



The Armed Forces Officer

U. S. Department of Defense

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Excerpt: ...Turnbull into a withdrawal, volunteered to stand his ground and cover the others with a BAR. Corp. Raymond Smitson said he would stay by Sebastian and support him with hand grenades. Sgt. Robert Niland started for one of the machine guns, to help Smitson and Sebastian in covering the withdrawal, but was shot dead by a German closing in with a machine pistol before he could reach it. The 16 remaining survivors took off like so many shots fired from a pistol, at full speed but at intervals, to minimize the target. All got back to their Battalion, though Turnbull was killed in action a few days later. Their 1-day fight had preserved the flank of an Army. For economy of Pg 135 effort, and power of decision, there is not a brighter example in the whole book of war. To encourage subordinates to present their views, and to weigh them in the light of reason, is at the same time the surest way to win their confidence and to refine one's own information and judgments. However, to leave final decision to them in matters which are clearly in the area of one's own responsibility, is fatal to the character of self and to the integrity of the force. Any officer is one among many. Behind the smallest unit is the total power of the combined services. In the main, effectiveness develops out of unity of effort. To commit one's force to desperate, unhelped enterprises, when there is support at hand which may be had for the asking, may be one road to glory, but it is certainly not the path to success in War. The Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava was made immortal by Tennyson's poem, but it was as foolhardy as asking a troop of Boy Scouts to capture Gibraltar. In battle, a main obligation of those who lead is to make constant resurvey of the full horizon of their resources and means of possible support. This entails in time of peace the acquisition of a great body of knowledge seemingly unrelated to the administration of one's immediate affairs. It entails, also,...

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