

CHAPTER 1

CAPTAINCY AND LEADERSHIP

CONTENTS

	<i>Paras</i>
Introduction	1-2
Leadership	3-4
The Aircraft Captain	5
The Qualities of a Good Captain	6-15
Training	16
Conclusion	17

Introduction

1. Like ships, all aircraft must have a captain. In single-seat aircraft the captain is, of course, the pilot. In large aircraft the captain is the head of a team of professional airmen and may be of any aircrew category.

2. JSP 318 establishes the authority and defines the responsibilities of the captain of an aircraft but it is also necessary to consider the qualities required for such a post. The best captain is one who possesses in large measure the qualities discussed below, and who tries always to improve his value to the Service.

Leadership

3. Leadership is a quality difficult to define, although it has long been recognized and appreciated by the human race. Leadership is required to carry through any enterprise of importance and often seemingly hopeless causes have been carried through due to the determination and personal influence of some individual.

4. Leadership is already present in all officers and aircrew because many of those personal attributes associated with leadership are required to become aircrew. Many of these attributes are inherent and the really great leaders throughout history were probably born such, but much can be done to acquire the qualities of leadership and, certainly, those qualities already present can be enhanced by careful study, thought and training.

The Aircraft Captain

5. An aircraft's crew is composed of professionally competent airmen all possessing leadership qualities to a greater or lesser extent.

Nevertheless, it is essential that one member of the crew should be captain, and should be recognized as such, in order to direct the crew's efforts and to be in overall charge. In him should be found and expressed the qualities of leadership, which may be stated briefly as:

- a. The influence of example arising from the character and ideals of the captain.
- b. The extent to which his professional ability and efficiency command respect.
- c. The affection that he inspires by attention to the administration and welfare, in its widest sense, of those in his crew.

The Qualities of a Good Captain

6. The qualities of a good captain are broadly those of a good officer and include:

- a. Skill and experience.
- b. Moral character, which includes:
 - (1) Personality.
 - (2) Tenacity.
 - (3) Loyalty.
 - (4) Sense of responsibility.
 - (5) Personal influence.
 - (6) Courage.
 - (7) Initiative.
- c. Physical and mental fitness.

As stated earlier, all the above qualities are those required by any officer, but in the case of an aircraft captain, it is the use made by him of the various facets of personality, character and temperament, and the way in which he applies his training, which are of paramount importance.

7. **Skill and Experience.** A very high degree of skill and experience is needed to ensure that an aircraft is operated to its maximum capability.

Flying is a professional business and a good captain is one whose professional standards are such as to be beyond the criticism of his crew. He must endeavour to extract the maximum value from every sortie and should consult other aircrew of known ability and experience. It is only by experience, foresight and careful planning that a captain can anticipate difficult situations, deal with them successfully, and appreciate any limitations there may be in his aircraft, equipment and crew.

8. **Personality.** Personality is generally understood to be the distinction of personal character, the means whereby one individual is distinguished from another. Personal integrity is essential to a good personality and is a quality which promotes trust. A captain's integrity must be unquestionable and beyond reproach; he should be a good example to his crew in all things. He should be patient and cheerful and may need to adjust his personality to achieve complete harmony in his crew. However, this aspect should not be overdone and all should appreciate that although the captain is primarily a leader, he is also a commander and should exercise that command. He is responsible for crew discipline before, during and after a flight and other members must accept this and also be prepared to adjust their personalities in the interests of harmony.

9. **Tenacity.** One of the essential requirements of leadership is mental stamina—the ability to think clearly and act decisively and quickly in an emergency. Tenacity is closely allied to determination and encompasses the desire and ability to see a difficult matter through to a successful conclusion in spite of apparently overwhelming odds.

10. **Loyalty.** An aircraft captain must be loyal to his superiors and subordinates alike, and this loyalty must be manifestly sincere.

