially vicious and included mortars and rockets.⁶⁴

Herren now had a new situation on his hands. Having just ordered Deal's 3d Platoon to go to Deveny's aid, it became apparent that the enemy was concentrating its efforts in an attempt to decimate Herrick. Herren called Moore with a situation report and then, as his lone 81mm mortar fired all of the forty rounds that were brought in on the air assault, he ordered Deveny to await Deal's arrival and then conduct a movement to reach Herrick.⁶⁵

At 1330, the third troop lift arrived at the LZ with the last platoon of Company A and the first elements of CPT Robert H. Edwards' Company C. The lifts were now fragmented into smaller serials of four to six aircraft because of the scattered pick-up zones of the follow-on companies.⁶⁶ A steady rain of NVA mortar rounds began to "feel out" the battalion's defenses on the LZ. In the midst of "geysers of red dirt" and "the thick pall of dust and smoke,"⁶⁷ Moore issued instructions to his A and C Company commanders. Nadal would move instantly to assist Herren. He would do so by sending one platoon out immediately to push through to Herrick's isolated unit, then move with the remainder of Company A to secure Herren's open flank. CPT Edwards would take what he had of Company C and assume Nadal's previous mission of LZ security. Edwards' force would strongpoint positions within the treeline to the west, southwest, and south of the LZ. Edwards would also cover Nadal's left flank as Company A moved out to help Herren.⁶⁸ Moore was taking a colossal risk by sending his only reserve - Edwards - to the western end of the perimeter. Moore gambled that in order to stave off the mounting threat from the northwest, he could take a chance with LZ security until the next troop lift arrived. Unknown to Moore, the thin defensive screen of the LZ had already been breached by 66th Regiment scouts.⁶⁹

About the time Nadal and Edwards moved out on their respective missions, Moore's CP came under fairly heavy small arms and automatic weapons fires. Moore promptly radioed Dillon, flying above the LZ in the command and control helicopter, to request and coordinate artillery, aerial rocket artillery, and close air support around the LZ. Moore directed Dillon to arrange for fires to be concentrated initially on the lower slopes of the Chu Pongs. On order, fires were to be directed "to ring the LZ with a curtain of steel."⁷⁰ Priority of fires would go to units in contact. A few minutes later, U.S. Air Force A1E's from Pleiku were dropping five hundred pound bombs on the Chu Pongs. Artillery fires impacted just as quickly but it took some time before the artillery forward observers in the rifle companies could "walk" the rounds close enough to their beleaguered perimeters to be effective. Simultaneous with Moore's call for fire, COL Brown arrived "on station", orbiting above the LZ.

It was apparent to Moore that he had tripped a hornet's nest and that the NVA were out to destroy him. While the situation confronting Moore was serious, it was by no means desperate. At the time, Moore did not feel compelled to request reinforcement from Brown. "The PAVN (Peoples' Army of Vietnam) were reacting violently," Moore recalled. "And we were trying our best to retain and maintain the momentum of our air assault and tactical

initiative by carrying the fight to the enemy off the LZ while simultaneously keeping him away from it."⁷¹

Meanwhile, Nadal was maneuvering to assist Company B's imperilled platoons. 2LT Walter J. Marm's 2d Platoon soon linked up with 2LT Deal's 3d Platoon of Company B. Shortly afterward, a sharp firefight broke out. Marm and Deal had apparently uncovered the NVA force which had initially outflanked Herrick and was now enroute to envelope all of Herren's unit. After a brisk exchange of gunfire which brought casualties to both sides, the NVA broke contact and headed toward the dry creek bed in an attempt to include Marm in the encirclement.⁷²

In the dry creek bed behind Marm the company-size NVA pincer movement ran straight into Nadal's follow-up platoons. 2LT Robert E. Taft's 3d Platoon engaged the enemy in extremely savage and close-range combat. The remnants of the NVA company then broke away from Company A and continued their movement toward the LZ.⁷³

As the firefight escalated in the creek bed, the first eight UH-1s of the battalion's fifth lift touched down on the LZ. This lift carried the remainder of Edwards' Company C and CPT Louis R. LeFebvre and his lead elements of Company D. The LZ was under such tremendously heavy enemy fire, Moore waved off the second set of eight aircraft.⁷⁴

Company C was next to feel the wrath of the NVA attack. Edwards now had all of his troops except three

aircraft loads which were diverted from the LZ by the battalion commander. Following Moore's instructions, Edwards had quickly moved his platoons into a blocking position adjacent to CPT Nadal's right flank. At this time, Company A's firefight in the creek bed had reached full fury. Edwards had just completed the positioning of his platoons when he was attacked by the NVA company which was attempting to outflank Company A and overrun the LZ. The North Vietnamese soldiers, wearing full combat gear (unlike the Viet Cong) and extensive camouflage, were stopped in their tracks, with heavy losses.⁷⁵

The time was 1400. Moore's timely decision to position Edwards south of Nadal rather than north had thwarted the enemy attempt to overrun the LZ. In shifting Edwards to Nadal's flank, Moore exposed the rear of his battalion. To consolidate his security on the LZ, Moore ordered Edwards to tie-in and coordinate with CPT LeFebvre and Company D to his left. The perimeter around LZ X-Ray now extended south and southeast into the brush.⁷⁶

When Edwards linked-up with Company D, he found that LeFebvre had been evacuated with severe wounds. Staff Sergeant George Gonzales, leader of the battalion anti-tank platoon, had assumed command of Company D. Edwards got Moore's permission to move Gonzales into a gap on Company C's left flank.⁷⁷ Also, Edwards learned that the battalion's mortars had not yet been consolidated according to the operations order. He then received

Moore's approval to establish a mortar "battery" under the operational control of his mortar sergeant until the battalion mortar platoon leader and fire direction center air-landed. In short order Edwards' battery was firing in support of units in contact. Unfortunately, the noise, smoke, and confusion around the LZ precluded company forward observers from adjusting effective fire on enemy targets. Still, Edwards' clear thinking gave the battalion an additional fire support "organization" for the afternoon combat.⁷⁸

By about 1500 an uneasy lull had set in around LZ X-Ray. Moore took this opportunity to call for the last elements of his battalion to air-land. Judging that a small section of the eastern edge of the LZ would be the most secure site for the next lift to touch down, Moore brought in the last squads of Company C and the reconnaissance platoon of Company D. Moore personally directed this landing and all future helicopter approaches to the LZ.⁷⁹ The temporary lull was shattered when the 66th Regiment's anti-aircraft company fired its 12.5mm heavy machine guns on the approaching helicopters. The troopers unloaded without casualties, but two choppers were disabled.⁸⁰ Moore reconstituted his battalion reserve from these fresh troops.⁸¹

As concerned as he was with getting all of his battalion into the fight at LZ X-Ray, Moore was equally aware of the need to evacuate his more seriously wounded

troopers. The battalion casualty collection point had been set up not far from Moore's CP near the center of the LZ. In the early afternoon, the battalion surgeon and four aidmen landed on the LZ to take charge of casualty treatment and evacuation. Rather than expose unarmed medical evacuation helicopters to the brutal NVA anti-aircraft fire, Moore personally arranged with the lift helicopter commander for departing choppers to quickly load wounded for a short ride to LZ Falcon, a secure LZ where medevac birds could land. This arrangement "worked exceptionally well and did a great deal to bolster morale."⁸²

Based on the situation reports from his company commanders, Moore felt reasonably certain his battalion was up against 500-600 NVA regulars. Taken in the context of the pre-operation intelligence picture, the possibility existed that at least two more NVA battalions were converging on LZ X-Ray. Moore realized it was time to ask for help. Shortly after 1500 Moore called COL Brown and requested reinforcement with at least one additional rifle company.⁸³

COL Brown was firmly convinced that the NVA were closing in on LZ X-Ray to annihilate Moore. In anticipation of a request for help from Moore, Brown had alerted LTC Robert B. Tully's 2/7 Cav to prepare to go to Moore's aid. When Moore's call for a rifle company reached him, Brown responded by directing the attachment

of Tully's Company B, 2/7 Cav to Moore, effective 1528. Company B, commanded by CPT Myron Diduryk, would air assault into LZ X-Ray immediately after it was assembled at Catecka Plantation. Tully would then assemble the rest of his battalion as rapidly as possible at LZ Victor, three kilometers southeast of X-Ray. Brown's plan was for Tully to conduct a foot movement from LZ Victor commencing at first light on 15 November. Tully's lead elements would conceivably reach Moore by mid-morning. Brown wanted Tully to move overland in daylight instead of using helicopters at night because he "didn't relish the idea of moving a steady stream of helicopters into an LZ as hot as X-Ray". In addition, Brown felt "a foot move would be unobserved and the battalion might come in behind the enemy."⁸⁴

At 1600 Moore had his full battalion on the ground.⁸⁵ His troopers had thus far succeeded in defeating the NVA attempts to overrun the LZ. Moore conceded that the NVA were aggressive, well-trained, and highly motivated. He also saw that they could shoot extremely well and were not afraid to die.⁸⁶ But Herrick's 2d Platoon of Company B was still isolated within the sea of disciplined, well-led NVA. Moore had to rescue this lone platoon before it was completely wiped out.⁸⁷

Moore was going to try one more attempt to reach Herrick before dark. Now that Marm's 1st Platoon, Company

A, had linked-up with Deveny's 1st Platoon and Deal's 3d Platoon, Company B, Moore directed this force to withdraw back down the finger to the dry creek bed. The withdrawal would be covered by the battalion mortar battery plus artillery fires. The platoons would withdraw to the creek bed with all dead and wounded troopers. At the creek bed, Companies A and B would prepare to conduct a coordinated attack to reach Herrick's platoon.⁸⁸

What Moore did not know, but could surely expect, was that Herrick's platoon was making its last, desperate stand. During the course of the afternoon, the NVA maintained relentless pressure against Herrick's tiny perimeter. The platoon chain of command had been mowed down, virtually one after the other, until control rested in the hands of the 3d Squad Leader, Staff Sergeant Clyde E. Savage.⁸⁹

Within minutes of assuming command of the beleaguered platoon, Savage had called for and adjusted artillery concentrations to ring the perimeter. He continued walking the highly accurate artillery fires toward his position until the rounds impacted as close as 20 meters from the platoon. With seven effectives out of the original twenty-seven-man platoon, Savage and his group continued to exact a deadly toll on two NVA companies whose attention was solely concentrated on the reduction of Savage's "Bastogne in Microcism."⁹⁰ These two NVA companies never joined in the attacks against LZ

X-Ray. Had they been involved in the flanking maneuvers around the LZ, it is conceivable that Moore's thinly stretched perimeter defenses would not have held out against the additional combat power. Also, there is some question as to why the NVA "concentrated sources all out of proportion to the strength of the tiny American outpost."⁹¹ The answer is found in the NVA "lure-and-ambush" tactic; the NVA were maintaining constant pressure on Herrick's platoon, just like it had a Plei Me, while an ambush, or assault force, attempted to destroy Moore's "relief column".

Moore's two company coordinated attack would use the dry creek bed as the line of departure and would be preceded by artillery and aerial rocket fire. At 1620 the two company attack commenced. The artillery prep, designed to secure the front of the attacking force from ambush, was impacting too far in front of the companies. Not 50 meters beyond the creek bed, the attack ran into a hail of fire from NVA who had infiltrated and had dug themselves into "spider holes" and anthills and had tied themselves in trees. Blending perfectly with the honey-colored elephant grass, the khaki-uniformed NVA - the "ambush" segment of the lure-and-ambush tactic - inflicted severe damage on the assault companies.⁹²

Nadal realized that his company was now postured in an extremely vulnerable position, susceptible to being systematically reduced by the NVA ambush force. All of

Nadal's platoon leaders were dead or wounded; his artillery forward observer and his communication NCO had been killed right next to him. The attack had stalled after an advance of only 150 meters. It was just a few minutes past 1700 and the shadows were already lengthening on the eastern side of the Chu Pongs. Accepting the fact that he would not be able to break through to Herrick before it got dark, Nadal called Moore and requested permission to withdraw to the dry creek bed.⁹³

Monitoring Nadal's call to Moore, Herren had reached the same conclusion about his chances for success. By 1700, Herren had lost 30 casualties, and his depleted company had barely moved beyond the creek bed before it was halted by the stinging NVA fire. In spite of his unit's collective desire to rescue their isolated bretheren, Herren realized it was pointless to continue to send his understrength platoons against a dug in enemy.⁹⁴

Moore made the tough decision to withdraw the exposed companies. In reality, Moore had little choice. His battalion was fighting three separate engagements: one force was defending the LZ, one platoon was cut-off and encircled, and two companies were attacking to retrieve the isolated platoon. Moore had to arrive at a coherent scheme of maneuver or risk being defeated in detail by the overwhelming numbers of NVA. Analyzing his situation, Moore rationalized that the security of the LZ

was paramount to the survival of his battalion while it fought outnumbered. He anticipated that other NVA battalions were converging on LZ X-Ray to destroy him, sometime after dark or at first light the next morning. Instead of playing into the NVA "lure-and-ambush" tactics of attrition, Moore decided to consolidate his base at the LZ. Preparations would be made for a night attack or a first-light attack to relieve the besieged platoon. Since he still had communications with SSG Savage, Moore contemplated ordering Savage to exfiltrate back to the LZ. Though a defensive stand painfully reminded Moore of his Korean War experiences at Pork Chop Hill, Triangle Hill, and Old Baldy, he ordered Nadal and Herren to withdraw their companies to the dry creek bed. Both units would pull back under cover of an artillery smoke screen, bringing their dead and wounded with them.⁹⁵

Even though Nadal's request to withdraw had been a simple, common sense approach to the situation, the actual movement promised to be extremely difficult. Both companies were under fire, and were having a tough time conducting the hazardous retrograde maneuver. Moore called for the 1st Battalion, 21st Artillery at LZ Falcon to fire smoke rounds to mask the withdrawal of the two units. When he was notified by the battalion fire support officer that no smoke rounds were available, Moore was faced with another tough decision. He recalled from his Korean War days that white phosphorous (WP) rounds often

provided the same heavy concentration of smoke when they detonated as did the conventional smoke shells. If WP was fired "danger close" to friendly troops, the burning particles of phosphorous would wound the troopers as well as the enemy. Given the gravity of the situation, and the demonstrated accuracy of the artillery up to this point, Moore decided to go with WP fires as close to the companies as possible. After two volleys, and no friendly casualties, both companies made it back to LZ X-Ray.⁹⁶ From a distance, LZ X-Ray "resembled a heavy ground fog with dancing splotches of colors", produced by the exploding WP rounds and "the discharge of dyed smoke grenades."⁹⁷

At 1705, as Moore was orchestrating the withdrawal, the 2d Platoon and the command group of Company B, 2/7 Cav landed at the LZ. Amidst cheers from Moore's troopers on the LZ, CPT Diduryk dramatically reported to Moore for instructions. Minutes later the remainder of Diduryk's 120-man company had closed in on the LZ. Moore initially placed Diduryk's company in battalion reserve. At about 1800, with Companies A and B back within the perimeter, Moore directed Diduryk to detach one platoon to Company C to assist Edwards, who had been holding the largest sector of the battalion perimeter. At about 1830, Moore decided he would need more combat power on the perimeter than in reserve. Consequently, he elected to use his recon platoon as the reserve, and he directed Diduryk to take

his remaining two platoons and occupy the northern and northeastern sectors of the perimeter between Companies B and D. Diduryk would tie-in with Company B on his left, and Company D on his right. Diduryk placed his two 81mm mortars in the 1/7 Cav mortary "battery" and dispersed some auxilliary mortarmen on the perimeter. Once in position on the perimeter, Diduryk's registered artillery and mortar fires in conjunction with the other company commanders.⁹⁸

