



1st Place
MacArthur Writing Contest

Relooking Unit Cohesion: A SENSEMAKING APPROACH

Major Geoff Van Epps, U.S. Army

My first wish would be that my Military family, and the whole Army, should consider themselves as a band of brothers, willing and ready to die for each other.

—George Washington, writing to Henry Knox on 21 October 1798¹

WHEN DID THE ARMY STOP emphasizing the importance of unit cohesion? As the excerpt from George Washington’s letter to the first secretary of war of the United States illustrates, cohesion has been a fundamental objective for Army leaders since the founding of the institution. Yet current Army leadership doctrine virtually overlooks the importance of unit cohesion. This lapse is both surprising and troubling, particularly in a time of decentralized operations by small units often spread over great distances, on remote patrols, or manning secluded combat outposts, vulnerable to being isolated and overrun. The Soldiers in these units count on nothing with certainty except their fellow Soldiers immediately around them.²

Unit cohesion is an important consideration in the best of times. In the worst of times—for an encircled unit, low on supplies, out of communication, beset by foul weather, and facing overwhelming odds—unit cohesion may be the one attribute enabling it to hang on and survive until it can break out or be relieved. The “guarantees” offered by persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), modern communications, and other technologies make it tempting to conclude that it is impossible for American units to be cut off and destroyed. But we ignore this threat at our own peril, especially in light of the grave strategic consequences that would accompany such a disaster.

The 2006 Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, is an improvement over its predecessor, particularly in its embrace of the ambiguity and uncertainty of the contemporary operating environment. Unfortunately, the FM also continues the slow erosion of emphasis on unit cohesion’s significance in doctrine. The previous 1999 edition of *Army Leadership* dedicated six pages to discussing team building and unit cohesion at the direct, organizational levels of leadership. By contrast, the latest edition contains only four short paragraphs on this important topic.³

Worse, the current edition completes a trend evinced in the 1999 edition by conflating teamwork and cohesion. It addresses both terms in the same section of the manual without defining either term or distinguishing between the two. Yet teamwork and cohesion, while closely related, are clearly distinct.

Teamwork is the collaboration or coordinated effort of a group of Soldiers toward common goals or objectives. Cohesion, on the other hand, is both more abstract and more basic. Cohesion means a bonding together of an organization or unit’s members in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the group, and the mission.⁴ Cohesion binds an

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PHOTO: SPC Daniel Brooks and a fellow Soldier take a minute of downtime after gearing up for a combined dismounted patrol with Iraqi police in the Ghazaliya district of Baghdad, Iraq, 17 July 2008. (U.S. Army, SPC Charles W. Gill)

organization together and enables it to function as a unified, integrated unit. Cohesion allows teamwork to occur under difficult conditions.

The seeming unimportance of cohesion in the latest FM is perhaps best reflected in the following understatement: “To operate effectively, teams, units, and organizations need to work together for common Army Values and task and mission objectives.”⁵ Soldiers deserve a better explanation. They need a deeper understanding of cohesion.

The rest of this article addresses steps the Army can take toward that end. I will outline the modern evolution of the Army’s interest in cohesion and then introduce the ideas of Karl Weick, whose research into the connection between sensemaking and cohesion provides a more appropriate way of discussing it given today’s ostensibly more complex and uncertain environments. In the last section of the article, I show how Weick’s ideas help explain the differing fates of two U.S. units attacked by the Chinese in North Korea in late 1950.

The Rise and Decline of Interest in Cohesion

Until early in the last century, conventional wisdom held that panic caused military units to disintegrate. In the 1920s, the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, turned that notion on its head through his studies of group psychology. Freud argued that the loss of cohesion incites enough panic that “none of the orders given by superiors are any longer listened to, and that each individual is only solicitous on his own account, and without any consideration for the rest. The mutual ties have ceased to exist, and a gigantic and senseless fear is set free.”⁶ Although novel at the time, Freud’s insight has become part of the Army’s understanding of how units function: when cohesion breaks down, panic sets in, and each Soldier is left to fend for himself.

