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# Journal

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IMCOM



# Garrison Command: Key Leader Judgments

By Retired Colonel Charles D. Allen

The lead articles in the last two editions of this publication presented my view that garrison command spans several levels of leadership (direct, organizational and strategic) and provided a perspective of skills (technical, conceptual, and interpersonal) that garrison commanders should have to be successful. Effective leaders of organizations scan the external environment, are aware of and seek to influence the organizational culture, and determine missions and execute strategies to accomplish them. These are the transformational factors for determining "what" the organization does combined with "how" it is done that contributes to effective organizational performance (Burke, 2002).

How well the organization does is ultimately determined by its customers – both internal and external. Accordingly, the success of garrison commands is directly related to the perception by key stakeholders of the commanders' judgment and the resulting outcomes as garrisons provide base support. The purpose of this article is to explore the leader judgments that are essential for decisions and actions within garrisons.

Professors Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis, both renowned leadership scholars in their own rights, provide an interesting framework for how to

look at judgments that really matter to an organization and its performance – judgments about strategy, people and actions during times of crisis (Tichy and Bennis, 2007). Of the three, we are more comfortable with judgments about strategy. We have been raised on the military decision-making process (MDMP) throughout

For those who have been part of institutional activities, the annual strategic planning conference is also an embedded process. We determine the core competencies, produce an organizational vision, and then derive subordinate missions and functions that support the organizational purpose. In the end, we develop a

strategic plan with objectives, milestones, and metrics to guide how the organization does its business – until the next planning conference or the next commander arrives. Garrison commanders and key staff members will go through this process and also participate in that effort with the regional headquarters. Thus, we have a fairly structured approach to develop, judge, and select an organizational strategy.

Garrison commands are expected to align their strategic plans with that of the Installation Management Command (IMCOM) and the regions.

Additionally, the garrison commands are formally evaluated based upon the execution of their strategic plans and the reports that the IMCOM uses to monitor performance against its metrics. To guide the execution of strategic plans at the garrisons and installations over the past decade, we

## Transformational Factors



**Figure 1:** Transformational Factors.  
Adapted from Burke-Litwin Model of Organization Performance and Change, 1992.

our educational system and military officers have been through countless sessions of tactical and operational planning. In those cases, our units were provided with missions, higher commanders' intent, and assigned resources. From these items, we developed staff estimates, restated missions, alternative courses of action, and then have gone through a formal process of evaluating and selecting the "best" course of action to execute.

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have adopted quality management programs with Total Army Quality (TAQ) and Army Performance Improvement Criteria (APIC), showcased our efforts with the Army Community of Excellence (ACOE) programs, and are now embracing the continuous improvement program of Lean Six Sigma (See Volumes 2 and 3, Journal of Installation Management, for articles on APIC and Lean Six Sigma program implementation at Army installations).

The coin of realm for garrisons is achieving the purpose of IMCOM Common Levels of Support (CLS) – to ensure consistent and predictable delivery of Base Operations Services through standards, measures and adequate resources within funding available to the Army. CLS is IMCOM's primary focus for measuring performance and projecting resource requirements to meet its strategic objectives.

There are any number of things that can preclude and derail the execution of strategy – problems and issues with people and the injection of a

crisis. The insights of Tichy and Bennis ring true: "While misjudgments ... have the potential to be fatal, the one [misjudgment] with the most potential is people. If leaders don't make smart judgment calls about the people on their team or if they manage them poorly, there is no way to set a sound direction and strategy, nor can they effectively deal with crises" (Tichy and Bennis, 2007). The judgment of people extends beyond the hiring of new personnel to leading and managing the incumbents in the organization.

As offered in the last publication (Allen, 2008), the personnel manning and structure of the garrison leadership will be fairly stable when the new commander arrives and meets the executive team of the deputy garrison commander (DGC) and command sergeant major (CSM), and the functional teams headed by senior civilians. While the garrison commander and the CSM have gone through the Army centralized process for command selection, appointment and slating, the same is not true for the civilians in installation

management. Typically, civilian managers will have a great deal of experience and knowledge in their specific areas, but may have not gone through a rigorous selection process. You may have the opportunity to hire people to fill a few of these critical posts on the garrison staff. While there may be a pressing need and sense that key positions must be filled as quickly as possible, commanders must be "urgently patient" in selecting the right person for the job. Jim Collins, in "Good to Great", stressed the importance of getting the "right people on the bus" (Collins, 2001). The right people are those that are talented, that share the values of the organization, have willingness and capacity to lead their elements to success, and contribute to the overall performance of the garrison.

