

# US Army Leadership

## What it is and What it is not!

(An ex-Warrant Officer's personal view point.)

By LTC (Ret) W. Larry Dandridge, US Army Aviation

Leadership is taking the point position when your unit or flight is expecting contact with the enemy. Leadership is flying a crippled bomber to the ground when one of your wounded crew members cannot bail out. Leadership is keeping your young soldiers, marines, airmen, sailors, and coast guardsmen alive and never leaving your wounded behind. Leadership is writing a dead trooper's family a personal letter immediately after the battle.

Leadership is not glorifying war. Leadership is not doing "anything" just to get promoted. Leadership is not winning the battle at all costs, nor is it losing a war to avoid casualties. Leadership is not found in the security of a well fortified command bunker, nor is it found in a plush officers' field mess.

No compromise of the integrity of one's word, deed, or signature is leadership. Setting high standards and seeing that they are met is leadership. Intelligence, dedication, creativity, and selflessness are leadership. Stamina, vigor, and commitment are leadership. Spontaneous, contagious enthusiasm is leadership. Initiative, self-improvement, and professionalism are leadership.

Leadership is rewarding a soldier, sailor, airman, marine, coast guardsman, or civilian with the appropriate recognition immediately after exceptional service. Leadership is commanding and managing. Leadership is establishing and meeting, in priority, specific objectives. Leadership is managing by exception, using job enlargement, and seeking job enrichment.

Believing in God, family, and country, in that order is leadership. Being humanistic is leadership. Trusting well trained troops ideas and decisions is leadership. Knowing where the mission is at, when the troops and material are to be there, and how many troops and systems are needed to win is leadership. Blocking out periods of "private time" to accomplish creative work and recharge is leadership.

Leadership is treating men and women equally without regard to race, color, creed, religion, age, or custom. Leadership is visiting your wounded and sick frequently. Leadership is knowing and living by the Constitution, the Code of Conduct, the Geneva Convention, and the basic human rights of all mankind. A leader is assertive, but not aggressive. Leadership is neither ruthless nor mindless discipline, but it is the ability to do the right thing at the right time, by putting the whole before the parts. Leadership is not a good efficiency report, nor is it paper readiness. Leadership is not a court martial for every mistake or leniency for serious violations. A leader is fair, predictable, and consistent.

Giving a superior sound professional advice, even when you know he or she does not want to hear it is leadership. After you have given your best advice, following all legal, moral, and ethical orders, even when you do not agree with them is leadership. Leading when you can; following when you should; and getting the hell out of the way when you have nothing to offer, is leadership. Learning the language, culture, and customs of a host country is leadership. Staying in top physical condition is leadership.

Leadership is an admiral or general who knows the friendly and enemy situation, knows the immediate action sequence for the M16 rifle, knows his driver's first name and family, and can recite the Lord's Prayer. Leadership is a private who knows that he or she is in the chain of command and may have to take over when senior in rank. Leadership knows that a water truck in the desert is worth more combat power than an extra armored cavalry regiment.

Not forgetting that the past is our heritage, the present is our challenge, and the future is our responsibility is leadership. Not being overweight, not smoking, saying no to drugs, and not drinking alcohol in excess is leadership. Delegating authority, commanding confidence and respect, and accepting full responsibility for your actions is leadership. Ingenuity, sociability, tact, and tenacity are leadership. Cross training is leadership. Saying what you do and doing what you say is leadership.

Leadership is not being right all the time, and it is certainly not being wrong most of the time. Leadership fixes problems---not blame. Leadership is adaptability, appearance, cooperation, and decisiveness. Leadership displays knowledge, manages resources efficiently, and plans beyond the immediate requirements of assigned duties. Leadership creates an organization of mutual respect. Leadership is building an organization and environment where it is not necessary to tell troops what to do. Leadership knows that combat without conscience is evil.

A leader knows why there are air, land, coast guard, and sea forces; why there are cavalry, infantry, armor, artillery, aviation, amphibious, special operations, propositioned, recon, marine (amphibious), allied, combined, and logistical forces; and why combined arms and concentration of combat power are important. A leader knows about close air support, strategic bombing, crossing the "T", and the absolute requirement for air superiority. A leader knows about air, land battle and defense in depth, civil affairs, urban operations, the advantages our forces have at night, and how to use them. A wise leader knows that young soldiers spend most of their time worrying about and planning tactics, while older more experienced soldiers spend the majority of their time worrying about planning logistics.

Leadership can be good or bad, centralized or decentralized, warm or cold, offensive or defensive, macro or micro, or expensive or free. Leadership can be Catholic or Protestant, Jewish or Moslem, Hindu or Mormon, Atheist or Agnostic. Leadership prevents over mobility of junior leaders and troops, by keeping them in their jobs long enough to really learn their jobs and common and collective tasks and work as team members. Establishing and promoting worker/troop certification and team certification programs are leadership.

