

Cómo citar este artículo:

Cortés DíazGranados, L. E., Cubides Cárdenas, J. & Fajardo Rico, A. (2017). Leadership in the Colombian Military Forces (MMFF): A comprehensive experience in the fight against terrorism. *Estudios en Seguridad y Defensa*, 12(23), pages 97-108.

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Recibido:
20 de septiembre de 2016

Aprobado:
24 de febrero de 2017

Keywords:
Human Rights, International
Humanitarian Law, Military
Forces, Leadership, Defense
Sector.

Palabras clave:
Derechos Humanos, Derecho
Internacional Humanitario,
Military Forces, Liderazgo, Sector
de la Defensa.

Palavras-chaves:
Direitos humanos, Direito
Internacional Humanitario,
Forças Militares, Liderazgo,
Sector da Defesa.

Leadership in the Colombian Military Forces: A comprehensive experience in the fight against terrorism¹

Liderazgo en las Fuerzas Militares colombianas: Una amplia experiencia en la lucha contra el Terrorismo

Liderança nas Forças Militares colombianas: Uma ampla experiência na luta contra o Terrorismo

ABSTRACT

Colombia has fought an irregular war, including guerrilla warfare and a counterinsurgency generated by different armed groups operating within the margins of the law (Sánchez-Cabarcas, 2009). These groups have victimized the nation with violence surrounding the drug trade, forced displacement,

1 Reflexive article connected to the research Project of "Desafíos para la Seguridad y Defensa Nacional de Colombia", from the research group called "Centro de Gravedad" of the "Escuela Superior de Guerra". The authors express their gratitude for the institutional support

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forced disappearances and terrorism. The Colombian National Army has played a great role in this irregular war where it has won the victory by its position as a leader throughout Colombia with different actions in education and in full compliance with international provisions related to Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and the strategic positioning of the defense sector.

RESUMEN

Colombia ha luchado en una guerra irregular, incluyendo la guerra de guerrillas y una contrainsurgencia generada por diferentes grupos armados que operan al margen de la ley (Sánchez-Cabarcas, 2009). Estos grupos han victimizado a la nación con violencia en torno al narcotráfico, el desplazamiento forzado, las desapariciones forzadas y el terrorismo. El Ejército Nacional colombiano ha desempeñado un gran papel en esta guerra irregular donde ha ganado por su posición como líder en toda Colombia con diferentes acciones en educación y en pleno cumplimiento de las disposiciones internacionales relativas a Derechos Humanos, posicionamiento del sector de la defensa.

RESUMO

A Colômbia lutou uma guerra irregular, incluindo a guerrilha e uma contra-insurgência gerada por diferentes grupos armados que operam ao margen da lei (Sánchez-Cabarcas, 2009). Esses grupos têm vitimado a nação com violência em torno do tráfico de drogas, deslocamento forçado, desaparecimentos forçados e terrorismo. O Exército Nacional colombiano tem desempenhado um papel importante nesta guerra irregular, onde tem ganhado por sua posição como líder em toda a Colômbia com diferentes ações de educação e em plena conformidade com as disposições internacionais relacionadas aos Direitos Humanos, Direito Internacional Humanitário e estratégico posicionamento do setor de defesa.

INTRODUCTION

The principal postulate of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), consists in the pretense of limiting the war, reduce the suffering caused by armed conflict, and regulating the use of force with the ultimate purpose of mitigate the affliction that it causes (Peytrignet, 1995). Taking into account that the IHL applies also to internal conflicts, the Colombian State must respect the provisions of this law, for that reason, all its organs have to integrate into the national norms applied by all the public sectors, included the National Police of Colombia (NPC) and Military

Forces of Colombia, because they have a special role in the safeguarding of Human Rights (HR) and applying IHL, because the officials have the obligation to respect all the normative elements that compose the internal legal system in the framework of the Colombian internal armed conflict.