11. **Sense of Responsibility.** Members of an aircrew can be expected to have a highly developed sense of responsibility. It is the captain's task to foster this and give it purpose. Each member of the crew must be made aware of the importance of his own task and the captain should take a detailed interest in the individual tasks of his crew so that he can offer good advice, make valid criticism, and, most important, so that he knows what information is available from each one. In this way he will learn to appreciate the true worth of his crew members and their steadiness and capacity for work under pressure or in an emer-

gency. Crew members should be professionally competent and one of the most important of the captain's tasks is that of crew co-ordination. Crew co-ordination implies more than the whole-hearted and active co-operation of crew members each with the other; it means that the captain co-ordinates and directs his crew in such a way as to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication of effort and that all the aircraft's systems and facilities are correctly and adequately used to ensure maximum efficiency. Further, the co-ordination of the crew extends throughout all spheres of activity, particularly in the case of ground training. A captain should take an interest in his crew's welfare but such interest should be most tactful and should normally be limited to such matters as affect, or are likely to affect, the efficiency and well-being of his crew as a whole.

12. **Personal Influence.** Personal influence is the ability to inspire a crew to further efforts when their inclination is to give up or turn back. The personal influence of a good captain should ensure that his crew invariably give of their best.

13. **Courage.** Courage is of two kinds—mental or moral courage and physical courage. In essence, courage is an effort of will to overcome fear; courage, bravery and fearlessness are not the same things. Courage is the ability to stick to the job to the end despite injury, privation and approaching death; moral courage is reflected in the attitude of mind required to make just but unpopular decisions.

14. **Initiative.** Initiative may be said to be the ability to combine and utilize common sense, foresight and imagination under difficult conditions. More specifically, it is the ability of an individual to originate a course of action without prior reference to his superiors, in order to meet unexpected circumstances. It consists of refusing to be defeated by circumstances or events for which no specific orders have been given. It is affected by such human characteristics as personal integrity, professional knowledge, courage and confidence and should be part of the make-up of all aircrew.

15. **Physical and Mental Fitness.** The ever-increasing performance of modern aircraft demands the highest level of physical and mental fitness. It is important for crews to understand the factors which go to make up the particular state of health necessary for maximum efficiency, and the aircraft captain should set a good example and should ensure that the efficiency of his crew

is not impaired by lack of fitness.

a. *Hygiene and Physical Fitness.* A high standard of hygiene is essential if the body is to remain healthy and free from infection. Personal hygiene promotes a feeling of well-being and care of the skin, scalp and teeth are important adjuncts to good health, and it ensures that minor cuts and abrasions do not become infected. Physical exercise is an important means of stimulating the various systems of the body, thereby ensuring the circulatory efficiency required to cope with the physiological stresses encountered during, for example, acceleration or heat stress. The general toning-up of the muscles, heart and lungs is important both in the daily working life and in preparation for extra physical effort when it is required. Sports which call for agility, balance and quick reaction as well as endurance provide an excellent means of keeping the body and the mind on top form.

b. *Diet.* The provision of a nutritious, well-balanced diet for aircrew is an important function of the Catering Branch, but ultimately the success of the dietician depends on the individual aviator. Meals should be taken at sensible intervals as long periods without food can induce fatigue and inefficiency. Obesity is a serious hazard because of its detrimental effects on life span and general health. Periods of inactivity and boredom can lead to over-eating, and should be guarded against. It is sensible to keep a regular check on body weight and to adjust the diet to maintain the desired level rather than to repeatedly diet strictly because of signs of obesity. The advice of the Medical Officer with regard to diets should be sought where necessary.

