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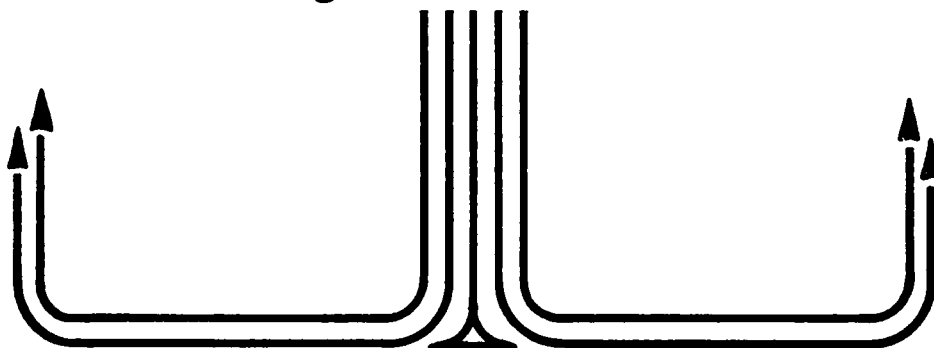
## STUDENT REPORT

BOOK ANALYSIS OF:  
TAKING CHARGE, A PRACTICAL  
GUIDE FOR LEADERS

MAJOR TIMOTHY F. NALL

88-1950

"insights into tomorrow"



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**TITLE** BOOK ANALYSIS OF: TAKING CHARGE, A PRACTICAL GUIDE  
FOR LEADERS

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requirements for graduation.

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## PREFACE

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Effective leadership in the United States Air Force is an important and much debated aspect of military service at all levels of the organization. This book analysis of Taking Charge, A Practical Guide for Leaders, by Major General Perry M. Smith (Ret), compares the book to other contemporary leadership literature and makes a recommendation on the usefulness of the book to current and aspiring leaders. General Smith's primary leadership fundamentals are discussed after a short synopsis of the book. Taking Charge is written in a clear and concise manner and is a valuable guide for leaders, in the author's opinion.

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by Lieutenant Colonel Jay M. Stewart, USAF, for his efforts as advisor on this paper. In addition, the author would also like to extend a special thanks to his wife, Mindy, for her patience and help.

This material is being submitted to the faculty of Troy State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science in Personnel Management degree.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Timothy F. Nall entered the Air Force through a ROTC commissioning program after graduating from Texas Tech University with a Bachelors Degree in Business in 1973. He received flying training as a pilot and has flown both F-4 and F-16 fighter aircraft operationally for over eleven years. As an Air Force officer he has commanded other flying officers at the squadron level as a Flight Commander and has been responsible at the wing level for all Flying Training and Standardization/Evaluation duties. He attended Squadron Officer School in residence and completed Air Command and Staff College by seminar. He is currently attending Air Command and Staff College in residence and working toward a Master of Science in Personnel Management degree.

Timothy F. Nall is married to the former Melinda Kilgore and has two children, Camille and Brett.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**REPORT NUMBER** 88-1950

**AUTHOR(S)** MAJOR TIMOTHY F. NALL, USAF

**TITLE** BOOK ANALYSIS OF: TAKING CHARGE, A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR LEADERS

I. Purpose: To provide an objective analysis of General Perry M. Smith's book, Taking Charge, A Practical Guide for Leaders and make a recommendation of the book's usefulness for aspiring Air Force leaders.

II. Problem: Does General Smith's book, Taking charge, A Practical Guide for Leaders, agree with contemporary literature on the basic leadership fundamentals required of an effective leader? Due to the vast expanse of leadership fundamentals which might be discussed in this paper, the author limits his analysis to four widely recognized key leadership fundamentals specifically discussed by General Smith. Are General Smith's viewpoints and checklists appropriate, clearly stated, and useable for leaders?

