



THE MPSA WOMEN'S OPERATIVE SERIES

# FIELD COMMANDER

BOOK 10



**PHASE 4: INTEGRATION**

**MPSA COMPANION  
WORKBOOK**



**BOOK 10**

# **FIELD COMMANDER**

The Science of Leading from the Front, Building Teams, and Commanding in Chaos

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*FIELD COMMANDER*

*The Science of Leading from the Front, Building Teams, and Commanding in Chaos*

*To every member of the MP girl army.*

*You have done the work.*

*You have learned the language.*

*You have studied the women who came before you  
and understood that their capacity was always yours.*

*You now have the skills to rule the shadows  
and command your world.*

*Lead with precision. Lead with integrity.*

*Lead like the women in these pages led:  
as if the outcome depended on you.*

*Because it does.*

*I am proud of each one of you.*

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Terry Oroszi'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underlining the name.

COMPANION TO THE FIELD COMMANDER RIBBON

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## A Guide for Readers

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PROFILER is designed to be read in two ways: straight through, and in conversation with the Profiler Ribbon course it accompanies. You will get something from reading it either way, but you will get something different depending on when and how you read. If you are reading before beginning the course: read it as orientation. Let it give you the scientific and historical foundation for what you are about to train. Pay particular attention to the historical profiles: not for their drama, but for their methodology. Notice what these women actually did. Notice where their capacity came from. Notice that none of them were exceptions. If you are reading alongside the course: read it as context. When the course asks you to practice a specific skill, find the section of this book that covers the science beneath that skill. The course teaches what to do. This book explains why it works: and why it is yours to do. If you are reading after completing the course: read it as integration. You will find, as promised in the introduction, that the second read feels different. By then you will have direct experience with the material, and the historical and scientific context will land differently against that experience. At the end of each chapter, you will find a set of Reflection Questions. These are not assignments. They are invitations: points where the chapter's ideas can be turned inward and made personal. Some of them will be immediately relevant to your experience. Some will not. Take what is useful.

Following the reflection questions, you will find journal pages. Use them or not. Some people find that writing produces a different kind of processing than reading. If you are one of them, use the space. If you are not, leave it blank. Both choices are fine. Finally: this book is free. It is not free because the content is low-quality. It is free because the women who need it most cannot always pay for it. If this book is useful to you, tell someone else about it. That is the only payment requested.

### **Pro Bono Non Malo: For Good, Not Evil**

# Introduction: The

## INTRODUCTION

# Introduction: The

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Art of Command

## Introduction: The Art of Command

The field commander is the person who stands at the front of an operation, who makes decisions that affect others' safety, who takes responsibility for success or failure. The field commander is not necessarily the person with the highest rank or the most authority, though they might be. The field commander is the person who steps forward when action is required, who understands the situation, who makes clear decisions, and who leads others through whatever comes next. Command in intelligence and security operations is different from command in traditional military hierarchies. Intelligence operations often occur in ambiguity and uncertainty. The field commander might not have complete information. The field commander might not have clear authorization from above. The field commander might need to make decisions that stretch or bend the rules because the situation is unprecedented or because normal procedures do not apply. The field commander must balance improvisation with principle, boldness with caution, and decisive action with ethical clarity. This book explores leadership neuroscience, the science of how human brains respond to leadership. It examines team building and the creation of trust among people who must work together under pressure. It explores decision-making under uncertainty and how leaders make good decisions with incomplete information. It examines mission planning and how to prepare teams for operations. It explores after-action review culture and how organizations learn from experience. It examines inspiring loyalty and followership, and the special responsibilities that come with holding people's commitment. Finally, it explores legacy and institutional intelligence; how field commanders build

institutions and cultures that outlast their own leadership. The field commander must understand that leadership is ultimately about responsibility. A commander takes responsibility for decisions and for their consequences. A commander is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of people under their command. A commander is responsible for the success or failure of the operation. This responsibility cannot be delegated or shared. The weight of it can be substantial, but it is the price of command. Throughout this book, we will examine the science and practice of command at the operational level. We will look at historical examples of field commanders who led effectively in dangerous and ambiguous situations. We will examine the personal qualities that make effective commanders. We will look at the systems and practices that allow organizations to develop effective commanders and to maintain command excellence over time. As you read this material, remember that you do not have to be famous or have a high rank to be a field commander. Any person who steps forward in a moment of crisis and leads others through it is a field commander. Any person who accepts responsibility for

a mission and makes the decisions necessary to accomplish that mission is a field commander. The principles in this book apply to anyone in a position where they must lead.

Leadership Neuroscience How the Brain Responds to Leadership and Authority

Leadership activates specific neural systems. Understanding these systems allows you to lead more effectively.

CHAPTER ONE

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# Leadership Neuroscience

The Neurobiology of Trust and Followership

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*When people perceive a leader as trustworthy and competent, specific neural*

# Leadership Neuroscience

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trust and bonding. Neural systems associated with social connection and empathy activate. When these systems activate, people are more likely to follow the leader, to share information, to work together toward common goals. When these systems do not activate, people are suspicious, defensive, and reluctant to cooperate. A leader activates trust neural systems through consistent behavior, through demonstrated competence, through showing genuine concern for the people they lead. A leader who is inconsistent, who makes errors, who appears indifferent to the welfare of their team, will not activate trust neural systems. The neural response is involuntary; people cannot decide to trust someone if their neural systems are not sending trust signals. A leader must understand what activates these neural systems and must deliberately act in ways that activate them.

## Mirror Neurons and Emotional Contagion

Mirror neurons are neurons that activate both when a person performs an action and when they observe someone else performing the same action. This neural mechanism is the basis of empathy and of the ability to understand what others are experiencing. Mirror neurons also create emotional contagion; the emotions of a leader are literally transmitted to people around them. If a leader is calm and confident, people around them will tend to become calm and confident. If a leader is anxious and panicked, people around them will tend to become anxious and panicked. A field commander can use mirror neurons strategically. By remaining calm under pressure, by modeling the emotional state they want their team to adopt, they help their team regulate their own emotions. By showing confidence in the mission, by demonstrating that they have a plan and know what they are doing, they help their team feel confident even in uncertain situations. This emotional regulation through leadership is not manipulation; it is a natural neural mechanism that good leaders use consciously.

