

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE (Draft): Courage Under Fire-The Definitive Account from Inside the Capitol on January 6

Book Overview

Courage Under Fire is a first-person institutional case study examining leadership, governance, and decision-making under extreme pressure during a national crisis. Written by 30-year Washington D.C. law enforcement veteran and former U.S. Capitol Police Chief Steven A. Sund, the book provides a documented account of how organizational structure, authority limitations, and interagency coordination affect outcomes during high-consequence events.

The book is designed to support classroom discussion, executive education, and professional development focused on crisis leadership and institutional resilience.

Applicable Disciplines & Courses

This book is appropriate for undergraduate, graduate, and executive-level courses in:

- Homeland Security & Emergency Management
- Criminal Justice Leadership
- Public Administration & Public Policy
- Organizational Leadership & Ethics
- National Security Studies
- Crisis & Risk Management (Business / MBA programs)
- Executive Education & Board Governance Programs

Learning Objectives

After engaging with this book, students should be able to:

1. Analyze leadership decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and time compression
2. Identify how authority, responsibility, and governance structures influence crisis outcomes
3. Evaluate the role of interagency coordination in complex security environments
4. Distinguish between individual accountability and institutional failure
5. Apply lessons from a real-world crisis to future organizational planning and oversight

Key Themes

- Crisis leadership under extreme pressure
- Authority vs. responsibility mismatches
- Interagency coordination and communication
- Governance and oversight during emergencies
- Public narrative formation vs. operational reality
- Institutional learning after failure

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What decision points during the crisis were most constrained by structural or legal limitations?
2. How did governance and chain-of-command issues affect operational response?
3. How should a leader evaluate their oversight in advance of a crisis?
4. In what ways did interagency coordination succeed or fail—and why?
5. How should organizations balance speed, authority, and accountability in crisis situations?
6. What lessons from this case are transferable to non-law-enforcement organizations?

Suggested Assignments

- Case Analysis Paper: Identify a critical decision point and evaluate alternative courses of action
- Governance Review Exercise: Assess how organizational structure influenced outcomes
- Tabletop Scenario: Apply lessons from the book to a hypothetical crisis
- Leadership Reflection: Compare this case with another historical crisis