Studies of combat units in World War II reinforce this perspective. In his classic, *Men Against Fire*, S.L.A. Marshall declares, “I hold it to be one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry Soldier to keep going with his weapon

is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade... He would rather be unarmed and with comrades around him than altogether alone, though possessing the most perfect, quick-firing weapon.”⁷ In *The American Soldier*, a more scientific investigation of the attitudes of combat Soldiers in the European Theater, Samuel Stouffer found a strong link between the loyalty that Soldiers felt toward one another and their level of confidence in their comrades’ abilities under combat conditions.⁸

Consistent with this point of view, leaders from the interwar period forward trained units in order to, among other things, build confidence and cohesion among their members. This paradigm was reinforced in the 1970s and particularly during the Vietnam War, when the individual replacement system was seen as disrupting cohesion and causing a decline in unit performance. In 1981, the Army instituted a unit manning system, whose key feature was COHORT (cohesion, operational readiness, and training) units that formed and trained together for three-year cycles. The idea of combat units based around a cohesive nucleus of Soldiers was a promising one, although officers and noncommissioned officers were not stabilized with the unit. However, by 1990 the Army deemed the COHORT experiment a failure and returned to individual manning.⁹ Cohesion remained important, but the attempt to institutionalize its development fell out of vogue. A U.S. Army War College study concluded that “cohesion among Soldiers remains primarily the by-product of good leadership combined with important, fulfilling work.”¹⁰

Around the time the COHORT system fell short of expectations in performance and building unit cohesion, the idea of “sensemaking” began to emerge in academic literature to complement discussions of organizational design and structure.

Sensemaking and the Collapse of Organizations

Sociologist Karl Weick was one of the first scholars to apply the concept of sensemaking to organizations operating in complex or ambiguous

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environments. Weick argued that the ability to construct a coherent, shared explanation for events and circumstances enabled organizations to continue to function during times of great uncertainty. “The basic idea of sensemaking,” he wrote, “is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs. People try to make things rationally accountable to themselves and others.”¹¹ In other words, people and organizations use shared mental models to deal with disorder and ambiguity.¹² Weick explored this idea in order to determine what held organizations together and, conversely, what caused them to unravel during crises. He concluded, “What holds organization in place may be more tenuous than we realize.”¹³

Weick determined that organizations are especially vulnerable to a collapse of sensemaking as a result of fundamentally unexpected or incomprehensible events. The low probability of such an incident occurring causes the organization and its members to be caught by surprise when it does, shattering their individual and collective understanding of the situation. If members of the organization do not quickly recreate a shared reality or adopt a new mental model to make sense of the chaos surrounding them, they will cease to function as a unified team. The organization’s structure serves as a foundation to anchor sensemaking because it provides roles and interlocking routines that tie the people together into a team and keep them functioning while they rebuild a shared understanding of the situation they face. Sensemaking and structure are interrelated, enable cohesion, and allow an organization to keep functioning in the face of chaos.¹⁴

Weick notably applied this concept to analyze the deaths of 13 smokejumpers fighting a fire in Mann

Gulch, Montana, on 5 August 1949. The event bears striking similarities to a disastrous military patrol by a platoon or squad. Fifteen smokejumpers, led by foreman “Wag” Dodge, parachuted onto the south side of Mann Gulch to meet a forest ranger who had been fighting the fire alone for about four hours. They had been told to expect a “ten o’clock fire”—one they could surround and completely isolate by 1000 hours the next morning. As they gathered up the supplies they parachuted in with, they discovered their radio equipment had been destroyed in the landing. After eating a brief dinner, the crew marched along the hillside toward the river, when Dodge noticed the fire had suddenly crossed the river and was moving uphill toward them. Dodge ordered the crew to turn around and headed them up the hill toward the ridge at the top. Calculating the fast-moving fire would catch the smokejumpers before they reached the safety of the ridgeline, Dodge ordered the crew to drop their tools, lit a small fire in front of the group, and ordered them all to lie down in the area he had just burned. No one obeyed. The entire crew ran for the ridge. Two smokejumpers made it to the top unharmed. One more made it to the top badly burned and died the next day. Dodge survived by lying in the area burned by his escape fire, as the main fire moved around and over it. The other 12 members of the crew were overcome by the main fire and perished in flames that jumped between the ridgeline and the area burned bare by Dodge’s escape fire.¹⁵