By 1900, Moore's perimeter was secure and all weapons sited and registered.⁹⁹ Positions averaged five meters apart and all companies were tied-in with adjacent units.¹⁰⁰ The recon platoon was assembled near Moore's CP for its assignment as battalion reserve.¹⁰¹ At 1915, just prior to darkness, the day's last lift of dead and wounded were carried out to LZ Falcon and a much-needed resupply of ammunition, water, medical supplies, and rations was flown in. Anticipating Moore's need for a night landing capability, a pathfinder team from the 229th Helicopter Battalion had flown in during the late afternoon. By dusk the team had cleared a two ship night LZ at the northern end of LZ X-Ray, complete with lights.¹⁰²

Just after last light, Moore and his Command Sergeant Major, CSM Basil Plumley, walked around the entire perimeter to visit with troopers, spot-check fields of fire, and verify positions. Moore's personal

inspection of the "foxhole line" confirmed that the morale of his battalion was still high after the day's stiff fight. Facing a large, formidable NVA force, Moore's troopers had acquitted themselves well. Moore later remarked that "we know we had and could hurt the enemy badly."¹⁰³ Based on his assessment of the status of his soldiers and his evaluation of the perimeter of the battalion, Moore was satisfied that 1/7 Cav was prepared for night combat with the NVA. He also believed that with proper planning, his battalion could rescue Savage and punish the NVA during the next day's fighting. With this in mind, Moore radioed his S-3 to land at LZ X-Ray to initiate planning for offensive operations on 15 November.¹⁰⁴

High on the slopes of the Chu Pongs, BG Man was also preparing his unit for further combat with the Americans at the base of the mountain. All units in contact with the U.S. battalion were to maintain pressure on the Americans by conducting squad-size probes of the defensive positions on the LZ. Once gaps were discovered, and properly marked, Man would direct the 8th Battalion of the 66th Regiment to attack in the morning. Continued attempts would be made to entice the U.S. battalion commander to send another relief force to make contact with the isolated platoon. With his units already in ambush positions, Man hoped his opponent would try a night relief effort. Additional pressure would be exerted on

the defenders of the LZ by the arrival of the H-15 Main Force Viet Cong Battalion from the south, sometime on the 15th. As a reserve for the larger scale "lure-and-ambush" he intended to inflict on the American brigade, Man kept his battle-hardened 32d Regiment safely tucked into its assembly area, twelve kilometers away from the LZ. Man would patiently await a reinforcement column from the brigade, sent to assist the U.S. battalion on the LZ. He would then direct the 32d Regiment to strike and annihilate that reinforcing unit. Such a tactic would clearly forecast the complete isolation of the Americans at the base of the mountain, and lead to their destruction. In preparation for the daylight assault on the LZ, Man directed the 8th Battalion of the 66th Regiment to depart from its assembly area on the Ia Drang River and move to its attack position on the eastern side of the LZ.¹⁰⁵

At 2125 Dillon linked up at Moore's CP. As he discussed the situation with Dillon, Moore's thoughts were dominated by two things - saving Savage's platoon and holding on to LZ X-Ray.¹³⁸ Both Moore and Dillon were convinced that the NVA would simultaneously strike Savage and the LZ perimeter after first light. The flashing lights Dillon saw as he flew into the LZ clearly indicated the NVA were posturing on the forward slopes of the Chu Pongs for a renewed offensive. This ruled out any possibility of reaching Savage with a night attack. In

addition, since the NVA appeared to be settling into position for an overwhelming push to overrun the LZ, Moore came to the conclusion that a coordinated first-light attack by three companies would not only beat the NVA to the punch, but would regain the isolated platoon. Moore's tentative plan called for the battalion to attack in wedge formation. Herren's Company B, augmented by one platoon from Company A, would be the main effort of the attack and would be the point of the wedge formation. Echeloned left and right behind Herren in supporting roles would be, respectively, Nadal's Company A and Edwards' Company C. Moore and his command group would move behind Company B during the attack. Dillon would remain at the battalion CP on the LZ, maintaining security of the LZ with Company D and Diduryk's Company B, 2/7 Cav. Dillon would be prepared to commit at least Diduryk's Company as the battalion reserve.¹⁰⁶

Moore's battlefield planning was not accomplished in a vacuum. During the night, NVA squads probed the battalion perimeter while up on the finger, platoon size elements attempted to overrun Savage. The probing attacks on the LZ were repulsed by the registered artillery concentrations and close air support. Many of these concentrations enabled Savage to hold on.¹⁰⁷

Savage and the remnants of his platoon were hit three times during the night of 14-15 November by reinforced platoon-size NVA assault groups. The most

vicious attacks came at 0345 and 0445, often preceded by bugle calls and shouted commands which seemed to encircle the miniature perimeter. Savage defeated all attacks by adjusting artillery fires so close to his position that his men were literally lifted off the ground by the concussion of the rounds and then buried by dirt and branches. Following up rapidly with tactical air strikes, Savage ensured the survival of his platoon.¹⁰⁸

Ten minutes after first light, Moore radioed all company commanders and directed them to meet him for an orders group at the Company C command post. Moore intended to brief his commanders on the attack order for reaching Savage. He chose the CP of Company C for his orders group because it was on the southwestern edge of the LZ and provided an excellent view of the attack route and objective. Outlining the plan of attack, Moore further stipulated that all companies send patrols forward of the foxhole line to flush out NVA snipers. Also, units would sweep behind their positions to uncover any infiltrators who may have discovered a gap in perimeter defenses.¹⁰⁹

Since the orders group had been held in his CP, the commander of Company C was the first to dispatch patrols forward of his lines. Edwards' patrols moved out at about 0640, and had travelled approximately fifty meters when they were hit by heavy enemy fire. Fortunately, for the battalion as a whole, Edwards' two patrols had prematurely

triggered the assault of an NVA company that had been quietly crawling toward the LZ on hands and knees.¹¹⁰

In between the times he fired his M16 at the attacking NVA, Edwards called Moore and delivered a contact report. The situation in the Company C sector was quickly deteriorating and Edwards requested that Moore commit the battalion reserve to backstop the crumbling Company C left flank. Moore denied the request on the grounds that he believed that the attack against Edwards was not the NVA main effort. Moore knew that the NVA had sufficient forces disposed to hit the LZ with two full battalions, but he had to await a more substantial indicator as to which sector of the perimeter these forces would be committed. The best Moore could do was shift the priority of fires to Edwards.¹¹¹

Despite the heavy losses inflicted by Edwards' machineguns and the steady rain of artillery and tactical air fires, the NVA closed to hand-to-hand combat range with the Company C troopers. In the ensuing melee, Edwards was badly wounded. Again, Edwards called Moore for reinforcements, and this time the battalion commander approved the request. But Moore elected to keep his reserve - the battalion recon platoon - intact, and ordered CPT Nadal to send a platoon to Edwards' aid. It was now 0715. The fighting had raged for 45 minutes, yet only Company C was under attack. As he waited for the NVA to tip their hand as to the location of the main attack,

Moore believed that reinforcement from Company A would rectify the situation in Edwards' sector.¹¹²

A heavy cross fire soon ripped across the entire LZ. The NVA had extended the frontage of their attack and now struck the vulnerable Company D sector with a company size assault. Since Moore's small anti-tank platoon was the only unit manning the line, the NVA quickly threatened to overrun the battalion's mortar battery. At the same time Company D came under attack, Nadal sent his 2d Platoon to reinforce Company C, as directed by Moore. Within seconds the platoon was the recipient of a brutal grazing fire which swept the western edge of the LZ, and was pinned down. Nadal's platoon, stopped just a few meters behind and to the left flank of Company A and directly behind Company C's right flank, was now fortuitously positioned to defend the battalion command post.¹¹³

Moore was now under attack from three directions. Artillery concentrations and aerial rocket fires blasted the outer ring of the perimeter. To Moore, "the noise was tremendous. I have never heard before or since in two wars such a loud or continuous volume of small arms and automatic weapons fire."¹¹⁴ The situation verged on becoming desperate. NVA had pressed through the perimeter and were sniping at the battalion CP. On two occasions, Moore engaged the NVA with his M16.¹¹⁵ Enemy RPG or

mortar rounds impacted on the LZ in an attempt to bracket the battalion CP.

"Lieutenant Colonel Moore exerted a forceful, professional coolness in the midst of the confusion and near panic."¹¹⁶ Under simultaneous attack in several perimeter sectors, Moore feared that the LZ was in danger of being overrun. "It certainly entered my mind that we were the 7th Cavalry, and by God, we couldn't let happen what happened to Custer."¹¹⁷ Moore felt it was time that each company and each trooper hold his own in the spirit of Savage and his survivors on the finger. At 0745, Moore alerted the reconnaissance platoon to be prepared for possible commitment into either the Company D or Company C sector, in that priority. Next, he contacted COL Brown and appraised him of the situation. Moore also requested reinforcement with another rifle company. Brown replied that he had Company A, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry on strip alert at Catecka Plantation, and that they would air assault into LZ X-Ray as soon as enemy fires slackened enough to permit helicopters to land. Brown also informed Moore that Tully's 2/5 Cav was enroute by foot from LZ Victor, a mile and a half distant.¹¹⁸

Until reinforcements arrived, Moore would have use artillery and tactical air support to offset his numerical disadvantage. At 0755, Moore directed all units to throw smoke grenades forward of their positions so that all fire support platforms could begin walking concentrations

closer and closer to friendly forces. As supporting fires and aerial rockets were brought within bursting radius of Moore's troopers, some ordnance landed inside Moore's perimeter. Two misdropped napalm canisters detonated near Moore's CP, killing one soldier, burning several others, and exploding a resupply load of M16 ammunition.¹¹⁹

"During this maelstrom of activity the NVA continued to press their attack."¹²⁰ Caught in the swirling, ferocious cacophony of U.S. fire support, the NVA were following their standard "hugging tactics" in order to keep the Americans from firing final protective fires close to friendly troops. At 0800, the NVA had gotten close enough to jab at the left flank of Company A and jeopardize all of Company D's sector. The company D mortarmen were firing their M16s and mortars simultaneously as they desperately battled the approaching NVA. In danger of losing his organic fire support, Moore committed the battalion reserve to backstop the Company D sector. Moore then reconstituted his battalion reserve by directing Diduryk to assemble his company command group and one platoon near the anthill in the center of the LZ. The grazing fire which criss-crossed the LZ was so intense the Diduryk's 1st Platoon sustained two casualties before it even began moving toward Moore's CP.¹²¹

By 0900 the sheer volume of American firepower around the LZ stalled the NVA advance. With the LZ reasonably free of NVA direct fire, Moore called his

brigade commander and asked for the reinforcements to land. As soon as the lead elements of Company A, 2/7 Cav touched down, Moore directed the company commander, CPT Joel E. Sugdinis, to occupy Diduryk's former position on the perimeter. This move brought Diduryk's remaining platoon into the center of the LZ to give Moore a two-platoon battalion reserve. Enemy fires around the perimeter began to slacken proportionally so that by 1000 only sporadic NVA sniping harassed Moore's positions. The NVA appeared to be breaking contact and withdrawing.¹²²

With the NVA pressure momentarily abated, Moore made an assessment of his dispositions. The Company C sector, originally a four-platoon slice of the perimeter, was being held by just one platoon. Moore directed Diduryk to take his two full platoons and assume responsibility for the Company C sector. Moore then augmented Diduryk's combat power with the 3d Platoon of the newly arrived and fresh Company A, 2/7 Cav. Moore once again reconstituted his battalion reserve by moving the remnants of Edwards' hard-pressed Company C to the center of the LZ.¹²³

At 1205, Tully's 2/5 Cav reached the perimeter at LZ X-Ray. Although the overland movement of Tully's battalion failed to achieve COL Brown's optimistic plan to trap NVA units between Moore's stationary force and Tully's moving force, the link-up relieved much of the danger at LZ X-Ray.¹²⁴

Now that Tully's 2/5 Cav was completely within the perimeter, Brown made Moore the commander of all ground forces in the LZ. With the command arrangements taken care of, Moore and Tully discussed the next move. Moore's attention was now focused on the relief of Savage's outpost on the finger. Since Tully's battalion was still configured in attack formation, and was reasonably fresh, Moore planned to conduct an immediate sweep to the northwest to reach Savage. Tully would command the relief column attacking to reach Savage. Moore would remain on the LZ in overall charge of the operation.¹²⁵

Preceded by a short but intense artillery and aerial rocket prep, Tully's force departed the perimeter at 1315. Within an hour of leaving the LZ, Herren reached Savage's perimeter. Seventy dead NVA lay in crumpled heaps around Savage's position. Unbelievably, the isolated platoon had not had an additional fatality during the twenty-four hours Savage was in command. The platoon had been saved, according to Moore, "by guts and Sergeant Savage."¹²⁶

With the return of Tully's relief column to the landing zone, at 1500, Moore decided to reposition his combat power on the perimeter. Now in charge of two battalions, Moore concluded that he needed a simple, logical, and combat effective task organization for the defense of the LZ. With this in mind, Moore bisected the perimeter and placed Tully's 2/5 Cav on the northeastern

half while he maintained the southwestern half with his battalion and Companies A and B, 2/7 Cav. This arrangement ensured unity of effort and tactical integrity of each battalion in the event of renewed NVA attacks. For the rest of the afternoon of 15 November, Moore directed the evacuation of the dead and wounded and supervised the preparation of night defensive positions.¹²⁷

Although BG Man's units had suffered heavy losses in the first thirty-six hours of the battle at LZ X-Ray, the 4th Field Front commander was not yet ready to give up the fight. He directed his disciplined soldiers to conduct night time probes of the LZ in order to find gaps in the perimeter for a pre-dawn attack. Man reasoned that the Americans would not expect any additional attempts to overrun the LZ.

Throughout the early hours of the evening, Man's soldiers kept up sporadic sniper fire around the LZ to give the appearance that the NVA force was withdrawing. All night long, the artillery batteries from LZ Falcon kept up an incessant ring of fire around the perimeter. At 0100 five NVA soldiers were discovered as they probed the northwestern sector of the perimeter manned by Herren's Company B. In an abrupt exchange of gunfire the NVA fled, leaving behind two dead. For the next three hours there were no additional probes of the perimeter. At 0400, though, a series of short and long whistle

signals was heard from out in front of the sector held by Diduryk's Company B, 2/7 Cav - the same sector occupied twenty-four hours earlier by Edwards' Company C, 1/7 Cav. At about 0422 trip flares were ignited and anti-intrusion devices were sprung approximately 300 meters from Diduryk's position. In the glare of the ground illumination, a company-size NVA assault struck the entire width of Diduryk's sector. The attack was finally broken up by a fusillade of small arms fire and the imaginative adjustment of four batteries of artillery shooting high explosive and white phosphorous shells with variable time fuses.¹²⁸

The NVA attempted another attack at 0530. Coming out of the south and west, the NVA resorted to human wave tactics as they pressed against Diduryk's 3d Platoon. By dawn this attack was also defeated. Outside Diduryk's positions, NVA bodies lay in heaps and mounds. In front of one position NVA dead were stacked so high that Diduryk's troopers had to move them to achieve a clear field of fire.¹²⁹

Well aware of what was happening in Diduryk's sector of the perimeter, Moore was concerned about where the NVA main effort would strike his exhausted troopers. Diduryk had ably handled what Moore judged was a deliberate, set-piece diversionary attack executed repetitively in order to draw attention from an infiltrating main attack. Not unlike the morning of the

15th, the skilled, disciplined NVA would take advantage of the terrain bordering the LZ to crawl within hand grenade range of U.S. positions before attacking. To prevent this, at 0655 Moore directed all units to fire "a mad minute" of all weapons systems at trees, anthills, and bushes in front of their positions. Within seconds the "mad minute" produced results - a forty-man NVA platoon which had crept to within 150 meters of the positions of Company A, 2/7 Cav was forced to attack prematurely. A heavy dose of artillery fire decimated the infiltrators. All around the perimeter, snipers fell dead from trees.¹³⁰

After the mad minute was completed, Moore turned his attention to a matter that had disturbed him for over twenty-four hours: three American casualties were unaccounted for - a situation Moore found unpalatable. To Moore, a commander was responsible for returning from a combat action with every trooper he had taken into the fight. This responsibility included the evacuation of wounded and recovery of dead soldiers. During the brief lull that followed the mad minute, Moore dispatched the battalion reserve (consisting of the recon platoon and the remnants of Company C) to sweep the interior of the perimeter for the missing troopers. The search, much to Moore's chagrin, failed to locate the three men.¹³¹

