

10 Elements Contribute to Morale: Lesson by General Mark Hertling (3/24/22)

Yesterday, I was asked several times about Ukraine "morale." A difficult quality to define. It's something commanders (& all leaders) struggle to ensure. There are tons of research on the subject. Even Clausewitz discusses it. So here's a thread of some thoughts. 1/16

Clausewitz says that morale (& will) is critical. For soldiers & commanders. He says this quality is found through moral & physical courage, the acceptance of battlefield responsibility, & suppression of fear. Interesting. But how do you achieve that? 2/

On 2/24, I wrote a thread discussing how power on the battlefield is defined by resources and will. I said then the RU had advantage in "resources," but UKR had a greater advantage in "will." And I predicted UKR would win. "Will" can often override resource advantage. 3/

I believe will & morale complement each other. There are many articles about what contributes to morale & will. Some are random musings by business leaders and some are great research studies. But my experiences show there are 10 key elements contributing to morale. 4/

Here are those 10 key elements (not in order of importance):

1. Trust in leaders, from the small unit level to the top of the "food chain"
2. Belief that leaders will share the individual's hardships.
3. The inherent self-discipline of individuals 5/
4. The discipline instilled by the leaders in a variety of ways.
5. Training...and the individual's trust in their own ability
6. Trust... in the quality of equipment
7. Trust...in your team. 6/
8. The provisions of physical comforts: food, sleep, warmth & the ability to contact loved ones. 9.
- Communication (about the situation & the related expectations: "what are we doing and why do we need to do it?")
10. The belief you are on a "winning team." 7/

It's not difficult to determine which side - Russian or Ukraine - has the advantage in these ten areas.

1 and 2. "Trust in leaders & belief that leaders will sharing the individual's hardship."

These two pictures represent trust, or lack of it. And the organization takes on the personality of the leader: 8/



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3 and 4. "The inherent self-discipline of soldiers, and the discipline instilled by the leaders."

Again, one can find many pictures and films showing the differences...but here are just two: 9/





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5, 6, 7. "Training, trust in your equipment, trust in your team."

Both sides have similar equipment (though the RU's certainly have a quantity advantage). But after seeing RU training...it's abysmal.

On the other side, starting in 2008, UKR adopted the EUCOM and NATO training model. 10/



My experience: Seeing UKR soldiers arrive at Grafenwoehr to gain individual & unit proficiency (for operations in the Balkans & Afghanistan) and UKR sending young leaders to the Sergeant's course (WLC at Graf, with other European countries) is making a significant difference.11/



Additionally, the decision by the UKR Chief of Ground Forces to send increasing numbers of UKR senior leaders to US Military Schools (and US willingness to offer those slots) is also showing to be a major contributing factor to success. 12/



8. "Individual comfort: Food, sleep, warmth, contact with loved ones."

Both sides are experiencing the demands & stressors of combat, but 2 RU reports sum up the difference: "Our soldiers are digging trenches in the snow to sleep" and "We are requesting Chinese MREs." 14/

9. "Communication: What are we doing, and why?"

It's apparent from reports of RU soldiers who did not know why they were being sent to UKR or told they were going on an "exercise" -- that RU soldiers were not told of the mission or intent of the invasion. On the other hand. . . 13/

UKR's Army, Territorial Force & citizens are all aware of the threat to their sovereignty and freedom, and they continue to share their successes, and their challenges...with each other, and with the world. 14/

10. "Belief you are winning."

Today:

Reports of the "Bucha Pocket" north of Kyiv...

UKR soldiers surrounding 10,000 RU troops N of the capital.

UKR Air Force (UAF) - with ground Air Defense - continue to fight way above their weight.

A RU ship on fire in Berdyansk port. 15/

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Yes, "morale" is a critical factor in combat. Leaders know there are ways to instill that inherent desire for strong (high?) morale among their population and their forces. Lots of lessons to be learned from this fight...just like any fight in any conflict. 16/16