



CHAPTER 1

Characteristics of Combat-Ready Teams

"A conglomerate mass of Americans gathered from all walks of life who had been shaped into a cohesive organization for the purpose of performing certain military tasks, the unit was . . . not simply the place where members lived and worked, ate and slept; the unit was the soldier's family."¹

This description of the squads, platoons, and companies of the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion in World War II captures the essence of the combat-ready team. Each squad, section, and crew is a tightly knit family where soldiers know one another intimately—their likes and dislikes, their faults and strengths, their beliefs and ideas. These small groups of soldiers determine to a large extent whether wars are won or lost. Each basic group is a part of a larger group which is part of a yet larger group. In the final analysis, the effectiveness of battalions and higher military units depends on the formation of these "families" in the smallest groups. Each soldier's performance in combat will be directly related to his membership on a team whose members think, feel, and act as one. Such successful teams demonstrate certain BE-KNOW-DO characteristics.

BE CHARACTERISTICS

The BE of BE-KNOW-DO deals with inner qualities—the heart of the team and its members. These inner qualities are expressed in soldiers' actions. Successful soldier teams reflect a winning spirit and a professional attitude.

SPIRIT

**SOLDIERS
WITH SPIRIT
SUPPORT AND
FIGHT FOR
ONE ANOTHER**

When we try to determine the probable winner of a sports contest, we weigh the participants' strengths and weaknesses. We add them up and normally choose the strongest as the probable winner. But experience shows that this system does not always work. A team, outnumbered and overpowered, can overcome lack of strength and win when it has a strong desire to do so. That strong desire is called spirit—a most critical element of a combat-ready team. Soldiers in a unit with spirit believe in the cause for which they are fighting, they believe in themselves, and they fight for one another. They have a will to win and believe they are winners. They act as one in accomplishing the units' tasks and missions.

According to Clausewitz, the spirit of the soldier is extremely important:

An army that maintains its cohesion under the most murderous fire; that cannot be shaken by imaginary fears and resists well-founded ones with all its might; that, proud of its victories, will not lose the strength to obey orders and its respect and trust for its officers even in defeat; whose physical power, like the muscles of an athlete, has been steeled by training in privation and effort; a force that regards such efforts as a means to victory rather than a curse on its cause; that is mindful of all these duties and qualities by virtue of the single powerful idea of the honor of its arms—such an army is imbued with the true military spirit.²

Leadership that nurtures and builds this kind of spirit reinforces the pride in service critical for cohesive teams.

PROFESSIONALISM

In effective units prepared for the air-land battlefield, each soldier is a respected professional. Others believe that he can get the job done and can be trusted. Professional soldiers are mature and share the values of their profession and their unit.

Maturity. A mature soldier develops physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Physical fitness and development provide the stamina necessary for sustained action and intense stress. Social maturity provides the willingness to work with others in cohesive teams. Emotional maturity gives stability to deal with the stress of combat. Spiritual maturity gives the soldier hope and purpose to face the dangers and uncertainty of combat. Signs of maturity that are important in combat-ready teams include self-discipline, initiative and judgment, and confidence.

Self-discipline enables clear thinking and reasonable action in the moment of combat with its isolation, high leadership casualties, continuous stress, and need for independent actions. Self-disciplined soldiers realize that success and survival depend on working together, and they are able to undergo extreme hardship to achieve team goals. In peacetime, self-discipline helps the team engage in more difficult training, develop trust more quickly, and handle more tasks with ease.

Initiative and judgment are essential in both peacetime and combat. On the battlefield soldiers need *initiative* to operate within the intent of their commander and to move decisively in accomplishing their mission. This is true whether “combat action” involves firing at the enemy, performing maintenance and repairs on combat equipment, or driving a truck that takes essential food, ammunition, or fuel to the battle. However, initiative does not mean “do something even if it’s wrong.” It must be tempered by good judgment—the ability to size up a situation quickly and to know what is important and how to accomplish what needs to be done. Soldiers with initiative tempered by good judgment act on their assessments quickly and decisively with little or no supervision. They accept responsibility and take thoughtful action to operate successfully and to execute difficult missions,

Another ingredient of successful teamwork is *confidence*. To remove doubt and anxiety in combat, the soldier must first have confidence in his own professional ability. Then he must be confident that his fellow team members, as well as other supporting soldiers, can do their jobs effectively. For example, when a forward observer calls for “danger close” fires, the soldier needs confidence in the accuracy of the forward observer and of those delivering the fire.

