The Chief Operating Officer and CAP-USAF Commander Perspectives

Student Guide

The E&T program uses the flipped classroom format where students read the material before class and come prepared to discuss the topics. All students are required to come prepared to participate, which includes completing the reading and all assignments in advance.

Work submitted for this assignment should reflect your own knowledge, analysis, and effort. AI tools may be used to support research, brainstorming, and editing, but should not replace your original work. Any AI-generated content included in the submission should be appropriately acknowledged in accordance with course requirements and the VOLU Academic Integrity Standards.

Lesson Objective: This lesson seeks to provide the region or national level leader with insight into the leadership principles valued by two strategic leaders

Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):

1. Understand the role and background of the Chief Operating Officer (COO).
2. Gain insight into the leadership principles the COO values via his leadership reading list.
3. Understand the role and background of the CAP-USAF Commander.
4. Gain insight into the leadership principles the CAP-USAF Commander values via his reading list.
5. Reflect on your leadership style and how it might be enhanced by the principles shared by the COO and CAP-USAF Commander.

Suggested Time to Complete Module (reading, discussions, and assignments):
Synchronous onsite/ViR classes: 90 minutes (plus items from reading lists)
Asynchronous online cohorts: 90 minutes (plus items from reading lists)

Reading: Student Guide, links and articles or books introduced in the lesson.

Introduction

The COO and the CAP-USAF Commander work closely with CAP's National Commander. Each shares personal insights on leadership, vision, character, and what makes a good leader. This module introduces resources the COO and CAP-USAF CC

have read and encourages others to explore. More than an interesting read, these writings teach leaders some valuable skills for strategic leadership.

1. Understand the role and background of the Chief Operating Officer (COO).



Christopher Plamp serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Civil Air Patrol at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. In this role, he supports the day-to-day operations of National Headquarters and works closely with Civil Air Patrol's Chief Executive Officer/National Commander and senior leadership team to strengthen operational alignment, organizational effectiveness, and support for CAP members nationwide.

The CAP COO manages the day-to-day operations of CAP's National Headquarters. This includes ensuring compliance with all applicable Air Force, Department of War, and Federal grants laws/directives, as well as centrally procuring all CAP assets. The COO also serves as the executive secretary to CAP's Board of Governors and as an advisor to the CAP Senior Advisory Group (CSAG) and Command Council.

Plamp joined Civil Air Patrol after serving as Chief Operating Officer of the United Service Organizations (USO), where he helped lead global operations supporting service members and their families. His nonprofit leadership experience also includes serving as Chief Executive Officer of Hire Heroes USA, an organization focused on helping transitioning service members find meaningful employment. Across these roles, his work has focused on mission execution, operational excellence, organizational growth, and service to those who serve.

Plamp is a retired U.S. Air Force colonel and command pilot who primarily flew the A-10 Warthog and MQ-1B Predator. He held numerous command and senior leadership positions throughout his Air Force career and was selected as the A-10 East Demonstration Pilot. He also served as an Air Liaison Officer and Joint Terminal Attack Controller supporting Army and joint units. His operational experience includes Operation Southern Watch, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The COO's full biography is available at https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/about/governance/cap-commandteam.

2. Gain insight into the leadership philosophy of the COO via his leadership reading list.

Insights from Mr. Plamp: My leadership philosophy is centered on mission accomplishment through servant leadership. To me, servant leadership does not mean

avoiding hard decisions or placing people above the mission. It means understanding that the mission is accomplished through people, and that leaders succeed when those they lead are successful. Leadership is not about personal credit, title, or authority; it is about taking care of your people, building trust, setting clear expectations, removing obstacles, and holding the team accountable to the objectives and goals of the organization. The leader's responsibility is to create the conditions where people can do their best work, grow in their own leadership, and contribute fully to something larger than themselves.

Mr. Plamp's leadership reading list includes the following books:

***The Infinite Game* — Simon Sinek**
Sinek argues that the most effective leaders do not focus only on short-term wins, but on building organizations that can endure, adapt, and continue serving a purpose greater than any one leader or moment. The book emphasizes vision, trust, ethical decision-making, and the responsibility leaders have to sustain an organization for the future.

***Get Back Up: Lessons in Servant Leadership* — Heather Wilson and Gen. Dave Goldfein**
Wilson and Goldfein share leadership lessons built around service, humility, resilience, teamwork, and character. The book connects servant leadership with real-world military and public-service experience, reinforcing that effective leaders listen, adapt, recover from setbacks, and continue serving the mission and their people.

***The First 90 Days* — Michael Watkins**
This book is about entering a new leadership role with discipline: listen first, learn the organization, build relationships, identify early priorities, and create alignment before driving change. It reinforces the importance of understanding culture, context, and people before assuming what needs to change.