Leaders hope and pray for the best and plan for the worst. Leaders know about the need to wage "total war" to win and the special advantage the defender has in cities, mountains, and jungles. Leaders know how to "own the night" and take maximum advantage of all of the combat arms team, and is skilled in the use of snipers, attack helicopters, counter artillery, naval gun/missile fire, and close air support. Leaders know not to keep troops weapons locked up and away from them, but rather train troops to live with a clean weapon that they are an expert in.

Leadership is embodied in Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, Pope John Paul II, Robert E. Lee, Mohammed, Irwin Rommel, Jesus, Joan of Arc, John Paul Jones, Winston Churchill, Sister Teresa, Margaret Thatcher, and many other well known figures. Also leaders are Bill Waters, Robert Lightle, J.C. Dandridge, Sam Deloach, Bubba Segrest, Judi Dandridge, Lee Thompson, Val Verger, Earl Erickson, Luther Bergen, Keith West, Rick Maul, and thousands of other unknowns.

Commitment to the team and a participatory form of leadership that draws on every troop's knowledge and skills, at every level is leadership. Encouraging and rewarding suggestions and complaints is leadership. Having an "open door" and "open mind" policy is leadership. Empowering troops, civil service employees, and support contractors with the tools, responsibility, authority, and "accountability" to get the tough jobs done is leadership. Making troops multi-process, multi weapon, and multi-functional experts is good leadership. Good leaders practice servant leadership.

Leaders know that "the bitterness of low quality remains long after the sweetness of low price". Leaders allow talented soldiers "long tethers" for experimenting. Leaders find ways to satisfy the essential dualism of troops and civil servants to be both part of a team and be recognized as individuals. Leaders know how to use "internal and external bench marking", observations, and inspections to rate their organization's readiness, products, services, and processes against those front runners in their specialty.

Leadership is guiding. Leadership is legendary. Leadership is foresight. Leadership is absorbent, abstinent, and, unfortunately, at times it is abominable. Leadership is baccalaureate, balance, basic, and too frequently backward and barbaric. Leadership has saved lives, killed, stopped wars, and started wars. Leadership has walked softly and carried a big stick, but it has also been loud and nonviolent.

Saying what you do (in clear concise SOPs, Plans, Verbal Orders, and OP Orders) and doing what you say is leadership. Breaking down communication barriers between staffs, line units, support organizations, and sister units is leadership. Asking deep probing questions and finding root causes is leadership. Changing problems into opportunities is leadership. Knowing that you can seldom wait until you have all of the answers is leadership. Repeatedly doing simple things that demonstrate sincerity is leadership.

Leadership is honesty, enthusiasm, loyalty, courage, and wisdom. Taking care of your soldiers', civilians, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen, and marines and their dependents is leadership. Leadership includes being a good boss, good comrade and friend, father or mother, son or daughter, sister or brother, and husband or wife. Knowing that the profession of arms is much more than just a job is leadership. Leadership knows there is only an inch difference between a pat on the back and a slap on the butt.

Being a champion of safety (accident, injury, illness, infection, crime, and fire prevention, hearing conservation, sight preservation, heat and cold injury prevention, and use of protective equipment), quality, and continuous improvement is leadership. Being an unquestionable friend to the environment is leadership. Basing decisions on facts is leadership. Promoting and rewarding continuous improvement is leadership. Staying focused on internal customers (your troops, employees), external customers (supported units, joint team members, sister units, OSHA, EPA, Customs, Department of Agriculture, etc.) and the enemy is leadership.

Performing preventive maintenance, knowing what cellular techniques (task organizing around weapons, tools, skills, logistics support) involve, being skilled in set up reduction (single minute exchange of rotor blades, etc.), understanding mixed model methods (multi and alternate tasking), understanding rocks-in-the river (reduce, find a problem, bring back up until problem is solved and reduce lower again) inventory management, knowing how to level and balance work load (smoothing workload and everyone does about the same amount of work), understanding that distance (to supplies, replacements, ammunition, fuel, etc.) is usually evil, and ensuring things are at least "in-time", not necessarily, just in time.

Leadership is enthusiasm, optimism, helping, training, encouraging, understanding, motivating, disciplining, crying, laughing, standing firm, giving way, counseling, correcting, giving a second chance, and trying again and again. Leaders are tall, short, thin, heavy, male, female, black, brown, white, yellow, old, young, and naturalized and unnaturalized. Leaders are from the city and from farm. Leadership works hard to close the gap between a soldier's potential and their performance.

