



Engaged Leadership Requires Buy-In

Our goal at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center is to serve as the Army's knowledge center for loss data collection, fusion, analysis and dissemination of actionable force protection information. Simply said, we collect, store and analyze data to develop tools for our Army to know the risk upfront. The preservation of combat power can only come through the aggressive application of composite risk management by engaged leadership.

The cornerstone of standards and discipline is effective engaged leadership. Whether you're talking about safety, retention, readiness or kicking in doors, it requires synchronized engaged leadership throughout the chain to make this mission happen. It is not automatic, and some organizations do it better than others. Why? Because engaged leadership requires buy-in. By buy-in, I mean Soldiers at all levels understand the message that you are transmitting and translate that message into risk mitigated actions.

Usually, buy-in occurs in as little as one-to-three forms. First, a leader explains the mission to their Soldiers, and they buy-in to execute the mission because they don't want to let the organization or their comrades down. In the second form, the leader's issues an order and Soldiers buy-in to avoid the consequences of disobeying a lawful order.

Both are situational driven, require more or less time and are effective when the organization enforces standards and discipline. Lastly, the most difficult are those "loose in the secondary" that often require a combination of both approaches along with policing by peers. This can result in almost constant supervision, which leads me in to off-duty.

Two-thirds of Army accidents happened off-duty, when the leader generally is not present. Who is filling the leadership gap off-duty?

As Brig. Gen. Forrester indicated in his column, Families are mission essential, as well. Families, whether it is a mom, dad, spouse or even children, have a direct connection with our Soldiers that we are not afforded. In realizing that Family, friends and a Soldier's sergeant are the most influential people in a Soldier's life, the USACRC teamed up with the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command to release the Family Engagement Kit to help fill the off-duty leadership gap with quality Family engagement.

The kit is designed to educate the support network and provide it with a better understanding of how safe practices can make a difference in the lives of our Families and Soldiers. Between fiscal 2001 and 2007, the Army has lost 186 of our Soldiers to accidents within a year of return from deployment. Of those, 63 percent were lost in the first six months. The Family Engagement Kit will allow us to open up another front to combat an enemy that robs our Army of its most precious resource—the Soldier.

In closing, many installations are adopting a safety campaign entitled "I Can My Own Life"? and having great success. Send us your ideas and best practices so we can share them with our Army. Success in the business of safety is hard to measure; however, failure is not here. Here's wishing you and your Family a Happy New Year!

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