The soldier needs to feel confidence in his leader. The leader earns his soldiers' confidence as he demonstrates his ability to do his job. Soldiers and leaders develop mutual confidence by sharing difficult, challenging, and realistic training, as well as the rigors and dangers of combat. Mutual confidence multiplies combat power as it welds individuals into cohesive teams.

Values. The values of the professional Army ethic—loyalty, duty, selfless service, and integrity—are stated in FM 100-1. These values, based on the Army's relationship to the nation, form the bedrock of the soldier's values and provide guidelines for his behavior. They are time-tested, and they work.

Each soldier has his own set of values developed in his home, place of worship, school, and community. But when an individual leaves civilian life and puts on the Army uniform, he incurs new obligations based on the Army values. Through strengthening individual values of candor, competence, courage, and commitment, these values of the professional Army ethic can be developed as the working values of all soldier teams. The role of the leader is not to change long-held personal values, but to impress upon the soldier the importance of these professional values. If, however, a soldier holds values that significantly conflict with these Army values, the leader must seek some resolution with the soldier.

The Professional Army Ethic.

THE PROFESSIONAL ARMY ETHIC PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR FORMING COMMITTED, COHESIVE TEAMS

The values of the professional Army ethic are discussed below as they relate to developing effective military teams. When team members share these values, they have the basis for a cohesive team committed to the unit, the Army, and the nation.

Loyalty to the nation, to the Army, and to the unit is inherent in the oath which every soldier takes upon entry into the service of his country. If the leader shows loyalty to his soldiers, he earns their loyalty. He trains his soldiers before battle to ensure they have the best possible chance for survival. He cares for their well-being and for that of their families. He demonstrates genuine concern for their problems. He protects them from ill-conceived and unnecessary tasks from outside elements. In turn, loyal soldiers follow legitimate orders without explanation because they have confidence in their leader. They stand up for their unit and its leadership in discussions with other soldiers.

Duty is obedience and disciplined performance. A sense of duty in each soldier, even in the face of difficulty and change, is indispensable to soldier team development. Soldiers with a sense of duty accomplish tasks given them, seize opportunities for self-improvement, and accept responsibility for their actions. They recognize their place on the team and work to earn and maintain the respect and loyalty of their peers, leaders, and subordinates.

Selfless Service is evident in the cohesive, combat-ready team; soldiers and leaders operate with the view that “we’re in this thing together.” Soldiers are primarily committed to mission accomplishment rather than to self-interest.

Integrity is the cornerstone of the professional Army ethic. Integrity involves honesty, but more than honesty, it is a way of life. When a soldier has integrity, others know that what he says and what he does are the same and that he is absolutely dependable. In both preparing for, and fighting in, combat, demonstrated integrity is the basis for dependable information, decision making, and delegation of authority.

Trust and loyalty will more likely develop in a unit where integrity is an accepted way of life. Trust allows the leader to give critical tasks to the soldier, confident that he will accomplish them responsibly. The soldier who trusts his leader’s integrity follows his orders willingly, even in the heat of battle. He trusts that the leader has good reasons for his actions. Mutual trust leads to mutual loyalty between soldiers and their leaders.

Soldier Values.

The development of four basic values in each soldier can help strengthen the acceptance of the values of the Army ethic. These soldier values are candor, competence, courage, and commitment.

Candor is honesty and faithfulness to the truth. The combat-ready team develops only when its members realize that honesty is absolutely essential. Team members must be able to trust one another and their leaders. Without truthfulness, this will not occur. When soldiers see their leaders or peers lying about status reports, or other unit situations, they wonder if they can be trusted to be truthful in a crisis. The question arises “Will they be honest about the wartime situation?” There is no time for such second-guessing in combat.

