

Deterring Combat Flow and Absorption:

The need for the COMMARFORCOM to provide ethics- and morals-based training for operational leaders in order to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on their decision-making

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE					Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188							
<p>The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the Department of Defense, Executive Service Directorate (0704-0188). Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p> <p>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ORGANIZATION.</p>												
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 29-06-2018		2. REPORT TYPE JMO Research Paper			3. DATES COVERED (From - To) March to May 2018							
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Deterring Combat Flow and Absorption: The need for the COMMARFORCOM to provide ethics- and morals-based training for operational leaders in order to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on their decision-making				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER none								
				5b. GRANT NUMBER none								
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER none								
6. AUTHOR(S) Canero, Beth-Anne Maj USMC				5d. PROJECT NUMBER none								
				5e. TASK NUMBER none								
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER none								
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841					8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER none							
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)					10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) none							
					11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) none							
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution statement A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.												
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the USNWC or Dept of the Navy.												
14. ABSTRACT The course of time and war demonstrates that combat flow and absorption remain as much a threat to the fitness of a leader's mind as the enemy. From the Vietnam War through the War in Iraq, ethical and moral dilemmas concerning the treatment of the defenseless continue to plague combat leaders. Combat flow and combat absorption are interrelated physical and mental states that develop within a leader in a combat environment. Combat flow is a physical state in which a leader is fully engaged in the present combat moment. Combat absorption is the mental effect resulting from combat flow. The Commander, Marine Forces Command (COMMARFORCOM), needs to include ethics- and morals-based training as a core function in pre-deployment training and continue to use as a core function in an operational campaign to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on leaders' decision-making in a combat environment. It is recommended that psychologists be employed as operational advisors to the subordinate commanders in a non-combatant status and call them Behavioral Science Advisor Teams (BSAT). The BSATs will be responsible for ethics- and morals-based training for operational leaders in order to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on their decision-making.												
15. SUBJECT TERMS Combat flow and combat absorption.												
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 2px;">a. REPORT</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 2px;">b. ABSTRACT</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 2px;">c. THIS PAGE</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">UNCLAS</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">UNCLAS</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 2px;">UNCLAS</td> </tr> </table>			a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE	UNCLAS	UNCLAS	UNCLAS	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT		18. NUMBER OF PAGES 17	
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19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chairman, JMO Dept					19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) 401-841-3556							

Abstract

The course of time and war demonstrates that combat flow and absorption remain as much a threat to the fitness of a leader's mind as the enemy. From the Vietnam War through the War in Iraq, ethical and moral dilemmas concerning the treatment of the defenseless continue to plague combat leaders. Combat flow and combat absorption are interrelated physical and mental states that develop within a leader in a combat environment. Combat flow is a physical state in which a leader is fully engaged in the present combat moment. Combat absorption is the mental effect resulting from combat flow. The Commander, Marine Forces Command (COMMARFORCOM), needs to include ethics- and morals-based training as a core function in pre-deployment training and continue to use as a core function in an operational campaign to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on leaders' decision-making in a combat environment. It is recommended that psychologists be employed as operational advisors to the subordinate commanders in a non-combatant status and call them Behavioral Science Advisor Teams (BSAT). The BSATs will be responsible for ethics- and morals-based training for operational leaders in order to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on their decision-making. By providing operational combat leaders with ethics- and morals-based training, the COMMARFORCOM ensures a formidable force that aligns with the U.S. national integrity while protecting U.S. national interests at the same time.

