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## RESEARCH REPORT

COMBAT LEADERSHIP

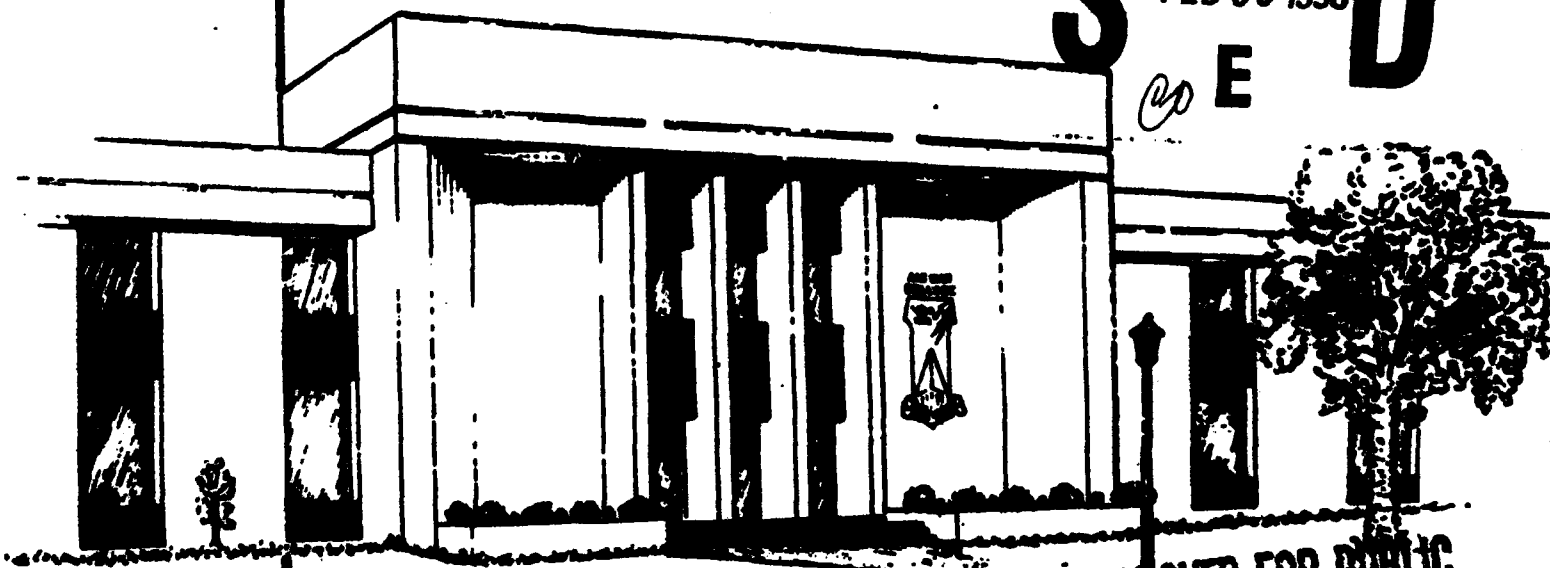
A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF TRAITS DEFINITION AND  
HOW IT DIFFERS FROM PEACETIME LEADERSHIP

LT COL ROBERT P. HANSEN

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AIR UNIVERSITY  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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COMBAT LEADERSHIP: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF TRAITS,  
DEFINITION, AND HOW IT DIFFERS FROM PEACETIME LEADERSHIP

by

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A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM  
REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Colonel Richard A. Steeves

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**TITLE:** Combat Leadership: A Historical Analysis of Traits, Definition, and How It Differs From Peacetime Leadership

**AUTHOR:** Robert P. Hansen, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

Remarks on the difference between the type of leadership required in the peacetime military and that required in combat. This report uses a historical analysis of the leadership characteristics of successful combat leaders to define and list the traits of combat leadership. It goes on, further, to argue that these leadership traits may be inherent, natural abilities and that leadership and management (peacetime leadership) are mutually exclusive. The conclusion is that there is a difference in the styles of leadership required in peacetime versus combat and that the successful peacetime leader will not be the ideal candidate for leadership in combat. (SDW)

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel (SEL) Robert P. Hansen (B.A. Biology, California State University at Long Beach, M.A. Business, Webster University), has been interested in the differences between combat and peacetime leadership as a result of his experiences during the Vietnam War. Colonel Hansen is a Command Pilot with experience in a variety of aircraft (F-4D/E, T-37, T-38, T-39, FB-111). From March 1970 to March 1971, he flew more than 200 combat missions in the F-4 aircraft stationed at DaNang AB, Republic of Vietnam. After several assignments in the Air Training Command (at the Squadron, Wing and Headquarters level), he was assigned to the Strategic Air Command as an FB-111 Instructor Pilot. Between FB-111 assignments, he held the position as Chief of the Training Division at Eighth Air Force Headquarters. His last operational assignment was as Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations and, later, as Deputy Commander for Resources, 509th Bomb Wing(M), Pease AFB, N.H. Colonel Hansen is a graduate of Air Command and Staff College, class of 1987 and the Air War College, class of 1989.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Is there a difference between the type of leadership required in the peacetime military and that required in combat? If there is a difference between the two different styles, or requirements, of leadership, then there must be a set of traits or personality characteristics that would provide the leader with a greater probability of success in combat. On the other hand, if these traits are different from those required for success in the peacetime leadership of the military, the differences should be acknowledged and an accommodation should be made to provide for the development of both types of individuals. Has the military in general, and the Air Force in particular, acknowledged this difference and taken action to prepare its future leaders for combat?

Some critics, both inside and outside the services, feel that the military faces a combat leadership problem. Richard Gabriel, professor of politics at St. Anselm College believes, "that we have a giant career-enhancing machine that has defined the prerogatives of success, and that these prerogatives have nothing remotely to do with fighting and everything to do with budget battles and their ramifications". (24:50) He feels that the military needs to

reorder their priorities, and to keep in mind that:

The function of the military officer (leader) is one track, and that's to fight. If he does that well, everything else he does or doesn't do well doesn't matter. (24:51)

Additionally, even though the services have moved in the right direction, some, such as Roger H. Nye feel its actions have fallen short.

