

THE IMPACT OF COMBAT STRESS ON TACTICAL DECISIONS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOR IN OPERATIONAL THEATERS

Emil Răzvan GATEJ

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Police Academy Bucharest, Romania

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Abstract: *The impact of combat stress on tactical decisions cannot be overstated in military operations. Combat stress, often referred to as battle fatigue or shell shock, encompasses a range of psychological responses to the stressors of warfare . These stressors can include prolonged exposure to danger, witnessing traumatic events, and experiencing physical or emotional injuries. Combat stress can impair cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and reasoning, hindering an individual's ability to make effective decisions under pressure (Timothy Christian Lethbridge et al., 2004). The psychological effects of combat stress are not only detrimental to individual soldiers but can also have significant consequences for mission success and overall operational effectiveness. Understanding how combat stress influences behavior and decision-making is crucial for implementing effective management strategies to support troops in high-stress situations. By exploring historical incidents and contemporary military engagements, we can learn valuable lessons about the real-world implications of combat stress on tactical decisions, informing future research and training practices.*

Keywords: *combat stress, decision-making processes, operational theaters*

1. INTRODUCTION

Combat stress is a complex phenomenon that plays a significant role in shaping tactical decisions in operational theaters. As individuals are exposed to the rigors of combat, they experience a range of psychological factors that can impact their behavior. The effects of combat stress on cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and reasoning can impair decision-making abilities crucial for successful military operations. By examining real incidents where combat stress has influenced tactical decisions, we can glean insights into how psychological factors shape military outcomes. Military organizations have developed various management strategies to address combat stress among troops, aiming to safeguard decision-making capabilities in high-stress situations. Effective stress management is a critical component of military training and operations, underscoring the importance of ongoing research into psychological support in combat zones for informing future best practices in the field.

2. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF COMBAT STRESS ON TACTICAL DECISION-MAKING

The psychological effects of combat stress on tactical decision-making are profound and multifaceted. Under high-stress conditions, individuals often experience cognitive impairments that can significantly impact their ability to make sound decisions in fast-paced and high-pressure situations.

Stress can impair memory retrieval, reduce attentional focus, and compromise logical reasoning processes, all of which are essential for effective decision-making on the battlefield. Moreover, real-world incidents have demonstrated how combat stress can lead to errors in judgment, resulting in costly consequences for military operations. However, it is important to recognize that effective stress management strategies can mitigate the negative impact of combat stress on decision-making. By implementing psychological support programs and resilience training, armed forces can equip their personnel with the tools to cope with stress and maintain optimal performance in combat situations. (National Research Council et al., 2012-08-06) Therefore, there is a critical need for continued research and development of innovative strategies to enhance psychological support for military personnel in operational theaters.

Additionally, research has shown that psychological factors play a significant role in influencing behavior under stress. Individuals experiencing high levels of stress may exhibit heightened emotional responses, impaired problem-solving abilities, and decreased situational awareness. According to , the "fight or flight" response triggered during stress can lead to impulsive decision-making and reduced critical thinking skills. Furthermore, (Lucy Mitchell et al., 2017-05-15) suggests that pre-existing mental health conditions or personality traits can amplify the impact of stress on behavior. Understanding these psychological influences is essential for mitigating the negative effects of combat stress on tactical decision-making. By implementing evidence-based interventions and training programs, armed forces can better equip their personnel to navigate high-stress situations with resilience and optimal performance. This underscores the importance of incorporating psychological support into military training programs to improve operational outcomes and ensure the well-being of service members in challenging environments.

