

**LECTURE ON MILITARY LEADERSHIP**  
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The Commandant (CSC)  
 Directing Staff  
 Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you once again, especially in my capacity as a farmer. Though, I must admit that I am not yet qualified to speak to you on my new profession. We will however correct that fairly soon. Today, gentlemen, I have the privilege of addressing you on the subject of 'Military Leadership'. I understand you already have had one or two lectures on the subject matter, so if by any chance, I tend to touch once in a while on issues already discussed, I hope you will not be bored.

Since I lay no claim to being an intellectual theorist, I do not therefore intend in my treatment of the subject to fill you with quotations from known and unknown philosophers. I intend to treat it simply as I see it from a soldier's point of view drawing examples at times from some of my varied experiences in my short military career.

**Leadership.** So let us start gentlemen, by defining the word leadership. At this stage, I will like us to take the narrow and simple but most acceptable meaning of a leader as one who leads others and therefore take leadership to mean the act of leading others. Having accepted this, let us now see what are the qualities of leadership or what one might describe in military terms, the Principles of Leadership.

**Qualities of Leadership.** Over the years, people in all walks of life in educational and other types of institutions have tried to come to agreement as to what are the qualities of leadership? Researchers including the military are yet to agree fully as to what precisely are these qualities. Since we are dealing with the military, I will give you some examples of this lack of agreement by listing the qualities of a leader as described by some famous military leaders and institutions.

**Qualities of a Leader**

<b>US Marine Corps</b>	<b>RMC Canada</b>	<b>US Army</b>	<b>BRNC (Dartmouth)</b>	<b>RAF College</b>	<b>FM Lord Harding</b>	<b>FM Lord Smith</b>
Integrity	Loyalty	Bearing	Faith	Efficiency	Fitness	Courage
Knowledge	Professional	Courage	Courage	Energy	Integrity	Willpower
Decisiveness	Competence	(Physical	Loyalty	Sympathy	Courage	Initiative
Dependability	Courage	and Moral)	Sense of Duty	Resolution	Initiative	Knowledge
Initiative	Honesty	Decisiveness	Integrity	Courage	Willpower	
Tact	Common Sense	Endurance	Humanity	Tenacity	Knowledge	
Justice	Good Judgment	Initiative	Common Sense	Personality	Judgment	
Enthusiasm	Confidence	Integrity	Good Judgment		Team Spirit	
Bearing	Initiative	Judgment	Tenacity			
Endurance	Tact	Justice	Fortitude			
Unselfishness	Self-Control	Loyalty	Physical			
Loyalty	Humour	Tact	and Mental			
Judgment	Personal	Unselfishness	Fitness			

	Example Energy Perseverance Enthusiasm Decisiveness Justice		Self-Control Cheerfulness Knowledge			
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You can see from the above that there is no universal agreement on these qualities. In fact, from the above description, there is only one quality on which everybody seemed to agree is essential to Military Leadership and that is courage. But then, I am sure you will agree with me that courage is an essential quality for all good soldiers irrespective of rank. Coming back to all the qualities described, if you were to take a closer look at them, you will find that they are all desirable qualities in a leader and you might even find some more yourselves if you think hard about it. I have drawn your attention deliberately to this lack of agreement in order to enable you to know that they exist so that when I give you what I consider to be the qualities of leadership, you will know that they are purely my views and not necessarily a consensus of military thinking. It is my opinion therefore that the essential qualities for Military Leadership are:

- a. Courage
- b. Integrity
- c. Loyalty
- d. Professional Knowledge
- e. Initiative
- f. Judgment

You will notice that I said essential qualities. I did so because even I do accept that there are other qualities, but while I might consider them desirable, I do not consider them essential. For what I consider essential, I am concerning myself purely with the military. In so doing, I will want you to understand that I am proceeding from the point of view that no two military situations are ever exactly the same even though military leaders are expected to be able to cope with the different situations, and in each situation, they are expected to give effective leadership. It is of course known and accepted that different situations may demand different qualities of leadership or their application. In choosing the qualities I listed above, I have chosen those qualities I consider that a leader must have in any conceivable military situation to enable him give effective leadership. I now proceed to expatiate on those qualities:

- a. **Courage.** By this I mean both physical and moral courage. Physical courage I consider to be that quality which enables a man to meet danger without giving way to fear. But to a military leader, lack of fear is not enough; he needs that moral courage which enables him to take decisions even though he knows that those decisions are not going to be popular. For the supreme test of military leadership is war and in war, decisions cost lives. There were times when famous war commanders were forced by situations to take calculated risks in some cases even against the advice of their staff.
- b. **Integrity.** This simply means uprightness and honesty. You will agree with me that there is no way a leader can gain the confidence of his subordinates without being upright and honest in his dealings with them. Confidence, as they say begets confidence and it is certainly an essential element in the relationship between leadership and followership.
- c. **Loyalty.** As officers, I do not think that I need to explain the meaning of loyalty to you. It will however, be relevant to point out that by loyalty, I am not merely referring to being firm in allegiance to the State, but loyalty in all its manifestations

– i.e, loyalty to the cause, to subordinates, to superiors and to oneself. It may sound funny talking about loyalty to oneself but I believe that a military leader needs to be honest in his assessment of his own capabilities, and were he to over-assess himself, he would to my mind, be disloyal to himself and of course, he or his followers will face the consequences.

