



August 3, 2021

Military Quotes

PART 1: LEADERSHIP

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"I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion."

- Alexander the Great, 356-323 B.C.

Leadership in all organizations is a key element of success. Without it, even the best of organizations will begin to stumble and fall; with it, even the worse organizations will begin to thrive. Great leaders are contagious.

During my time in the military, I had the chance to see many forms of leadership, both good and bad. I saw the consequences of units with poor leaders and the benefits of those with strong ones. I experienced firsthand both ends of the spectrum.

A key lesson I learned from one of my commanders was to establish and maintain the standards you expect as a leader. These simple, yet disciplined steps are critical to developing

an organization of excellence. Below are two examples of what one of the best leaders I ever served for did when he came to our unit.

The first standard he addressed was ensuring our ability to move great distances with our equipment. To this end, he made it mandatory that we complete a 10-mile road march each week, a 12-mile march each month, and an alternate 20 or 30-mile march every quarter. This was initially met with significant resistance, but he never relented and over time it became a habit of the organization.

The second standard he imposed was the use of our Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) during all our training sessions. Utilization of MILES included mounting a laser on the end of your weapon, a halo on your helmet, and a piece of equipment on your torso. The lasers would illuminate whenever we fired a blank round, and if you hit your target, they system would set-off indicating the hit.

This gear was notoriously inaccurate and keeping the laser zeroed to your rifle was extremely tedious, especially while out in the field training. With our new commander, missing was not tolerated. He insisted that everyone had their MILES zeroed and capable of hitting targets out to 200 meters. He would randomly appear at your training site, pull a soldier out and ask him to hit a target. If he missed, he would pull the leadership aside and provide them with little motivational encouragement.

Again, this simple application of discipline became routine and the level of performance in our unit improved immeasurably. A great leader will define and expect the organization to retain the standards they have set. After all, it's easier to maintain a standard than it is to create a new one.

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