III. Data: The number of leadership fundamentals which are valuable for leaders to be familiar with are numerous. In Taking Charge, General Smith discusses those primary leadership fundamentals which he believes are important for leaders to contemplate in order to make themselves more

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## CONTINUED

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effective. General Smith discusses, sometimes in question style, why he believes a leader can and should make a difference in the organization that he leads. The overall leadership theme of each chapter is briefly commented on in the analysis and four specific themes are examined. The four specific themes commented on are: the universal need for leadership integrity, the important aspect of counselling, the need for decentralization and feedback, and the necessity of planning and setting priorities for the organization.

IV. Conclusion: General Smith's book is valuable as a practical guide for leaders. The book is very easy to read and contains useful information and views, both for current and aspiring leaders. The essential leadership elements discussed by General Smith are substantiated by other contemporary leadership literature.

V. Recommendations: General Smith's book Taking charge, A Practical Guide for Leaders, is highly recommended for all leaders aspiring for the opportunity to command a successful military organization during their career.

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges facing the military today is that of providing strong and effective leadership. To provide this leadership in the increasingly complex military organization of today, a leader must prepare himself to assume command. One method of preparation is that of reading about leadership fundamentals and concepts. A recently published book dealing with leadership purports to be a practical guide for leaders.

A book analysis of Taking Charge, A Practical Guide for Leaders by General Perry M. Smith (Retired), includes an analysis of the overall content of the book as compared to contemporary leadership writings. A judgement on the usefulness of the dialogue and checklists provided by General Smith is drawn. Additionally, this book analysis addresses General Smith's discussion of leadership fundamentals. In considering leadership, many writers agree on the basic idea that leadership is primarily an art which can be developed rather than a quantifiable science which must be learned (11:21; 12:1). This idea of leadership being mostly an art is particularly noteworthy when reviewing General Smith's book as a practical guide for leaders.

Prior to analyzing General Smith's practical guide for leaders some representative definitions of leadership should be considered. Leadership, as defined in Concepts of Air Force Leadership, is "...the process of influencing the activities of an individual or group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation" (10:4-1). Another more business-like definition is "...the intrapersonal interactions between a leader and one or more subordinates for the purpose of increasing organizational effectiveness" (4:48). Both of these definitions are typical of those contained in most leadership writing. They both view a process of reactions between people to accomplish a mission or goal. The extent to which the leadership process is enforced through a command relationship versus being

voluntary is an aspect of leadership in which the military officer is particularly involved.

The military officer of today must not only be concerned with leading people, but, also, must manage items in order to accomplish his required duties. For an officer to effectively accomplish his duties, a quote by Lord Slim can be compared to the quotes of leadership previously presented. Lord Slim, a highly regarded British military officer, said, "Management is of the mind, more a matter of accurate calculation, statistics, methods, timetables, and routines--it's practice is a science" (11:18). Therefore, it is evident that an effective leader must be primarily concerned with the people he leads but, also, he must insure that the practical or managerial side of command is accomplished. It will be assumed for the remainder of this discussion that leadership is a art and deals primarily with people and management deals with things and is primarily a science.

General Smith believes in the artful, people oriented approach to the leadership challenge. This approach is evident throughout his book. He discusses actions a leader must accomplish or consider to be effective. These leadership actions include communicating, planning, and teaching, as well as many others.

General Perry Smith's long association with the military allows him to discuss leadership challenges on a level which is familiar to military officers. In the next chapter General Smith's military association, credentials, background, and sources of possible bias will be reviewed.

## Chapter Two

### THE AUTHOR

General Perry Smith has been associated with the military throughout his life. This fact as well as the following observations are pointed out in "The Author" section of his book Taking Charge, A Practical Guide for Leaders (6:233-234).

General Smith was born into an Army family and graduated from United States Military Academy at West Point. He entered the Air Force following West Point, earned his wings as a pilot, and flew several types of operational fighter aircraft. General Smith has extensive teaching experience at the Air Force Academy and the National War College and acquired a Ph.D. in International Relations from Columbia University.

