

Taking Care of Soldiers

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Abstract

Bottom line up front, the Army can do more for our junior enlisted Soldiers. As Sergeant Majors and Command Sergeant Majors, we will be the role models for future generations of soldiers to come. Junior enlisted Soldier are currently telling stories of assaults, sexual violence, gang activity, serious alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, psychiatric problems, and racial hostility. My question to you is have we ethically and morally taken care of our Soldiers to the best of our ability?

We train our young Soldiers for combat, send them overseas to countries that they know nothing about, and expect them to not engage in illegal activities. What is the Army doing to return our young Soldiers back to our society? Here are the challenges that we have as SGM/CSM in today's and tomorrow's Army.

Taking Care of Soldiers

I read an article about gangs in the Military which included a segment about Soldier after Soldier telling stories of assaults, sexual violence, gang activity, serious alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, psychiatric problems, and racial hostility.

"Ninety-eight percent of E-4's and below are dissatisfied, this place is a joke," Ahnefeld says, and ridicules the idea that the army wants a smarter recruit today, "We run around mopping floors, cleaning things; they want a smarter army so we can really think about that floor." (Heldman, 1997, para 34).

As Senior Non-Commission officers, we will be the role models for future generations of soldiers to come. Here are the challenges that we have as SGM/CSM in today's and tomorrow's Army. My question to you is have we ethically and morally taken care of your Soldiers to the best of our ability? Are you prepared and ready for this challenge? Our Ethics and moral values become that of future generations. To teach them to make the right choices even when it would be easier to bend the rules or take a short cut. We need to step in to guide them to do the right thing, the hard right over the easy right. The United States Army has its own set of values that its soldiers should live by. Those values spell the acronym "LDRSHIP". The values are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.

We must become more involved with our Soldier's through in-depth communications and thorough education which would prepare to be better Soldiers as well as civilians. We must have our first line leaders sit down with each Soldier and

encourage them to further their education. Education will help restore good moral and values that will build their understanding of themselves and prepare them as future leaders.

“Approximately 95 percent of the Army’s new recruits sign up for the Montgomery GI Bill, in which a Soldier has the opportunity to contribute \$1,200.00 (nonrefundable) into the program and (if a number of conditions and qualify certain bonuses are met) can earn up to \$30,000 for college. But a significant number of these men and women are paying into a program they may never use. Though the military spends the contributed funds in a variety of different ways, the bottom line, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs, is that 2.03 million service members have contributed into the program since it began in 1985, and to date only about 436,000 have actually used the benefits (Heldman, 1997, para 10)”.

“The soldiers who took advantage of this opportunity after leaving the service averaged payments of approximately \$7,000.00 of which \$1,200.00 was contributed by the Soldier; a substantially lower sum than the "\$30,000 for college" that the military uses in its advertising.” (Heldman, 1997, para 10)

Leaders need to find a way to encourage our young Soldiers to use their education benefits. Senior NCOs need to apply the Army values into our young Soldiers by encouraging and challenging their education. In some cities police forces will substitute 2 years of military service for a required 60 college credits for applicants.

We are enlisting into today's Army young people from all variations of life backgrounds. Some young enlisted are recruited from neighborhoods full of crime, dysfunction families, and poor job markets. Due to these variations today's Army is more diversified than it ever has been.

"A 1993 survey of new recruits found that they come from homes where 78.4 percent of fathers and 84.5 percent of mothers didn't have college degrees. They come from the ranks of the unemployed, working in dead-end jobs as cashiers, in factories, at fast food franchises." (Heldman, 1997, para 8)

"But in actuality, the military is an institution beset by a variety of destructive behaviors in the enlisted ranks. In interviews with scores of soldiers, the predominant theme that emerges is that they feel neglected and betrayed by an institution that hasn't met their expectations and isn't concerned with their welfare. And they've responded in kind. Soldier after soldier tells stories of assaults, sexual violence, gang activity, serious alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, psychiatric problems, and racial hostility." (Heldman, 1997, para 12) "A 1995 study by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services surveyed male and female soldiers stationed in 18 different installations overseas and found substantial alcohol problems, high levels of physical assaults (men on men), sexual assaults, racial hostility, depression, discipline problems, low morale, and on some bases a high number of suicide attempts and soldiers on anti-depressant drugs." (Heldman, 1997, para 15)

“These are young men and women who are shipped to countries they know little about and have little interest in, who are disconnected from their culture and their families and arrive overseas with a misguided sense of superiority because of their role as a protecting force. Yet they find themselves ghettoized in GI camp towns, on the bottom rung of society economically, denied entrance to clubs, bypassed by taxis, protested against, regarded on the street with wariness or utterly ignored--second-class citizens in their own country, they're sent overseas to be treated like second-class citizens in other people's countries.” (Heldman, 1997, para 16)

We train our young Soldiers for combat, send them overseas to countries that they know nothing about, and expect them to not commit illegal acts. Soldiers receive little training in regards culture awareness when deployed overseas. Soldiers who end up committing illegal acts can receive an article 15 also know as “Nonjudicial punishment (NJP) refers to certain limited punishments which can be awarded for minor disciplinary offenses by a commanding officer or officer in charge to members of his/her command.” (Powers, 2006) Senior leaders can prepare these Soldiers to be more aware of culture differences through lessons learned, more communication and thorough education which ultimately could prevent Soldiers from receiving an Article 15. Writing long papers on the topic through the pro and con concept fashion could increase our Soldiers education. The paper should include the paper Army writing style as well as the Army values. Was their training, once the Soldiers completed their military obligation? If not, there needs to be systems put in place to allow these Soldiers to have the opportunity to have extensive, post training. When young Soldiers are selected for

military schools, NCO's prepare the Soldiers for that education for it is our Army Values at stake.

Bearing true faith and allegiance is a matter of believing in and devoting yourself to something or someone. A loyal Soldier is one who supports leadership and stands up for fellow Soldiers. Doing your duty means more than carrying out your assigned tasks. In the Soldier's Code, we pledge to "treat others with dignity and respect while expecting others to do the same." Selfless service is the commitment of each team member to go a little further, endure a little longer, and look a little closer to see how he or she can add to the effort. Honor is a matter of carrying out, acting, and living the values of respect, duty, loyalty, selfless service, integrity, and personal courage in everything you do. Integrity is a quality you develop by adhering to moral principles. It requires that you do and say nothing that deceives others. SGM need to select first line leaders that will apply the seven Army values.

References

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