Chapter 10

PSYCHIATRIC SUPPORT FOR COMMANDERS

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INTRODUCTION

Psychiatric support for commanders is an emerging approach to preventing psychological deterioration in key personnel and in units. The essence of the problem is that military service is noted for high stress, and leaders experience higher stress and lower levels of social support than do members of the rank and file in any vocation. The principal sources of stress for leaders are isolation, uncertainty, and responsibility. Current thinking on future warfare indicates that it will become more rather than less severe.[1,2]

Although there is no systematic documentation to define commanders' requirements for psychiatric support, almost any objective history of the U.S. armed forces in peace and war includes reports of deleterious effects on units of dysfunctional behavior by commanders. At the most superficial level, one need only recall the sorry parade of commanders of the Federal Army of the Potomac in 1861 to 1864 and the number of generals General Pershing relieved in 1917 to 1918 and General Marshall relieved in 1943 to 1945.[3–5] Blair has described in detail the inability of many commanders at battalion level and above to function effectively in the Korean conflict (1950 to 1953).[6(pp581–585,612–614)] Few senior commanders were relieved during the Vietnam conflict (1964 to 1972) because the bulk of the fighting comprised individual company and platoon actions. The breakdowns occurred among junior officers.[3–5]

The traditional solution to dysfunctional behavior by commanders has been to relieve those who display it. This approach accomplished three things: it got rid of leaders who failed, it deterred unwanted behavior, and it exculpated superiors by fixing blame on the identified problem. This philosophy of firing the failures is expensive in time and casualties, and it has tended to suppress initiative. In a world in which armed conflicts can explode overnight and in which early and competent application of force may be decisive, firing the failures must be the exception rather than the rule. An alternative, psychiatric support for commanders, acquired substantive potential in the 1990s because of developments in biopsychosocial theory and psychotherapeutic practice and because of a new awareness in the military community that psychological support can be useful and acceptable. A component of command consultation, it is a partnership between psychiatry and command to strengthen the masterful in contrast to the traditional psychiatric mode of healing the psychologically distressed. (See Chapter 9, "Psychiatric Consultation to Command," of this volume.) It offers an opportunity for psychiatrists in the field to assist commanders to strengthen the psychological readiness of themselves and their subordinate leaders to function under conditions of high stress.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, when American military traditions began, soldiers fought shoulder to shoulder. A company usually had a maximum strength of about 65 men. When it formed in two ranks for combat, the company had a frontage of about 30 meters.[7] The captain in command could shout instructions to his officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and he could even run to any point in the line in less than half a minute. The colonel of a regiment of 10 companies could see his flank companies from his position on horseback and could gallop to the furthest one in a minute or two.

The principal tasks of the company commander and his lieutenants were to train their men in movements and discipline and see that they cared for their bodies and equipment so that they were fit to fight. The principal tasks of the regimental commander were to train his officers and see that his companies had food, clothing, lodging, equipment, and ammunition—the wherewithal to survive and fight.[7(pp128–131)]

Officers and NCOs faced the same risks as their soldiers in combat—they were in the line with them or in front in some cases. In addition to the danger of being felled by musket ball, saber, or bayonet, officers also ran the risk that their men might run away from the battle leaving them to death, capture, or disgrace. These uncertainties were somewhat palliated by the close proximity of all the members of a company; if a man quailed, an officer or NCO was not far away and could communicate

with the faint-hearted lad by voice, boot, or flat of the saber. Moreover, the officers were available to each other for social support; they lived and ate together and interacted with each other throughout the day. Each was in sight of several other officers in combat and could hear each other shout commands. Evidence from memoirs reveals that the officers of a regiment in the 18th century were not necessarily always mutually supportive and trusting, but they were at least physically there for each other.[8(pp7–8,41,61–64,75)]

The Dispersed Battlefield and *Auftragstaktik*

With the advent of rifled cannon and small arms in the 1860s, shoulder-to-shoulder formations became suicidal, and a trend toward progressively greater dispersal on the battlefield began. In 1866, the frontage of a Prussian infantry company was 150 meters, a 5-fold increase, and one-half the width of an entire regiment 50 years earlier.[9(p84)] The company commander could no longer control his troops with his voice alone, and the regimental commander saw his force dispersed over one-half mile.

Even before combat began, the regimental commander would only be able to see a few of his companies and their commanders. Direct communication was impossible. Victory came to depend on junior leaders having the knowledge and confidence to act without reference to higher authority to capitalize on tactical opportunities they encountered. In response to this development, the Prussian army instituted *Auftragstaktik*,[10(pp22–27)] a complex set of behavior on the part of commanders to develop in junior officers readiness and ability to act competently on their own initiative. *Auftragstaktik* was intended to make the army more effective in combat and had no psychological or ethical implications, but operationally it was the first systematic approach to providing psychological support for leaders.

Auftragstaktik was a function of command. It comprised behavior on the part of commanders to communicate to subordinate leaders that the senior had confidence in the junior's judgment, wanted him to exercise his initiative, and would support him in his actions. *Auftragstaktik* also included training to develop junior officers' judgment so that encouraging their acting on their own would lead to success more often than disaster. *Auftragstaktik* functioned as a process of psychologically supportive socialization that went on throughout an officer's career. Commanders did not scorn or belittle subordinates; neither did they overlook errors, inattention, sloth, or ignorance. When there were shortcomings in performance, the commander would use them as opportunities for transformational change. He would teach, orient, and strengthen his subordinates in the context of a partnership between the senior and the junior leader.[11(pp50–56)]

Psychological concepts were not part of *Auftragstaktik*; neither was coddling. Making war was a rough business. The Prussian leaders realized that the lower the echelon the rougher it got, and the more the leaders needed supportive chiefs. Although the junior officer was isolated on the battlefield, he had learned from his interactions with his commander that he was a valued member of a group whose leader respected and would support him. This social support, although less tangible than seeing and hearing his commander, often proved to be an operationally effective substitute on the dispersed battlefield.

Auftragstaktik served the Prussian and later the German army well. Although often outnumbered, it won decisively in 1866 against Austria, 1870 against France, 1914 against Russia, 1939 against Poland, 1940 against France, and 1941 against Yugoslavia and Russia. When Hitler took personal command of the armed forces in late 1941, *Auftragstaktik* faded away and, with it, the era of victories.

The U.S. Army in the 20th Century: A Culture of Anxiety

There have been individual commanders in the U.S. Army who practiced the essentials of *Auftragstaktik*, but even if they had been more common, the lack of any institutional understanding of the psychological stresses to which officers practicing this form of leadership were subjected would probably have doomed them to failure. Thus, *Auftragstaktik* has never become a way of life in the U.S. Army. The culture of the U.S. Army in the 20th century has been more nearly one of anxiety: Leaders feared their superiors would find fault with them, and they also feared their subordinates would let them down.[12(pp232ff),13(pp283ff)] Caught between the upper and the nether millstones, many leaders have sought to assure proper performance by intimidating their subordinates. To a major extent, the nature of U.S. military institutions between 1776 and 1945 made *Auftragstaktik* almost impossible and intimidation almost inevitable. Americans kept their peacetime military establishments extremely small. Expanding the army 20-fold to 40-fold in 1861,

1917, and 1942 allowed little time to develop subordinate leaders and imposed severe anxieties on regular officers shouldering new and heavy responsibilities.[14]

In 1940 to 1945, regular officers were forced to depend on inexperienced reservists, former NCOs, and officers commissioned directly from civilian life to fill most positions up through battalion commander and division staff. Many senior commanders used centralized control, minutely detailed orders, and close, coercive supervision to reduce the uncertainties they faced. Control rather than trust characterized professional relationships. Working together under stress united junior and senior officers and enlisted men in small units and staff sections, but there was no ethic of support for subordinate leaders.[15(pp71ff,384ff,413ff)]

The traditional practice of drastically reducing the officer corps after the war was not followed when World War II ended. The army was cut back to a little less than three times its prewar strength, but it retained almost five times as many officers as were on duty in 1939.[16(pp3,14)] Many of the officers on duty in 1947 could never have aspired to commissioned rank before the war. The army offered them undreamed of status and authority, but it could not make them secure in that status and authority. There had been social supports that sustained officers before the war. These supports included a small officer corps whose members knew each other personally, long assignments with the same colleagues, an atmosphere of study generated by a few bright and professionally oriented officers in the middle ranks, and social customs that encouraged interaction and mutual support.[8,17,18] These supports were attenuated during the wartime expansion. Officers commissioned during the war had never experienced those supports, and many did not feel fully assimilated in the less homogeneous and more fragmented postwar army. Some of them adopted authoritarian behavior patterns such as uncritical submission to superiors, hostility to innovation, and indifference toward subordinates.[19(pp258–265)] They did not trust their troops or teach small units how to act on their own. Together with those of their regular army colleagues who during the war had developed habits of not trusting their subordinates, these new officers structured human relations in the U.S. Army in an authoritarian mold.