The psychological impacts of combat stress on tactical decision-making are complex and multifaceted. Understanding how these stressors influence behavior in operational theaters is crucial for optimizing military performance and mission success. By examining the cognitive functions affected by stress, such as memory, attention, and reasoning, researchers can pinpoint areas of vulnerability where errors in judgment may occur. Real-world incidents provide valuable insights into the consequences of unmanaged combat stress on tactical decisions, underscoring the need for effective stress management strategies in military training and operations (Charles R. Figley et al., 2011-02-14). The development and implementation of such strategies are essential for ensuring that troops are equipped to make critical decisions under duress, ultimately enhancing overall mission effectiveness and soldier well-being. Future research in this area should focus on further refining and tailoring these management techniques to address the unique challenges presented in combat zones.

The main body of this essay is structured to delve into the psychological effects of combat stress, the real-world implications of such stress on tactical decisions, and the management strategies employed by armed forces. Psychological literature demonstrates that combat stress can significantly impair cognitive functions essential for sound decision-making, such as memory, attention, and reasoning.

These impairments can have profound consequences on the battlefield, as evidenced by historical examples of both negative and positive outcomes resulting from the impact of stress on tactical decisions. In response to these challenges, armed forces have implemented various stress management strategies to mitigate the effects of combat stress on troops and maintain their decision-making capabilities under pressure. However, the complexity of combat stress demands further research to continue improving psychological support in combat zones. A comprehensive understanding of the interplay between stress and decision-making is crucial for enhancing military training and operational effectiveness (Figley et al., 2011: 02-14).

The psychological effects of combat stress can significantly impact the decision-making process of military personnel in operational theaters. Stress can impair cognitive functions, including memory, attention, and reasoning, which are imperative for making high-stakes tactical decisions. In the heat of battle, individuals may struggle to recall crucial information or maintain focus, ultimately leading to suboptimal choices with potentially dire consequences. Real-world examples illustrate how combat stress has both positively and negatively influenced tactical decisions in historical battles and recent military engagements (Figley et al., 2011: 02-14). Therefore, effective stress management strategies are essential for ensuring that military personnel can perform at their best in high-pressure situations. By implementing tailored interventions and support systems, armed forces can mitigate the negative impact of stress on decision-making abilities, ultimately enhancing operational effectiveness and mission success. Future research should continue to explore innovative psychological support mechanisms in combat zones to safeguard the well-being and performance of military personnel.

The psychological effects of combat stress are profound and have a significant impact on cognitive functions essential for making tactical decisions in operational theaters. Stress can impair memory, attention, and reasoning abilities, hindering the ability to process information accurately and make sound judgments. In real-world scenarios, combat stress has been seen to lead to errors in judgment and decision-making that have costly repercussions on the battlefield (Szalma et al., 2017: 06-12). However, there are instances where stress has also been shown to enhance performance under pressure, suggesting a complex interplay between stress and cognitive functions in high-stakes situations. To address these challenges, armed forces have implemented various strategies to manage stress among troops, including mindfulness training, debriefing sessions, and mental health support services. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue researching and developing effective stress management techniques to ensure optimal decision-making and performance in military operations.

In the context of combat stress and its impact on tactical decision-making, it is essential to consider the intricate relationship between stress and memory in high-pressure situations. Research has shown that elevated levels of stress can significantly impair cognitive functions, including memory retrieval and encoding processes. In the heat of battle, individuals may struggle to recall critical information or make quick decisions due to heightened stress levels. This can have detrimental consequences on the outcome of tactical engagements, leading to suboptimal choices or delays in critical decision-making processes. It is crucial for military strategists and commanders to recognize the influence of stress on memory in high-pressure situations and implement effective stress management strategies to mitigate these effects. By prioritizing the mental well-being of troops and providing adequate support, military forces can enhance their decision-making capabilities and ultimately improve operational outcomes in combat scenarios.

In operational theaters, the impact of combat stress on attention and focus during engagements is a critical factor that can significantly influence tactical decisions. Research has shown that under high levels of stress, individuals experience impaired attention and focus, leading to reduced ability to process information effectively. This can be detrimental in combat situations where split-second decisions are required to ensure mission success and the safety of personnel. Historical accounts of battles have documented instances where stress-induced cognitive impairments have led to costly mistakes and tactical failures (National Research Council et al., 1997: 01-17). Therefore, effective stress management strategies are essential for maintaining optimal cognitive functioning in high-pressure environments. By implementing methods to mitigate the effects of stress, armed forces can enhance the decision-making capabilities of their personnel, ultimately improving mission outcomes and operational effectiveness.