While in the United States Air Force General Smith held numerous leadership positions. He was commander of a tactical fighter wing in Europe and served as the first American general in the Second Allied Tactical Force while stationed in Germany. While assigned to the Pentagon in Washington DC, General Smith held several important positions such as the Director for Plans for the Air Force. General Smith also served as the Commandant of the National War College where he taught a number of courses including leadership in large organizations.

General Smith's background and credentials in both teaching and military leadership are noteworthy. His long association with the military, both as a commander and the leader of large organizations, attests to his leadership capabilities. General Smith's rise to significant levels of command in the military educational field also suggest an extensive depth of knowledge in education. His practice of leadership skills during a long and successful military career, particularly as the commander of a Tactical Fighter Wing in Europe, make General Smith's leadership views not only credible but noteworthy for aspiring leaders.

Although General Smith has had a long association with the military, his commentary throughout the book suggests no particular military bias in dealing with leadership challenges. Any possible bias present in General Smith's book is offset, in the author's opinion, by his educational background and credentials.

General Smith deals with a variety of leadership challenges in Taking Charge and discusses many that a leader will face. Some of these important leadership challenges are reviewed in the following chapters.

## Chapter Three

### A SYNOPSIS

Taking Charge is divided into two sections in which General Smith writes of his fundamental premise that leaders count and should make a difference in the organizations they lead (6:xvii). He provides a practical guide for the leaders of complex (one hundred or more people) and large (one thousand or more people) organizations. The first section contains twenty chapters of assorted leadership problems and issues that a mid-level or senior leader is likely to face. The second section contains checklists for busy leaders and leadership case studies divided into three appendices.

The first chapter of Taking Charge deals with General Smith's twenty fundamentals to remember; these fundamentals form a basis for his philosophy of leadership (6:3). He examines such issues as trust, teaching, communication, time management, people interactions, goals, insight, and integrity. In the remaining nineteen chapters General Smith further develops some of these fundamentals and other particular challenges of leadership he feels are important. He states, "Leadership skills can be improved by reading, discussion, use of case studies, and wrestling with concepts" (6:xvii). Throughout this section many leadership actions are discussed. These include, transitioning into leader positions, establishing standards of integrity, and aspects of hiring and firing. Also, Taking Charge discusses leadership requirements relating to the ability to be flexible and yet decisive, maintaining personal contact with subordinates and superiors, encouraging innovation, establishing long-range planning goals, and ensuring mission accomplishment. General Smith also includes many other hints, rules, and techniques for leaders to consider in the first section of Taking Charge.

In the second section of Taking Charge, General Smith presents memory jogging checklists for the busy leader (6:157). These checklists for busy leaders cover many leadership actions and issues discussed in the first section

of the book. Additionally, issues such as promotion boards, phrases to avoid, and a congressional visit checklist are provided. The second section also presents several situational leadership cases from his experiences and those of his colleagues (6:xix). These case studies are analyzed and critiqued to illustrate real life leadership problems, decisions, and outcomes.

General Smith's writing style includes asking questions of the reader throughout the book which is written in a pragmatic and logical manner. This style of writing allows General Smith to suggest many issues for the reader to contemplate and at the same time maintain the reader's interest.

In order to draw a conclusion about General Smith's treatment of the many leadership issues he discusses, it is necessary to compare Taking Charge to current recognized literature dealing with the many practical aspects and issues of leadership. This comparison will be accomplished in the subsequent chapter.

## Chapter Four

### A COMPARISON

General Smith begins Taking Charge with a look at leadership fundamentals he believes are important to remember. Next, he lists several checklists for leaders to use as quick memory joggers about leadership aspects, or situations he believes a leader might find helpful.

General Smith's leadership fundamentals in chapter one are fundamentals that can be found throughout leadership literature. General Smith also discusses traits and actions that a leader must take or be aware of to be effective. In Guidelines for Command, twenty-one responsibilities for a leader and ten points of advice are considered, these include, honesty, self-sacrifice, setting standards, communicating, and the necessity of removing people; these are very similar to General Smith's twenty fundamentals to remember in chapter one (12:1-4). Also, leadership fundamentals such as General Smith's are discussed in professor Gary Yukl's book, Leadership In Organizations (8:193-199). In Yukl's book specific leadership behaviors such as performance, delegation, goal setting, and training are discussed with their corresponding effect on effectiveness. This is essentially what General Smith does in the first chapter to his book Taking Charge, but in a much more readable fashion. After discussing leadership fundamentals in chapter one, General Smith relates his thoughts about the first things a leader should be concerned with when taking over an organization as a new leader.