According to the official historian, command during the initial phases of the Korean conflict was characterized by mistrust across ranks and episodes of leadership collapse.[20(pp84,698),21(p151)] As the war evolved, an extraordinary degree of micromanagement emerged.[12(pp262ff,460ff)] The post-Korean conflict era saw the full flowering of a culture of anxiety because the wartime mistrust was exacerbated by policies to reduce the size of the officer corps. New educational standards that were extremely difficult for officers to meet while performing their duties were imposed. A single efficiency report that was less than extravagantly complimentary could lead to termination of active commissioned service. Many officers who had won their commissions during World War II and the Korean conflict lost them. A culture of anxiety developed that taught officers to attract no attention, attempt no innovation, and take no action not specifically authorized by directives from higher headquarters.[12(pp291–292,314–315)] Some sought jobs with minimal exposure to responsibility, and this meant keeping away from troop command.

Vietnam and the Seeds of Reform

One consequence of the culture of anxiety was a reluctance on the part of midcareer officers to get involved with the comparative evaluations and technical disciplines associated with service in line units. When the conflict broke out in Vietnam, many field grade officers did not have the requisite professional knowledge to function effectively as battalion S–3, executive officer, or commander. They had isolated themselves so long from their basic branch skills that they no longer were able to teach or inspect the techniques of field service and combat. For example, in some infantry battalions and brigades, there was no officer who knew how to organize interlocking fields of fire, effective barbed wire obstacles, or indirect machine gun fire. Many field grade artillery officers did not know how to carry out meteorological and survey procedures. The company and battery commanders were, especially after 1966, mostly officers with less than 3 years of service; they needed older officers who could teach them the fine points of their profession.[22(pp208–209)] Instead, many got only imperious instructions about the results they were to produce and the fate that would befall them if they failed.[3(pp65ff),5(pp96ff)]

Of course, this approach to leadership was not unique to the U.S. Army. Many armies have been organized along rigidly authoritarian lines that allow little leeway for any but the most senior officers to exert any initiative. The underlying assumptions were that subordinate personnel were incapable of understanding the commander's intent and using

their own intellects to carry it out, and subordinates had no reason to risk their lives other than fear of their commander. In past situations, these assumptions were often accurate. But, when they persisted into the 20th century, they were usually inaccurate.[23]

During the conflict in Vietnam, ignorance and the inevitable self-doubt and insecurity it entailed limited the ability of many career officers to provide psychological supports for junior leaders. Many junior officers lacked confidence in their superiors' judgment and in their readiness to back them up if they acted. The results in combat were often that junior leaders did not act. The leadership practices of an unusually large number of officers, particularly those in the field grades and higher, had deteriorated to the point that it caught the attention of senior commanders.[3–5] Lieutenant General William R. Peers, who had held divisional and corps-level commands in Vietnam, sent a memorandum to the Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, in which he pointed out that officers were shirking responsibility, lying, turning a blind eye to improper behavior by soldiers, commanding from a safe distance, ignoring their men's concerns, and failing to enforce measures to ensure the troops' safety.[24(pp195–198)] Although this type of behavior was not universal,[25(pp45–52)] it was sufficiently widespread for General Westmoreland to ask the U.S. Army War College to investigate the issues Peers had raised.

The War College's *Study on Military Professionalism*[26] of 1970 found that serving officers in all ranks perceived that if they were to achieve personal success, they had to please their superiors rather than meet the legitimate needs of their troops or attend to the good of the service. They saw themselves as compelled to attain trivial short-term objectives through dishonest practices that injured the long-term fabric of the organization. The pressure to behave in this way seemed:

> . . . to stem from a combination of self-oriented success-motivated actions, and a lack of professional skills on the part of middle and senior grade officers. . . . A scenario that was repeatedly described . . . [was] an ambitious, transitory commander—marginally skilled in the complexities of his duties—engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk or listen to his subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks at the expense of the sweat and frustration of his subordinates.[26(ppiii-iv)]

The *Study on Military Professionalism*[26] described the gap between the official values of the U.S. Army and praxis—the way socialization processes taught leaders to behave. The gap was not new; describing it without euphemism was. The study recommended a number of actions focused on strengthening officers' technical and tactical knowledge, stabilizing command tours, and encouraging initiative and learning by experience. It described as counterproductive judgmental leadership and the use of statistical indicators as bases for evaluating units and commanders. Some of these recommendations were incorporated into policy. But research conducted between 1975 and 1990 indicated that behavior at variance with leadership policy continued.[27–30] Further, neither the study nor policy addressed the question of social supports for junior leaders.

The lieutenants and captains of Vietnam became lieutenant colonels and colonels in the 1980s and early 1990s. They were able to conceptualize the social and professional support they had wanted and had not gotten from their superiors in Vietnam, and many sought to give it to their own junior officers. Mentoring, empowerment, and providing space in which to fail while learning became active leadership principles in the mid-1980s.[31,32(pp33,36,39,47)] Within the limits of their own anxieties, and of the rapid turnover mandated by the U.S. Army culture for junior officers, the colonels of the 1980s and 1990s had an effect. They did not create an army-wide culture of *Auftragstaktik*, but some created climates of social support within their own units that led to unusually high levels of cohesion, competence, and morale.[33(pp3–16),34(pp68–74)]

The new culture made possible a fundamental change in army warfare doctrine, which first appeared in the 1982 version of Field Manual 100–5.[35] For the first time, a version of *Auftragstaktik* became official doctrine, as is apparent from such statements as ". . . initiative requires audacity which may involve risktaking and an atmosphere that supports it . . . [and] . . . it is essential to decentralize decision authority to the lowest practical level. . . . Decentralization demands subordinates who are willing to take risks and superiors who nurture that willingness and ability in their subordinates."[35(p15)] The U.S. Army's performance in the invasion of Panama and in the Persian Gulf War is a testimony to the success of the new doctrine, but much remains to be done to assure its full acceptance at all levels of command.