**Decision-Making and Leadership Responsibility** When people follow a leader, they are partially abdicating responsibility for decisions and delegating it to the leader. Neurological research shows that people's brains show different activation patterns when they are making their own decisions versus when they are following someone else's decisions. When following a leader, neural systems associated with personal responsibility are less active. The person is relying on the leader to have done the thinking and to have made the right decision. This delegation of responsibility comes with a cost. The leader must understand that they are taking on the responsibility that others are abdicating.

The leader cannot blame others for following their instructions. The leader must accept full responsibility for decisions and their consequences. This is the neurobiology of command

responsibility; the brain patterns of leadership are literally the brain patterns of taking on responsibility.

**Stress Response and Leadership Under Pressure** Under stress, the human brain goes through predictable changes. The amygdala becomes more active, triggering fight-or-flight responses. The prefrontal cortex, associated with complex thinking and decision-making, becomes less active. This means that under stress, people think more simply and are more likely to defer to leaders. This is evolutionary adaptive; in an emergency, complex group decision-making can be a liability, and deferring to a strong leader increases survival chances. A field commander must understand their own stress response and must train themselves to maintain prefrontal cortex activation even under high stress. A commander whose stress response causes them to shut down or panic will not be able to think clearly or make good decisions. A commander who has trained themselves to remain calm under stress will be able to continue thinking clearly and making good decisions even when others are becoming stressed and confused.

**Threat Response and Team Cohesion** When a group perceives a threat, neural systems associated with group cohesion and team bonding become more active. This is evolutionary adaptive; facing a

threat together creates stronger group bonds. However, the identity of the threat matters. If the threat is external, team members bond together against the external threat. If the threat is perceived to be from within the group or from the leader, team cohesion breaks down and team members become defensive and suspicious. A field commander can use threat to build team cohesion if the threat is clearly external and clearly defined. A commander who creates internal threat or who the team perceives as threatening will destroy team cohesion. A commander who clearly identifies an external threat and rallies the team against it will strengthen team bonds and increase team effectiveness.

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## HISTORICAL PROFILE

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### Boudica 30 to 60 CE

Boudica was a British tribal leader who led a major revolt against Roman occupation in the first century CE. Though she ultimately lost militarily to the Romans, her leadership of thousands of warriors through a massive military campaign demonstrates the principles of command and inspiration of followership. Boudica inspired such profound loyalty and followership that her warriors were willing to follow her into battle against the military might of Rome, knowing that defeat was likely. Boudica became a leader after her husband's death and the Roman occupation of Iceni territory. Rather than accepting Roman rule passively, she rallied her people and other British tribes to resist. She gave speeches that inspired warriors to follow her into battle. Contemporary historical accounts describe

her as a powerful speaker who could move people to action through the force of her conviction. She embodied the resistance to occupation and became the symbol around which people organized.

Boudica's leadership demonstrates the power of authentic conviction and clear purpose. She was not commanding people through fear or coercion. She was inspiring them through shared belief in a cause; the preservation of their people and their way of life against occupation. People chose to follow her because they believed in what she stood for. This voluntary followership is far more powerful than coerced obedience. Boudica's command of military operations shows sophisticated leadership under extreme pressure. She coordinated multiple tribal forces, organized supply lines, made tactical decisions. She led from the front, placing herself at the head of her warriors. She accepted responsibility for decisions and for outcomes. When her forces were ultimately defeated by Roman legions, she accepted that consequence rather than abandoning her people or betraying them to save herself. Boudica's legacy demonstrates the power of inspirational leadership and the capacity of leaders to inspire people to actions they would not otherwise undertake. She showed that authentic conviction, combined with willingness to take personal risk, can inspire profound loyalty and followership. She demonstrated that leadership is not about power over people but about inspiring people to action in service of a shared cause. Her rebellion ultimately failed militarily, but her leadership inspired resistance that lasted across generations and that made her a symbol of freedom from oppression for centuries.

## **Leadership Neuroscience**

Leadership Neuroscience How the brain responds to leadership

1. What neural systems do you activate in people when you lead them? Do you build trust or do you create anxiety?
2. How do you maintain emotional control under stress so that your emotional state does not negatively affect your team?
3. What are the mirror neuron effects of your leadership? Are you modeling the emotional and behavioral state you want your team to adopt?
4. How do you balance leading from a position of personal responsibility with making space for others to take responsibility?
5. What would change about your leadership if you truly understood that you are taking on the brain responsibility of decisions that others are delegating to you?
6. How do you build trust neural systems with people who are initially skeptical of your leadership?

## **Chapter One: My Reflections**

## Chapter One: Continued

Building Team Trust

### Creating Cohesion Among Intelligence Operatives

A team that trusts functions as a single organism. A team that does not trust is a collection of individuals.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# Building Team Trust

Trust as Foundation for Team Function

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*Trust is the foundation of team function. A team where members trust each*

# Building Team Trust

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member can assume that others will do their part reliably. Each member can trust that others have their back. A team where members do not trust each other requires constant communication, constant verification, constant checking. Efficiency suffers and effectiveness suffers. In intelligence operations, trust is even more critical. Team members must be willing to share sensitive information with each other. Team members must be willing to rely on each other for security and safety. Team members must be willing to trust that others will not compromise the operation. This level of trust develops only when team members have demonstrated consistency, competence, and commitment to the team.

**Building Trust Through Consistency and Reliability** Trust develops through repeated consistent behavior. A team member who does what they say they will do, who shows up on time, who follows through on commitments, gradually builds trust with teammates. A team leader who treats team members fairly, who keeps promises, who admits mistakes, gradually

builds trust. Trust cannot be demanded or forced. It can only be earned through consistent reliable behavior over time. Reliability extends to emotional reliability. A team member who is predictable in how they respond to stress, who maintains composure, who does not become volatile or unpredictable, builds trust with teammates. A team member whose emotional state is always in flux, who becomes hostile or withdrawn unpredictably, damages team trust. A leader who maintains consistent emotional tone, who does not punish people for things that are beyond their control, who treats people fairly even when stressed, builds team trust.

