

TURNING PAGES

~ book reviews of interest to the aviation professional

In Extremis Leadership:

Leading as if your life depended on it

By Thomas A. Kolditz. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers 2007. 249 pp. Available in hardcover and Kindle formats at https://www.amazon.com/Extremis-Leadership-Leading-Your-Depended/dp/0787996041/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1469554013&sr=1-1&keywords=in+extremis+leadership.

A book review by MAJ John P. Kurtzweil

The author of *In Extremis Leadership* is Brigadier General (retired) Thomas A. Kolditz. Kolditz is a professor at the Yale School of Management. During his service in the Army, he served in a variety of leadership positions and has held positions as a professor at the U.S. Military Academy, concept developer in the Center for Army Leadership, and was the founding director of the West Point Leadership Center. Through his book *In Extremis Leadership*, he gives real leadership examples that show how extreme life and death leadership skills can offer eye opening lessons to leaders with varying level of leadership experience in a variety of settings. Kolditz challenges leaders to learn from their own experiences and to lead as though their lives depended on it.

In Extremis Leadership is structured with six chapters and also includes conclusion and resource chapters. The individual chapters contain vignettes of leaders who have had experiences in life threatening situations. A summary at the end of each chapter allows readers to quickly access the main points of the chapter as a reference for developing their individual leadership skills. The conclusion briefly identifies many of the individuals, associated with or interviewed by the author, who represent the values placed on in extremis leadership. The resource chapter describes what in extremis leaders can do to meet the physical demands of this leadership style.

Kolditz does an excellent job describing the concept of in extremis leadership. He goes into some

detail defining in extremis leadership, how to identify it, its strengths and weaknesses, and the circumstances under which it is best applied. Kolditz identifies and describes the attributes of in extremis leaders across a wide spectrum of professions and life experiences. These range from the youngest leaders who are just beginning to develop their leadership style to the most seasoned leaders who continue to develop and refine theirs. The author goes on to explain how the application of the lessons of in extremis leadership covered in the

book can improve leadership across all sectors of society.

In Extremis Leadership describes techniques that permit leaders to assess their response to situations or provides some understanding of how they might behave in potential life threatening or life altering situations. This book would be a good read for junior leaders who want to understand and develop the skills necessary to lead others through tough and potentially life threatening situations. Seasoned leaders might find the material useful as a way to evaluate and improve their own leadership skills or as a tool to further develop their subordinate managers or leaders to take on roles of increased responsibility. This book is truly eye-opening and life changing if the reader chooses to take the examples and lessons and apply it to everyday life.