An important factor that made mentoring of junior by senior leaders more important—because it

added to the stress of leadership at squad, platoon, and company levels—was a series of experiments with systems for stabilizing personnel. Under the names COHORT (Cohesion, Operational Readiness, and Training), New Manning System, and Unit Manning System, efforts were made to keep first-term soldiers together from their initial enlistment through entry training and for 3 years in a unit. The system offered the possibility of strong horizontal cohesion, and the reduced personnel turnover made possible progressive training in more sophisticated individual and unit skills. In field tests, the COHORT system proved to have the potential for making all units capable of strong cohesion, high morale, and outstanding performance. Whether it fulfilled its promise was a function of the leaders' abilities to rise to the challenge. They had to know three times as much about their profession to conduct 3-year training programs, and the emotional demands on leaders increased when they were with the same soldiers for prolonged periods.[29(pp49–50),33]

Psychological Supports for Soldiers but Not for Leaders

While these developments were taking place, officers in the 1980s and 1990s experienced increased intellectual and emotional demands, frequent and sudden calls to war or warlike deployments, and no sustained system for psychological sustenance from superiors. As operational and administrative demands grew, and the battlefield became more dispersed, social supports for officers in the U.S. Army were further attenuated.[36(pp16–17)] In European armies, the sense of belonging to a hereditary leadership class supported many officers. Others, not born to the officer class but assimilated, were able to draw some support from their achievement even though they were not part of the nobility. The officers' messes provided a daily source of social support in garrison and on campaign. In the U.S. Army, the officers' open messes gradually lost much of their potential for social support. During the 1950s and 1960s on many large posts, the officers' clubs became prestige symbols and entertainment facilities for the post commander. They were funded largely by obligatory contributions from the mass of junior officers, but they provided negligible social support for most of them.[12(p458)] In some cases, satellite beer halls functioned as after-hours gathering places for bachelor officers. When these had a battalion- or regiment-specific identity, they provided opportunities for officers to let their hair down, argue, complain, and share experiences informally. In the 1970s and 1980s, the movement for better health has led to alcohol consumption becoming a career liability rather than an asset, and the clubs and beer halls have waned further as sources of social support.

Throughout the history of psychiatry as an element of military medicine, the foci have been alleviating battle-induced psychiatric symptoms and screening out or eliminating individuals who gave indications that they were psychologically unsuited for military service.[37] Efforts to strengthen soldiers' resistance to combat stress have fallen under the rubrics of discipline and morale—functions of command rather than medicine. Psychological support has been primarily of a spiritual nature—the province of the chaplain. Military culture has defined leaders as not needing psychological support, and the higher the leader's position the more independent he is presumed to be. In military folklore, psychological neediness is a weakness that disqualifies an individual for leadership. For example, a field grade officer in a unit studied by the Department of Military Psychiatry of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research had an impeccable record. He suffered a tragedy in his family, wept before his general, and was relieved of his command. Subsequently, he was passed over for promotion and separated without a pension.

In 1981, members of the military psychiatric research community undertook to collaborate with the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in finding ways to enhance resistance to the stresses of combat. Experimentation, research, and/or evaluation have included pharmacological, organizational, and leadership approaches. The latter two domains have proved to be most promising, but their target was again junior enlisted personnel, not the leaders. Research on strengthening the psychological readiness, competence, and stamina of leaders was, until 1990, conducted only in the civilian sector.

PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS PECULIAR TO LEADERS

Because most of the available data on psychiatric problems of and support for leaders come from the civil sector, military psychiatry is initially dependent on civilian experience and research in design-

ing programs to support commanders. It is helpful to have a starting point, but there are departures as well as correspondences between civilian and military executive roles. There are fewer levels of management in the civil sector that practice leadership per se. Officers in the combat branches of the army and marine corps have to become leaders within their first year. Officers in the navy, air force, and technical services acquire leadership responsibilities somewhat earlier than do their civilian peers. It is important to consider the differences and similarities of civilian and military executive roles and the processes by which individuals are prepared for such roles.

Stress Among Civilian Leaders

Research on stress management among leaders in the civil sector has focussed on chief executive officers and other senior managers. The reasons for this are obvious; stress breakdown in a top manager has more far-reaching effects than it does in a junior person, and with limited resources, it makes sense to take care of the people whose behavior has the most impact. The responsibility, isolation, and expectations associated with military leadership often are not present in civilian organizations except at the top levels. This fact in itself is a special source of stress for civilian executives because the training and experience that put them in line for promotion to a senior leadership position were technical skills, such as manufacturing, accounting, and sales, rather than leadership skills. They reach senior executive roles thinking they know the business and find they are in an entirely different set of psychological circumstances. In the words of one chief executive officer, "The development process short-changes the role of leadership. . . . Being a successful top manager means overcoming the limitations of becoming one."[38]

A review of civilian research on leadership and stress reveals four salient issues: isolation, competence, defenses, and support.

Isolation

Civilian chief executives find suddenly that they have no social supports within the organization. Relationships that were perfectly appropriate in a subordinate position can compromise an executive's authority. If a chief continues to confide his doubts and worries to a former colleague, it will probably lead to ill-feeling among other subordinates about the executive's playing favorites. If a relationship with a subordinate confidant includes romantic or sexual components, the effects could lead to a rapid deterioration of the executive's authority. His people want him to be a strong, autonomous leader, not one dependent on subordinates. This expectation, when combined with absence of social supports, is a burden peculiar to both military and civilian leaders.

Also waiting for the military and civilian executive is the trap of believing their own press releases. It is easy to fall prey to hubris. The executive-commander is the cynosure of all eyes, the fulfiller of all hopes, and the source of a great many fears. He must recognize that he is seen as larger than life. Every word he says will be the subject of interest and discussion among his subordinates. They will seek to anticipate his wishes and will, in many cases, go beyond the limits he intends. Understanding this amplification effect gives the executive-commander enormous power to influence events. However, becoming convinced of his own omnipotence and infallibility leads to further isolation. If a leader believes in himself totally and tolerates no one else's ideas, he will soon teach his subordinates to keep their mouths shut, and he will lose contact with what is going on in his organization.

A paradoxical corollary of the leader's position is that he is socially isolated among a large number of people seeking social contact. The problem is that the subordinates are seeking support rather than giving it, or if they are offering support, it is for the purpose of manipulating the leader—taking from him the autonomy essential to carrying out the particular functions of leadership. Subordinates clamor for decisions, approval, signs of favor, and hearings for ideas. The military and civilian executive must ration his time and energy so that none of the subordinates feel neglected, none acquire a predominant influence, and the executive's time and energy are not exhausted.[38]

All of these stresses arising from isolation are applicable to military and civilian leaders. The only difference is that they affect an infantry platoon leader when he is 22-years-old; they may not hit an executive in banking or the pharmaceutical industry until he is 50-years-old.

Competence

The civilian executive's and military commander's primary responsibility is to define the purpose and course of the organization. To carry out this responsibility, he must function con-

currently in the present, the immediate future, and the distant future. He lives in a broad context of continuing uncertainty. Reassurance comes when his judgment proves to be correct, but the reassurance is only momentary; the future continues to be full of uncertainties. The ability to function effectively in such an environment is called vision. Vision is an intangible quality difficult to define precisely, but it includes knowledge, judgment, courage, and close contact with reality.

Knowledge comes from experience and study. It includes detailed information about the financial, material, and human resources required and available, and how requirements and availability are changing. With respect to people, the executive needs to know what skills and temperaments are most productive in the context of the organization, how to attract them, and how to capture their interest and commitment. Many of these kinds of knowledge a budding executive or commander acquires in fulfilling a variety of assignments at progressively greater levels of complexity. Many large companies and the armed services deliberately rotate junior and middle leaders through different functions.

Judgment is the faculty that assigns weights and priorities to incomplete and often conflicting fragments of evidence. Making decisions with incomplete data is the woof and warp of the civilian executive's and military executive's life. One definition of good judgment is guessing what works. There are both stress and zest in living with perpetual uncertainty. An infrequently recognized component of judgment is the ability to detect when one is becoming addicted to the zest and taking the organization into risky ventures for the thrill of having one's judgment validated more dramatically.

Courage is an essential aspect of vision, and one that is often degraded by experience. A leader must pursue new and uncharted ventures and must terminate popular, familiar, and comfortable activities that are reassuring and familiar to the members of the organization. Any change will provoke resistance, and the leader becomes a focus for hostility arising out of members' fears that they will not be able to cope with the changes, will lose status or influence, and may even lose their jobs. They will act out their feelings of helplessness and fear by opposing, vilifying, and undermining the chief. It takes courage to persevere, especially since the best way to neutralize the subordinates' hostility is with forbearance and understanding. Middle managers and officers who take unpopular positions or challenge their superiors' policies usually have short careers. Aspirants for promotion must, therefore, develop their courage privately or exercise it discretely.

