

## CHAPTER 7

**STRESS ISSUES IN ARMY OPERATIONS****7-1. Introduction**

This chapter reviews Army operational concepts for how we will fight. It highlights specific stressors that can contribute to decreased effectiveness, battle fatigue casualties, or misconduct stress behaviors. The chapter summarizes a number of other doctrinal manuals. For those readers who are already familiar with those manuals, it will highlight stress issues which were not explicitly stated in the original sources. For those readers who are not familiar with the source manuals, this chapter provides a hasty "one-stop" reference source. However, they are strongly encouraged to continue their education in the original references. All leaders must understand these operational realities and the words used to describe them. Leaders at all levels work closely with each other so they may be able to anticipate the stressors and prevent stress casualties.

**7-2. Overview of the Challenges**

*a. Army Missions.* Army forces must meet worldwide strategic challenges against the full range of threats within highly varied operational theaters. In areas of greatest strategic concern, the Army must be prepared to fight battles of unprecedented scope and intensity. The operations surrounding such battles will routinely involve cooperation with other services and allies. While the threat of tactical nuclear war has decreased, it may be present in some confrontations. The threat of functioning on a chemical or biological battlefield remains a possibility in any conflict, anywhere in the world.

**NOTE**

Every scenario involves its own unique combination of stressors which must be controlled to assure that our forces function at their best.

*b. Joint and Combined Operations.*

The nature of modern battle and the broad dispersion of US geographical interests require joint operations by US forces. It is imperative that Army units fight as part of a joint team with units of the US Air Force, the US Navy, and the US Marine Corps. We must cooperate with representatives of civilian and government agencies. These agencies may include the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Red Cross, United Nations, and international relief agencies. It is also critical that commanders prepare themselves and their troops to fight in coalition/combined warfare alongside the forces of our nation's allies. Teamwork in joint and combined operations will be necessary in any battle the Army forces fight, as well as in operations other than war.

(1) Leaders must take active steps to counteract prejudices, disrespect, mistrust, and doubt about the reliability and competence of other services and allies. It is extremely important that soldiers respect those beliefs that are different from our own and respect the customs and practices of people in other nations. Unchecked prejudices, disrespect, mistrust, and doubt can lead to high battle fatigue casualties or to misconduct stress behaviors which could damage the coalition.

(2) When directed by the national command authority (NCA), the Army may need to assist a less-developed host nation (HN) in setting up an effective stress control or community mental health/social services system. This system may be for its Armed Forces, refugees, and/or civilian population.

*c. Forward Presence Versus Contingency Operations.* Army operations in the foreseeable future will be fought in one of two basic environments.

(1) One environment may be an anticipated theater of war with an existing support structure of communications, air defense, logistic facilities, and ports. Service families may be present in the theater before the conflict. Their presence adds additional concern for their security and for noncombatant evacuation operations. The troops and their families must have confidence that the chain of command can be trusted to implement a workable plan to assure the safety of the families. Otherwise, the soldiers' first concern will be the safety of their family rather than mission accomplishment.

(2) The other environment may be a relatively austere theater. In this environment, Army leaders will have to choose between creating such a support base or fighting with only external support. Contingency operations are military actions requiring rapid deployment in response to a crisis. Contingency operations involving Army forces may provide a rapid show of force in support of a threatened ally to deter aggression by a hostile neighbor. Contingency operations react to the invasion of a friendly government, protect lives and property of US nationals, rescue hostages, or perform other tasks as directed by the NCA. The size of a contingency force, its mission, and its area of operations will vary.

(a) Rapid deployment itself involves much physical and mental stress during preparation and transportation. If the deployment crosses many time zones, there is the added disruption of the body's biological day-night/work-rest cycles.

(b) The necessity for secrecy in contingency operations puts great stress on the soldiers who are suddenly "sealed in." Great stress is also placed on their families with whom they cannot communicate. Leadership must ensure and support the establishment of family support groups. They must also be sensitive to

the needs of families to learn about the involvement of their spouses in particular military operations. Stress control leader actions are discussed in Appendix A.

