

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION TO THE MEDICAL THREAT

### Section I. Message To The Unit Commander

#### DISEASES AND NONBATTLE INJURIES

What action do you think should be taken against a commander who allows his unit to sustain 40% combat injuries through neglect? How about a commander with a unit 40% ineffective due to malaria, cold injuries, or diarrhea?

Historically, in every conflict the US has been involved in, only 20% of all hospital admissions have been from combat injuries, The other 80% have been from diseases and nonbattle injuries (DNBI). Excluded from these figures are vast numbers of soldiers with decreased combat effectiveness due to DNBI not serious enough for hospital admission.

Preventive medicine measures are simple, commonsense actions that any soldier can perform and every leader must know. The application of PMM can significantly reduce time loss due to DNBI.

*How Much Time Does Your Unit Spend Training Soldiers on:  
Disease and Nonbattle Injury Prevention?  
Combat Injury Prevention?*

**YOUR RESPONSIBILITY**

You are responsible for all aspects of health and sanitation of your command. Only you can make command decisions concerning the health of your unit in consideration of the—

- Mission.
- Medical threat.
- Condition of troops.

**DO NOT LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU**

*Togatabu Island 1942:* The 134th Artillery and the 404th Engineer Battalions were part of a task force preparing to attack Guadalcanal, Fifty-five percent of the engineers and 65% of the artillerymen contracted a disease called “Filariasis” transmitted by mosquitoes. Both units had to be replaced (medically evacuated)

without seeing any enemy action because they were not combat ready. The use of insect repellent, insecticides, and elimination of standing water would have prevented this.

*Merrill's Marauders:* Disease was an important detractor to this famous unit. The medical threat faced by the Marauders in the jungles of Burma was great. Everyone was sick, but some had to stay and fight. Evacuation was limited to those with high fever and severe illness. One entire platoon cut the seats from their pants because severe diarrhea had to be relieved during gunfights. After a bold and successful attack on a major airfield, Merrill's Marauders were so decimated by disease that they were disbanded.

## **Section II. The Medical Threat and Principles of Preventive Medicine Measures**

The medical threat is—

- Heat
- Cold
- Arthropods and other animals

- Food/waterborne diseases
- The unfit soldier
- Noise
- Toxic chemicals-nonNBC
- Nonbattle injury

## **PRINCIPLES OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE MEASURES**

Soldiers perform individual principles of PMM.

Chain of command plans for and enforces PMM.

Field sanitation teams train soldiers in PMM and advise the commander on implementation of unit level PMM.

***Failure to Apply the Principles of PMM  
Can Result in Mission Failure***