Vision is not the province of visionaries; it is a function of leaders who are in close contact with the capabilities of their subordinates and the realities of the situation in which they work. An executive's vision is meaningless unless subordinates can understand it, believe they can carry it out, and see how it can pay off for them as individuals and as members of the organization. When the members of an organization embrace his vision, it alleviates the leader's isolation by bringing all members of the organization together in a common enterprise.[39(pp269–274)]

The leader's words and behavior create a climate in the organization that can impede or facilitate the implementation of his policies. A leadership climate can emphasize, for example, a spirit of being on the crest of a wave of new developments or of self-conscious belt-tightening or of commitment to precision. But creating and maintaining a particular kind of climate requires the leader to be consistent. There is a risk of sending inadvertent messages that are contrary to his intentions. The executive must learn to monitor constantly the possible second- and third-order consequences of words, acts, and policies. Keeping watch over one's casual remarks and gestures is fatiguing and stressful, and when the leader makes a slip, it can be personally demoralizing as well as operationally disadvantageous.[40]

Defenses

The executive, because he is the one responsible for setting the course of the organization, rarely has clear and specific guidelines about what to do. The role is inherently ambiguous. The executive can only get validation of his judgment by events that may not unfold for years. The executive lives in a world of permanent uncertainty. Events today can demonstrate the correctness of the executive's judgment, but it is judgment that was exercised months or years ago. A vast array of decisions is always awaiting validation. To alleviate the inevitable anxiety inherent in executive roles, executives may unconsciously make use of maladaptive defenses.

The chief is perpetually caught between the Scylla of symbolism and the Charybdis of detail. If he goes too far in the direction of generality, he will give subordinates the impression of being in another world that has nothing to do with problems that subordinates face. On the other hand, if the boss

gets enmeshed in micromanaging, he will lose sight of the overall purpose of the organization. The problem lies in the leader going to one extreme or the other for unperceived psychological reasons. Abstraction can be a welcome respite from the need to make specific decisions. When a chief gets hooked on the freedom of dealing in airy generalities, it may become hard to get back to business, and his usefulness may be ending. Just as seductive to the executive or commander who feels the burden of making plans the fruits of which may not be apparent for years is getting down to the workers or troops and making little improvements in technique. Such interventions are gratifying because they show results immediately, but they are the province of front-line supervisors. Some executives find so much satisfaction in "helping" their subordinates do their jobs that they neglect their own job of looking into the future and making long-range decisions.

Uncertainty combined with isolation and responsibility can impose stresses that will make the most stable and mature personality grope unconsciously for succor. The most obvious need is for companions who will reassure the executive about his wisdom and worth and help deny the evidence of advancing age. These companions may be compliant subordinates—the "yes-man" phenomenon or sexual partners who restore the executive's faith in his lovability—or intellectual confidants. It is appropriate for leaders to treat their subordinates with respect and friendliness. It is, therefore, extremely easy for a chief to become involved in a dependency or sexual relationship with a subordinate, thinking all the while that he is engaging in appropriate role behavior. The key variable of which the executive is usually unaware is his own need for emotional support, reassurance, and sustenance.

Closely linked with sexual adventurism is recreational risk-taking. Hunting, racing cars and boats, climbing mountains, and other high-risk sports expand the arena of a leader's uncertainty. (They also expose the organization to an increased likelihood of suddenly needing to find a new chief.) Their practitioners describe these activities as "relaxing," but a more accurate description is that they are distracting. They take the executive's mind off the uncertainties in the organization, but they do not bring him any closer to confronting, understanding, or neutralizing the anxieties that may distort his judgment.

Another defense is the omnipotence referred to earlier. The executive got to his position through being a highly successful manager. Why should he not have complete confidence in himself? Total belief in one's own judgment is inherently reassuring; it gives the chief and his subordinates the illusion that everything is under control. But omnipotence is an exercise in self-deception to hide from oneself feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and vulnerability. The more precarious the chief's ability to tolerate uncertainty, the more he is likely to cling tenaciously to a conviction of omnipotence. Operationally, it closes the executive's data receptors, and he loses control.

Supports

An executive or commander can find social supports and psychological security among members of his family, friends, peers, and psychiatrists. The first three of these categories of relationships have important limitations. While relationships with spouse, children, and parents may include mistrust, jealousy, or antagonism, often there will be one or two in a familial constellation who can be supportive. Friends often combine a limited interest with an unspoken agenda. Peers are almost always competitors, at least in achievement if not for markets. This situation leaves the psychiatrist, who ironically is often least able to help a leader before a breakdown because acceptance of one's psychic vulnerability is incompatible with the self-confidence that chief executives and commanders are expected to display.

Recent work by Jackson[41] with corporate executives has indicated that a combination of psychotherapist and peers in a group setting oriented toward strengthening the strong rather than curing the sick can be both acceptable to executives and effective in protecting them against stress breakdown.

Case Study

In 1982, a dynamic young general at the Pentagon became concerned that some of his most able commanders were becoming disabled or dying from myocardial infarctions. He organized a three-pronged approach: physical assessment (the "over 40" physical examination including a stress electrocardiogram); physical conditioning; and stress management exercises (relaxation, group discussion, and so forth) led by organizational effectiveness personnel. The program identified a number of colonels at risk and probably saved their lives. The outcome of the stress-management intervention is harder to assess.

Comment: This approach, couched in terms of fitness, if institutionalized, might be a method by which commanders could get psychological support without stigma.

Stress Among Military Leaders

There are three major differences between the stresses military leaders experience and those their civilian counterparts encounter. First, the risks in the military are higher. Failure, loss of status, and dismissal face both soldiers and civilians. But the officer's competitors are, during wartime, seeking to kill him and those for whom he is responsible. Second, the character of the relationship between leader and subordinate is many times more comprehensive in the military than it is in the civil sector. A civilian executive is responsible for providing direction to his subordinates in accordance with an overarching design and for developing his subordinates in a vocational sense. The military officer has these responsibilities and also is responsible for feeding, housing, and clothing subordinates; for assisting them with personal and familial problems; and for protecting them against the efforts of the enemy to kill them. The third difference in civilian and military leadership stresses is the age at which they begin. Many military officers find themselves in their first vocational experience as platoon leaders or division officers responsible for training, motivating, punishing, and comforting 20 to 40 enlisted personnel. It is instructive to review for military officers two of the issues—isolation and competence—identified as salient in the research[38] on stress among civilian executives. The defenses and supports available to both civilian and military leaders are generally similar.

Isolation

"The lonely splendor of command" is an accurate cliché for both military and civilian leaders. But for many military leaders, the isolation begins with the first duty assignment. There is an immediate legal and social gulf between the officer and his enlisted personnel. In wartime, the officer is alone in the responsibility of doing everything he can to keep his subordinates comfortable, healthy, and alive while directing them to undertake missions that put their lives at risk. In peacetime, the officer is alone in the responsibility for his subordinates' personal, professional, and familial welfare while directing them to undertake tasks that may appear purposeless and that keep them from their families and personal development.

In common with the civilian chief executive, the military leader must keep his fears and doubts from subordinates and must avoid getting involved in dependency relationships with them. Also in common with the civilian executives, the officer needs to be wary of believing in his omniscience. Being the sole authority figure in a group of 30 or 40 at the age of 22 is heady business, and the readiness of some subordinates to curry favor can easily unbalance a young officer's judgment. Isolated as he is, it is often hard to find corrective perspectives. The officer's immediate commander may be physically remote and is certain to be inundated with work. Research has shown that he is unlikely to have much time or energy to provide balance, reassurance, or psychological sustenance.[36(pp15–17),42(p118)] Other junior officers are each surrounded by their own subordinates and have little time to support each other.