At 0930, lead elements of another of Col Brown's reinforcements reached LZ X-Ray. LTC Robert McDade's 2/7

Cav, augmented with Company A of LTC Fred Ackerson's 1/5 Cav, reached Moore's perimeter after a five-mile trek by foot from LZ Columbus. The arrival of McDade's battalion signalled that Moore's fight for LZ X-Ray was coming to a close. But Hal Moore still had unfinished business to conduct. At 0955 he directed that all units conduct a coordinated sweep to their front to a distance of 500 meters. Moore felt this tactic could accomplish two primary objectives: (1) it would spoil the attack of any fresh NVA units which had converged on the LZ during the night; and (2) it would clear out the survivors of the NVA pre-dawn assaults and preclude the vulnerable LZ from being attacked during the relief-in-place between Moore and the Tully/McDade force.¹³²

Company B, 2/7 Cav had swept only 50-75 meters in front of its positions when it was hit by a large volume of fire. In an instant Diduryk lost ten casualties. Under cover of artillery fire, Diduryk withdrew his company back to its perimeter positions. There he was met by Moore and LT Hastings, the battalion's Forward Air Controller (FAC). In a matter of minutes, Hastings brought in two fighter-bombers who unloaded Napalm, cluster bombs, rockets, and a 500-pound bomb on top of the NVA ambush. Diduryk then rallied his company and renewed the sweep. Moving behind "a wall of artillery fire", Diduryk quickly eliminated the last of the NVA in his sector. Continuing his sweep past the twenty-seven

recently killed NVA soldiers, Diduryk came across the bodies of the battalion's missing troopers.¹³³

On the mountain side, above LZ X-Ray, BG Man conceded that the U.S. perimeter was "a nut too tough to crack."¹³⁴ Just before he had committed the 8th Battalion of the 66th Regiment in a final assault against the perimeter of the LZ, Man decided to re-orient his combat power onto the highly vulnerable American artillery batteries at LZ Falcon. Late in the morning of 16 November, BG Man ordered the 8th Battalion to march eastward and link-up with the H-15 Main Force Viet Cong Battalion to strike LZ Falcon. To cover this move, NVA units still in contact with the Americans on the LZ were ordered to maintain just enough pressure on the U.S. forces to keep them bottled up at the base of the mountain. For the 4th Field Front, the battle for LZ X-Ray was over, and it was time to move on to more lucrative targets.¹³⁵

As the action around the perimeter dwindled to dulcatory sniper fire, Moore consolidated his battalion for its helicopter movement to Pleiku. He had every reason to be proud of the accomplishments of his battalion in the face of such overwhelming odds. As his men stacked large piles of NVA weapons and equipment in the center of the LZ, Moore took stock of the cost of the fierce battle with the NVA. Moore's casualties for the three days fighting, attached units included, were 79 killed, 121

wounded, and none missing. In fighting that was frequently hand-to-hand and nearly always within hand grenade range, Moore's troopers killed 634 NVA known dead and 581 estimated dead and captured six prisoners.¹³⁶

At about 1400, LTC Tully assumed operational command of the forces at LZ X-Ray. But Hal Moore and his battalion were once again encircled, this time by a Chinook - load of reporters, film crews, and news personalities flown in by the 1st Cav Division's Public Information Officer. In the midst of the media frenzy, Moore articulated how "brave men and this little black gun (the recently issued M16 rifle) won this victory."¹³⁷ For the commander who would not leave the battlefield until every member of his battalion was accounted for, it was the individual soldiers and their incredible skill and determination which defeated the NVA. "I've got men in body bags today," Moore said, "that had less than a week to go in the Army. These men fought all the way; they never gave an inch."¹³⁸

Late in the afternoon, after his entire battalion had been extracted, LTC Harold G. Moore finally boarded a helicopter for the ride to Pleiku. It was a fitting gesture for the commander of 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry at LZ X-Ray: very nearly the first man in the battalion to land on the LZ, he was certainly the last man to leave.¹³⁹

Analysis and Conclusions

Seven days after the Battle of LZ X-Ray, LTC Hal Moore was promoted to Colonel, awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his gallant leadership of 1/7 Cav at LZ X-Ray, and assigned as Commander, 3d Brigade, 1st Cav Division. COL Moore commanded the 3d Brigade through several major engagements until he returned in the United States in late July, 1966.

The performance of Hal Moore and his tough, intrepid battalion at LZ X-Ray is one of the most documented accounts of battalion-level combat in recent military history. There is no denying the fact that Moore's commandership of his battalion in the bloody cauldron named LZ X-Ray is a tremendous example of a successful leader firmly in control of his unit. For future combat battalion commanders, the narrative of Moore's leadership during the decisive three-day engagement provides a veritable gold mine of "lessons learned". Especially instructive are the skills of command of battalions in combat which readily appear in an examination of Moore's performance in conjunction with the leadership competency/performance indicator model.

COMMUNICATIONS

Moore stands out as an extremely effective communicator. While his style has been described as flamboyant,¹⁴⁰ Moore clearly displayed knowledge of information by properly implementing the commander's

intent. Moore believed the concept of commander's intent was a fundamental. This is perfect evidence of the philosophy of the 1st Cav Division Commander, MG Kinnard, who routinely articulated his intent along with mission orders to subordinates. Moore and his immediate superior, COL Brown, discussed intent when Brown issued Moore his orders for the air assault into the Ia Drang Valley. Moore passed this intent down to his company commanders during his operations order on 14 November. As in previous chapters, it is not possible to assess to what degree Moore was a Good Listener. Back brief information and provide feedback on what was briefed are, as has been shown in the previous leader assessments, particularly difficult indicators to analyze. There is evidence to support the performance indicator respond to subordinates' input. From the start of the planning of the operation, Moore accepted the opinions of subordinates and used them to formulate plans. He relied heavily on the input of his S-3, CPT Dillon, during the planning of the three company attack on 15 November. He accepted the report of the reconnaissance helicopter section leader to help him confirm LZ X-Ray. There had even been a discussion about the choice of LZ immediately following the leaders' recon on the morning of 14 November. During the fighting on LZ X-Ray, Moore took into account the observations and assessments of CPTs Nadal, Edwards, Herren, and Diduryk.

For LTC Moore, it was imperative for a battalion commander in combat to Clearly Communicate His Intent. It is reasonable to conclude that every subordinate leader on LZ X-Ray during the three days of fighting knew that Moore intended to attack the enemy, save the LZ, rescue Savage, and account for all personnel before extraction. Moore frequently changed the missions of his companies, but regardless of the circumstances, they all knew his intent.

Because of his personality type, Moore communicated verbally as opposed to Nonverbally. This does not mean that Moore's words spoke louder than his actions. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. It just means that because of his general affability, Moore was often prone to expressing himself verbally in order to reinforce his actions. He communicated face-to-face with subordinates whenever practicable during the fight at LZ X-Ray. It was also the way he preferred to do business with superiors.

Moore's actions within the perimeter of LZ X-Ray during those three days in November 1965 complemented/ reinforced unit standards and demonstrated a sense of urgency without panic. On LZ X-Ray, 14-16 November, there was no question as to who was in charge. Hal Moore was in command and his actions, just like those of the combat battalion commanders in the previous chapters, are indicative of a conscious adherence to a type of mental checklist displaying the dynamics of taking care of leader

business in combat. Moore demonstrated, by force of personal example, how the standards his unit developed during the training and testing of the airmobility concept would be applied on the battlefield. Airmobile commanders, Moore showed went into the proposed landing zone on the initial lift and were usually some of the first leaders on the ground. Commanders directed the influx of subsequent lifts based on the situation. Commanders called for and orchestrated the employment of combined arms on the battlefield. Commanders situated themselves at a point from which they could see the entire battlefield. Commanders remained aware of the status of wounded soldiers and ensured all casualties were promptly evacuated. Commanders never left casualties on the battlefield; every man into action was brought back out - dead, wounded, or, hopefully, uninjured.

Along with this, Moore demonstrated a sense of urgency without panic by exerting a cool, professionalism throughout many instances of potential panic on the LZ. He and CSM Plumley shot and killed NVA who had infiltrated within hand grenade range of the battalion CP. They helped load wounded on helicopters. Moore was calm and forceful in his radio communications even as heavy NVA automatic weapons fires wounded personnel in his CP and an errant napalm canister exploded stacked cases of rifle ammo near the CP. Moore took care of leader business in

combat. His single minded tenacity and his personal example permeated the ranks of his battalion.

Moore Communicated Enthusiasm during his pre-operations planning and troop leading procedures and once he was on the LZ. His excitement at Company B's discovery of the NVA deserter and the subsequent intel gathered from the prisoner fired the enthusiasm of the entire organization. As seen during his inspection of the perimeter on 14 November, Moore articulated his enthusiasm for the prospects of success to the lowest level as frequently as was practicable.

Moore Clearly Communicated Orders in a manner which was fundamentally sound and doctrinally correct. His pre-operational planning inculcated the intent of both the division commander and the brigade commander and was based on a solid intelligence preparation of the battlefield and mission analysis. Moore's plan was simple, took into account the guidance of his superiors and, perhaps most instructive, it was especially flexible. Moore's plan was devised to Stress Simplicity. Analogous to the football quarterback who calls an audible to change a pre-set play at the line of scrimmage, Moore likewise fashioned his assault plan to enable him to look at the terrain, size-up the enemy, assess his own troops, check the time available, and maintain mission focus. Moore could, and did, call audibles at the line of scrimmage; in fact, he called several, as is evidenced by the change in

in missions of his companies once in contact with the NVA.

To take the analogy a step or two further, Moore was fortunate to have coaches (superiors) who allowed him to call his own plays in the huddle as long as they complemented the game plan (intent). This attitude was influenced by MG Kinnard's philosophy of allowing subordinates the latitude to fight the battles and make decisions on the ground. It was a direct product of the spirit of airborne warfare which demanded that subordinate commanders exercise independence of action.

Moore excelled because he knew what end state his superiors wanted him to achieve with his operation and because he was capable of DEFINING SUCCESS for his company commanders: find the elusive NVA, fix them, attack them, defeat them; rescue Savage, defend the LZ, sweep the perimeter, police the battlefield, win.

Moore Communicated Up, Down, and Horizontally throughout the battle. He was in constant radio communications with COL Brown. He was in constant communications with his company commanders, issuing orders face-to-face or via radio. He even maintained communications with SSG Savage during the darkest period of that platoon's isolation. He talked constantly with his S-3, CPT Dillon, who functioned from the command and control helicopter. Lastly, Moore communicated with his soldiers. As he "trooped the line" with CSM Plumley on

the night 14 November, Moore assessed the morale and fighting ability of his unit through his conversations with his soldiers.

SUPERVISE

How does LTC Moore rate as a supervisor of his battalion in combat?

First of all, Moore Commanded Forward. He was virtually the first soldier of his battalion to land on LZ X-Ray. From that moment on he stayed on the LZ, and did not leave until all of his battalion had been extracted by helicopter to Pleiku. Throughout the three days of fighting Moore shared hardships with subordinates, led by example, spent time with his soldiers, and personally inspected selected tasks accomplished by subordinates. Moore did not hover above the battlefield in a command helicopter. He was on the ground, fighting next to his soldiers.

In Commanding Forward, Moore located his command post where he could best influence the action and remain in positive control of the fight. He situated his CP behind a huge anthill in the center of the LZ, and it remained there throughout the battle. On a couple of occasions Moore positioned himself at decisive sectors of the perimeter. He moved to Herren's location on the morning of 14 November in response to the capture of the NVA deserter. There he issued Herren the warning order for a future change in Company B's mission. At dusk on

the 14th Moore and CSM Plubley inspected the perimeter and talked to soldiers. Moore returned to his CP after the inspection tour with the feeling that his soldiers' morale was high and that they were capable of out-fighting the NVA. This assessment formed the basis for Moore's actions during the next thirty-six hours.

On the morning of 15 November Moore called his commanders to an orders group at Edwards' Company C command post. This site was chosen so that the commanders of the proposed three-company assault could observe the axis of advance and the objective, both plainly visible from the Company C positions. Then on the morning of 16 November, Moore was back in the same location, this time to get a first-hand glimpse of what had occurred in CPT Diduryk's sector at first light. There, in the old Company C positions, Moore and his Forward Air Controller directed fighter-bomber attacks on NVA infiltrators.

Late in the morning of 16 November, after the arrival of Tully's 2/5 Cav, Moore was responsible for commanding and controlling ten companies of infantry. As Tully moved out to rescue Savage, Moore remained at his CP near the anthill, in overall command of the LZ.

Moore Did Not Over-Supervise. He gave subordinates mission-type orders, a direct reflection of the confidence Moore had in his subordinates. Without this type of approach, Moore would never have been able to

affect the rapid changes in company missions as he did on LZ X-Ray.

When he gave mission orders to his company commanders Moore insured that they understood what success would look like. Herren's assumption of the Company C mission was predicated on creating a buffer zone between the mountains and the LZ in order to secure the LZ for follow-on lifts. Moore explained this to Herren. Then, when Herren's Company B was held up on the finger, and Herrick was surrounded, Moore sent Nadal to Herren's aid. Success for Nadal in this mission would be, according to Moore, the recovery of the isolated platoon. In that Nadal could not accomplish that mission, and recognized that success was beyond his capability, Moore switched to the plan to use Companies A and B in a combined attack to reach Herrick. Success again was the rescue of the platoon. Nadal went to dramatic lengths to insure his company understood what success would be for the two company attack. When the attack faltered in the face of overwhelming NVA fires, and could not succeed, Nadal requested permission to withdraw to the perimeter. Moore agreed and for the rest of the night, success for Hal Moore was LZ security. He articulated success to his soldiers during his twilight inspection of the perimeter.

As has been mentioned in previous chapters, Enforce Safety Standards leans more toward peacetime training restrictions than "fire control measures", "command and

control of direct and indirect fires", "orchestration of tactical air support", and "protection of troops". Moore's deliberate use of indirect fires within minimum safe distance range to friendly troops was an enormous risk to his soldiers yet it repelled countless NVA assaults. Savage's employment on artillery 25 meters from his perimeter demonstrated that accurate artillery fires may be adjusted to within hand grenades range. Moore used WP rounds to mask the withdrawal of Companies A and B on 14 November, a clear hazard to troops. Napalm and 500-pound bombs were also incorporated into the fire support and were professionally executed.

The issue of Enforcing Safety Standards revolves around training and trust. Moore knew that he could emplace artillery concentrations within minimum safe distance range because he knew the artillerymen were well trained and that his forward observers in the battalion could handle the task. Moore personally called for and adjusted numerous artillery concentrations but in most cases it was company forward observers requesting and adjusting multiple fire support assets. For future battalion commanders, the salient point is that observed fire training is mandatory for forward observers at company and platoon level. In this age of dwindling resources for artillery and mortar live fire, future battalion commanders will have to be particularly imaginative in the development of training events which

will provide the chain of command with the essential trust necessary for danger-close adjustments.

LTC Hal Moore effectively supervised subordinates.

In terms of assessing the remaining SKA Establish Controls, Establish/Enforce Standards, Follow-Up on Corrective Action, and Provide Feedback, few of the performance indicators seem to apply to supervising combat activities. For example, it may be stretching the point to say that Moore checked to ensure standard compliance and conducted performance evaluations. Indeed, his tour of the foxhole line on the evening of 14 November was intended to insure the over-arching performance standards for a defensive perimeter were being followed. However, the leadership competency performance indicators don't focus on critical tasks such as "assess morale of the organization", "assess combat power", or "assess the ability of the organization to execute continuous operations." These tasks were the part of Moore's inspection trip that night that cannot be considered as segments of an unannounced review of standards of compliance.