In January 2004, IMCOM initiated the Civilian Executive Development Assignment Program (CEDAP) and is currently implementing the Department of Defense National Security Personnel System (NSPS) to give commanders the flexibility and the tools to select high-quality personnel needed to fill

## Proposed CF 29 Builder Positions

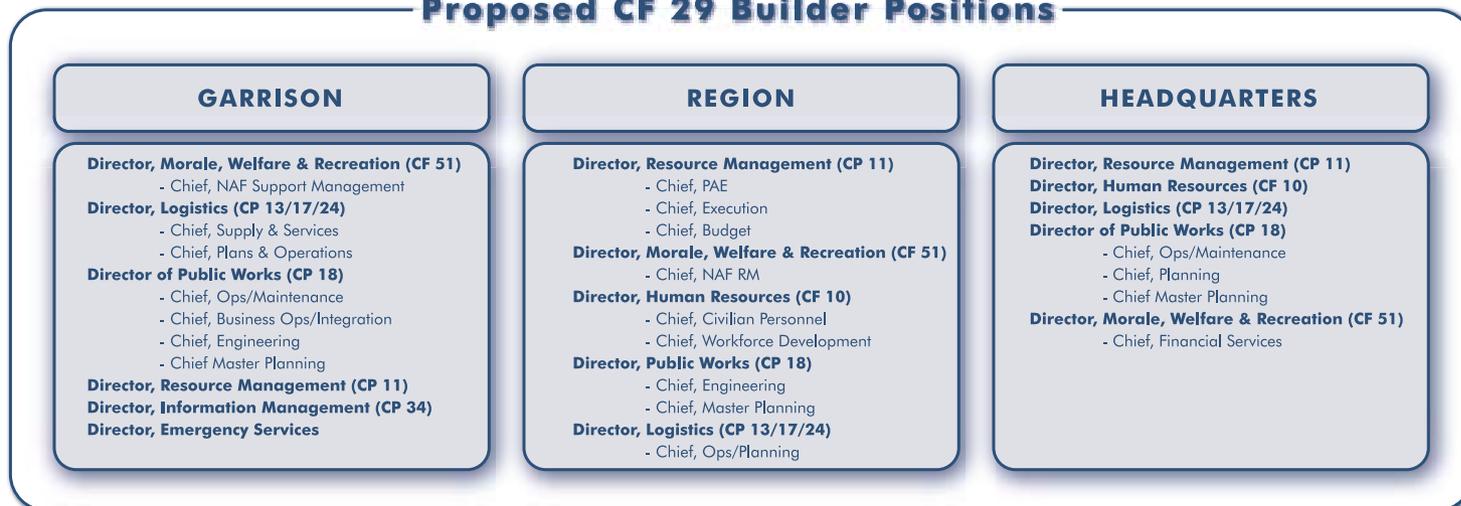


Figure 2: Proposed IMCOM Builder Positions

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critical positions (DeMarais, 2007). As part of its strategic plan, IMCOM has designated key leadership positions under CEDAP (DGC and GS-15 equivalent) and has focused its efforts on developing Installation Management Career Field 29 (CF 29). These positions and select ones from other career fields are centrally managed by IMCOM to assign senior leaders at the IMCOM, region and garrison headquarters. The final selection of applicants for CEDAP positions is reviewed and approved by the Senior Executive Leadership of IMCOM. (IMCOM Senior Executive Leadership (SEL) is comprised of the IMCOM general officers and senior executive service (SES) members.) To develop the garrison leadership pipeline and facilitate succession planning, IMCOM is moving to identify "builder" positions for CF 29 at each headquarters level for those personnel who perform cross-functional broad-based installation management work with a significant requirement to integrate multiple disciplines (Kurd, 2007).

Figure 2 provides the proposed builder positions at each level of installation management. The intent is to develop personnel through functional assignments that will provide them with the experience and skill to be successful at higher grades. In effect, IMCOM has proactively instituted a process for judging, developing, and selecting prospective leaders to fill critical assignments within the installation management community.

Garrison commanders must keep in mind that it is harder to get the wrong people off the bus once they are given a seat at the installation. I am sure that each of us during our careers can recount such examples. While it may be easy to remove an employee that has committed a crime

or violated the explicit values of the organization, it is significantly more difficult to move on a hardworking, likeable, and loyal supervisor that just doesn't have it. Our loyalty as leaders extends downward and we offer one more chance or tend to overlook shortcomings; we have natural blind spots when it comes to people. This is often to the detriment of accomplishing key tasks of the garrison and may cause the overall performance and reputation of the organization to suffer. A senior supervisor may have the technical and conceptual competence for managing the processes within his directorate, but may lack the interpersonal skills needed to lead that directorate. This could result in a poor climate among employees that directly affects their motivation and hence their performance. Additionally, if a supervisor is unable to effectively work with peers or with stakeholders outside of the garrison structure, it could also adversely affect the garrison mission performance.

Once again, NSPS is intended to provide commanders and supervisors with the tools to effectively manage performance and assess potential. NSPS employees develop job objectives with their supervisors (designated as rating officials) and have written performance plans by which they will be counseled and evaluated during the rating period. This applies equally to installation management professionals enrolled in CEDAP and supervisors that are in the builder positions. Ideally, performance plans align with core competencies of the organization and the supporting missions of the directorates. These plans should be used as the basis for judging and managing people that are on the garrison team. Leaders have inherent responsibilities to make expectations clear, to ensure

alignment of the job objectives with the organizational vision and missions, and to hold employees accountable for their contributions.

Additionally, garrison leaders have an obligation to help employees grow professionally by giving them the opportunity to develop and exercise the necessary skills and competencies. These opportunities are captured in individual development plans that list training, education, and development activities to enhance the development of the up and coming leaders in the organization.