One factor can mitigate the junior officer's isolation and is not generally available to the civilian executive. It is love. Students of superior-subordinate relations in the civil sector usually insist that intimate, or family-like, relationships are inappropriate in vocational settings.[38] But small military units are, psychologically, families. The members are physically close together, experience fear and hardship together, and are dependent on each other for survival in the face of the enemy and for avoidance of harassment in garrison. The leader, although socially and legally segregated, often becomes a psychologically integral member of the group. The leader comes to love his subordinates and to be beloved by them, all the while holding extraordinary powers over them. The love has nothing to do with sexuality or the sexual composition of the unit. It has to do with trust, respect, and interdependence developed during shared experiences. The degree to which military leaders can derive support from intimacy with their subordinates is a function of several complex factors. The prerequisite is time together pursuing common goals under stressful conditions. If, in such a setting, a junior officer demonstrates that he will share all the risks and discomforts, take action to protect his subordinates and alleviate their discomforts, attend to their distress before his own, and contribute to accomplishing goals valued by the group, intimacy can develop. If the leader is sufficiently secure to accept the risks of intimacy, it will develop. Although there have been a great many words written about how authority and discipline are degraded by familiarity between leaders and subordinates, the most thoughtful writers[43–45] have recognized that intimacy brings strength. A U.S. Army Regulation[46] adopted in 1915 states:

> Officers will keep in as close touch as possible with the men under their command and will strive to build up such relations of confidence and sympathy as will insure free approach of their men for counsel and assistance. This relationship may be gained without relaxation of the bonds of discipline and with great credit to the service as a whole[46(p11)]

Research during the 1980s indicated that in the most cohesive and effective military units, there is intimacy between leaders and followers, without the least diminution of obedience or respect for authority.[33] In fact, it is the trust and respect that the members of the unit have come to feel for each other as a consequence of the suffering they have endured and the things they have done in each other's presence—and often for each other's benefit—that are the bases for both discipline and love. In cohesive units, the leader's authority rests on the confidence his subordinates have in his ability to lead them in ways that will maximize damage to the enemy and minimize injury to them and on their trust that the leader will never abandon them. Subordinates in cohesive units may call their officer by nicknames, they may feel comfortable arguing with him, and they may disregard rituals of subordination, but they execute his orders immediately, creatively, and with full commitment. Junior military officers who experience such mutual trust and confidence are not isolated; many report leading a platoon or being a division officer on a ship as being the richest experience of their lives. Some have lifelong friendships with the members of their platoons.

Commanders at higher levels have progressively fewer opportunities to share daily and directly in the lives of their private soldiers. Company-level commanders and department heads, with 50 to 200 subordinates, can know all of them and can do informal things with many of them. They can interact as quasi-equals in such activities as the unit softball team, talking during a long night vigil, or sweating out the birth of the subordinate's child. Combined with competent performance of his duty and attention to the needs of his subordinates, these informal activities enable a unit commander to contribute to a climate of trust and respect in the unit, and the commander will feel the goodwill, the support, and even the love of his subordinates. Commanders of battalions, squadrons, and ships have 300 to 1,000 subordinates; they can rarely know all of them and can only interact informally with a few. The unrelieved nature of their isolation resembles more closely that of the civilian chief executive. Commanders at the colonel / navy captain level and general / flag officers also experience unrelieved isolation. They interact socially and professionally with a great many other officers, but they are alone; they cannot have close experiences with any of their subordinates without presenting a confusing image to them.

A paradoxical aspect of military commanders' isolation is the need for a clearly understood system for succession. Because of the violent nature of military activities, each commander must keep his immediate subordinates sufficiently aware of his intentions so that they can act independently in accordance with his plan even when out of communication for prolonged periods or when the commander is killed. This requirement entails intimacy between a commander and his subordinates on a professional level; the paradox is that the ultimate purpose of the intimacy is to facilitate pursuit of the mission when the senior partner in the relationship is dead. The loss of a beloved leader, however, can have devastating effects.

Competence

On the strictly vocational level, the officer's technical knowledge is the foundation of his authority. This is true for the civilian executive also but in a more restricted sense. If a civilian chief executive lays out a marketing and production plan that fails, the stockholders lose dividends; if a commander lays out a battle plan that fails, his soldiers lose their lives. Even in peacetime, the stakes riding on a commander's knowledge are higher psychologically than they are in a civilian organization. Members of a military unit identify with it; they derive their sense of worth from it. Soldiers confer authority on a commander who "knows his stuff," who can lead them in the way of success, and who knows how to take care of them. They find ways of evading or undercutting the orders of an ignorant leader. Civilian subordinates also are involved psychologically and practically with their organizations, but their involvement is not as intense. Civilians can quit a company without leaving their field. For civilians, the job is largely a way of earning money, and in our culture, an individual's sense of worth is often associated with the amount he earns rather than what he does. Frequently, the way to increase income is to move to another firm. For a soldier, the military provides a living, but the soldier's sense of worth is based more on the importance of his role and the reputation and mission of the unit. Identity as a soldier / sailor / airman / marine confers a sense

of personal significance.[47(pp218–219)]

Lack of knowledge is a severe source of stress for newly commissioned officers. They know less about the army than their subordinates, yet they are in charge. Most officers never feel fully prepared for their jobs, and spend most of their careers studying. The armed services recognize that officers need to know a great deal about many fields and fields in which there are rapid changes; every 5 years or so, they give officers an academic year off to study at a military school.[48]

The range of knowledge an officer requires can best be illustrated with vignettes.

Vignette 1—The Reversed Screw. A lieutenant in an air defense battery found that the tractors with which the unit was equipped would only go 10 miles per hour when they were supposed to be capable of 30. None of her maintenance people could fix the tractors. She had them explain how they adjusted the engines and then went over the procedures in the technical manual. They were doing everything as the manual prescribed. One of the adjustments involved turning a screw clockwise for maximum performance, but the screw was under a floorboard and faced downward. The lieutenant visualized the problem from the perspective of the screw rather than the mechanic. She showed the mechanics what to do and the tractors performed correctly.

Vignette 2—Taxes Everywhere. A new company commander in a foreign country got a notice from the host government that his unit had failed to pay social security taxes for indigenous kitchen helpers for more than a year, and he would be imprisoned if the arrears were not paid within 10 days. He had to find the appropriate office and official, find out what the tax law required, learn how to comply, and figure out what the back taxes were—all in a foreign language.

Vignette 3—Chaperonage. An officer in a unit that included both men and women was periodically on duty in Saudi Arabia. He learned that the Saudi religious police would arrest any woman who appeared in public without her husband. Because the women in the unit wanted to tour the city, the officer proposed that each woman pair up with a man who would say he was her husband. The religious police accosted several couples, received reassuring answers, and left the women alone.

Vignette 4—The Covenant of the Arc. A staff officer was detailed to investigate the shelling of a friendly village by American artillery. He identified the battery that had fired, interviewed its personnel, and found that no one knew how to calculate corrections for the effects of weather on artillery shells. He subsequently found that no one in higher headquarters knew how either. In the melee of charges and countercharges about who would be court martialed for the incident, he was the only one who had facts or an understanding of the facts. Several people in the chain of command who were exposed to responsibility sought to get him to alter his findings, and failing that, to discredit him.

These vignettes illustrate the range of knowledge officers must acquire. Two of the vignettes also illustrate how lack of knowledge can be a source of intense stress. It is a double-acting source. Efforts to learn more put pressure on an already packed schedule, and lack of knowledge is not an excuse for inaction. The officer must act and endure the stress from making a decision on the basis of inadequate information.

The military leader's judgment is put to the test more often than is the civilian executive's because the officer operates in an arena in which there are more unknowns. Judgment is a learned faculty; experience and knowledge sharpen it. But frequent exposure to having to act in a climate of multiple uncertainty with severe penalties for failure does not necessarily "hone" judgment. A leader can protect himself from the psychological stress of making such judgments by becoming fatalistic—a process that does not enhance the rational content in judgment. Some leaders burn out and opt not to make judgments. Some convince themselves that they will win some and lose some. When they are wrong they repress the memory and drive on. Making demands on judgment is always psychologically expensive. When, in combat, the enemy defeats an officer's judgment and kills his people, the emotional cost escalates rapidly. Because they must use judgment early, often, and for mortal stakes, comparatively few officers become addicted to risk as some executives do, but many become reluctant to make decisions.