3. THE IMPACT OF COMBAT STRESS

In understanding the impact of combat stress on tactical decision-making, it is crucial to recognize the implications that stress has on reasoning and problem-solving abilities. Combat stress can significantly impair cognitive functions essential for making effective decisions in high-pressure situations. Research has shown that stress can lead to reduced working memory capacity, decreased attentional control, and impaired reasoning skills. This can result in suboptimal decisions being made under stress, affecting mission success and overall military effectiveness. However, it is equally important to acknowledge that certain individuals may exhibit enhanced problem-solving abilities under stress, leveraging heightened arousal levels to make quick and decisive choices (National Research Council et al., 1997: 01-17). Therefore, in exploring the implications of stress on reasoning and problem-solving abilities, it is paramount to develop comprehensive strategies for stress management in military training and operations to optimize decision-making capabilities in combat environments.

In the context of combat environments, it is imperative to consider the psychological responses to stress that individuals may experience. Combat stress can significantly impact cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and reasoning, all of which are crucial for making effective tactical decisions. The debilitating effects of stress on these cognitive processes can lead to impaired decision-making abilities in high-pressure combat situations, potentially increasing the risk of negative outcomes. Real-world examples, such as incidents where combat stress has influenced tactical decisions in both negative and positive ways, serve as poignant reminders of the significant role that psychological factors play in operational effectiveness (Figley et al., 2011: 02-14). Therefore, it is essential for armed forces to implement effective stress management strategies to support troops in maintaining optimal cognitive function and decision-making capabilities in combat environments. This underscores the critical importance of integrating psychological support into military training and operations, highlighting the necessity for ongoing research in this area to enhance psychological resilience in operational theaters.

In examining the real-world implications of combat stress on tactical decisions, it becomes evident that the psychological impact of stress on military personnel can have profound consequences in operational theaters. Research has shown that heightened stress levels can impair cognitive functions, such as memory, attention, and reasoning, which are essential for making strategic decisions under pressure. For instance, there have been instances where combat stress led to impulsive or reckless decision-making, resulting in detrimental outcomes on the battlefield.

Conversely, there are also accounts of individuals who have demonstrated remarkable resilience and leadership in high-stress situations, showcasing the potential for adaptive responses to stress (Helmus et al., 2005: 06-15). By understanding these real-life scenarios, military leaders can implement effective stress management strategies to mitigate the negative effects of combat stress on tactical decision-making and enhance overall mission success.

Research on historical battles affected by combat stress provides valuable insights into the impact of psychological factors on tactical decision-making.

For example, the Battle of Stalingrad during World War II exemplifies how extreme stress can impair soldiers' ability to make sound judgments in intense combat situations. Soldiers experiencing combat stress may exhibit symptoms such as impaired memory, reduced attention span, and distorted reasoning, all of which can hinder their decision-making processes (Vertuli, et al., 2018: 10-12). However, case studies also indicate that effective management strategies, such as providing psychological support and stress-relief techniques, can help mitigate the negative effects of combat stress on tactical decisions. By understanding the historical context of battles affected by combat stress and analyzing the management strategies used, researchers can contribute to the development of more effective methods for supporting troops in high-stress environments.