Weick’s analysis attributes the disaster to the twin collapses of sensemaking and structure in the smokejumper crew. First, he argues, the team experienced what he labels a “cosmology episode” when they ended up fleeing for their lives when they had only expected a “ten o’clock fire.” Although the term is ungainly, it is important to understand because it signals the death knell of the organization. Weick explains:

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A cosmology episode occurs when people suddenly and deeply feel that the universe is no longer a rational, orderly system. What makes such an episode so shattering is that both the sense of what is occurring and the means to rebuild that sense collapse together.

Stated more informally, a cosmology episode feels like *vu jàdé*—the opposite of *déjà vu*: I’ve never been here before, I have no idea where I am, and I have no idea who can help me.¹⁶

The smokejumpers never understood the threat the fire posed until it was too late. Events like Dodge turning them upslope as the fire jumped the river challenged their shared understanding of “ten o’clock fire” they thought they faced. The minor blaze they anticipated had suddenly become a threat. Their cohesiveness began to disintegrate. When Dodge ordered them to drop their tools, they lost their identity as an organization. What good is a firefighting crew with no equipment? Are they even firefighters anymore? Finally, when Dodge lit a fire in the middle of the only apparent escape route, their collective ability to understand the situation and respond to it disappeared. Lighting escape fires was an unknown technique at that time, and Dodge’s actions were inconsistent with the crew’s grasp of the situation. The crew had ceased to exist. It was every man for himself.

Weick’s final analysis shows how the simultaneous collapse of structure and sensemaking led to disintegration of cohesion and, ultimately, disaster:

[The fire crew] faced . . . the feeling that their old labels were no longer working. They were outstripping their past experience and were not sure either what was up or who they were.

As the ties weakened, the sense of danger increased, and the means to cope became more primitive. The world rapidly shifted from cosmos to chaos as it became emptied of order and rationality. . .

As their group disintegrated, the smokejumpers became more frightened, stopped thinking sooner, pulled apart even more, and in doing so, lost a leader-follower relationship as well as access to the novel ideas of other people who are a lot like them. As

these relationships disappeared, individuals reverted to primitive tendencies of flight.¹⁷

Five days later, the efforts of 450 firefighters finally brought the Mann Gulch fire under control. Although the Forest Service had classified it as a Class C Fire, signifying an extent of between 10 and 99 acres, at the time the crew parachuted in to fight it, it was clearly not a “ten o’clock fire.”¹⁸ Deprived of external communications when their radio was destroyed during the jump, the smokejumpers could only rely on the information they were given before the mission to try to understand the danger they faced.

The next section of this paper will briefly examine two military units faced with conditions similar to those at Mann Gulch. Their abilities to maintain sensemaking and structure led to vastly different outcomes.

Sensemaking and Structure at Chosin Reservoir

In late fall of 1950, the American X Corps faced relatively light resistance in a rapid advance through North Korea toward the Chinese border on the Yalu River. Despite the winter weather and restrictive terrain, corps commander Ned Almond ordered a new offensive to begin on 27 November. This “ill-advised and unfortunate operation” was predicated on the assumption of continued light opposition in the corps zone.¹⁹

To the west of Chosin Reservoir, the 1st Marine Division’s three reinforced regiments inched their way up the one road of any significance, pausing to consolidate after each successive move. On the night of 27 November, after hours of painfully slow progress, the division halted with the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments arrayed around the town of Yudam-ni and the 1st Marine Regiment securing key terrain on the main supply route in the division’s rear.²⁰

On the eastern shore of the reservoir, the 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was the lead unit of the Army’s 7th Infantry Division. The unit spent 27 November arriving at their attack position along the main route east of the reservoir and waiting for the arrival of their third infantry battalion, which lagged behind due to transportation delays. The regimental commander, Colonel Allan MacLean, confirmed that the regiment would attack to the north the following morning with whatever forces



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Astonished Marines of the 5th and 7th Regiments, who hurled back a surprise onslaught by three Chinese communist divisions, hear that they are to withdraw, Hagaru-ri, near Chosin Reservoir, ca. December 1950.

