

Case Study: Inappropriate Influence

Description:	Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) commander and his staff attempt to influence amphibious ship captain to move location of ship despite safety concerns.
Background:	Ship is participating in the anniversary of General MacArthur's return to the Philippines with an international celebration and demonstration conducted on and near the island of Corregidor. SECNAV and his staff are staging from the ship. An ESG commander, embarked for the event, contacts PACFLT and PACOM (since it is a DoD-directed event) headquarters to support the ship's re-location. Fleet commander convenes an informal investigation into the event.

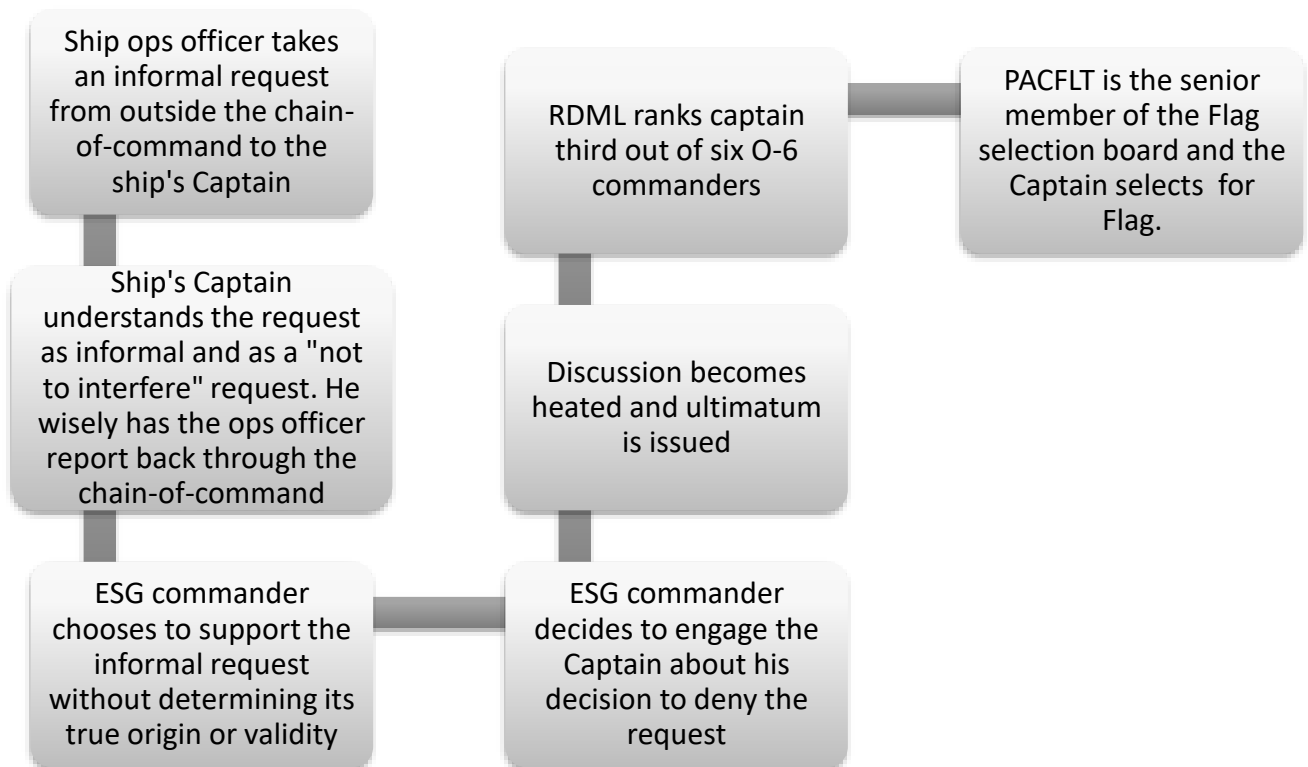
Findings:

1. The demonstration is to take place at dawn with the SECNAV's departure from the ship and arrival on Corregidor.
2. Ship has been directed to a point 3.5NM off Corregidor to support the event.
3. Ship Navigation/Operation personnel have briefed anchoring plan to SECNAV's staff and received approval.
4. SECNAV and staff are onboard the ship. Around midnight, SECNAV staff members ask ops officer if it is possible to re-locate the ship closer to the beach. They want it closer to enable full media coverage of the SECNAV's helicopter launch, flight and recovery on the island. The staff members emphasize that such a move is only a request and if there are any safety, operational or other considerations that make such a move unwise, they withdraw the request.
5. The ops officer takes the request to the Captain and recommends against the move at night. His rationale is based upon the fact that there are no navigational aids, there are numerous small vessels around the ship, the desired re-location point is very close to the port navigation channel, and the ship is using only one screw.
6. The Captain agrees with the ops officer and asks him to relay this information and his regrets to the SECNAV staff but via the