***The Servant as Leader* — Robert K. Greenleaf**
Greenleaf's work is the foundational text on servant leadership. He argues that true leadership begins with the desire to serve, and that the best measure of leadership is whether those being served grow, become stronger, wiser, more capable, and more willing to serve others. This work connects directly to the idea that leadership is not about personal status or authority, but about helping people and organizations achieve their purpose.

3. Understand the role and background of the CAP-USAF Commander.

Colonel Andrew J. Stewart serves as the Commander of the Civil Air Patrol-United States Air Force (CAP-USAF) at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. In this capacity, he is the



Department of the Air Force's senior officer responsible for program management, oversight, and operational integration of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the congressionally chartered auxiliary of the Air Force and official Total Force partner. Colonel Stewart commands a dispersed nationwide team of military and civilian personnel across eight geographic liaison regions, providing program oversight of Civil Air Patrol. Additionally, Colonel Stewart ensures the readiness of this volunteer force to execute Air Force Assigned Missions and its three congressionally mandated programs of Emergency Services, Cadet Programs, and Aerospace Education.

The CAP-USAF Commander provides Air Force advice, assistance, liaison, and oversight to CAP. CAP-USAF operates from 50 locations nationwide, providing oversight of CAP's ~1,400 units and fleet of 541 light aircraft. The CAP-USAF Commander is also an advisor to the BoG, CSAG, and Command Council.

Colonel Stewart began his career by enlisting in the Air Force in April 1998. Following Basic Military Training and Aerospace Maintenance technical school, he served as a B-52H Crew Chief at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. While serving at Barksdale, he earned an Air Force commissioning scholarship through the Airman Scholarship and Commissioning Program, which allowed him to attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, while pursuing his commission through AFROTC Detachment 157. Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and went on to complete Joint Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) at Vance AFB, Oklahoma. After UPT, he became a career Mobility aviator, flying both the C-17A Globemaster III and the mighty KC-135 R/T Stratotanker.

Colonel Stewart's career is diverse and spans a wide range of Operational, Command and Control, Force Support, Personnel, Maintenance, Headquarters Air Force staff, and various Group and Wing leadership assignments. He also served as a C-17A Formal Training Unit Instructor Pilot, providing flight training to the next generation of mobility aviators. His previous commands include Commander, 305th Maintenance Squadron at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, and Commander, 97th Force Support Squadron at Altus AFB, Oklahoma.

Colonel Stewart is a command pilot with over 3,475 flying hours in the T-37B, T-1A, C-17A, KC-135R/T, and various CAP aircraft on global contingency, presidential, and humanitarian/disaster relief airlift and air refueling missions, including 708 combat hours during Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM.

Colonel Stewart's complete biography is available at **https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/about/governance/board-of-governors**.

4. Gain insight into the leadership philosophy of the CAP-USAF Commander via his reading list.

Insights from Colonel Stewart: As you expand your leadership toolkit from these readings, there are two main points to keep in mind. First, a true leader is dynamic and adaptive. Surely, you have read about the various leadership styles and considered which one you are or which one you strive to be. It's true, successful leaders typically have a core leadership style, but what is not emphasized is that they will often adapt to the style that is needed at any given time. I argue that the best leadership style is simply the one that your people and your organization need at that exact moment. Second, as a leader, taking care of people should always be at the forefront of everything you do. When you take care of your people, the unit, culture, and mission will naturally thrive. Strive to improve quality of life and quality of service, and everything else will fall into place.

This reading list isn't a collection meant to provide rigid formulas or catchy acronyms to memorize and resurrect when you face a challenge. Leadership and command are far too dynamic. Instead, internalize the core character traits and leadership concepts you learn from these authors and remain completely dynamic and adaptive. The following reading list is in no distinct order.

The first is *Start with Why*, by Simon Sinek. This book is a great reminder that people don't buy into "*what* you do", they buy into "*why* you do it". In a volunteer organization like CAP, understanding and communicating the "why" is the difference between a disengaged unit and a highly motivated team that feels deeply connected.

The second is *It's Your Ship,* by Captain D. Michael Abrashoff. This is a fantastic and easy read on extreme ownership, decentralized execution, and contains some of the best applied leadership characteristics and examples out there. Taking command of a low-performing Navy ship, Abrashoff didn't replace the crew, he changed his approach to leadership, listened to his sailors, and empowered them to take charge and change from within.

Next is *Stone Soup,* by Marcia Brown. This isn't a traditional leadership book; it's a classic folk story that has transcended centuries and cultures and is a perfect metaphor for the collaborative leadership needed in a volunteer organization. NOTE: This is a great option for those who are time limited or aren't a fan of long reads. However, for your assignment, my challenge to you is to use the time saved to *cook* up a robust content analysis and real-world examples of how you've brought your own "stone" and rallied your people.

My fourth book is *Leaders Eat Last*, also by Simon Sinek. This book demonstrates that if you create a culture of trust and security, your team will thrive. It also dissects human biology a bit to explore motivation. Sinek argues that great leaders put themselves

second to ensure the safety and well-being of their team without considering their status or privilege. In command, when your people know you have their backs and that you put them first, they will naturally feel safe enough to innovate, take initiative, and excel.