**Trust Through Demonstrated Competence** Team members trust leaders and colleagues who demonstrate competence. A team member who clearly knows their job, who can solve problems, who makes good decisions, builds trust. A team leader who demonstrates tactical knowledge, who understands the operation, who can make decisions confidently, builds trust. Competence is not about being perfect; it is about being able and willing to learn, to improve, and to handle the demands of the job. Demonstrated competence also includes knowing what you do not know. A leader who claims expertise they do not have will eventually be discovered and will lose trust. A leader who admits uncertainty about some things but demonstrates clear competence about core responsibilities builds trust. Trust is based on realistic assessment of competence, not on inflated claims.

**Trust Through Vulnerability and Authenticity** Trust also develops through authentic connection. A leader who only presents a strong, invulnerable face to the team creates distance. A leader who is willing to acknowledge mistakes, to ask for help, to show appropriate vulnerability while maintaining strength, creates more genuine connection. This vulnerability must be appropriate and strategic; a

leader should not share all their doubts and fears, but should be honest about mistakes and willing to learn. Authenticity also means being the same person in different contexts. A leader who behaves one way in front of superiors and another way with their team creates suspicion about which version is real. A leader who is consistent in their values and behavior regardless of context builds trust. Team members respect leaders who stand by their principles.

Maintaining Trust Through Accountability Trust also depends on accountability. A team that holds all members accountable for their actions, including leaders, maintains trust. A team where some people are held accountable and others are excused develops resentment and loses trust. A leader who is accountable for their decisions, who takes responsibility for failures, who admits mistakes, maintains team trust. A leader who blames others for failures or who excuses their own mistakes damages team trust. Accountability also applies to consequences. If team members understand that violations of team principles will have consistent consequences, they trust the system. If enforcement is inconsistent or if some people seem exempt from consequences, trust breaks down. Fair and consistent accountability is the

foundation of team trust.

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## HISTORICAL PROFILE

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### Joan of Arc 1412 to 1431

Joan of Arc was a French military leader who commanded armies during the Hundred Years War between France and England. Though she had no formal military training and was a young woman in a male-dominated military context, she demonstrated extraordinary ability to inspire loyalty and followership. Soldiers followed her into battle with conviction and commitment. She built trust with her forces through authenticity, conviction, and demonstrated competence. Her legacy demonstrates the power of inspirational leadership to create team cohesion and willingness to undertake dangerous missions. Joan came to prominence claiming divine guidance and mission. Whether or not one believes in the divine origin of her mission, what is clear is that she articulated a vision; the restoration of French sovereignty and the end of English occupation. This vision was powerful enough to inspire people to follow her, to fight for her, to risk their lives in battle. People trusted her because they believed in the cause she represented, not because of military authority or rank. Joan's team cohesion came from shared belief in her mission. Her armies were willing to undertake tactics that were relatively innovative at the time. Soldiers trusted her tactical judgment even when her plans were unconventional. She demonstrated competence in military strategy despite her lack of formal training. She led from the front, placing herself in danger alongside her soldiers. She shared risks with her team rather than commanding from safety.

Joan also demonstrated extraordinary emotional authenticity. She was not trying to be something she was not. She was a young woman from a rural village, and she acted like it. She did not pretend to be a professional soldier or adopt military mannerisms that were not genuine. This authenticity made her trustworthy. Soldiers knew who she was and what she stood for. She was consistent in her values and her behavior. Joan's leadership was ultimately limited by the politics and constraints of her context. She was a woman leading men in a male-dominated military. She was leading people who had different levels of commitment to her cause. She was operating within a political context where her authority was questioned by nobles and church officials. Her inability to navigate these political complexities, combined with her eventual capture and execution, demonstrates the limits of even extraordinary leadership when confronted with political opposition. Joan of Arc's legacy demonstrates that team trust and followership can be built through authentic conviction, through demonstrated competence, through willingness to share risk with team members, and through clear articulation of purpose. She showed that a leader does not need formal authority or years of experience to inspire extraordinary loyalty and commitment. She showed that people will follow leaders they trust, even when the odds are against them.

## **Building Team Trust**

Building Team Trust Creating cohesion among team members

1. What trust-building behaviors do you consistently demonstrate? How long does it take for people to develop trust in you?
2. How do you build trust when you do not have years of working relationships with your team?
3. What would it take for you to lose the trust of your team? How would you rebuild trust if you lost it?
4. How do you demonstrate competence while also admitting what you do not know?
5. What role does vulnerability play in your leadership? How do you balance vulnerability with strength?
6. If your team did not trust you, how would that affect your ability to lead them?

## **Chapter Two: My Reflections**

### **Chapter Two: Continued**

## Decision Command Under Uncertainty Making Decisions With Incomplete Information

The commander who waits for complete information will never give an order. The commander who decides with incomplete information must accept the consequences.

### CHAPTER THREE

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# Decision Command Under Uncertainty

Accepting Uncertainty as a Given

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*Command decisions are almost always made with incomplete information. A*

# Decision Command Under Uncertainty

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making a decision. They will not know what the enemy is planning. They will not know if their intelligence information is accurate. They will not know how their team will perform under actual stress. They must make decisions despite this uncertainty. The field commander who demands complete information before deciding will never give orders. Accepting uncertainty means understanding that any decision might be wrong. The commander must make the best decision possible with available information, and must accept that new information might later reveal that the decision was not optimal. The commander must also accept that sometimes there are no good options, only less bad options. Decision-making under uncertainty is about choosing the best available option, not about achieving perfect outcomes.

**Information Gathering and Decision-Making** Before making a decision, the commander gathers available information. They consult with team members who have relevant knowledge. They review

intelligence information. They consider historical precedents and how similar situations have been handled. They gather information rapidly, understanding that the more time spent gathering information, the higher the cost of delay. There is a point of diminishing returns where additional information does not improve the decision but does delay the action. The commander must distinguish between information that is critical for the decision and information that is nice to have. Critical information is information that would change the decision if it indicated something different. Nice-to-have information is information that would be useful but that does not change the fundamental decision. The commander focuses on getting critical information quickly and accepts uncertainty about nice-to-have information.

