Lessons from Yusufiyah, Module 15
“Taking Leave” (LTC Fred Winrich)
Example Questions

[Watch “Taking Leave”]

1. Just as Winrich is about to leave for R&R, he learns that some of his units are in contact. What is his initial reaction?

2. A) What legitimate concerns or motivations make it difficult for a leader to take leave during a deployment? B) What are some of the negative concerns or motivations?

3. Should leaders take leave during deployment? Why or why not?

4. A) What have been some of the negative impacts you have seen from a leader leaving? B) What are some of the positives? C) What is the purpose of “R&R”?

5. MAJ Salome, the S3, says, “Look, this is never going to end. Go get in that vehicle. I’ll see you in two weeks.” What do you think of MAJ Salome’s statement?

6. Winrich followed MAJ Salome’s suggestion. Winrich says, “He was right.” What does this tell you about the relationship between the XO and the S3?

7. If Winrich and Salome had not established a deep trust, how might Winrich’s departure have been different?

8. Winrich views his decision-point from a leadership perspective. He says, “Your organization should be healthy enough to not have you there and still be able to function.” A) What do you think of that? B) How long can a leader NOT be present and the unit still function in a healthy manner?

9. In what ways is a leader going on-leave during a deployment similar to and different from losing a leader to re-assignment? To death?

10. A) What are some characteristics of a competent unit? B) What specific actions can leaders take to develop those characteristics?

11. In what ways can esprit de corps help a unit function when a leader is gone?

12. To what degree is “how a unit functions when the leader is gone” related to the Leader Competency of “Develops Others” presented in ADP 6-22?
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Transcription

Winrich tells his story:

Fred Winrich was a battalion executive officer just before the surge in Iraq. His unit operated in a hotly contested area, averaging 11 direct fire contacts a day over the entire deployment. Before taking leave, he handed his responsibilities to the S3, MAJ Rob Salome.

I took R&R in March. The day I was actually loading up to drive up to have a patrol take me up and drop me off for leave, standing in the hallway with my body armor stripped and standing there, and the radio call was coming in that Charlie Company had had a contact and it was kinda lingering down in the QaQaa Weapons Facility. I believe that we were starting to get the initial radio reports about a house that had been burned down in B Company’s area. Then there was another contact. I realized Rob was about to go down to the TOC to start stacking problems and I started to walk down the hall with him.

He just turned around and said, “Look, this is never going to end. There is never going to be a day where we don’t have just enough combat power to get it done. Turn around. Go get in that vehicle. I’ll see you in two weeks.”

He was right. Me going down there, I would have never been able to walk out of that TOC, nor would he, nor would Tom if you kept waiting for the radio to blow up with a problem.

But really the talk about what it felt like to walk out that day in March—halfway through a very difficult tour that never really got any easier—wasn’t so much that I was so indispensable that the battalion wasn’t going to get past it, but it was more I’ve become so connected to what the Soldiers are trying to get done that I felt like that’s just where I should be. Leaving them was like leaving a brother or a sister who is struggling or is going through hard times.

Our noncommissioned officers and Soldiers are just an unbelievable resource. As long as we’ve got them in the Army, the Army will thrive. Your organization should be healthy enough to not have you there and still be able to function.

It’s not (that) your unit should be able to function without you and not commit war-crimes; they should be able to still excel. They should be able to be successful because you’ve built the leadership systems and the reinforcing trust and the competence in your organization to where whether you’re there or not is irrelevant.
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Additional Resources

Additional Resources

The Army Profession of Arms Pamphlet

- “Esprit de Corps” is to prevail in arduous and chaotic warfare, the Army Profession must have spirited, self-aware professionals who compose cohesive and effective units embedded in a culture that sustains traditions, respects customs, and creates a sense of belonging by inspiring martial excellence and the fortitude to never quit. Winning in combat is the only acceptable outcome; the Army cannot fail the American people. Thus the obligation to create and maintain a dominant, winning spirit within the Army Ethic rests with leaders at all levels.

Marching Orders: 38th Chief of Staff, Jan. 1012

- As part of his vision for an Army that is prepared for America's future conflicts, GEN Odierno makes it clear that trust is the foundation - "the bedrock" - upon which everything else is built.