Knowing how to use teams, flow charts, simple --- yet powerful statistical methods, set up reduction, simplification, continuous improvement, complaint and suggestion programs, and standardization to get the tough jobs done is leadership. Leadership makes quality easy to see, feel, smell, taste, and hear, by finding root causes and permanently fixing the problem. Leadership is clarifying processes, flow charting complex processes, and making every troop an expert at solid common tasks --- everyone should be an Infantryman first!

Leadership is caring, compassion, understanding, and leading by example. Leaders look you in the eye, kick you in the ass, cover your flank, and take your place on the most dangerous mission. Knowing there is "a place for everything and everything in its place" is leadership. Leadership admits mistakes and learns from them. Eating last is leadership. Practicing servant leadership and sharing the pains of heat, dirt, cold, wet, insects, and other harsh environmental conditions is leadership. "Packing your own roll and digging your own hole" is leadership.

Leadership comes from experience, but experience comes from making mistakes. A leader changes the odds and knows the risks. Leaders develop teamwork. The tides, the channels, the seasons, the winds, the hazards, the weather, and the best forecast are all known by leaders. Leadership knows that the one most important word is "we" and the least most important word is "I". Leadership knows there is no end to change, except failure. Leadership knows that if you treat every customer like your last or first, you would never have to worry about repeat business.

Leaders often make good grades in school and have numerous years of formal education and many important degrees. But they also have been known to fail Math, English, and other equally important subjects. Leaders make sure the enemy gives his life for his cause. Leadership ensures his troops always have the tactical advantage, best training, best equipment, and the highest morale, plenty of water, and hot food. Leaders work hard at ensuring the workload is distributed equally among all troops.

Leadership comes from family, friends, teachers, coaches, and pastors. Simple, easy-to-understand orders come from leaders. Complex tasks are changed into short and accurate plans through leadership. Leadership can be learned and taught, but it cannot be forgotten nor brought. Leadership can be seen, tasted, smelled, felt, and heard, and it can come from a blind person with no hands who cannot hear, speak, nor walk.

Finally, a leader is so in love with life that he or she is willing to die to ensure that others lives, and our great nation will go on!

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**About the author.** Lt. Colonel Dandridge is a graduate of Charleston, SC's Murray Vocational High School and honors graduate of three police academies. He is also an Army Warrant Officer Candidate (WOC) flight Class 68-21 graduate and served in Vietnam in 1968-1969 with the 121<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company and the 235<sup>th</sup> Armed Helicopter Company. He is an Army ex-enlisted infantryman; ex-aviation Warrant Officer; ex-combat Attack, Utility, and Scout Helicopter Pilot, Fixed Wing Pilot, Flight Examiner, Test Pilot, and Instructor Pilot; and a retired Army Master Aviator. He has a BS degree in Aeronautical Science from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and a MS degree in Transportation Management from Florida Institute of Technology. He is a graduate of the Army Officer Advanced Course, and Armed Forces Staff College. He has a California Community College Teaching Credential in Aeronautics, Business, Industrial Operations, and Military Science. He is a certified "Business Process Reengineering Specialist" and the East Region Manager and a Senior Engineer with WESTAR Aerospace and Defense Group, Incorporated, Field Services Division. An FAA Certified Flight Instructor in Airplanes, Helicopters, Instruments, and Basic Ground, he has worked as a Multi and Single Engine Commercial Pilot. He served as an Army Flight Instructor/Examiner, Safety Officer, Aviation Company Commander, an AVIM Company Commander, a Battalion Operations/Intelligence Officer, a Battalion Executive Officer, a US-German Negotiator, Middle East Advisor, Fort Rucker's Chief of Aircraft Maintenance, COBRA Assistant Fielding Team Chief, Aviation Science Project Officer, Airport Commander, Depot Transportation Officer, and Locomotive Operator. He also has worked as a Police Officer, Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) Reengineering Consultant and College Instructor for the University of Maryland, Chapman University, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, and Lassen Community College. A member of the West Point Logistics Hall of Fame, his decorations include the Legion of Merit, 5 Meritorious Services Medals, the Defense Joint Meritorious Service Medal, 15 Combat Air Medals, the German Silver Cross, two Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry, the Army Commendation Medal, and others. The Founder, Chief Operating Manager, and Board Chairman of a Medical Services Company and the President of the Charleston, SC Chapter of AUSA, LTC (Ret) Dandridge has had professional articles published in over a dozen US, German, and British professional journals, magazines, and news papers. He is a long time member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's Association (VHPA), a 35 plus year member of the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA), and president of the Association of the US Army (AUSA) Chapter in Charleston, SC.