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Abstract

Drill Sergeants are looked upon as competent and professional NCOs who can be counted on to do the right thing at all times. The incidents that took place at Aberdeen caught the Army by surprise and we still have not recovered from the sexual abuse that took place to the Soldiers in training. The unethical conduct of a few Drill Sergeants has paid a toll on thousands of Drills who are honest, hard working, and care for their Soldier's quality of training.

What is a Drill Sergeant?

"Drill Sergeant" is defined as the job title of each Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) who graduates from the Drill Sergeant Course and is assigned to an Initial Entry Training (IET) unit. A Drill Sergeant is the person responsible for training, mentoring, molding, and leading the future soldiers of the United States Army.

America trusts Drill Sergeants to take care of their kids while going through training. Dealing with Initial Entry Training (IET) Soldiers is so much different than dealing with seasoned Soldiers in the operational Army. Leaders and Cadre in IET must continue to understand that they are there to role model at **ALL** times. Even though Soldiers reach the milestones set forth in TRADOC Reg 350-6, even though they make it to phases 4, 5, and 5+ doesn't mean that leaders stop role modeling. The same rules that apply during phases 1-3 in reference to the treatment of IET Soldiers are the same rules that apply forever!!!! The phase privileges change, the rules of Trainee Abuse do not. This is where many Drill Sergeants go wrong.

I became a Drill Sergeant in 1997 and entered in a very difficult command setting during the trials of the Trainee Abuse. I was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood Missouri, so I did not expect that the Aberdeen incident would affect the outlook that people and leaders had on Drill Sergeants in other locations.

I remember hitting the ground running as a basic training Drill Sergeant. The hours were long and the schedule was fast paced. I was learning as I went, and at times, I felt that I was not learning fast enough; but I was very proud to train Soldiers. The days at the rifle ranges were long and very hot. Being the safety on the firing line while baking in the sun takes a lot out of a person. The “round brown” had no affect on cooling me down (as most people stereo type). I looked around at other Drill Sergeants and see the sweat stains around their campaign hat. The heat cannot distract the Drill Sergeant’s ability to train the Soldier for Basic Rifle Marksmanship fundamentals. During this phase (phase 2), Soldiers are very motivated and fired up. Qualifying with their rifle the first time is so important because, for the Soldier, it is a huge let down and demotivator. For the Drill Sergeants, we must find time within the training schedule to retrain the Soldier on the basic skills as well as arranging to have our Soldier qualify with another unit. After the last firing order clears the firing line and forms up with the rest of the company, we Drill Sergeants march the Soldiers back to the barracks. Upon arriving at the company, the weapons are turned in and the Soldiers are marched to the barracks. We rush the Soldiers to the barracks and they prepare for the next morning’s training by taking showers and cleaning the barracks.

As I walk through the barracks around 2100 hours, I smell the lingering body odor running throughout the entire barracks. The heat took its toll not only on me, but also on all 240 Soldiers in the company and you could tell by the constant odor that the barracks kept. I walk to my office and notice that I cannot have time to myself because I cannot close my office door. I cannot shut the door because the door has been removed from the hinges. All the doors to all the offices in the barracks have been removed by order of our

higher command. The distrust that we felt from our command affected the enjoyment of training Soldiers. We felt that everyone was looking over our shoulder at all times to ensure that we didn't abuse our Soldiers. While pulling overnight duty Charge of Quarters (CQ), a Drill Sergeant must make checks to ensure that all Soldiers are accounted for. Throughout the night, another person on duty at Brigade level would check on us. Together, we would walk through the barracks as we counted Soldiers together and compared them to the daily accountability log.

I was tasked to be a bailiff for a court martial of a Drill Sergeant accused of Trainee abuse, which took place several months before my being a Drill Sergeant. I was tasked because this Drill Sergeant was in our battalion during the incident. This tasking was a significant strain on our unit because we were already short Drill Sergeants with regard to the required ratio to Soldiers. During the trial, I realized that this Drill Sergeant's ethics (as well as another Drill Sergeant) were on very shaky grounds. He was married with three children, he had 17 years of service and he was very close to completing his time as a Drill Sergeant. During the next four days, there were many witnesses. Four of the witnesses were female Soldiers that were part of the trainee abuse. Each one of them gave their testimony of how this and another Drill Sergeant worked out ways to have sex with female Soldiers.