*d. Austere Support.* Army forces must be prepared to fight their battles at the end of long, vulnerable lines of logistical support, with limited availability of airlift and sealift. They must anticipate high consumption rates for all supplies. They may have to fight outnumbered against an enemy with significantly shorter supply lines. This may be true for leading US echelons even in a contingency operation against a distant opponent much smaller than the United States. Logistical support may be austere in such situations and thereby markedly affect the design of campaigns and the planning and conduct of battles.

#### NOTE

Shortages and uncertainties of re-supply contribute to low morale and high rates of battle fatigue casualties unless troops are psychologically prepared to improvise. Once apprised of the situation, they must believe that everything feasible is being done to support them.

*e. Urban Combat.* Combat in built-up areas will be unavoidable in war and operations other than war (conflict). Units will have to plan for attack and defense in urban areas and for fluid battles around them. The usual static, house-to-house nature of urban warfare, with many snipers, mines, and booby traps, tends to increase battle fatigue casualties unless troops are well-trained and led. Built-up areas are also likely to provide temptations for looting, alcohol and substance abuse, black marketeering, and harmful social interactions. Preventive measures must be in place to avoid these temptations. For

more detailed information, refer to FMs 90-10 and 90-10-1.

*f. Presence of Civilians and Rules of Engagement.* The likely presence of civilians in combat areas can have diverse effects. Seeing and perhaps accidentally inflicting casualties on civilians (especially if they are women and children) increases battle fatigue, especially if the civilians are perceived as friendly. If the civilians are hostile, or have been infiltrated by enemy partisans, the potential for misconduct stress behaviors is high unless strong unit cohesion and a sense of ethical purpose protects against it.

*g. Continuous Operations.* Continuous land combat is an advanced warfare concept made possible by the almost complete mechanization of land combat forces. It is also made possible by the technology that permits effective movement and target detection at night, in poor weather, and in other low-visibility conditions. Combat can continue around the clock at the same high level of intensity for extended periods. Armies now have the potential to fight without letup. The reasons that have traditionally forced a pause—darkness, resupply, regrouping—have been largely overcome by technological advances. Thus, CONOPS is more possible due to advanced technology, and the demands of such operations are very stressful. However, the possibility of failure of the sophisticated devices can also be a great stressor. Soldiers who become dependent on the technology in their military occupational specialty could feel extremely vulnerable should the equipment fail. Where possible, soldiers should be taught how to accomplish the task without the device so that its failure would not be so catastrophic. Refer to FM 25-101 for doctrine on battle-focused training. For recommendations related to CONOPS leader actions, see FM 22-9 and Appendix A of this FM.

*h. Sustained Operations.* The term *sustained operations* (SUSOPS) is used when the

same soldiers and small units engage in CONOPS with no opportunity for the unit to stand down. This permits very little opportunity for soldiers to catch more than a few minutes of sleep under disruptive conditions. Weapons systems can operate day and night, but must be refueled, rearmed, and repaired by soldiers for their operations. Soldiers need water, food, hygiene, and sleep just as the machines need refueling and preventive maintenance. Sustained operations should be avoided whenever possible except for brief periods, when forced by enemy action or accepted by command as essential to maintain pressure on a disintegrating enemy or catch him at a disadvantage. Sustained operations must always be considered carefully as a calculated risk. Leader actions when SUSOPS must be undertaken are discussed in Appendix A.

#### NOTE

Sustained operations place significant emphasis on the leaders' abilities to implement effective sleep plans (which include the leaders) and on cross-training of soldiers so they can perform a variety of roles during combat operations. Continuous operations do not necessarily involve SUSOPS if sufficient units (or individuals within units) are available to allow everyone to get adequate rest. Leaders must be aware that SUSOPS quickly deplete the combat effectiveness of units physically, logistically, and psychologically. For CONOPS, plans must be in place to relieve spent units and redesignate missions to other less depleted organizations.

### 7-3. The Potential Battlefield

a. The threat will vary according to the intensity and location of the conflict. A European,

Southwest Asian, and possibly Northwest Asian scenario would most likely be a high-intensity environment. This environment would be characterized by broad frontages, deep targets, and enemy penetrations of varying depths. Operations other than war (conflicts) are usually associated with Third World countries. These conflicts would be characterized by poorly defined frontages, semiautonomous dismounted operations conducted at varying depths, and rear area security problems.

b. Each environment would challenge (stress) friendly logistics—including medical—in terms of distances and amounts required. Each environment would also provide opportunities for deep strikes, long-range unconventional operations, and terrorism. Prepared airfields, permanent bases, and fixed support facilities (including medical units and facilities) will become primary targets for opposing forces. In the wartime environment, such facilities may not survive. In the operations other than war environment, logistical and command centers may have to be highly centralized for defense, thus lengthening already long lines of communications.

