

## **Commandership at the Chosin Reservoir: Introduction**

This case study explores the art and science of “Commandership” and the mutually reinforcing concepts of professional excellence and competence and ethical conduct. It was developed using material from the following books: *For Country and Corps: The Life of General Oliver P. Smith*, by Gail Shisler; *The Coldest Winter*, by David Halberstam; *This Kind of War*, by T. R. Fehrenbach; and *The Last Stand of Fox Company*, by Bob Drury and Tom Clavin. While there have been countless books written about the heroism and combat courage of the Marines of the Chosin Reservoir – and deservedly so, and they will continue to be written – the purpose of this case study is to focus on the actions of the commander in shaping the context and setting the conditions for the courageous *actions* of his Marines to occur.

By selecting an iconic battle from Marine Corps history to study the subject of commandership, it is hoped that current and future commanders will more closely examine their own climates and challenges, develop and emplace innovative mechanisms to address them, and understand the assuredness that subordinates have in professionally competent and disciplined leaders. This is the real lesson of the Chosin Reservoir Campaign: the Marine discipline that commanders insisted upon and attributed as the main reason for the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division’s success against overwhelming odds is just as applicable to solving our current challenges of sexual assault, hazing, and lapses in ethical conduct as it was to destroying those seven Chinese divisions in the freezing mountains of North Korea. This masterpiece of courage and leadership was responsible for winning an everlasting triumph from what could have been a disaster of epic proportions, and is worthy of our careful study.