Deterring Combat Flow and Absorption

A main factor that separates the military from other organizations is that the military is a mission-oriented profession of arms with the primary mission to defend the country and be able to fight and win a war.¹ In today's irregular warfare (IW) environment where commanders at every level make quick decisions under the fog and friction of combat, never is the training of ethical and moral standards of conduct more important to combat leaders than now. William Peters argues that "a commander is duty bound by law to take all reasonable measures within his or her power to halt ongoing crimes."² The course of time and war demonstrates that combat flow and absorption remain as much a threat to the fitness of a leader's mind as the enemy. From the Vietnam War through the War in Iraq, ethical and moral dilemmas concerning the treatment of the defenseless continue to plague combat leaders. The COMMARFORCOM needs to include ethics- and morals-based training as a core function in pre-deployment training and continue to leverage in an operational campaign to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on leaders' decision-making in a combat environment. The COMMARFORCOM needs to ensure all leaders are inculcated with the following ethics- and morals-based decision-making to aid in combat flow and absorption identification: code of professional ethics; command responsibility in the combat environment; and, the understanding of moral ownership as it relates to professional development. Conclusions and recommendations are made that explain why the inclusion of non-combatant operational psychology into all blocks of the force generation process is vital to the combat effectiveness of operational leaders and to the national integrity and strategic interest of the U.S.

Combat Flow and Absorption

Combat flow and combat absorption are interrelated physical and mental states that develop within a leader in a combat environment. Combat flow is an engaged physical state in which a leader is fully engaged in the present combat moment; the leader loses the reflective awareness as a social actor, with other thoughts excluded, and loses the awareness of time.³ Interrelated with combat flow is combat absorption, which is an immersed mental state that occurs when the leader experiences an exhilarating and heightened sense of being alive.⁴ Combat absorption can also be described as an ecstatic state to a point where a combat leader feels as though he/she does not exist and is completely caught up in the moment.⁵ A veteran from Mogadishu describes combat flow and absorption: "...it was like an epiphany... close to death, he had never felt so completely alive...a state of complete mental and physical awareness...he had no connection to the larger world...he had just been a human being staying alive from one nano-second to the next...he felt he would never be the same."⁶ Combat flow leads to combat absorption – the leader begins to see things that he/she wants to see, not what is actually there.⁷ As such, the knowledge of both and the personal attributes that help to mitigate both are too important not to train to prior to deployment or as continuing actions during deployment.

Historical Cases

As the operational commander, the COMMARFORCOM needs to take the bona fide lead in the education, training, and continuous assessment of subordinate commanders in the conduct of their combat decision-making. Though the majority of combat leaders do the right thing – make ethical and moral decisions while engaged in combat flow – it only takes one incident to diminish the U.S. role as a lead state actor in any conflict, threatening U.S. national interests and

security. The operational commander's responsibility to train effective combat leaders dates back to 1863 during the American Civil War. To maintain order among subordinates, President Lincoln developed his General Orders 100.⁸ The Orders were reinforced by Professor Francis Lieber of Columbia University with Article 156 (amendment to the Orders), which stated that "...common justice and plain expediency require that the military commander protect the manifestly loyal citizens, in revolted territories, against the hardships of the war as much as the common misfortune of all war admits."⁹ Keeping with the national dictate of commander ownership, the COMMARFORCOM remains the one responsible to mandate that ethics- and morals-based training standards are meshed with the effects of combat flow and absorption.

History demonstrated why the training is needed. In each of the following cases the antithesis to President Lincoln's Orders are seen in that "...the indirect role of a commander's actions, or failure to act where duty imposes the obligation, contributes to crime in a given battle space."¹⁰ Further, the selected cases demonstrate the span across time periods and characters of war. The ethical and moral lapses seen in My Lai and Haditha stand as incidents that could have been avoided had leadership taken more of a concerted effort in its prevention – education, training, and continuous actions in all things related to ethics, morals, and non-combatant operational psychology.

The Vietnam War demonstrated a character of warfare different from WWII and Korea – guerilla warfare. The commanders were not fully prepared for the type of guerilla war that they would fight. An escalation of the conflict between 1965 and 1968 brings numerous U.S. military casualties, increases of troop strength, and mounting questions as to why the U.S. is involved. This confusion and loss of purpose brings the country to 16 March 1968 and the My Lai massacre, which becomes known as "...a tragedy of major proportions."¹¹

At My Lai, approximately 500 defenseless people, including women, children, and elderly men, were murdered by the U.S. Army soldiers of Task Force Barker of the 23rd (Americal) Infantry Division.¹² Along with the murders, women were raped, livestock were killed, crops were destroyed, and homes were burned. It can be argued that combat flow and absorption played a major part in the unethical and immoral decision-making of the combat leaders. The unit suffered 28 casualties since their arrival three months earlier; and, just two days before the My Lai massacre, they lost one of their most popular sergeants to a land mine.¹³ Immersed in their anger at the loss of their comrades, engaged in combat flow, and absorbed in the moment, the leaders can no longer separate themselves from right and wrong – from moral and immoral. The incident received global condemnation, domestic outrage, and threatened the U.S. national security and interests in the region.