To command in wartime is to assume responsibility for taking and saving human lives. Yet, the [United States Air Force], and the U.S. Army have rated commanders on the same efficiency report form as it has rated personnel administrators, chaplains, and computer programmers. Commanders are still picked from paper records, just as bandmasters are picked for promotion and petroleum engineers are picked for higher schooling....Commanders are often rated by supervisors on leader style or their completion of whimsily-selected tasks, rather than on some universally recognized criteria of command performance....There is great scarcity in official literature on the universal requirements, limitations, preparation for, and execution of command. (23:19-20)

The Air Force in 1986, in a report to the Chief of Staff on "Shaping the Future", stated that the best way the Air Force can prepare its combat leaders to fight future conflicts is by studying warfighting. The best preparation for combat, short of war is to simulate it. The combat experience of our senior leaders is limited to the wing level and below during the Vietnam conflict. (9:11) In the future, our leaders may have no personal combat experience.

Another difficulty in preparing our senior leadership to fight future wars is the considerable difference between their peacetime responsibilities and those assumed in a combat command. Currently,

tasks which are unique to peacetime consume the majority of our senior commanders' time, and those tasks generally stress evolutionary thought within fixed organizational structures. Combat, on the other hand, requires decisive action without lengthy deliberation in an often fluid environment. (9:11)

### The Problem

Many argue that combat leadership presents a whole spectrum of problems, and requires a particular set of skills to handle them. History has highlighted numerous great leaders that have been successful in war and in peace, or have succeeded equally in both. Does the study of these skills reveal that combat does require leadership skills different from those required in a peacetime environment? If so, are there certain "warrior" traits that serve the armed forces well during war that are counterproductive to leadership in peace? On the other hand, can an effective manager become a warrior leader when challenged by combat?

### The Path to Analysis

The solution to the problem is to understand that battles can be won by the mind of the leaders that are skilled in the art of leadership. This art is not an abstraction, but embodied in the man, and there are certain attributes which are found in leaders who have been proven in battles. (37:2) Looking at the profiles of men who have lead in battle and into their minds will provide some of the answers. First, this paper will define leadership in its historical context and go on further to attack the

question--is leadership an art or a science? If that is not challenge enough, the author will discuss the argument that leaders or leadership traits may be inherent natural abilities, and not a product of training and environment. This then leads directly to the proposition that leadership and management are mutually exclusive, and the controversy over the definitions may affect the whole process of leadership evaluation in the Air Force. Has the U.S. Air Force really become too business-like and less warrior-like? The evidence will show that.

Secondly, the author will focus on possible leadership traits in general and certain characteristics that are common to all successful leaders. The discussion will logically contain the proposition that such characteristics are indicative of leadership potential. Next the discussion will evolve into an analysis of combat leadership and its elements that set it apart from peacetime leadership--those elements of the environment that place demands on a leader that are so heavy that failure means the difference between life and death. A summary of the traits of acknowledged great leaders identifies those skills and traits required to lead men successfully in battle and helps to determine if they are different from those required in peacetime. And finally, several traits that good combat leaders have which make a peacetime bureaucracy uncomfortable will be noted.

In conclusion, this paper will prove that there is a difference between the type of leadership and leadership characteristics required in combat and those that are successful in peacetime, and that a successful peacetime leader will not be the ideal candidate for leadership in combat.

## CHAPTER II

### LEADERSHIP

According to Dr. William A. Hamel, in his analysis of military leadership from 1900 to 1982, the military says they want people with as much leadership potential as possible. But that's the very person who is so competent that he will become discouraged and get out to form his own company. What the military really means is that they want someone with just enough ability to make a successful leader. (10:37) If this cynical attitude is true, then the Air Force is just in the process of finding the best of what's left. So what will help serve to identify those leaders that are left, and on what are ideas on leadership based?

#### Art or Science

In this search for traits and characteristics that will help identify the potential leader, many have succumbed to the temptation to develop a checklist of traits that, according to scientific analysis, will logically lead to the desired outcome--a leader. If the process were as simple as the solution to a mathematical problem then the discussion would be concluded. However, the study of leadership cannot be reduced to a series of scientific constants alone that determine leadership ability. General John L. Piotrowski,

Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, said in 1986, "Management is the science of accomplishing specific tasks and leadership is the art of inspiration and motivation to achieve, despite adversity." He continued by saying that things are managed and people are led by leaders that have courage to both face the enemy in battle and do what is right. The leader must also be dedicated to the mission and be able to instill pride in his followers, and take care of them. (25:2) To further reinforce the position that leadership is an art that has elements of science, LTC Louis S. Csoka concludes that:

The artist paints a picture based on some inherent qualities, coupled with the experiences of numerous paintings. This combination creates a unique style. No study, no new knowledge is going to alter the basic feeling for painting. It is an inherent part of the painter's essence....However, studying art can enhance and expand the existing capabilities of the painter and lead to an even more enriched painting. This is not because it alters the essence of the painter but because it embellishes and enlarges the capabilities that already exist.....And so it is with leadership. The art of leadership involves those qualities, beliefs and values that permit skillful influence over others. This is based more upon the essence of the individual than anything else. We can practice this art in varying degrees. The scientific study of leadership, however, provides a common conceptual framework which can equally enrich the leadership process for all. Both are needed. (7:47)

#### Born or Made

Many other theorists also believe that, like the artist, leaders have some special inherent personality trait that enables them to see through obscuring trivialities and get to the heart of the problem. Additionally, they inspire

enthusiastic obedience, loyalty, commitment, and devotion from followers. The followers in turn emulate the hero's values, goals, and behavior. The charismatic leader, like the hero, commands that same loyalty and devotion from the followers. Charismatic leaders also display an extremely high level of self-confidence, dominance, and strong conviction in the moral righteousness of their beliefs, and unite others in their cause because of some strength in their own personalities. (1:595)

Field-Marshal Montgomery observed that the qualities that make a good leader or commander are inherent rather than learned. However, the leader will only become great as long as he studies the art or craft of war. (21:16-17) John M. Vermillion, in his analyses of the leadership traits of several great generals, separates out the qualities that make a great combat leader from those of an outstanding staff officer. He is quick to point out that there is a difference. Superior leaders surround themselves with staff officers who complement them and cover their weaknesses. These great leaders (Napoleon, Montgomery, Patton, and Rommel) had many traits in common (to greater or lesser degrees). Most abhorred involvement with details and were temperamentally unsuited for staff officer duties. This, however, prompted most to rely heavily on their staffs and to develop, if not excellent relationships with them, a strong dependency on them. Most promoted an open and frank dialogue

and displayed an uncanny vision. All were not terrorized by confusion or chaos. (35:2-17) These great leaders would be the first to admit that there was a difference between leadership and management. The management of things and details was left to an extremely competent staff that specialized in these actions.