Recent military engagements have highlighted the profound impact of stress on decision-making processes in operational environments. When faced with high-stakes situations, individuals undergoing combat stress may experience cognitive impairments that hinder their ability to make informed choices. These impairments can manifest as reduced memory retention, decreased attentional focus, and impaired logical reasoning skills (Helmus et al., 2005: 06-15). Such deficits can significantly compromise the success of tactical decisions, leading to detrimental outcomes on the battlefield. It is crucial to analyze these instances to understand the interplay between stress and decision-making in combat scenarios. By examining real-world examples, researchers can glean valuable insights into the nuanced relationship between psychological stressors and strategic outcomes. Through comprehensive research and the implementation of effective stress management strategies, military leaders can better equip their personnel to navigate the complexities of warfare with sound judgment and clarity of mind.

Efficient management of combat stress is crucial for the success of tactical decisions in operational theaters. The impact of stress on decision-making is evident in the contrasting outcomes of successful and unsuccessful tactical decisions. Research has shown that under stress, individuals often experience cognitive impairments, affecting their memory, attention, and reasoning abilities. These psychological factors significantly influence the quality of decision-making in high-pressure situations (Goldstein et al., 1996). The comparison between successful and unsuccessful tactical decisions offers valuable insights into the importance of stress management strategies. While successful decisions may be characterized by clear thinking, adaptability, and effective communication, unsuccessful decisions often result from impaired judgment, indecisiveness, and communication breakdowns. By understanding the implications of combat stress on decision-making, armed forces can implement effective strategies to mitigate its negative effects and enhance the performance of troops in high-stress environments.

In examining the role of leadership in mitigating the effects of combat stress, it becomes apparent that effective leadership plays a crucial part in maintaining operational effectiveness in high-stress environments. Leaders who understand the psychological impact of combat stress can implement strategies to support their troops and facilitate decision-making under pressure.

Research has shown that leadership style, communication skills, and emotional intelligence are key factors in reducing the negative effects of stress on cognitive functions. By fostering a supportive and understanding environment, leaders can help their subordinates cope with the psychological strain of warfare and make more rational and effective decisions in complex and demanding situations. It is essential for leaders to be trained in recognizing the signs of combat stress and equipped with the necessary tools to intervene promptly and effectively to support their team members. These efforts are integral to operational success and the well-being of military personnel in challenging environments.

In analyzing the impact of combat stress on tactical decisions, it is evident that lessons can be learned from past experiences to improve future operational planning. Historical battles and modern military engagements provide valuable insights into the effects of stress on decision-making. For instance, the Battle of Stalingrad during World War II demonstrated the detrimental consequences of prolonged combat stress on soldiers' ability to make rational choices. Conversely, the successful D-Day invasion highlighted the importance of effective stress management strategies in enhancing decision-making under pressure (Department Army, 2009: 03-18). By examining these historical events and extracting key lessons, armed forces can better prepare for handling stress-induced cognitive impairments in future operational scenarios. Implementing comprehensive stress management programs and integrating psychological support into military training are essential steps towards ensuring optimal decision-making capabilities in high-stress environments. This analysis underscores the critical need for continuous research and advancement in psychological support for troops deployed in combat zones. In reviewing the impact of combat stress on tactical decisions within operational theaters, it becomes evident that effective management strategies play a pivotal role in maintaining the cognitive functions necessary for sound decision-making. While numerous psychological factors come into play during stressful situations, the implementation of appropriate management strategies can mitigate the negative effects of stress on memory, attention, and reasoning abilities. By examining real-world incidents where combat stress influenced tactical decisions, it becomes increasingly apparent that armed forces must prioritize the development and utilization of techniques aimed at reducing stress levels among troops (Figley et al., 2011: 02-14). These management strategies not only enhance the decision-making capabilities of individuals operating in high-stress environments but also contribute to overall mission success. Therefore, the critical need for effective stress management strategies in military training and operations cannot be overstated, underlining the importance of ongoing research in psychological support within combat zones. In the context of military settings, the comprehensive set of activities involved in the psychosocial climate survey plays a vital role in assessing and addressing psychological factors that impact combat readiness and efficiency. The surveying of unit psychosocial climate not only involves subjective assessments but also maintenance and corrective measures focused on personal psychological status, working conditions satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and trust in commanders. This standardized methodology enables the identification of critical changes, leading to the development of corrective action plans and tailored interventions to improve specific elements within units, ultimately enhancing psychological resistance and social skills (Yair Shai et al., 2013). Additionally, the surveying of psychological combat readiness and psychosocial climate, coupled with tailored training and targeted assessments, allows for a differential approach to addressing stressors and enhancing decision-making capabilities in military personnel, highlighting the importance of effective stress management techniques in military operations.