Despite the amendment of Article 156 to President Lincoln's Orders and despite lessons that could have been learned from My Lai, war-time atrocities continued in the IW environment of Iraq. Similar to My Lai, events in Haditha can be seen as a massacre caused by the effects of combat absorption. The Haditha killings occurred on 19 November 2005. Marines from 3d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment (3/1) were alleged to have shot defenseless men, women, and children at close range, killing 15. Similar to My Lai and the unit's loss of a soldier, 3/1 lost a Marine when an improvised explosive device (IED) hit their convoy. An allegation surfaced that the Marines allegedly killed the defenseless as retribution for their fallen Marine. The Haditha massacre was another example of the effects of combat absorption and the inability of troops to disengage from the combat flow. Today, the COMMARFORCOM needs to instill the ability in the leaders to reemerge from combat absorption in order to decide, with their moral and ethical schematic, not to kill the defenseless.

Code of Professional Ethics

To assist combat leaders in ethics- and morals-based decision-making, the code of professional ethics provides the ethical foundation. In a wartime environment, the onus of responsibility lies with the COMMARFORCOM to abide by all articles and protocols of the Law of War and Geneva Conventions, including treatment of the defenseless. The underlying principle remains that respect for human dignity is a constant. All peaceful and humane measures must be taken to reduce the suffering of those who are sick, wounded, or held captive regardless of whether they took part in the conflict. Because the defenseless are generally the most vulnerable people of war, their treatment is a question with which the Law of War and the Geneva Conventions are concerned.¹⁴

From the 1949 Geneva Conventions, an international bill of rights was created that governs the handling of the defenseless.¹⁵ The rules of the Geneva Conventions apply to all people engaged in armed conflict. The Third Geneva Conventions made provisions to protect all individuals regardless of their status – spy, mercenary, or terrorist – and regardless of the type of war in which they are fighting: “...individuals who do not or can no longer take part in the hostilities are entitled to respect for their life and for their physical and mental integrity and must, in all circumstances be protected and treated with humanity.”¹⁶ In pre-deployment training, the COMMARFORCOM should ensure that in addition to the standard class regarding the Geneva Conventions, that another class/practical exercise be added that shows the leaders how to apply the Conventions while engaged in combat flow.

In addition to the Geneva Conventions, the COMMARFORCOM operates under the Law of War or the Law of Armed Conflict. The Department of Defense Directive 5100.77 defines the Law of War as “...that part of international law that regulates the conduct of armed

hostilities...encompasses all international law for the conduct of hostilities binding on the United States or its individual citizens, including treaties and international agreements to which the United States is a party, and applicable customary international law.”¹⁷ The prewar agreements “...operate as institutions by shaping the decisions of the combatant troops during wartime. The agreements codify standards of treatment and rules for verifying that those standards are adhered to.”¹⁸ Before a deployment to a combat zone, the COMMARFORCOM needs to require that all combat leaders receive mandatory Law of War training, which they do. The training, however, is not complemented by the effects combat flow and absorption have on a leader’s ethical and moral decision-making.¹⁹

Status Quo

The ethics- and morals-based training for operational leaders and the relation of combat flow and absorption on decision-making is vital to U.S. national strategic interest. One incident in which a U.S. combat leader chooses to go ‘sideways’ can mean strategic disaster for the country. And, as shown, the long war on terror has had at least one incident. The COMMARFORCOM does not mandate that subordinate leaders prepare for the avoidance of such an event because combat flow and absorption are not discussed in relation to ethics- and morals-based decision-making. The responsibilities of the COMMARFORCOM include, but are not limited to, the following: commands active component, service-retained operating forces; executes USMC force generation actions across the active and reserve components in provisioning of joint capable Marine Corps forces; and, directs deployment planning and execution of service-retained operating forces in support of Combatant Commander (CCDR) and service requirements.²⁰ Though the Law of War class is presented by a staff judge advocate as part of pre-deployment training, it is not meshed with the effects of combat flow and absorption

on decision-making by leaders. If meshed, the operational leaders will have a better understanding of how to identify combat moments that lead to actions against the Law of War.