Tichy and Bennis offer six lessons to help leaders develop the capacity to judge people and manage them to contribute to the organizational goals (Tichy and Bennis, 2007). These lessons fit well with the initiatives within IMCOM and DoD for senior installation management leadership (Figure 3).

The third area of leader judgment that has great impact is those judgments rendered during times of crisis. The types of crises that can occur in garrison environments are wide-ranging. Incidents occur, like home or building fires, damage due to weather, medical emergencies, and others that require routine response by emergency services. While these incidents may present a clear threat to life and property, they may also be relatively small in scope and impact to the overall community. An effective response can be anticipated and prepared for by developing standard procedures and protocols. Thus, responses to these events can effectively be planned, resourced, and rehearsed. As part of the garrison daily operations, we have practiced fire evacuation, conducted force protection exercises, and employed suspicious package protocols. The

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LEADERSHIP JUDGEMENT LESSONS	IMCOM APPLICATIONS
1. Anticipating the Need for Key People Changes	- Monitoring and managing personnel movements
2. Specifying Leadership Requirements	- Designating positions under CEDAP (DGC and GS-15 equivalents) - Developing Career Field 29 - Identifying builder position across career fields
3. Mobilize and Align the Social Network to Support the "Right" Call	- Managing assignments and final selection by the Senior Executive Leadership - Garrison Commander, DGC, and CSM apply leadership judgment at local installations
4. Making the Process Transparent and Judged Fair	- CEDAP and CF 29 programs briefed at Garrison Commanders Conference - IMCOM policies and processes announced - NSPS education and training programs for the workforce
5. Making it Happen	- Making selection and assignment decisions in accordance with CEDAP and NSPS policies - Providing evaluations and rewards IAW CEDAP and NSPS policies
6. Provide Continuous Support to Help the Leader Succeed	- Develop written performance plan - Develop individual development plan for training, education, and development - Provide periodic counseling and conduct performance monitoring

**Figure 3:** Leadership Judgment Lesson Applications

technical expertise to deal with these incidents resides in the specialized teams and directorates within the garrison. The role of the commander is to monitor and ensure processes are effectively executed and to judge when and where to add support if necessary.

There is another class of crisis events that requires substantially more from the commander. These events when they occur have substantial impact on the community and may overwhelm the resources (people, facilities, equipment and, most importantly, time) immediately available to respond. If handled poorly, these types of crises will damage the confidence in the garrison staff to provide for the community. A vivid example is the initial response by senior leaders in the Army when the special reports were released on the care of wounded Soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) at the now-infamous Building 18 (Priest and Hull, 2007).

The judgments rendered by key leaders were deemed inadequate and inappropriate. Stakeholder response was immediate and severe with the relief of the WRAMC commander and subsequent resignations of the surgeon general and the secretary of the Army. While Walter Reed made the national headlines, Army garrisons had been dealing with medical-hold companies and injured Soldiers in transition since the beginning of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The local garrisons were faced with similar challenges – lack of clear policy and assigned responsibility, inadequate resources to meet unanticipated requirements, and an emotionally-charged issue of caring for wounded warriors (Gettleman, 2003). Garrison commanders had to become deeply involved and apply their judgment on what to do to support Soldiers and tenant commands.

Once again, Tichy and Bennis offer insights on effective leader judgments (Tichy and Bennis, 2007). Leaders prepare in advance for crisis by building powerful teams within the garrison organization and across the community. These teams of stakeholders have a shared organizational vision for the community and act in accordance with organizational values. The foundation for judgment and actions in time of crisis are embedded in the strategic plans and standard procedures to deal with anticipated crisis events. For both anticipated and unanticipated crises, leaders must quickly bring together those with the knowledge to inform judgment and to mobilize others with the experience, skills, and competencies to take action.

In a personal example from early in my base support battalion (BSB) experience, there was the suspected sexual abuse by a member of a contracted summer youth camp

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program. You can imagine the anxiety experienced by parents whose children were enrolled in the program as well as the concern from other members of the community. Even though there was a clear protocol to follow, it was important for the garrison leadership to be actively involved. It was important to gather all the information and facts as we knew them. It was important to communicate quickly and report the incident up the chain of command. It was important to be receptive to "help" from outside agencies – in this case, there was a U.S. Army Europe task force specifically designed for such an occurrence – and to coordinate with multiple agencies (e.g., law enforcement, medical and social services). More importantly, it was essential to contact the parents of children in the program and to notify the community. Our actions were consistent with the BSB strategic priorities for the well-being of our children of the community and open communications.

This article has addressed the essential function of leadership that spans each level (direct, organizational and strategic) and the set of competencies by exploring leader judgment. Garrison leaders must effectively execute judgments about strategy (how it will accomplish its missions), people (who is on the bus), and what to do in times of crisis (aligned with organizational vision and values). Judgments are made by leaders and become the foundation for organizational and strategic decisions that have significant impact on the garrison's ability to provide support for the community members – that is the reason that they exist. It is vital for garrison commanders to develop effective judgment within themselves and among the garrison leadership.

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