Chapter two of Taking Charge discusses assuming command of the organization and the establishment of rules to be followed during the transition. The following chapter discusses the importance of establishing personal and institutional standards of integrity. General Smith emphasizes, in question style, many of the same challenges facing the leader when taking command as does the Air Force, in its, Guidelines for Command publication. These transition items include, but are not limited to, having a plan by which

to take charge, setting the goals of the organization, and getting to know your subordinates and superiors alike. As for integrity, General Smith discusses the need for both personal and unit integrity. His views are echoed in such sources as the US Military Academy's Leadership in Organizations (7:20-21) and Jefferson Howell's discussion about the need to establish integrity values in his article "The Principles of Leadership: A Personal View" (15:25-28). In this article Howell emphasizes that the leader must "set the example" and that he must be "positive but honest" when doing so (15:25-28). General Smith also relates several understandable examples of both personal and institutional integrity situations and discusses the importance of ensuring individual leadership credibility in Taking Charge.

Taking Charge then delves into the everyday necessities which confront a leader of an organization. Such requirements as hiring, firing, counselling, and complimenting are discussed. General Smith's observations concerning these leadership responsibilities are easily understood and supported by such texts as Mondy and Noe's Personnel: The Management of Human Resources (5:220-230); and Goble's Excellence in Leadership (3:43-48). Hiring is discussed by General Smith particularly with an emphasis on putting the right people into the right job. Likewise, Goble states, "The ability to choose the right person for each job is clearly one of the most important characteristics of the excellent leader" (3-43). The ultimate requirement and responsibility for firing is also emphasized by General Smith. He contends firing is very important and points out that it is ultimately the leaders' responsibility to insure the organization's success. Therefore, individuals who cannot assist in that success must be moved (6:49-53). The importance of firing is likewise emphasized in the Air Force publication Guidelines for Command, "Once people have demonstrated... [the] inability to get the job done, you must have the courage to terminate their assignment" (12:4). Next, General Smith's views on counselling come in the context of questions that might be asked of the subordinate and why these questions are important to ask. The importance of counselling as a leader is recognized in many leadership publications. One such publication is the US Military Academy's Leadership in Organizations (7:16-21). It emphasizes that one of the most effective methods for teaching is through counselling (7:16-21). Besides the need of counselling, General Smith also discusses the need for complimenting. In discussing complimenting, General Smith emphasizes his ideas about using the compliment to reward and motivate. This method of influencing behavior builds on the

ideas of praise and congruency discussed in Buck and Korb's Military Leadership (2:74-93). General Smith's discussion of hiring, firing, counselling, and complimenting as a leader gives personal insight into these important aspects of the leadership problem.

Taking Charge next deals with situations such as leading in crises, dealing with the down side, and the problem of decentralizing control while maintaining information feedback. General Smith emphasizes that the challenge of leading during a crisis is primarily a problem of innovation and flexibility (6:55). He also emphasizes the need to practice and train those whom might be called to step in and handle a crisis situation should the normal leader be unavailable. His discussion of dealing with the down side incorporates feedback and communication problems. These problems are also emphasized as primarily communication problems in Hill's The Military Officer's Guide to Better Communication (4:4-6). The question of decentralization and feedback requirements of a leader are emphasized in numerous other leadership books and articles; one such source is the Air Force's Guidelines for Command (12:7-10). Finally, General Smith states that management control systems must be used carefully to insure the large amount of feedback that is possible with the system doesn't overload the organization and the leader when using systems.

