



Height of view

Command exercise

publication armée de terre

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Valeurs de l'Armée de Terre

THE HEIGHT OF VIEW... WHAT?

The height of view can be defined as the quality that allows the leader to consider a situation in its entirety and to dominate a problem. It goes beyond the simple fact of taking a step back and distance or even detachment from an event. If hindsight makes it possible to better analyze a situation, it is indeed the height of vision that allows the leader to respond in an adapted way beyond the simple level of reaction. The height of vision requires a solid culture, combined with practical intelligence and a sense of the concrete.

It implies a good understanding of the issues at stake in the situation, the objectives of the higher echelon and the ability to project oneself into the future.

THE HEIGHT OF THE VIEW... WHY?

- In peace time, the complex environment and the limited means require to take the and to absorb change by understanding the issues involved.
- The spirit of the mission requires a keen understanding of the desired end state of the higher level.

NO HEIGHT OF SIGHT ... WITHOUT :

- analytical skills;
- prospective vision;
- general culture and knowledge of the environment;

- ability to listen;
- ability to delegate, subsidiarity.

THE HEIGHT OF VISION ... IN THE TEXTS :

"Culture does not consist in knowing everything, nor in knowing a little of everything, but in dominating things in order to know them from a superior point of view. The more responsibilities a man has, the more he must acquire general views and escape from the detail. »

Gaston Courtois- L'art d'être chef (1953).

"The true school of leadership is that of general culture. Through it, thought is put in a position to exercise itself with order, to discern in things the essential from the accessory, (...) to rise to that degree where the whole appears without prejudice to nuances. There is not an illustrious captain who did not have the taste and the feeling for the heritage and the human spirit. At the bottom of Alexander's victories, we always find Aristotle. »

General de Gaulle - The Thread of the Sword (1932).

THE HEIGHT OF SIGHT ... "IN CONTACT":

Testimony of a lieutenant colonel staff officer - operation PAMIR - Afghanistan - 2012:

"In this month of May 2012, Task Force La Fayette armed by a French brigade is in a delicate position: on the security front, pressure remains strong in a political context where France must minimize its losses. Moreover, our disengagement has been officially announced, which worries our Afghan partners and our American allies. Finally, for several months now, French forces have no longer been operating in the notorious "green zone" in the Tagab sector, where there have been numerous clashes with the insurgents.

In favour of the installation of a post for the Afghan army in this zone, an American chief (the deputy of the US division) announces as he went to the Tagab bridge to "understand the difficulty of the terrain and assess the balance of power". The French general commanding the brigade feels that he should accompany his counterpart but his staff is strongly opposed to this and recommends that he does not expose himself personally to this reconnaissance.

Against the advice of his staff, however, it is the general himself who will accompany his American counterpart on the Tagab bridge to witness the installation of the Afghan army post.

In this particular case, showing a high level of vision implied that the chief had to finely measure the advantages that the French brigade could gain in credibility vis-à-vis the US command's command and its Afghan partner brigade, in relation to the human consequences (possible losses and impact on the morale of the entire French La Fayette Task Force). Once the decision had been taken and explained by the chief, the mission was mounted with a thorough tactical thinking and an in-depth risk analysis which largely guaranteed its success. »

Testimony of a Captain Unit Commander - Operation SANGARIS - CAR - 2015:

"The SCORPION GTIA has been based in the town of Bria for the past two days. The GTIA CP is located in front of an ex-Seléka rebel camp in a semi-permissive zone. One of the company's platoons on patrol faces a hostile crowd and exchanges of fire. The Company observed movements of armed ex-Seléka around the ERTF CP, which it was supposed to protect. Soon, we come under harassment fire and pressure rises within the sections.

The fire does not seem to be aimed directly at us, so the situation seems incomprehensible to me. Nevertheless, I understand that the security of the AITF HQ is closely linked to the calm that I will be able to maintain and the control of our reactions. I therefore decide to leave the conduct and management of the debriefings to my deputy in an attempt to analyse the situation. I go around the system to talk to my element leaders. I regularly go back and forth to the IATF headquarters to find out the content of the discussions taking place there. I finally understand, in the light of the information summarized at the beginning of the mandate, that we are surrounded by two politically divided factions of ex-Seléka. It is one of the isolated factions that is harassing us and is probably trying to provoke a response from all the ex-Seleka groups deployed in the area. I understand that this would result in a united reaction by the two factions of ex-Selekas in Bria against the SANGARIS arrangement. Moreover, at this point in time, I am not sure that the balance of power is locally favourable to us (little protection, limited number of armoured vehicles, ROLE 2 to 6 hours).

Thanks to the solidity of my subordinates (ability to conduct operations, quality of reports...) and a return to the spirit of the mission, I think I have been able to step back, but above all to take a more objective view of the situation as a whole (analysis of the forces present, their intentions, the risks and issues at stake, at the level of the IATF). From then on, I was able to make a precise situation assessment to my subordinates, which contributed to maintaining strict fire discipline. That day, the SGTIA restored calm without yielding to the provocations of the Sudanese faction of ex-Seléka de Bria. »

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