

Running head: MANPOWER MANAGEMENT IN THE U.S. ARMY

Manpower Management in the U.S. Army

SGM Ken Jackson

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class 58

SGM Lucero

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Abstract

This paper explores the ethical dilemma of manpower management facing United States Army today. The United States Army faces many ethical challenges, but manpower management is one that causes a great deal of strife when we transition between global conflicts and relative peace. Most recently the Global War on Terrorism has caused major manning issues with Soldiers enduring the high operational tempo. The Soldiers being killed and injured in Iraq and Afghanistan must be replaced. The Army has to figure out where to get these replacements. They cannot all be pulled from units that are not deployed, because many of them are preparing for a deployment, and they can't all be pulled from TDA units that don't deploy because these units need their personnel to provide the support needed for units that are deployed. This situation has forced senior leaders to put extra emphasis on recruiting and retention, which is where this ethical challenge gets the most attention.

Even though manpower management is a fact of life that every organization has to deal with, the United States Army faces an ethical dilemma with manpower management because recruiting and retaining qualified Soldiers costs a tremendous amount of money and the Army does not currently have the manpower needed to maintain the current operational tempo of fighting the Global War on Terrorism without increasing its number of Soldiers.

Manning the United States Army with willing, qualified and dedicated Soldiers is a difficult task. There are many aspects of manning the force that senior military leaders and the Human Resources Command must manage carefully. Some of the various conditions affecting manning and manpower are recruiting new Soldiers, retaining experienced Soldiers, and the deployability of the Soldiers we have available to us in the manpower management sense. In the past, and in our current situation, these areas have created difficulties that have led to policy changes, increases in exceptions to policy, lower standards, and added stress for recruiters and for the chains of command at all levels. Since September 11th, 2001 and with the subsequent Global War on Terrorism there have been mixed emotions about the Army. Immediately after the terrorist acts of September 11th Americans united as one and patriotism was at an all time high. Patriotic individuals could not join the military fast enough and Americans could not support them enough. Recruiters had individuals knocking down the doors to join the military in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Many of them specifically asked to be deployed so they could do their part to support the actions of the American government, secure our homeland and ensure freedom. Retention of Soldiers already serving in the Armed Forces also increased. Soldiers readily reenlisted to continue their service. Even a portion of those who were already in the transition phase of separating from the military changed their minds and reenlisted to continue their service. Personnel strength managers in the Human Resource Command did not

suffer from a lack of personnel to fill positions. Eventually things gradually started to change. As the Global War on Terrorism continued and it became obvious that this was not going to be a short conflict, the American public started to show its opposition to it. Patriotism dwindled and getting new recruits to join the military became more and more difficult. Soon retention became more difficult. With Soldiers deploying to Afghanistan and Iraq multiple times Soldiers started to become worn out both physically and mentally. The strain and stress of seeing comrades killed and wounded in action, coupled with the stress of being away from their families caused many outstanding Soldiers to separate from the military in order to gain some sense of control in their lives. These two indicators alone caused the majority of the decrease in personnel availability and forced manpower managers to look at how the Army could resolve the issue before it became a large problem.

Later in the Global War on Terrorism the problem became filling vacancies created by individuals being killed and wounded in action. So far there have been over 346 killed in action, and 1,450 wounded in action in Afghanistan. In Iraq the numbers are much greater. There have been over 2,715 killed in action, and over 18,912 wounded in action in Iraq. That's a total of over 3,060 killed in action and over 20,461 wounded in action in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. These numbers do not include those who were injured or died of non-combat related incidents. These numbers represent a huge deficit in manpower availability and equally as important a decrease in morale of Soldiers and support for our Armed Forces.

The combined factors of Soldiers who are a loss to the Army either because they were killed in action, wounded in action, or died or were injured as a result of non-combat related incidents, coupled with the increase in separations, and the decrease in enlistments caused a tremendous problem for senior leaders and manpower managers at senior levels. These people

had to figure out how to fill these vacancies with qualified individuals and they needed to do this quickly.

The fastest way to fill these vacancies is to initiate the draft. Since a draft has to be approved by congress and will likely never happen again senior leaders had to come up with alternative methods. The first ethical dilemma senior leaders faced was deciding to initiate the Stop Loss, which involuntarily extended individuals past their contractual agreements. This method allowed the Army to retain trained, qualified and experienced Soldiers, but at the expense of individuals who had already served their commitment. Many of these individuals had already made arrangements to attend college, start new careers, or start their own businesses. In an attempt to minimize the disruption and interference in these Soldiers' lives the Army pumped more money into advertizing for recruiting in an attempt to influence more individuals to join the Army which would eventually eliminate the need for the Stop Loss action. When this method proved to be too slow or ineffective senior leaders started pumping even more money into recruiting. This time the money was used to pay enlistment bonuses in attempt to get more people to enlist in the Army. The enlistment bonuses were effective and enticed a lot of people to join the Army, but many of these individuals joined for the wrong reason. Many of these people joined to get the immediate bonus money, but lacked the dedication and determination it takes to be a successful Soldier. These individuals are not only a drain on the budget, but more importantly area detriment to others when serving in a combat environment. Soon bonus money was not enough to get a sufficient number of qualified individuals to join the Army, which led to exceptions to policy and lowering of standards in order to fill the Army's need for new Soldiers. Even with the lowering of standards and approval of exceptions to policy recruiters had a difficult time meeting the Army's recruiting goals. Recruiting command received pressure from

senior Army leaders to do better and meet the goals. This in turn led to leaders in the Recruiting command putting tremendous pressure on recruiters to make mission. Many times this pressure put a recruiter in a position where he or she had to choose between receiving unfavorable actions, which may hinder career progression or ruin their career altogether, or resorting to unethical methods to make mission. Unfortunately some recruiters resorted to unethical methods to meet the Army's recruiting goals.

There are a few things the Army could have done differently to retain qualified, dedicated and experienced Soldiers. These methods include, but are not limited to doing things to show the current members of the force how much they are appreciated and needed. Instead of paying large sums of money to individuals coming off the streets, who had not spent a day in training, much less a day in combat, more money should have gone to retaining those qualified and experienced soldiers. And money paid to new recruits should have only been paid after they completed their service obligation, reenlisted for a second term, or completed a tour of duty in a combat zone.

Another method would be to create a positive view of the Global War on Terrorism by showing the positive effects the military is having in both Iraq and Afghanistan. We've spent an enormous amount of money on advertising for recruiting. We could have advertised the positive influence we've had on the citizens of these countries, shown the schools, water treatment facilities, power generation facilities, roads and other infrastructure that we've either built or rebuilt. This would give the general public a better picture of what's being accomplished and create more patriotism in our nation and support for our Soldiers. In turn this will generate a higher level of esprit de corps and morale, thus give Soldiers more of a feeling of

accomplishment and pride which would lead to higher retention of qualified, dedicated and experienced Soldiers.