

Ethics Thought Paper (L564)

Ethics and Army Recruiting

Presented to
SGM Abdul Cole
FA R07

by
MSG Stan Randolph
R07

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Army recruiting is experiencing significant difficulties due to the casualty toll resulting from the War on Terrorism in Iraq. The Army faced its toughest recruiting period during fiscal year (FY) 2005 in which it failed to meet its 80,000 new enlistment goal by 6,627. Some of the noted reasons for this are the number of casualties suffered in Iraq, lack of patriotism, lack of confidence in United States/Army leadership, and ethics/integrity of those who recruit American citizens placing them in harms way. In this paper I will address steps the Army is taking to address recruiting concerns, decisions that leadership and Recruiters make based on irrational reasoning, and provide a couple of possible solutions that could positively impact Army recruiting and restore the image of Army Recruiters.

First, ethics must be defined. Webster defines ethics as “the principles of right and wrong that are acceptable by an individual or a social group.” When one’s ability to make the right ethical decision becomes questionable he/she loses the confidence of followers. Army Recruiters face ethical dilemmas on a daily bases due to the high level of pressure placed on them to meet monthly recruiting missions. Since a period after the invasion of Iraq the number of patriotic recruits dwindled and the Army is struggling to meet enlistment goals. Active Army recruitment goals and rates for FY04 and FY05 are listed below.

FY04		FY05	
Goal	Recruits	Goal	Recruits
77,000	77,587	80,000	73,373

To offset these enlistment goals, the Army increased retention goals by 5,000 per year for 4 years starting FY04 for a total of 20,000 by FY07. To do so the Army began offering reenlistment bonuses/incentives to entice Soldiers in certain specialties to stay on active duty.

How does the Army plan to attract potential recruits and convince them to enlist without lowering quality? By utilizing Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP), assisting recruits without a graduate equivalent degree (GED) to obtain one, targeting less fortunate areas, 15-month enlistments, and enlisting less qualified recruits earlier in the fiscal year. I will briefly explain the ethical situation the Army and Recruiters are placed in with the aforementioned methods. The former Commanding General of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command stated the AIP was not an enlistment incentive while in the same article states the AIP has helped fill priority units and provide extra pay to Soldiers. If this is offered to recruits with the understanding that they must complete basic and advanced training and report to a designated priority unit prior to receiving the incentive pay, it is an enlistment incentive. A senior Pentagon officer recently stated that the Army would not drop its recruiting standards; however, the Army has already begun to enlist category IV recruits and those with GEDs in the first quarter of FY 2006. Though he states the Army will not break its acceptable threshold for both categories, it may not be preventable if the Army plans to meet its recruiting goal for fiscal year 2006 seeing it has already dipped into that pool. An indicator that the Army has already lowered its standard is the Army Education Plus enlistment option. Under this option the Army pays for qualified recruits who have been out of high school for a minimum of six months to attend an approved GED program and testing. Those who pass the GED test are allowed to complete the Army enlistment process. Another senior Pentagon official stated that during fiscal year 2005 the Army took in its least qualified recruits in more than a decade.

The Army is using demographics to target recruiting in areas where economic depression leaves the Army as a last resort for young people in need of work. Approximately half of today's recruits come from lower-middle class to poor households. Politically speaking, could this be another reason why all of the emphasis is on the war on terrorism verses stabilizing the economy and getting it back on track? This I cannot answer but an improved economy right now would have an adverse impact on recruiting.

A 15-month enlistment is a solid sell for the Army if the unknown possibilities are completely shared with the potential recruit. It's more than the 15-month active duty obligation after completion of AIT, 24-months actively drilling with the AR or NG, and completion of the eight year service obligation in some other status. Most are not aware of the impact of being an individual replacement for a unit deployed in Iraq, stop-loss, or reserve unit deployment rotations. Most look at it as a means to obtain educational funds verses a long-term commitment to the military. What's the impact of a Recruiter telling a potential recruit all of the possibilities associated with such a commitment? Answer: A loss of the potential recruit and time that he/she could have spent writing another contract or finding another potential recruit.

Even with the new enlistment bonuses/incentives, Recruiters are still left to use non-conventional tactics to convince potential recruits to join the Army. This sometimes results in Recruiters being investigated for committing offenses contrary to the Army values. Two of the 480 recruiter investigations for misconduct in FY 2005 (up from 320 substantial cases in FY2005) involved recruiters threatening to have a potential recruit arrested if he didn't attend a recruiting station interview and falsifying high school diploma along with informing a potential recruit on how to pass a drug test. Though both ethically wrong, the Recruiting Command was equally wrong by stating that penalty for not making mission is additional training and/or

resources. There was no mention of the possibility of being relieved of their duties and the implication it would have on their careers. These Recruiters got caught but the ones who originated the acts are long gone but passed unacceptable tactics to fellow Recruiters. In an interviewed that aired on 14 November 2005 on Fox 5 News an Army recruiter stated "I will tell them what they want to hear to get them to enlist." This is a clear indicator that the pressure on Recruiters today is enormous and some are willing to do whatever it takes to make the mission and/or save their careers. Recently a Recruiting Command Command Sergeant Major stated that some commands are often aware of questionable tactics but don't say anything until someone gets caught. "As long as the recruit ships, it's okay. It all depends on the integrity within the command and the level of leadership involvement."

To make matters worse, for every impropriety (the Recruiting Command preferred term) that is found, there are at least two more that are never discovered. According to an article in the International Herald Tribune "Recruiters in Ohio, New York, Washington, Texas, and New England said that as long as offending recruiters met his enlistment quota of roughly two recruits a month, punishment was unlikely." A couple of years ago the Army reduced the severity of punishment for Recruiters who committed acts of impropriety. According to former recruiting commander, MG Rochelle, he looks at "the person's value to the command first." This is an indicator that the command is aware of the difficulty to recruit nowadays but impact on the force could last for up to 30 years.

There are two possible solutions to the recruiting dilemma the Army is facing. The first one is a new commission to revamp the bureaucracy built into the Gates Commission which was drafted during a time when an unconventional threat was not foreseeable and our Army was over 811,000 strong. A new commission could provide options such as a mandatory military

commitment during times of either conventional and nonconventional, state or non-state warfare or threats. As a service, we cannot continue to afford to deploy Soldiers from Iraq to Korea to another phase of Army transformation. It's extremely tiring on the body, mind, family, and well-being of those preserving peace at home and abroad. By forgoing the political bureaucracy and a commission's impact on elections, at least there would be a plan, with options, in place to quickly enact a modified draft verses lowering the standards of an enlistee.

The second possible solution is also noted in the Gates Commission report, raising pay to meet that of the marketplace. This is something often stated by Soldiers throughout the ranks but continues to fall short. When a Captain with 8 years of service makes more than a Sergeant Major with 20 years of service, it's clear that the enlisted force is somewhat seen as dispensable. Yes, the use of enlistment bonuses or falsely termed assignment incentive pay will assist in meeting the recruiting goal; however, if enlisted pay was raised to an acceptable level, the recruiting problem would be minimized. The need for AIP would be greatly diminished and those funds would be used for enlistment bonuses for critical specialties and reenlistment incentives. This would also increase the target recruits from less fortunate areas to medium class recruits and allow our Army to maintain its integrity when questioned about the quality of recruits.

Lastly, our Recruiters are absolutely wrong when they conduct acts that are not in keeping with the Army values. But the pressure placed on their careers is enormous and should be considered when our nation places recruiting in a no-win situation. It will never be publicly condoned but some of the questionable ploys of Recruiters are well known and no one says anything until an investigation is warranted.