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## History's Positive Effects thru Lessons Learned 2

### Abstract

A study of History, battles and conflicts gone by can be a very valuable tool for today's military leaders, to include the NCO. It is through this knowledge of many lessons learned that Military leaders have gained awareness and ready to stand ready when confronted. As the "backbone of the Army" it is imperative that the NCO have a familiarization of past battles and conflicts in order to sustain and be on guard for any similar attacks or confrontations. This insight along with more educational opportunities will enhance and help in the development of working skills and opportunities for the Soldier once they leave the military and become part of the civilian working force.

A study of History, more obtainable/available training, and educational opportunities have helped to shape today's Soldiers, particularly NCOs' into more strategically mission ready leaders. Thru lessons learned in the past we can hope to avoid the same mistakes made in historical instances and become proactive instead of reactive.

Americans have been tested many times and we have always learned from these tests. Sometimes America hasn't acted right away with an immediate response. During the 1970's a known terrorist Muammar al-Qaddafi (Khadafy) offered support to known non-Libyan terrorist groups around the world. Qaddafi claimed the Gulf of Sidra to belong to Libya and not to be international waters, which it was. The Sixth Fleet (Navy) was planning to conduct summer maneuvers in the Gulf of Sidra during the Carter administration. Qaddafi claimed this area to belong to Libya and ordered foreign fleets out of the region. President Carter cancelled all planned maneuvers for this area. Qaddafi was claiming territory that he did not own, this territory was international waters. Qaddafi continued this claim when the United States went under a new administration...The Reagan Administration. During the Reagan administration Qaddafi continued to attack and strike against our aircraft over these international waters. Ronald Reagan gave a go ahead to our military to react should they be acted upon. There is evidence to show Qaddafi continued his terrorist acts by bombing a disco in West Berlin that was a frequent favorite of American service people. One American Soldier was killed and approximately fifty American Soldiers were injured. Ronald Reagan reported in his diary that "every time they got a leak they ran with it even though it meant risking human lives"

(referring to the press) and “maintaining secrecy in a war against terrorism is crucial”.<sup>1</sup> On April 14, 1986 US forces attacked the Qaddafi's barracks and military headquarters in Tripoli. This sent a message that the US would not stand by idly and be dictated to by terrorist. The lessons learned here are still being carried out in our current war on terrorism against al-Quada. Some may argue that Reagan was wrong to go in and attack Qaddafi's compound, because innocent lives did die in that attack, but sometimes the end result justifies the means. How many Qaddafi attacks have we had lately?

Although the US has not been attacked by Qaddafi recently we have been the subject of other terrorist regime. In 1993 the World Trade Center in NY was attacked via a car bomb killing 6 people and injuring over 1000; in 1996 a truck bomb exploded at the Khobar Towers barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia killing 19 American Service members: in 1998 the US embassy in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by terrorist killing 258 people and injuring more than 5000. In response to the Kenya and Tanzania attack the US, under the Clinton Administration, launched cruise missiles on a terrorism training complex in Afghanistan which was believed to be financed by Osama Bin Laden who later declared war on America in September 1998. In September 2000 Osama Bin Laden said he would attack US ships, on October 12, 2000 the USS Cole was struck by a massive bomb from a boat that had pulled a long

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<sup>1</sup> National defense Libya  
<http://www.ronaldreagancom/libya>

side it. Seventeen Americans were killed.<sup>2</sup> Then, on September the 11, 2001 four planes armed with al-Quada terrorist on board used these planes as weapons of mass destruction and crashed into the two World Trade Centers, the Pentagon and an open field killing thousands on board mostly Americans. The Bush Administration reacted by waging a no-tolerance war on terrorism. Any known terrorist would be eliminated. In March of 2003 war was declared on Iraq for their suspected ties to terrorism and possible harboring of weapons of mass destruction. The argument here could be that had the US retaliated with stricter force in the first attacks beginning in 1993 or later the 911 attacks may possibly not have happened and could have been eliminated. The Bush administration had an advantage of lessons learned from previous conflicts. It responded with force and resilience. The US was and is a force to be reckoned with. Had the Clinton administration been more forceful maybe a lot of lives could have been spared. President Bush had a historical knowledge of a prior conflict (Reagan/Qaddafi) that may have possibly helped him in his decision to not stand idly by and risk our nation becoming, once again, a target for terrorist attacks. The United States has not been attacked on its soil since the war on terrorism began. This is a true example of learning from our past conflicts. As members of the military the NCO can take this example with them in their own shaping of character and development skills.

On the Job training is good, but it helps to have more structured learning resources. The first enlisted Soldiers were only given on-the-job training, with no structured learning offered.

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<sup>2</sup> US Charges Cole role players  
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/04/11/attack/main548840.shtml>

Soldiers were expected to learn thru trial and error. Mistakes and/or accomplishments were there learning tools. They had no knowledge of historical battles in which to build their strategy. They had no structured training in which to enhance their skills and tactics. It became evident near the end of Vietnam that the NCO needed more sustainment setting the stage for a more structured NCO educational system.<sup>3</sup> Now, with the offer of military training schools such as the NCOES (WLC, BNCOC, ANCOE, Battle Staff, First Sergeants Course and Sergeants Major Academy) the enlisted Soldier can gain more insightful and accomplished training. This training is much more helpful to the Soldier than just OJT. Some would argue the fact that only thru true life experiences can the Soldier grow and learn. Historically only thru trial and error was a soldier believed to grow and develop into leadership roles. This is how it was done in the past military life, but now in today's military the enlisted personnel are given an advantage of higher learning, military and civilian.

Today's Soldiers have many opportunities to gain higher level education. With the GI bill and other state and federal supported tuition assistance offered all military personnel their educational opportunities and desires are obtainable and endless. All military personnel should take advantage of these educational assistance opportunities for not only their military careers, but to better prepare them for life after the military should they want to pursue a career in the civilian market. It is evident that a higher level of learning is being sought after by civilian employers.

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<sup>3</sup> Educating Non Commissioned Officers  
[www.ncohistory.com](http://www.ncohistory.com)

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Not everyone agrees that history is a valuable tool to be studied. It is their belief that only thru trial and error can successes be achieved in battle and conflicts. While the stage may not always be the same, I believe that all the knowledge and insight we can gain can only be a positive. Not everyone believes they need structured training, but why not? Higher education may not be the only way to advance in your career, moreover, there are instances where job opportunities come your way and you succeed by just having a working knowledge of the tasks at hand or the career you've chosen. This is not something to rely on in the evolving world we live in today. You must have higher education for the most part in today's world.

In the pursuit of success it is imperative that history, education and an inner desire for achievement be part of our growing process. Through tactical battles and conflicts history can only be looked at as a benefit. We may not always be guaranteed a positive outcome by studying history, but we will be going in with our eyes wide open to what might, could and possibly happen as a result of conflicts gone by. As an educated and well rounded individual we can only move forward with the knowledge of what we've left behind.

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