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Strategic NCO Roles and Responsibilities

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Abstract

The advance technology, growth of transnational threat, and globalization, affected the world of peace. Noncommissioned officers (NCO) of our Army are trained as conventional fighters to secure victory in a swift and decisive action and success is almost instance. Situation has changed due to the lethal and unpredictable asymmetric warfare that we are fighting today. Noncommissioned officers are always in a theatre of 360 degree environment where actions, decision making, and peace mediation are all in the nutshell of a future strategic NCO roles and responsibilities.

Strategic NCO Roles and Responsibilities

The rapid spreading and increase of advance technology, it has escalate a multitude of transnational factors and the increased of globalization and economic have created countries' security challenges remarkably for the last 15 to 20 years or so. The challenges posed by this global instability will be the emergence of a complex, lethal, and often in an asymmetric 360 degrees battlefield.

Even though most of today noncommissioned officers are performing and reacting exceptionally well in the current roles and responsibilities (R&R), it is importance that we review and re-emphasize their R & R periodically to support the future Army's full spectrum of operations.

The NCO started with sergeants and corporals as early as revolutionary wars in 1812 and established a systematic selection system by 1840. The NCO corps was again earned their reputation during civil wars, linear fighting techniques where the sergeants and corporals will hold the units intact during the fight as part of their main R&R. Since than, NCO corps has shown their continuous exemplary and valiant actions through both world wars, Vietnam, Korea, Panama, and today global war on terrorism in Middle East.

Many of us agreed that technology and advance weaponry increase the chances of winning a war. Does that mean that today NCOs need just technology to win the war? No. Technology will only minimize casualty and inflict more damage to the adversaries if we use it correctly and we need that intellectual thinking and "Heart Ware" to complete it. There is no doubt that it acts as a force multiplier but the more intricate part will still lies on the actions of an NCO at downrange fighting, negotiating and ensuring the correct intent is transmitted to our adversaries.

NCO basic roles will never change and here are the generic roles and responsibilities of the current NCOs,

Role Model / Mentor – He is also a good mentor to coach and advice from professional to personal point of views. He will be responsible in grooming our future generation of NCOs.

Experience Trainer – He/she conducts daily business, focusing on daily training, placing emphasis on individual and equipment.

Care for Soldier and their welfare – He shall be accountable to the welfare and administration, career management, and projection.

Custodian of Cultures and Operational Discipline – NCO deal directly with the servicemen and they have immediate influence in molding the junior servicemen regarding military and operational discipline.

Enforce Standard – He will be the standard barrier and quality control supervisor in all aspect of training.

Force Preparation – He will be dealing with all aspect of preparation ranging from personal hygiene, ration, weapon configuration, equipment allocation and rest plan etc.

Custodian of Parade & Ceremony – Military organizations will never be parted with Parade and Ceremony. We must be the custodian in ensuring the correct protocol be given appropriately.

Subject Matters Expert (SME) in own Vocation – We must be the expert in Weapon System and Minor Tactics.

Fitness Trainer – Physical training will be part of the NCOs' responsibilities in getting Soldiers in shape enhancing the “Lean and Fit” image of our future NCO.

These are the basic character to make an outstanding NCOs and role model for peace time and it shall be enforced. Asymmetric warfare has changed our thoughts and leading us to think strategically even at the very low level of command.

Leadership level has shown that there is an increase demand of NCOs assuming more officer appointments and commanding units that never been given to the NCO corps. One of the contributing factors will be their experience on the ground and they are more influential to both the Soldiers and the civilian population.