he had at his disposal. Consequently, the regiment did not prepare mutually supporting defensive positions or establish landline communication between units. MacLean dispatched the regimental intelligence and reconnaissance (I&R) platoon to scout the route ahead, and in an ominous development, it disappeared, never to be heard from again.²¹

As night fell, both the Marines and the 31st RCT hunkered down, intending to attack north the following morning. Signs of an impending Chinese assault were evident, but the Americans largely misread them. Then, that night, 27 November, three Chinese divisions attacked the 1st Marine Division west of Chosin Reservoir, and the 80th Chinese Division hit the 31st Regimental Combat Team on the reservoir's eastern shore. On both sides of the reservoir, the Chinese achieved nearly complete surprise, swarmed out of the hills, overran outposts, penetrated unit perimeters, and wreaked havoc. In desperate, often hand-to-hand fighting, the Americans fought off the Chinese attacks. With the break of day, the Chinese melted back into the hills and the U.S. units were left to tend to their casualties and figure out what to do next.²²

Later in the morning of 28 November, Lieutenant General Almond flew forward to assess the situation for himself. After this, the fates of the two units—the 1st Marine Division and the Army's 31st Regimental Combat Team—began to diverge. Almond conferred with the commander of the 1st Marine Division, Major General O.P. Smith, who informed Almond that based on the previous night's intense action, he had cancelled the division attack northward. Smith's regiments were intact, but isolated and in jeopardy. He intended to order the 5th and 7th Marines to constrict their perimeters, hold their positions, and attack to the south to regain contact with the remainder of the division along the main supply route.²³

Almond then flew to visit Colonel MacLean and the 31st RCT. MacLean had spent the night fighting alongside his lead battalion, the

1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, which suffered about 100 casualties, but which he judged to be in "pretty good shape." He had no word on the fate of his second infantry unit, 3d Battalion, 31st Infantry, which had also been hit hard the previous night. Nor did he have any news about when his third infantry battalion, still in transit, might arrive. Unaware that Chinese action prevented his regimental tank company from joining the regiment's main body, MacLean was "reasonably optimistic" about the situation and did not object when Almond told him the enemy was "nothing more than the remnants of Chinese divisions fleeing north." "We're still attacking and we're going all the way to the Yalu," Almond said. "Don't let a bunch of Chinese laundrymen stop you."²⁴

But by nightfall on 28 November, the 1st Marine Division and 31st Regimental Combat Team held very different views of the tactical situation. The Marines had cancelled their offensive operations and focused on consolidating their positions on defensible terrain and reopening their lines of communication. The 31st RCT's orders remained to attack northward upon the arrival of its third infantry battalion, still expected at any moment.

During the night of 28-29 November, the Chinese attacked again and the results were the same—high casualties on both sides during desperate fighting. Still the Americans held. Colonel MacLean of the 31st RCT came to the decision that the regiment needed to consolidate temporarily into a single perimeter until his last infantry battalion and his tanks arrived and he could resume the attack. Thus, early on the morning of 29 November, MacLean ordered the “temporary withdrawal” of 1-32 Infantry, his lead battalion, into the perimeter with 3-31 Infantry and other regimental units. The Soldiers would not destroy their equipment; they were ordered to remove critical parts and carry those parts with them so they could repair the equipment for use in the attack the following day.²⁵

The withdrawal of 1-32 Infantry into the 3-31 Infantry perimeter happened, but not without difficulty. 1-32 Infantry fought its way south only to find the 3-31 Infantry situation just as precarious as their own had been. Tragically, MacLean misidentified a column of approaching troops and allowed the Chinese to take him prisoner. The senior battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Don Faith of 1-32 Infantry, assumed command of the 31st Regimental Combat Team.²⁶ Faith waited for help from his division or corps to arrive, but there was none to give. On 30 November, the Assistant Division Commander of the 7th Infantry Division flew into Faith’s perimeter to tell him the 31st RCT was on its own. The regiment would have to fight its way back to safety.

