

LEADERSHIP AND ETHICS: A Practitioner's View

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I'd like to talk about leadership and I want to address it from the practical view of a practitioner. I've had the great pleasure of having many leadership jobs, over the last 10 years or so, and as a result have had a chance to deal with people at a variety of levels. I've not only worked for Americans, but I've also worked for Germans and for the British and so I've had a chance to see leadership demonstrated to me from international perspectives as well as from a national perspective. The British, particularly, have a lot to teach us in the area of leadership.

I would like to say a little bit about my job here at the National War College. The National Defense University has all of the tough jobs. General Lawrence has all the major in-box problems and I have the great advantage of having the opportunity to do lots of teaching and lots of research. Over the course of this summer, I've written two manuscripts, one on leadership and one on long-range planning. I was so glad to hear Dr. Kissinger this afternoon say that the most important thing we need to do in this government is to get some long-range planning done. My book will be entitled, Creating a Strategic Vision for America: National Security and Long-Range Planning. I feel strongly that we have a deficiency in that area, but it is a deficiency that can be solved. My book on leadership is going to be called, Taking Charge: A Practical Guide to Leadership of Large and Complex Organizations.

My course which I teach here at the National War College (and I'm in my third year), is basically a course on leadership of large and complex organizations. My basic thesis is that leading large organizations is different enough from leading small organizations that you really have to think through the problem carefully and, if you don't do that, you're likely to fail. I get that conclusion as a result of watching many people fail in big leadership jobs. Particularly in the Air Force, but also in other services, there are leaders who seem to do pretty well in running smaller organizations, but when they come to the point of running very large organizations they have great difficulty delegating, they have great difficulty communicating, and they have great difficulty reaching out and

touching their people. They have trouble motivating them, setting a higher vision for the organization, doing the planning that's necessary, establishing levels of integrity, and so forth.

Let me share with you a few of my leadership experiences. Let me give you a few little vignettes of leadership problems as they relate to ethics and perhaps that would help us get into a good discussion period. I'll give you a few case studies. First of all, I'll take you back to 1976. I'm now the Chief of Maintenance of a maintenance organization at Hahn Air Base in Germany. I've got 1,000 people working for me and I've been in this job now for three or four weeks. I've just come out of the Pentagon and gone to Germany. And I find one evening that every night we are falsifying the official report that the Wing is sending forward to the Joint Chiefs of Staff through the higher headquarters on the state of readiness of our airplanes. At 0300 every morning we were submitting a report that said that 70% of our aircraft were fully combat ready, when in fact, somewhere between 50 and 70% of our aircraft were really combat ready. I kind of stumbled over this one night when I was down in our job control where we monitored the aircraft status. I asked the basic question, "Why are we doing this?" And, of course, the answer was, "We're trying to make the Wing look good." The maintenance people were trying to make the organization look good, so they falsified the record to do that. Well, my dilemma was, I was brand new; I had known the Wing Commander only a few weeks; I didn't know the situation there; what should I do? I decided the best way to do this, was to approach it directly. I went to the Wing Commander and said, "Do you know we're sending a false official report every night to the JCS?" And he said, "No, I didn't know that." And I said, "Don't you think we ought to knock that off?" and he said, "Yes, I think we ought to knock that off." So I got a good answer from the Wing Commander; I went back to my maintenance people and said, "I know you've been doing this in the past, and I know you think you're helping out the Wing, but there are two reasons why I can't stand to do this. One is because it's wrong, and two, because it's dysfunctional. If you tell everybody you're doing great and you're not, you're not going to get the command support, the logistics support, the manpower support to fix it." So I said, "We've got to quit doing that." The nice thing about that story was it was fairly easy to turn that problem around. The Wing Commander supported me and my maintenance community went along and it worked out fine. But here was an example of an

organization that had been doing that for many, many months and had rationalized that that was the right thing to do.