The Pre-deployment Training Program (PTP) mandated by the COMMARFORCOM does not dictate that leaders receive training or education regarding the effects of combat flow and absorption on their decision-making process with regards to the code of ethics. Per the PTP, the force generation process is conducted in five phases based upon an assigned mission-essential task list (METL).²¹ The phases include: synchronize the force; generate the force; ready the force; deploy the force; and, redeploy the force. In Phase III of the process, Marines are prepared for today's IW environment. Within Phase III, training is conducted in four blocks, which develop a unit systematically for deployment, exponentially increasing in competency and skill requirements. The training focuses on sustained core skills, core capabilities, advanced core capabilities, and, concludes with a unit's mission rehearsal exercise (MRX).

Additionally, a command and control training package is conducted with the Marine Corps Command and Control Training and Education Center of Excellence (C2TECOE). The package aims to "...train in the art and science of C2 to enable leaders to act more decisively and effectively than the enemy."²² The training is intended to "...improve the warfighting skills of senior commanders and their staffs at the MEF and MEB levels."²³ The training requirements are codified in the Command and Control Training Readiness Manual. The training, however, is not meshed with the effects of combat flow and absorption on decision-making.

Throughout the entirety of the PTP, no training or education regarding ethics- or morals-based decision-making while engaged in combat flow is mandated. The bottom line is this: the operational force is very prepared to conduct all tasks and missions required to conduct a battle, but it is not prepared to conduct all tasks required to handle a mental battle when confronted with

an ethical or moral dilemma while engaged in combat flow and immersed in combat absorption. As an MRX is conducted to train and assess a unit's preparedness in offensive, defensive, and stability operations in an IW environment, it should also be required that the unit's leaders be educated, trained, and assessed in ethical and moral standards of conduct and non-combatant operational psychology regarding the effects of combat flow and absorption on decision-making.

Command Responsibility in Today's IW Environment

In the IW environment, a consistent, unified, and operational approach to ethical decision-making relies on the COMMARFORCOM to mandate that the training and education of the aforementioned ethical codes and standards of practice are conducted along with the effects of combat flow and absorption. Peters discusses the "Doctrine of command responsibility...where the superior knew or had reason to know [judgment] that the subordinate was about to commit such acts or had done so and the superior failed to take the necessary and reasonable measures to prevent such acts."²⁴ Some of the issues associated with the notion of judgment that need to be taught to subordinate leaders include: exercising command combat restraint in the face of unethical methods of the opposition; making tough calls in a limited timeframe; and, ensuring that the entire team is treated with fairness.²⁵ The leaders' education on the notion of judgment prepares them to identify when combat flow begins to lead them into combat absorption.

Once the command leadership understands the notion of judgment, they need to be able to conceptually apply it to the five groups of battlefield dynamics as this is where the morals-based training occurs.²⁶ The application of judgment ensures compliance with moral and ethical established codes of conduct, including the following: ideals; physical, intellectual, and moral dynamics; competition of wills; moral imagination and the human virtues; and, institutions and

individuals.²⁷ First, to delineate the function of the IW environment in moral and ethical terms, “...ethics, or moral philosophy, is about thinking...connected with instantaneous mental response preceding every sort of human action and conduct. Acting and behaving morally may or may not include prior conscious ethical thinking, in line with written and taught institutional codes of conduct, norms, values, and beliefs.”²⁸ As such, the ethics- and morals-based training will assist the IW commander to think before taking action or restrain from adverse action in order to achieve success and avoid failure, either physical or moral.²⁹ When the COMMARFORCOM ensures that the ethics- and morals-based training is provided in relation to combat flow and absorption on decision-making, leaders will be better able to deter atrocities.