The psychological impacts of combat stress on soldiers can have significant consequences for their decision-making abilities in operational theaters. Research has shown that stress can impair cognitive functions essential for making effective tactical decisions, such as memory, attention, and reasoning . Historical accounts and recent military engagements provide numerous examples where combat stress either hindered or improved soldiers' decision-making processes (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1998). Accordingly, training programs designed to prepare soldiers for stress in combat must focus on managing these psychological effects. Armed forces have developed various strategies, including stress inoculation training and psychological resilience programs, to help soldiers cope with the demands of combat. These management strategies are crucial for enabling soldiers to maintain their cognitive functions under stress, ultimately enhancing their decision-making capabilities in high-pressure situations. Effective stress management in military training is imperative to ensure troops can perform optimally in combat scenarios, emphasizing the critical need for ongoing research and development in this area.

Research has shown that combat stress can significantly impact the quality of tactical decisions made by military personnel in operational theaters. The psychological effects of combat stress can impair cognitive functions crucial for effective decision-making, such as memory, attention, and reasoning. For instance, in high-stress situations, individuals may experience tunnel vision or cognitive overload, leading to suboptimal choices . Real-world incidents, including historical battles or recent military engagements, provide concrete examples of how combat stress can either enhance or hinder tactical decision-making. To address these challenges, armed forces have implemented various management strategies to support the mental health of troops in combat zones. However, there is a critical need for more effective psychological support systems to ensure that military personnel can maintain their decision-making capabilities under extreme stress. Further research in this area is essential to continually improve the psychological support available to those serving in high-risk environments.

Recent research has focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of stress management interventions in combat scenarios to enhance decision-making capabilities. Studies have shown that stress management techniques such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and resilience training can effectively reduce the impact of combat stress on cognitive functions . These interventions aim to improve memory, attention, and reasoning, which are essential for making sound tactical decisions in high-pressure situations (Figley et al., 2011: 02-14). By implementing targeted stress management strategies, armed forces can potentially mitigate the negative effects of stress on decision-making processes, thereby increasing operational effectiveness and mission success rates. Further research is needed to assess the long-term efficacy of these interventions in combat environments and to identify the most optimal strategies for enhancing psychological support in high-stress situations.

In light of the significant impact combat stress can have on tactical decisions in operational theaters, it is imperative to consider recommendations for improving stress management strategies within the military. Research has shown that stress can impair cognitive functions critical for effective decision-making, such as memory, attention, and reasoning . By implementing targeted interventions to address stress in military personnel, such as resilience training, mindfulness practices, and debriefing sessions, it is possible to mitigate the negative effects of combat stress on operational outcomes (Department of the Army, 2012: 09-28). Furthermore, drawing on real-world incidents where combat stress has influenced tactical decisions can provide invaluable insights into the importance of effective stress management strategies.

Therefore, future research should focus on optimizing psychological support in combat zones to enhance the overall effectiveness and safety of military operations.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In light of the extensive research presented in this study, it is evident that combat stress significantly impacts decision-making processes in operational theaters. The psychological effects of combat stress, as discussed in prior sections, have been shown to compromise various cognitive functions essential for effective tactical decision-making.