My final recommendation is *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* by Stephen Covey. Rather than offering quick management hacks, Covey focuses on character-based effectiveness. He walks you through moving from dependence to independence, and ultimately to interdependence. By internalizing these habits, you build the self-discipline and proactive mindset needed to carry the weight of senior leadership.

BLOB: Strive to be a dynamic and adaptive leader and focus on taking care of your people. Lead with humility, adapt to your team's needs, and remember, character counts. Internalize your core values and be a good human!

LEAD BOLD...BREAK THE MOLD!!!

5. Reflect on your leadership style and how it might be enhanced by the principles shared by the COO and CAP-USAF Commander.

After reading materials that guide and inspire the COO and the CAP-USAF CC, reflect on your leadership. How might you be able to grow from these resources? Choose two resources to read and apply to your leadership growth. Choose one resource from each reading list.

Lesson Summary and Closure

Over time, we develop a leadership toolbox. It includes tools and techniques we have learned from reading, our experiences, etc. In this lesson, the COO and CAP-USAF Commander shared some tools from their toolboxes. You can now add the tools that appeal to you to your toolbox.

Assignment

Choose one item from the COO's reading list and one from the CAP-USAF/CC's reading list. Read the work and reflect on how you can use it to enhance your leadership in CAP. Write a brief review of each item (minimum of a half page each), to include your reflections on how you will use what you've learned and your recommendation to others for leadership development. You may also provide a copy to Mr. Plamp and Colonel Stewart, but your moderator will be grading completion of the assignment.

- COO's Reading List

  - *The Infinite Game*, by Simon Sinek
  - *Get Back Up: Lessons in Servant Leadership,* by Heather Wilson and Gen. Dave Goldfein
  - *The First 90 Days*, Michael Watkins
  - *The Servant as Leader,* Robert K. Greenleaf
- CAP-USAF/CC's Reading List
  - *Start with Why,* by Simon Sinek
  - *It's Your Ship,* by CAPT D. Michael Abrashoff, USN
  - *Stone Soup,* by Marcia Brown
  - *Leaders Eat Last,* by Simon Sinek
  - *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* by Stephen R. Covey

Instructions for Synchronous Onsite/ViR Classes

Submit both reviews in the same document to your instructor for credit.

Instructions for Asynchronous Online Students

1. Upload both reviews in the same document to Absorb for credit.

Because asynchronous students do not have classroom interaction, a second assignment is required.

2. Answer the following questions in plain paper format and upload to Absorb for feedback:
   a. What types of leaders do you prefer to work with most? The least? Why do some leaders fail while others succeed?
   b. What does teamwork accomplish, and why is it a critical necessity for an organization? Include in your discussion some skill sets that are desirable for an effective team.
   c. Why is trust important in teams, and what happens when you lose it? In your opinion, which of CAP's core values has the greatest impact on building trust and why?
   d. Thinking of examples of leaders with high integrity, as well as leaders with little or none, what effect did these leaders have on their organizations? *Note: it is not necessary to include identifying information.*

e. Thinking of challenges that people and teams may face, how does resiliency help them to navigate these challenges? How can individuals and teams build resiliency?

Aim Higher! (optional activities)

Create your own reading list of leadership topics and begin (or continue) reading on a regular basis. Readers are leaders! Some suggested sources include:

- The above reading lists,
- The CAP National Commander's Reading List (https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/members/cap-national-hq/ed-training/education-and-training-continuing-education),
- Lists by current and past Air & Space Forces Leaders, such as the Secretary of the Air Force, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Chief of Space Operations, and the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force,
- Air University Press (https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AUPress/Bookstore/). Books on this site are free to download. Many are available in print for free to members of the Air Force Total Force (including CAP). Note: *Get Back Up: Lessons in Servant Leadership*, from Mr. Plamp's reading list, is available here.

Share this list with others that you mentor.

Lesson Summary and Closure

Over time, we develop a leadership toolbox. It includes tools and techniques we have learned from reading, our experiences, etc. The COO and CAP-USAF/CC shared some tools from their toolboxes in this lesson. You can now add the tools that appeal to you to your toolbox.

Resources

- CAP Dictionary

Acronyms and Abbreviations Used in this Document

- AFROTC: Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps
- BLOB: Bottom Line on Bottom
- BoG: Board of Governors

- CAP: Civil Air Patrol
- CAP-USAF: Civil Air Patrol – United States Air Force
- CC: Commander
- COO: Chief Operating Officer
- CSAG: CAP Senior Advisory Group
- DLO: Desired Learning Objective
- SG: Student Guide
- UPT: Undergraduate Pilot Training
- USO: United Service Organizations
- ViR: Virtual In-Residence
- VOLU: Volunteer University