

Running head: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ESSAY

ATSS-DAS

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for Release of Student Writing Assignment Personal Experience Paper ( PEP ).

1. I, MSG DIAZ DE LEON submitted a (PEP) to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army with the following caveat/exception:

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Date: 3 Dec 10

Student Printed Name: DIAZ DE LEON, JUAN-A MSG # 78

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

SGA Printed Name/Date: CWO J. Roy / 3 Dec 10

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Personal Experience Paper Essay

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United States Sergeants Major Academy

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16 November 2010

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### Abstract

The U.S. Army has endured severe problems at home as a result of a long war against terrorism. Starting since 11 September 2001, when the war on terrorism began, the U.S. Army- in addition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan- it had to fight a third war here at home. This war involves American Soldiers having difficulty coping to garrison environment and way of living. The effect of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has caused the US Army to lose its focus on military standards of discipline and military bearing.

### **Nine years of war**

The war on terrorism that began after 11 September, 2001, has caused a tremendous wearing-out of our armed forces. The United States Army has been fighting the war on terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan for the past nine years. As a result of this long and prolonged war it is feasible to say that there is a third war that we are “fighting at home”, and this one is proving to be a difficult one as it has the U.S Army at a breaking point. Our Soldiers are under lots of stress due in part to the repeated deployments along with the lack of support for the Soldier and family upon return. Drug and alcohol abuse as well as violence has been the outlet for Soldiers coping with stress. Consequently, the war on terrorism has caused a severe lack of discipline among our Soldiers.

### **An exhausted Army**

In order to provide a better understanding of the lack of discipline among the Soldiers in today’s military, let’s first compare it to a previous war. The U.S. Army that participated and won the battles and campaigns in 1991, in a war better known as the Gulf War; a war that culminated in defeating Saddam Hussein’s Army. This war was perhaps one of the most professional wars ever fought by American Soldiers. From General Schwarzkopf to the lowest ranking Soldier –at that time- when they returned home, they were welcomed by a supportive public waving yellow ribbons. Today, almost ten years later, the situation has changed dramatically. Although, in the beginning of the Iraqi and Afghanistan war, the U.S. Army was also welcomed by a supportive population, today however, it is obvious that the emphasis and warmth welcome home slogans are now part of the past. During the past decade, the U.S. Army has undergone drastically changes, from major force realignments, budget reductions, equipment modernization programs, as well as many base realignments and closures (Snider & Watkins,

2010, p.10). All were intended by design to adapt to a new type of requirements to confront an enemy both, at home and/or abroad with the best and most advance technological equipment and Soldier readiness in order to provide the advantage to the American Soldier. The main intent of all this changes in the U.S. Army was mostly with the intent to provide a highly discipline force for many years to come.

Apparently, that has not been the case thus far. Is it fair to say that the U.S Army is exhausted as a result of the long war against terrorism!! Perhaps we need to take a closer look at what is causing the decrease in Soldier discipline which is also creating a lack of readiness, and effectiveness while Soldiers are at home in garrison environment. The decline in Soldier Readiness as well as military discipline perhaps is due in part to the self confidence on having the latest and most advance equipment for self protection from MRAPs, MATVs to personal weapons like the M4s; from UAVs to the latest technology that will assist and provide in personal protection. For what-ever reason, today Soldiers just do not show the discipline of the old and traditional Army. While abroad (in a war zone) from Officers, CSMs down to the lowest ranking Soldier, the lack of discipline can be observed inside and outside any Forward Operating Base (FOB). Soldiers who go outside the FOB without the necessary equipment to include basic load or proper weapons; while inside the FOB Soldiers can find many different reasons as why not to carry their personal weapon at all times, or the lack of concern for wearing the right uniform. Here at home, Soldiers are constantly out of uniform; in part is due to the immense amount of uniforms and variety. It is hard to understand what the real Uniform standard is; but, what about the proper courtesy and respect? The proper courtesy and respect is declining because of lack on emphasis while Soldiers are attending their Initial Basic Training to recruiters being pressure on obtaining the new recruit numbers. The military doesn't accept just anyone

who wants to join. Some of the general qualifications to enlist in the military consist of age, citizenship, credit and finances, education, drug and alcohol involvement, criminal history, etc. The Soldiers of today's Army are ready for combat but, inclined toward risky personal behavior while at home. It's a volatile mix that is leading to more deaths from suicide, drug overdoses and drinking and driving than from warfare. Based on above information it is obvious that the military discipline in today's Army is significantly below Standards (Snider & Watkins, 2010, p.10).