#### Peacetime Leadership

As was discussed in the Introduction, the Air Force admitted that there may be differences in the requirements of the peacetime leader from that of the combat leader. Additionally, these peacetime requirements fell mainly on the management of things rather than the leading of people. In support of this theory, Mr. William E. Turcotte, in his book on military leadership, explains that many high ranking military leaders feel that effective leadership should blend leadership and management. He says that senior officers spend much of their time in the area of acquisition and allocation of resources and should have specialized education in this area. (34:108-109)

General S.L.A. Marshall counters by saying that he believes there are many great leaders who had no particular gifts for management or administration, but found good subordinates to do it for them. General U.S. Grant wrote, "I never knew what to do with paper except to put it in a side pocket or pass it to a clerk who understood it better than I did." (10:44) General Edward C. Meyer has written that:

Techniques appropriate for managing resources may not work on the battlefield, and battlefield techniques may be disastrous when substituted for management in other circumstances....Leaders who work to bring about change are willing to take risks, and have great self confidence; managers are perhaps less willing to take risks, they tend toward careerism, and they emphasize management skills at the expense of good leadership. (10:76)

The following quote from Military Forum by Jeffrey A. Marlin indicates that the Air Force and the Army are not the only services with leadership problems. He states that:

As high technology has become the way to improve warfighting capability, Navy officers have been forced to place more emphasis on the design, development, operation and repair of equipment and less on leadership and the teaching of leadership to their subordinates. Naval officers must learn the difference between management and leadership, and develop those leadership skills. (17:56)

The concentration on management over leadership discourages risk taking, and encourages the maintenance of the status quo and careerism. Brigadier General Herbert G. Bench wrote,

The greatest deterrent to developing dedicated young leaders is the present system of encouraging our young officers to be 'yes men' and to 'not rock the boat'.... I do not mean to advocate having a bunch of rabble rousers, but we need honest men of courage who do not hide behind rules and regulations. We need officers who will risk their own professions to see that others are treated fairly. A man who has the strength of his convictions will be respected, admired, and followed. (26:259-260)

If leaders are wanted instead of managers, what are some of the basic traits that to look to?

### Leadership Traits

Many leadership scholars believe the subject of leadership traits to be indefinable, and others comment that it is certainly a subject that is extremely complicated and complex. That being said, they have all attempted to surround the subject by listing or defining numerous characteristics, qualities, attributes, and principles that have been noted in the study of prominent leaders throughout history. Several suggested lists have been compiled and combined in the following characteristics: integrity of character, intelligence, job knowledge, knowledge of people, broad interests, communicative skill, initiative, willingness to work, stamina, and maturity. (6:8-12) The attempts to define these traits date back to the works of Sun Tzu who wrote of the leader, "by command, I mean the general's qualities of wisdom, sincerity, humanity, courage, and strictness." (33:65) A review of 350 leadership studies, by Dr. William A. Hamel, supported twelve leadership characteristics. Successful leaders were found to be above average in energy and activity, appearance and grooming, education (scholarship), social status, intelligence, fluency of speech, self-confidence, personal integrity, achievement, responsibility, administrative ability, and interpersonal relations skills. Additionally, it was noted that unless conferred or acknowledged by those to be led, leadership will

not evolve. People will only accept leaders because they want to and for no other reason. (10:a-c) Then to get the mission accomplished, the primary goal, the leader must rely on his people. They are the key to getting the job done. The leader must understand people, towards a view to evaluating their potential to get that job done--evaluate morale, esprit, discipline and effectiveness. (31:41-43)

"While there are no perfect men, there are those who become perfect leaders of men because something in their makeup brings out in strength the highest virtues of all who follow them....minor shortcomings do not impair loyalty...." (10:41)

Field Marshall Montgomery believed that the goal of a military officer or leader was to command, and to command was to win victories in war. To win victories, leaders require four qualities: knowledge of how to fight wars, the ability to see the very few essentials that are important to success, courage and mental toughness, and good judgement. (21:11)

## CHAPTER III

### COMBAT LEADERSHIP

There are six dynamics of battle that should be considered when studying combat leadership. It is these dynamics that define the characteristics that combat leaders must possess in order to succeed, and that sets the combat leader apart from others. The first is danger--personal danger and the danger to the unit as a whole. The second is chance. Chance can upset the best laid plans or provide an unanticipated opportunity. The third is exertion--operating to the limits of human suffering. The fourth, uncertainty, is the lack of knowledge to accomplish the mission. Apprehension, the fifth dynamic, is the anticipation of adversity, the father of fear and the grandsire of panic. And lastly, the sixth dynamic, frustration. Clausewitz called it friction, others have labelled it "Murphy's Law". It is the vast difference between plans and their execution. (37:3-5) To continue in a Clausewitzian vein, he states that:

Warfare always involves four factors: danger, physical effort, uncertainty, and chance.... the leader that functions best in this environment possesses inner qualities that equip him to deal with those factors. The genius for warfare is aggressive and physically energetic, bold and firm, and has a steady character and calm mind unphased by the circumstances of the moment. (29:26)