#### 7-4. **Army Operations Doctrine: Implications for Combat Stress**

##### a. *Basics of Army Operations.*

(1) Army operations described in FM 100-5 (the Army's keystone doctrinal manual) emphasize battlefield success through five basic tenets—initiative, depth, agility, synchronization, and versatility. These tenets apply to everyone and every unit in the Army. Table 7-1 identifies each tenet, the stress issue associated with that

tenet, and recommended actions for commanders and leaders.

(2) The most violent and high-risk environment is that of war with its associated combat operations.

b. *Opposing Forces on the Battlefield.* The opposing forces on the modern battlefield will rarely fight across orderly, distinct lines. Massive concentrations of forces and fires will make penetrations all but inevitable and will result in a nonlinear battlefield. There may be little distinction between rear and forward areas.

c. *Reliance on Traditional American Military Qualities.* Army operations doctrine utilizes the traditional military qualities of skill, tenacity, boldness, and courage, together with the technological prowess, self-reliance, and aggressive spirit which characterizes the American soldier. While respecting the increased complexity and lethality of modern weapons, Army doctrine recognizes that such weapons are no better than the soldier's skill and mastery he brings to bear on the enemy.

#### 7-5. **Endurance/Staying Power on the Battlefield**

In addition to initiative, agility, depth, synchronization, and versatility, Army operations will demand endurance. Endurance is the ability of a force to sustain high levels of combat potential relative to its opponent over the duration of a campaign. American soldiers have proven their staying power under adversity. This quality of endurance can make the difference between victory and defeat.

Table 7-1. Combat Stress Issues and the Battlefield Imperatives

<b>INITIATIVE</b>	
<b>STRESS ISSUES</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR COMMANDERS AND LEADERS</b>
SUBORDINATES MUST ACCOMPLISH COMMANDER'S INTENT WITHOUT DIRECT ORDERS.	PRACTICE STATING INTENT CLEARLY AND SIMPLY.
REQUIRES CORPORAL TO COLONEL TO BE PLANNERS AND PROBLEM SOLVERS.	TEACH PROBLEM SOLVING AND PLANNING SKILLS AT ALL LEVELS.
TAKING ACTION WITH LITTLE INFORMATION.	LET JUNIOR LEADERS BE RESPONSIBLE WITHOUT OVERMANAGEMENT.
TAKING ACTION WHILE IMPROVISING.	DEVELOP LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS WHICH REWARD IMPROVISATION.
TAKING ACTION WITHOUT IDEAL FORCE RATIOS, EQUIPMENT, SUPPORT, OR COMMUNICATIONS.	PRACTICE FIGHTING WITH LESS AND ACHIEVING MORE.
DETERIORATION IN ABILITY TO SEE PATTERNS AND MAKE DECISIONS DUE TO SLEEP LOSS AND STRESS.	PRACTICE SLEEP PLANNING AND STRESS CONTROL TECHNIQUES.
	TRAIN IN SMOKE, MOPP, AND ADVERSE WEATHER.
<b>DEPTH</b>	
<b>STRESS ISSUES</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR COMMANDERS AND LEADERS</b>
PLANNING WELL-AHEAD IN BOTH SPACE AND TIME.	PUSH INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION TO LOWER LEVELS.
ISOLATING OWN MEN AND UNITS, SOME FOR AN EXTENDED TIME.	TRAIN TO FIGHT WITH FEW RESOURCES AND REALISTIC BATTLE LOSSES.
SURVIVING IN ISOLATION, WITH UNCERTAIN RESUPPLY.	LEARN TO FUNCTION IN ISOLATION. TEACH WAYS TO LIVE AND SURVIVE BY SELF.
RISKING HIGH CASUALTIES.	EMPHASIZE HOPE, AND MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT DESPITE THE ODDS.
SOME UNITS SEEN AS BEING EXPENDABLE.	TRAIN SURVIVAL SKILLS TO ALL SOLDIERS/UNITS.