### **Areas to focus on in order to prevail at home**

In order to prevail at home on dealing with the lack of discipline in the military, Commanders and leaders must be fully engaged on taking care of soldiers and their families as well as looking out for their well being. Leaders must train soldiers the "good old fashion way" Leaders must enforce the Army Standards; refer back to Basic quality Army training. Part of the reason why soldiers are lacking on discipline has to do with lack of leader engagement. No one seems to realize that the Army is fighting a third war here at home, and unless Officers, leaders, and NCOs get fully engaged it may become a losing battle. Leaders and Commanders have failed to identify and monitor soldiers prone to risk-taking behaviors therefore, suicides among soldiers have soared. The U.S. Army needs to overcome this trend in order to prevent a possible breaking point and assist Soldiers that are coping with the stress with drugs abuse and violence that too often leads to soldier's death. The constant and repeated deployments need to be rewarded with proper and adequate support for soldiers and their families when they return. A deployed Soldier must be provided with the right amount of dwell time in order to unwind and release combat stress. Statistics has shown the latest trends of soldiers dealing with difficulties after coming returning from deployment. Look at the following statistics:

One third of soldiers are taking prescription drugs to include anti-depressant, anxiety medications, and pain killers. Amphetamines use has doubled between 2006 and 2009. Sexual offenses tripled since 2003. Every year an increase of 5,000 misdemeanors are committed. Domestic abuse is up 177% in the past six years. Military divorce continues to rise every year. To make things worse, more and more soldiers are dying from non-combat injuries including accidents and "high risk behavior." than war (ABC News). Army soldiers are in desperate trouble and Army leaders are failing to assist and aid those who need help while in combat or when they return home. ABC News reports that the statistics suggests leaders are focusing only on preparing soldiers for their next deployment too quickly without allowing them sufficient time to reset after time in war. Currently soldiers are asked to return to war after one year of combat and less than two years dwell time at home. The Army's inability to adapt is itself a significant manifestation of a decline in effectiveness which is also showing a declining in military discipline as well a lack or declining of proper customs and traditions. Even worse, it is not clear that there is currently within the officers and NCO corps of the Army a consensus on just what taking care soldiers is, nor a common language with which to analyze and discuss it.

### **The future of the U.S. Army**

Everyone in the military and civil society has their own way or possible solution on how to fight the war on terrorism. However, does the public really understand of what our Army represents today and where is it going in the future in order to enhance the security of this nation? The security of this nation is constantly adapting to new changes, and changing at a very fast pace, the Army as a whole, must be flexible, light and agile to meet the threat of future wars or conflicts that might still be over the horizon. Army leaders need to focus on the following challenges in order to meet and prevail in the future:

- Train and equip soldiers to serve as warriors and grow adaptive leaders;
- Attain a quality of life for soldiers and their families that matches the quality of their service.

By focusing on these two issues alone, it will provide better effectiveness on global commitments which will become essential to Combatant Commanders, enabling them to fulfill the strategic role of missions as well as transforming the force to be prepared for engagements in the future decades (Snider & Watkins, 2010, p.10). The Future of the Army will depend on how well the soldiers are taking care in order to maintain an extremely fast tempo. The soldiers are - after all- the boots on the ground. It will be the Soldier who will determine victory or defeat. They will always be indispensable in any future war or conflict. No other U.S. armed force (Navy, Air Force or Marines) can do what the Army Soldier does. In order to meet the future challenges however, soldiers need to be the best trained, the best led with the highest morale in order to be effective in the battle field. The only way to attain a high positive result will be by including a high level of discipline on our soldiers. Discipline will provide Unit effectiveness and great future professional soldiers who will continue to hold the great traditions and customs of the U.S. Army.

### CONCLUSION

The U.S. Army must continue to fight the war on terrorism with all tools available. In addition, it must also fight the “war at the home front” in the same manner; that is, with all tools available in order to get our Soldiers back on track. We must, as a fighting force, bring back the traditions of military standards and discipline in order to prepare future generations of Soldiers and Leaders for future wars to be fought at home or abroad. The Soldier in the future will become a Combat System of itself that will become a major force in order to integrate new and

developing technologies to make our Army more lethal, mobile, and flexible. New technologies and equipment (including vehicles and weapons systems, UAVs) will enable the Army to dominate and win in complex terrains and battle fields. Americans can be proud of those who serve. For more than 230 years our soldiers have answered the Call to Duty. Those who serve must continue to be trained and led while enforcing the highest level of discipline in order to succeed in the future.

References

Snider, Don M., & Watkins, Gayle, L. (2010). The Army Professionalism

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