Thus, this article reveals the military leadership inside the Military Forces of Colombia; the first section exposes the situational leadership, the second section explains the characteristics of leadership inside the Colombian military, the third section describes the importance and impact of education within the military leadership in Colombia, the fourth section reveals the commitment of the Colombian Military Forces to the total compliance of the Inter-American Court (IAC) international orders, the fifth section describes the Colombian military leadership inside the fight against terrorism and finally, the sixth section talks about the experience of the operational legal advisors as leaders in Colombia.

MILITARY LEADERSHIP: SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

We observe that the type of leadership that is most applicable in the Colombian military is the situational leadership model because it confronts dynamic circumstances. This model generates a lot of interest because it requires a flexible and dynamic leadership style, instead of a static one (Noriega, 2008). Situational leadership allows for the development of other kinds of leadership without excluding each other, it is consecrated as a metatheory, as a method that can allow for different variations. In Colombia, the military has continually exercised situational leadership because it has faced an irregular war that is complex, integral, dynamic and demands effective actions like those proposed in this leadership model.

The situational leader is an operational leader that in the words of General Paredes Cadena, has the “responsibility to command units at different levels, where they have to put in practice doctrine, operational guidelines, and personal experience while also relying on logic, initiative, creativity and of course, the capacities of their Soldiers as they move forward to success. In summary, they maximize their tools for leadership and success”. The exercise of these fundamentals allows for reaching the operational objectives to defeat internal aggressors within Colombia and break their will to fight with the goal of consolidating territorial control, guaranteeing security in every part of the Colombian territory and achieving a definitive path to peace and security for all Colombians.

For the author, operational leadership is basically the military’s ability to generate support, to develop capacities and take the initiative while creatively developing the necessary momentum to achieve victory in combat.

In the theme of military leadership, authors such as García- Guiu⁵ and Torres-Horton⁶ state that there is a complex decision making process inside the Military Forces because there are more and more factors to consider when taking decisions, not to mention the increasing responsibilities (García-Guiu and Torres-Horton, 2012). It is necessary that leaders inside the Military Forces have the capacity to make complex decisions at all levels of command. To this point, it is necessary to state that for Castro, Becerra & Lupano (2007), the military seems to value leadership traits more than the private sector when it comes to problem solving and the capacity for the effective administration of resources. Charismatic leadership, where leader reach their objectives inspiring and motivating their followers, highlights the visionary characteristics of a leader and combined with situational leadership focuses more on the ability to anticipate and successfully traverse complex problems. When the leader involves the followers in making decisions (participative leadership), individuals seem to benefit from the democratic character of the leader, while the military would also benefit from values like humility and simplicity (Castro, Becerra & Lupano, 2007, p.82); for this reason, the characteristics of the leader will depend on particular conditions and the makeup of each group, finding different guidelines in behavior relative to the conduct and attitude of the soldiers and of the citizenry (Castro, Becerra & Lupano, 2007, p.82). The study of leadership is not new to Colombia, the researches on military leadership reveals its complexity, for example paraphrasing professor Vanoni (2013) “is possible to state that leadership is an ancient preoccupation” (Bass, 1999), not pertaining solely to the political and business sphere (Alcazar, 2007), but also in the Military Forces it is a strategic concept in the definition of forming a military. It is a competition that requires us to confront the complexity and evolution of modern day conflicts (Alcazar, 2007).

In Colombia, the Military Forces and in particular the army develops situational leaders. In the words of Ruiz and Palomino (2009) situational leadership requires those who want to exercise as leaders to have capacities to capture quickly the details of various situations they encounter and to select for each one the appropriate leadership style. For that reason, a situational leader must possess a dynamic and flexible character. Generally, for these authors, one effective leadership style for every situation do not exist, conversely it is situationally dependent.

5 About it this author affirms: Leadership is a strategic concept in the military profession definition. The complexity reality affects both the Leadership definition and formation and selection of leaders and their professional development. It requires an open and adaptable mind, development the activity in different domains with growing importance in the new technologies use.