TEACHING AND COUNSELING

Did LTC Moore coach/counsel subordinates on LZ X-Ray? In spite of the training orientation of many of the LPI which constitute the SKA of this competency, it would be fair to assess that Moore did some coaching and counseling on LZ X-Ray. Just how much he did is difficult

to judge given the depth of the source material. Certainly, Moore Demanded Action on the battlefield. He provided advice and direction to subordinates in many instances during the three days on LZ X-Ray. It is arguable as to what degree Moore was able to Develop Subordinates and Teach Skills while in contact with the enemy. These SKA, plus Train for War, are pre-combat activities and post-combat training actions. Other than making an adjustment in dispositions or making a decision to change the condition of combat (attack instead of defend, etc.), the amount of corrective action taken on the battlefield, short of relief of a leader, seems to be minimal. There is no mention in the source material of Hal Moore conducting "footlocker counseling" of subordinates on LZ X-Ray. Moore's situation, not unlike the circumstance confronting Vandervoort and Lynch, was an environment where the time span between recognizing "bad performance" and executing "corrective action" was measured in friendly KIA or WIA.

SOLDIER TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Hal Moore's story is one of a battalion which fought as it had been trained. Moore was so confident of this fact that he boasted that his unit was as well-trained and well-disciplined as the U.S. airborne divisions in WWII. Accepting Moore's proclivity for invoking the traditional and philosophical connection between his unit and the tremendous paratroop battalions,

it is especially important to examine how Moore trained his unit and developed such a high standard of cohesion. While the objective of this study is not to conduct an in-depth analysis of the training methods of 1/7 Cav or the 1st Cavalry Division (which in itself is a premise for another thesis), Moore's focus on cohesion requires description.

Essentially, Moore created a strong unit identity by emphasizing tradition and pride in the unit and by demanding that leaders and teams have common goals. It was absolutely imperative in Moore's battalion that junior leaders actively team up with the NCOs who were veterans of light infantry combat in Korea and seek to learn as much as possible about small unit fighting. The corollary was that Moore's NCOs were also required to "adopt a lieutenant" and train the neophyte junior leaders. For a combat team to develop and then function under fire, there was no room for an adversarial relationship between officers and NCOs. Nor is there room for such an attitude in today's light infantry battalions. Moore's philosophy of cohesion unequivocally points out that the genesis of successful unit performance in combat occurs in the training and garrison environments where cooperation and teamwork is the standard. The overt demonstration of trust, caring, and confidence, up and down the chain of command, was mandatory behavior in 1/7 Cav. So must it be in the infantry battalions of the 1990s. Failure to

implement a Hal Moore style of cohesion-building robs a unit of its potential SSG Savage-type enlisted soldiers. The inability of many infantry battalions to develop subordinates to replace key leaders is no more dramatically demonstrated than at the various CTC's. Frequently, units begin to flounder after the officer or senior NCO is declared a casualty. At risk of overstating the case, how many squad leaders in battalions today can assume command of a platoon as Savage did and repel repeated assaults by two enemy companies? Or how many NCOs could assume command of a company as SSG George Gonzales did with Company D?

Moore developed his soldier and leader teams by Encouraging Boldness, Candor, Initiative, Innovation, and Speedy Action. He relied on his company commanders, platoon leaders, and squad leaders to boldly execute his plans and orders. He expected his leaders to demonstrate moral courage and freely inform him when mistakes are made or when operations have failed. Herren's report that Herrick had been isolated by a large NVA force is an example. Nadal's request to withdraw the two-company attack force is another instance of subordinate candor. Edwards' radio message that the mortar battery had not yet been formed was another illustration of candor.

Initiative was exercised all over the LZ during the three days of fighting. NCOs took charge of units when officers were killed or wounded. The actions of SSG Clyde

E. Savage is the preeminent model of initiative. Marm's personal gallantry in silencing the NVA machinegun that completely halted Company A is one more case in point. Edwards' organization of the mortar battery and his use of SSG Gonzales' Company D in his defensive sector is another example. CPT Dillon's targeting of the blinking lights in the Chu Pongs on the night of 14 November is a good example of subordinate initiative.

Perhaps the most Innovative leader on the battlefield was the battalion commander. Moore's reaction to several situations during the course of the fighting were not only innovative but also indicative of his ability to take speedy action. First and foremost is Moore's imaginative and innovative employment of fire support assets. He integrated every conceivable fire support platform into the fighting: tac air, aerial rocket artillery, helicopter gunships, artillery, and his mortar battery. He used white phosphorous rounds to mask the withdrawal of Nadal and Herren from NVA observation and fire. He directed the execution of the "mad minute" to clear the perimeter of snipers and infiltrating NVA assault echelons, a technique which paid enormous dividends.

Moore was also innovative in the maneuver arena. His air movement plan which called for a battalion LZ was different. His plan for the initial security of the LZ - Herren's one platoon sweep - was a departure from

doctrine. His frequent alteration and modification of company missions is not only an example of innovation but points to the exceptional responsiveness of his organization. Moore's innovative scheme of attachment and cross-attachment highlights the interoperability of his platoons and companies - an achievement worthy of emulation by future battalion commanders. His ability to smoothly assimilate the two reinforcing companies from 2/7 Cav and Tully's entire 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry into his operations is also a remarkable achievement.

Moore was also innovative in logistics. First of all, he deliberately lightened the load of his soldiers going into battle. Emphasizing the absolute necessity to carry an increased combat load of ammunition, Moore provided his battalion with sufficient resources to fight outnumbered, in the early hours of the battle. This did not preclude ammunition resupply but it gave his units an advantage in terms of expenditure and replenishment. What is most instructive in this instance is that Moore did not overburden his soldiers with a "packing list" for combat which included unnecessary items of equipment. While it may be arguable to what degree Moore's soldiers were light and highly mobile when on the ground, they were certainly not outfitted like the jungle-bashing, ruck-sack-laden "pack mules" of infantry battalions in the latter years of the war. Similar to the NVA, Moore confined his individual soldier loads to ammunition, water, and one

day's ration (C rations were stuffed in GI socks and tied-off on a soldier's load bearing equipment). Interestingly enough, no ruck sacks are visible in photos of Moore's soldiers on LZ X-Ray. (For that matter, ruck sacks or packs are not visible in pictures of Vandervoort's paratroopers or Lynch's infantrymen either). For future battalion commanders of "ruck sack infantry", Moore's example of simplified combat logistics, driven by METT-T, may be worthy of a "try out" during training exercises.

On LZ X-Ray, LTC Hal Moore encouraged and exemplified the dynamic of Speedy Action in decision-making. Crucial to the ability to make rapid decisions on the battlefield is the knowledge that: (1) decision-making process of the commander and his subordinate leaders can effectively and rapidly respond to directives from the senior leader during a fluid situation; and (3) subordinates often anticipate the desires of the senior and have already taken steps toward fulfilling the organizational goal. The foundation for these conditions lies in Tough, Repetitive, Exacting Training.

Hal Moore fought at LZ X-Ray with subordinate leaders who had been with him for over a year. For example, Nadal, Herren, Edwards and LeFebvre had all served with 1/7 Cav during the training and testing days of the airmobility concept at Ft. Benning. All were

commanding companies for Hal Moore in 1964. Most of the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants were also veterans of the Ft. Benning train-up. Many squad leaders had been in Moore's battalion for over a year, but assignment rotations had begun to whittle away at junior NCOs prior to the fight at LZ X-Ray. The bottom line is that Moore had a battalion whose leaders were familiar with one another, had trained one another, and had made decisions together. Cohesive, trained to a very high standard during the air assault testing period at Ft. Benning, Moore's leaders were used to making independent decisions and providing input to larger organizational decisions.

When bullets began flying on LZ X-Ray, Moore knew he had leaders who clearly understood his thought processes and could rapidly respond to changes in the situation. Moore's "team" had been trained to such a high level of sophistication that he could expect them to know the missions of adjacent units, accept rapid attachment or detachment of units from other companies or battalions, and employ an amazing array of fire support platforms. Simply, Hal Moore trained his leaders and his battalion as he expected it to fight.

TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL COMPETENCY

LTC Hal Moore conducted successful combat operations on LZ X-Ray. His actions are a formative illustration of a battalion commander Applying the Tenets of AirLand Battle Doctrine, Implementing the AirLand

Battle Imperatives, and Employing Battlefield Operating Systems. Hal Moore personally exhibited Technical and Tactical Competency on a scale which included, one one end, engaging the enemy with an individual weapon and, on the other end, directing the employment of multiple fire support assets.

Moore's employment of his battalion on LZ X-Ray demonstrated agility. His frequent adjustments in company missions is a solid example of agility on the battlefield. His agility in employing attached rifle companies and a reinforcing battalion is remarkable. Successfully engaging the NVA on three fronts is also indicative of Moore's agility.

Moore demonstrated initiative throughout his operation at LZ X-Ray. His air movement plan and his new technique for securing the LZ are examples of initiatives taken by Moore. He took the initiative to seek contact with the NVA after the discovery of the deserter. It is arguable as to what degree Moore maintained initiative in the fight with the NVA. An opposing case may be made that Moore did not maintain the initiative after the first contact with the NVA and only reacted to situations in which the NVA chose the time and place of the attack. In his defense, Moore may be seen as maintaining the initiative in terms of his ability to maneuver on the LZ, conduct spoiling attacks, bring in reinforcements, and eventually police the battlefield.

The depth of Moore's defense of LZ X-Ray is also subject to interpretation. Moore strongpointed the LZ with a perimeter defense. Units manned positions on the perimeter line, with no listening posts or observation posts forward in their sectors. Savage and his isolated platoon do not constitute a forward-echeloned force. The reserve he maintained near his battalion CP was virtually the only depth he had to his defense.

Unless vertical depth is considered. Moore's aerial fire support provided him with the margin of depth that his manpower and dispositions could not give him on the LZ. There is no question that Moore used his vertical depth to its maximum capability.

Moore's synchronization of available combat power throughout the battle is especially instructive. He orchestrated fire support to synchronize with maneuver of ground troops. He directed air movements to coincide with fire support. He integrated casualty evacuation with air movements and close air support. He brought in logistic resupply in conjunction with troop lifts. Without a doubt, Moore's ability to synchronize different types of fire support systems and ordnance to form a "ring of steel" around his perimeter stands out as a predominant example of synchronization on LZ X-Ray.

Moore's Implementation of AirLand Battle Imperatives at LZ X-Ray was dynamic. From the inception of the operation, Moore ensured unity of effort by

providing purpose, direction, and motivation to his battalion and his attacked units. Moore was in charge of the battle from the start, and he only relinquished control of the perimeter when he was convinced the bulk of the NVA forces had withdrawn.

Moore was especially good at anticipating events on the battlefield. In the majority of cases, Moore was able to implement dispositions or make a decision in advance of the NVA activity. His "anti-infiltration" patrols in front of the perimeter forced NVA units to prematurely initiate their attacks. His "mad minute" compromised a major NVA attempt to overrun the LZ. His two-company spoiling attack on 14 November pre-empted an NVA assault. His reinforcement of the threatened Company C sector with Lane's platoon strengthened Edwards at a time just before a two-company NVA attack.

Moore concentrated combat power against enemy vulnerabilities mainly by directing an incredible array of indirect fire on NVA attacks. Fire support was his primary combat multiplier in the engagement, and he took advantage of his superiority in this regard.

Moore's troop movements at LZ X-Ray is a classic example of the imperative designate, sustain, and shift the main effort. For the initial air assault, Herren's Company B was the main effort, reinforced with the requisite priority of fires. Though Herren's mission changed almost immediately upon touchdown on LZ X-Ray, he

remained the battalion main effort. When Herren ran into trouble on the finger Moore sustained him by sending Nadal in to help. During the two-company attack to reach Savage, Moore shifted the main effort to Nadal. This remained in effect as the two units withdrew to the perimeter.

Edwards' Company C was the main effort during most of 15 November. This remained the case until Diduryk's company replaced him on the perimeter. Throughout the night of 15 November Diduryk was the main effort, and was maintained in that posture until Tully arrived on 16 November. At that point, Moore switched the main effort back to Herren, now in the lead of the three-company assault to reach Savage. Herren remained the main effort until Tully assumed command of the LZ.

Moore clearly pressed the fight. He maintained contact with the enemy, spoiled enemy attacks, and continued to fire artillery concentrations at night to keep large NVA attack echelons at bay. His "anti-infiltration patrols" in company sectors and his "mad minute" are examples of forward momentum directed at the enemy.

Moore did not move fast, strike hard, and finish rapidly in the sense that he became involved in a defensive battle to save his lifeline, the LZ, and fought for three days against a numerically superior foe. His initial air movement to the LZ was fast and caught the NVA

off-balance, and his artillery and air strikes hit the NVA hard. But it would not be fair to propose that Moore rapidly defeated the NVA at LZ X-Ray.

For the imperative use terrain, weather, deception, and OPSEC, Moore can be assessed on three of the four categories. He used OPSEC so well that the NVA were surprised at the American intrusion into their base camp at ANTA. He employed deception through the flight route of his leaders' recon and the subsequent air assault routes into LZ X-Ray. He also used artillery fires to confuse the NVA as to which LZ his battalion would actually choose. He used smoke, conventional HE, and WP rounds to mask the movements of his units from NVA observation and fires.

Moore applied his terrain sense n LZ X-Ray. First, he chose LZ X-Ray because it was large enough to accept sixteen helicopters in one lift. Companies established defensive positions in the dry creek bed or in the low scrub, carving out hasty fighting positions. Moore used the massive anthill on the LZ for his CP. Machinegun teams found other anthills in their respective sectors as cover and concealment, as well.

Moore was adamant about conserving strength for decisive action. He reconstituted his reserve several times to build it with sufficient combat power. He kept the reserve in close proximity to his CP so that he could use it in a hurry. His notion of sweeping the LZ with

small patrols after the initial air assault lift was a conscious decision to make contact with the enemy with a small force, then attack with decisive combat power to defeat him.

Moore's fight at LZ X-Ray was a combined arms battle. His employment of combined arms and sister services, namely the artillery and U.S. Air Force, gave him the necessary edge in combat power to fight outnumbered, and win.

Lastly, Hal Moore completely understood the effects of battle on soldiers, units, and leaders. He demonstrated his comprehension of this important imperative when he and CSM Plumley walked the perimeter. His concern for the welfare and well-being of his soldiers was best seen in his methods of evacuating wounded and his near obsession with recovering the bodies of troopers killed in action. Through tough, realistic training at Ft. Benning, Moore produced a cohesive battalion which was psychologically strong enough to endure the brand of fighting they encountered at LZ X-Ray. Future battalion commanders should ask themselves, as their units roadmarch, parachute, or air assault into contact to a determined enemy, whether their soldiers, leaders, and units could perform as well as LTC Hal Moore's 1/7 Cav at LZ X-Ray.

DECISION MAKING

"...the commander," according to Clausewitz, "...finds himself in a constant whirlpool of false and true information, of mistakes committed through fear, through negligence, through haste; of disregard of his authority, either mistaken or correct motives, ...of accidents, which no mortal could have foreseen. In short, he is the victim of a hundred thousand impressions, most of which are intimidating, few of which are encouraging."¹⁸⁰

This quotation by Clausewitz essentially describes the situations confronting LTC Hal Moore during the three days of combat at LZ X-Ray. When Moore's decisions are reviewed with the Clausewitzian appreciation for the volatility of decision making in combat, his performance as a commander appears all the more remarkable. Moore's decision making prowess as a battalion commander in fierce combat stands out as one of the foremost examples of a leader making sound, timely decisions with practiced, practical judgement.

When viewed chronologically, Moore's key decisions are instructive in the manner in which they are Creative, Assertive, Improvisational, and Decisive.

To begin with, Moore had decided to try a new air assault insertion scheme for the operation into LZ X-Ray. Instead of separate, company LZ's Moore decided to approach his mission with one consolidate battalion LZ.

This was creative, original thought on Moore's part which was as ferociously audacious as it was innovative. While the source material fails to overwhelmingly substantiate just how innovative Moore was by directing a leaders' reconnaissance of the proposed LZ's, sufficient evidence exists to warrant the conclusion that his decisions pertaining to the flight route demonstrated initiative and the best use of available materials Moore then confirmed LZ X-Ray as the battalion LZ only after subordinates actively gave advice and he had included all leaders in the decision making process.