- d. **Initiative**. By this, I mean the energy and resourcefulness that enables a person to act without prompting from others. In my view, nobody can even begin to lay claim to any form of leadership if he cannot act on his own. Especially, military leadership with its many complex demands. Those of you who have participated in as peaceful a thing as an exercise with troops will agree with me that the moment you cross the Start Line (SL), anything can happen and if you are leading even a platoon, you will invariably be called upon to use your initiative.
- e. **Professional Knowledge**. For a military leader, professional knowledge is a necessity. The profession of arms as you obviously know is today, probably the most dynamic profession. The military leader of today can no longer afford to be seen as merely a swash-bulking horse-rider. He needs to master not only his profession, but other professions as well, if he is even to just understand the different military hardware of the modern army. To military leaders in the third world, the need to have a good grasp of the political, social and economic situation of their countries is imperative if they are not to be a disservice to their country. One cannot over-emphasize the importance of knowledge in leadership because you cannot lead from a position of ignorance. In almost any given situation, you will find that the person with superior knowledge, tends to take over the leadership of the group.
- f. **Judgment**. Here, I mean the ability to compare ideas and elicit the truth. A person who is likely to be confronted with different situations at different times must be able to judge situations correctly; he must be able to use his subordinates correctly and to do that, he has to be a good judge of men, their characters and their capabilities.

Well, gentlemen, as I have said earlier, I have enumerated qualities I consider essential to military leadership and which I also think are necessary leadership requirements in almost any given situation. In listing these qualities, I have given no regard to their relative importance because I do not for one moment believe that you can be an effective military leader if you lack anyone of them. In the course of our discussion, I will like us to see if we can think of a possible military situation where a leader may not need any of these qualities.

Before I conclude this lecture, I think it will be pertinent to examine the relevance of these qualities to the Nigerian Military. In so doing, one needs to quickly review the recent history of the military in order to see the relevance or otherwise of the qualities. It will be recalled that in 1966, two rather traumatic events, i.e., the January and July coups, disturbed the cohesion of the military and threatened its continued existence. Not only did these events destabilise the military, they also shook its leadership. For the first time, the mystery and invincibility surrounding the officer corps were shattered and officers almost lost their grip on the other ranks. Those of you who were in the forces at that time will remember that, that was a time when ranks hardly mattered. In most units, officers as individuals, in spite of their ranks and appointment, rose up overnight to take control of the troops. Other ranks, having found out that officers were not bullet proof tried in many places to permanently take the law into their own hands. Various illegal activities were taking place in many units with almost total impunity. However, as I said, in most units, a handful of officers strived to put the situation under control. There are many examples of such situations where officers displayed these rare qualities of leadership. One of these examples

was towards the end of 1966 when the 5 Battalion then in Kano mutinied and killed an officer and the Battalion RSM. The then Commanding Officer and most of the officers abandoned their command and went into hiding. The late Head of State, General Murtala, then a Lt. Col. and based in Lagos, flew to Kano, drove into the unit, got the soldiers on parade and under control. He then got hold of the Commanding Officer and re-established his authority over the troops. After that the usual commission of enquiry and court martial followed. I have chosen this example because I believe it brings out quite clearly most of the qualities we are talking about. It certainly needed courage to face mutinous troops whom you have never worked with. It required physical courage to face them and moral courage for Murtala to decide to undertake the responsibility to do so, since he was not ordered to do it. If he was not loyal to the army he would not have undertaken the task. When he landed in Kano, he was not in full possession of the facts of the situation and the Commanding Officer was not there to brief and advise him so he was left entirely to use his own initiative and judgment which he did correctly.

The relationship between the officer corps and the other ranks remained in this rather unsatisfactory condition up to the time the civil war broke out. In a way, the civil war, regrettable as it was, brought its own blessing to the officer corps. It was the civil war which demonstrated to the other ranks that they could not do without the officers. The superior professional knowledge of the officers came into play and the other ranks realised, even though in most cases sub-consciously, that they needed this knowledge to stay alive and prosecute the war. By the end of the war, the authority of the officer corps was re-established, a process which would have taken God knows how long if the civil war had not offered the officer corps the chance to prove itself. Of course, there are myriads of examples during the war where these qualities were displayed. There were also a number of situations which demanded these qualities but because they were lacking, there were disastrous consequences.

I have given you some of these examples in order to show how relevant these qualities are to the Nigerian military. Their relevance is not just confined to a crisis situation. You are all fully aware that the normal process of growth and expansion in our armed forces was disturbed during the civil war. You also know the various efforts at re-organisation and very recently of barracks development and training. These were all efforts directed at bringing complete normalcy to the armed forces. With soldiers living out of barracks, with training facilities not adequate, the possession and where possible the development of these qualities are necessary and essential for the armed forces.

In concluding this lecture, I will like to draw your attention to this very true maxim “Good leadership always exists in a form appropriate to its environment”. I am doing this so that you don’t lose sight of the fact that while leadership is essentially the same everywhere, its application has to be related to the environment. To exercise effective leadership in the Nigerian armed forces therefore, the leaders must have intimate knowledge of the Nigerian military, its weaknesses and strength, its limitations and its abilities, its hopes and aspirations.

Thank you.