Great generals have understood this environment and the impact it would have on decisions they would make that would effect the life and death of thousands of combatants. Often these decisions have to be made under great stress, noise, fatigue, and the threat of annihilation. The leader has to be able to stand the shocks of war and have a high margin over the normal breaking point. This toughness can only be developed by spending peacetime practicing the art and science of war. (35:2-17) Jeffrey W. Anderson observed in the Military Review that:

Numerous psychological, sociological and historical analyses have concluded that leadership is the most salient determinant of unit combat effectiveness. Under combat conditions, the leader plays a prominent role by being prepared to take prompt and decisive action in spite of the scarcity or total absence of reliable information..... Additionally, estimates made by research indicate that 15 to 20 percent of the US population may reside at the upper portion of the combat performance continuum and may be truly called warriors. (2:74)

General Richardson feels that combat commanders must have a compelling desire to make their units the best possible. These commanders must have a love for the operational level and a strong intuitive sense of how to fight with their unit in any conflict. These leaders must also be dedicated to the welfare of their men by providing them with the skills for success. Additionally, a combat leader must be tactically and technically proficient and have mastered the fundamental skills that they demand in their troops, because technical and tactical proficiency remain the

mainstay of the leader's competence. These leaders must be willing to take risks and have the confidence that this professional competence provides. A lack of confidence will undermine their unit's ability to accomplish the mission. (28:6-8)

There are some who are successful in peacetime and fold under combat pressure, there are some who are admired, some who do not inspire confidence and some who are despised; and then there are a select few whom one would follow into the very bowels of hell. The main characteristic that makes the difference between these types of individuals is the proper mental attitude. They have a will to endure and to win--the warrior spirit. The warrior spirit is: a way of thinking, an attitude, a desire; committed to duty, mission, absolute competence and self confidence; and a willingness to take calculated risks in battle. This spirit is difficult to sustain in peacetime because it runs contrary to our heritage and culture. This trait is innate in a few. (30:51)

Most behavioral scientists believe that only certain kinds of personalities have the courage and aggressiveness to be good combat leaders. They look for traits of competitiveness, love of power, toughness with people, and extroverted behavior. Additionally, they feel that these combat leaders delight in the spectacle of a great drama, seek comradeship in the deadly bond of combat, and are not repulsed by destruction. (23:91)

The warrior leader must have a selfless devotion to duty, and practice leadership by example. He must be a reasoned acceptable risk taker (especially the risk of his own life), yet calm, confident, and self-controlled in the face of danger. He must be decisive, given limited or inaccurate information, and be able to effectively communicate his decisions and instructions to every subordinate and create a cohesive fighting unit. (23:91)

Roger H. Nye noted in The Challenge of Command: Reading for Military Excellence that:

Despite the antique, distorted, and romantic views of the warrior, there are still valid demands on commanders to prepare themselves for warrior roles. They must be personally courageous to function usefully in the hazardous and chaotic conditions of the battlefield. They cannot allow fatigue to cloud their minds. They must get their troops to fight. They must wage violence completely. And they must win on the battlefield, regardless of obstacles, bad luck, and the incompetence of others. Courage, aggressive leadership, skillful war-waging, and winning are all hallmarks of the warrior, in the modern era as well as in the antique past. (23:81)

In the 1984 work, Leaders and Battles: The Art of Military Leadership, Wood listed the key combat traits as.....courage, intellect, will and presence. Physical courage, to confront the dangers of combat, and morale courage, to take risks in executing bold, plans are required. Intellect encompasses imagination, flexibility of mind and sound judgement. Will includes boldness and tenacity, the boldness to take chances, and the tenacity to persevere no matter the adverse conditions. Finally, presence is defined as the leader's

personal example and force of character to bring order out of potential chaos. (37:29)

Field Marshall Erwin Rommel listed his beliefs on the necessary traits of a combat leader as the need for mental gifts of the highest order and great strength of character. The combat leader must be flexible, eager to accept responsibility, and display a mixture of caution and audacity. Additionally, he must be tactically and technically competent, have initiative and energy, and finally must be able to establish personal contact with his men without weakening his authority. (15:27-28) General S.L.A. Marshall based his list of traits a combat leader should possess on personal observations. These traits were:

1. Emphasis on the care of soldiers.
2. The administration of strict discipline and justice in all matters.
3. Military bearing.
4. A basic understanding of the simple fact that soldiers wished to think of themselves as soldiers and that all military information was nourishing for their morale.
5. Courage, innovation, and physical fitness.
6. An innate respect for the dignity of the position and the work of other men. (15:26)

It seems that the key to success in battle revolves around many leadership traits, but a few common threads run through the characteristics of all the great combat leaders, that may be conspicuously absent when describing peacetime leaders. Among these traits are an uncanny strategic sense and the innate ability to sense time and timing.

The sense of time and timing is important in combat. The key difference is in the perception of the situation by

the leader. This perception is the ability to see a situation, the judgement to evaluate it in relationship to time and goal, and finally to resolve to act. When is it time to make a move? The decision may have to be made instantly. The loss of time could mean the loss of opportunities; however, the too hasty action could be fatal. The ideal combat leader will "see" this and act accordingly. (22:67-68)

David J. Rogers sees the key to successful combat leadership as a strategic sense:

Strategic sense is the ability some people have of conceiving in a moment all the advantages of the terrain and the use that they can make of it with their army.... it has three dimensions. The first consists of grasping the situation as it really is, perceiving the information, the data, with as little prejudice as possible. The second is rejecting the non-essentials--the junk, the garbage, the information that doesn't bear on the issue--and holding in mind only the essentials and the connections between them. The third dimension is seeing with what Clausewitz called "the mental eye."..... Ordinarily the right decision comes to you in a flash of intuitive insight..... It is always accompanied by a powerful surge of confidence. (29:55-56)

#### The Combat Leader As Hero

The ideal combat leader may also be described as a hero. The military needs heroes and leaders who inspire, but the military finds it difficult to identify the leaders that are predisposed to become military heroes. There are indications from published data that may provide the following operational definition: the military hero has always set the example of behavior, persists in the

accomplishment of his duty and willingly accepts personal danger to further the cause, and jumps at the chance to command or lead when the opportunity presents itself.