General Smith next turns his attention to the more personal side of leadership problems such as responsibilities, personality traits, and introspection. A leader's need and responsibility to not only reach upward to his supervisors but outward to the sister organizations is emphasized. This understanding and positive attitude building is also emphasized by Hill in The Military Officer's Guide to Better Communication, where he states that the leader, and the group, both must understand the way the unit and the larger organization relate (4:82-88). Next, General Smith's discussion of personality types is based on the personality theories developed by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. These personality theories are common in various leadership writings; one such example is York's article, "Managing Professional Relationships in the Modern Air Force: Communication and Influencing Skills" contained in Concepts for Air Force Leadership (10:3-32 - 3-39). Additionally, General Smith discusses introspection and emphasizes that knowing yourself is extremely important to leaders. The importance of knowing yourself and your leadership style is echoed by many writers; one example of this is discussed by Blanchard in his book, Leadership and the One Minute Manager.

Blanchard states that your perception of your own leadership traits and qualities is probably different than what is seen by those who work for you, and to become an effective leader you must be aware and take into consideration, these different perceptions (1:20). Likewise, General Smith states that a leader must be aware of the different perceptions his subordinates may have of him and, "Leaders should try to correct the worst of these [perception] distortions when possible" (6:95).

General Smith now deals with problems more external to the organization itself, but which are still very important to it's overall success. Problems such as dealing with the media, the need for strategic planning, and challenges associated with international organizations are included. General Smith states in chapter fourteen, "In general, the media can be helpful", but, all leaders must handle this opportunity wisely and carefully to ensure that information comes out when and how you wish it to (6:113). This attitude toward the media is also held by Brooks Hill in his book The Military Officer's Guide to Better Communication and states that a careful but cooperative working relationship with the media can result in changing a negative public relations episode into a positive one for the military (4:111-113). In creating a strategic vision for his organization, General Smith believes in the necessity of establishing a long-range plan and climate open to innovation. This belief in the importance of planning and innovation is also shared by Goble in his book Excellence in Leadership, here, Goble says, creative success involves the willingness to make mistakes to achieve the goal and this requires the leader to encourage creativity (3:22-23). Finally, in dealing with international organizations, General Smith discusses the dilemma of supervising these units and their people in a broad efficient manner. These problems include being sensitive to cultural differences and spending a majority of time with leaders from other countries rather than their own (4:125-130). The basic ideas of tact and social sensitivity are also discussed in Yukl's book Leadership in Organizations (8:85-87). The tone of Taking Charge now changes from considering external problems and planning to those of mission accomplishment and taking care of your people as a leader.

General Smith discusses his views concerning organizational priorities and the need for ensuring potential leaders have a chance in chapters 17 and 18. He reminds the reader that the most important priority of any leader is to ensure mission accomplishment through commitment and planning. These ideas of commitment, goals, and planning are

also discussed in Goble's Excellence in Leadership (3:18-23). General Smith's views on taking care of people and avoiding cronyism are valuable and simple. Goble, in his book Excellence in Leadership, likewise believes in the importance of finding the right person and promoting him (3:43).

General Smith completes section one of Taking Charge with a chapter emphasizing teaching and some general thoughts dealing with leadership. In this last chapter he points out that a good leader should also be a good teacher and should maintain his own learning process while encouraging others to read, discuss, and contemplate leadership (6:145-150). The success of the organization, according to General Smith, is essentially a problem of developing and maximizing the individual. The individual, in this view of leadership, is the leader's greatest challenge; this position is shared by Hill in The Military Officer's Guide to Better Communication (4:19-20).

The body of Taking Charge has been reviewed and compared to other leadership literature. Next, four widely recognized aspects of leadership discussed by General Smith will be further examined and a conclusion on the overall usefulness of Taking Charge will be drawn.

## Chapter Five

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

General Smith states in the preface to Taking Charge that his purpose is to provide a practical guide for leaders (6:xvii). He discusses many aspects of leadership which he believes are important. The number of aspects of effective leadership to be considered by a leader or writer are vast. For the purpose of this analysis, four recognized aspects of leadership specifically discussed by General Smith will be discussed. These aspects will include the universal need for integrity, the important aspect of counselling, the need for decentralization and feedback, and the necessity of planning and setting priorities for the organization.