In his very first assignment, the military leader needs the kind of moral courage the civilian executive needs when pushing through changes to popular and familiar procedures. The officer needs a second kind of courage when leading his subordinates into danger that he shares. The military leader needs a third and most demanding type of courage to order his subordinates into danger that he will not share. The commanders of units from platoons on up normally direct the maneuvers of their subordinate elements from at least

somewhat protected command posts. The officer seeks to coordinate the movement of subordinate units with fire support in ways that neutralize the ability of the enemy to harm them and maximize the damage done to the enemy. This is the essence of the military commander's version of vision, and it takes a special kind of courage to carry it out when his subordinates are facing enemy fire.

People who have never experienced military command may perceive that officers do not exercise vision because they are merely executors of plans developed at remote headquarters. It is true that most military operations are carefully planned to bring as many uncertainties as possible under control, and battles are controlled by phase lines, boundaries, schedules, and the like. The military passion to plan is driven by the fact that there are more numerous and more dangerous uncertainties in war than there are in corporate operations. Vision is essential to the military commander in three respects. First, the apparently simple act of putting an armed force in position to confront an enemy entails forward thinking about tons of food, ammunition, and fuel; hospitals, tents, and spare part stocks; air and sealift capacity; terrain, enemy forces, and weather; and the numbers, equipment, and training of friendly units. The plan requires vision. Second, orders assign missions; it is up to the subordinate commander to figure out how to accomplish them. Battles may take minutes or hours, but for the participants, they last an eternity. The visualization at the small unit level of who does what, when, and how; what enemy reactions might develop and how they might be countered; and how to keep balanced in case of unexpected developments must be carried out minute by minute in advance. Third and probably the most critical facet of military vision, and the one that most closely resembles the chief executive officer's vision, is developing forces in peacetime. Commanders at all levels set goals for the long-term development of their units knowing that at any time they may be called into combat. The kind of battle they will be called for is never known, personnel are coming and going, new equipment is due in and personnel will need to practice with it but no one knows when it will arrive, and funds for training and travel are unpredictable. A lot of vision is required.

Stress on Military Leaders in Modern Warfare

Military service has evolved into a generalized readiness to engage at short notice in a wide range of predictable and unpredictable missions involving danger, discomfort, and separation from families. There is no permanent enemy that soldiers and leaders can learn to visualize as evil; there will be a series of temporary adversaries, generically described as "the bad guys." Military personnel will have to fight members of an armed force defined as enemy and, then after defeating them, often succor them.

The nature of military action may be nonviolent, as in stabilization, peace-keeping, or nation-building operations. It may involve low-level violence, as in counter-insurgency or counter-terrorist operations. Or the intervention may be against a modern armed force capable of high-intensity combat operations possibly including chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. The nature of an operation may change, as it did in the invasion of Panama in 1989 and the Persian Gulf War in 1991. The first began as medium-intensity combat using minimal force to limit enemy as well as civilian and friendly casualties, but it quickly became a civil government and institution-building operation.[49–51] The U.S. Army's involvement in the Persian Gulf War began as a show of force to deter Iraqi moves into Saudi Arabia. A buildup and embargo culminated in an ultimatum for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. When this was not forthcoming, the American and allied involvement escalated into a high-intensity conventional air attack, then ground-sea-air attack, then into a relief operation for Iraqi minority groups.[52–53] The leaders had to have sufficient knowledge, common sense, and flexibility to sustain their soldiers' morale and persistence in the face of changing missions that were difficult to perform, obscure in purpose, and always dangerous. Their success was a consequence of changes in U.S. military doctrine,[35] and in the organization, manning systems, and leadership training to support them. The interlocking patterns of stress that commanders in such operations have to endure will be evident from the discussion that follows.

The nature of low-intensity and counter-insurgency operations entails the deployment of very small numbers of military personnel in the midst of populations that are either skeptical or hostile and whose language most soldiers do not understand. The soldiers' anxiety is very high because there may be no apparent danger and when it comes, it will be a surprise. They are completely dependent on each other's alertness and on their leader's judgment to survive and accomplish their missions. Squads or platoons will be out of sight of each other and out of

range of supporting weapons. In a sea of people, any of whom could become lethally hostile at any moment, the leader is under perpetual stress. Commanders know that any of their units could be snuffed out in a moment before they could intervene.

At the other end of the scale of violence is high-intensity war. Technology makes possible almost continual pulses of combat involving weapons of extreme lethality. Surveillance systems make it difficult to conceal units and weapons, and the only hope for survival lies in a high degree of dispersal. Electronic warfare will normally interdict electrical communications. The leaders of small units will be isolated and out of contact with supporting headquarters for prolonged periods. Commanders will have very little information about their subordinate elements and will live in advanced states of anxiety. The psychological effects on units, even well-equipped, battle-seasoned, elite units, were demonstrated in the collapse of many Iraqi units under allied air, sea, and ground attack in 1991.[52]

The stress on leaders in forces that must be prepared for an overnight deployment to engage in such a wide range of military actions is high in peacetime as well as wartime. Measures to improve the fighting capacity and psychological readiness of units may enhance the gratifications inherent in military command, but they do not mitigate the strain. Research[29,54] on cohesive, high-performance military units in which the first-term soldiers were stabilized for 3 years revealed that the demands on leaders were increased. These demands were of three basic types—intellectual, behavioral, and emotional. The demands were interactive; to describe them, it is necessary to outline the relational system within such units. The descriptions are derived from research done by teams from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research during the 1985 to 1991 time period, but the same patterns are reported by other observers in other countries and services.[29,33,54,55]

In several cohesive, high-performance units, soldiers bonded strongly with each other during their basic and advanced individual training. They came to trust and depend on each other, to be concerned about each other's welfare, and to share values throughout the unit. Because of their mutual concern and common values, if a superior did something the privates thought was unfair to one soldier, that superior became the target for the enmity of the whole unit. Similarly, if a leader went out of his way to help a soldier, all would know about it and approve. Leaders lived in a goldfish bowl in which all of their actions were judged by all of their subordinates—even if only one member witnessed an action.[29,56]

One of the values the soldiers developed in their initial training was interest in military matters and in being effective soldiers. They judged each other on their military aptitude, they helped each other to become proficient, and they reserved their scorn for the soldier whose ineptitude was a consequence of lack of effort or attention. They looked to their leaders to be experts, to teach them, and to respect their interest by talking army to them. Leaders found themselves burning the midnight oil to keep ahead of their soldiers and to develop training experiences they would find challenging and professionally meaningful.[29,33]

The soldiers devoured their leaders' time and energy. They had ideas; they wanted to be in on planning so that they could learn about what goes into an operation. They perceived themselves to be full members of the unit and, as learning professionals, to deserve their leaders' attention. They expected their leaders to be able to teach them how to cope with the problems of being husbands, fathers, and householders. The leaders had to be endlessly accessible, and they still had to find the time to become the physical, moral, and intellectual models in which their troops could have confidence.[29]

The interdependence between leaders and followers, the satisfaction they experienced together when they accomplished a task through joint effort, and the misery they shared getting those jobs done forged links of mutual respect and trust. Respect and trust were supplemented by affection when leaders and followers went out of their way to say or do something to ease or recognize another. Intimacy, a readiness to make oneself vulnerable to someone for whom one has strong trust and affection, emerges spontaneously in many units that are successful in combat. In units that can go into combat overnight, it is desirable to develop intimacy across ranks in peacetime. But it is difficult for most leaders and commanders to tolerate the vulnerability and the feeling of being exposed that intimacy entails. Treatises on civilian leadership proscribe intimacy between the chief and his subordinates. The primary reasons are that the chief is expected to project an image of strength and autonomy, and intimacy appears to be favoritism if bestowed on only a few. In a military platoon, company, small vessel, or aviation unit, intimacy is possible for all

members, irrespective of rank. The members are together 24 hours a day for days on end, not just for 40 of the 168 hours in a week. Their lives depend on each other, and the closer they are to each other the more effective they will be in battle.