By the morning of 1 December, the 31st RCT had survived four consecutive nights of brutal attacks by the Chinese. Its ranks were decimated. Several of the regiment’s companies were utterly destroyed. Others had no officers left alive. Supplies and ammunition were critically low. Fatigue and the bitter cold pushed the Soldiers to the limits of human endurance. Faith concluded his men would not withstand another night of Chinese attacks and ordered a breakout. Soldiers would destroy all equipment that could not move. The remaining vehicles would carry the hundreds of serious casualties. Every Soldier who could walk—wounded or not—would fight dismounted.

The 31st RCT got underway around noon. Within minutes, a Marine pilot providing close air support dropped a canister of napalm short, killing

several American troops. The situation worsened from there. The RCT had to run a gauntlet of roadblocks and blown bridges under withering enemy fire. Vehicles stopped running. Drivers were killed behind the wheels of their trucks. A Chinese grenade mortally wounded Faith, leaving no clear commander of the unit. The dismounted rear guard began to overtake the trail vehicles of the column, leaving them vulnerable to the pursuing Chinese. The unit began to disintegrate as Soldiers set out on their own across the frozen ice of the reservoir or onto the high ground along the roadway. Ultimately, the formation lost momentum and ground to a halt. Those Soldiers who could still move under their own power headed south toward friendly lines as individuals or in small groups, hoping to avoid the Chinese who stood in their way. Those who could not move were left for dead. The 31st Regimental Combat Team had ceased to exist.²⁷

For its part, the 1st Marine Division had its own share of problems. The limited attacks to restore contact between the divisions’s scattered elements failed. Nightly Chinese attacks decimated the ranks. On the morning of 1 December, the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments began their own breakout attempt, attacking southward from their consolidated position toward the remainder of the division. They came out as intact units in tactical formations, bringing their jeeps, trucks, trailers, and guns with them. Almost 600 wounded were piled in trucks or strapped across the hoods of jeeps, just as in the 31st RCT. The vehicles had to keep to the road, but infantrymen repeatedly maneuvered to seize the key terrain necessary to secure the force. It took three days of exhausting, bloody fighting, but the Marines managed to sweep aside countless ambushes and roadblocks to reach friendly lines at Hagaru. The 1st Marine Division was intact and had maintained enough combat power to resume its attack to the south three days later, after evacuating thousands of casualties.²⁸

Why were the fates of these two units so vastly different? They faced similar tactical circumstances in terms of force ratios, terrain, weather, and resources available. Both the Marines and the 31st RCT enjoyed advantages over the Chinese in automatic weapons, heavy mortars, artillery, and close air support. And both were completely cut off and faced an untenable situation that compelled

them to attempt a breakout to preserve their forces. Traditional explanations do not adequately answer why the Marines survived as a fighting force and the 31st RCT was defeated in detail.

However, by applying the ideas on sensemaking and structure described earlier, one interpretation emerges. The Marines were able to keep their structure and sensemaking ability intact and thereby maintain unit cohesiveness throughout their ordeal. On the other hand, the 31st RCT suffered the twin collapses of both structure and sensemaking, causing the unit to disintegrate into a rabble of small groups and individuals. Evidence from members of both units supports this perspective.

Within the 1st Marine Division, there was skepticism from the outset concerning the claims that the X Corps' attack to the Yalu River would face nothing but light resistance. One account describes how "Marines, from O.P. Smith on down, were exceedingly reluctant to proceed with the offensive" and how the Marine attack that began on 27 November was "unenthusiastic."²⁹ The caution that accompanied this skepticism meant the Marines were better prepared both tactically and mentally for the Chinese onslaught on the night of 27 November. Smith, the division commander, immediately cancelled the scheduled attack, thus abruptly signaling to his entire division that the situation had changed drastically.

Smith and his division leaders intuitively began to refine the collective understanding of the situation they faced, a key part of sensemaking. Lieutenant Colonel Ray Murray, the commander of the 5th Marine Regiment, said of his response to the heavy Chinese attack, "I personally felt in a state of shock. My first fight was within myself. I had to rebuild that emptiness of spirit," an apt description of the process of finding a mental model to explain the surprise that had befallen him.³⁰ The 5th and 7th Marines tightened their perimeters and tried to restore contact with

the remainder of the division. When they could not, it became clear they would have to break out.