6 In this Torres-Horton's (2012) write, is concluded: The complexity of the actual operational environment, exposed the AAFP to a tasks diversity about uncertain and unpredictable scenarios; where actors diversity (enemies, citizens, no combatants, journalists, NGO), requires leaders with more adaptation and preparation ethic, technic, communicational and policy capacities; able to keep the group cohesion, to achieve the technic interoperability, operational and culture required and to dominate the politics, social and particular implications of those operations.

This leads us to take in to account the different factors that make a leader effective (the complexity of the task, kind of task, parameters of the task, task feedback, situational stress, and depth of support) (Ruiz & Palomino, 2009, p.6).

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS IN THE MILITARY

Leadership is granted to individuals by a community of people as a means of representation. The leader's power is a capacity granted socially, not by the valuation of individual attributes, but for the valuation of those measures determined by a social group. It is possible to suppose that every group measures attributes similarly across cultures or, conversely, groups gravitate towards leaders who resemble the peculiarities of thinking and behavior of their communities (Huaylupo, 2007, p.108). Leadership inside the military is proven in complex situations, in difficult or critical moments (Rojas & Gaspar, 2006, p. 23). The Colombian internal armed conflict reveals the necessity of military leadership with particular and abundant characteristics for this multidimensionality of scenarios, actors and threats.

In groups, many members highlight the characteristics of the leader, and are able to overcome every obstacle regardless how hard they may be (Moloeznik, 2004, p.63). Even in the fifth century B.C., Sun Wu (1983) (Sun-Tzu) recognized that in war "If you know the enemy and you know yourself, you don't have to be afraid of the result of one hundred battles. If you know yourself but you don't know the enemy, for every victory you will suffer a defeat. If you don't know the enemy and you neither know yourself, you will succumb in every battle" (p.113). Military leadership reveals that there must be complex military power, which means the interaction of quantitative and qualitative components. Some of the characteristics of a leader could be attributed to military education and training, his acquired competencies and life experiences.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN FORMING MILITARY LEADERS IN COLOMBIA

In accordance with military-strategic thinking, both in its Western Hemisphere and Eastern Hemisphere approaches, the human factor is the decisive element in every conflict. Also, in light of new technologies and increasingly sophisticated weapon systems, there is a demand for more specialized and qualified individuals. For that reason, the dominant trend is the professionalization of officers and countering the dangers of compulsory recruitment (Moloeznik, 2004, p. 268). The professional education of the Military Forces members focuses on values, virtues and institutional principles.

The values or qualities required of military leader must be oriented inside the respect of IHL and the acquisition of proper competences from the military sciences. Some of these attributes include: positive attitude, self-discipline, work capacity, character, charisma, commitment, communication, discernment, teaching, listening, focus, generosity, initiative, passion, interpersonal relations, responsibility, safety, helpfulness, problem solving, value and vision of the future (Estrada, 2007). These qualities are important characteristics of a military leader that ensure success in various situation; the above attributes are qualitative and dimensional components of leadership. The military leader's qualities will depend greatly on his education, formation and experience.

In Colombia, military leadership starts in the Military School of Cadets "General José María Córdova", continues in the School of Arms and Services and ends at the Higher School of War; in every educative institution of the Colombian Army skills are honed with the purpose of combating each one of the threats faced by the Colombian Military. Each institution develops the leader with: (i) a mission and vision of each one of the institutions, (ii) the inclusion of micro-curricular components inside the study plans with leadership themes, (iii) a requirement of specific competences considered in every military grades, (iv) institutional values that every institution promotes inside the Military Forces member and (v) the courses, congresses, seminars, and specializations where it promotes the leadership theme. Parallel to the academic formation are the combat leadership courses, which form the leaders for tactical level and operational level planning.