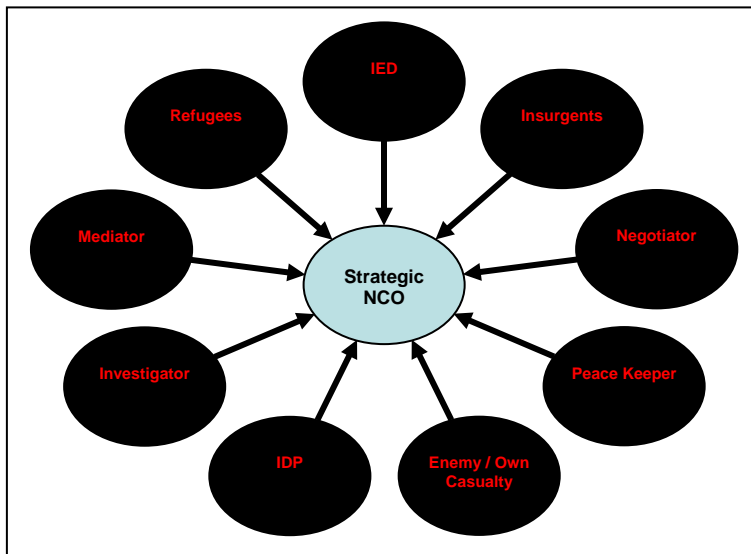
Corporals and junior sergeants have traditionally executed the assault and capture enemy under the chain of command from their platoon commanders or company commanders. The Rules of engagement with their enemies is simply “shoot to kill” if they are carrying weaponry or simply imposing threat to you. But today, they will need to exercise judgment and facing ethical dilemma before he/she can react to the situation.

Gone were days where only officers will negotiate with rebels or village chiefs. More often than not, the negotiations were carried out by NCOs. This has help alleviates the command elements to fight a continuous 360 warfare more effectively. As such, the NCOs will need to wear different hats and they will be tasked with importance roles as like investigator, mediator, and diplomat. His/her actions will have a significant impact of the strategic outcome to the unit's or overall campaign plan. One example will be the Marine killing of civilian due to anger in Iraq, the actions by that section has tainted the reputation of the entire American Army. This has not only affected that village trust but also greatly hampered the strategic goal to the overall campaign plan.

A well trained NCO will need the skills in critical, creative and ethical thinking abilities. He/she will still be the linkman and subject matter expert (SME) in running the daily business, training, provide mentorship to their juniors, and maintain forceful even under fire.

Wearing different hats on today complex battlefield is not uncommon. You are expected to be a fighter and be able to switch to peace keeper in a matter of seconds within the same mission. These situations have happened and proven in many occasions. The Current Iraq war is the best example of it. United State forces have liberated the country through offensive operation and executed stabilizing operation. Almost immediately, the forces transformed to a peace enforcer, at some area as peace keeper, and switch back to a war fighter when situation turns hostile. And in a nick of time, your Firm, Fair and Friendly approach will have you change to Aggressive and Non negotiable. Can you imagine the roles you are acting and the kind of responsibilities that you are holding with the aim of bringing freedom and justice to the country and your subordinates.

History has shown us that past modes of operations were: **Attack – Capture – Reorganize – Evacuate – Continue Mission or Defense on objective.** Current situation will be all of the above and it will have additional roles and responsibilities of an NCO in the diagram below:



Facing with all these challenges, the new roles and responsibilities of the NCO will definitely have to be a mediator with culturally and ethically sensitive to deal with maturity and conceptual thinking to interpret key messages and trends. The NCOs must be able to know, defines and solves the problems by analytical and logical thinking. He/she will capable of drawing on all data sources, knowledge and past experiences thus appreciates the external environment, consequences that will impact any decision and links actions to a larger cause or purpose as strategic/systems thinker.

He/she will be able to play the role to solve problem, respond to challenges with creative and innovative solution by past experience, cultural practice, as well as from non-conventional thinking to create a new perspective to complete the task with success.

Realizing the NCOs play a crucial pivot point to the smallest negotiation to kicking doors in downrange. The Army will invest and equip them with all the necessary skills and competencies to achieve that well trained, analytical and strategic NCO in order to support his additional R&R. The NCOs must always be conscious of the important actions taken in relation to the strategic intents and cultural awareness. Knowing the roles and responsibilities will significantly enhance our Soldiers' confidence and win the enemy or locals without the use of lethal force.

Conclusion

Understanding the dynamic and uncertainty in today battle field, the NCO corps will always be the moving force in rallying our corps and servicemen to reach the expected goal set by the organization with his/her critical roles and responsibilities in support of the global war of terrorism.