(1:599-602)

However, many claim that heroic action can only occur when the situation allows the leader to make a choice among several alternatives, and that heroism springs from this constant interaction between the leader and the environment--combat in this case. The hero, or leader, is able to influence future events because he applies his talents to the situation and is able to increase the probability of success by virtue of the qualities he brings to bear on the situation. The hero serves as a model of approved behavior and is the focus for group morale and organizational goals, and demonstrates the value of these goals to the followers. (1:597)

#### Assertive Versus Aggressive Styles In Combat Leadership

Leadership styles can be studied by comparing assertive and aggressive behaviors. The aggressive leader has dedication, energy and direction, but some aggressive behaviors can be socially and organizationally dysfunctional. For example, the aggressive leader quickly expresses anger, and may also be known for complaining, procrastinating, and stubbornly fighting problems. The totally assertive leader is not the opposite of the aggressive leader, but is self-confident, has well developed social skills, and tends

to take the initiative. He'll stand up for his rights, and is not easily impressed by rank or position and will listen to all ideas. The assertive leader's communication is frank and he is known for clearly stating his feelings, opinions, and beliefs. Additionally, he is comfortable in both giving and receiving praise, and has no problem saying "no". The more assertive leader performs superbly in peacetime, but lacks the combativeness of the wartime leader. (14:21-23) An overly aggressive leader may be a great combat leader, but tends to be verbally abusive, antagonistic, obnoxious, opinionated and closed minded. (14:24-27)

The present-day (peacetime) leader profile conforms to the demands of the peacetime military bureaucracy. His assertive skills are not so strong as to get him into trouble with the boss, nor so weak as to suggest ineffectiveness. His moderately aggressive behaviors are encouraged because the readiness to be brash and the use of sharp words are often a sign of effectiveness....those leaders that would survive in a doctrinal wartime environment would not survive in a bureaucratic peacetime military. In peacetime, they are frustrated by the structure, cannot speak out without fear of institutional retribution and too frequently say no when yes is expected. (14:35-36)

General Eisenhower was well aware of the traits that make a fine combat leader, as well as the faults that sometimes mask great potential. He wrote in his letters to General Marshall, that, "General Doolittle is a curious mixture, he has fine strong points....I'm going to considerable trouble to help him eliminate his faults, in the belief that he will develop into a brilliant Air Force

commander." He continued by observing about one of his subordinates, "I think he is a natural leader, possesses a fine tactical sense, has the admirable quality of visualizing his own minor operations within the framework of the whole, and is an energetic, resourceful officer." Eisenhower observed that "General Patton, although a tremendous combat leader, continued to exhibit some of those unfortunate personal traits that cause problems, yet we cannot do without him. General Bradley, on the other hand, has never given cause to worry...not as good a combat leader as Patton, but a well rounded leader." (11:94-124) General Eisenhower appeared to be less tolerant of the faults of his good combat leaders as others may have been. John M. Vermillion wrote:

Those commonly acclaimed as great leaders are not necessarily good men. It is possible to be morally blemished and still be a highly effective combat commander.... There is no simple set of rules, but one rule is that a good general must be adept at the art of choosing competent and compatible subordinates....after selecting his staff, the leader must then look to his communication, scheduling of time, issuing of simple orders, decentralization of control, and develop a tolerance for the uncertain and unexpected. He must have clear-sighted vision of the objective and understand his capabilities and limitations. Finally, he must be able to discern with certain knowledge the fine distinction between tenacity and obstinacy. (35:16)

A look at some of the prominent characteristics exhibited by some of the most successful military leaders in history may serve to confirm the differences between combat and peacetime leadership, and may also highlight any traits that combat leaders have that would be considered odd in peacetime.

## CHAPTER IV

### EXAMPLES OF GREAT LEADERS AND THEIR TRAITS

Great leaders sought out and met challenges head on. They thrived on added responsibility. Many were not known for their academic achievements, a trait that really stands out, but they did know the value of a good education, and the importance of continuing the quest for knowledge. Hard work was nothing new to these men. They worked hard in their youth and maintained good physical conditioning throughout their lives to complement the mental processes. Each was successful in different ways. However, they all knew how to lead men to attain objectives. The ability to think, plan, and foresee as well as communicate these ideas and plans is the mark of their genius. (6:48-49)

#### Napoleon

Napoleon was well known for his electric perceptions, enlightened vision, and instinct of infallible quick judgement. He had the ability at the critical moment to decide the proper course of action. Napoleon said, "Success in war depends so much on quick-sightedness, and on seizing the right moment...." (13:54-56) This electric quality of mind--the power to see, combined with almost super human energy, made him successful.

### General James Longstreet

General James Longstreet, considered by General Robert E. Lee to be a superb battle leader, began his career at West Point. He detested study, a common thread among combat leaders, but was considered a "natural leader". He had personal courage, displayed a high degree of force in battle, and because of his understanding of men, inspired his troops. He was charismatic and outspoken, tremendously self-confident and truthful, and a tenacious fighter.

(14:29-30)

### General William T. Sherman

General William T. Sherman, also a mediocre scholar from West Point, was very independent of mind. He learned easily, desired action, had a voracious thirst for information, was detail oriented and had a forceful personality. He had the moral courage to take unpopular stands when others chose to sacrifice truth for policy. His genius of intuition was well recognized. He was a cool aggressive fighter, who relied on his personal presence and force of character. His personal courage resulted in his being wounded several times. He was aggressive, tenacious, and had a nervous energy that wouldn't break under stress.

(14:31-32)

### Captain Raphael Semmes

Another example of a great, but not so famous, combat

leader is Captain Raphael Semmes, a Confederate sea captain. He had a broad comprehensive knowledge of his profession through education and experience, a facility to envision and form plans, and the ability to impress his vision on his men. Most of his talents came naturally, but he sought to broaden them with experience. He could communicate both verbally and in writing, and was a man of conscience and high principles. On the other hand, he believed in authoritarian leadership at sea and expected strict obedience to his orders. Yet he avoided many disciplinary problem because he understood the needs of his sailors, and let them relax and brawl on occasions of shore leave. He was a tough combat leader, who remained calm in the most dangerous situations. In the end, his willingness to take risks, broad knowledge of his profession, vision, and understanding of fighting men made him a combat winner during the Civil War. (5:19-24)

#### General William (Billy) Mitchell

Billy Mitchell was probably one of the most controversial combat leaders in aviation history. He is most renowned for his vision. He was bold, outspoken and had an extremely rebellious personality that had a way of rubbing his superiors the wrong way. However, his genius was evident by his ideas and accomplishments. He thrived on the excitement of conflict. (19:2-3) General Mitchell's forte as a combat commander became evident during the First World War (WW I).