**Consultation and Input from Team** A commander who makes decisions without consulting their team is making poor decisions. Team members who are closer to the operational reality often have important information that the commander lacks. Team members who understand the implications of a decision often have insights into whether it will work. Consulting with the team is not weakness or indecision; it is gathering crucial information before making the final decision. However, consultation is not consensus. The commander gathers input and considers it, but the commander makes the final decision. A commander who abdicates decision-making responsibility by trying to reach consensus is not really commanding. The commander takes responsibility for the decision even if that decision contradicts what some team members recommended.

**Decisiveness and Clarity of Orders** Once the decision is made, the commander must be decisive and clear. Ambiguous orders or hesitant communication of orders will create confusion. Team members

need to understand clearly what they are being asked to do. The commander communicates decisions with confidence, even if internally the commander has doubts. The confidence is not about being absolutely certain the decision is right; it is about being committed to the decision and focused on executing it. Decisiveness also means not second-guessing the decision once it is made. If new information suggests the decision was wrong, the commander adjusts. But constant second-guessing or hesitation communicates uncertainty to the team and damages their confidence. Once the decision is made, the commander is fully committed to it.

**Accepting Responsibility for Outcomes** A commander accepts full responsibility for decisions and their consequences. If a decision leads to failure or to harm, the commander takes responsibility. The commander does not blame circumstances, does not blame team members for not executing properly, does not blame bad luck. The commander says, I made this decision, I accept the consequences, and here is what we learned and how we will do better next time. This acceptance of responsibility is psychologically demanding. A commander who makes bad decisions will eventually face consequences for those decisions. A commander must be willing to accept that sometimes decisions will be wrong and must be willing to face the consequences. This is

the deepest level of command responsibility; not just responsibility for success, but responsibility for failures as well.

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## HISTORICAL PROFILE

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### Harriet Tubman 1820 to 1913

Harriet Tubman served as a military commander during the Civil War, planning and executing military operations. Though her formal military rank was limited, she commanded operatives and made decisions that directly affected their safety and the success of operations. Tubman's approach to command demonstrates decision-making under uncertainty, acceptance of responsibility, and inspirational leadership that motivated people to undertake extremely dangerous missions. Tubman's military operations were conducted in occupied enemy territory where she could not rely on complete information about enemy positions, strength, or intentions. She had to make decisions about when to attack, how to move her forces, how to retreat if necessary, with limited and sometimes inaccurate intelligence. She made these decisions despite the uncertainty, accepting that a decision might be wrong. Her willingness to make decisive decisions even with incomplete information allowed her operations to proceed rather than remaining paralyzed by uncertainty. Tubman consulted with the people under her command. She listened to their assessments of situations. She considered their input about whether an operation was feasible. However, she made the final decisions and took responsibility for the outcomes. People under her command trusted her not because they agreed with

every decision but because they understood that she was making the best decisions she could with available information and that she accepted responsibility for the consequences.

Tubman's decisiveness under pressure was legendary. When faced with enemy forces or changing circumstances, she made rapid decisions and communicated them clearly to her forces. She adjusted decisions when new information warranted adjustment, but she did not hesitate or second-guess. This decisiveness inspired confidence in her team even in dangerous situations. Tubman also modeled the willingness to accept responsibility for decisions. When operations went wrong, she took responsibility rather than blaming others. She analyzed what happened, learned from it, and adjusted her approach for future operations. She did not use failures as excuses for not conducting future operations. She accepted them as part of the cost of doing important work and continued operating. Tubman's command demonstrates that exceptional decision-making under uncertainty comes from willingness to act with incomplete information, from consultation with team members while maintaining ultimate responsibility, from decisiveness in communication of decisions, and from acceptance of responsibility for outcomes. She showed that a commander does not need to be certain about decisions to be an effective leader. The commander needs to be decisive, to take responsibility, and to lead their team through whatever comes next.

## **Decision Command Under Uncertainty**

Decision Command Under Uncertainty Making decisions with incomplete information

1. How comfortable are you making decisions with incomplete information? What information do you insist on having?
2. How much input do you gather before making decisions? How do you decide when you have enough information?
3. How do you communicate decisions to your team? Do you communicate with confidence even if you are uncertain?
4. What is your track record with decisions made under uncertainty? What have you learned from your mistakes?
5. How do you accept responsibility for decisions that turn out to be wrong?
6. If you had to make a critical decision right now with the information you currently have, how would you approach it?

## **Chapter Three: My Reflections**

## **Chapter Three: Continued**

## Mission Planning Preparing Teams for Operational Success

The team that prepares for multiple scenarios is the team that remains effective when reality does not match the plan.

### CHAPTER FOUR

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# Mission Planning

Understanding Mission Objectives and Constraints

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*Mission planning begins with clear understanding of what the mission is*

# Mission Planning

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What constraints exist on how the mission can be conducted? What resources are available? What is the timeline? These fundamental questions must be answered before detailed planning can begin. A mission without clear objectives is a mission that will fail to accomplish anything meaningful. The commander must also understand the strategic context. How does this mission fit into the larger operation? What will happen if the mission succeeds? What will happen if the mission fails? What are the consequences of different levels of partial success or partial failure? Understanding the strategic context allows the commander to make decisions about how much risk is worth taking.

**Planning for Multiple Scenarios and Contingencies** No mission goes exactly according to plan. Something will go differently than expected. The commander who has only planned for the ideal scenario will be unprepared when reality diverges from the plan. Effective mission planning involves identifying likely contingencies and planning how to respond. What if key team members are incapacitated? What if intelligence information is

wrong? What if communication systems fail? What if the enemy is stronger or in a different location than expected? For each major contingency, the commander develops a contingency plan. These contingency plans are not necessarily equal to the primary plan in detail, but they outline the approach that would be taken if that contingency occurs. Team members are briefed on contingency plans so they understand how the mission would adapt if conditions change. Contingency planning is not pessimism; it is professionalism.