One female testified that she offered her self to both Drill Sergeants at the same time in their office (the doors were hinged at the time). Since two Drill Sergeants were involved, they were able to watch out for each other and set up situations for each of them to have time with female Soldiers. During CQ one Drill Sergeant on duty would send a female

Soldier to take trash out to the dumpster. The other Drill Sergeant would be in the car next to the dumpster and the female Soldier would ride off with the Drill Sergeant and be brought back several hours later. They took advantage of other opportunities when female Soldiers would go on sick call while the company was out on the ranges. The female Soldier would go back to the barracks after sick call and wait to be picked up by a Drill Sergeant and taken back to training. Of course, the Drill Sergeant who would be picking her up would be one of the two Drills with ethical problems. Since the barracks were empty, the Drill Sergeant and the female had plenty of time to do what they wanted.

Due to the unethical conduct that only a few Drill Sergeants displayed, we all had to change the way we did business in training Soldiers. The higher command, as well as the public, displayed distrust to all of us as a group, as if all of us Drill Sergeants were involved in the scandal.

Every unit cadre member must remember why they are in the IET environment.

IET Soldiers are the most impressionable during their informative weeks of IET. What you do is what they will do. No matter who you are, what Platoon you are in, you directly impact each and every one of these Soldiers. Whether you're the PT stud or the weapons expert, these Soldiers want to be just like you. Not only are you their ticket who offers them the right to passage, but also you are the whole Army picture to them.

Many patterns of misconduct start with premature unprofessional actions that could have been stopped before they became illegal actions. Some of these actions are cutting up or joking with IET soldiers. There is a difference between motivating Soldiers and opening a class with a joke or motivator, and being unprofessional. Cadre are not present to be

liked, but are there to be reckoned with and to be respected. Respect will be earned by being tough yet fair. Joking and teaching nothing will not earn respect.

There is no secret safe with an IET soldier. Your actions are not only monitored at all times, but they are also broadcasted. When your unit does poorly on the range, everyone knows before you return. When your unit performs with great success, everyone knows. When Cadre acts inappropriately, everyone knows, and they know quickly. (TRADOC Reg 350-6)

Drill Sergeants remain the most influential impact to a Soldier in the least amount of time. Normally, there is 10% of any professional group or organization that does not do any justice or benefit for the whole. The remaining 90% continue to do a great job and are proud of what we do, regardless how difficult the job may be. I close with the Drill Sergeant Creed:

I AM A DRILL SERGEANT. I WILL ASSIST EACH INDIVIDUAL IN THEIR EFFORTS TO BECOME A HIGHLY MOTIVATED, WELL DISCIPLINED, PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY FIT SOLDIER, CAPABLE OF DEFEATING ANY ENEMY ON TODAY'S MODERN BATTLEFIELD. I WILL INSTILL PRIDE IN ALL I TRAIN. PRIDE IN SELF, IN THE ARMY, AND IN COUNTRY. I WILL INSIST THAT EACH SOLDIER MEETS AND MAINTAINS THE ARMY STANDARDS OF MILITARY BEARING AND COURTESY, CONSISTENT WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE U.S. ARMY. I WILL LEAD BY EXAMPLE, NEVER REQUIRING A SOLDIER TO ATTEMPT ANY TASK I WOULD NOT DO MYSELF. BUT FIRST, LAST, AND ALWAYS, I AM AN AMERICAN SOLDIER. SWORN TO

DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES AGAINST ALL
ENEMIES, BOTH FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC. I AM A DRILL SERGEANT.

Reference:

TRADOC REG 350-6; Enlisted Initial Entry Training (IET) Policies and Administration

(30 Dec 05)