Although Mitchell was in constant competition with General Benjamin D. Foulois, General Foulois was impressed by General Mitchell's effectiveness as a combat leader. General Foulois requested General Pershing appoint Mitchell to a combat command instead of himself (Foulois). Foulois recognized Mitchell's combat leadership ability, and, despite their constant disagreements and fighting, he knew that Mitchell's combat ability was better than his own. The colorful Mitchell would cut red tape and get things done no matter what was in the way. He not only supported Mitchell's actions as in the best interests of the combat forces but recommended that Mitchell take over his job of having full authority over Air Force Combat elements of the 1st Army. General Foulois went on to do what he did best: training, personnel, and supply. He was as brilliant in this as Mitchell was in combat. (16:41) Mitchell had vision, singleness of purpose, and the flair for the dramatic. He never kept quiet. His vision was of no value unless others heard what he had to say. (19:9-11) "Mitchell had four key leadership traits which particularly stand out. They were discipline, technical expertise, loyalty to his men, and bravery." (19:13)

In summary, Billy Mitchell was bold and rebellious, yet had the vision and drive that made what he had to say in his outspoken manner worth listening to. Additionally, when the time or circumstances required it, he could be ruthless

in getting the job done. His flamboyant personality thrived on excitement and the dramatic. Although not known as an academician, he knew the value of professional education and technical expertise. He was a leader, not a manager. He left the managing to others, like he did in WW I when he let General Foulis handle the logistics. His candid and lucid foresight were often ignored by his superiors because he was not the "organizational man." In the end, his visions were proven out by events. (19:1-13)

#### General John J. Pershing

General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing believed that command in wartime and popularity do not go hand-in-hand. To insure strict obedience to orders, he trained hard, believed that the battlefield was no place for weak leaders, and led by the example of his own high standards. In this, he was successful, as demonstrated by his combat victories in WW I. However, he was found lacking in one trait usually displayed by good leaders. If he ever attempted to understand people, little of it has been documented. He was completely oriented to the achievement of the objective at hand, and used any means to complete the mission. (6:23-25)

#### General Douglas MacArthur

MacArthur was a brilliant student who never quit striving for knowledge. He seemed so trained and organized in his mental processes that, in approaching a problem, he could leap across space and arrive at a conclusion that was

often uncanny in its accuracy. His swift and lightning decisions were apparently the result of a logical mind, an unusual sense of psychological awareness and a tremendously strong code of moral values. He had an excellent understanding of his position in relation to others and an understanding of human nature. One of his greatest concerns was the welfare of his men. His eloquence in writing and speaking are among his most famous traits. But down deep, his desire was to lead men and to attain great heights and glory in the military. (6:31-32)

#### General George S. Patton

General George S. Patton was the most experienced soldier to ever lead America into combat. Both of his grandfathers were combat veterans, and he considered the profession of arms his life. He was not a very strong student, and because of his difficulty with mathematics, spent a fifth year in West Point. Later, he led the first American tank unit into battle during WW I. Between the wars he developed his knowledge of armor and tactics. He was well known for his propensity for saying exactly what was on his mind. This was a trait that led to his constantly being in trouble with superiors. He, like General Billy Mitchell, was noted for his vision. He predicted, long before it came to pass, that Japan would attack Pearl Harbor and that we would also enter a war with Nazi Germany.

During the Second World War (WW II) his successes

were brilliant during the invasion of North Africa and Sicily. However, he was suspended from command for slapping a private who was a patient in a hospital. (6:36-38) After WW II, Patton was so convinced of the Soviet threat that he started a major controversy over his view. He felt that the US must be prepared for this threat by universal military training. Once again, his willingness to take a controversial stand, and use an untactful approach to subjects he had strong feelings about, resulted in his removal from command in October 1945. Some say that his lack of self-discipline was a weakness of integrity or character. He demanded loyalty but would, on the other hand, violently disagree with his superiors. He spoke his mind--no matter the consequences. (6:40-41)

General Patton's will to win was paramount, no matter the cost. He honed his wartime skills by constantly practicing in peacetime. Patton led his men by several means. He talked to them and gave inspiring speeches. He led by example. He was always at the front line in the heat of battle. He believed in discipline, and used his personal leadership techniques and showmanship to inspire his troops. He always took the initiative and was a "hands on" leader. He had no patience for those who failed to follow orders and detested leaders who didn't take care of their troops. He rewarded outstanding performance. Although he was an impatient planner, he never walked the fence of indecision.

Many pictured him as overbearing and demanding. (14:33-34)  
Despite the constant turmoil surrounding General Patton, he was one of the most successful combat leaders of modern warfare. Could it be that many of his idiosyncrasies were the manifestations of genius?

#### General Curtis E. LeMay

General Curtis LeMay, a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) student at Ohio State, was another great leader that somehow didn't quite fit into the academic community. After the end of four years of school, he lacked fifteen hours to graduate. He had failed an engineering course two years in a row because it was a morning class that he slept through. He was working six days a week on the swing shift in a steel foundry. He later made a name for himself in the tactical and technical development of long range aviation and strategic bombardment. He was not a fabulous student and couldn't be considered an academic genius. He wasn't known as a great orator, yet he could get the point across and had tremendous drive to succeed. He had a great deal of physical stamina and intellectual curiosity. He is known for his genius as a military tactician, strategist, and leader.

