

Leader Professional Developmental Reading Lists

Table of Contents

- [The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs' Professional Reading List](#)

This reading list (TBD) has been constructed to support the renewal of our commitment to our Profession of Arms and the development of Joint Force. The books selected capture the values and ethos of our military profession, promote innovative thinking to prepare for the operational realities of an uncertain future, and provide insights into the foundations of our service cultures.

- [The U.S. Army Chief of Staff's Professional Reading List](#)

The Army List (TBD) is compiled for leaders. The Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) views it as a pillar for leadership development efforts. Titles are included that will provoke critical thinking about Professional soldiering and a deep understanding of the Army and the future of the profession of arms in the 21st Century. [Previous CSA Reading List.](#)

- [TRADOC Headquarters Library Reading Lists](#)
- [National Defense University Professional Military Reading List](#)
- [Cadet Command CG Reading List](#)

Cadet Optional Readings

[The First 100 Days of Platoon Leadership](#) CALL Handbook NO. 18-24.

[Leadership: The Art of Inspiring People to Be Their Best.](#)

[TACTICAL PAUSE: For Daily Growing Leaders.](#)

Additional Resources

- [The Boss's Challenge: Manage Well, Lead Well, and Listen.](#)
- [Article "Getting the Most Out of Professional Reading."](#)

CADET COMMAND CG'S PROFESSIONAL READING LIST

MG John R. Evans | reading list |

All Leaders:

1. **Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of the Battle of Thermopylae**, Steven Pressfield, 1998. This novel recounts combat and leadership in its most raw and visceral form. Follow Leonidas and the Spartans as 300 stand against over 100,000 in perhaps the greatest epic battle in the history of warfare.*
2. **Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia**, Ahmed Rashid, 2001. Insightful and predictive, this narrative of the Taliban published before the events of September 11, 2001, is a must read for all military officers.
3. **We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young**, LTG (R) Hal Moore, 1992. LTG Moore offers a gripping, firsthand account of the November 1965 Battle of the Ia Drang as the commander of 1/7 Cavalry. The Ia Drang was the first major combat test of the airmobile concept and the first battle between U.S. forces and the North Vietnamese Army.*
4. **The 9/11 Commission Report**, 2002. This is a surprisingly easy read for a government report. The notes are significant (nearly ¼ of the text), but the body of the report is on point.
5. **An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-43**, Rick Atkinson, 2002. An educational account of America's foray into North Africa – poorly led, badly equipped and ill-prepared. Read how American ingenuity and growing strength of leadership took us from defeat to victory.*
6. **The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-44**, Rick Atkinson, 2007. In the second book of Rick Atkinson's Trilogy follow the penetration through Southern Europe and the defeat of Italy as the stage is set for Operation Overlord and the Normandy invasion.*
7. **The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944-45**, Rick Atkinson, 2013. The final book of Atkinson's trilogy traces the fight through Western Europe, the liberation of France and Hitler's final defeat in Germany.*
8. **LikeWar**, Peter Singer & Emerson T. Brooking, 2018. The weaponization of the internet is changing our operating environment and our future battlefield. Singer and Brooking make a compelling argument of why every future leader needs to understand this landscape.
9. **Army of None**, Peter Scharre, 2018. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and autonomous systems are poised on the horizon – and many have already arrived. Read why this will fundamentally change the nature of how we conduct warfare in the future.

10. **Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking**, Malcolm Gladwell, 2007. Gladwell posits that many of the decisions we make are automatic – made without thinking. Explore why some decision makers are naturally gifted, and others struggle.
11. **All the Light We Cannot See**, Anthony Doerr, 2017. This Pulitzer Prize winning novel weaves together the story of two complex characters that get caught up in the humanity of war. Recommended by the Chief of Staff, USACC.
12. **Radical Inclusion: What the post-9/11 World Should Have Taught Us About Leadership**, Martin Dempsey, 2018. Former CJCS and TRADOC CG asks us to look hard at our conformational biases. Are you building the best teams with diverse opinions, or are you surrounding yourself with like-thinkers?

Cadets and Company Grade Leaders

1. **Five Years to Freedom**, James N. Rowe, 1971. This true story of Rowe's own POW experience in Vietnam is a great primer for Pre-SERE candidates. It also provides significant insights into the strength of the human spirit and the importance of our Code of Conduct.
2. **The Killer Angels**, Michael Shaara, 1974. This Pulitzer Prize winning account of the Battle of Gettysburg examines leadership at all levels and highlights some of Nation's most heralded heroes including Medal of Honor recipient, Joshua Chamberlain.
3. **Marine! The Life of Chesty Puller**, Burke Davis, 1962. I'm not trading sides, but this biographical sketch of the Marine Corps' most celebrated leader is inspirational. He was the only Marine to ever be awarded the Navy Cross (equivalent of the Army Distinguished Service Cross) five times.
4. **The Greatest Generation**, Tom Brokaw, 1998. The tales of men who lived through the depression only to face the greatest war in the history of mankind should serve as a lesson to us all.
5. **Band of Brothers**, Stephen Ambrose, 1999. Follow the men of Easy Company as they parachute into D-Day. Tremendous read by the master of military history.*
6. **Guests of the Ayatollah**, Mark Bowden, 2006. Mark Bowden presents yet another thrilling account of American adversity. This is a great story of the American hostages in Iran and what can arguably be called the beginning of America's war against extremist Islam.
7. **Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq**, Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, 2006. This insightful look at the planning and invasion of Iraq in 2003 provides a top-level view of how and why the decision to invade was made.
8. **Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War**, Robert Gates, 2014. A great study of transformational leadership by the only Secretary of Defense to ever be held over from one party administration to the next.
9. **The Outpost**, Jake Tapper, 2012. An inspiring story of one of most deadly battles in Afghanistan, and an examination of combat leadership at the squad, platoon and company level.