- appropriate chain of command—the ESG staff.
7. Ship ops officer informs ESG Chief-of-Staff (COS).
 8. ESG COS is angry that the SECNAV staff went directly to the ship's ops officer/Captain as opposed to using the chain of command. However, he briefs the ESG commander (RDML) who chooses to support the SECNAV staff's request. The ops officer reminds him that the SECNAV staff withdraws the request if there is opposition. The RDML remarks that that is "BS" and summons the Captain to the flag spaces.
 9. At 0100, the Captain reports to the flag quarters and explains his rationale for not moving the ship until daylight.
 10. The RDML was a naval aviator and achieved flag rank without commanding a ship.
 11. The RDML pressures the Captain to reconsider and the conversation becomes heated.
 12. The RDML tells the Captain that if his ship's maintenance was better he would have both screws to work with.
 13. The Captain informs the RDML that single-screw operations are only one component of his concern and the ship will remain anchored until day light.
 14. The RDML tells the Captain that he will go over his head and that, "He would read about it."
 15. RDML contacts both the PACFLT and PACOM watch officers to solicit support for the ship's re-location. Both commands support the Captain's decision.
 16. The investigation failed to uncover any of the SECNAV's personal knowledge of the event and the staff was adamant about the desire to withdraw the request if there was opposition from the ship.
 17. As a postscript and not part of the investigation, the RDML ranks the Captain three out of six captains (O-6s). The Captain screens for flag.
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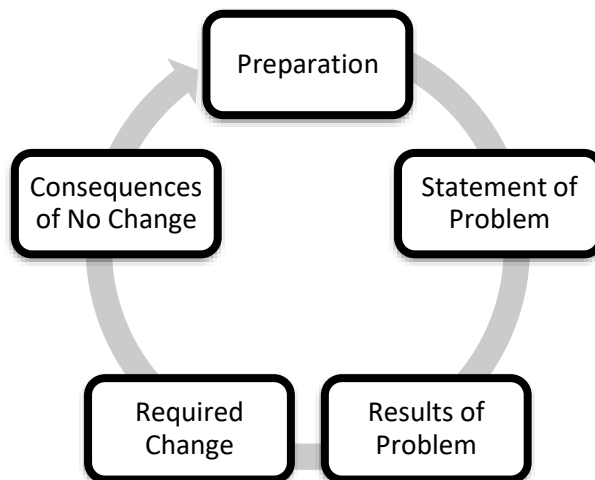
Facilitation Questions:

1. Diagram the thought-to-action chain for the RDML.
 - a. The ship's ops officer takes a SECNAV staff request (from outside the chain-of-command) to the ship's Captain; the Captain denies the request; the ESG commander knows the ship has been directed to a spot to support military operations but apparently believes pleasing the staff is more important; the ESG commander attempts to change the Captain's mind but fails; the ESG commander threatens the Captain, then goes over his head to higher authority
2. What were the failure points in this event? From the SECNAV staff perspective, the ESG staff perspective, etc.
3. Do you think the ESG commander's lack of "ship driver" experience hurt him? How might he have overcome it?
4. Since both senior staffs supported the Captain, do you think THEY figured out if the SECNAV was personally involved?
5. Have you ever witnessed a similar event?



Social Constructive Confrontation Discussion:

1. The first opportunity for constructive confrontation is internal. In this case, the O-7 would benefit from a constructive confrontation with himself. What is the mission for his unit and how does the “informal’ request affect it? Exactly who is asking for the move and for exactly what reason? Why would he challenge the Captain? Is it for operational or mission reasons or is it for his career?
2. A next opportunity for confrontation might come from a friend or colleague (junior or senior). These “on-lookers” often know about or strongly suspect issues of misbehavior. Approaching a friend or co-worker in such a situation would be very difficult, especially if they are senior; and you would have to be sure that real, negative consequences were likely. Using the case study, your own observations, or a hypothetical example, how would you realistically handle such a confrontation? Look at the wheel below for a template.



Preparation:

1. Put yourself in the position of the ESG COS. What would you do to prepare for a confrontation with the ESG commander if you felt he was going in the wrong direction? What facts would you amass? How timely is this? Where would you have such a conversation?

Statement of Problem:

1. What is the problem (or likely result) of the ESG commander's decision making? What problem is it for the unit, etc.?
2. How would you state this to the ESG commander?
3. What do you expect his response to be?

Results of Problem:

1. Using the example, what are the likely results or negative outcomes from the problem and how would you state that to the commander?
2. What do you expect his response to be?

Required Change:

1. What do you propose as the appropriate behavior from the ESG commander?
2. What do you expect his response to be?

Consequences if No Change:

1. Hopefully, by this point in the confrontation you are having a discussion and not a shouting match. The understanding of consequences would be something that both of you agree to, vice you listing them.

Case Conclusions:

1. What main points did you take from this case study?
2. What are your concerns as a facilitator with this case study?