**Team Selection and Role Assignment** The success of the mission depends on whether the right team members are selected for the right roles. A commander must understand the capabilities of team members, understand what the mission requires, and match people to roles where they can succeed. A team member who is good at rapid decision-making might be assigned to a role requiring flexibility. A team member who is methodical and detail-oriented might be assigned to a role requiring careful execution. Team members assigned to roles that match their strengths are more likely to perform well. The commander must also ensure that the team is prepared for the roles they are assigned. If a team member is assigned a role they have never performed, they need training before the mission. If a team member is assigned a role in which they lack confidence, the commander must address that lack of confidence through training or role adjustment.

**Communication Planning and Information Sharing** Effective mission planning includes detailed communication planning. How will team members communicate with each other? What information will be shared? How frequently will information be updated? What is the protocol if communication

systems fail? What is the protocol for emergency situations? Communication planning ensures that team members understand what information they need to know, how they will receive it, and how they will communicate with others. Information sharing must be calibrated so that each team member has the information they need to perform their role, but does not have information that creates security risks if they are compromised. A person planning logistics does not need to know tactical details. A person executing a tactic does not need to know the strategic purpose of the operation. Careful calibration of information sharing supports both security and team effectiveness.

Rehearsal and Practice Planning is only effective if the team has practiced executing the plan. Rehearsals allow team members to understand their roles, to identify problems with the plan, to practice communication, to develop confidence in their ability to execute. Rehearsals should simulate the stress conditions of actual operations as closely as possible. A team that has not rehearsed will have to learn how to execute the plan while actually executing it, under real stress, with real consequences. Rehearsals also allow the commander to evaluate whether the plan is actually executable. A plan that looks good on paper might be impossible to

execute in reality. Rehearsals reveal these problems before the actual operation. Rehearsals also build team cohesion and confidence. A team that has worked through the mission multiple times in rehearsal knows what to expect and has confidence in their ability to handle it.

## **Mission Planning**

Mission Planning Preparing teams for operational success

1. How thoroughly do you plan missions? Do you plan for contingencies or only for ideal scenarios?
2. How much input do you gather from team members during planning? How do you balance team input with your leadership role?
3. How do you assign people to roles that match their capabilities?
4. How much rehearsal and practice do you require before executing plans?
5. If a major assumption in your plan turned out to be wrong, how would you respond?
6. What would be different about your mission planning if you truly believed that every plan will be tested by reality?

## **Chapter Four: My Reflections**

## **Chapter Four: Continued**

## After-Action Review Culture Building Organizations That Learn From Experience

The organization that learns from failure learns faster than the organization that only celebrates success.

### CHAPTER FIVE

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# After-Action Review Culture

The Purpose and Principles of After-Action Review

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*An after-action review is a structured process in which a team examines what*

## CHAPTER FIVE

# After-Action Review Culture

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and identifies lessons learned. The purpose is not to assign blame but to improve future operations. An after-action review conducted properly is psychologically safe; people are not punished for making mistakes, but rather are encouraged to discuss what happened honestly so that others can learn. After-action reviews operate on the principle that every operation, successful or unsuccessful, teaches lessons that are valuable for future operations. By conducting rigorous after-action reviews, an organization accumulates knowledge about what works and what does not work. This accumulated knowledge makes the organization more effective over time.

**Structured Analysis and Honest Assessment** An effective after-action review follows a structured process. What was supposed to happen? What actually happened? Why was there a difference? What can we learn? This simple structure creates a framework for analyzing operations without getting lost in blame or defensiveness. The analysis focuses on the operation, not on individuals. Even if an individual made a mistake, the

focus is on the mistake and how to prevent it in the future, not on punishing the individual. Honest assessment requires psychological safety. If people are afraid that honest statements will be used against them, they will not speak honestly. If leaders create an environment where mistakes are acknowledged and learned from rather than punished, people will speak honestly. An organization develops this culture through consistent messages that mistakes are learning opportunities, not grounds for punishment.

**Capturing and Sharing Lessons Learned** Lessons learned are only valuable if they are captured and shared. An organization that conducts after-action reviews but does not document the lessons will have to relearn those lessons when new people join the organization. Documentation of lessons learned allows knowledge to be preserved and transmitted to new team members. Lessons learned should be recorded in formats that can be accessed and referenced in the future. Sharing lessons learned requires creating mechanisms for disseminating information. Newsletters, training materials, meetings, internal publications; all of these can be used to share lessons. The goal is to ensure that new team members learn from the experience of previous team members, rather than having to relearn lessons through their own mistakes.

## Blame-Free Culture and Psychological Safety

A culture that blames individuals for mistakes will not learn as effectively as a culture that analyzes mistakes without blame. In a blame culture, people try to hide mistakes and deflect responsibility. In a blame-free culture, people acknowledge mistakes and discuss them openly. A blame-free culture requires leadership commitment. Leaders must model the willingness to acknowledge their own mistakes and to learn from them. Leaders must actively avoid blaming individuals when things go wrong. Psychological safety also requires that there are appropriate consequences for failures. If people are never held accountable, they will not take learning seriously. A culture that is both blame-free and accountable is a culture that is clear about principles and values, that acknowledges when those principles are violated, but that focuses on learning and improvement rather than on punishment.

**Continuous Improvement Through Iteration** Organizations that conduct rigorous after-action reviews and implement lessons learned are organizations that continuously improve. Each operation teaches lessons that make the next operation better. Each mistake prevented prevents future harm. Each success analyzed leads to understanding of what made it successful so that success can be repeated. Organizations that commit to this cycle of learning and improvement become significantly more effective over time. Continuous improvement requires investment of time and resources. It requires leadership commitment to analysis and learning. It requires willingness to change procedures and approaches based on lessons learned. Organizations that make this investment become learning organizations; they accumulate

knowledge, improve their processes, and become more effective at their missions.

## **After-action Review Culture**

After-Action Review Culture Building organizations that learn from experience

1. Do you conduct after-action reviews after operations? How systematic and structured are they?
2. How psychologically safe is your after-action review environment? Would people honestly discuss mistakes?
3. How do you capture and share lessons learned? Are new team members taught the lessons?
4. How do you balance accountability with psychological safety? How do you hold people accountable without creating blame culture?
5. If your team was repeating the same mistakes, what would that suggest about your organization's learning?
6. What would be different about your organization if every operation led to documented lessons that improved future operations?

