

WHERE SHOULD COMMANDERS BE DURING A FIGHT?

"A brave captain is as a root, out of which, as branches, the courage of his soldiers doth spring."

Sir Philip Sidney 1586

Personal example will always remain the rule for leadership in combat. If a commander believes that he sets a personal example in a helicopter at high altitude, then that is the place he should be located. I have found more often than not; decisions in the air can be turned over to a trusted staff officer as long as the commander stays in radio contact. In Vietnam the troops hated the "helicopter commanders" -- the man that made impossible demands and only set foot on the ground after the fight.

There are times when command from a helicopter is absolutely better than being lost on the ground. But when things go wrong, or a key leader or leaders are out of action, then it is time to land and command from the ground.

The morale value of a squadron commander on the ground cannot be measured, especially if the fire fight is hot. Sharing risks is the common bond of all soldiers. Although at times it may be hazardous, flying is not considered that way by the ground trooper.

"In audacity and obstinacy will be found safety."

Napoleon