Prior to his operations order, Moore checked with COL Brown to ensure his scheme of maneuver did not conflict with the brigade commander's guidance. He then began to implement a plan, exercising the authority and responsibility delegated by his superior, COL Brown. His air movement plan, worked out in detail with his S-3, and his ground tactical plan, a variation of the standard air assault techniques, were both formulated with the understanding that calculated risks were being taken. Moore believed his surprise air assault at the base of the Chu Pongs by his entire battalion, not separate companies in multiple LZ's, was a prudent risk where the variables (METT-T) were in his favor.

Once on the LZ, Moore's series of decisions in reaction to unexpected situations during 14 November clearly highlights his tremendous ability to make sound

timely decisions at the lowest practical level. Moore was able to rapidly assimilate raw information (taken from subordinates and based on his observations) to decide upon a course of action. Moore took appropriate action (within commander's intent) in the absence of specific orders. His job was to find the enemy, fix him, and defeat him with combined arms. He was operating within COL Brown's intent when he exploited the opportunity presented by the capture of the NVA straggler by attacking toward the Chu Pong mountains. Moore frequently improvised, according to METT-T, and switched company missions, cross-attached subordinate units (platoons), or re-constituted his reserve with the piecemeal unit arrivals into the LZ. Moore constantly sought methods to improve current operations. His imaginative use of white phosphorous rounds as a smoke screen, his use of lift helicopters as impromptu air ambulances, and his creative fire support choreography are only a few of the examples of how Moore attempted to make the most imaginative and decisive use of available assets.

Moore's entire experience on LZ X-Ray is a definitive example of a leader operating autonomously, conducting a mission as an isolated force without loss of effectiveness. Moore was conducting business on the battlefield in the style of the WWII airborne battalion commanders to whom he felt an enormous professional and philosophical affinity. The parallels between Moore and

LTC Ben Vandervoort are not only educational, but they also point toward the emergency of a brand of combat leadership which seems to breed success on the battlefield: commanders who exude the "airborne philosophy" and create combat-ready, high-performing units which are aggressive and audacious; and have subordinates who are capable of vigorously executing plans or operating independently, often without orders and often surrounded or faced with a numerical disadvantage. As the U.S. Army postures itself into a light, tough, rapid deployment force whose mission is the vigorous execution of contingency operations, the standards of command of battalions in combat may very well require the "airborne philosophy" as demonstrated by Vandervoort and Moore.

PLANNING

Moore's planning for the air assault operation into LZ X-Ray is virtually a textbook example of proper mission analysis, effective troop leading procedures, and rapid adjustments to the situation. Visited by COL Brown at the Company A CP at 1700 on 13 November, Moore received his orders to conduct the air assault mission commencing at 0800 on 14 November. Still in the midst of the saturation patrolling mission, Moore had to rapidly shift gears to take full advantage of the fifteen hours he would have plan, prepare, and execute his new mission.

Although the source material does not elaborate on Moore's mission analysis or troop leading procedures, it

is still within the parameters of sound scholarship to make an assessment based on general segments of the battle narratives. The bottom line is that Moore planned effectively. It is also especially heartening to note that Moore followed the prescribed doctrine for the formulation of both his deliberate plan and his subsequent rapid battlefield planning.

At about 1800 on 13 November, Moore and his S-3 began the deliberate planning process. First in the order of business was a thorough map reconnaissance in order to identify possible landing zones. While there is no evidence to indicate how his S-2 conducted the intelligence preparation of the battlefield, it must be remembered that Moore and his brigade commander were cognizant of the NVA order of battle and were convinced of the likelihood of a meeting engagement during the operation. The much referred to "big red star on the G-2 situation map" which was drawn next to the Chu Pong mountains must be accepted as an indication that both Brown and Moore knew what the 1/7 Cav was going up against. Moore's subsequent planning and virtually all of his decisions once combat is joined are predicated on his authoritative knowledge of the enemy force ratios. Moore constantly has his "feelers out" to obtain advance warning of the arrival of the one or two NVA battalions he felt were not yet in contact.

Most important, Moore had a clear-cut idea of what success would look like in the operation. Moore anticipated, and consequently articulated to his subordinates, that the battalion had a very high probability of making contact on the LZ with a numerically superior force which it would defeat in a pitched battle along conventional lines. Success in this engagement would be achieved, according to Moore, when the momentum of the air assault was maintained; the initiative was maintained; the LZ was defended; the NVA were punished by the 1/7 Cav attack and all fire support platforms; the NVA were forced out of their Chu Pong sanctuary; and, when Moore extracted from the battlefield with every trooper who inserted into the LZ.

Moore's concept of operations was simple, flexible, and innovative. He opted for a battalion LZ as opposed to multiple company-size LZ. He modified his sweep tactics to make contact and fix the NVA with a small force while the bulk of his combat power remained near the LZ, poised to envelope the enemy. He organized his plan such that his widely scattered companies would be sequenced into LZ X-Ray in five, thirty-minute intervals. The sixteen UH-1s allocated by COL Brown could bring in nearly one entire company on each lift. While it did not exactly turn out according to plan, Moore and his S-3 went into excruciating detail in orchestrating the air movement of the battalion into LZ X-Ray.

Moore established priorities for accomplishing tasks. CPT Herren's Company B was the air assault main effort, responsible for LZ security - Moore's first priority. Follow-on lifts would accomplish Moore's second priority - sweep of the area. Fire support priority was to Company B initially, then Company A, the sweep main effort. In identifying these priorities, Moore considered his available resources. He knew he had a well-trained but understrength battalion of around 450 troopers who could go in to LZ X-Ray in 16 helicopters. He also knew that he had extremely responsive fire support on hand to give him the edge in combat power. In addition, Moore knew that the two other battalions of the brigade were in close proximity to LZ X-Ray and were a potential source of reinforcement. Finally, Moore got so detailed in his plan that he stipulated ammunition loads and how many mortars each company would deploy with. While this may smack of micromanagement on Moore's part, it turned out that these logistics concerns were well justified. Moore lightened the load of each individual soldier to the minimum essential items: ammunition, water, and food, with ammunition being the number one priority. Rifleman would make the attack with 300 rounds of 5.56mm ammo; machinegunners would take 800 rounds of 7.62 ammo; each soldier in the battalion carried two fragmentation grenades and one smoke grenade. Moore had planned for

ammunition resupply, but the initial fighting load was a factor in saving the LZ.

Finally, there is no question that Moore's planning enabled him to Adjust According to the Situation. His lightning-like assessments of the battlefield enabled him to make appropriate adjustments in fluid situation. He changed company missions many times, developed impromptu task organizations for immediate missions, and he responded to subordinates' requests for adjustments based on their knowledge of the situation. Moore could not have affected this flexible adaptation scheme without first Establishing a Sense of Common Purpose for the Unit. The common purpose of 1/7 Cav on the morning of 14 November was to find the NVA and kill a lot of them. By twilight on 16 November no one would dispute the battalion's claim of "mission accomplished."

USE OF AVAILABLE SYSTEMS

In parallel with the two previous assessments, the LPI and SKA of Use of Available Systems are not appropriate for analysis of Moore's combat leadership at LZ X-Ray. While there may have been information filtering and there certainly was resource management, these performance indicators do not have the combat-orientation necessary for application in the study.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Hal Moore's performance at LZ X-Ray ranks as one of the best examples of the application of professional Army

ethics in a combat situation. Moore's actions on the LZ clearly demonstrate how professional Army ethics are the foundation of moral and physical courage on the battlefield.

Hal Moore fully Accepted Responsibility for the conduct of the battle of LZ X-Ray. He was entirely responsible for his decisions and for whatever his unit accomplished or failed to accomplish. In allowing subordinates to make decisions at their level, in their perspective, Moore acknowledged the ownership of the failures and successes of his subordinates. He acknowledged that Herren was initially going to be unable to reach Herrick's isolated platoon. He acknowledged that the combined attack by Nadal and Herren would not link-up with Savage. He accepted the possibility that Savage might be annihilated. He accepted the possibility that his entire battalion might be overrun due to the numerical advantage of the NVA - but he never articulated that concern to subordinates.

Moore was definitely a Role Model. He led by example in every way, and his subordinates mimicked his behavior. Moore's excitement at the discovery of the NVA deserter also exhilarated his company commanders and reinforced their aggressiveness toward the enemy. Moore's attitude for the air assault was to attack the NVA; his company commanders and platoon leaders showed that they were imbued with the same spirit. Moore "kept his cool"

and made quick decisions "on his feet". Likewise, Herren, Nadal, Edwards, and Diduryk maintained their composure during the roughest moments, personally engaged the enemy, and commanded their units, often in spite of wounds. It must be remembered that Diduryk and Sugdinis were two company commanders from another battalion. To Moore's credit, these officers seemed to quickly accept his dynamic combat leadership and they mimicked his behavior throughout their period of attachment to 1/7 Cav.

Moore was not afraid to admit a mistake or failure but it is important to note that he treated failure as a condition of the battlefield and planned around it. Herein lies the enormous difference between successful and unsuccessful leaders on the battlefield. Beginning with the recognition that things will never go according to plan after the first round is fired, the successful combat commander accepts the events of the battlefield as distinct decision points which require expeditious assessment, validation, and reaction. The successful commander pre-determines those elements of the battle which will be valid criteria for judging whether or not he is winning or losing the engagement. By contrast, the unsuccessful commander neglects to establish criteria for success. He then compounds his error by subjecting himself to a decision-making process which is bombarded by thousands of impressions of the battle. This only serves to add additional layers of obscuration to the already

heavy "fog of war". The successful commander knows what indicators, or signs, to look for. His professional Army ethics enable him to stand firm in the midst of the swirling maelstrom of battle and make informed, intuitive decisions once he assesses the status of his indicators of success. In the case of LTC Hal Moore at LZ X-Ray, it is evident that he accepted a mistake or failure at face value, as a local condition, not an end state. By applying practiced, practical judgement, Moore Demonstrated Maturity in command under fire. His decisions were not emotional yet they accounted for the "can do" attitude of his organization and capitalized on the emotional charge of his unit. Undeniably, the actions of subordinate leaders like Edwards, Marm, and Savage boldly show to what extent Moore's professional ethics permeated his battalion.

Moore Demonstrated Bearing and Physical Fitness. His posture, appearance, and physical movement around the perimeter during the three days of fighting are indicative of his ability to endure stress without rest. It also highlighted his confidence in himself and his unit. Moore and his men shared the view that they had, and could, inflict serious punishment on the NVA.

Moore's concern for the evacuation of the wounded and dead troopers of his battalion is a premier indicator of his compassion, selflessness, and integrity. Moore demanded that all casualties be evacuated as rapidly as

possible and that every soldier be accounted for at the end of the fighting. In light of the relatively embryonic nature of the airmobility concept, his use of troop helicopters to evacuate casualties on their exit flights from the LZ was a highly imaginative approach which had great impact on the individual and collective morale of his battalion. His troopers knew that, if they were wounded, they would be evacuated by helicopter for immediate treatment. They also knew, and were possibly comforted by the idea, that if they were killed, their bodies would not remain "lost" on the battlefield, that they would go "home". In the training environments of the peacetime Army, these notions fail to receive sufficient attention. Based on a review of NTC and JRTC "lessons learned", casualty evacuation procedures for light infantry units, in contact with the enemy, deserve increased interest. As Moore so ably demonstrated, concern for the well-being of the soldiers includes expeditious casualty evacuation and guaranteed recovery of remains. CTC results routinely reveal that for most battalions, this concern never progresses past an ambiguous, templated remark in the Personnel Annex of the operations order. Future battalion commanders must address casualty evacuation as a small unit combat imperative if they expect their soldiers to believe that leaders will take care of them if they are injured while fighting aggressively with the enemy. As Hal Moore has

shown, soldiers must know that their remains will be tenderly and honorably recovered by the unit. For future battalion commanders, this is ethical behavior of the highest order.

ENDNOTES

- 1 J. D. Coleman, Pleiku, p. 37.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 LTG Tolson, Airmobility 1961-1971, p. 72.
- 4 Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, ed., American's First Battles, 1776-1965, pp. 304-308.
- 5 Heller and Stofft, p. 309.
- 6 Coleman, p. 77.
- 7 Ibid. and Coleman, p. 95.
- 8 LTC David R. Campbell, "Fighting Encircled: A Study in U.S. Army Leadership," p. 68.
- 9 Shelby Stanton, Anatomy of a Division.
- 10 Michael Herr, Dispatches, pp. 95-97.
- 11 Ibid., p. 96.
- 12 John Galvin, Air Assault, p. 293.
- 13 Galvin, pp. 293-294 and Coleman, p. 189.
- 14 Campbell, p. 69.
- 15 John Cash, et.al., Seven Firefights in Vietnam, p. 2.
- 16 Stanton, p. 55.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Cash, p. 2.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Galvin, p. 294.
- 21 Heller and Stofft, p. 315.
- 22 Cash, p. 3.
- 23 Stanton, p. 55.

24 Coleman, pp. 197-198, estimates a battalion size attack by the H-15 Main Force VC Battalion. U.S. casualties were seven killed, twenty-three wounded. Cash doesn't mention the attack.

25 Coleman, p. 199.

26 Coleman, p. 199 and Cash, p. 4.

27 Coleman, p. 200 and Cash, p. 5.

28 Campbell, p. 69.

29 Campbell, p. 69; Coleman, p. 200; and Cash, p. 5.

30 Cash, p. 5.

31 Coleman, p. 200.

32 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), Combat Operations After Action Report-Pleiku Campaign, enclosure 28.

33 Cash, p. 6.

34 Campbell, p. 70.

35 1st Cav Div (Airmobile), p. 84.

36 Ibid., p. 85 and Galvin, p. 294.

37 Ibid., p. 8 and Coleman, pp. 203-204.

38 Cash, p. 8.

39 Campbell, p. 70.

40 Ibid.; Cash, pp. 8-10; and Coleman, p. 207.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Campbell, p. 71. From LTC (RET) Harold G. Moore's tape to BG William Kinnard (Chief, Center for Military History), 30 April 1984, Encircled Project Files, CMH, p. 3.

44 Ibid.

45 Cash, p. 11.

⁴⁶ Campbell, p. 72; Cash, p. 11; and Coleman, p. 209.

⁴⁷ Coleman, p. 209.

⁴⁸ Campbell, p. 72; Cash, p. 11; and Coleman, p. 209.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Coleman, p. 209.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Campbell, p. 73.

⁵³ Galvin, p. 294.

⁵⁴ Cash, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Coleman, p. 209.

⁵⁶ Cash, p. 13, describes the POW as a deserter who had lived on bananas for five days.

⁵⁷ Campbell, p. 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. All three sources indicate that Moore gave Herren instructions to intensify his search and to be prepared to assume Company C's mission. However, all three sources then indicate that Herren had assumed the Company C mission concurrent with the orders to be prepared to do so. It seems unlikely that Moore would push Company B toward the mountains without first ensuring the LZ was secure. Security of the LZ, in the face of an enormous enemy threat, was paramount. While there is no evidence to corroborate the assumption that Moore subsequently ordered Herren to change missions after Company A landed, it is highly logical that Moore would have done it just about like that.

⁶¹ Cash, p. 13.

⁶² Galvin, p. 294.

⁶³ Coleman, p. 211.

⁶⁴ Cash, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Coleman, p. 213.

- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Stanton, p. 56.
- 68 Coleman, pp. 213-214.
- 69 Ibid., p. 214.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Campbell, p. 74.
- 72 Cash, p. 18.
- 73 Ibid., pp. 18-19 and Coleman, pp. 215-216.
- 74 Campbell, p. 75 and Coleman, p. 217 and First Cav Division AAR, p. 84.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Cash, p. 21.
- 77 Ibid. and Coleman, p. 218.
- 78 Ibid.; Cash, p. 21; and Campbell, p. 75.
- 79 Campbell, p. 76.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Stanton, p. 58.
- 82 Campbell, p. 76. The battalion surgeon, CPT Metzger, loaded wounded all afternoon even though he had been wounded in the shoulder. Late in the afternoon, Metzger was killed by a sniper.
- 83 Campbell, p. 76.
- 84 Stanton, p. 59 and 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 84.
- 85 Coleman, p. 219.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Ibid., p. 220.
- 88 Coleman, p. 220; Cash, p. 25; and Campbell, p. 77.
- 89 Ibid., p. 220.

