

## Command Experience of an Aviation Warrant Officer through Mentorship and Counseling

WOSSC 10-02, CW4 Sam R. Baker

I served as a Platoon Leader for 4<sup>th</sup> ID from November 2005 – November 2006 while deployed to Taji, Iraq and then in my current assignment from April 2007 till now as a Platoon Leader, Executive Office and Acting Commander. These assignments are not traditionally assigned to warrant officers in the aviation community, therefore creating an opportunity to set an example in mentorship and counseling for superiors, peers and subordinates alike to emulate.

Observation #1: Leaders were and are not conducting counseling either way in the chain of command.

Discussion: During my tenure in leadership positions, I asked for counseling from my superiors on their intent while I was assigned and what expectations they had while I served under their command. It was like pulling teeth. On both occasions while assigned as a platoon leader, I created an initial counseling for all officers and the platoon and section sergeants. It usually consisted of 3 pages in memorandum format with a place for their ideas and input into the counseling. It had places for follow up quarterly counseling. The response to approach was split. Some warrants laughed and said it was a joke and that they had never received counseling from their previous platoon leader or commander during their entire careers. Others took it as it was meant to be received; that a leader had enough care and took the time to set aside and have a one on one about their position in the organization. Counseling is a way to have Soldiers follow in your footsteps and that is why counseling is lacking, no one is doing it IAW FM 6-22 para 8-68 through 8-79 & Appendix B.

Recommendation: Leaders at all levels take the time to utilize discipline and perform counseling. It is similar to doing what is right when no one is looking. Yes, there is a digitally signed Officer Evaluation Report support form and NCO counseling form, but raters and senior raters are NOT requiring these forms filled out or sometimes not even present when evaluating Officers and NCOs. Counseling is key to mission accomplishment and even more important in development of Soldiers and Leaders. It should be mandatorily required and checked at all levels. If a Soldier, regardless of rank feels that they have not been properly counseled, then they should exercise the open door policy often offered by leader and show some concern. Counseling is an inspectable item for all ranks during the Organizational Inspection Program (OIP).

Observation #2: Mentorship is not taking place in warrant officer circles and there is a lack of emphasis as noted in training calendars.

Discussion: Warrant Officer Professional Development has never been on the training schedule during the past two units assigned and frankly I have never seen it really. Officer Professional Development and Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development are quarterly at a minimum on the training calendar. The warrants are an afterthought and usually just a tag along with the Officer Professional Development. Subjects such as counseling, OER Support forms, ORBs, and other WO related issues must be addressed. Mentorship would be the driving force during WOPD where instruction and education is

shared among all, but basically from the Senior Warrants. WOPD should not be merely restricted to the organizations warrants, but be open to all warrants locally assigned so that some sharing takes place.

Recommendation: WOPD must be pursued and administered by warrant officers. If a collective group is too small for a WOPD, then the echelons above should initiate and cooperate. We as senior warrant officers need to be proactive in the training process in order to mentor younger officers and ourselves. While officers wish for us to perform some of their jobs, tasks and details, they at the same time wish for us not to outperform or exceed everyone's expectation of what we are. So taking care of our young and up and coming officers is a must. We must talk about how to mentor superiors and subordinates alike. We must become familiar with proper counseling to achieve goals and actively grow experienced warrants. So many warrants in aviation have not a clue as to when they should review their file, what courses to attend and when, how to write a dash one and deal with superiors out of the cockpit. WOPD is the key to mentoring warrant officers of all grades. They must be conducted quarterly and have a purpose and be of quality.

Observation #3: Professional Military Education is not a priority and brushed off by leaders and officers as a waste of time.

Discussion: Young warrant officers in aviation are mainly concerned with flying. During my stint at 4<sup>th</sup> ID, we sent exactly ZERO warrant officers to school for anything other than IPC and MTPC. These are two flying schools and all that BDE would release training dollars to fund. There always is a need linked to funds released from combat aviation brigades and PME is not one of them. The whole idea of bringing warrant officers under the branches was to give the same support to warrants that young captains receive from brigade commanders in reference to their education. It is not working yet. This is evident by captains being allowed to depart deployments for their respective advanced course and all warrants being told they have to remain in theater. Additionally the attitudes of most young warrants are that they wish not to attend as it has nothing to do with flying. I have had to really make it loud and clear about selection boards to the next grade to them and how they really don't understand the importance of fulfilling the next PME. The same goes for non-MOS related basic combat training or any training having to do with their additional duty. Seek and get training.

Recommendation: Having been in a leadership role where I am capable of having an impact, it is imperative for warrants to counsel and mentor as discussed in the previous two observations. We have to take it a step further. Warrants need to take an active interest in young warrants. Warrant Officers of all grades constantly say they do not have the time or desire to go to PME, counsel and make it mandatory that they understand the importance. A technique and suggestion would be to create a list of required and desired courses for each officer your assigned or mentoring. All warrants should attend their PME one grade early as now available by regulation. As a leader, I recommend that you create and submit a DA FM 4187 for each and every warrant officer for their next required level of PME. Additionally, if there was is a course that either prepares them or makes them a more capable officer in their job, additionally create a DA FM 4187 for that course. Air Assault and Airborne are just a few others that we can schedule for advancement and professional development. In aviation, the Rotary Wing Instrument Flight Examiner Course and other track course are available to pilots. Having

personally placed 19 warrant officers in courses in the past 24 months has been a rewarding and exceptional mentoring experience.

Summary: All three of these observations, discussions and recommendations basically are interwoven. They can be attacked independently, but I do believe that they are a definite problem in aviation and very well may be across other branches. We must be mentors up the chain to get PME, WOPD and counseling done. We must focus on our youth in the warrant officer ranks and get them the experience, knowledge and schooling in order to develop them into competent officers as well as the technician they signed up to be.

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