Second, battlefield dynamics bring out ethical dilemmas. The operational leaders’ understanding of combat absorption and the interlocking physical, intellectual, and moral dynamics of fighting power and military effectiveness is necessary to make ethics- and morals-based decision-making in an IW environment.³⁰ As the battlefield is immense, military operations are conducted in the context of ever-changing circumstances, which stresses the importance of mission command at every level.³¹ The battlefield dynamics make it all the more necessary for the COMMARFORCOM to mandate the education and training of the Geneva Conventions and the Law of War as the ethical and moral forces that underlie the battlefield dynamics and its relation to combat flow and absorption.³² The training will provide the solid base for all leaders in their preparation to handle the battlefield dynamics.

The human element is the common bond between friendly and enemy forces. The third battlefield dynamic regards the nature of human will-power and the competition of wills between adversaries.³³ Clausewitz states: “...moral elements are among the most important in war. They constitute the spirit that permeates war as a whole, and at an early stage they establish a

close affinity with the will that moves and leads the whole mass of force.”³⁴ The concept relates to the troops’ will to fight in the IW environment in the face of adversity and moral conflict as much as with direct physical contact with the enemy. To achieve military success within the IW environment, moral cohesion, motivation, and leadership are important factors to the sustained ethical fighting power of the operation.³⁵ Motivational factors “...are part of the human dynamics of what people do on operations – own side and enemy – and personal relationships between leader and led on both sides of conflict.”³⁶ If combat leaders receive pre-deployment training in the application of all ethics- and morals-based training and as a continuing action while deployed, then they will understand and recognize when the competition of wills transitions to combat absorption.

The operational leaders’ understanding of the fourth dynamic in the IW environment is the distinction between their moral behaviors and their treatment of the defenseless.³⁷ Self-discipline requires the constructs of two moral resources – humanity and moral identity – then respect for others develops along with the ethos, or the spirit of the military institution.³⁸ Moral imagination develops from humanity and moral identity. The COMMARFORCOM can ensure that the troops are able to interpret the moral consequences of their actions beyond the technical and legal domains through the education of moral imagination.³⁹ The internal military dynamics coupled with the standards of practice that promote self-discipline results in high morale, sustained will-power, and combat effectiveness throughout military operations in the IW environment.⁴⁰

Finally, the COMMARFORCOM needs to ensure that, in view of the complexity of the IW environment, the subordinate leaders have significant individual moral, legal, and professional obligations. The obligations need to remain in concert with the Geneva

Conventions and the Law of War – the final battlefield dynamic: “...individual virtues include that of restraint when appropriate and minimum force much of the time.”⁴¹ To ensure the ethical functioning of the unit in the IW environment, the COMMARFORCOM needs to stress that all subordinate leaders are moral agents who act and respond at “...the right time, to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive in the right way.”⁴² As moral agents, operational leaders are held responsible for their troops’ actions. The combat leaders are charged with the inherent obligation to know their moral and ethical identity, serving as the lead moral agent. If the COMMARFORCOM provides the ethics- and morals-based training to the operational leaders, the congruence between their behavior and their professional identity can be seen. The leaders’ ethics- and morals-based decision-making relies on their ability to separate moral identity from combat flow and absorption.

Moral Ownership Related to Professional Development

The combat leaders’ understanding of moral ownership as it relates to decision-making will also aide them when engaged in combat flow and absorption. Leaders must first make judgments of responsibility before moral judgments and actions will occur.⁴³ Moral ownership over ethical conduct of oneself or one’s team underpins the moral judgment and action: “...ownership is critical in that even though a leader may be unwilling to commit an immoral act...(ethical commission), if lacking in moral ownership, that leader may allow unethical things to happen in...sphere of influence or for others to act unethically without intervention (ethical omission).”⁴⁴ Moral ownership dictates that before an individual can act, the individual needs to perceive the situation as needing moral courage in order to be able to take responsibility of the situation and act.⁴⁵ Moral ownership is integral to moral courage as it bridges the thought to action. Leaders can make the correct judgment and have the propensity to act with ownership

and courage, but may be immobile to act because they lack the confidence to address the ethical dilemma.⁴⁶ The physical engagement into combat flow and the mental immersion into combat absorption can have debilitating effects on a leader's decision-making if the leader cannot take moral ownership.

