

STATE OF THE ART

Colonel (Retired) Paul T. Bartone, Ph.D. is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University. A Fulbright Scholar (Norway, 2006-07), Bartone has taught strategic leadership at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, and at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, where he also served as Director of the West Point Leader Development Research Center. Trained as an interdisciplinary research psychologist at the University of Chicago, he is a seasoned expert in applying psychological, social, cultural, and biological perspectives to the understanding of human behavior. As an Army Research Psychologist, Bartone deployed to locations worldwide to conduct embedded research with Army units, to include the Persian Gulf, Bosnia, Croatia, Grenada, Germany, & Hungary. His work focuses on understanding and measuring resilient responding to stress, identifying underlying biomarkers for resilience, and applying this knowledge to improve selection, training and leader development programs. Bartone also served as the Research Psychology Consultant to the U.S. Army's Surgeon General, and as the Assistant Corps Chief for Medical Allied Sciences. He is a past-President of the American Psychological Association's Division 19, Society for Military Psychology, a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, and a charter member of the Association for Psychological Science.



The Military Psychologist: A Key Resource for Leaders

The success of a military unit depends on many factors, but probably most importantly on its people. As experts on human behavior, military psychologists can be a hugely valuable resource for leaders and commanders. It's the job of military psychologists to apply their knowledge on human nature and behavior to maximize the health, well-being and performance of the people serving in uniform. The military psychologist is able to advise leaders on a range of "people issues" related to soldier health and performance including initial selection and classification decisions; determining a soldier's fitness for continued duty; assessing morale, health, and well-being; designing and implementing prevention and treatment programs; and developing policies to protect and enhance individual and group fitness.

Wise leaders make use of their military psychologists, and wise military psychologists understand the importance of working closely with leaders. Advising leaders can take the form of informal conversations, more formal briefings, or published reports, briefing papers and policy recommendations. In this brief talk, I'll cover some of the central issues and approaches taken by military psychologists as consultants to leaders, and provide a few recommendations for success, including:

- Get to know the culture, language, and habits of the military organization you are working for; get out of the office or clinic; participate in various military training courses (e.g., airborne, air assault); accompany the unit on training exercises. In addition to

developing “cultural competence,” this also helps to build relationships, trust, and credibility.

- Take time to find out what commanders need, and understand their questions. Make it a point to attend staff meetings and briefings.
- Be honest and clear with commanders and military personnel regarding ethical issues, any limits on confidentiality, etc.
- Include local unit behavioral experts in your consultations, such as chaplains and social workers; take a team approach. This expands the resources of the military psychologist while generating greater cooperation.
- Provide clear advice in a format the commander is familiar with and if asked, offer practical suggestions for how to implement it.