General Smith discusses the need for planning and setting priorities in chapters 15 and 17 of his book where he states that great leaders must be able to plan, set goals, and motivate people to accomplish these goals (6:119). This idea of the leader as a planner and motivator is evident throughout leadership literature. As stated in the book Military Leadership by Buck and Korb, "the leadership function involves the motivation and activation of subordinates, staffing, and training" (2:74). The importance of this type of planning and motivation is particularly important in the military world of shrinking resources (2:93). The author, as a military officer himself, agrees with General Smith when he states, "a leader who is a flexible planner and who has a vision based on careful thought and research can lead the organization to new heights of performance and effectiveness" (6:124). Additionally, General Smith discusses in a separate chapter the need for organizing priorities and maintaining the mission at the head of those priorities. This goal setting and establishment of priorities is a necessity, for as Goble says in his book, Excellence in Leadership, "professional leadership literally revolves around the establishment of goals and the effort to achieve them" (3:18). General Smith discusses both the necessity for planning and the setting of priorities in a very understandable and appropriate manner for the military

person.

The important and complex military leadership issues of decentralization and feedback are discussed clearly by General Smith in chapter 10. General Smith points out the need to allow for authority and delegation at every appropriate level while encouraging feedback from all levels. The problem of centralized control and decision making is evident throughout large organizations (9:15-12). The leaders problem of maintaining communication and getting feedback is also emphasized by Hill in his book about better communications, "as [a] leader, [you] must open channels of communication and discover blocks which obstruct the flow" (4:63). The author also feels that General Smith's encouragement of feedback and discouragement of inappropriate centralization are right on target.

In order to be effective a leader must be able to communicate, with his people (1:105). One of the prime ways to communicate according to General Smith is through the counselling session. The counselling session must be regular, frank, and honest (6:39). This need for counselling and communication is emphasized by the Army in the, Leadership Makes the Difference pamphlet, here the Army states that it is important to always be "talking with and listening to subordinates, not simply talking at them" and that "teaching individuals by counselling" is one of a leaders most important tasks (13:28). In the authors opinion, General Smith "hits the nail on the head" in his chapter dealing with counselling because it is one of the most pressing leadership problems that the Air Force has; General Smith covers it well.

Counselling is a necessity, but the importance of leadership integrity cannot be overemphasized according to General Smith. The leaders' need for individual integrity is universal in leadership writing. As General Smith states, "it is important for the leader to make clear the standards of integrity that are to be adhered to" (6:27). General Smith emphasizes the importance of the individual leaders' integrity on the organization when he states "the first and perhaps most important organizational influence on the moral behavior of the organization members is the behavior of organizational leaders" (6:21-20). General Smith also emphasizes that demonstrating this commitment to integrity is essential, and to set the example as a leader is vital. This example of integrity must be human, but strict, according to Jefferson Howell, because those under you will not quite live up to your standards (15:25-28). General Smith and many

other military leaders such as General Russ, Commander of Tactical Air Command, believe that a leader must set personal and unit discipline, then enforce it, to be a truly effective leader (9:2). The Air Force, as an institution, states in the pamphlet on leadership, "A leader must be honest and fair" (14:4). The importance of both an individual leader's and the institution's integrity are obvious in General Smith's mind.

Finally, General Smith's checklists in the appendix to Taking Charge mirror the highlights of his discussions about practical leadership problems and challenges. These checklists would be very helpful during the day-to-day process of functioning as an effective leader. General Smith's book is accurate and helpful to leaders' as a practical guide.

General Perry Smith has been honest and fair in his book about leadership. Taking Charge fills a literary gap as a practical guide for military leadership. The book's clear and concise style and questioning examples are very informative and thought provoking. General Smith's book is highly recommended for all leaders aspiring for the opportunity to command a successful military organization during their career. General Smith's book is accurate and helpful to leaders as a practical guide.

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