



China: Building Leadership Skills in NCOs for the Future Battlefield

OE Watch Commentary: One of the biggest issues that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has had to confront is its lack of leadership skills in what has been referred to as the “Five Cannots (五个不会),” of commanding officers and the “Two Inabilities (两个能力不够).” These have been identified as issues and referenced in a number of Chinese military reports over at least the past five years and are defined and broken down in the first and second articles, both published in *Jiefangjun Bao* as:

Five Cannots:

- (Officers/leaders) cannot judge/analyze the situation
- (Officers/leaders) cannot understand the intention of higher authorities
- (Officers/leaders) cannot make operational decisions
- (Officers/leaders) cannot deploy troops
- (Officers/leaders) cannot deal with unexpected situations

Two Inabilities (often translated as Insufficient Abilities):

- “Our military’s ability to fight a modern war is insufficient”
- “Our cadres’, at all levels, abilities to command modern war is insufficient”

In a world with rapidly evolving technology and the changing dynamics and function of China’s military, the PLA is now pushing to professionalize and develop the leadership skills of its non-commissioned officers (NCO). The third article extract, also published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, describes how a brigade in the Tibet Military District is working to improve the comprehensive command abilities of its infantry squad leaders through what can be seen as a trial by fire.

During drills and exercises, infantry squad leaders are being assigned to specialized squads of various other branches to give them an opportunity to master the operation of different specialized weapons and equipment from other branches. This also affords them the opportunity to see how command works within these different branches. To further build their decision-making ability Infantry squad leaders are incorporated into major battle groups during combat scenarios, where they are encouraged to share their views and recommendations with the more senior leadership in key areas, such as in the use of force and firepower attack. Also, combat training scenarios are not scripted and infantry squad leaders are placed in unfamiliar scenarios.

Infantry squad leaders are viewed as the “end-point” commanders on the battlefield. Battalion and company commanders will delegate command to them. They are expected to accomplish combat tasks independently, are expected to develop their capability in “joint thinking,” and have a good grasp on available supporting forces. Therefore, we might expect to see an increasing stringency in their training as time goes on. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Infantry squad leaders are the end-point commanders on the battlefield, so they must also have joint thinking, and they must consider supporting forces.”

Source: “西藏军区某旅着力提升“末端指挥员”综合指挥能力:步兵班长独立指挥支援火力 (A Brigade of Tibet Military District Exerts Efforts to Improve the Comprehensive Command Abilities of ‘Commanders at the End Points’: Infantry Squad Leaders Command Supporting Firepower on Their Own),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 30 March 2020. http://www.81.cn/bzzj/2020-03/30/content_9779985.htm

A Brigade of Tibet Military District Exerts Efforts on Improving the Comprehensive Command Abilities of ‘Commanders at the End Points’: Infantry Squad Leaders Command Supporting Firepower on Their Own

“Infantry squad leaders are the end-point commanders on the battlefield, so they must also have joint thinking, and they must consider supporting forces.” A leader from the brigade told a reporter that to improve the overall command abilities of infantry squad leaders, the brigade is following the path of overlapping squad leader posts within the scope of brigade and battalion. It puts infantry squad leaders into specialized squads of various other branches so that they can master the operation of the specialized weapons and equipment of several branches and learn how command is exercised there. When organizing training exercises in combat actions and the operations which groups of military officers do in them, the brigade incorporates infantry squad leaders into major battle groups, and it encourages them to give their views and recommendations in those teams regarding the use of forces and firepower attack, so as to play the role of brain trust for scientific decision making by battalion and company commanders.

... In unfamiliar conditions, and with no set advance plan for the combat operations and no script to follow, battalion and company commanders delegate command to infantry squad leaders for accomplishing tasks...



Continued: China: Building Leadership Skills in NCOs for the Future Battlefield

Source: Li Chunli, “着力破解“两个能力不够”问题 (Focus on Breaking Down the Problem of the Two Insufficient Abilities),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 30 December 2014, <http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2014-12/30/content_97805.htm>

Focus on Breaking Down the Problem of the Two Insufficient Abilities

President Xi profoundly pointed out that our army's ability to fight modern wars is insufficient, and cadres at all levels are not capable of commanding modern wars.

... it is necessary to stand on the cusp of the storm and examine the importance and urgency of resolving the “Two Insufficient Abilities.”

Source: “西藏军区某旅着力提升“末端指挥员”综合指挥能力:步兵班长独立指挥支援火力 (A Brigade of Tibet Military District Exerts Efforts to Improve the Comprehensive Command Abilities of ‘Commanders at the End Points’: Infantry Squad Leaders Command Supporting Firepower on Their Own),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 30 March 2020. http://www.81.cn/bzzj/2020-03/30/content_9779985.htm

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