Another example occurred when I moved to Bitburg. I commanded the Wing there before Bitburg was made famous by President Reagan's visit in 1985. We were in the middle of a major flying exercise. NATO periodically conducts these exercises to test the full capability not only of the F-15s during the air defense, but test the whole capability of the flying, missile, and radar forces. The intelligence officer, who was an Air Force major, got up and said, "When you are returning from your mission and you're reporting in the air down to the Command Post, I want you to report that you've killed four airplanes, you've expended half your missiles, and half the rounds from your 20mm gatling gun. No matter what you do or what you see, or whether you ever intercept any airplanes, or whether you shoot down ten or whether you shoot down none, always report four kills." I'm sitting there as the Wing Commander saying to myself, I wonder why we are doing that? I jump up and say, "We're not going to do that!" My reaction was spontaneous; it didn't seem to me that it was useful to lie in these reports and so I said, "We will not do that. Just report whatever you see. So if you intercept two airplanes and shoot them down and you expend two missiles or four missiles to do that, report that; if you intercept none, report that; if you intercept eight and shoot those down, report that." I did that because of the fact that it didn't seem to me, even though it was an exercise, and even though we were trying to exercise the full intelligence reporting system, that we should get every one of our aviators to lie and get in the habit of doing that. If you do that in peace time you might well do that in wartime. I think most of you know the United States Air Force record in that regard is not too outstanding because we, in fact, did that during the Vietnam War. But here was a good example of what looked like a pretty good idea to fully exercise the intelligence system; just have everybody report this and then the intelligence system gets exercised. But the fundamental question that had not been asked up to that time is, "What does that do to us? What does that force us to do to ourselves?"

For the third example, I'll take you to Washington, but before I do that I would like to say that ethical and integrity issues in Washington are frankly tougher. The issues are not as easy, there are many fuzzy areas. This is a very political town, as you would expect a national capitol to be,

and so the issues get more complex and tougher. It's 1982, and I'm testifying before the House Armed Services Committee. Sam Stratton is in the chair (Mel Price had left for the day), but I'm being asked questions by Beverly Byron. Some of you may know her. She's a congresswoman from the State of Maryland. She's pressing me on the issues of flying safety. She has a son in the Air Force who's flying airplanes, so she knows quite a bit about airplanes and a lot about the Air Force. She's trying to make the point that the Air Force needs to fly more in order to improve our flying safety. She claims that pilots who don't fly very much crash more than pilots who fly more. Well, she's right; we all know she's right; everybody who flies airplanes knows she's right; but unfortunately the data wasn't showing that at the time. We had been flying a little bit more each year, but the flying safety record has been staying at this time, back in '82 about the same. She was trying to make the case for the Air Force that we need to get more flying hours, but her data wasn't right. So I couldn't agree with her. I said, "I'd love to agree with you Mrs. Byron, but I can't because the data doesn't show that. We think, over time, it will show that, but it hasn't shown that in recent years." Now there is an example, where she's trying to help the Air Force. It would have been easy to answer that question in the affirmative; that might have even helped the Air Force in that regard, but you know, you just can't do that in dealing with the Congress. I find from all my experience with the Congress, the worst thing you can do, is be dishonest with the Congress. If you ever do that: first, you're going to get caught because the staffers are very smart; two, you'll never ever have any credibility on the Hill from that moment forward. Although I have been encouraged to do so by some people, I have never done that, because it's wrong and it's dumb.

Now another example, which is kind of an in-house story in the Pentagon, may give you a little bit of a flavor for the kinds of dilemmas that you run into. Again, it's 1982; now it's General Lew Allen, who is the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and we're in the process of briefing General Allen on the famous POM. For those of you who are not familiar with that term, "POM" stands for "Program Objective Memorandum." What it means is it's the next five-year plan and program that is developed about a year and a half in advance of the five year period. Every May each service will submit their program; in the case of the Air Force now, that's a hundred billion dollars times five. So that's a five hundred billion dollar program for the next five

years. Each service submits its POM to the Secretary of Defense. He then works on it for a while, changes it a bit, and then submits it to the President, who after additional modifications, sends it to the Congress the following January or February. The chief planner briefs on the planning aspects of the POM; what's the strategy; what are the priorities, how well do we meet the guidance from the Secretary of Defense; and so forth. Then the programmer, who's also a two star general, gets up and he briefs on the specifics. How many B-1s are we going to buy in each year, and so forth. The briefing goes on for about an hour. It's a very complicated briefing; there's a lot of detail in it. At the end of the briefing General Allen says, "This is a dishonest POM, I will not submit it to the Secretary of Defense. Go back and redo it." What he was saying was, and I was part of this, in the process of putting together our program, we had played some games; as all the services have a tendency to do. 'Gaming the system' it is called. We know, for instance, that the Congress will give us x number of C-130H's built in Georgia. So you take the C-130s out of your program, put some other things in you'd like to have, knowing that when it gets to the Congress, you're going to get the C-130s anyway. These are the kinds of games that are played. Well, the staff had done some of that. We just saw that as kind of smart operating business in the tough political environment of Washington. But General Lew Allen hit it right on the nose and I could have hugged him for doing it, even though we had to go back and work weekends to get the program fixed because he set a higher standard. His point was clear; he was not going to play those kinds of games. He wanted to play it straight so we could defend it as not only a good POM but an honest POM. Here is a really nice example of a leader, in this case, the Chief of Staff for a military service, setting a standard for his service and making us live up to that standard.

