



## Firmness

Command exercise

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### FIRMNESS... WHAT?

**A moral quality, firmness is the expression of authority without excessive pressure but without hesitation either. It requires knowing where one stands and maintaining a high awareness of the mission as well as of the common good. It is a manifestation of the military leader's solidity and courage. While a leader can be expected to be benevolent, he must also be rigorous and tenacious. Paradoxically, he will receive a share of the consideration of his subordinates, who actually expect him to make decisions and encourage them to take action despite the difficulties. Firmness is exercised in many areas: decision making, execution of orders, maintaining discipline, judgment, etc..**

### FIRMNESS... WHY?

- It is necessary to fight against errors and possible behavioural faults or aberrations. ethical.
- It gives subordinates confidence in command; it has a positive influence on their adherence.
- It sets benchmarks for subordinates.
- It ensures that the spirit and letter of the mission is respected.
- It is a factor in command effectiveness and troop efficiency.

## **NO FIRMNESS ... WITHOUT :**

- a full awareness of one's role;
- a spirit of decisiveness and character;
- consistency;
- clear-sightedness and a moral conscience excluding any form of authoritarianism;
- a willingness to elevate one's subordinates;
- a personal requirement (exemplarity);
- righteousness.

## **FIRMNESS ... IN THE TEXTS :**

"A troop well in hand less educated is better than a more educated troop less in hand. »

Marshal Hubert Lyautey - The Social Role of the Officer (1891).

"Men do not seek the complacency of a weak authority; they are happy to find someone who is strong and on whom they can rely. Manly firmness reassures them, complacent weakness makes them distrustful and eventually disgusts them."

Henri Lacordaire (French religious, preacher, journalist and politician - 1802-1861).

"The war against demagogy is the hardest of all wars. »

Charles Péguy, Pensées (1931).

"You have to have a hard mind and a tender heart, you have to be firm but you have to love those you command, especially at home where you obey in friendship. Soldiers must know that obedience and love can go hand in hand. »

General WEYGAND

## **FIRMNESS... "IN CONTACT."**

Testimony of a Chief Warrant Officer, NCO Section Head - Operation Pamir - Afghanistan - 2009:

"We've been engaged for about 3 months in operation in Afghanistan, my platoon is on that day protecting 24 hours of a forward operating base.

As soon as we arrived, I warned all my subordinates about the use of narcotics because I know that it is easy to get some here. I have insisted that managers relay this message regularly. In spite of this, three young soldiers are able to obtain them. They decide to gather in a watchtower in the middle of the night, during their tour of duty, to smoke cannabis and take pictures of themselves.

The next day, one of my group leaders noticed it and immediately reported back to me, with photos. Given the seriousness of the incident, several questions come to mind:

should I keep this matter at my level? What impact will it have on my section? Can they still be trusted? How can we do without these 3 volunteers whose behaviour in action during our last mission I admired? Are there other men who have tried to get their hands on these drugs?

Quickly, I decide to report to my unit commander, proposing to him to opt for firmness. My three soldiers are immediately relieved of duty with a ban on carrying a weapon. The provost marshal initiated proceedings and a week later, the penalty was lifted: they were repatriated to France for disciplinary reasons. In the aftermath, I communicated about this incident with my section, reminding them of our responsibilities and duties at all levels. I insist on the fact that everyone is responsible for the safety and therefore the lives of others, especially during operations. I subsequently carried out several checks at random times. No incidents of this type have occurred again. The mandate ended very well and I did not have to identify any further breaches of discipline. The toughness and firmness imposed on all paid off. Looking back, I am convinced that I made the right decisions with respect to both my subordinates and my leaders. »

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