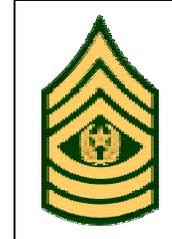


PREVENTION OF TRAINEE ABUSE



As a CSM of a Basic Combat Training Battalion, I have had the opportunity to relate to several trainee abuse cases, some of which were founded and others unfounded. The environment that we are in places great emphasis on this issue. The responsibility lies within each one of us as leaders to see to it that the abuse doesn't occur. It is therefore important to understand the process of how we can lower the rate of trainee abuse in the IET environment.

To have a successful tour in basic combat training, we must first have leadership involvement. Every soldier coming into our environment must be treated equally and in accordance with what we preach, the seven core Army Values. It is through these values that we portray our image to the American people. We are expected to teach, coach, train, and mentor these young Americans who voluntarily joined our organization for whatever reason.

There are several points that I would like to share on prevention of trainee abuse. First of all, every leader in the unit must be familiar with the regulation governing trainee abuse. There are leaders who don't even know where to locate the correct responses to certain questions about the proper treatment of trainees. Drill Sergeants are so busy that they sometimes tend to forget the rules of engagement regarding trainees when enforcing standards and conducting corrective training. They sometimes go over the edge not realizing what just happened and how it happened. It is critical that we as senior leaders take time to reinforce the importance of not just reading the regulation, but also understanding and applying what is written. Drill sergeants spend long hours and are sometimes over pressured with an abundance of tasks that must be completed. The environment in which they work is stressful, which at times changes their attitudes toward their soldiers. When soldiers are repeatedly told what to do and yet don't react in a timely manner, it drives the drill sergeant to conduct corrective measures. Allegations such as the use of vulgar language towards a soldier could occur. Having a drill sergeant battle buddy present can help prevent this from happening. Because they can help one another by providing real world experiences and sharing common sense approaches to prevention of trainee abuse, it is vital for drill sergeants to have a battle buddy whenever possible.

To lead in to my second point, unit ISGs are the role models and mentors of these drill sergeants. First Sergeants must use every opportunity available to enhance the knowledge of drill sergeants on trainee abuse. This can be accomplished during down time at ranges or at their nightly coordination meetings. The first sergeant can also implement a company Leadership Development Program on trainee abuse during every end of cycle. This can be done by setting aside a one-hour block during cycle recovery operations. Remember, standards of interaction with trainees and prevention of trainee abuse must be well understood by all cadre.

Others that can help are the Chaplain and JAG personnel. At the start of every cycle (Red Phase), Soldiers are presented with mandatory classes on sexual harassment and trainee abuse. Have all your drill sergeants present at this training as it is a great refresher course for them. Do not worry if they start complaining; the bottom line is it is our DUTY to protect them.

In closing, I would like for everyone to know that the feedback I get from drill sergeants attending the Trail of Success Program has had a great impact during their tour on the trail. It's a great way to recharge their batteries.