The combat leader's understanding of their self-identity as it relates to decision-making will also aid them while engaged in combat flow and absorption. In addition to a coherent moral identity enabling consistent moral action, leader self-identity can be enhanced "...by incorporating self-complexity theory – an assemblage of identities rather than one global whole."⁴⁷ When the self-identity is considered central, the leaders have a desire to verify that identity by acting accordingly.⁴⁸ Conversely, in areas that are less central to an identity, leaders are "...less motivated to act to verify that part of the self-identity, and are more likely to act inconsistently, particularly when other behaviors can be more satisfying."⁴⁹ By providing training to the operational leaders, the COMMARFORCOM ensures the interlocking nature of the code of ethics, moral ownership, and leader self-identity. Despite the IW environment and combat flow, the leaders can still recognize that they possess that central identity of nurturing and protecting others because it is the right thing to do according to their leader, morals, and ethical identities.

Leaders can also choose not to abide by their central identity. On the other side of leader self-identity, the capability exists for leaders to delink identity from their behaviors, which is more true of leaders without a central identity.⁵⁰ Leaders who have less central identity and less moral ownership to act in specific, challenging contexts would be more likely to delink their identity from their behaviors.⁵¹ Those leaders who choose to delink are more likely to commit acts of ethical omission and commission by "...protecting their self-concept through the process

of moral disengagement or self-deception.”⁵² Moral disengagement can be described as self-deceit practices whereby a leader justifies an unethical action/inaction by protecting their self-image.⁵³ An ethics- and morals-based training package includes learning how to recognize when a delink process occurs when combat leaders are engaged in combat flow. This will help prevent leaders from failing to make ethical and moral decisions in a combat environment.

The COMMARFORCOM needs to require that the six forms of moral disengagement are taught in the PTP. The training will ensure that subordinate leaders are mentally prepared for the decision-making needed in a combat environment. Moral disengagement involves self-advantageous comparison, victim blaming, diffusion of responsibility, dehumanizing of victims, failure to recognize harm, and, the use of euphemisms.⁵⁴ Moral disengagement enables leaders to act unethically, morally disengaging from the situation.⁵⁵ Since the My Lai and Haditha leaders chose to kill or harm the defenseless using moral disengagement justifications, it allowed the leaders to lessen the severity of their actions. Ultimately, moral disengagement allowed the leaders the opportunity to protect their moral self-identity. An ethics- and morals-based education piece in the PTP can assist the leaders in recognizing when moral disengagement occurs.

Counterargument

There are those who would argue as to why should the COMMARFORCOM be responsible for the conduct of such training. Considering that the COMMARFORCOM has the unique responsibility to mandate a detailed and exhaustive PTP so that Marine forces are trained and ready to fight, then another phase or block of training that ensures Marine leaders remain ethical and moral decision-makers while engaged in combat flow also needs to be mandated. As such, though it might seem like a time constraint to add the ethics- and morals-based training to

the PTP, it adds a critical component to an already well-trained Marine force. The value added ensures that the COMMARFORCOM takes the commander responsibility to do everything in his/her capacity to prepare an operational ready force. Parts of an operational ready force are combat leaders who, in addition to receiving command and control training, receive the training that will sustain their ethics and morality through the gruesome and dark nature of war.

Additionally, the U.S. represents a nation state that abides by a Constitution, but when events like My Lai and Haditha occur, what kind of state then does the U.S. become? As a global leader, the U.S. cannot allow such unethical or immoral acts to occur, especially when ethics- and morals-based training can be conducted in order to prevent it. The ethics- and morals-based training is of such high importance to the U.S. national integrity as much as it is important to the U.S. national strategic interests – it demands the attention of an operational commander like the COMMARFORCOM. The training demands the time necessary to ensure the combat leaders of the U.S. are not only aware of ethics- and morals-based standards but are also able to recognize when engaged in combat flow that they can then suffer the effects of combat absorption. If they can effectively recognize the signs of combat absorption, they then can make the needed efforts to maintain their ethics and morals in their decision-making. Such training will be the thread that binds all other operational training together in a combat environment, maintaining U.S. national integrity and interests in the process.