COLOMBIAN MILITARY FORCES LEADERSHIP IN TOTAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT: CONSOLIDATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

In a conventional context generated by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), Colombia has adopted a new approach towards Human Rights, in which past failures inside the State provide legal concepts that improve the protection of Human Rights. Also, the Military Forces are leading the way in adopting the international norms outlined by the IACHR. Of the sixteen (16) sentences that have been issued by the IACHR against Colombia throughout the internal armed conflict, five (5) of them speak of the need to adopt educative measurements for the Military Forces and its leaders: (1) IACHR, Case Gutiérrez Soler against Colombia, (2005); (2) IACHR, Case Mapiripán's Massacre vs. Colombia, (2005); (3) IACHR, Case Ituango's massacre vs. Colombia, (2006); (4) IACHR, Case Rochela's Massacre vs. Colombia, (2007) and (5) IACHR, Case Vélez Restrepo and relatives vs. Colombia, (2012). Below are the rules in detail for each case:

- a) IACHR, Case Gutiérrez Soler Vs. Colombia, 2005.

The State must implement courses that educate the public sector on the military criminal jurisdiction and a program directed to the analysis of jurisprudence of the Inter-American Protection System of Human Rights, in the terms of paragraphs 106, 107 and 108 from this Sentence.

- b) IACHR, Case Mapiripán's Massacre vs. Colombia, 2005.

The State must implement, in a reasonable time, permanent education programs in Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law inside the Colombian Armed Forces, in every hierarchical level, in the terms of paragraphs 316 and 317 from this sentence.

- c) IACHR, Case Ituango's Massacre vs. Colombia, 2006.

The State must implement, in a reasonable time, permanent education programs in Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law inside the Colombian Army Forces, in the terms of paragraph 409 from this Sentence.

- d) IACHR, Case Rochela's Massacre vs. Colombia, 2007.

The State must continue implementing, and in this case develop permanent education programs in Human Rights inside the Colombian Armed Forces, and guarantee their effective implementation, in the terms of paragraph 303 from this sentence.

- e) IACHR, Case Vélez Restrepo and Familiars vs. Colombia, 2012.

The State must incorporate, in its education programs in Human Rights directed to Armed Forces, a specific module about right to freedom of thought and expression protection for journalists and social communicators, in the terms of paragraph 277 from this sentence.

In correspondence with these measurements, the IACHR has recognized that Colombia has totally fulfilled its obligations related to the education programs of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law implementation, as can be verify in the Compliance Monitoring Resolutions Wilson Gutiérrez Soler (2008), Case Ituango's Massacre (2009) and Case Rochela's Massacre (2010). Compliance was due to the diligent work of the Military Forces related to each action required by the IACHR. The requirement to adopt international conventions and education requirements that respect promote and defend Human Rights and IHL inside the Military Forces in Colombia is the cornerstone that shows military leaders are agents of change able to respond to complex situations. The total compliance increases the

legitimacy of the Military Forces with Colombian citizens because they are compliant with international obligations.

COLOMBIAN MILITARY LEADERSHIP AND THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

It cannot be ignored that the terrorism phenomenon is combined with the acts of organized illegal groups within Colombia. The armed conflict produced violent acts sequenced, planned and high mediated, that deliberately targeted objectives with the purpose of creating a climate of fear and insecurity (Rodriguez, 2012). Given the above, Colombian represented by Public Forces (composed of the Military Forces – Army, Navy and Air Force- and National Police), must intervene in a decisive way. In that vein, Colombia established an integral program through different public policies routed to fight terrorism like defense and democratic politics (2003) and the consolidation of democratic politics (2007). Meanwhile, the security and democratic policies designated as terrorists every illegal group ignoring common societal norms. Also the state strategy clarified that: i) Terrorism, ii) Illicit drugs business, iii) Illicit finances, iv) Arms, munitions and explosives trafficking, v) Kidnapping and vi) Extortion, are the major threats which affect the social order of the nation. For that reason it was deemed necessary to establish a regional state control over all the Colombian territory, protecting citizens and attacking the drug trafficking and corruption.

