

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 9563
U. S. Army

6 March 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Instruction No. 1

TO: Corps, Division, and Separate Unit Commanders.

1. GENERAL

This letter will orient you, officers of the higher echelons, in the principles of command, combat procedure, and administration which obtain in this Army, and will guide you in the conduct of your several commands.

2. COMMAND

a. Leadership

(1) Full Duty.

Each, in his appropriate sphere, will lead in person. Any commander who fails to obtain his objective, and who is not dead or severely wounded, has not done his full duty.

(2). Visits to the front.

The Commanding General or his Chief of Staff (never both at once) and one member of each of the general staff sections, the signal, medical, ordnance, engineer, and quartermaster sections should visit the front daily. To save duplication, the chief of staff will designate the sector each is to visit.

The function of these staff officers is to observe, not to meddle. In addition to their own specialty, they must observe and report anything of military importance. Remember, too, that your primary mission as a leader is to see with your own eyes and to be seen by the troops while engaged in personal reconnaissance.

b. Execution

In carrying out a mission, the promulgation of the order represents not over 10 percent of your responsibility. The remaining 90 percent consists of assuring, by means of personal supervision on the ground, by yourself and your staff, proper and vigorous execution.

c. Staff Conferences

Daily, at the earliest possible moment that the G-2 and G-3 can get their maps posted, a staff conference will be held, attended by the Commanding General, the Chief of Staff, and the heads of all general staff sections, the Surgeon, the Signal Officer, the Ordnance Officer, the Engineer Officer, and the other special staff heads when called on. Also present at this conference will be the staff officers described in paragraph 2a(2) above, who visited the front on the previous day. Any person present with a statement to make will do so briefly (n.b. if a staff inspector saw anything during his visit to the front requiring immediate action he would have reported the fact to the Chief of Staff immediately on his return). The Commanding General then gives his intentions and the Chief of Staff allocates the sectors for the day's staff inspectors.

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 9563
U. S. Army

d. Rest Periods

Staff personnel, commissioned and enlisted, who do not rest, do not last. All sections must run a duty roster and enforce compliance. The intensity of staff operations during battle is periodic. At the Army and Corps levels the busiest times are the periods from one to three hours after daylight, and from three to five hours after dark. In the lower echelons and in the administrative and supply staffs, the time of the periods is different but just as definite. When the need arises, everyone must work all the time, but these emergencies are not frequent; "unfatigued men last longer and work better at high pressure."

e. Location of Command Posts

The farther forward the Command Posts are located the less time is wasted in driving to and from the front. The ideal situation would be for the Army Command Post to be within one half hour's drive in a Command and Reconnaissance car of the Division Command Post. The driving time to the front from the Command Post of the lower units should be correspondingly shorter.

Much time and wire is saved if Command Posts of higher units are at or near one of the Command Posts of the next lower echelon.

All Command Posts of a division and higher units must have at least two echelons; the forward one -- and that is the one referred to in this paragraph (e) -- should be kept as small and mobile as possible with the minimum amount of radio traffic.

3. COMBAT PROCEDURE

a. Maps

We are too prone to believe that we acquire merit solely through the study of maps in the safe seclusion of a Command Post.

Maps are necessary in order to see the whole panorama of battle and to permit intelligent planning.

Further, and this is very important, a study of the map will indicate where critical situations exist or are apt to develop, and so indicate where the commander should be.

In the higher echelons, a layered map of the whole theater to reasonable scale, showing roads, railways, streams, and towns is more useful than a large scale map, cluttered up with ground forms and a multiplicity of non essential information.

b. Plans

Plans must be simple and flexible. Actually they only form a datum plane from which you build as necessity directs or opportunity offers. They should be made by the people who are going to execute them.

c. Reconnaissance

You can never have too much reconnaissance. Use every means available before, during, and after battle. Reports must be facts, not opinions; negative as well as positive. Do not believe intercepts blindly, crosscheck -- sometimes messages are sent out to be intercepted.

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 9563
U. S. Army

d. Orders

(1) Formal Orders

Formal orders will be preceded by letters of instruction and by personal conferences. In this way the whole purpose of the operation will be made clear, together with the mission to be accomplished by each major unit. In this way, if communication breaks down during combat, each commander can and must so act as to attain the general objective. The order itself will be short, accompanied by a sketch -- it tells WHAT to do, not HOW. It is really a memorandum and an assumption of responsibility by the issuing commander.

(2) Fragmentary orders

After the initial order, you will seldom get another formal order, but you will get many fragmentary orders in writing, or orally, by phone or personally.

Take down all oral orders and repeat them back. Have your juniors do the same to you.

Keep a diary with all orders and messages and the resulting action pasted in it in sequence.

Keep your own orders short, get them out in time, issue them personally by voice when you can. In battle it is always easier for the senior officer to go up than it is for the junior to come back for the issuance of orders.

A division should have twelve hours, and better, eighteen hours, between the physical receipt of the order at Division Headquarters and the time it is to be executed.

(3) Warning Orders

Warning orders are vital and must be issued in time. This requirement applies not only to combat units, but also to the Surgeon, the Signal Officer, the Quartermaster, the Ordnance Officer, and the Engineer Officer who must get warning orders promptly. They, too, have plans to make and units to move. If they do not function, you do not fight.

Orders, formal or otherwise, concerning units further down than the next echelon of command are highly prejudicial.

(4) Keep Troops Informed.

Use every means before and after combats to tell the troops what they are going to do and what they have done.

4. ADMINISTRATION

a. Supply

(1) General

The onus of supply rests equally on the giver and the taker.

Forward units must anticipate needs and ask for supplies in time. They must stand ready to use all their means to help move supplies.

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 9563
U. S. Army

The supply services must get the things asked for to the right place at the right time. They must do more; by reconnaissance they will anticipate demands and start the supplies up before they are called for.

The DESPERATE DETERMINATION to succeed is just as vital to supply as it is to the firing line.

(2) Replacements

Replacements are spare parts, supplies. They must be asked for in time by the front line, and the need for them must be anticipated in the rear. An educated guess is just as accurate and far faster than compiled errors. During lulls, you can balance the account. Keep your combat units full. A company without riflemen is just as useless as a tank without gasoline.

(3) Hospitals

Evacuation or Field Hospitals must be kept close to the front. Visit the wounded personally.

b. Decorations

Decorations are for the purpose of raising the fighting value of troops, therefore they must be awarded promptly. Have a definite officer on your staff educated in writing citations and see that they get through.

c. Discipline

There is only one kind of discipline; PERFECT DISCIPLINE. If you do not enforce and maintain discipline you are potential murderers. You must set the example.

5. RUMORS

Reports based on information secured through reconnaissance conducted after dark should be viewed with skepticism. The same thing applies to reports from walking wounded and stragglers. These latter seek to justify themselves by painting alarming pictures.

It is risky and usually impossible to move reserves during darkness on every call for help. Units cannot be wholly destroyed in a night attack. They must stick. Launch your counter attack after daylight and subsequent to adequate reconnaissance, and see that it is coordinated.

6. CONDITION

High physical condition is vital to victory.

There are more tired corps and division commanders than there are tired corps and divisions.

Fatigue makes cowards of us all. Men in condition do not tire.

7. COURAGE

DO NOT TAKE COUNSEL OF YOUR FEARS

G.S. Patton, Jr. - Lt. Gen., U.S. Army / Commanding