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Personal Experience Paper

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87th USAR Support Command – East

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), September 8, 2005 to July 31, 2007

June 8 – 21, 2009

USASMA-NRC-35

UNCLASSIFIED

Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA), 87th Division Training Support (TS)

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Abstract

Headquarters, United States Army Reserve (USAR) Command recognizes the Outstanding Army Reserve Equal Opportunity (EO) Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year with the presentation of the Merlin G. Pope, Jr. Award. The award is presented to the Army Reserve EO NCO who has distinguished him or herself through their contributions to the equal opportunity environment of the Army Reserve, their individual Command's EO Program, and their local community. A committee of senior EO Sergeants Major and EO Practitioners review and evaluate the award nominations, while the Command Sergeant Major of the Army Reserve selects the overall winner. I was blessed with being selected as the USAR EO NCO of the Year for 2006.

Mobilization and Army Reserve EO NCO of the Year Award

The 87th Division (TS), also known as the Golden Acorn Division, was a Major Army Command (MACOM). The Division's main effort during 2005 and 2006 was continuous post-mobilization training for Army Reserve and National Guard units in and outside the Division's Area of Responsibility (AOR), which included five Brigades and 18 Battalions. The Division was directly responsible for training combat, combat support, and combat service support units destined for operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Europe, and Homeland Security in support of the continuing Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The Brigades assigned to the 87th Division (TS) were responsible for validating all training for reserve component units deploying out of installations located in the southeastern United States. Installations supported were Camp Shelby, Mississippi, Fort Stewart, Georgia, Camp Blanding, Florida, Fort Benning, Georgia, Fort Gordon, Georgia and Fort Gillem, Georgia.

During fiscal year 2006 (FY 06), the 87th Division (TS) supported the training, mobilization and demobilization of 29,000 Soldiers and 789 units, to include five Brigade Combat Teams. This collaborative effort was in direct support of such missions as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). In addition, the Division provided personnel and support to the massive humanitarian assistance support in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

During mobilization, MSG Paula James served as the primary advisor to the 87th Division (TS) Commander on all aspects relating to Equal Opportunity (EO) and the fair treatment of all assigned. MSG James also served as the Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA) to HHC, 87th Division (TS), 313th Army Band, five Brigades and 18 Battalions, as well as, acting

EOA for First Army Division East. In these roles, MSG James provided advisory assistance to all Commanders and investigating officers within the Division's AOR in the investigation and resolution of appeals or formal EO/sexual harassment/discriminatory cases. In addition, she provided oversight and assistance to subordinate Command EO Programs in the areas of EO and human relations training, climate assessments, complaint resolution, development of EO action plans and the implementation of pro-active EO programs.

Even though Army Regulation (AR) 600-20, Army Command Policy, is very clear; no EOAs should have additional duties. While mobilized, MSG James was directed by the Division Chief of Staff to serve as the Alabama Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) Team's First Sergeant/Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) until October 2006. In this humanitarian assistance/civil support role, the DCE Team was responsible for assisting Civilian and Government Authorities with the massive Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations in conjunction with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The DCE provided extremely vital logistical, transportation, and operational support to ensure America's own were taken care of and confidence in the relief and support efforts were restored.

Previous Experiences / Training

SGM Paula James was born in Russellville, KY. In 1987, she graduated from Warren Central High School in Bowling Green, KY, and entered the U.S. Army in September of that year, completing basic military training at Fort Jackson, SC. In 1993, she graduated CUM LAUDE with an Applied Science – Business Resource Management degree from Troy State University, Troy, AL. In 1995, she graduated as Honor Graduate from the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course and in 1998 graduated from the Advanced Noncommissioned

Officer Course. SGM James is also a graduate of the Battle Focused Instructor Training Course, Small Group Instructor Training Course, Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Course, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator Training Course and the Department of Defense EEO Mediation Course.

SGM James served six and half years on active duty and the remainder of my 21 year military career in the Army Reserve. She has served one tour in Korea and in numerous stateside assignments from Fort Jackson, SC, Fort Benning, GA, Montgomery, AL, Decatur, GA and Birmingham, AL. SGM James is currently serving as the 87th United States Army Reserve Support Command – East’s Assistant Chief of Staff (ACoS), G2 Sergeant Major, and completing the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy and a graduate student of Walden University.