10. **My Share of the Task**, Stanley McChrystal, 2014. A riveting account of McChrystal's paradigm breaking leadership techniques, and the teams that he has successfully built throughout his career.
11. **1776**, David McCullough, 2005. This book provides a breathtaking account of the critical year in the Revolution that gave rise to the birth of our Nation. It is astounding to see how truly close we came to defeat.*
12. **Blackhawk Down**, Mark Bowden, 1999. Long before the Global War on Terrorism, the United States was taking the fight to warlords and terrorists in northeast Africa.
13. **The Brotherhood of War Series (The Lieutenants – The Aviators)**, W.E.B. Griffin, 1986 and forward. This fast moving series of historical novels follows a cohort of officers from 2LT to General and beyond, asking critical questions about leadership along the way.

Field Grade and Senior Leaders

1. **My American Journey**, Colin Powell, 1995. Former CJCS and NSA provides a powerful statement on personal accountability and tenacity. Walk the career of one of the Army most successful four-star generals and America's first African-American Secretary of State.
2. **Once an Eagle**, Anton Myrer, 1968. Required reading at the Army War College and the only book that former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, GEN Hugh Shelton, ever professed to reading twice. This is the work that inspired W.E.B Griffin's Brotherhood of War series.*
3. **The Commanders**, Bob Woodward, 1991. Woodward provides a brilliant essay on the Bush (41) cabinet and the road to war in Panama and the Persian Gulf.
4. **Guerilla Warfare**, Che Guevara, 1985. This book contains significant insights into the mind of the military guerilla – what motivates him and how to beat him. There are subtle lessons here for battling insurgencies in any theater.
5. **The Art of War**, Sun Tzu. Master Sun wrote the book on warfare. Jomini, Clausewitz and others expounded on his themes and methods.*
6. **The Darkest Summer: Pusan and Inchon 1950: The Battles That Saved South Korea--and the Marines--from Extinction**, Bill Sloan, 2009. This book chronicles North Korean invasion of the south in 1950, the driving of American forces back to the Pusan Perimeter and the amazing landing at Inchon that saved American forces and South Korea.
7. **1776**, David McCullough, 2005. This book provides a breathtaking account of the critical year in the Revolution that gave rise to the birth of our Nation. It is astounding to see how truly close we came to defeat.
8. **The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive History of the Peloponnesian War**, edited by Robert Strassler and Richard Crawley. Written over 2500 years ago, Thucydides recounts lessons in strategy, politics and tactical evolution that are relevant even today. A difficult read, but worth the investment.*
9. **Six Days of War**, Michael Oren, 2003. This book is a must read for all military leaders that want to understand the underpinnings of the quagmire in the Middle East. It not only

gets at the root cause of the 1967 war between Egypt and Israel, but sets the stage for how power dynamics have evolved in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon since 1948.

10. **The Generals, American Military Command from World War II to Today**, Tom Ricks, 2012. This book received wide criticism from the military establishment but provide key insights to the different styles and motivations of senior leaders throughout our Army's history.*

11. **The Soldier and the State**, Samuel Huntington, 1957. The book to take a deep hard look at civil-military and the role of each in making the relationship better.*

12. **This Kind of War**, T. R. Fehrenbach, 1963. This the quintessential account of the Korean War by a man who lived it, catalogued it and provided it in exceptional and breathtaking detail. The authoritative book on the Korean War.*

13. **1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War**, Benny Morris, 2009. To understand the complexities of the Middle East, it is essential that one understand the re-birth of the Israeli nation.

14. **World Order**, Henry Kissinger, 2015. In a way that only Kissinger can, he takes us through pre-Westphalia to modern day world order, and asks the critical questions about how long we can sustain the current state of play.*

15. **The Gulag Archipelago**, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 1973. Voluminous and detailed, this work is, nonetheless, the best personal account of the Stalinist purges and those who lived through them. Importantly it speaks to the human spirit of ethnic Russians.

16. **The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order**, Samuel Huntington, 1996. A classic work on internal relations and the importance of the military element of national power in foreign policy.

17. **A World Undone: the Story of the Great War, 1914-1918**, G. J. Meyer, 2007. The essential history of World War I from the German invasion to the 11 November Armistice.

18. **Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap?**, Graham Allison, 2017. As we re-enter an era of Great Power competition, the US and China seem to be on a collision course. Can we avert a large scale conflict and avoid the fate of Athens and Sparta?