Intimacy for many leaders is one more source of stress; they have to fend it off, or if they succumb to it, they feel guilty. A paradox of intimacy in military organizations is that it is almost impossible for it to compromise the leader's authority. Here is the dynamic. If subordinates have sufficient trust and respect for a leader to be intimate, his authority is beyond challenge. If he feels sufficiently secure in the authority his troops have conferred on him to be intimate with them, the circle of mutual trust, respect, and affection is complete. The much-maligned "familiarity breeds contempt" is a totally different system of relationships. It begins with a superior who does not feel competent and does not believe he has his subordinates' respect and trust. He wishes to purchase their support with friendly behavior. The subordinates, perceiving both the leader's incompetence and neediness, make use of his overtures to manipulate him. The difference in relational processes between a unit in which informality and affection between leaders and subordinates are based on trust and respect and one in which they are based on scorn is apparent in a few moments of observation.

The cost of fending off intimacy that has been earned and is appropriate is additional stress for the leader and a lower level of cohesion for the unit. The cost of accepting intimacy is negligible. The soldiers have too much affection for their leader to embarrass him in front of a less secure superior who might consider the intimacy within the unit to be inappropriate. Intimacy with subordinates of the kind that is available to a military leader is one of the two most powerful stress buffers available to him. The other is intimacy with his commander. Each leader must have the conviction that his boss is thinking about him, wants him to succeed, will do everything in his power to help him succeed, and will not abandon him on the battlefield. In most combat scenarios, the junior and senior commanders will rarely see each other and sometimes will not even be able to communicate for long periods. Because they are totally dependent on each other, the trust between them that the other is competent and is doing his best needs to be as complete as possible. The higher commander, who rarely sees the battlefield but who is responsible both for his subordinates' accomplishing their mission and for their welfare, can come to hate his subordinates because of his isolation and impotence. Similarly, the junior commander can come to hate his superior for failing to do enough to take care of him and his troops. Commanders at all levels need help in empathizing with those above and below them, in recognizing and accepting their own feelings, and in managing the uncertainty and isolation they will experience.

THE PSYCHIATRIST AND THE COMMANDER

By the time the battle is joined, the opportunity for preventive psychiatry has passed. The partnership between psychiatry and command, like the trust between senior and subordinate leaders, must be forged in peacetime. The commander is responsible for creating the trust and respect necessary to support cohesion and resistance to stress. This has never been considered a medical problem. The psychiatrist cannot be criticized if he deals only with those who break down. Indeed, in combat, the slender mental health resources of a division can be immediately overwhelmed with psychiatric casualties. Before the battle, however, it is possible for the psychiatrist to take a proactive role. He can strengthen the ability of commanders to build relationships with subordinate leaders that will enable them to persevere, command effectively, and create climates that reduce the incidence of stress casualties.

The situational vulnerability of military leaders is not balanced by any system for selecting the psychologically most hardy individuals for leadership positions. In the first place, six decades of research have not turned up reliable screening systems.[57] In the second place, the army is imbued with the democratic ideal that leaders are made, not born.[58(pp251ff),59(pp58ff)] The only screening that differentiates leaders and followers are civilian education and brief military training programs.[60(pp132–135)] Most officers have college degrees, NCOs are expected to be high school graduates, and college credits help enlisted soldiers rise through the ranks. Soldiers selected to be NCOs and college students in military academies or other officer programs receive special training, some of which is designed to test and/or develop ability to persevere through exhaustion, pain, and frustration.[61(pp166ff),62(pp25ff)] In

wartime, even these requirements are often waived; the leaders face isolation and responsibility with little preparation and haphazard support.

There are four primary issues the psychiatrist must consider in providing support to military commanders: resistance, military efficiency, modalities of intervention, and the appropriateness of civilian models to the military setting.

Resistance

There is strong resistance among civilian executives to any activity that smacks of psychology or "touchy-feely" approaches. Researchers[38] have found that executives feel uncomfortable unless they are measuring their strength against each other and do not want to reveal private feelings of fear, doubt, or vulnerability. When such topics come up, they typically protect themselves with sarcasm. They feel at ease talking about money, achievements, and victories over competitors, regulatory agencies, and lawyers. Military personnel are, if anything, more resistant to things psychological. Studies in 1987–1990 by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research[54] showed that even after traumatic combat or surviving a catastrophic accident, neither soldiers nor their leaders wanted mental health professionals in their units. Soldiers in units that suffered casualties during the invasion of Panama in 1989 said afterwards, "The psychiatrist offered to come to the unit, but command dragged its feet." "People fear mental health workers. They might make them look at themselves." "We don't say nothing about our nightmares. It might get into our records."[54]

There are related processes behind soldiers' fear of "shrinks"—mental health theory and mental health professionals. The most fundamental process is a reluctance to upset a psychic system that is working albeit imperfectly. Those soldiers who have been willing to talk about themselves indicate that they have some sense that they have conflicts and problems hovering just beyond awareness and indicate that they would rather not know more about them. To probe them and to penetrate the defenses around them would be to invite pain. Often, membership in a military organization is a part of a defensive system to avoid awareness of feelings of vulnerability, to help control hostile urges, or to achieve a sense of adulthood or potency.

A derivative process is fear that having psychological problems would damage a military career. The fear is accurate. Any evidence of "mental instability" is a mandatory ground for revocation of security clearance. Beyond the fact that no military person can hold a position of responsibility without access to classified information, the stigma of unreliability that accompanies loss of a clearance is enough to stifle any military career. Predictability, stability, and hardiness under stress are essential characteristics of a soldier and particularly of a leader. No one wants to go into combat with an individual labeled as psychologically unstable.

Psychological problems are in a realm of vulnerabilities that cannot be strengthened by working out in the gym or corrected by surgery. They are particularly threatening because they are unknowable, they can manifest themselves without warning, and their effects are unpredictable. To express symptoms of mental illness or to acknowledge a need for psychiatric help is, in most units, a manifestation of weakness that would destroy a male soldier in his own eyes. It would be unthinkable even to admit to himself, and it would certainly be punished forthwith by his superiors and peers. For example, in 1991, a captain with an outstanding record was experiencing symptoms of a psychiatric disorder. He sought inpatient treatment at a military hospital. On discharge he was relieved of his position, given a relief-for-cause efficiency report, and directed to appear before a board of officers to show cause why he should not be eliminated from the service. None of his peers or superiors, all of whom had esteemed him before his hospitalization, would make statements in his behalf.

Because psychological problems are so ephemeral, devastating to a professional military man's sense of himself, and destructive of military careers, few military personnel willingly acknowledge them. Many soldiers have concealed their psychological distress for years; others have acted it out on their subordinates or families or pursued solace through alcohol or drugs. For generations, in armed services throughout the world, alcohol has been an acceptable, if not obligatory, way of avoiding psychological pain.

The challenge is to demonstrate that psychological services can strengthen the masterful, not just cure the needy. It is a legitimate question for the military psychiatrist, given the position of military folklore and culture with respect to his profession, whether he should bother to undertake anything more than recovery of the wreckage of the battlefield and the elimination of those who demonstrate their "unfitness" by seeking help before the battle. However, another given is the psychiatrist's potential for strengthening leaders' ability to create cli-

mates in which their subordinates can resist the stresses of combat more successfully. This potential is a strong argument for psychiatrists to make every effort to show the commanders in their units how they can use mental health staff and psychological principles to enhance the psychological readiness of their commands. Each psychiatrist must make his own decision on how much effort he is willing to expend based on the climate in the command in which he is serving.