Major General Smith explained how he attempted to communicate his new understanding of the situation to his division through tactical orders and up the chain of command to X Corps: "For two days, we received no orders from X Corps to withdraw from Yudam-ni. Apparently, they were stunned, just couldn't believe the Chinese had attacked in force."³¹ But the Marines had quickly and effectively made sense of the situation, even though their higher headquarters continued to operate using a broken paradigm. The Marines' ability to quickly grasp the new situation they faced allowed them to develop a plan that suited it and kept the structure of the organization intact. They would consolidate their available forces, keep all of their vehicles and equipment functioning, employ their units in the sort of tactical maneuver for which they were designed, and fight for survival.

Unfortunately, the 31st Regimental Combat Team did not achieve similar success in grappling with the changing conditions. The 31st RCT moved into positions on the eastern edge of Chosin Reservoir with none of the healthy skepticism of the Marines. On 26 November, Lieutenant Colonel Faith misread the tactical picture and told his division commander that his battalion could attack north by itself the following day if the division could loan him a platoon of four tanks. Even when the entire regimental I&R platoon vanished without a trace on 27 November, Faith and his regimental commander, Colonel MacLean, showed no indication they understood the danger they faced.

On 28 November, after suffering heavy casualties the night before, MacLean agreed to the corps commander's order that the regiment would begin its attack the next morning. It took a second night of savage fighting against the Chinese on 28 November to convince MacLean to withdraw 1-32 Infantry to consolidate the entire regiment at one location, and even then, he showed a poor understanding of the situation by ordering the disabling (rather than the destruction) of equipment as part of the "temporary" withdrawal. Conditions were changing faster than the unit's ability to make sense of the situation. Then the unit's structure began to unravel as well, plunging the 31st RCT into a textbook "cosmology episode."

The Marines were able to keep their structure and sensemaking ability intact and thereby maintain unit cohesiveness throughout their ordeal.

Casualties among key leaders mounted during the initial Chinese attacks—a handful of company commanders and platoon leaders killed the first night, along with two battalion commanders wounded. The Chinese killed or wounded still more officers during the subsequent fighting, and then captured MacLean himself. Faith consolidated the RCT into one perimeter, but never retracted the order to be prepared to transition to the attack. This, of course, made little sense to Soldiers who had just spent three nights fighting for their lives against overwhelming numbers of attacking Chinese, who killed still more officers and noncommissioned officers during the fourth night of fighting.

Suddenly, on 1 December, the same Soldiers who had been repeatedly told they were going to resume the attack at any moment were told that the situation was hopeless and a breakout was necessary. They had already left much vital equipment behind when the regiment consolidated days before. The order to break out was inconsistent with what they had been told earlier, but their discipline and survival instincts allowed them to initiate the attempt. As the breakout convoy lurched forward, more leaders fell. Captains, and then finally lieutenants, commanded the remnants of battalions. The Marine aircraft accidentally dropped napalm on the convoy. Repeated delays in order to clear roadblocks and bypass downed bridges made the operation look more like a traffic jam than a breakout attempt.

Then Lieutenant Colonel Faith was killed. There was no one else left to explain the plan to the unit, and no internal communications available at that point anyway—nor any reason to suppress the instinct to flee. A historian has described the unit's cohesion at this point: "Virtually all the officers who tried to get the rank-and-file to follow them . . . commented on the reluctance, the surly unwillingness of the men to do so, and many men who were forced to act, soon deserted the effort. . . The men were no

longer normal Soldiers. They were worn out; they no longer cared. All they had left was individual instinct for survival."³² In the words of a survivor from the 31st RCT, "The chain of command disappeared. It was every man for himself."³³ The unit had abandoned much of its equipment, which contributed to its loss of identity as a fighting force. The chain of command was gone, and so was the cohesion that had held the unit together. Like the smokejumper crew at Mann Gulch, the 31st RCT had fallen victim to the collapse of sensemaking and structure.