- 90 Ibid., p. 221.
- 91 Campbell, p. 77.
- 92 Ibid., p. 28. It was for his heroic action in this attack that 2LT Marm would be awarded the Medal of Honor.
- 93 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 84.
- 94 Coleman, pp. 233-224; Cash, p. 29; and Campbell, p. 78.
- 95 Stanton, pp. 59-60.
- 96 Cash, pp. 29-31.
- 97 Coleman, p. 225.
- 98 Campbell, p. 78.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Tolson, Airmobility 1961-1971, pp. 78-79.
- 101 Campbell, p. 79.
- 102 Ibid.; Coleman, p. 226; and Cash, p. 32.
- 103 Coleman, p. 230.
- 104 Ibid., pp. 230-231.
- 105 Ibid. and 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 84.
- 106 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 84.
- 107 Campbell, p. 79. Artillery at LZ Falcon fired over 4000 rounds that night.
- 108 Ibid.; Coleman, p. 230; and Cash, p. 36.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Stanton, p. 60.
- 112 Cash, p. 38.
- 113 Heller and Stofft, p. 318.
- 114 Stanton, p. 60.

- 115 Campbell, p. 80.
- 116 Cash, p. 38.
- 117 Coleman, p. 235 and Cash, p. 39.
- 118 Campbell, p. 80.
- 119 Cash, p. 40.
- 120 Coleman, p. 236.
- 121 Ibid.
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- 122 Stanton, p. 61.
- 123 Coleman, p. 237; Cash, p. 41; Campbell, pp. 80-81; and 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 87.
- 124 Ibid.
- 125 Coleman, p. 238; Cash, p. 42; Campbell, pp. 81-82; and 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 87.
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Cash, pp. 44-45; Coleman, pp. 240-241; and Campbell, p. 82.
- 128 Cash, p. 46; Coleman, pp. 241-242; Campbell, p. 90; and 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 90.
- 129 Ibid.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Cash, p. 47; Coleman, pp. 242-243; Campbell, pp. 82-83; and 1st Cav Division AAR, pp. 90-91.
- 132 1st Cav Division AAR, p. 91.
- 133 Ibid.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 Coleman, p. 244.
- 136 Ibid. and 1st Cav Div AAR, p. 91.
- 137 Coleman., p. 245.
- 138 Ibid. p. 202.

139 Ibid., p. 10.

140 Hamburger, "Leadership in Combat: An Historical Appraisal," p. 3.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The primary objective of this thesis has been to determine what skills of command of battalions in combat could be learned from a leadership analysis of selected light infantry combat battalion commanders in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. The study focused on an historical analysis and leadership assessment of the successful combat performance of three Distinguished Service Cross-winning battalion commanders. What conclusions can be drawn about battalion command in combat? Do the leadership competencies of FM 22-100, Military Leadership, provide a framework for historical assessment of battalion commanders in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam? Can the nine leadership competencies and their associated tasks, SKA, and LPI serve as an assessment or evaluation tool for battalion commanders during training or NTC or JRTC rotations? Are there overtly measurable criteria for success in commanding a battalion in combat? Does an historical analysis of past battalion commanders reveal basic tenets of battlefield success?

Fundamental to any discussion of conclusions of this study is the clear understanding of the intent of the leadership competencies and the supporting tasks, the

skills, knowledge, and attitudes, and the leadership performance indicators. The nine leadership competencies - communications, supervision, teaching and counseling, soldier team development, technical and tactical proficiency, decision-making, planning, use of available systems, and professional ethics - were developed in 1976 to provide a framework for leadership development and assessment. However, the lack of adequate tasks, conditions, standards (or valid performance indicators) for evaluating, assessing, and developing leaders during training events (such as ARTEPs and NTC rotations) drove the Army Research Institute and the Center for Army Leadership to develop the leadership performance indicators (LPI). The LPI were based on the nine leadership competencies and were intended to be subjective, not totally measurable (in order to allow for a leader's personal dynamics), and were to be generic in nature in order to be applicable in the "schoolhouse" and on the AirLand Battlefield. The end product, as seen in the May, 1989, approved final draft of FM 22-100, Military Leadership, is an Army leadership doctrine which outlines the nine functions in which leaders must be competent if their organizations are to operate effectively.

The first conclusion which is evident from this study is that the FM 22-100 leadership competencies are an adequate outline for conducting an historical assessment of past battalion commanders in combat. In general terms,

the assessments of the combat leadership of LTCs Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore have confirmed the Army's doctrinal position that successful combat battalion commanders must "perform" some degree of each of the nine over-arching competencies if their respective organizations are to operate effectively under fire. Because the competencies are deeply rooted in the eleven time-honored leadership principles - the leadership doctrine of the 1940's, 50's, and 60's - a fundamentally consistent evaluation was attainable. In this regard, the FM 22-100 leadership competencies clearly fulfilled their doctrinal role as broad, over-arching performance categories. Moreover, the study has also clearly indicated that, at least in terms of historical assessment, some competencies are difficult to observe or are not completely applicable to a combat situation (see diagram 5). This conclusion is based on the fact that many of the required leadership tasks, supporting skills, knowledge, and attitudes (SKA), and leadership performance indicators (LPI) - the subordinate evaluation criteria of each competency - did not have a warfighting focus and were more germane to "the schoolhouse" than to the AirLand Battlefield.

This conclusion substantiates the existence of a disconnect between Army leadership doctrine and actual field application. Viewed in the context of the FM 100-5 operational doctrine, the "breakdown" has occurred at the

point where the nine competencies may be effectively used as a leadership assessment tool during training events (CPS, FTX, ARTEP, NTC or JRTC rotation, etc.). At this point in their development, the leadership competencies are not entirely valid for use in the field. The application of the leadership competency/performance indicator model in the examination of the combat leadership of Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore highlighted both major and minor incongruities. For example, "Technical and Tactical Proficiency" is the competency which is the keystone to the entire leadership arch, yet there are no tasks, conditions, or standards for assessing this tremendously crucial function during training events. This is a major shortfall. Another example is found in the competency "Use of Available Systems." The "systems" which immediately come to mind are the "Battlefield Operating Systems" (BOS) of AirLand Battle Doctrine. However, the essential task of this competency is "Effectively Employ Management Technology," and the supporting SKA and LPI deal with information filtering, computer literacy, and the use of technology to garner and process information. There is no mention of BOS. Clearly, some fine-tuning is needed to reconstitute the linkage between the leadership competencies of FM 22-100 and FM 100-5.

A more detailed conclusive analysis of the performance standards of each competency follows.

COMMUNICATIONS

The assessments of the three battalion commanders has clearly shown that without effective communications on the battlefield, the commander runs the risk of losing control of his organization and jeopardizing the success of his mission and that of his parent organization. Included in this is the fact that poor or ineffective communications gets soldiers killed. LTCs Vandervoort and Moore stand out as extremely effective communicators because of their personal emphasis and involvement in combat communications. Both of these officers demonstrated to a great degree several of the SKA subordinate to the communications competency: (1) Stress Simplicity; (2) Clearly Communicate Orders; (3) Communicate Up, Down, Horizontally; and (4) Clearly Communicate Intent. The degree to which Vandervoort and Moore demonstrated these SKA suggests that these four supporting skills may very well be considered as the imperatives of battalion commander communications in combat.

In contrast, LTC Lynch seems to have succeeded in spite of a less-than-stellar rating in the communications category. The research clearly showed that Lynch had incomplete communications with his immediate superior, COL Nist. Also, Lynch appears to have had minimal communications with adjacent units and had trouble maintaining solid comms with his supporting arms. While

there are numerous mitigating circumstances pertaining to Lynch's marginally effective communications on Hill 314, two points are especially instructive: (1) Lynch had his best communications with his assault companies. By stressing simplicity, clearly communicating orders, and by clearly communicating intent to his subordinate commanders, Lynch placed his emphasis on the aspect of communications which deserved the most attention - his battalion internal communications; and (2) the synchronization of combat power at the decisive point of the battlefield revolves around communications with supporting arms and services. As a result, the battalion commander must make the synchronization of fires his own pre-battle special interest item if he expects it to work according to plan. Additionally, a back-up communications plan - internal to the battalion as well as with combined arms elements - is vital to effective communications.

In what may appear to be an aberration, none of the three battalion commanders gave any overt indications that they were a Good Listener or Obtained Feedback. From an historical perspective, Be a Good Listener is a SKA that is difficult to assess. And unless it is specifically described in the combat narrative, Obtain Feedback is just as difficult to analyze. This conclusion seems to suggest that unless more specific LPI are developed for these SKA, it will be just as difficult to assess these SKA during training exercises.

But what is most important about these two SKA is that they are both vital and complementary ingredients of effective communications on the battlefield. How well a battalion commander can Be a Good Listener and Obtain Feedback is best measured in the types of decisions he makes in situations where subordinates have suggested probable courses of action or offered specific tactics or techniques.

Using this criteria, there is ample evidence within the combat situations of each of the three battalion commanders to demonstrate the "listener-decision maker" linkage. Vandervoort, for example, is described as having "listened" to LT Turnball's assessment of the situation at Neuville-au-Plain and subsequently "deciding" to not only maintain the outpost in the village but allow Turnball to execute the mission. Later, when LT Wray approached him with a request for reinforcements, Vandervoort "listened", then "decided" that Wray should instead conduct a counterattack (which produced handsome results).

LTC Lynch employed a similar philosophy on Hill 314. He "listened" to the situation assessments from his assault company commanders during numerous incremental stages of the attack. He then "decided" to continue the attack, leaving execution details to the company commanders on the ground. The same is true of LTC Moore at LZ X-Ray. There are numerous examples of Moore "listening" to his company commanders' assessments or

suggestions and reacting with "decisions" that took into full account the trust and confidence Moore felt in his subordinates' abilities to execute his orders.

The assessments infer that fundamental to the "listener-decision-maker" linkage is the assertion that the battalion commander must have an organization based on a deliberately constructed and maintained sense of trust and confidence in the ability of his subordinate leaders. The connection with SOLDIER TEAM DEVELOPMENT, TEACHING AND COUNSELING, AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS is not accidental. COMMUNICATIONS is the cornerstone of the arch of competencies; every competency is based on COMMUNICATIONS or affected by it. The successful battalion commanders, then, are the ones that "listen to their battalions and obtain feedback on key activities. The whole chain of command then becomes a group of "listeners" and "feedback-gatherers." By the simple act of listening to his soldiers or quizzing his men about the mission, the battalion commander can establish the groundwork for a cohesive, technically and tactically proficient, and high-performance soldier team. This is the type of unit required for contingency operations in the 1990's.

The final comment on the communications competency deals with the SKA Clearly Communicate Intent. As the narratives of the three battalion commanders have unmistakably articulated, combat at the battalion level is incredibly chaotic and fluid. Vandervoort, Lynch, and

Moore demonstrated that decentralized command, reinforced by the presence of the battalion commander at decisive locations during the action, is the key to success in battalion combat. Because the battalion commander cannot be everywhere on the battlefield, he must rely on subordinate leaders to use practical, practiced judgement to solve problems at small arms range. The battalion commander facilitates the execution of this decision-making by articulating his overall intent to subordinates in mission orders.

Statements of intent establish two extremely vital guidelines for subordinate leaders: (1) the commander stipulates the parameters, or boundaries, within which the subordinate has flexibility to operate; and (2) the commander focuses the subordinate on the eventual end state of the mission by describing - in very simple terms - what success will look like at the conclusion of the mission. The importance of commander's intent cannot be over-stated. The three battalion commanders in this study clearly demonstrated that intent must be communicated to subordinates if rapid reaction to unforeseen circumstances is expected. Quick response to new developments is just what battalion-level combat is all about.

But the communication of intent cannot be clearly achieved in three-paragraph statements. Intent must be succinctly and concisely addressed in extremely simple, common sense terms. If it is not, a simple back-brief by

subordinates will reveal the confusion. Statements of commander's intent must describe what success will look like on the battlefield. Vandervoort "painted" the picture of success for Turnball at Neuville and the lieutenant executed a mission which was to have operational-level significance. Lynch focused his company commanders on the end-state of fighting on Hill 314 by stating that the capture of Knob 3 would constitute success. Moore's basic intent for the mission into LZ X-Ray was to find the elusive NVA units and defeat them in a conventional battle. In every case, a straight-forward picture of success was included in the commander's intent.

SUPERVISION

LTG (RET) Arthur S. Collins, Jr. writes in his article, "Tactical Command" that "there is no substitute for the physical presence (of the commander) on the ground."¹ This philosophy is the skill of Command Forward - a performance standard clearly demonstrated by Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore. "Battalion command is the essence of tactical command," writes LTG Collins, and it is at battalion level that the commander "actively exercises his command responsibility in a most constant, obvious, personal, and effective manner."² The successful battalion commander is:

Out where the action is...with one of the lead units, or at a forward observation post where he can see the ground being fought over, or at a critical crossroad or stream crossing, or at the forward collecting point talking to men who have just been wounded in battle. In the course of a day, he will

have been at several such points. All the time he is weaving a web of knowledge of the terrain, the effectiveness of his unit's firepower, and that of the enemy. He is aware of the hardships and pressures his troops are being subjected to and how they are reacting in a given situation. He is consistently sensitive to his unit, his troops, and the conditions under which his unit is fighting. The same applies in peacetime training and operations.³

As seen in the examples of Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore, Command Forward appears to be an imperative of command and control of an infantry battalion in combat. LTG Collins' description of commanding forward is excellent and clearly shows the importance of supervision and its relationship with other competencies. Appropriately, Command Forward is the first SKA of the SUPERVISION competency.

The analysis of the three battalion commanders has revealed that the SKA Enforce Safety Standards has a peacetime slant and does not take into account the more applicable combat safety requirements. There is no disputing the importance of safety in training or in combat. Where the LPI for Enforce Safety Standards falls apart is that there is no mention of the inherently

dangerous business of direct and indirect fires on the battlefield. In other words, a more relevant LPI would list indicators such as "apply fire control measures", "effectively command and control direct and indirect fires", "protect troops from fratricide and enemy fires", etc.

The remaining three SKA's of the supervise competency were found to be difficult to apply to combat leadership assessments. Establish/Enforce Standards, Follow-Up on Corrective Action, and Provide Feedback have LPI which relate more to garrison activities or structured training events than to dynamic combat situations. To effectively supervise subordinates - the key task of the competency - in garrison or on some training exercises where there is ample time for after-action review and feedback, these LPI will work well. However, the LPI need to address such combat critical tasks as "assess morale of the organization", "assess combat power", or "assess the ability of the organization to perform continuous operations".

The LPI need to examine such considerations as faced by LTC Lynch before he assaulted Hill 314: how to enforce standards and follow up on corrective action after a failed mission? What type of training should occur between battles to correct identified deficiencies from the previous combat experience? Or look at Moore's reaction to the failed attempts to reach Savage: what

sort of corrective action and standards enforcement must occur during the course of a battle which must take into account the unforgiving nature of failure in combat - friendly casualties?

TEACHING AND COUNSELING

As each of the three assessments has shown, it is difficult to ascertain what degree of coaching and teaching went on in the combat situations of the battalion commanders. This is an extremely important competency which actually has its full impact prior to and after combat, not during battle.

There is no doubt that a battalion commander in combat must demand action, but the LPI defining this SKA is incomplete. While subordinate initiative is mentioned, there is no requirement listed for "operate within commander's intent" or "subordinate leaders use imagination and initiative to overcome obstacles". Both of these indicators were prevalent actions of the subordinates of Vandervoort, Lynch and Moore.