## **Chapter Five: My Reflections**

## Chapter Five: Continued

Inspiring Loyalty and Followership Creating Commitment to Leadership and Mission

Loyalty is not commanded. Loyalty is earned through demonstrated commitment to the people you lead.

## CHAPTER SIX

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# Inspiring Loyalty and Followership

The Difference Between Authority and Leadership

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*Authority comes from rank or position. A person with a rank can command*

# Inspiring Loyalty and Followership

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can obey orders while feeling resentment toward the authority figure. Leadership, by contrast, inspires commitment and followership that goes beyond what is commanded. A leader can ask people to do things that are not formally required, and people will do them because they want to follow the leader. Loyalty to a leader is different from loyalty to an organization or to a cause. A person might be loyal to an organization and committed to its mission. But loyalty to an individual leader means that people will follow that leader even when the organization's interests might be in doubt. This kind of personal loyalty is what enables extraordinary actions and sustained commitment.

**Demonstrated Care for Team Members** Leaders inspire loyalty by demonstrating genuine care for the people they lead. This care must be genuine; people quickly detect when care is calculated or manipulative. A leader who genuinely cares about the wellbeing and development of team members, who advocates for their interests, who shows

concern when they are struggling, inspires loyalty. A leader who views team members as tools to be used and discarded fails to inspire genuine loyalty. Demonstrated care also includes willingness to advocate for team members to higher leadership. A leader who goes to bat for their people, who fights for resources and recognition for their team, demonstrates that they care about their team's interests. A leader who throws team members under the bus to protect their own interests will lose loyalty.

**Shared Sacrifice and Risk** Leaders inspire loyalty by being willing to make the same sacrifices they ask of their team members. A leader who leads from the front, who takes the same risks as their team, who faces the same dangers, inspires loyalty. A leader who remains safe while ordering team members to face danger will not inspire loyalty. The willingness to share risk creates the deepest bonds of loyalty. Shared sacrifice also includes fairness. If some team members are required to sacrifice while others are exempt from sacrifice, loyalty breaks down. A culture where sacrifice is shared fairly, where everyone contributes, where leadership also contributes, inspires loyalty across the team.

**Clear Purpose and Meaningful Work** People are more loyal to leaders and organizations when they believe their work is meaningful and serves a clear purpose. A team member who understands why they are doing what they are doing, who believes in the purpose, who sees how

their work contributes to that purpose, is more loyal than a team member who is just following orders. A leader who can articulate a compelling purpose and can connect team members' work to that purpose inspires greater loyalty. Clear purpose also means being honest about what the work is for. A leader who tries to make unimportant work seem important will eventually lose credibility. A leader who

honestly acknowledges that some work is difficult or unpleasant but is necessary, and explains why, maintains credibility.

Recognition and Respect People are loyal to leaders who recognize their contributions and who treat them with respect. This recognition does not have to be public; it can be private acknowledgment. But it must be genuine. People know when recognition is sincere and when it is perfunctory. A leader who genuinely recognizes team members' contributions and efforts inspires loyalty. A leader who ignores contributions or only gives recognition when it serves the leader's purposes loses loyalty. Respect also means treating team members as capable adults, not as children who need to be told exactly what to do. A leader who trusts team members to handle their responsibilities without micromanagement, who respects their judgment, who listens to their input, inspires loyalty. A leader who is constantly checking up, who does not trust team members, who dismisses their input, will not inspire loyalty.

## **Inspiring Loyalty And Followership**

Inspiring Loyalty and Followership Creating commitment to leadership and mission

1. Do the people you lead truly commit to following you, or do they simply obey orders? 2. What do you do to demonstrate genuine care for the people you lead? 3. Are you willing to take the same risks and make the same sacrifices that you ask of your team? 4. How clearly do you articulate purpose? Do people understand why they are doing what they are doing? 5. How do you recognize and respect your team members' contributions? 6. If you suddenly had no authority position, would people still follow you?

## **Chapter Six: My Reflections**

### **Chapter Six: Continued**

Legacy and Institutional Intelligence Building Organizations That Survive Leadership Change

The leader whose organization falls apart after they leave has failed. The leader whose organization thrives after they leave has succeeded.

# Legacy and Institutional Intelligence

Building Systems and Institutions

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*A leader's primary responsibility is not just to accomplish the immediate*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Legacy and Institutional Intelligence

the leader is gone. A leader who makes themselves irreplaceable has failed. A leader who builds systems, trains people, creates processes, and develops institutional capability has succeeded. An organization built on the personality and capabilities of a single leader will collapse when that leader leaves. An organization built on systems and processes will continue functioning. Building institutions means documenting procedures, creating training programs,

## developing

## processes

for

## decision-making,

## establishing

communication systems. It means identifying and developing people who can take leadership roles. It means creating a culture that values learning and improvement. It means ensuring that knowledge is not held in the minds of individual people but is recorded and transmitted.

**Developing Successor Leadership** A critical part of a leader's legacy is developing the next generation of leaders. This means identifying people with potential, providing them with development opportunities, giving them increasing responsibility, mentoring them. It means

being willing to step aside and let others take on leadership roles. A leader who tries to maintain power and prevents others from developing leadership capabilities has failed in this responsibility. Developing successor leadership also means being willing to let successors do things differently than the current leader would do them. A leader who insists that successors follow exactly the same approach will prevent innovation and adaptation. A leader who trusts successors to find their own way, while providing guidance and support, enables the organization to evolve.

Institutional Knowledge and Organizational Memory Organizations need institutional knowledge; the accumulated learning from years of operations. This knowledge must be captured in ways that allow it to be transmitted to new people. This might be through documentation, through training programs, through mentoring relationships, through case studies of past operations. An organization that loses institutional knowledge when people retire or move on is an organization that has to relearn lessons repeatedly. Organizational memory is created through after-action reviews, through documentation of procedures, through explicit teaching of lessons learned. An organization that intentionally preserves its knowledge and teaches it to new people will maintain and improve its effectiveness. An organization that assumes knowledge will be retained by individual people will lose that knowledge when the people leave.