(6:46)

#### Summary

Great leaders sought out and met challenges head on. They thrived on added responsibility. Many were not known for their academic achievements, a trait that significantly

stands out, but they did know the value of a good education, and the importance of a continuing quest for knowledge. Hard work was nothing new to these men. They worked hard in their youth and maintained good physical conditioning throughout their lives to complement the mental processes. Each was successful in different ways. However, they all knew how to lead men to attain objectives. The ability to think, plan, and foresee, as well as communicate these ideas and plans, is the mark of their genius. (6:48-49)

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that leadership is an art that possesses certain elements of science and that leadership traits and styles come from deep-seated aspects of personality. Also, this style and ability can be enhanced through practice. (20:1-11) Furthermore it has been acknowledged by the U.S. Air Force that we have confused the differences between leadership and management. Leadership requires characteristics and actions that differ from those required in the pure management of resources. The U.S. Air Force has become too business-like and less warrior-like. Field Marshall Montgomery stated that the qualities that are required of a combat leader are different than those of a politician. Neither is effective in reversed roles. Additionally, the qualities that make a good commander are inherent rather than learned; however, the leader will only become great as long as he studies the art or craft of war. (21:11)

An historical analysis of thirty-five battles, listed by W.J. Wood in his book *Leaders and Battles: The Art of Military Leadership* (Tables 1 and 2), reveals a list of traits that is readily identifiable by the leaders in the listed conflicts. A compilation of this data (Table 3)

reveals the number of times each trait was identified and the percentage of occurrence. Table 4 displays the combination of traits most frequently observed. This process may serve to identify attributes in the leaders of today and tomorrow. (37:301-309)

Table 1  
Conclusions Deducible from Leaders and Battles: The Art of Military Leadership (37:303)

| LEADER           | BATTLE          | ATTRIBUTES/QUALITIES      |                              |                                                 |                          |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                  |                 | COURAGE                   | WILL                         | INTELLECT                                       | PRESENCE                 |
| Morgan           | Cowpens         | <i>Moral<br/>Physical</i> | <i>Boldness</i>              | <i>Imagination<br/>Flexibility<br/>Judgment</i> |                          |
| Wayne et al      | Stony Point     | <i>Physical</i>           | <i>Boldness</i>              | <i>Flexibility</i>                              |                          |
| Davout           | Auerstadt       | <i>Moral</i>              | <i>Boldness<br/>Tenacity</i> | <i>Flexibility</i>                              | <i>Inspire</i>           |
| Cortes           | Cempoala        | <i>Moral</i>              | <i>Boldness</i>              | <i>Judgment</i>                                 |                          |
| Chard & Bromhead | Rorke's Drift   | <i>Moral<br/>Physical</i> | <i>Tenacity</i>              | <i>Flexibility</i>                              | <i>Inspire</i>           |
| Scipio           | Ilipa           | <i>Moral</i>              | <i>Boldness</i>              | <i>Imagination</i>                              |                          |
| Bouquet          | Bushy Run       | <i>Moral<br/>Physical</i> | <i>Tenacity</i>              | <i>Flexibility</i>                              | <i>Inspire</i>           |
| Custer           | Little Big Horn | <i>Physical</i>           |                              |                                                 | <i>Inspire</i>           |
| Lannes           | Ratisbon        | <i>Moral<br/>Physical</i> | <i>Boldness</i>              | <i>Flexibility</i>                              | <i>Rally</i>             |
| Lettow-Vorbeck   | Tanga           | <i>Moral<br/>Physical</i> | <i>Boldness<br/>Tenacity</i> | <i>Imagination<br/>Flexibility</i>              | <i>Rally<br/>Inspire</i> |

Table 2  
Conclusions Deducible from an Extended Range of Leaders and  
Battles (37:304)

| Leader(s)                | Battle             | Date     | Description                                               | Attributes and Contributing Qualities                                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Epaminondas              | Leuctra            | 371 B.C. | Tactical masterpiece defeats Spartans                     | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Imagination                                |
| Philip II of Macedon     | Chaeronea          | 338 B.C. | Macedonian system conquers Greece                         | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Tenacity/Flexibility                                |
| Alexander the Great      | Arbela             | 331 B.C. | Alexander conquers Persian Empire                         | Courage—Will—Intellect—<br>Presence/Moral-physical/Bold-<br>ness/Flexibility/Inspire |
| Hannibal                 | Cannae             | 216 B.C. | Classical masterpiece of annihilation                     | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Imagination-innovation                     |
| Julius Caesar            | Ilerda             | 49 B.C.  | Bloodless tactical triumph over the Pompeians             | Courage—Intellect/Moral/<br>Imagination-judgment-flexibility                         |
| Narses the Eunuch        | Taginae            | 552 A.D. | Justinian's general conquering Italy                      | Courage—Intellect/Moral/<br>Imagination-flexibility                                  |
| William the Conqueror    | Hastings           | 1066     | Norman conquest of England                                | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral-<br>physical/Boldness/Flexibility                       |
| Richard the Lion-Hearted | Arsouf             | 1191     | Third Crusade victory over Saracens                       | Courage—Will—Presence/Moral-<br>physical/Tenacity/Inspire                            |
| Sabuti & Batu            | Sajo (or Mohi)     | 1241     | Mongol invasion of Central Europe                         | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Imagination-flexibility                    |
| Henry V of England       | Agincourt          | 1415     | English archers/men-at-arms defeat French chivalry        | Courage—Will/Moral-physical/<br>Boldness-tenacity                                    |
| Gonzalo de Cordoba       | Garigliano         | 1503     | Spanish surprise attack on the French                     | Courage—Will—Intellect—<br>Presence/Moral/Boldness/<br>Imagination/Inspire           |
| Gustavus Adolphus        | Breitenfeld        | 1631     | Protestant victory over Catholics, Thirty Years War       | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Tenacity/Flexibility                                |
| Johan Baner              | Wittstock          | 1636     | Swedish victory over Saxon-Imperial Army                  | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness-tenacity/Imagination                       |
| Frederick the Great      | Rosbach            | 1757     | Prussian victory over French, Seven Years War             | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Judgment-flexibility                       |
| Napoleon                 | Lodi               | 1796     | Charge to seize bridge held by Austrians                  | Courage—Will—Presence/Moral-<br>physical/Boldness/Rally-inspire                      |
| Napoleon                 | Castiglione        | 1796     | Swift maneuver defeats Austrian strategic thrusts         | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Judgment-flexibility                       |
| Napoleon                 | Austerlitz         | 1805     | Tactical gem—defeats Austrians & Russians                 | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Imagination-flexibility                    |
| Wellington               | Salamanca          | 1812     | Outmaneuvers French to gain surprise                      | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness-tenacity/Judgment-<br>flexibility          |
| Stonewall Jackson        | Valley Campaign    | 1862     | Strategic/tactical masterpiece of maneuver                | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Imagination-judgment-<br>flexibility       |
| Lee & Jackson            | Chancellorsville   | 1863     | Masters of maneuver gain surprise                         | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Imagination-judgment                       |
| Grant                    | Vicksburg Campaign | 1863     | Swift maneuver and rapid strikes separate the Confederacy | Courage—Will—Intellect/Moral/<br>Boldness/Imagination-flexibility                    |