c. *Alcohol and Tobacco.* Alcohol in moderation can provide pleasure and relaxation for many people but it is basically a depressant which adversely affects the normal functioning of the body tissues. Apart from the more obvious effects of excessive alcohol, even small amounts can have a detrimental effect on judgment, perception, speed of reaction and co-ordination. A certain time is needed to metabolize, or burn up, a given amount of alcohol, and this time is not shortened by medication which may make an individual feel better. It is an excellent rule to allow 24 hours between the last alcoholic drink and take-off time and certainly no alcohol should be taken within 12 hours. Tobacco and its long-term association with lung cancer and coronary heart disease has been much publicized, but

there are less dramatic albeit important effects resulting from smoking. Chronic irritation of the lining of the nose and lungs by tobacco increases the chance of infection in these areas, and reduces the ability to cope with the effects of pressure changes on the ears and sinuses. The incomplete combustion of tobacco results in the smoker absorbing carbon monoxide which has a great affinity for haemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying constituent of the blood. Haemoglobin which is linked with carbon monoxide is not available for carrying oxygen, and thus the effects of hypoxia at a given altitude will be aggravated.

d. *Drugs and Self-Medication.* Apart from the primary purpose for which drugs are intended, it is generally true to say that most of them also have some unwanted side-effects. People also vary to some extent in the way in which the primary action of a drug affects them. For these reasons it is essential that aircrew only take medicine which has been prescribed by their own Medical Officer or by a physician who is aware of the fact that they fly. Self-medication is particularly dangerous. It not only carries the risk of unexpected drug effects but also the possible hazards to flying associated with the underlying illness. Medical Officers who are responsible for the health and well-being of aircrew are fully conversant with drug effects. They also aim to ensure that patients make a safe return to flying in the shortest possible time, and their professional guidance should always be sought when feeling "off-colour" or ill: self-medication should not be practised.

e. *The Teeth and Gums.* Toothache may be caused by marked changes in barometric pressure, a condition known as barodontalgia. Typical causative factors are large deep-seated fillings which are unlined and various degrees of inflammation or degeneration of the tooth pulp. It is important that aircrew attend dental clinics regularly and that dental work is completed by a dentist who is aware that they fly, and who appreciates the possible effects that changing barometric pressure may have on an ill-filled cavity containing gas.

f. *Mental Health.* Apart from the many physical and physiological stresses experienced by aircrew, flying imposes a considerable mental load. It is important that additional anxieties and frustrations should be treated with insight and understanding to prevent a situation getting out of hand. A build-up of stress may be insidious so that individuals can

become quite ill from the cause before they realise it. In other cases they may recognize their difficulties but are reluctant to seek help. Discussion can be useful, both in prevention and as a cure by seeking help in the right places. The need for adequate rest and sleep before flying is important: the effects of fatigue are insidious and can result in seriously diminished levels of performance. When operational situations demand long hours of duty, it is necessary to guard against the natural relaxation which tends to follow in the wake of particularly stressful or exciting events, as this can lead to errors through lack of attention and is a potential cause of accidents.

Training

16. Training has been described as the ability to act instinctively in an emergency and this interpretation of the aim of training is valid for such things as emergency drills. But it does not go far enough, and a good captain appreciates the value and importance of training in a broader concept. Every flight should be analyzed for its training value and post-flight discussions should be held to augment knowledge and experience. Every opportunity must be taken to do collective as well

as individual training, and such training must be co-ordinated by the captain. Emergency procedures must be thoroughly practised so that in an actual emergency no time is lost.

Conclusion

17. The qualities of a good captain are those of a good officer and the actual responsibilities of a captain are laid down in JSP 318, Command and Group Air Staff Instructions, Flying Order Book, *etc.* The preceding paragraphs have outlined the chief requirements of a good captain and have indicated the lines along which the matter should be tackled. The aircraft captain has a most responsible job which calls for mature judgment and, at some time or other, for all the qualities discussed above. He is ultimately responsible for the safety of his aircraft, its crew and/or passengers and stores and he has the task of carrying out the mission assigned by higher authority. An intelligent study of the requirements of captaincy, the fostering of natural talent and the acquisition of the appropriate skills and techniques, together with a genuine desire to be a good captain, go a long way towards achieving such an aim.

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