Military Efficiency

The effect of an insecure commander on subordinate leaders is usually detrimental. As the commander acts out his insecurities through authoritarian, paranoid, or withdrawal behavior, communications dry up, morale among junior leaders plummets, and the efficiency of the organization flags. Junior leaders get out of the service at the first opportunity, abandoning a calling that they had once found highly attractive. Research[63(p77)] has revealed that commanders who are not comfortable with making decisions and accepting responsibility have inefficient units or ships, poor retention among their officers, and high incidence of psychological behavior dysfunction—spouse/child abuse, substance abuse, and inability to commit to the military profession in many subordinates. Under stressful conditions, the greater the complexity of the tasks, the more severe the degradation of performance.[64,65]

Modalities of Intervention

The basic mode of intervention used with civilian executives has been peer workshops. In the few workshops on which data are available, the participants, all of them men, were selected on the basis of being chief executive officers roughly comparable in achievements and reasonably open as human beings. The essential character of the workshops has been developmental, an orientation toward mastery, growth, and empowerment. There is never any mention of therapy or cure. The assumption is that the men are superbly functioning people who want to enhance the richness of their lives and the scope of their competence.

In most of the workshops, the men begin by relating to one another with sarcasm and put-downs. They subtly flex their psychological muscles at each other. The group facilitator works toward introducing the notion that there are new things to be learned—growing, relating, and empowering. He moves the structure of the group from leader-directed to a horizontal, collegial arrangement in which the facilitator is a participant. He can thereby serve as a role model for new ways of relating. He raises questions to encourage the members to understand and appreciate where others are coming from in a pluralistic as contrasted to a right-wrong way. Initially, the members are uncomfortable with open-ended and personal issues. They want structure, an agenda, and closure. The leader challenges them—do they want to play it safe or go for bigger stakes? Do they want to go where they have never been before or not? Gradually, they begin to see that each has vulnerabilities, and the bolder ones lay them out. As they come to feel safer with each other, they open up to new ideas. They begin to look at themes associated with power and intimacy—how they are antithetical and how they can be mutually supportive.

In a second phase, the therapist introduces possible paradigm shifts. The participants come to see the workshop as an opportunity to define themselves as men, and to define their missions in life. Questions arise such as "Could something come out of this other than that I am just stronger? Could I be actually different?" "Can we create something new, question our roles as men?" "Can we reexamine how we have been trained by our culture, parents, school, career?" "Can we develop and pass along the capacity to have more satisfaction?" More complex and conflicting themes emerged—failure, relationships with women, raising children. Gradually, they come to dare to venture into troubling territory and trust the integrity of the group to see them through.

One group, after 7 months, went on a wilderness experience. The group leader hired a ropes expert as an instructor. None of the men had any experience with rock climbing or rappelling. They were terrified. The ropes instructor made his pitch, and no one volunteered. At length, one man said he would do it. He was drenched with sweat and could not repeat the instructions he had been given. The group analyzed what was going on. The man said he was willing to risk his life to look good in front of the other men. He guessed he could do it, but he did not know; he had not been listening to the instructor. He had slipped into a regressive mode; he would do anything to have the illusion of control. The members talked about how this kind of regression could be self-destructive. They were able to understand how the process works because they had seen it and felt it. They explored how it could

affect their behavior as chief executive officers or as fathers or husbands. As chief executive officers, they were supposed to know what they were doing, but if they got into a regressive mode, they would be blind to information and ideas. The experience of taking new kinds of risks brought them to see the faces of fear and shame and brought new readiness to accept new ideas.

On one occasion, the group facilitator proposed that the members spend a week observing themselves. They were not to do anything different; they were to respond and behave as they always had but to observe the difference between how they normally reacted and the impulses they had now. They came back furious. They hated the facilitator. It was stupid to deny themselves a breakthrough they had discovered. They discussed the sources of the anger. They came to realize they were imprisoned in the "real man" paradigm, were used to selling out for approval, and would do anything for psychological survival. When this group went on a wilderness experience, one of the men sat against a tree at the bottom while the rest climbed a cliff. He refused to do it. At the debriefing, they all talked about their feelings and he was excited about what he had done. "I had two feelings. One was shame and embarrassment that I had wimped out. The other was pride that I could say 'no,' that I didn't have to look good." The group acknowledged his courage to stand against the real man paradigm. His behavior changed; he became less angry and belligerent and was a more effective leader. Acknowledging and owning his fear and making his own choice had empowered him in a fundamental way.

In a late stage, the groups raised the question of whether they were designing their lives or their lives were designing them. They had worked on leadership, effectiveness, and satisfaction. They were ready to try the leap from being reactive to proactive. A first step was to explore what each was doing to help the other men in the group. They developed a shared vision and then worked to realize it. What they were doing was using the workshop as a case study in generativity. They then applied their discoveries to empowering their subordinates and the members of their families. They also used the concept of a community vision that they had developed in the group to buffer the isolation they experienced in their corporate roles.

They then went on to explore resiliency, the ability to bounce back from a defeat. They practiced in the group turning frustrations and disappointments into opportunities to learn and transferred the technique to their businesses. They learned how to absorb defeats without suffering damage to their senses of self. The basic objective was to maintain a context in which to look at a crisis or a failure as an opportunity for breakthrough into growth.

Psychological resiliency, the ability to persevere and maintain a balanced perspective under stress, has been the subject of research focused on children and civilian executives. The salient findings from studies[66–68] of children are that the resilient ones have interactional histories that have led them to believe they can trust adults to provide guidance, nurturance, and information; have experienced gratification, support, and comfort after deprivation, frustration, and pain; and have identified with competent, supportive adult figures.

Studies[69,70] of adults indicate that the so-called "invulnerables," having experienced repeated successes in the intellectual, physical, and interpersonal aspects of their lives, expect to succeed. They identify with older people who have worked hard and mastered pain, defeat, and loss to achieve important goals. Their commitment to their work is a function of the pleasure they derive from its content and challenge; they are not driven. Maddi and Kobasa[69] have defined "the hardy executive" as one who has a "vigorous sense of commitment, control, and challenge"[69(p32)] and who "reacts to stressful events with transformational rather than regressive coping."[69(p32)] Transformational coping comprises becoming actively engaged with the stressor, understanding and acting on it, and ultimately changing it to reduce its stress potential. The hardy executive recognizes stressors that he cannot alter in an objective sense, and that alteration consists in changing his own attitudinal valences. Transformational coping does not, however, include denying the reality of the stressor, or withdrawal through acting out.[69,70] The evidence indicates that resilience develops throughout adulthood and that hardiness can be learned. Social supports, mastery experiences, and trustworthy adult figures in the vocational and counseling environments can build resilience.[69]

SUMMARY

Military commanders, even more than civilian executives, need to be resilient, invulnerable, transformational copers. They have already experienced substantial success through the process of selection for command. Although not all are invulnerables, many may be on the threshold. The role of the psychiatrist is to work with senior commanders—those commanding ships, battalions, squadrons, and higher level formations—to enhance their sense of invulnerability. They, in their turn, can then create command climates in which resilience and hardiness can develop in their subordinate leaders. The bottom line will be tighter cohesion, stronger commitment, more open communication, and higher levels of resistance to combat stress breakdown within their commands.

The challenges of applying the techniques developed by civilian psychiatrists and psychologists in a military setting are daunting. The resistance of both individuals and the military culture, the frequent absences of commanders from their home station, the 2-year turnover of commanders, and the commanders' and the psychiatrists' workloads all provide excuses for dropping any project of psychiatric support for commanders. One could argue that the importance of being proactive is self-evident for the chief of a corporation but might doubt that it was necessary for a colonel—a leader near the middle of an immense hierarchy. Considering the stress on commanders and leaders at all echelons and the role each plays in creating a climate for his subordinates that either strengthens or compromises resistance to combat stress breakdown, growth workshops for commanders would probably prove useful. Only a few would be interested, but the pattern of predispositions inherent in participating suggests they would profit immensely. And, for every brigade commander who learns that he does not have to look good all the time, 3,000 subordinates will have a better chance of surviving combat physically and psychologically. Psychiatric support for commanders is an idea whose time will come when creative pioneers put it into effect.

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