Table 2 (continued)  
Conclusions Deducible from an Extended Range of Leaders and  
Battles (37:304)

| Leader(s)               | Battle       | Date | Description                                      | Attributes and Contributing Qualities                                           |
|-------------------------|--------------|------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hindenburg & Ludendorff | Tannenberg   | 1914 | Masterful maneuver and surprise defeats Russians | Courage—Will—Intellect/ <i>Moral/Boldness/Imagination-flexibility</i>           |
| von Below & Hutier      | Caporetto    | 1917 | Tactical surprise and exploitation               | Intellect/ <i>Imagination-flexibility</i> (adaptation of a new tactical system) |
| Byng & J. F. C. Fuller  | Cambrai      | 1917 | Tactical surprise, first use of massed tanks     | Will—Intellect/ <i>Boldness/Imagination-innovation</i>                          |
| Rommel                  | Mersa Matruh | 1942 | Bold stroke in following up Gazala victory       | Courage—Will—Intellect/ <i>Moral/Boldness/Flexibility</i>                       |
| Vo Nguyen Giap          | Dienbienphu  | 1954 | Vietminh exploit French strategical blunder      | Courage—Intellect/ <i>Moral/Judgment-flexibility</i>                            |

Table 3  
Data on Single Attributes as Derived from Tables 1 and 2  
(37:307)

| Attribute                        | Number of Times Occurring <sup>a</sup> | Percentage of Occurrence <sup>a</sup> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Courage                          | 34                                     | 94%                                   |
| Will                             | 31                                     | 86%                                   |
| Intellect                        | 32                                     | 89%                                   |
| Presence                         | 10                                     | 28%                                   |
| Energy<br>(assumed in all cases) |                                        | 100%                                  |

<sup>a</sup> = Out of a total of 36 cases (Table 1 plus Table 2).

Table 4  
Combinations of Attributes as Derived from Tables 1 and 2  
(37:308)

| Combinations                    | Number<br>of Times<br>Occurring <sup>a</sup> | Percentage<br>of<br>Occurrence <sup>a</sup> |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Will—Intellect                  | 1                                            | 3%                                          |
| Courage—Will                    | 1                                            | 3%                                          |
| Courage—Intellect               | 3                                            | 8%                                          |
| Courage—Presence                | 1                                            | 3%                                          |
| Courage—Will—Intellect          | 21                                           | 58%                                         |
| Courage—Will—Presence           | 2                                            | 6%                                          |
| Courage—Will—Intellect—Presence | 7                                            | 19%                                         |

<sup>a</sup> = Out of a total of 36 cases (Table 1 plus Table 2).

The combat leader is a fighter that cares for his people, and yet is a calculated risk-taker. However, the actions required to identify and hone the skills of these warrior leaders often take back seat to the bureaucratic requirements of conducting business. We seem to be doing everything except preparing ourselves for combat. Additionally, we must realize that not everyone can be a leader. When we find good candidates, we should let them practice and perfect their art. (30:52) The potential combat leader must spend more time leading. Initially, it is extremely critical that a new leader be provided the opportunity to learn from mistakes, to express initiative and creativity without fear of criticism or reprisal. (16:25)

The military must become more permissive of the leadership behaviors that it needs in combat leaders. It

must encourage frankness, independent activities, and competing and unpopular viewpoints. The services need to create an environment which encourages the leaders to seek help if they need it and, in turn, to be receptive to a well-studied "no" to unwarranted or unreasonable demands. Finally, the services must not neglect the development of productive aggressive behaviors. (14:36)

The parallel between combat leadership and crisis leadership is close, in that there are the same tensions, need for flexibility and innovation, the need to keep things basic and simple when tasking people and organizations. In combat, if the troops have a feeling they'll survive and win, if they trust their leaders, if they feel they are invulnerable, and if they believe the enemy will die instead of them, they are more likely to win. Combat leaders of the future will be short on facts, emotions will run high, the "fog of war" will cause confusion. Yet, these leaders must be decisive, temper courage with wisdom, and exercise a great deal of self-discipline to keep from micromanaging. Additionally, they must be historically minded, comfortable with risk, and have a well developed warrior spirit. (32:57-62)

To find and select these leaders is really an exclusion or elimination process. If the potential candidates are not exposed to warrior-like duties and responsibilities, how will they stand the test? Studies

further indicate that better leaders have a greater military knowledge, and that job related experience is one of the best peacetime indicators of successful combat performance.

(2:77-78)

There are many character and personality traits that have been observed in many successful leaders that may make them somewhat different than the ideal peacetime military leader. We have seen that they are aggressive and outspoken, a trait that does not lend itself to diplomacy. Most are extremely intelligent, however, and are not fond of the academic environment. They chose instead to become experts in their military field. Of particular significance is that the great leaders were not necessarily perfect individuals. As John M. Vermillion stated so well in his book, The Pillars Of Generalship, "In the final analysis, U.S. (Armed Forces) leadership doctrine must step away from preachments on the Boy Scout virtues writ large and toward the genuine requirements of wartime command." (35:16)

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