



ETHICAL CHALLENGES FACED ON RECRUITING DUTY

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The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) had a mandatory Values Stand-down Day on 20 May 2005. The Commanding General of USAREC, MG Michael Rochelle, took this historical and proactive approach to ensure ethical standards in recruiting remained a top notch priority at all levels. The focus of the training was re-enforcement that even during these difficult times in recruiting, there is still a professional code of ethics that recruiters must abide by.

There are over 7, 500 Army Recruiters serving in approximately 1,700 Recruiting Stations throughout out the United States. Each one of these individuals and their military records were screened to ensure that only the best candidates were selected for this special duty. Some of the candidates characteristics taken into consideration are: performance reports, education level, intelligence level, financial fitness, and whether the individual exemplifies the portrait of a professional Soldier. This screening is imperative because there is a special trust imparted to these soldiers. We must ensure only the highest quality soldier is placed in the civilian community so they will honorably represent the Army.

Since only the highest performing Soldier is accepted on Recruiting Duty, it is puzzling why there is such a negative stigmatism associated with the title of "Recruiter." What is it about Recruiting duty that is able to take a stellar performer with a rock solid history and place them into a position where there ethics and values are questioned?

The NCOs that make it through the screening process and are selected for recruiting duty attend a nine week Army Recruiting Course (ARC) at Ft. Jackson, SC. They are taught the basics of recruiting techniques and how to screen applicants to ensure only qualified applicants

are processed for enlistment. There is invaluable instruction in this course on basic communication and public speaking skills. Instructors also prepare the recruiters of the ethical dilemmas that are unique to recruiting duty. Recruiters must be prepared for the extremes of how some members of the community might receive them. There are ones that will openly despise them and the other extreme that is too friendly. Recruiters are briefed on how to handle both with tact and integrity.

After the recruiter graduates from ARC, they are assigned to one of the 42 Recruiting Battalions. Even though they are fully qualified as a recruiter, there is a 9 month apprenticeship program that pairs them up with a mentor. The reason for this "New Recruiter Program" is to assist and critique them as they gain experience, confidence, and the first-hand knowledge of the complex process of an Army enlistment. It would be impossible to provide a recruiter with everything they need to know during ARC. Each day, the new recruiter faces an abundance of new and unique challenges.

The challenges a recruiter faces differ significantly when in comparison to the challenges of their peers in a combat zone. In a combat zone, success means that that you live to see another day. Failure does not exist; Soldiers have no concept of failure other than failure equals death. We create warriors that rather die than fail.

Yet, on recruiting duty the concept of failure, whether spoken or implied always looms in the environment. There is what is known as the Hero to Zero mindset. The recruiter is a Hero when they have made their monthly mission commonly called "Box". Other than that, they are a Zero. Therefore, every recruiter begins their month as a Zero until they accomplish their monthly goal. This is the pressure that has caused a minority of these previously stellar performers to begin to relax their ethical standards. What begins as a simple miscalculation as to

the number of phone calls that were placed, could eventually escalate to allowing unqualified applicants to process into the Army. Once the line of un-ethical behavior is crossed, it quickly develops into a habit. We must realize that with the Hero to Zero environments, we create a breeding ground for those unethical recruiters. There are those who wrongly believe it is better to secretly violate their ethics openly than be considered less than a hero.

The relaxation of any ethical standard is never justified. The number of allegations of improper conduct has nearly doubled in the last four years, there is reason for concern. Previously, it was those few unethical recruiters that stained the reputation of the ethical majority. There are still many stellar NCOs still performing their recruiting duties with absolute integrity, yet the small increases in unethical behavior overshadows them.

The increased number of allegations might be what prompted MG Rochelle to shut down recruiting operations for an entire day to re-enforce the Commands stance on recruiting with ethics. This was an important first step to send out the message that even during these lean times in recruiting, there is still a professional code of ethics. This day off allowed for individual self reflection. But there is still more that can be done to combat this trend.

Each recruiter is provided an "Integrity and Recruiting Ethics Card". This card states in large bold print "If it ever becomes a clear choice between box and Integrity; make no mistake...integrity is far more important." This is a strong statement, meant to give the recruiter clear guidance on priorities. Ethical recruiting is much more important than mission box. Yet in the Hero to Zero environments, there is no such middle ground.

The recruiters that are out there in our communities are the finest, most capable NCOs the Army has to offer. Once they pin on the recruiting badge, those qualities are still intact. It is the few un-ethical recruiters that have tarnished all the good that the ethical recruiters do. Every

year there should be an Ethics Stand-Down day to re-enforce that a Soldiers ethics is always top priority and can never be compromised.