My fifth example relates to probably the most interesting case of dealing with a command situation. I'll take you back to Bitburg in the late 1970's. You come into work as a wing commander every morning and sitting in the middle of your desk, is the police blotter. What that is, is about 10 or 12 or 14 pages of what's happened the last 24 hours as reported to you by your Security Police, (your military police people, your cops). And it has everything on it. It has speeding violations; it has doors left open, security violations, safes left open, fights in the NCO club, drunken driving cases, wife abuses, husband abuses, child abuses; it's a fun way to get the morning started. It's

a very sobering document because it has all the bad things that happened in a 24-hour period. And a lot of things happen in a 24-hour period in a community of about 10,000. Well, I come in one morning and I'm looking through the police blotter and I notice that a technical sergeant with about 14 years of service had been picked up leaving the main gate because his car had been weaving. He'd been stopped, and he was clearly driving under the influence. He had alcohol all over his breath; he couldn't walk the line. The security police took him down to the base hospital for a blood alcohol test and then delivered him home. Well, I put the name in my head and a couple of weeks later we got the results back from Weisbaden, showing that the same sergeant had 00.000 alcohol in his blood, but was "positive" for amphetamines. I thought, there's something wrong here. I don't know what's wrong, but how could he be blowing alcohol all over the Security Police, and yet not have a bit of alcohol in him? So I called in the Chief of the Security Police and the Hospital Commander, and I said, "Check into this." Well, what had happened, a very interesting story, but it's the kind of thing that's useful to talk about. After the drunken sergeant had been delivered home by the security police, he went to his neighbor and said, "I'm in big trouble. I was drinking; I'm gonna be DWI; I'll lose my license for six months. My wife doesn't drive; she has a job; I just can't afford to lose my license." His next door neighbor said, "No sweat! We'll go on back and do a blood swapping exercise." So they did that, and they convinced the young two-striped corpsman in the hospital that they should do a little blood swapping. So they extracted some blood out of the neighbor. The only trouble with the neighbor was, he was popping lots of pills. So what you have; you have an opportunity to discipline not one person but three. It also gave us an opportunity in the base newspaper, within a few weeks, of telling the story to our people and letting them know these are the kinds of things that we wouldn't tolerate in the name of integrity.

Let me make some generalizations about integrity in large organizations. First of all, as I mentioned, there are lots of temptations. There are temptations to fudge the figures, to withhold a little bit of information, to tell 95% of the story instead of the full story, to try to make your boss look good, to try to make your organization look good, to beat out somebody else who's playing dirty pool. I remember so often the Air Force people would say in the Air Staff, "We've got to fudge the figures because the Navy's doing

it." And I'm sure the Navy guys were saying, "We've got to fudge the figures because the Air Force guys are doing it." That kind of rationale is quite common. Sometimes, if you're scrupulously honest, it doesn't pay off. A recent example comes from the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps went forward with a POM input to the Navy one year, and they got hit very hard by the Congress. If they'd played games they might have done a little bit better. Sometimes by being honest you do lose; but integrity still pays off in the long term.

It's particularly important to be honest in military organizations because trust in combat is so essential. Trust in combat is so essential that military institutions must generate a mentality of trust and honesty in peace time. The role of leader is very, very important. I find that integrity will go down hill fast if the leader isn't on top of that issue and doesn't set very high standards for himself. Leaders have to be squeaky clean in this area and set very high standards.

Here are some techniques worth thinking about. One of the things that I do when I first come into any new organization is to get my immediate subordinates around me and show them my "hang-up" slide. I throw up a slide and I say, "These are my hang-ups. I might as well tell you now the first week, so you don't have to learn them slowly." On that slide I have a list of usually 10 or 12 things, but the number one is integrity. I put it down always as number one, and I spend some time talking about that. I usually make the point that if the integrity level of this outfit is not in real great shape, that can be corrected. Let's work together to move that level up higher. Other "hang ups" include procrastination, hyper-ambition, authoritarianism, parochialism, lack of dignity, etc. In looking for opportunities to reinforce standards of integrity in life, if you have the situation with the blood swapping, use that as an example of what you will not tolerate. You can use that in newspapers and in newsletters. Compliment people who you find exhibiting high integrity. These are some of the techniques that are useful.