Competence is imperative for the combat-ready team. Soldiers accept one another and their leaders when they are satisfied with their leaders' knowledge of the job and ability to apply that knowledge in the working situation. Nothing deteriorates teamwork quicker than the perception that soldiers do not know how to soldier and leaders do not know how to lead. Further, the soldier's competence is the basis for the self-confidence critical to feeling accepted by the team.

Courage, both moral and physical, is displayed by soldiers in cohesive, combat-ready teams. They understand that fear in combat is natural and to be expected. This helps them retain control and accomplish their objectives in spite of the risk. Moral courage helps the combat-ready team to do the right thing in a difficult situation, even when some might strongly feel that the wrong is more attractive. Both physical and moral courage requires that soldiers do their part lest they lose face with their buddies. Courage on the part of one or two soldiers is contagious and becomes a way of life in the cohesive, combat-ready unit.

Commitment to the unit, the Army, and the nation occurs when soldiers accept and demonstrate the values discussed above. When soldiers show that unit accomplishment takes priority over personal inconveniences, when they willingly spend extra time to get the job done for the unit, when they spend time developing their competence to be the best possible soldier to make their unit combat-effective, they are demonstrating commitment to the unit and to the Army.

The values discussed are more than nice-sounding words; they apply in sections, squads, and crews and in platoons and companies. They are important in combat, combat support, and combat service support units. Soldiers may not think of them in terms of the Army or of the nation. Instead they may think of their buddies with whom they eat and sleep and share dangerous situations. These values and the actions they cause set the climate for a team prepared for battle.

KNOW CHARACTERISTICS

What the soldier *knows* about his profession has made the difference between winning and losing since the first two warriors met in the days before recorded history. It is

even more imperative on the complex, fast-moving, and high-technology battlefield of today and tomorrow. Competence is necessary if trust and confidence are to develop in cohesive, combat-ready teams. A soldier or leader new to a unit is not automatically accepted. He earns his way as others become confident that he knows how to do his job. Certain key knowledge is necessary for effective teams.

SOLDIER KNOWLEDGE

All soldiers, regardless of military occupational specialty, must master skills necessary for survival in combat. These skills apply to all soldiers, from the engineer platoon leader to the finance clerk to the infantry squad member. In addition, each soldier is trained to do certain tasks that when combined with tasks of other soldiers accomplish the objectives of the commander. Each soldier is depended on for his expertise. Winning on the modern battlefield depends on harmonizing the skills of many soldiers.

**COMPETENCE
LEADS TO
MUTUAL TRUST
AND CONFIDENCE**

BATTLEFIELD KNOWLEDGE

For units to be cohesive and combat-ready, soldiers must know what to expect on the battlefield. This knowledge will support them during the shock of the first few days of battle as well as during the sustained stress of continuous operations. In the effective team, soldiers want to know as much as possible about the enemy and the battle environment in order to anticipate the enemy, make decisions quickly, favorably exploit the terrain, and win the battle.

ETHICAL KNOWLEDGE

Soldiers in cohesive, combat-ready units take pride in successfully accomplishing their mission *with honor*. Violating the basic principles of American life and the rules of warfare while defending them leads to tainted victory.

PEOPLE KNOWLEDGE

In cohesive, combat-ready units, soldiers and leaders know one another. Realizing that others have similar fears and needs helps each soldier overcome his own fears and assists unit members in creating the necessary spirit and “oneness.”

DO CHARACTERISTICS

What soldiers and teams DO is the concrete expression of who they ARE and what they KNOW. In every situation, units of excellence display character and knowledge as they successfully accomplish their mission. Following are key actions performed by soldiers and teams in units of excellence.