## **Ethics and Values in the Organization**

A leader's most important legacy is often the ethical framework and values that they establish in the organization. An organization that operates with integrity, that conducts intelligence operations ethically, that holds itself accountable for its actions, carries forward the values of its leadership. An organization that tolerates corruption, that conducts operations without ethical consideration, that avoids accountability, also carries forward the values of its leadership. Leaders establish values through their actions more than through their words. An organization will adopt the ethics and values that its leaders demonstrate through their decisions and behavior. A leader who talks about integrity but makes compromising decisions will create an organization that compromises. A leader who maintains ethical principles even at cost will create an organization that values ethics.

**Adaptation and Evolution** A leader's final legacy is whether they have created an organization that can adapt and evolve to meet new challenges. The world changes. Threats change. Technology changes. An organization that is rigidly committed to the approaches of the past will fail when the environment changes. An organization that has learned to adapt, that has systems for learning and innovation, that encourages people to think about how things could be done better, will thrive. A leader who has built an adaptive organization has given the greatest gift to their successors. An adaptive organization can meet whatever challenges come, can learn from experience, can innovate when necessary. An organization that has leaders committed to this kind of legacy building will endure and improve for generations.

## **Legacy And Institutional Intelligence**

**Legacy and Institutional Intelligence** Building organizations that survive leadership change

1. If you left your position tomorrow, would your organization continue functioning well without you? 2. Are you developing successor leaders? Who could replace you? 3. What systems and processes have you put in place that will outlast you? 4. How have you established values and ethics that will guide your organization after you leave? 5. What institutional knowledge are you preserving? How are you transmitting it to new people? 6. What is the legacy you want to leave? Are your current actions aligned with that legacy?

## **Chapter Seven: My Reflections**

## **Chapter Seven: Continued**

# Conclusion: The

INTRODUCTION

# Conclusion: The

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Responsibility of Command

# Conclusion: The Responsibility of Command

## CONCLUSION

# Conclusion: The Responsibility of Command

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The field commander stands at the intersection of organizational objectives, team capabilities, and the realities of operational necessity. The commander must translate organizational goals into team actions. The commander must understand team capabilities and limitations. The commander must make decisions about what is possible and necessary. The commander accepts responsibility for the outcomes. Command is responsibility. When others follow your leadership, when others have delegated to you the responsibility for decisions, you have accepted an enormous weight. You are responsible for the success or failure of the mission. You are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of your team. You are responsible for your decisions and their consequences. This responsibility cannot be delegated or transferred. It rests with the commander. Effective commanders understand this responsibility and accept it fully. They do not make excuses. They do not blame circumstances or team members for failures. They analyze what happened, learn from it, and commit to doing better next time. This acceptance of responsibility is what builds trust and loyalty among team members. People will follow leaders who take responsibility. The most effective commanders are also the most humble. They understand that command is a responsibility, not a privilege. They understand that the people they lead are making sacrifices, taking risks, committing their effort. They understand that they must honor that commitment through excellent

leadership, through genuine care for their team, through clear purpose and competent decision-making. As you develop as a leader, remember that the best commanders are those who understand that command is preparation for the time when you no longer hold that position. Build an organization that functions without you. Develop leaders who can replace you. Establish systems and values that will outlast you. The greatest legacy of command is not what you accomplish while you hold power, but what continues after you are gone. The field commander's final test is not measured in victory or defeat. It is measured in whether the people you led would follow you again. It is measured in whether the organization you built continues to function effectively. It is measured in whether the values you established continue to guide the organization. If these things are true, you have succeeded as a commander, regardless of the immediate outcomes of the missions you undertook.

## Mission Possible Spy Academy

## Conclusion: My Reflections

## Conclusion: My Reflections

### Tools

#### Operational Self-Assessment

Use this assessment at the beginning of your Profiler Ribbon work, and again when you complete the course. It is not a test. There are no correct answers. It is a calibration tool: a way of taking a precise inventory of your starting point so that change, when it happens, is visible.

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 = Not at all like me. 3 = Sometimes like me. 5 = Consistently like me.

1. Leadership Presence Do people naturally look to you for leadership when uncertainty arises? [ ] 1. Not at all [ ] 2. Somewhat [ ] 3. Moderately well [ ] 4. Excellent

#### 2. Decision-Making

Am I comfortable making decisions with incomplete information and accepting responsibility for outcomes? [ ] 1. Not at all [ ] 2. Somewhat [ ] 3. Moderately well [ ] 4. Excellent

3. Team Building Can I build trust and cohesion among people who did not previously work together? [ ] 1. Not at all [ ] 2. Somewhat [ ] 3. Moderately well [ ] 4. Excellent

4. Communication Can I articulate purpose, provide clear instructions, and maintain team morale? [ ] 1. Not at all [ ] 2. Somewhat [ ] 3. Moderately well [ ] 4. Excellent

5. Institutional Building Have I built systems and developed people that will outlast my tenure? [ ] 1. Not at all [ ] 2. Somewhat [ ] 3. Moderately well [ ] 4. Excellent

6. Ethical Leadership Do I consistently maintain ethical principles even when they cost me? [ ] 1. Not at all [ ] 2. Somewhat [ ] 3. Moderately well [ ] 4. Excellent

Score Interpretation Level 1 (mostly first options) You are beginning this work with real room to grow. That is the correct starting condition. The Profiler Ribbon is calibrated exactly for this starting point. Level 2 (mostly second options)

You have developed real situational awareness but have not yet systematized it. The Ribbon will give you the vocabulary and the protocol that makes what you already do more consistent and reliable. Level 3 (mostly third options) You are already reading people with substantial accuracy. The Profiler Ribbon will sharpen the precision of the read and extend it into high-pressure situations where your current skill degrades. Level 4 (mostly fourth options) You are operating at an advanced baseline. The Capstone Mission will be your growth edge: not acquiring the skills but integrating them under sustained operational conditions.

Take this assessment again after completing the Profiler Ribbon. The changes will be specific and measurable.