Real-world incidents have demonstrated both the negative and positive repercussions of combat stress on operational outcomes, underscoring the urgent necessity for efficient stress management strategies within military contexts (Grossman et al., 2007). Given the high stakes involved in military operations, it is imperative to prioritize the development and implementation of targeted stress management interventions to safeguard optimal decision-making abilities under duress. Future research in this domain should focus on enhancing psychological support mechanisms in combat zones, ultimately enhancing mission success rates and ensuring the well-being of military personnel in high-pressure environments. In the context of military operations, combat stress can significantly impact tactical decision-making. When soldiers are under extreme stress, it can impair their cognitive functions, including memory, attention, and reasoning skills critical for making sound tactical decisions on the battlefield. Research has shown that high levels of stress can lead to poor judgment and impulsive actions, potentially compromising mission success. Historical accounts and contemporary reports provide examples where combat stress has both negatively and positively influenced tactical decisions, underscoring the need for a better understanding of its implications in the field (National Research Council et al., 2012: 08-06). To mitigate the adverse effects of combat stress, various management strategies are employed by armed forces, emphasizing the importance of effective stress management in military training and operations. Moving forward, further research is needed to enhance psychological support for soldiers in combat zones, ensuring optimal decision-making capabilities in high-pressure environments. Moreover, in the realm of military operations, effective stress management plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success and safety of troops. Combat stress, a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses various psychological and physiological responses to the demands of combat situations, can significantly impair cognitive functions essential for sound tactical decision-making. Research has shown that under intense stress, individuals may experience cognitive distortions, memory lapses, and difficulties in processing information. Real-world incidents have further underscored the detrimental impact of unchecked stress on tactical decisions, leading to costly errors and miscalculations on the battlefield (Helmus et al., 2005: 06-15). Therefore, implementing reliable stress management strategies within military training programs and operational contexts is imperative. By equipping service members with effective coping mechanisms and support systems, armed forces can enhance their decision-making abilities under pressure, ultimately contributing to mission success and troop well-being. The examination of combat stress and its profound impact on tactical decision-making within operational theaters necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the psychological support available to combatants in such high-stress environments. As highlighted by (Cronin et al., 2017), the maintenance of morale among infantrymen in combat is a critical factor affecting performance, underscoring the importance of effective psychological support mechanisms.

Furthermore, (DarkaShade et al., 2016) emphasizes the distinction between proximal and distal combat environments, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by combatants in different settings. Future research in this domain should focus on developing tailored psychological support interventions that address the specific needs of troops in various combat environments, incorporating insights on combat stress management strategies to optimize decision-making capabilities under duress. By delving deeper into the psychological aspects of combat stress and exploring innovative support approaches, researchers can contribute significantly to enhancing the psychological resilience and well-being of military personnel in combat zones.

In conclusion, understanding and addressing combat stress are paramount in enhancing decision-making capabilities in operational theaters.

The psychological effects of stress, including impaired memory, attention, and reasoning, significantly impact an individual's ability to make sound tactical decisions. Real-world incidents have demonstrated both the detrimental and, in some cases, fatal consequences of disregarding the impact of combat stress on decision-making (National Defense University Press, 2010: 09). Thus, it is imperative for military organizations to implement effective stress management strategies to mitigate the negative effects of stress on decision-making processes. By prioritizing the psychological well-being of troops through comprehensive training and support programs, armed forces can ensure that service members are better equipped to make critical decisions in high-pressure situations. Moving forward, further research is needed to enhance psychological support systems in combat zones and optimize decision-making capabilities under stress. Given the profound impact of combat stress on tactical decision-making, there is a pressing call to action for the implementation of evidence-based strategies to support military personnel in high-stress environments. It is imperative to acknowledge the psychological effects of combat stress on cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and reasoning, which are pivotal for making sound tactical decisions. Real-world incidents have demonstrated how combat stress can either impair or enhance decision-making capabilities in critical situations, underscoring the importance of effective stress management strategies. The armed forces have deployed various approaches to manage stress among troops, but there is a need for further research to validate and refine these strategies. Moving forward, it is essential to prioritize psychological support in combat zones to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of military personnel.

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