ASSESS

Teamwork assessment is critical for an effective, combat-ready unit. Most leaders know a great deal about the status of their unit's teamwork and cohesion. They gather impressions by listening, observing, and monitoring soldiers' problems. But even the best leader can be blind to problems; the communication system may fail; the pressure of other work may cause inattention to danger signs; or the actual status of teamwork may be misinterpreted or misrepresented. For these reasons the leader should create a guide to assess teamwork similar to checklists used to determine unit readiness. (Appendix A includes questions keyed to Chapters 2 through 4 that may be used for this purpose. Appendix B provides additional guidance on a unit of excellence.)

The assessment process is continual. Units grow and change, leaders come and go, and the uncertainties of combat impinge on unit teamwork and, consequently, on combat readiness. In each new situation, leaders and soldiers of effective, combat-ready units reassess and correct to retain and enhance teamwork.

COMMUNICATE

Communication is the process of sending and receiving information both verbally and nonverbally. Clear, uncluttered communication is especially critical for teams on the modern battlefield. The complexity of the battlefield, dispersion of soldiers, actions of small teams, and disruption of conventional means of communication demand innovative communications between soldiers in squads, sections, and crews. (FM 22-100 discusses communication in detail.)

To operate within the commander's *intent*, soldiers and leaders in combat-ready teams practice both verbal and non-verbal communication. They practice it in training, in day-to-day activities, and in social activities. When combat comes, they practice it in the heat of battle. Team members know one another well enough to anticipate the actions of the

other. They also develop a set of words—a short cut—that communicates large pieces of information in brief form. In critical situations, they use hand signals or other forms of nonverbal communication. They communicate within their team as well as with surrounding units.

MAKE DECISIONS

Decisions are made at every level of the Army. For example, on the battlefield, a squad member has to decide what he can do to help other team members when he becomes aware of an enemy threat. When the squad member reports to the squad leader, the squad leader then has to make critical decisions and respond to the enemy so that his squad can take the initiative and make the enemy fight on his terms. Once the squad leader notifies the platoon leader of the situation, the platoon leader has to make decisions about taking the initiative on a larger scale. At each higher level, the problems become more complex. The use of the chain of command allows these decisions to take place at the proper place and time. Leaders in cohesive units use the initiative and creative efforts of team members by giving them planning and decision-making responsibilities. When this is done, soldiers know the operation and learn to do the right thing within the commander's intent when necessary.

**LEADERS IN
COHESIVE UNITS
GIVE THEIR
SUBORDINATES
PLANNING AND
DECISION-MAKING
RESPONSIBILITIES**

TRAIN

The teamwork necessary for cohesive, combat-ready teams requires training. It involves mastering set procedures, such as battle drills or map reading. It also requires training in the processes of doing things, such as communicating or thinking on one's feet. Teams will more likely react without hesitation in combat when they have practiced what to do in realistic training. All training should be accomplished without unnecessarily risking the safety of soldiers or equipment. Careless accidents can significantly harm unit cohesion and teamwork.

TEAM CHARACTERISTICS

Effective teams possess most of the BE-KNOW-DO characteristics described above. Of course teams vary from crew to crew, section to section, and squad to squad. Each has its own character and unique ways of doing things. Each finds itself in different situations with different people.

Cohesive teams that are already effective receive new soldiers and leaders from time to time. When this happens, the teams have to regroup and spend time integrating the new members. Occasionally, groups of people are together for some time but never form an effective team. Other situations involve COHORT units in which an already-formed team of soldiers joins an already-formed leadership team. When this happens, time must be spent in joining these two teams into one effective combat-ready team. Appendix C contains one soldier's view of the process that a COHORT unit goes through. (It is also a good description of what goes on in the development of any team.)

Regardless of how the unit is formed, it is important to remember that all units go through a fairly well-defined process of development. The stages of this process are *formation*, *development*, and *sustainment*. While these stages follow in sequence, they have flexible boundaries, and many things can cause a unit to move back and forth from one stage to another. For example, third squad, first platoon, has been together for some time and functions as an effective combat-ready team. The team members are used to, and trust, one another, and their squad is a source of pride to them.