The SKA Teach Skills and Train for War were found to be present but not observed in all three assessments. Undeniably, these two SKA are the fundamentals of infantry tactical commandership and have the most significant impact on the actions of the unit in combat. Unfortunately, the LPI which support these SKA seem to skirt the importance of such indicators as "subordinates demonstrate knowledge of current tactical doctrine and

weapons employment" or "subordinates demonstrate complete understanding of combat leadership requirements." Nor is there mention of "mastery of combined arms warfighting" - vital to infantry success and demonstrated in each of the three combat narratives. Logically, these SKA should also address the application of the nine leadership competencies to pre-combat and combat situations.

SOLDIER TEAM DEVELOPMENT

It is a fair assumption to say that each of the three battalion commanders achieved overwhelming success because they had developed cohesive soldier teams prior to entering combat. The SKA for this competency are appropriate and well-developed.

Each of the three battalion commanders in the study went into their respective engagements with somewhat different levels of soldier team development.

Vandervoort, for example, was making his third combat jump, but it was his first operation as battalion commander. His troops were all seasoned veterans of fighting at Sicily and Salerno, with successful missions under their belts.

LTC Lynch, on the other hand, had his work cut out for him. His battalion was hastily moved into combat without adequate collective task training. On his first mission, his battalion performed dismally. Thus, after enduring a poor first outing, Lynch had to develop his soldier teams from the point of a morale disadvantage.

The manner in which Lynch seems to have turned his battalion around reads like a listing of each and every SKA and LPI of the soldier team competency.

Moore had a seasoned "training" battalion when he air assaulted into LZ X-Ray. He had almost all of the subordinate leaders at LZ X-Ray that had trained with him for 14 months at Ft. Benning. Other than dulsatory patrol action near Pleiku, Moore's battalion was yet to be tested in heavy combat. As the narrative points out, Moore's battalion was a well-developed soldier team because he placed tremendous emphasis on it during the Ft. Benning days.

The litmus test of a soldier team occurs when a unit is inserted into the swirling, turbulent hurricane of close combat; it absolutely must train for this "test" in peacetime or, like Lynch's 3/7 Cav, be shipwrecked by the storm. Current U.S. Army contingency operations reinforces this concept. Future battalion commanders must have cohesive combat teams before deployment; few opportunities for soldier team development exist at hand grenade range.

Perhaps the most vexing issue of soldier team development is training subordinates to replace you. While the Army of the late 1980's seemed to get beyond the "zero defects mentality", the budgetary constraints of the 90's will invariably force units to make the best showing on each high visibility, high-dollar training event. NTC

and JRTC are premier examples where the use of subordinate leaders to replace commanders takes on a risk that is out of immediate proportion to the long-term training benefits. Simply stated, units are afraid to "lose", and when organizations get only one opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency during a battalion commander's three year tour, the stakes are incredibly high. Many factors contribute to this attitude and it is not the intended purpose of this thesis to lay them out.

But, the bottom line is that combat requires leaders at every level to be trained to replace his superior. Superiors have to take active measures to ensure that subordinates can step in to run the organization. Though none of the three battalion commanders in this study had to relinquish command to a subordinate leader, the examples at Hill 314 and LZ X-Ray point out the necessity for NCOs to be prepared to command platoons and companies is blatantly evident. What the U.S. Army needs to emphasize is a specific training program for this requirement. This is the highest form of subordinate leader development - the one that will pay the greatest dividends in combat.

TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL PROFICIENCY

Because there were no tasks, SKA, or LPI for this competency, a performance standard was developed for use in the leadership/competency performance indicator model.

As described in Chapter 3, the SKA and LPI constructed for the study were intended to demonstrate linkage between the Army's leadership doctrine and the warfighting theory of AirLand Battle doctrine. Although it is arguable whether it is fair to assess the three commanders on doctrine which did not exist in their time, it is instructive to observe just how applicable AirLand Battle doctrine is in terms of learning the skills of command of battalions in combat.

What comes out of the application of AirLand Battle doctrine in the assessment of TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL PROFICIENCY is not surprising: success on the battlefield is dependent upon the integration of maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership. The salient point is that battalion commanders win on the battlefield because they plan for and orchestrate all available combat systems. This orchestration is seen in AirLand Battle doctrine as synchronization of Battlefield Operating Systems.

DECISION-MAKING

Unequivocally, each of the three battalion commanders demonstrated exceptional skill in making tough decisions under fire. Several factors stand out as contributing to the effectiveness of decision-making in combat: (1) a simple plan facilitates rapid decisions as events unfold; (2) tough decisions are best communicated face-to-face with subordinate leaders; (3) the commander and his subordinate leaders must subscribe to and apply

the same decision-making methods (in training and in combat); and (4) that the "practiced, practical judgement", "terrain sense", "single-minded tenacity", "ferocious audacity", and "physical confidence" highlighted in LTC K. E. Hamburger's study of combat leadership are appropriate SKA for this competency.

Of the four factors contributing to decision-making in combat, the five traits of successful combat leaders listed in LTC Hamburger's study deserves some attention. These traits were applied in the assessments of Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore as auxilliary LPI. Interestingly enough, all three battalion commanders exercised these components in decision-making on the battlefield. And of these five components, "terrain sense" and "practiced practical judgement" - common sense - stood out above the others.

PLANNING

The analysis of the three battalion commanders suggests that the simplest plans are the ones that work best in combat. Simple plans facilitate flexibility, thus providing the battalion commadner with some space (and maybe time) to adapt to fluid situations. There is nothing new in this conclusion (see Infantry in Battle, p. 35) but it bears repeating in this age of complex, multi-layered contingency operations.

Several points of interest have come out of the application of this competency in the battalion commander

assessments: (1) the battalion commander must have a supervision plan mapped out for the battle. It is vital that he deliberately chart his movement around the battlefield so that he can get the first-hand impressions of the fighting which are essential to combat decision-making and planning; (2) success must be defined for subordinate units. To reiterate, the commander must style his intent in such a way as to plainly articulate the end-state of the mission; (3) troop leading procedures worked in three wars, and they will work now. Troop leading procedures and infantry tactical doctrine were the foundation of the performance of Lynch on Hill 314. And Moore went "by the book" as he planned for the air assault into LZ X-Ray. Troops leading procedures must be applied completely up and down the chain of command; from battalion to squad. Units must rehearse, conduct back-briefs, have "chalk-talks" like football teams, use sandtables (models, etc.) - but these vital segments of mission planning are not described in the LPI for planning

USE OF AVAILABLE SYSTEMS

The task, SKA, and LPI of this competency constitute the largest disconnect between AirLand Battle doctrine and Army leadership doctrine. First, the task effectively employ management technology, has too much of an automatic data processing ring to it. FM 22-100 reinforces this slant by neglecting to include such battlefield-related tasks as "effectively employ

battlefield operating systems", "effectively integrate sustainment imperatives", or "effectively employ command and control systems". This competency must be over-hauled to bring it on line with AirLand Battle doctrine. In its current configuration, it was universally not applicable as an historical assessment tool.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The professional ethics competency, and its supporting SKA and LPI, is the best developed competency of FM 22-100. The application of this competency in the assessments boldly highlighted the monumental importance of professional ethics on the battlefield. Each of the three battalion commanders examined in this study exemplified the professional Army ethic in such a way as to make leader ethical behavior into something of a combat multiplier. Vandervoort continued on in combat with a broken ankle and clearly signalled to his soldiers what the leadership standard was as his battalion fought at St. Mere-Eglise. Lynch demonstrated exceptional maturity during the fight for Hill 314 at a time when his battalion badly needed a strong, self-disciplined leader to emulate. And Moore demonstrated the highest standard of the professional army ethic by ensuring that every trooper of his battalion was accounted for at the end of the battle.

This study has shown that the leadership competencies of FM 22-100 provide an adequate framework

for historical assessment of successful battalion commanders, yet need some fine-tuning to achieve a FM 100-5 warfighting focus. But has the study identified any overtly measurable criteria for successful battalion command in combat?

The answer is yes. The examination of Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore has shown that the following eleven performance indicators must appear to produce success:

- (1) rapid battlefield planning (and simple plans)
- (2) missions orders
- (3) maintain initiative
- (4) fire support (coordination, synchronization)
- (5) innovation
- (6) coaching on the battlefield
- (7) communications
- (8) training; pre-battle, between battles
- (9) casualty evacuation and KIA recovery
- (10) location/presence of battalion commander
forward
- (11) define success for subordinates

The following is a brief discussion of each of those eleven performance indicators.

Rapid Battlefield Planning

Although rapid planning almost sounds like a contradiction in terms, on the battlefield it is the "bread and butter" of the battalion commander engaged with the enemy. What Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore have

demonstrated is that at the battalion level, the decision cycle must be quickly completed if friendly forces are to retain the initiative and momentum of offensive operations. The outcome of the battle, it seems, depends on the ability of the battalion commander to complete the cycle of acquiring information (through first hand observations), analyzing information and developing responses (orienting on the immediate tactical problem), making a decision, and issuing instructions and supervising task execution. It also necessarily calls for a command and control philosophy which incorporates commander presence at forward locations, use of mission orders, clear articulation of success, and synchronization of combat power.

The most important aspect of rapid battlefield planning seems to be the battalion commander's ability to "read", or assess, the situation confronting his battalion. This assessment "snapshot" may take into account the full spectrum of the situation from the operational to the squad or individual soldier level. Vandervoort's "read" of the situation after the parachute drop in the early hours of 6 June 1944 stands out as a classic case of a battalion commander recognizing the opportunity for his organization to positively affect the outcome of the operational battle. The recognition of this opportunity was predicated on the window of opportunity afforded by the German actions (and

inaction). The "key" to this "read" - to use some football terminology - is the enemy, and the battalion commander has got to be in a forward position in order to accurately assess the enemy activities.

Hand-in-hand with rapid battlefield planning goes the skill of terrain appreciation, or "reading" the terrain. "The best tactical commanders," according to LTG Collins, "have a keen appreciation of terrain...such a commander's unit experiences one tactical success after another."⁴ Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore all showed an "eye for the terrain." Vandervoort sited Turnbull at Neuville because he was conscious of the observation and fields of fire afforded by the wide, flat ground leading north to Montbourg. Lynch ascertained the tactical significance of each of the Knobs on Hill 314 and battled for control of them. And Moore immediately saw the advantages and disadvantages of the terrain of LZ X-Ray and he shaped his tactics appropriately.

"There is no doubt in my mind," continues LTG Collins, "that a commander's ability to see the advantages and disadvantages in terrain for attack or defense is a major contributing factor to his unit's success."⁵ The absolutely imperative nature of this skill of command in combat is also reiterated in Infantry in Battle in clear, performance oriented prose:

In the absence of definite information small infantry units must be guided by their mission and by the terrain... The intelligent leader knows that the terrain is his staunchest ally, and that it virtually

determines his formation and scheme of maneuver. Therefore, he constantly studies it for indicated lines of action... The ground is an open book. The commander who reads and heeds what it has to say is laying a sound foundation for tactical success.⁶

Mission Orders

This study has clearly highlighted that the battalion commander in combat must, as a rule, employ mission orders to achieve success. Vandervoort's success at St. Mere-Eglise is directly attributed to his use of mission orders with LT's Turnball and Wray. Lynch, in a somewhat different predicament in terms of the battlefield maturity of his organization, used mission orders to demonstrate his trust and confidence in his subordinates to get the job done. Moore's use of mission orders to CPT's Nadal and Herren is an example of practiced, practical judgement on the battlefield. Moore was fighting three separate engagements on LZ X-Ray and he had to rely on his subordinates to fight their own battles within his overall intent.

The use of mission orders in combat is one of the fundamentals of AirLand Battle doctrine. This study has not only shown historical precedent for mission orders as a standard for success, but it has also suggested that the nine leadership competencies prescribe the use of mission orders in combat. Future contingency operations involving the U.S. Army will require that success on the battlefield be achieved by aggressive, intelligent, speedy, and decisive action. The exercise of initiative by

subordinates on the modern battlefield can only be facilitated by decentralized decision-making and mission orders. The "tradition" of mission orders demonstrated by Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore calls for future battalion commanders to coach their subordinate leaders about mission orders, tolerating mistakes in training while engendering a command climate which is based on the trust and confidence found in the application of the leadership competencies.

Maintain Initiative

Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore were all successful because they seized the initiative from the enemy and maintained it throughout the course of the battle. The main point here is that battalion commanders must be conscious of the impact of retention of the initiative on the outcome of the battle. Hand-in-hand with gaining and maintaining the initiative are rapid battlefield planning and mission orders.

Fire Support (Coordination/Synchronization)

Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore were successful in large measure because of their use of fire support in their operations. Vandervoort had to rely on mortars until naval gunfire was available, but then he took maximum advantage of this firepower to blunt a German armor attack. Lynch had a more varied array of ordnance at his disposal, bringing into play tanks, artillery, mortars, and fighter-bomber aircraft. Moore employed

a massive display of firepower on LZ X-Ray, orchestrating everything from aerial rocket fires to B-52 strikes. Clearly, fire support is vital to infantry survival and success on the battlefield.

Equally as important is the coordination and synchronization of fire support assets in conjunction with infantry maneuver. In this regard both Lynch and Moore are instructive. Lynch had trouble synchronizing his platforms with the assault on Hill 314 and very nearly placed his attacking echelons in jeopardy because of poor communications with the air support assets. Lynch also failed to completely integrate all available fire support assets, neglecting to incorporate the 8th Cav Regiment heavy mortars and the tanks into a coherent fire plan. Moore's performance, in contrast, seems to set the standard for orchestrating and synchronizing multiple fire support assets with the ground tactical plan. Finally, a review of both cases shows that the successful application of fire support is significantly dependent upon communications.

Innovation

The old saying that "necessity is the mother of invention" is as true in battalion-level combat as it is in any other pursuit. Successful battalion commanders must be able to innovate on the battlefield in order to solve tactical problems; they must be opportunists. Innovation on the battlefield dramatically contributes to

the success of the mission because the use of imagination, tempered with liberal doses of audacity, tenacity, and practiced, practical judgement, provides opportunities for friendly troops.

Vandervoort's innovative outposting of Turnbull in Neuville gave the 505th Regiment the advantage of forward power projection and defense in depth. Lynch's innovative use of his battalion headquarters company as an additional maneuver element and his imaginative assault formations gave his troops the additional combat power and security necessary to take Hill 314. And Moore's innovative air assault tactics and his "mad minute" gave his battalion the advantages of surprise and close-in protection from infiltration.

Innovation stands out as a catalyst of success, or even a combat multiplier of success. But innovation is based on sound doctrinal principles and the ability of the battalion commander to see the battlefield and envision the possibilities.

Coaching on the Battlefield

The study of Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore strongly implies that coaching on the battlefield is one of the battalion commander's most important roles. Coaching, in essence, is teaching, and the battalion commander constantly teaches his subordinate leaders about combat performance standards. Teaching, aside from the larger competency, Teaching and Counseling is more a professional

ethic than anything else. In fact, the philosophical concept of the battalion commander as a teacher has as its fundamental the practical application of the nine leadership competencies to the coaching and mentoring of his subordinates. Coaching should focus on terrain appreciation, mission orders, battlefield operating systems, communications, and combat leadership. The battalion commander has a professional obligation to coach and teach his subordinate leaders.

Coaching on the battlefield is basically as relevant and realistic as coaching a football or basketball team during a conference title game. The football coach does not stop teaching his assistant coaches during the game, and he does not stop teaching the nuances of offensive or defensive strategy to his unit captains on the sidelines. The same seems to have been true of Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore on their respective battlefields; they coached their subordinates to improve combat performance.

Communications

The overwhelming conclusion drawn from this study is that without effective communications the battalion mission is doomed to failure. Communications takes on many forms - from the technical to the personal - but it is such an important factor to success that a failure in any one of its various aspects jeopardizes mission accomplishment.

Communications is justifiably at the top of the list of leadership competencies because without effective communications, the other eight functions are hollow and impotent. Communications has got to be the priority interest item of the battalion commander because of its enormous influence on every other competency.

