

An Ethical Problem Facing the Army Today

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Army transformation challenges the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) just as it does with any other major Army unit. As the high deployment tempo continues for the U.S. Army, ethical dilemmas will continue to challenge USAREC.

As the U.S. Army transforms USAREC's annual recruiting mission continues to rise in an attempt to keep up. Both the Department of the Army (DA) accession mission assigned to USAREC and the contract mission assigned down to the recruiter increased in fiscal year 2005 and again in fiscal year 2006. This increase in mission requirements does not include an increase in recruiter strength. As with most major commands, USAREC attempts to do more with fewer personnel. Many soldiers misunderstand the requirement to make our accession mission. Many believe our high retention rate will make up for it, and to a point that is correct. However, our soldiers that reenlist have already attained Junior NCO rank. If we fail to make our recruiting mission we will have many Sergeants, but very few junior enlisted.

The current War in Iraq and Afghanistan do play a significant role in our ability to make mission. It is important to maintain public support to maintain our ability to recruit; the American press plays a very large role in public support. Many Americans do not understand all of the roles and responsibilities of the deployed units and their views are easily swayed by the media. The more negative the press, the more negative the American people's views and the less chance we have of making our recruiting mission. In the beginning of the war in 2003 and in to 2004, we had public support and USAREC exceeded its annual mission. As the war continued in to 2005 and now in to 2006 the public's view is changing as so is our ability to make the recruiting mission.

Retirements are an additional concern in our attempt to maintain our year-end strength. With the increased number of deployments, many senior non-commissioned officers decide to retire

rather than stay past 20 years of active federal service. Some of the retirees have negative feelings about the number of deployments they have been on and do not recommend enlisting in the Army as an option to their children or to the many young Americans they come across.

All of these factors contribute to the ethical dilemmas faced by USAREC today. USAREC's challenge is having to decide if we need to alter the enlistment requirements to meet our recruiting goals. The educational standard is now changing and some applicants do not have a high school diploma. In years past, they allowed an average of 5% of all enlistments to be young people who possess a General Education Diploma (GED). In FY 2005 USAREC initiated a program called GED Plus which allows the Army to help you receive a GED, and will even pay for it up to \$2,500. Recently the U.S. Army Reserves increased the maximum age of enlistment from age 34 to age 40. The Army reviews its tattoo policy every year to keep up with a changing society. In 1994 if an applicant had received a law violation of simple possession of marijuana, the Army considered it a felony and a General Officer reviewed the applicant's application for a moral disqualification waiver, none were ever approved. Now a battalion commander reviews and approves most of the same law violations due to the need for soldiers. These changes that lower the standards for enlistment can not continue. Although many norms in society have changed and it is understandable for the Army to keep up with some of them, there has to be limit. The Army can not continue to change its standards; it must require Americans to meet the proven standards it has.

USAREC is responsible for "Providing the Strength" for the Army but it is the individual recruiters that face the challenges each day. They receive their training at the Army Recruiting Course in South Carolina and there they receive their first of many hours of training on recruiting improprieties. Although they receive that training, it does not help them avoid ethical dilemmas.

A recruiter has a lot of autonomy and a mission to persuade or lead a young person to change their entire way of life. This takes many long hours. Most recruiters work at least six days a week and an average of 10 – 12 hours per day. They want to meet their prospecting requirements and be able to go home. This places them and their families under a great deal of stress, and in USAREC where you find stress you usually will find ethical dilemmas.

The opportunities to do something wrong and take a short cut are plentiful. Taking credit for prospecting that they did not do, going home during the middle of the day when they are supposed to be prospecting, forging a signature, or coaxing someone on how to answer medical questions. Any of these are possible and national television shows have done undercover stories to shine a light on the stress a recruiter faces trying to make mission. A few years ago, USAREC experimented with the Corporal Recruiting Program in which a Corporal would get the opportunity to spend 12 months as a detailed recruiter in their hometown. The program ended mostly because of the lack of maturity of most Corporals. These are now some of the reasons USAREC changed its recruiter screening process. They now try to identify those mature Soldiers who will do the right thing.

Although the Army continues to increase the recruiting mission, it cannot lower the enlistment standards. It is a more educated, better trained, and well-disciplined Army that continues to prove itself every day. The success of our Soldiers is the success of the high enlistment standards. The age criteria, education requirements, moral, and physical standards should not change. Put the stress of meeting our requirements on the Americans who want to enlist, not the recruiters who have to enlist them.

As the deployment tempo of the Army continues to increase, we must find ways to assist the Army, USAREC, and its Soldiers not to be challenged with ethical dilemmas.