

Commandant's Note

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A TENACIOUS MINDSET *OUR KEY TO VICTORY*

The threats we face today have demonstrated an ability to learn, adapt, and transform. Whether these security challenges are posed by such nation states as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran or by violent extremist organizations like ISIS, they require Infantry leaders who are not only tactically and technically proficient, but who are also tenacious in character and mindset.

Nowhere has the dogged tenacity of the American Infantryman been better exemplified than during the bitter fighting in Vietnam's la Drang Valley from 14-16 November 1965, when then LTC Harold G. Moore Jr., CSM Basil Plumley, and the Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) fought vastly outnumbered in the first major battle between U.S. and People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces. Facing hundreds of enemy determined to overrun his outnumbered unit by ground assaults, LTC Moore and his troops fought relentlessly from hastily prepared positions on bullet-swept hillsides and in sparse vegetation over a period of three days. At the end of the bloodbath the enemy withdrew, leaving over 600 of his dead in and around the 7th Cavalry's positions and taking with them the knowledge that their new American enemy was a tenacious, battle-proven adversary who was prepared to fight and win.

While the battle for LZ X-Ray raged in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, the seeds of victory were sown in the red clay soil of Fort Benning. LTC Moore's emphasis on Soldier and leader tactical and technical proficiency through rigorous training is what enabled the victory. The results of this tough training and leadership philosophy were demonstrated by the actions of such warriors as then CPT Tony Nadal who moved his company to the sounds of the guns; 2LT Joe Marm who single-handedly attacked an enemy position, suffering severe wounds in the process; and SGT Ernie Savage who assumed the mantle of combat leadership of the "Lost Platoon," calling for supporting artillery fire within 50 meters of his location and stifling a number of attacks throughout his platoon's isolation. This mental tenacity was not born but bred under the leadership of LTC Moore and CSM Plumley who instilled in their troopers the "will to win" and the mental resiliency of "three strikes and you're not out!" Today's leaders must possess this self-confidence and mental tenacity that allows them to take on any challenge while leading from the front.

There can be no other way, and as in the past our Army must be ready now to face the challenges of close combat and win! That is our key to victory!!

One Force, One Fight! Follow Me!