Additional Reads and Recommendations

1. **American Soldier**, General Tommy Franks, 2004. With a unique style and familial ease GEN Franks recounts his career with specific focus on his tenure at the CENTCOM Commander during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

2. **Killing Pablo**, Mark Bowden, 2001. Master military scribe, Mark Bowden, recounts our nation's assistance in hunting down the world's most notorious and ruthless drug dealer. This is an interesting study in interagency cooperation and political military affairs in the unstable capitals of South America.

3. **Raid on the Sun, Inside Israel's Secret Campaign that Denied Saddam the Bomb**, Rodger Claire, 2004. Follow the Israel Air Force through the high risk F-16 mission that

ended Iraq's Nuclear Weapons program. This is a great study in long term deliberate planning, and the use of the 1980s newest technology (satellite intel, F16, etc.).

4. **The Battle of Algiers** (film), directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966. This French language film explores the struggle of French forces against Muslim insurgents in Algiers – a great study on the nature of insurgency.

5. **Charlie Wilson's War**, George Crile, 2003. This book chronicles the incredible (and often illegal or unethical) efforts of Texas Congressman (D) Charles Wilson to fund the CIA's covert assistance of the Afghani Mujahideen during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. You'll be amazed by what high esteem some of our current nemeses (JHQ, Hekmatyar, Berader) were held in by our own CIA and members of Congress. A great read on Afghanistan and the path that brought us to our current state.

6. **Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea**, Barbara Demick, 2009. The author recounts the stories of multiple North Korean defectors and paints a compelling picture of just how dire the situation is in North Korea. A must read for anyone interested in the truth about the Kim regime.

7. **About Face**, David Hackworth, 1989. Before he was a CNN commentator he was the Army's most decorated Soldier. His criticisms of senior leadership may seem bitter, but his rise through the enlisted ranks to senior combat leader is astounding.

8. **The Siege of Dien Bien Phu: Hell in a Very Small Place**, Bernard Fall, 1967. Long before America was mired in war in Southeast Asia, the French were suffering staggering casualties in French Indochina. Fall offers a tremendous study in not just battle command, but the folly of over reliance on air power and the importance of logistics.

9. **The Places In Between**, Rory Stewart, 2006. This objective look at Afghanistan and its inhabitants offers cultural insights into the crossroads of the orient. Rory Stewart recounts his amazing foot journey across Afghanistan from Herat to Kabul. An easy read, compelling and surprising in its honesty.

10. **Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power**, Robert Kaplan, 2011. Kaplan conducts an overview of a rising Asia and a return to trade and economic routes of old. It's no mistake this AOR is now known as the Indo-Pacific.*

Something Different

Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era, Steven Emerson, 1988. Originally published in 1988 this book went out of publication after the first edition due to concerns about national security. A difficult to find out-of-print book, it provides keen insights into Special Operations Forces history.

Not a Good Day to Die, Sean Naylor, 2005. This recount of Operation Anaconda and special operations battles on the high peaks of Takur Ghar Mountain is an engaging read.

The Pentagon's Brain, Anne Jacobsen, 2016. Take a peek inside the history of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). Develop a better understanding of what someone means when they say a problem is "DARPA hard".

Ender's Game, Orson Scott Card, 1994. Card's Sci-Fi classic won a Hugo and Nebula award for its original thought and challenging premise in breeding high cognition child warriors.

A World Undone: the Story of the Great War, 1914-1918, G. J. Meyer, 2007. The essential history of World War I from the German invasion to the 11 November Armistice.

90 Minutes at Entebbe, William Stevenson, 2015. Few raid in the history of military operations were as quick, as bold and as lean as the Israeli Special Operations raid to free hijacked passengers in Entebbe. A must read.

The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations, Rod Beckstrom, 2008. Traditional top-down organizations (like the military) can stifle innovation. Read how bottoms-up leadership is taking hold and creating new and powerful business entities.

Outliers: The Story of Success, Malcolm Gladwell, 2011. Gladwell examines the elemental question of what makes high-achievers different. Is it training and focus or does it have to do with background and cultural variance?

The Demon in the Freezer, Richard Preston, 2003. None of us likes to consider the use of biological agents as weapons of terror, but we must. Examine the world of "hot agents" and gain a firmer understanding of what you should know about this dirtiest of warfare.

Iranian Rappers and Persian Porn: A Hitchhiker's Adventures in New Iran, Jamie Maslin, 2012. Follow the author on a hitchhiking tour of the Silk Road. Get a different view of what modern day Iran looks like, and what motivates its people.

109 East Palace: Robert Oppenheimer and the Secret City of Los Alamos, Jennet Conant, 2006. Step inside America's most classified military project – Manhattan. Learn how the Father of the Atomic Bomb gave birth to our most devastating human creation.

Ghost Fleet, Peter Singer and August Cole, 2015. The United States, China, and Russia eye each other across a twenty-first-century version of the Cold War, which suddenly heats up at sea, on land, in the air, in outer space, and in cyberspace. How will it end?*

***An Army Chief of Staff Professional Reading List selection. These books have either been recommended by the current CSA or former CSAs.**