

TEXT 2

The Commander and Chain of Command

According to the dictionary, we can define chain of command as the succession of commanding levels from a superior to a subordinate. Command is exercised through the chain of command. We recognize operational chain of command that is the chain of command established for a particular operation or series of continuing operations. Talking about administration, we use the term administrative chain of command, which is the normal chain of command for administration.

Commanders (officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers) hold a position of authority in the armed forces. They are in a position of command. Not every officer is a commander. Some of them are specialized as subject matter experts in particular occupational fields such as aviation, engineering, artillery, communications, logistics, computer science, and many others.

Every unit has its commander. The commander is usually the highest-ranking officer (soldier) in the unit. He is someone in an official position of authority who can command or control others. He is responsible for everything that his unit does or fails to do. The commander's responsibilities include direct as well as indirect supervision of his personnel. The successful commander keeps an organizational climate of mutual trust, cooperation, and teamwork within the unit. Good and comprehensive knowledge of modern military principles, methods, practices, and techniques with particular emphasis on activities of the assigned unit is needed in order to meet given objectives. Commanders must respect all the military rules and regulations. They also must be able to plan, organize, and coordinate the work of subordinate personnel, analyze complex military problems, communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. Given tasks are to be interpreted properly and the decisions are to be taken in accordance with laws, regulations, and policies. Commanders are expected to review their operating procedures periodically and to make recommendations for improvement. These requirements depend upon a given task. The commander should be not only experienced but also well educated. For selection of eligible candidates for any command position it is necessary to set the highest possible physical and mental standards.

The commander exercises his responsibilities through the chain of command. The chain of command is an established organization of command delegations. Through this chain, the commander holds each subordinate commander responsible for all that the subordinate unit does or fails to do. Every commander at the battalion and higher levels is assisted by the staff. The commander is supposed to supervise, train, and evaluate his staff and perform related duties as assigned.

The staff is a group of officers serving a military commanding officer in an advisory and administrative capacity without immediate command or combat duties.

Mentioning staff, we can come across the following terms: integrated staff, joint staff, and parallel staff. Sources define integrated staff as a staff in which one officer only is appointed to each post on the establishment of the headquarters, irrespective of nationality and service. Joint staff is defined as a staff formed of two or more of the services of the same country. Talking about parallel staff, we mean a staff in which one officer from each nation, or service, working in parallel is appointed to each post.

Nowadays, the modern battlefield demands a high level of staff efficiency and requires a great deal of initiative and coordination on the part of staff officers. The staff must assist the commander in making decisions by acquiring, analyzing, and coordinating information, and by presenting essential information to the commander with a recommendation.