

Running head: ETHICAL ISSUES IN U. S. ARMY RECRUITING COMMAND

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Ethical Issues in U. S. Army Recruiting Command

Recruiters have the toughest job in the Army. Their job is to locate, qualify, and enlist applicants into the United States Army; despite military action in Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations in the world, a recruiter must have integrity and the drive to continually enlist qualified applicants in to the US Army.

One would think having to enlist qualified applicants in the Army would be an easy task. When the pressure is on to enlist qualified applicants month after month, the task can be very challenging. Pressure from Battalion Leadership Team (Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major) and Company Leadership Team (Company Commander and First Sergeant) cause recruiters to commit unethical acts. Unethical acts that bring attention to recruiting command and the recruiters involved in the unethical acts. Acts that would cause qualified applicants to decide not to become a member of the Army.

As a former recruiter, I sympathize with the recruiters still in the field. Recruiting is a tough job, but the job not so tough that a recruiter can not do the right thing legally and morally. I never comprised my integrity or my drive to be successful at enlisting qualified applicants into the Army. As a recruiter, recruiting with integrity was priority number one. With the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army is consistently having a hard time getting applicants to join. If you lie to an applicant or mislead applicants into believing they will receive certain options or benefits know in your mind they will not receive those options or benefits. You purposely lied to your applicant. You should know if that applicant joined the Army for you, and later found out you misled him or her. The applicant will tell their friends and family about you and your reputation in the community and in the schools will be worth nothing. Any recruiter, who set out to mislead applicants, will have a hard time convincing parents and their sons and daughters to

listen to what the Army has to offer them. Recruiters who mislead potential applicants do not consider how this would impact recruiting effort across the United States. Intently lying to potential applicants is not how the Army wants recruiters to conduct business.

Integrity means doing what is right legally and morally. As Soldiers, we should possess high moral standards and be honest in word and deed. We should be truthful and upright at all times, despite pressures to do otherwise. We should be honest with ourselves, by committing to and consistently living Army values. Being honest to others, by not presenting yourself or your action as anything other than what they are.

Several recruiters have forgotten the Army values, because if they had not forgot the Army values; recruiting command would not be experiencing the ethical problems the command is faced with today. Recruiters have forgotten the Army values because of the pressure placed on them to enlist quality applicants into the Army. Recruiter felt they had no choice but to do what ever it takes to succeed. Command pressure to enlist quality applicants forced recruiters to come up with things like creating high school diplomas for none high school diploma graduates, enlisting applicants who have several known felony violations, lying to applicants about bonuses, options, and benefits just so the applicants would enlist into the Army. Some recruiters use ringers to take the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery for other applicants. Recruiters tell applicants not to mention any medication they have taken or currently taking, and not to mention any medical problems they might have had prior to joining the Army.

I understand recruiting command need to have as many recruiters they can have in the field to guarantee the command success to accomplishing the mission. No recruiter wants to fail their mission. Most will do what ever it takes to be successful at recruiting to include lying, stealing, and cheating to gain that need upper hand.

One flaw in recruiting command strategy is getting quality recruiters in the field.

Recruiting command should come up with a better way of screening potential candidates for recruiting duty. No process is a sure way of weeding out potential trouble recruiters.

According to regulation, a recruiter should have secret security clearances to perform recruiting duty. I know this will not entirely eliminate the ethical problems the recruiting command are having, but selecting recruiter with the needed security clearance will not hurt. Potential recruiter's records should get screen thoroughly to ensure there are no potential to commit infractions against Army regulations.

The ethical problem plaguing recruiting command will not be an easy task. I am not sure if there is a solution to fix it. Going back to basics is a good step recruiting command should consider. Go back to using the security check measure already in place.

There is several security check measure in place that will help to ensure recruiters are enlisting quality applicants. Most security measure are either totally disregarded or over looked because of the need to continually fill the fox holes with Soldiers.

Security measure starts with the recruiting station commander and it goes through the company leadership team all the way to battalion leadership team. In most cases the recruiting station commander is a sergeant first class, but he or she could be as low as a sergeant. Since the recruiting station mission is given to the recruiting station commander and not the individual recruiter. The station commander is under more pressure to ensure the recruiter under his or her commander is during the necessary work required to be mission successful. The success of the individual recruiters will lead to the success of the entire recruiting station.

The pressure from higher up and the recruiter's individual driven desire to be successful is one of the driving forces that cause a recruiter to commit improprieties. Every recruiter in the field wants to be successful and they will find ways, weather good or bad, to obtain that success.

If concerns still exists weather an applicant is unqualified either medically and or morally, that information can be forwarded to the company leadership. The company commander and the first sergeant will make the determination if the applicant can continue processing for entry into the Army.

All the blame of impropriety does not always lay with the recruiters. Some applicants really do not divulge all law violations or medical information to their recruiters. This information, in most cases, does not come out until the applicant sits with the security specialist at the Military Entry Processing Station (MEPS). Recruiters should assume all applicants are liars when it comes to law violations. A simple process of running all police checks will avoid being embarrassed during the applicant security screening process. Even if the applicants say he or she has no law violations, police checks will confirm or deny that statement. A method I used as a recruiter, were to allow another recruiter to talk with my applicant about law violation and past medical history. This method did not always present itself as my fellow recruiters were busy prospecting for applicants to enlist in to the Army. Most station commanders would go over issues, especially any law violations and medical, with the applicant during their final interview. Not all station commanders would take the opportunity to interview potential applicants prior to the applicant going to MEPS for processing. The station commander would just sign off on the packet and forward it to MEPS for processing.

Regulation states a recruiter must do a police check for any place the applicant have lived, worked or went to school. This can be very time consuming if the applicant lived in

several states and cities. In those cases, a recruiter must rely on other recruiting station in those areas to conduct the police checks for them. Keep in mind those recruiters, in those locations, are on a recruiting mission too. Getting the police checks completed in a time manner probably will be an issue and will get delayed for days or weeks. This can cause recruiters to miss their mission.

Medical issue can also become a time consuming process. Regulation requires the recruiter to get medical documentation from the applicant doctor. In most cases the applicant no longer uses the physician or conveniently don't remember the physician name or the location of the practice. There is the possibility the doctor is no longer in practice and has no ideal what practice took over his pervious patients and files.

Situation like this is why recruiters send applicant to MEPS with instructions to keep their mouth shut about their past law violations and medical history. When the applicant is interviewed by the security specialist at MEPS and the security specialist tells them that if they are lying or not revealing any law violation and past medical history. The applicant will be fined \$10,000 and given a five year prison term; this is where the applicant starts singing like a canary.

In order for recruiting command to eliminate some of the ethical issues that faces the command today, the command needs to return to basic recruiting. The command should start with selecting quality individual to be recruiters to ensure the selected individuals will recruiter with absolute integrity. The command should take an active roll in punishing those recruiters how violate recruiting rules and regulation. Punishing the violators will deter future violators.