Conclusion

The conduct of warfare has changed substantially since the savage battles near Chosin Reservoir in 1950. Technological, informational, and organizational innovations offer new means of waging war against our nation's enemies. Yet some aspects of warfare remain immutable, particularly its human dimension. While we have been fortunate in recent years not to have experienced a disaster on the scale of Chosin, the demands of the modern battlefield compel the Army to regularly place small units in remote locations where they are vulnerable to the same sort of isolation, danger, complexity, and ambiguity that the 1st Marine Division and the 31st Regimental Combat Team faced in late 1950. When technology fails or the enemy surprises us, human factors—particularly the cohesion that binds a unit together—may determine the unit's survival or destruction.

Understanding and fostering unit cohesion remain vitally important in today's operating environments, and Army doctrine should reflect that importance. The Army should update its views on unit cohesion, not cast them aside as useless or antiquated. It should incorporate new views, such as Weick's thoughts on sensemaking and structure, to flesh out the topic and restore the Army's traditional emphasis on such a critical subject. **MR**

NOTES

1. George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. XI, Jared Sparks, ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1848), 329.

2. For a harrowing account of an American patrol in Iraq in this very situation, see Jeff Emanuel's article "The Longest Morning" from the November 2007 edition of *The American Spectator*, available online at <www.spectator.org/dsp_article.asp?art_id=12233>.

3. The bulk of the coverage in the 1999 edition is contained in paragraphs 5-102 to 5-119 and 6-132 to 6-139. In the 2006 version, the discussion is limited to paragraphs 8-23 to 8-26.

4. Defense Management Study Group on Military Cohesion, *Cohesion in the U.S. Military* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1984), ix. For an

overview of the various definitions available and the ongoing debates in the literature (horizontal vs. vertical cohesion, social vs. task cohesion), see Robert McCoun, "What is Known about Unit Cohesion and Military Performance," in *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment*, National Defense Research Institute (Santa Monica: RAND, 1993), 283-331.

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6. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (New York: Norton 1959), 28.

7. S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (New York: William Morrow, 1942), 42-43.

8. Samuel Stouffer, et al, *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II: The*

American Soldier (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

9. McCoun, "What is Known about Unit Cohesion and Military Performance," 300-1.

10. Kenneth C. Scull, "Cohesion: What We Learned from COHORT," U.S. Army War College Study Project (2 April 1990), 24.

11. Karl E. Weick, "The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, no. 38 (1993): 635. Sensemaking has emerged in some literature on military leadership, primarily in the context of situational understanding and the commander's visualization process as part of battle command.

12. Christopher R. Paparone, "Strategies Gone Wild? Implications for Resourcing the Force in the Midst of Complexity," *Defense AT&L* (November-December 2006): 37.

13. Weick, "The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster," 638.

14. *Ibid.*, 633-34.

15. *Ibid.*, 628-29.

16. *Ibid.*, 633-34.

17. *Ibid.*, 636-38.

18. *Ibid.*, 629.

19. Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 456.

20. T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2000), 239-43.

21. Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 458-59.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, 462.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 463-64.

26. *Ibid.*, 506-7.

27. Roy E. Appleman, *East of Chosin: Entrapment and Breakout in Korea, 1950* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 195-277.

28. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 246-48.

29. Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 457-58.

30. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 246.

31. Donald Knox, *The Korean War: Pusan to Chosin, An Oral History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1985), 528.

32. Appleman, *East of Chosin*, 316.

33. Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 518.

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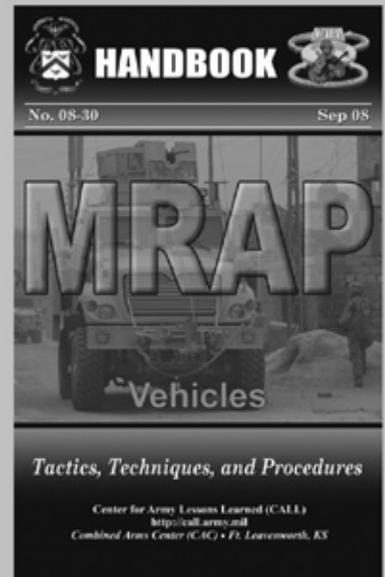
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