The squad leader's job is to sustain the squad's high performance level. This squad is in the sustainment stage. As frequently happens, two of the squad members are transferred, one leaves active duty, and three new soldiers arrive to take their places. Now the team is faced with breaking in three new team members. It will take time for each of the new soldiers to feel at home and to be accepted. Each must learn the way the team operates. Each must demonstrate the ability to contribute to the team before he is accepted. It will take time to trust and be trusted. Gradually, as the team shares experiences, the new members will begin to share its values and goals. Such shared experiences are necessary for soldier integration. In short, it will be some time before the team is in the sustainment stage again.

The following chart describes the three stages of team development in terms of challenges for the soldier and actions required of the leader and the unit.

STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

		Soldier Challenges	Leader and Unit Actions
FORMATION STAGE	GENERAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging and Acceptance • Settling Personal and Family Concerns • Learning About Leaders and Other Soldiers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and Care for Soldiers • Reward Positive Contributions • Set Professional Example • Develop Reception and Orientation for Soldiers and Families • Communicate Unit Values, Mission, and Heritage
	COMBAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facing the Uncertainty of War • Coping with Fear of Unknown, Injury, and Death • Adjusting to Sights and Sounds of War • Adjusting to Separation from Home and Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure with Calm Presence • Provide Stable Unit Situation • Talk with Each Soldier • Assist Soldiers to Deal with Immediate Problems • Communicate Survival/Safety Tips • Establish Buddy System
DEVELOPMENT STAGE	GENERAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusting Leaders and Other Soldiers • Finding Close Friends • Deciding Who is in Charge • Accepting the Way Things are Done • Adjusting to Feelings About How Things Ought to be Done • Overcoming Family vs Unit Conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and Encourage Trust • Allow Growth While Keeping Control • Identify and Channel Emerging Leaders • Establish Clear Lines of Authority • Develop Soldiers and Unit Goals • Train as a Unit for Combat • Build Pride through Accomplishment • Develop Self-Evaluation Habits • Be Fair and Give Responsibility
	COMBAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surviving • Demonstrating Competence • Becoming a Team Member Quickly • Learning about the Enemy • Learning about the Battlefield • Avoiding Life-Threatening Mistakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate Competence • Know the Soldiers • Pace Soldier Battlefield Integration • Provide Stable Unit Climate • Develop Safety Awareness for Improved Readiness
SUSTAINMENT STAGE	GENERAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusting Others • Sharing Ideas and Feelings Freely • Assisting Other Team Members • Sustaining Trust and Confidence • Sharing Mission and Values • Experiencing Feelings of Pride in Unit • Assisting New Members • Coping with Personal and Family Problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate Trust • Focus on Teamwork, Training, and Maintaining • Respond to Soldier Problems • Develop More Challenging Training • Build Pride and Spirit Through Unit Military, Sports, Social, and Spiritual Activities
	COMBAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting to Continuous Operations • Coping with Casualties • Adjusting to Enemy Actions • Overcoming Boredom • Avoiding Rumors • Controlling Fear, Anger, Despair, and Panic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe Sleep Discipline • Sustain Safety Awareness • Inform Soldiers • Know and Deal with Soldier Perceptions • Keep Soldiers Productively Busy • Use After Action Reviews • Act Decisively in Face of Panic

The leader must realize that developing into a team is not an easy or a rapid process for people who are basically strangers. His primary role is to encourage acceptance, open communication, develop team members' reliance on one another, and promote team acceptance of shared standards and values. Further, he must become involved in bonding between team members and bonding of team members to himself as the leader. He must set and enforce standards and set the example in the development of closer relationships.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a picture of what the cohesive, combat-ready team must BE-KNOW-DO and the stages through which it must pass to become such a team. When soldiers join a unit, they deserve the best the Army has to offer. They join a profession that demands certain values and standards in return for a chance to serve their country. Developing soldiers to the best possible level prepares them for the demands of combat. Excellence in training that develops their competence cannot be short cut. Their survival and the accomplishment of the mission depend on the ability of their unit to become a cohesive fighting team. The following pages will discuss how these cohesive teams can be formed, developed, and sustained.