## **Assessment: Notes & Observations**

## **Assessment: Notes & Observations**

## **ASSESSMENT: INITIAL SCORES (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

## **Assessment: Initial Scores (Date: \_\_\_\_\_)**

## **Reference**

Key Terms Definitions of terms and concepts used throughout this book, organized alphabetically for reference.

Accountability Responsibility for decisions and their consequences

After-Action Review Structured review of operation to identify lessons learned

Authenticity Genuineness and consistency in how you present yourself

Command Responsibility Full responsibility for decisions and outcomes of those decisions

Consensus Agreement among all members, not required for command decisions

Contingency Plan Plan for how to respond if major assumptions prove wrong

Decisive Making clear decisions and communicating them with confidence

## **Delegated Responsibility**

### **Responsibility that others have given to a leader**

Emotional Contagion Spread of emotional state from one person to others

Ethical Framework Set of principles guiding ethical decision-making

Followership Commitment to following a leader voluntarily

Institutional Knowledge Knowledge accumulated by organization through experience

Leadership Inspiring commitment and followership beyond commanded obedience

Loyalty Commitment to following a leader even beyond what is commanded

Mirror Neurons Neurons that activate during both action and observation of action

Mission Planning Process of planning operations including goals, strategies, contingencies

Organizational Learning Process by which organizations accumulate knowledge and improve

Psychological Safety Environment where people feel safe speaking honestly

## **Shared Risk**

### **Leaders facing same dangers as their team members**

Successor Development Developing next generation of leaders

## Back Matter

Further Reading The following works were foundational to the ideas in this book and are recommended for readers who wish to explore these subjects in greater depth.

Start with Why (2009) by Simon Sinek

Analysis of how leaders inspire commitment through articulating purpose.

Emotional Intelligence (1995) by Daniel Goleman

Foundation for understanding emotional intelligence in leadership.

Good to Great (2001) by Jim Collins

Analysis of how good organizations become great through sustained leadership.

Beyond Measure (2015) by Margaret Heffernan

Study of how organizations measure success and build cultures that enable excellence.

The Fearless Organization (2018) by Amy Edmondson

Study of psychological safety and how it enables learning and performance.

Dare to Lead (2018) by Brene Brown

Analysis of vulnerability and courage in leadership.

Wardley Maps (2018) by Simon Wardley

Framework for strategic planning and understanding organizational context.

The Power of Moments (2017) by Chip and Dan Heath

Analysis of how leaders create meaningful moments that inspire commitment.

Give and Take (2013) by Adam Grant

Study of reciprocity and organizational culture.

Principles (2017) by Ray Dalio

Framework for decision-making and building organizations based on principles.

## **The Series**

### **The MPSA Library Series**

FIELD COMMANDER is Book Ten of the MPSA Library Series: a collection of ten free reference books, one for each ribbon in the Mission Possible Spy Academy program. Each book provides the historical, scientific, and conceptual foundation for its corresponding ribbon course. They are companion volumes, not curriculum replacements. The courses teach tradecraft. The books explain why that tradecraft works: and how women have been using versions of it for centuries.

Book One: ANALYST Analyst Ribbon

Environmental awareness, the evolutionary origins of female perceptual intelligence, historical operatives, and the architecture of learned helplessness.

Book Two: PROFILER Profiler Ribbon

The science of behavioral reading: micro-expressions, baseline deviation, deception detection, and the history of women who read people for survival.

Book Three: SENTINEL Sentinel Ribbon

Personal security and threat assessment: stalking patterns, target selection, pre-incident indicators, and the women who understood threat before it materialized.

### **Book Four: STRATEGIST**

#### **Strategist Ribbon**

Strategic thinking, planning under uncertainty, decision science, and the women commanders and strategic thinkers history tried to forget.

Book Five: DIPLOMAT Diplomat Ribbon

Influence, persuasion, social engineering, and negotiation: the intelligence of soft power and the women who wielded it.

Book Six: HANDLER Handler Ribbon

Human intelligence, source development, trust and betrayal, and the women who ran networks of people in impossible conditions.

Book Seven: TACTICIAN Tactician Ribbon

Operational planning, counter-surveillance, cover and concealment, and the tactical thinking that kept women alive in hostile environments.

Book Eight: GUARDIAN Guardian Ribbon

Protective intelligence, close protection, emergency response, and the women who kept others safe when no one was keeping them safe.

Book Nine: GHOST Ghost Ribbon

Deep cover, identity management, the psychology of invisibility, and the women who lived double lives and brought both home.

Book Ten: FIELD COMMANDER Field Commander Ribbon

Leadership under fire, operational command, organizational intelligence, and the women who led when they were told they could not.

All ten books are free. All ten are available at [MissionPossibleSpyAcademy.com](http://MissionPossibleSpyAcademy.com).

## **My Notes**

## **My Notes**

### **My Notes: Continued**

### **My Notes: Continued**

### **My Notes: Continued**

### **My Notes: Continued**

### **My Notes: Continued**

### **My Notes: Continued**

## **About the Author**

Dr. Terry Oroszi is the founder and director of Mission Possible Spy Academy, based in Dayton, Ohio. A U.S. Army veteran and behavioral intelligence educator, her career spans academia, federal consulting, and national security. She has worked with women across the United States and internationally, including women surviving under conditions of extreme threat, to develop practical skills in awareness, self-protection, and resilience.

She began writing the MPSA curriculum in 2013, long before AI-assisted content generation existed, driven by one conviction: that the skills of intelligence professionals: honed by decades of field experience and research: belong to every woman who needs them. The MPSA Library Series makes these foundations freely available to every MPSA student, everywhere.

"I started writing in 2013: not because it was easy, but because it needed to be done. These women needed this. They still do." Dr. Terry Oroszi

About Mission Possible Spy Academy Mission Possible Spy Academy (MPSA) is an intelligence-training program founded by Dr. Terry Oroszi. MPSA teaches women: and men: the foundational skills of situational awareness, behavioral analysis, deception detection, strategic communication, and

operational discipline. The curriculum draws from intelligence tradecraft, behavioral science, and applied psychology. Courses are delivered online and accessible globally. The MPSA Library Series provides free companion reading for all MPSA ribbon courses.

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