These policies were execute in the Military Forces campaign Plan Patriota (2003) involving a strategic final objective looking to stem the power of the drug trafficking organizations with a military solution, through finance neutralization and military force against terrorist groups. Also Military Forces were involved in territorial control because of the persistence of terrorism acts. Military Forces saw it was necessary to push for the consolidation policies of democratic security that attempts to establish the State presence in every territory allowing for free operation of all government components and prioritizing the protection of citizens, conserving the strategic initiative against every threat to citizen's security, keeping a strong position against drug trafficking, and identifying financiers of terrorism. This strategic plan further legitimized the Military Forces in the public eye, making citizens more participative in the fight against terrorism.

The State also concentrated on attacking the funding for terrorism groups, intensifying the effort against the financial sources of all the criminal networks while also strengthening economic and financial intelligence as a tool to detect resources and speed up judicial processes. Ultimately they formed the National Anti-Money Laundering Information System and Against the Financing of Terrorism- AML/

AFT, whose principal purpose was to maximize the prevention and detection of money with criminal origins. In this context, the importance of policy management and administration requires a leader that has the capacities to manage such an important and complex mission. Also, the Military Forces required strong leadership to effectively implement this kind of policies against terrorism. It is very important to have a military leader with the necessary qualities to be able to make coherent decisions respecting at every moment the application of IHL. For that reason, the creation of the operational legal advisor was vital in the fight against terrorism.

COLOMBIAN STATE LEADERSHIP STRATEGY THROUGH APPLICATION OF OPERATIONAL LEGAL ADVISORS

The Colombian operational legal advisors comes from a legal mandate established in the article 82 from Protocol I additional to the Gin conventions, which consecrated the legal advisor as a tool of the commander to determinate the force use under the respect and compliance of the rules of the IHL. Colombian political leaders established this figure in the Integral Policy of Human Rights from the National Defense Ministry. This figure was designed as a tool to bring clarity on the legal framework applicable to military operations, clarify proper use of force, and also to ensure effective operational discipline.

The National Army implemented the legal advisor through Directive 066 of 2008, which created and activated the Operational Legal Advisor position. Since Directive 0181 of 2012, the Management of Operational Legal Advice passed from the Headquarters Operations to be part of the Headquarters Human Rights and IHL, with the purpose of ensuring impartiality of advice at the operational level. Today, the National Army has more than 140 Operational Legal Advisors distributed in different brigades and divisions.

In this way, it's possible to affirm that the Operational Legal Advisor in Colombia has a lawyer military profile in active service, prepared to advise on the following areas: Operational Law, Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, Criminal Law, Military Criminal Law, Criminal Accusatory System or Criminalistics Sciences, and others branches of Law, related with military sciences. Also, it's fundamental that the Operational Legal Advisor have a broad knowledge of military doctrine in intelligence, operations, and logistic. The advisor must have the capacity of applying legal doctrine with operations and contributing to the operational success and legal security of the unit.

IN CONCLUSION: STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF THE COLOMBIAN DEFENSE SECTOR AS A REFERENCE LEADER

The Military Forces leadership's searches to positioning Colombia as a world leader thanks to the integral policy experience of combating different threats. Operational experience, strategies developed from military education, international advisor assistance, the creation of the operational legal advisors, public policies synchronized with security, and the dynamic strategies utilized in the fight against terrorism are all evidence that the Colombian Military Forces has the capacity to counter unconventional threats.

This can be seen in the Strategic Plan of Defense Sector (SPDS) (2016) where it is stated that the Military Forces must continue to search for strategic partnerships to strengthen the national defense, participate in international missions, and improve bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The Military Forces will also work to improve standards, operational capacities, and Colombian Public Force tactics to become more effective in the fight against transnational organized delinquency and other threats. The Military Forces will also continue to offer support to other nations. For that reason one of the goals of the Military Forces is to position and consolidate Colombia as a leader in defense and security at the regional, hemispheric and global level, through the strengthening of mechanisms and cooperation efforts, based on Colombian Public Force experiences and capacities.

Modernity and globalization brings with it much complexity for all societies, even more so in the realm of defense. The asymmetrical threats faced by the Military Forces have developed dynamic leaders and well-rounded and proven strategies. Military Forces leaders are continually developed in leadership institutions and are more capable than ever to face the dynamic threats posed to society.

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