From my experience, there's always a small group on every base, in every situation, everywhere I've ever been, including the National War College, that has low standards of integrity. I had to throw a uniformed military student out of the National War College, during my first year here. It turned out that he claimed an earned PhD. When we checked into it, it was from the

Sussex Institute of Technology of London, England, where you can get that PhD for a certain amount of money, a letter, and some credits. No dissertation, no language requirements, and no oral or written examinations are required. He also turned out to be a convicted felon and so we removed him from the course. We also had a very serious case of plagiarism here at the National War College, before my time, but no more than four or five years ago. No matter where you are there are going to be people who are going to violate basic standards of integrity. They will sell their souls for money. I had an officer who worked for me very recently who falsified a report on household goods during a move. He took a '1' and turned it into a '7' for the repair of a piano; he sold his soul for \$600. I'm not sure he saw it that way, but that's what he did. He also sold his career for \$600.

People will sell their souls to avoid work, to avoid embarrassment, to cover up for their subordinates, to cover up for their families, to cover up for their weaknesses, to get back at the system to cover gambling debts, to look out for friends, to solve particularly tough problems; there are lots of rationales for low integrity. A leader must be realistic about these things. He's got to be an optimistic person without being a pollyanna. He's got to stress integrity and he's got to be willing to take strong action when violations of integrity take place. And he also needs to understand the close relationship between personal and institutional integrity. Some people will never lie for themselves, but they'll lie for the institution. As a leader it's important to emphasize both sides of the integrity equation.

Now, I would like to mention a couple of things relating to your conference. It seems to me as you look forward to the issues of tactics and strategy as they relate to moral behavior, the two most interesting issues for the future are strategic defense and terrorism. SDI is a concept, it's a technology, and it's a potential weapon system. The moral issues of deterrence and defense are very complex. Mutual assured destruction which is our basic nuclear strategy today, is moral as long as it works; it provides deterrence and prevents war, and those are both very good. When it becomes immoral, it seems to me, is when it becomes an operational reality. People who say mutual assured destruction is inherently immoral, cause me problems. There are some immoral and moral aspects of it. But as long as it works, I don't think it's immoral. SDI could become profoundly moral if it works, if we can transition to it peacefully, and that's a very important question, and

if it doesn't increase the chances of conventional war breaking out. That's one of the great concerns the Europeans have--will SDI make the world safe for conventional war? The Europeans have had a great experience with conventional war and they didn't find it a particularly happy occasion in the last 60 years or so.

In fact, you can argue that to not pursue SDI can be immoral, if SDI could lead to the end of strategic nuclear weapons. As far as terrorism is concerned, the just war concept of proportionality, it seems to me, must apply here. Preemption can be a useful approach, but it must be done with great care. Retaliation may be appropriate but only if our intelligence is good and casualties of innocents are minimized.

Finally, let me talk a little bit about technology, and what the hope of the future might provide. Technology can't solve all problems but may help in this area. There's strong technological evidence (there's a new study by the Rand Corporation) that shows a combination of better guidance systems, better sensors, better microcircuitry, and better computers, may lead to weapons in the future that can destroy strategic targets, military targets, without using nuclear warheads, and in some cases, not using warheads at all. Some weapons may just kill with velocity. You know, we have a new concept in the Air Force; we're going to build "hittiles" instead of missiles. That's an aside, but let me tell you that we have such great sensors on the front of air-to-air missiles now that they can just run into the airplane. You don't even need a warhead. So it's a "hitt-ile" instead of a "miss-ile."

I can see the day, if you'd like to think long-term out to the year 2025 or so, when nuclear weapons will be so obsolescent that the numbers of them could be quite small. This evolution can only take place, if a number of events take place. First of all, if non-nuclear technology is pushed, and in fact, works. I think there's a pretty good chance that will take place. I'm talking now about accuracies within inches. Second, SDI becomes a reality. Third, leaders of the major nations of the world actively pursue nuclear arms reductions through both multi-lateral and unilateral steps. In the meantime, in the next 40 years, the great challenge of our time is the maintenance of our basic values while avoiding both nuclear war and major conventional war. Any arms control or arms elimination proposal must be carefully evaluated in terms of maintaining our basic values while avoiding war.

Finally, I make an appeal to all of you, and I'm now going to turn myself into my long-range planner, and that is, don't be determinists. Americans can make a difference. Western Europeans can make a difference. Canadians can make a difference. Take a long-term view. Help this country and the West create a strategic vision. I don't think we can move the world very much, but we may be able to move it 1 or 2% over the next 30 or 40 years. That can make a real difference, particularly, if we set and pursue our goals with a full consideration of the ethical dimensions.