SGM James’ military decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon and the Overseas Service Ribbon. Her civilian decorations include the American Association of University Women Georgia Emerging Leader Award in 2004, Keep Columbus Beautiful Community Support Award in 2003 and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Columbus, GA’s 2000 Big Sister of the Year. However, her recognition received in 2006 for her commitment to equal opportunity and diversity was her most memorable and personally satisfying.

Army Reserve EO NCO of the Year Award

Patricia Pope, Chief Executive Officer of Pope & Associates, Inc., in memory of her late husband, Merlin G. Pope, Jr., successfully established a national award in recognition of her

husband's work in diversity. Merlin G. Pope, Jr. founded one of the nation's first diversity consulting firms and literally coined the term "diversity". In July 2002, the United States Army Reserve Command began recognizing the outstanding Army Reserve Equal Opportunity (EO) Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year with the presentation of the Merlin G. Pope, Jr. Award. The award is presented to the Army Reserve EO NCO who has distinguished him or herself through their contributions to the Army Reserve equal opportunity environment, their individual Command's EO Program, and their local community.

On Saturday, July 22, 2006, at the 2006 Army Reserve-wide EO Professional Development Training Workshop dinner held in Queens, NY hosted by the United States Army Reserve Command (USARC) EO Office and the 77th Regional Readiness Command, MSG James was honored and recognized as the fifth annual awardee of this prestigious award. In addition to receiving the award, she also received the Army Commendation Medal signed by Lieutenant General Jack C. Stultz, Commanding General of U.S. Army Reserve Command and a two-star note signed by Major General James P. Eggleton, Commander of the 87th Division (TS), along with his coin.

This recognition was received for ensuring mission readiness by completing 37 EO inquiries, three informal EO cases, two formal EO cases, two appeals, two mediations, two Division-level and one Brigade-level EO Staff Assistance Visits (SAVs) and five Organizational Inspections (OIPs) for Commands under the 87th Division from August 2005 and May 2006 while mobilized. All EO complaints/appeals were processed in accordance with (IAW) AR 600-20 and maintained under double lock and key to ensure 100% accountability and confidentiality.

During MSG James' award speech remarks, she reflected on the conference theme, which was "Diversity – One Team, One Fight, Embracing the Warrior Ethos," as well as her unit's commemorative service and one of the late Dr. Martin Luther King's speeches. In Dr. King's 1961 speech, he stated that "America is essentially a dream." MSG James stated, "Overall the strength of the human spirit in such trying situations, like mobilization, fighting for what is right, some of the cases EOAs are subjected to, has moved me beyond words and dreams, to positions (both within my civilian and military careers) to want to help others. It is in this spirit that fairness, justice, and equity have become my backbone."

As a result of receiving this award from USARC, MSG James competed against all the MACOM winners at the 9th Annual Worldwide Equal Opportunity Advisor Training Conference for the Headquarters Department of the Army title. Even though, MSG Michael Clements was the selected awardee, MSG James was selected to honor our fallen comrades by rendering the salute during the tribute to our fallen comrades portion of the military awards banquet at the Doubletree Hotel in Orlando, FL on Thursday, December 14, 2006.

Lessons Learned/Insight

It is imperative that newly assigned Commanders adhere to AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, and at a minimum develop and prominently post their Command policies on EO, Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Prevention of Sexual Assault and Response (POSA), and the Complaint Process. Commanders must stop the "cut-and-paste" cycle, i.e. changing the letterhead, date and signature block on existing policies, and ensure their policies are in accordance with (IAW) the latest revisions of the regulation. The policies need to be relevant to today's society and address the new recruit generation before

signing and posting them. An EEO policy is only needed if the Command has civilian personnel, i.e. Department of the Army Civilian (DAC), Military Technician (MILTECH) and/or contract employees working for the Command, and the policy should be IAW AR 690-600, Equal Employment Opportunity Discrimination Complaints.

The Army continues to move away from affirmative action, by establishing a Diversity Task Force., which is promoting an inclusive diversified work force and environment for the future. What exactly does this mean? The focus goes beyond the five current protective classes, i.e. race, religion, gender, national origin and ethnicity to also include “age, profession, organizational or functional area and background, tenure, personality type, education level, political party, and other demographic, socioeconomic, and psychographic characteristics” (Geren & Casey, 2008). By adding these additional classes, the Army hopes to be the Nation’s employment leader in diversity awareness.

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