

Running head: BAD LEADERSHIP

Bad Leadership

SGM Kenneth W. Johnson

United States Sergeants Major Academy

Class #58

SGM Jose E. Rogers

3 January 2007

### Abstract

Bad leadership cannot be allowed to fester in a unit especially in this time of great stress in the Army. With the nation at war it is imperative that the senior leadership handle the ethical dilemma of the bad leader because of the potential of a significant incident in combat.

## Bad Leadership

Leaders are not born they are molded by training, experience, and willingness to accept responsibility. To be effective leaders we must learn from what we have observed in other successful leaders, we learn from the bad leaders as well. By definition an Army leader is anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals. Army leaders motivate people both inside and outside the chain of command to pursue actions, focus thinking, and shape decisions for the greater good of the organization. Destructive or bad leaders can still fall under the perimeters of this definition but they are focus on visible mission accomplishments. They provide their superiors with enthusiastic responses to missions, but show little concern or are oblivious to Soldiers morale. We've all seen them, they are the leaders who bully, yell, threaten, and establishes a hostile work environment. There are three key elements that define a bad leader:

1. The apparent lack of concern for the well being of the Soldiers.
2. A personality that will negatively affect the units command climate.
3. The belief by the unit that the leader is motivated by self interest.

To the suffering Soldier a bad leader can bring unnecessary stress to the day to day operations, negative values, and the feeling of hopelessness. Soldiers serving under such leaders become disenchanted with the Army and this makes it difficult for the organization to retain quality Soldiers. This is not to say that bad leaders can be successful which is why we find them in the high levels of leadership, my concern is that future leaders might want to emulate these successful bad leaders. How do we avoid letting these leaders from progressing into leadership positions that influence our Soldiers? It starts with counseling and true evaluations. The higher

in the system they are the more damage they can infect. The Army fosters an attitude that we must respect the rank; even if we do not respect the individual. Army culture tends to protect technical and tactical competence which leads senior leaders to overlook what bad leaders may be doing to the climate of the organization. FM 3-0 gives an example of doctrinal leadership: “The role of the leader is central to all Army operations and trust is a key attribute in the human dimension of combat leadership. Soldiers must trust and have confidence in their leaders. Once trust is violated, a leader becomes ineffective.” The Soldier wants competent leaders and wants to trust them to get through their mission while looking out for their well being.

As we know there are several different types of leadership styles, the same is true with bad leadership styles. Below I have defined seven different types of bad leadership, as you read through them you may have had some experience with a leader that exemplify one or a combination of these less than desirable types.

**Incompetent Leadership** – the leader and at least some subordinates lack the will or skill to sustain effective action. With regard to at least one important leadership challenge, they do not create positive change.

**Rigid Leadership** – the leader and at least some subordinates are stiff and unyielding. Although they may be competent, they are unable or unwilling to adapt to new ideas, new information, or changing times.

**Intemperate Leadership** – the leader lacks self-control and is aided and abetted by subordinates who are unwilling or unable to effectively intervene.

Callous Leadership – the leader and at least some subordinates are uncaring or unkind. Ignored and discounted are the needs, wants, and wishes of most members of the team or organization, especially subordinates.

Corrupt Leadership – the leader and at least some subordinates lie, cheat, or steal. To a degree that exceeds the norm, they put self-interest ahead of the organizations interest.

Insular Leadership – the leader and at least some subordinates minimize or disregard the health and welfare of those outside the team or organization for which they are directly responsible.

Evil Leadership – the leader and at least some subordinates commit atrocities. They use pain as an instrument of power. The harm can be physical, psychological, or both.

Following the values at the Army has lied down for us we should strive to be a leader of character. It gives us the desire to do the right thing and the courage to keep doing what is right regardless of the consequences. Soldiers see character in us by our behavior, what we do speak louder than what we say. Be honest in all aspects of life, do not sacrifice integrity. To be an effective leader we must set the example and led from the front. As a leader we must demonstrate a genuine concern for the well being of our Soldiers. Caring for Soldiers will not only benefit the unit but also provide a positive command climate. The Soldier is the Army's most important asset we work for them. To be an exceptional leader we must work for the Soldier; for it is our subordinates, the Soldier, that will make us a successful leader or for that matter make the unit successful. The subordinates will also, if we are not careful and deserve it, bury us and of course the down side of this is the unit's inability to train successfully and stay motivated. We don't get the Soldiers to accept us as their leader by coddling them. You have to be fair and listen to what they have to say because they are the pulse of the unit. We will know

when they accept us in their discipline, training, and their willingness to follow us into harms way.

In conclusion leaders are responsible for our nation's most precious resources; the sons and daughters of this great nation. Supervisors at every level should kept a lookout for subordinates displaying behavior that is not conducive to the Army values and take the time to coach and mentor the Soldier to do the right thing. This may sound simple or expected of us as leaders but one has to wonder why there are so many leaders in the Army that display types of bad leadership. Bad leadership is easily described in terms like self-centered, petty, abrasive, indifferent to the unit climate, and just down right mean. These type leaders are poison to a unit and left unchecked will spread to other units. All this being said, is it an ethical dilemma when a leader has an inappropriate relationship but punish a subordinate? How about when Soldiers commit atrocities during combat and the chain of command tries to cover it up? When a leader commands with an iron fist, "it's my way or no way", and destroys the moral of the unit? How ethical is it for the superior to over look these behaviors because the leader supports higher or they can get the job done? These are but a few examples of how bad leadership can be detrimental to good order and discipline and render a unit ineffective. Fortunately there are enough leaders who believe in good command climate and have the courage to expose the bad leaders.