Training: Pre-Battle, Between Battles

This indicator of success is logically deduced from the analysis of the combat performance of the battalions of Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore. Vandervoort, for instance, seems to have conducted extremely high standard training for his battalion in between its action at Salerno and Normandy. The reason this is so instructive is that training during war is as important as training for the first battle. More remarkable is the training Lynch conducted after his battalion's first combat mission and the successful assault on Hill 314. Available evidence suggests he succeeded so dramatically because of his insistence on the fundamentals of infantry doctrine.

For Hal Moore, the fight at LZ X-Ray was the logical and long awaited culmination of almost eighteen months of pre-battle training. His battalion's superb performance unquestionably validated the superiority of his training program. Moore's stateside training program, incidentally, had as its foundation the development of technically and tactically efficient and cohesive soldier teams.

Casualty Evacuation and Recovery of KIA

As Moore so poignantly demonstrated, a battalion commander has no greater moral obligation than to care for his wounded soldiers and guarantee - as much as is humanly possible - the recovery of the remains of his soldiers killed in action.

Casualty evacuation is a difficult problem in battle because a unit has to thin its lines to detail litter carriers or "sweep" teams. In order not to lose momentum and sacrifice the initiative, the battalion commander has got to be innovative in collecting and evacuating his casualties. He has got to be inventive in balancing the requirement to protect his troops while he is conducting fire and maneuver to accomplish the mission. Casualty evacuation and KIA recovery is a performance indicator of success because a poor or inadequate evacuation plan can adversely affect the unit's morale and aggressiveness.

Location/Presence of the Battalion Commander-Forward

The absolute criticality of this performance indicator to the success of the mission is clearly evident from the study of the three battalion commanders. While the circumstances of each situation and METT-T considerations influence the battalion commander's actual location on the ground, the successful commander positions himself well forward to be able to rapidly assess and influence the battle. For the battalion commander,

commanding forward is an imperative of his command and control philosophy.

Define Success for Subordinates

The battalion commander must "paint the picture" of success for his subordinates before combat so they may execute his intent to accomplish the end-state of the task. Without an overtly recognizable "picture" of success, neither the subordinate leaders nor the battalion commander would have the necessary criteria to judge whether the unit is succeeding or failing. Without established criteria to assess the conduct of the battle, leaders up and down the chain of command deprive themselves of vital decision points for making adjustments which ultimately affect the outcome of the battle.

More importantly, this definition of success provides the subordinate leaders with sufficient guidance and intent to operate without orders. The definition of success is a must for mission orders. It also insures that subordinates don't commit their units toward the task in a manner which reduces the capability of the unit to conduct continuous operations. Lastly, the definition of success, described by the battalion commanders to his subordinates, gives the commander the opportunity to make sure that his plan is adequate enough to achieve the stated condition on the terminal end.

In summary, the conclusions of the study clearly point out the validity of the use of the nine leadership

competencies as broad performance functions for historical assessment. But the supporting SKA and LPI are considerably inadequate for use as a leader assessment tool during training exercises such as an NTC or JRTC rotation. The following recommendations address the steps necessary to correct this major deficiency.

Recommendations

The principal recommendation of this study is to close the existing gap between the Army's operational doctrine and its leadership doctrine. According to FM 100-5, leadership is considered to be the most essential of the four dynamics of combat power, but the leadership performance indicators supporting the nine leadership competencies are missing the AirLand Battle warfighting focus and spirit. This is a shortfall of major proportions.

The key point in this recommendation is that if the Center for Army Leadership intends to use the leadership performance indicators as a standard tool for leader assessment during training events, the tasks, SKA, and LPI must reflect current Army tactical doctrine.

This is especially true of the "Technical and Tactical Proficiency" competency - the keystone competency of the nine overarching functions. Perhaps the tasks, SKA, and LPI developed for this study should serve as a start point for the detailed development of this competency. By enlisting the assistance of the Center for

Army Lessons Learned and the various branch schools, a standardized leader tasks, conditions, and standards may be devised for evaluating leaders at NTC, JRTC, or CMTC.

The "Use of Available Systems" competency also needs revision. The emphasis on employing management technology is relevant and well intended, but the lack of battlefield-related tasks, SKA, and LPI detract from the focus of the competency. To align this competency with AirLand Battle doctrine, two additional tasks should be incorporated: "Effectively Employ Battlefield Operating Systems", and "Effectively Employ Command and Control Systems". Accordingly, this is fertile ground for a joint Center for Army Leadership and Center for Army Lessons Learned project.

This study has shown several other areas which need refinement along the lines of AirLand Battle doctrine. Battlefield coaching should be considered for incorporation as an SKA in either the "Supervision" competency or the "Teach and Counsel" competency.

The application of the "supervision" competency demonstrated that the SKA Enforce Safety Standards needs adjustments. Safety is the responsibility of every leader, and every leader should be taking active measures to protect his troops, in all circumstances. To make the LPI of this competency more applicable as a training assessment tool, consideration must be given to adding such indicators as: "employ fire control measures";

"command and control of direct and indirect fires";
"orchestrate tactical air support"; "protect troops from
enemy fires"; and "protect troops from fratricide".

One of the subsidiary purposes of this study was to underscore the need for a more exacting definition of battlefield success as it pertains to battalion combat leadership. Even though the concept of commander's intent is firmly entrenched in current operational practice, there are indications that the statements of intent in operations orders are not used by commanders to convey a realistic, overtly measurable "picture" of the required end-state of the mission. For Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore it was absolutely crucial that the end state of the mission was described just as specifically as the means to achieve it. What future battalion commanders need is a mental "checklist" by which they can monitor the valid indicators of success at battalion level which will then facilitate opportunities for exploitation.

But it is difficult to find any overtly measurable criteria for success in combat outlined in U.S. Army doctrinal manuals. The closest definition of success found thus far has been one proposed by MAJ William G. Butler in a 1986 School for Advanced Military Studies Monograph. MAJ Butler postulated that: "Success is defined in relationship to the ends desired when an armed force engages in combat. Before combat the commander establishes the criteria by which the success or failure

of an engagement is to be judged."7 MAJ Butler preceded to point out that success is based on the ability of the commander to recognize clearly "those elements of the battle which relate directly to the established criteria."9 The ability of the commander to recognize "these elements" drives his subsequent decisions in combat and ultimately effects the outcome of battle. If the commander neglects to establish criteria for success and then compounds his error by not being able to recognize "the indicators of the valid criteria", he runs the risk of losing the fight.10

Without a doubt, the subject of assessing the valid criteria of battlefield success is interwoven with the U.S. Army philosophy of command and control and with AirLand Battle doctrine. How these criteria are established for battalions at the National Training Center, for example, is a subject which should be studied by the Center for Army Tactics, the Army Research Institute, and the Center for Army Leadership. The development of these criteria may very well become some of the most important and far-reaching performance indicators of the 1990's. Recommended that the Center for Army Leadership integrate the contributors of success from LTC K. E. Hamburger's combat leadership study into current leadership doctrine: (1) terrain sense; (2) single-minded tenacity; (3) ferocious audacity; (4) physical confidence; (5) practiced, practical judgement.

In summary, this study consists of an analysis of three battalion commanders who were successful in leading their organizations under fire. LTC's Vandervoort, Lynch, and Moore dramatically demonstrated that leadership is the most essential dynamic of combat power on the battlefield. By analyzing the performance of these officers - on whose shoulders so much rests in combat - this study has shown that the battalion commander is indeed the vital link between operational maneuver and small unit tactics.

Recent contingency operations reinforce the fact that future battalion commanders must be capable of successfully leading their units into intense combat, with little or no prior notice of the impending operation. And just like LTC Vandervoort at St. Mere-Eglise, LTC Lynch on Hill 314, and LTC Moore at LZ X-Ray, future battalion commanders must personify the most essential dynamic of combat power and lead at the forward edge of battle.

ENDNOTES

¹ LTG Arthur S. Collins, Jr., "Tactical Command," The Challenge of Military Leadership, p. 55.

² Ibid., p. 49.

³ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Infantry in Battle," The Infantry Journal, pp. 69-78.

⁷ MAJ William G. Butler, "How Should the Brigade and Division Commander Assess Success or Failure on the AirLand Battlefield, pp. 3-6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

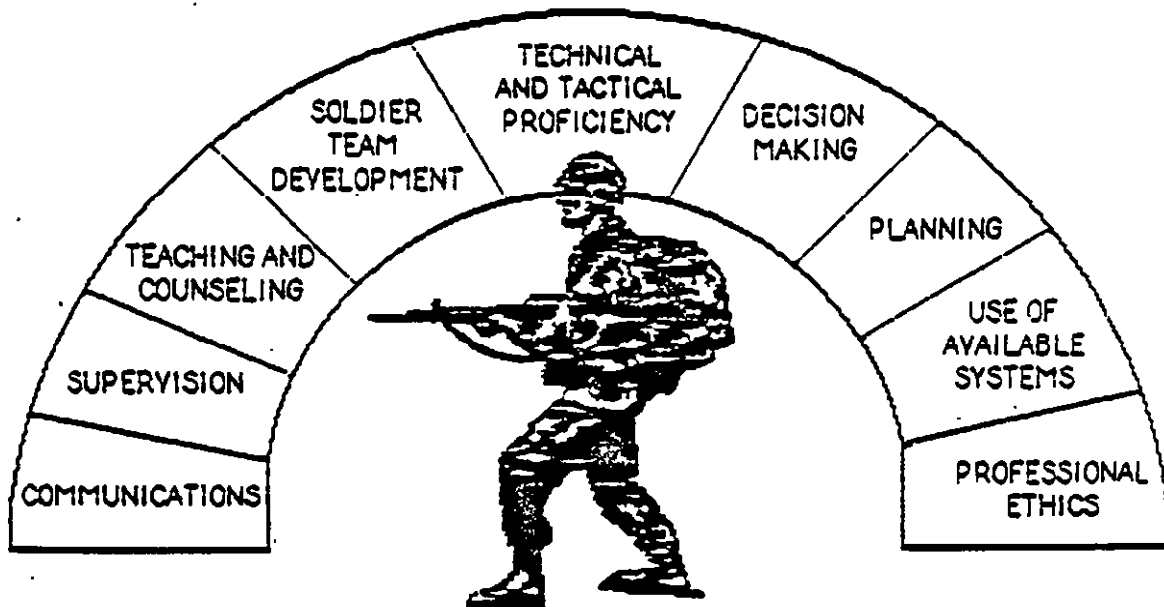
APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

The leadership factors and principles addressed in Chapter 2 are the basis for the Army's leadership education and training framework. This education and training must take place in a logical order, build on past experience and training, and have a warfighting focus. The nine leadership competencies provide a framework for leadership development and assessment. They establish broad categories of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that define leader behavior. They are areas where leaders must be competent.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES



The leadership competencies were developed in 1976 from a study of leaders from the rank of corporal to that of general officer. The study identified nine functions all leaders must perform if an organization is to operate effectively. Although all leaders exercise the competencies, their application depends on the leader's position in the organization. For example, the amount and detail of supervision a squad leader normally gives to his soldiers would be inappropriate for a battalion commander to give to his company commanders. Like the principles of leadership, the competencies are not simply a list to memorize. Use them to assess yourself and your subordinates and develop an action plan to improve your ability to lead.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications is the exchange of information and ideas from one person to another. Effective communications occurs when others understand exactly what you are trying to tell them and when you understand exactly what they are trying to tell you. You communicate to direct, influence, coordinate, encourage, supervise, train, teach, coach, and counsel. You need to be able to understand and think through a problem and translate that idea in a clear, concise, measured fashion. Your message should be easy to understand, serve the purpose, and be appropriate for your audience. This competency is addressed further in Chapter 2 of this manual.

SUPERVISION

You must control, direct, evaluate, coordinate, and plan the efforts of subordinates so that you can ensure the task is accomplished. Supervision ensures the efficient use of material and equipment and the effectiveness of

operational procedures. It includes establishing goals and evaluating skills. Supervising lets you know if your orders are understood and shows your interest in soldiers and the mission. Remember that oversupervision causes resentment and undersupervision causes frustration. By considering your soldiers' competence, motivation, and commitment to perform a task, you can judge the amount of supervision needed. This competency is discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6 of this manual.

TEACHING AND COUNSELING

Teaching and counseling refer to improving performance by overcoming problems, increasing knowledge, or gaining new perspectives and skills. Teaching your soldiers is the only way you can truly prepare them to succeed and survive in combat. You must take a direct hand in your soldiers' professional and personal development. Counseling is especially important in the Army. Because of the Army's mission, leaders must be concerned with the entire scope of soldiers' well-being. Personal counseling should adopt a problem-solving, rather than an advising, approach. You also need the judgment to refer a situation to your leader, the chaplain, or a service agency if it is beyond your ability to handle. You will, of course, follow up on this action. Performance counseling focuses on soldier's behavior as it relates to duty performance. Military counseling is discussed further in Chapter 6 of this manual, and FM 22-101 is devoted entirely to the subject.

SOLDIER TEAM DEVELOPMENT

You must create strong bonds between you and your soldiers so that your unit functions as a team. Since combat is a team activity, cohesive soldier teams are a battlefield requirement. You must take care of your soldiers and conserve and build their spirit, endurance, skill, and confidence to face the

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inevitable hardships and sacrifices of combat. The effectiveness of a cohesive, disciplined unit is built on bonds of mutual trust, respect, and confidence. Good leaders recognize how peers, seniors, and subordinates work together to produce successes. Soldier team development is significant in training and orienting soldiers to new tasks and units. You can help new soldiers become committed members of the organization if you work hard at making them members of your team. This competency is discussed further in FM 22-102 and Chapter 6 of this manual.

TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL PROFICIENCY

You must know your job. You must be able to train your soldiers, maintain and employ your equipment, and provide combat power to help win battles. You will gain technical proficiency in formal Army training programs, self-study, and on-the-job experience. You have to know your job so that you can train your soldiers, employ your weapons systems, and help your leader employ your unit. Tactical competence requires you to know warfighting doctrine so that you can understand your leader's intent and help win battles by understanding the mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time available. Technical proficiency and tactical proficiency are difficult to separate. This competency is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this manual.

DECISION MAKING

Decision making refers to skills you need to make choices and solve problems. Your goal is to make high-quality decisions your soldiers accept and execute quickly. Decisions should be made at the lowest organizational level where information is sufficient. Like planning, decision making is an excellent way for you to develop your leadership team. Include subordinates

DLMO/APPA/MAY89

in the decision-making process if time is available and if they share your goals and have information that will help produce high-quality decisions. Decision making is discussed further in Chapter 6 of this manual.

PLANNING

Planning is intended to support a course of action so that an organization can meet an objective. It involves forecasting, setting goals and objectives, developing strategies, establishing priorities, sequencing and timing, organizing, budgeting, and standardizing procedures. Soldiers like order in their lives, so they depend on you to keep them informed and to plan training and operations to ensure success. Including your subordinate leaders in the planning process is an excellent way for you to develop your leadership team. Remember, one of your tasks is to prepare your subordinates to replace you, if necessary. Planning is discussed further in Chapter 6 of this manual.

USE OF AVAILABLE SYSTEMS

You must be familiar with techniques, methods, and tools that will give you and your soldiers the edge. Use of available systems literally means that you know how to use computers, analytical techniques, and other modern technological means that are available to manage information and to help you and your soldiers better perform the mission. This competency may vary dependent upon your leadership position. You must recognize, however, that understanding computer technological advances is important. You must use every available system or technique that will benefit the planning, execution, and assessment of training.

DLMO/APPA/MAY89

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Military ethics includes loyalty to the nation, the Army, and your unit; duty; selfless service; and integrity. This leadership competency relates to your responsibility to behave in a manner consistent with the professional Army ethic and to set the example for your subordinates.

As a leader, you must learn to be sensitive to the ethical elements of situations you face, as well as to your orders, plans, and policies. You must learn to use an informed, rational decision-making process to reason through and resolve ethical dilemmas and then teach your subordinates to do the same. Professional ethics is discussed further in Chapter 4 of this manual.

APPENDIX B

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