Conclusions

In the array of training requirements, suspense timelines, and mission preparations essential to the conduct of the operation, why should ethics- and morals-based training be important to the COMMARFORCOM? Combat flow remains a constant in battle and combat absorption follows. Most likely, any warrior can attest to the adrenaline rush ignited upon the

first round. The emotions become exponentially more profound for the duration of combat flow to the point where combat absorption takes control. Once absorbed, it is increasingly more difficult to see events as they unfold, but become immersed in how that leader wants the events to unfold. The combat absorption can transform a logical decision-maker into an emotional one, resulting in events like My Lai and Haditha. The nature of being a human being lends combat leaders to become overwhelmed with emotion, regardless of the type of leader that they really are.

By preparing the combat leaders for the battlefield dynamics through educating them on the Geneva Conventions and Law of War complemented with an understanding of their own moral and leader self-identity, the COMMARFORCOM aligns him/herself with what makes the U.S. the global leader that it is, while preserving the force as well. The combat leaders' ability to recognize the signs of moral disengagement before the actual delink of their identity from their behaviors saves lives, preserves the U.S. status, and ensures the world that a global leader remains a leader in every sense of the word.

Recommendations

It is recommended that non-combatant operational psychology be added as another operational function used to balance time, space, and force in operational planning from a friendly force preservation perspective, not from combatant information ops or psychological ops perspectives. Vego states that "Functions are a number of supporting structures and activities that must be properly sequenced and synchronized to successfully employ one's military and nonmilitary sources of power."⁵⁶ It makes sense to add non-combatant operational psychology as another function so that the risks of combat flow and absorption can be mitigated in the force. Operational psychology is defined as "The employment of psychological principles to influence

combat-related operations through military decision makers.”⁵⁷ Currently, operational psychologists deploy as part of a Behavioral Science Consultant Team (BSCT) under combatant status.⁵⁸ The operational psychologists are on scene to provide support in all phases of a combat deployment from planning and preparation through execution and redeployment.

In a new capacity, the COMMARFORCOM can employ the psychologists as operational advisors to the subordinate commanders in a non-combatant status and call them Behavioral Science Advisor Teams (BSAT). The BSATs will be responsible for the ethics- and morals-based training for operational leaders to deter the effects of combat flow and absorption on their decision-making. The COMMARFORCOM needs to add the BSATs to all phases of the PTP and especially as a separate block in phase III. In the pre-deployment capacity, the BSATS will educate and train the leaders in the following: the effects of combat absorption and flow on decision-making; code of professional ethics; command responsibility in the combat environment; and, the understanding of moral ownership as it relates to professional development.

While in the combat environment, the BSATs will be responsible for the continuous assessment of the combat leaders in relation to the adherence to ethics- and morals-based standards of conduct and in relation to the effects of combat flow and absorption. Throughout deployment, it will be the responsibility of the BSATs to advise the COMMARFORCOM and the subordinate commanders on the status of the force, especially after any type of combat-related death or injury. Adding non-combatant operational psychology as another function in operational planning will allow the BSATs to operate as a force multiplier, mitigating the risk of combat flow and absorption on the decision-making of the combat leaders.

The COMMARFORCOM has the unique responsibility to ensure the preparedness of forces for deployment into a combat zone. As the combat effectiveness of the force depends on tailored field training and exercises, so does the mental fitness of a leader's combat decision-making need tailored training as well. By providing operational combat leaders with ethics- and morals-based training to understand the code of ethics in relation to combat flow and the effects of combat absorption, the COMMARFORCOM ensures a formidable force that aligns with the U.S. national integrity while protecting U.S. national interests at the same time.

Notes

1. Brad Johnson, "Consulting in the Military Context: Implications of the Revised Training Principles," *Consulting Psychology Journal*, 54(4), (2002): 233.
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