Table 7-1. Combat Stress Issues and the Battlefield Imperatives (Continued)

**AGILITY**

STRESS ISSUES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR COMMANDERS AND LEADERS
THINKING QUICKLY, AND MAKING DECISIONS.	PRACTICE HOW TO PLAN AND EXECUTE WITH SHORT NOTICE.
MOVING FAST AND SWITCHING OBJECTIVES.	BUILD SOLDIER LOYALTY TO SUPPORT QUICK REACTION TO MISSION CHANGES.
REACTING TO SUDDEN MISSION CHANGES.	PRACTICE WAYS TO ENSURE ALL SOLDIERS ARE CLEAR ON MISSION CHANGES AND ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES.
COMMUNICATING WITH SUBORDINATE AND NEIGHBORING UNITS.	PRACTICE COMMUNICATIONS USING MULTIPLE OR REDUNDANT MEANS.
SLOWING IN PERFORMANCE AND MENTAL ABILITY DUE TO SLEEP LOSS AND STRESS.	PRACTICE SLEEP DISCIPLINE AND MEASURES TO PREVENT FATIGUE. TRAIN IN SMOKE, MOPP, AND ADVERSE ENVIRONMENT.

**SYNCHRONIZATION**

STRESS ISSUES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR COMMANDERS AND LEADERS
UNITY OF EFFORT, EVEN THOUGH DISPERSED. MASSING RAPIDLY, INCREASING THE CHANCES OF CASUALTIES FROM FRIENDLY FIRE.	BUILD TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN OTHER UNITS, SUPPORTING ARMS AND SERVICES.
EXPLICIT COORDINATION AMONG UNITS.	OVERPRACTICE COMMUNICATIONS (SOLDIERS AND UNITS).
PARTICIPATION IN COORDINATION OF MISSION WITH LESS DEPENDENCE ON PRIMARY COMMUNICATIONS NETS.	COLLECT AND EVALUATE INFORMATION FROM A VARIETY OF TRADITIONAL AND NONTRADITIONAL SOURCES.
INTERPRETING WAYS IN WHICH FRIENDLY AND ENEMY CAPABILITIES INTERACT.	USE INTERACTIVE DECISION-MAKING MODELS.
DETERIORATION IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS DUE TO SLEEP LOSS, STRESS, LACK OF HYDRATION, AND ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTS.	ENSURE SLEEP DISCIPLINE, ADEQUATE WATER INTAKE, AND ACCLIMATIZATION FOR ALL PERSONNEL.

*Table 7-1. Combat Stress Issues and the Battlefield Imperatives (Continued)*

<b>VERSATILITY</b>	
<b>STRESS ISSUES</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR COMMANDERS AND LEADERS</b>
COMPLETING AN OPERATION WHILE SHIFTING THE FOCUS TOWARD THE NEXT OPERATIONS.	PRACTICE WAYS TO ENSURE ALL SOLDIERS ARE CLEAR ON MISSION CHANGES AND ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES.
SPLITTING ELEMENTS OF THE UNIT DURING TAILORING OF THE TASK FORCE.	CONDUCT TASK FORCE TRAINING AND DEVELOP UNIT COHESION WHILE BUILDING TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN OTHER UNITS AND ELEMENTS.
CHANGING THE COMBAT MISSION OF DESTROYING TO REBUILDING.	BUILD SOLDIER'S LOYALTY TO SUPPORT QUICK REACTION TO MISSION CHANGES AND NEW OBJECTIVES.
SUDDENLY CHANGING FROM HIGH AROUSAL ACTIVITY TO FORCED INACTIVITY (OR VICE VERSA).	DEVELOP CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS OF LETTING OFF STEAM AND OF GEARING UP AND DOWN.
RAPIDLY MOVING FROM ONE GEOGRAPHICAL REGION TO ANOTHER AND FROM ONE TYPE OF WARFARE TO ANOTHER IN QUICK SECESSION.	PRACTICE SOLDIER SURVIVAL SKILLS WHILE TRAINING IN ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTS.