



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY RECRUITING COMMAND
FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY 40121-2726

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

(b)(6)

17 November 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR (b)(6), Commander, 5th Recruiting Brigade, U.S. Army Recruiting Command, San Antonio, TX 78208-0277

SUBJECT: Results of Crisis Response Team visit to the Houston Recruiting BN, 15-24 October 2008

1. The USAREC Crisis Response Team (CRT) consisted of (b)(6), USAREC Deputy Command Psychologist; (b)(6), USAREC Command Chaplain; and (b)(6), USAREC IG SGM.
2. The 5th Recruiting Brigade Commander, (b)(6), requested that the CRT be deployed to the Houston Recruiting Battalion following two suicides within the battalion. The charter for the CRT was to assess the overall command climate and provide recommendations for the utilization of existing resources as well as the identification of additional resources that would be beneficial in providing for the well being of the Soldiers and families within the Houston Recruiting Battalion.
3. All available Soldiers and civilians at the Recruiting Companies and at the battalion headquarters were interviewed. Individual interviews were conducted for the Battalion Commander, Battalion Executive Officer, Battalion CSM, Company Commanders, 1SGs, Company Trainers, and any Soldier who did not wish to participate in the group sessions. Group sessions were conducted separately for station commanders and recruiters, as well as battalion-level officers/civilian equivalents and battalion-level NCOs/civilian equivalents.
4. The results will be reported in the following manner:
 - a. All widespread issues, opinions, concerns, and CRT observations will be addressed first. Those issues, opinions, concerns, and CRT observations that appear to be more localized to specific companies will be noted in that manner, with the specific companies identified. All statements will be summarized, unless exact quotes are determined to best reflect the sentiment of the respondents.
 - b. Recommendations will be made that specify level of asset (e.g., company, battalion, Army G-1, etc.) and whether the resource is currently available or if it needs to be requested.
5. Widespread agreement.
 - a. Virtually all Soldiers report that the hours they work prevent them from maintaining a strong family relationship. Additionally, they all believe that the hours were unnecessary and were often just used to "test our work ethic." Work hours and stress were the predominant complaints across the board. One Soldier stated that "the stress in recruiting is like going 90 MPH on the interstate in FIRST gear." Another sentiment that was consistent was that USAREC (at various levels) only cares about production and truly does not care about Soldiers or families. Soldiers expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the leadership abilities of 79Rs and blamed much of the stress they experience on poor leadership. There is a stark difference between Soldiers who have deployed and those leaders who have not. Most combat veterans expressed little respect for 79Rs who had not deployed, often pointing out that our 79Rs did not know anything about "real" leadership. The experience of being in true "life or death" situations appears to have contributed to Soldiers' perceptions about what is "really" important and they do not perceive taking more personal and family time to contribute to "anyone dying," thus not something that they should have to "earn" or be denied by their leadership.
 - b. Most Soldiers and civilians believe that Soldiers and their families are ill prepared for the stresses of USAREC. A concerning impression that many are either lead to believe or want to believe is that recruiting is a "knee down," or "refit" assignment. Most believe that they had not had enough time between their most recent deployment and coming to recruiting. Additionally, they believe that the psychiatric evaluations they had were largely "check the block" or they received no evaluation prior to recruiting at all. Surprisingly, there is a strong belief that station commanders are under too much stress

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and have virtually no resources to use for themselves or their families. With the number of combat veteran station commanders increasing, they and their families appear more like detailed recruiters when it comes to family stability and stress resiliency than young 79Rs of the past. This shift has become apparent at the Recruiting and Retention School, as well, with many more students in the Station Commander Course reporting higher levels of stress than in the past. The absence of a fully functioning FRG, as well as a battalion-wide sponsorship program, is issues of great concern for the majority of the Soldiers. Many recruiters do not feel as though their training at the ARC had been sufficient. There is a strong belief that they should receive training in sales in order to be more effective and successful. The overriding sense is that they feel they should receive more and better training at the Recruiting and Retention School, as well as in the field.

(b)(6), (b)(7)b

(b)(6), (b)(7)b The overall impression of the new Battalion Commander, (b)(6), is very good. Perceptions of the battalion staff are generally poor, with a few notable exceptions. Staff, themselves, are unhappy about the suspenses they have had to put on the Soldiers and feel as though their poor level of staffing as well as staff synchronization (under the previous commander and executive officer) contribute to them providing poor overall service to the Soldiers and their families.

(b)(6), (b)(7)b

6. Specific issues and impressions.

a. (b)(6) Company

Station commanders seemed to be a cohesive team and expressed appreciation for and trust in their 1SG. Trusting leadership is an issue for many of the recruiters. Some are skeptical about the prospect of improvements given the entrenched ways of leadership.

b. (b)(6) Company

Company Commander stated that (b)(6) had been approachable on personal and professional issues but was not very supportive on discipline issues. (b)(6)

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Station commanders stated that training happens every Friday after mission day. They are very happy with current company leadership. They had very negative comments on previous CCG leadership. Some stated that under previous leadership they would work until 0100-0200 hrs, hanging outside Wal-Mart, movie theaters or on "stakeouts". AGR Soldiers have difficulty getting NCOES slots; RA seems OK. They recommended two years as SC then need a break; however, RT and Guidance Counselor positions have been removed as 79R options.

Recruiters report Tricare issues, with one family paid only \$1,200 of an \$11,000 dental bill. They also prefer their current company leadership, stating a "Night and day comparison between previous and current CLT" (previous CLT was in place when SSG Andersson killed himself two years ago). Recruiters state there are no incentives for good performance, whether one puts in 0 or 4 contracts, the hours are the same. There was suggestion that use/abuse of alcohol on/off duty may be a problem.

c. (b)(6) Company

Company Commander states there is a problem with Tricare's month-long lag time in getting assistance for those with (b)(3) is too quick to release personnel after an initial cursory evaluation. Kudos given to (b)(6) (SFA) who does go the extra mile (e.g. in her FRG support). Station commanders report confidence in openness of CLT to provide assistance to Soldiers. Current (b)(6) is more receptive and supportive than previous (b)(6). Recruiters state that their CLT is much better now – more Soldier care and incentives. A list of incoming Recruiters seems to have been given to (b)(6) wife (realtor), who then contacted incoming Recruiters by email, Soldiers were bothered by this because they were given no other resources. Information about singles' and marriage retreats do not get to the recruiter level. Soldiers feel the current CCG is mission focused but also family oriented. (Felt the previous CCG was mission focused at any and all cost). Many Soldiers feel the CRT was sent to "check the block" and once the dust settles all will go back to normal. Soldiers expressed concern that the suicides were not adequately addressed by the leadership. Many Soldiers stated their previous leadership from the operational Army had called them to check up on them.

d. (b)(6) Company

Company Commander states their FRG has been established, with good participation. Issues with battalion staff, but A&PA is good. SFC Flores (1st suicide) used to work here and several Soldiers were hit hard by his death. Commander states that after the 1st suicide the CLT (apart from any BLT initiative) dealt with the well-being/safety concerns of the company. The second suicide didn't seem to elicit any reference at all from BLT that the Commander could see. Station commanders state they have high regard for (b)(6) who stood up for the Soldiers immediately following Hurricane Ike. In reference to those Soldiers returning from deployment, the issue is "from *physical* battle to *psychological* battle: how to make the transition." Station commanders believe they need more training in PTSD issues. Station commanders agreed that, "5th BDE is expected to produce more than other Bde's so the pressure is tremendous," and that they want outlets for themselves. A lot of pressure is self-driven as NCOs – dealing with constant sense of failure. They recommend marriage retreats specifically for Station Commanders—often the forgotten group. Some concern expressed over the removal of career progression opportunities off numbers for 79Rs. Overall, they agree that they have a great command climate at company level. Recruiters believe that under current (b)(6) good training is being conducted. However, they state that 79R NCOs often lose focus on the human element. A couple of Soldiers found out that they were involuntarily extended on AKO and feel the chain of command should have informed them. All agree that current CLT good on Soldier care. Soldiers feel they are being used up and spit out, stating "Integrity has a different definition in USAREC." Soldiers report inability to sleep and having bad dreams. Some Soldiers are drinking to help compensate for the inability to fall asleep. They believe "Time and understanding" is what they need. Very unhappy Soldiers...with the best production statistics in the battalion.

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e. (b)(6) Company

Company Commander has eliminated the use of the word "Recruiter," instead, always uses "Soldier" in order to maintain the association with the rest of the Army. He states current (b)(6) is very good vs. the former in providing concrete assistance. He senses a push to get rid of (b)(6), which he states "would be seriously wrong." (b)(6) are both strong advocates for (b)(6), as well. (b)(6) states that she is the "second best (b)(6) I have ever worked for."

Station commanders say FRG seems to be becoming more active at Company level, with regular "spouse calls" being conducted. They question "Who is looking out for the 79R? What is the 79R career path now that there are no longer operations, guidance positions?" (b)(6) who contacted (b)(6) by telephone several days after our visit to discuss his struggles, still dealing with SFC Flores' suicide. Generally, in agreement that their CLT is supportive of them and their recruiters.

One recruiter states that the FRG is not as strong as during prior assignment in the Company (1999-2002). They mostly report satisfaction and openness with Station commanders. Soldiers said there is not unit cohesion or teamwork and that everything out here in USAREC is individually based.

f. (b)(6) Company

The (b)(6) stated he believes moral is very high and that his station commanders and Soldiers are satisfied

(b)(7)b

Station commanders express a complete lack of trust in Company leadership (some instances include battalion level, as well); they will accuse and decide without talking to the NCO in question. Station commanders sense a good rapport and trust with the Soldiers, but the trust goes no higher. They believe power/authority is taken away from them by (b)(6); not letting them be station commanders. Voiced concern of having to having to do 200% in order to have time off. They have problems with CLT insisting on a by-Recruiter close-out; (b)(6) seems not to know/maintain his lane.

Recruiters generally have confidence in their station commanders, but believe (b)(6) is unreasonable in micro-managing at recruiter level. (b)(6) is seemingly not in the loop/unaware or lack of care with (b)(6) approach. Some lack confidence in the entire leadership structure. They want more predictable time off and reasonable work hours, which would go a long way toward showing some compassion for them.

g. (b)(6) Company

The (b)(6) stated he believes company morale is very low and this is due to the recent suicides. He states that he has (at best) a strained professional relationship with the (b)(6)

(b)(6). He believes his company was being singled out; one example was the 0700 and 2000 hour daily conference calls that were not being conducted by (b)(6) but were specific to (b)(6) company (no other company participated, these have not continued since the death of SFC Flores). The (b)(6) would not use the current leadership channels if he had problems. (b)(6)

(b)(6) He states he has lost his fire and needs to be slated in another position.

(b)(6)

Station commanders believe that they are approachable and that their Soldiers would reach out for help from them, but would not go to (b)(6) (as they felt his power base has been taken away and is currently ineffective). Several have exceptionally poor opinions of (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6). Several station commanders believe that work stress led SFC Flores to his family issues, and subsequently to his suicide. Two of the station commanders seem to have a different take on the (b)(6) stating that (b)(6) made threats of Article 15 without warrant and that he often verbally abuses them. Recruiters state they have little confidence in station commanders/CLT/Battalion. (b)(6) calls them liars, can be unreasonable and abusive, and doesn't let station commanders lead their stations. They have a lack of trust in the station commanders; the station commanders can't make a decision without (b)(6). Poor station commander mentorship; one case of a station commander remaining in the station playing

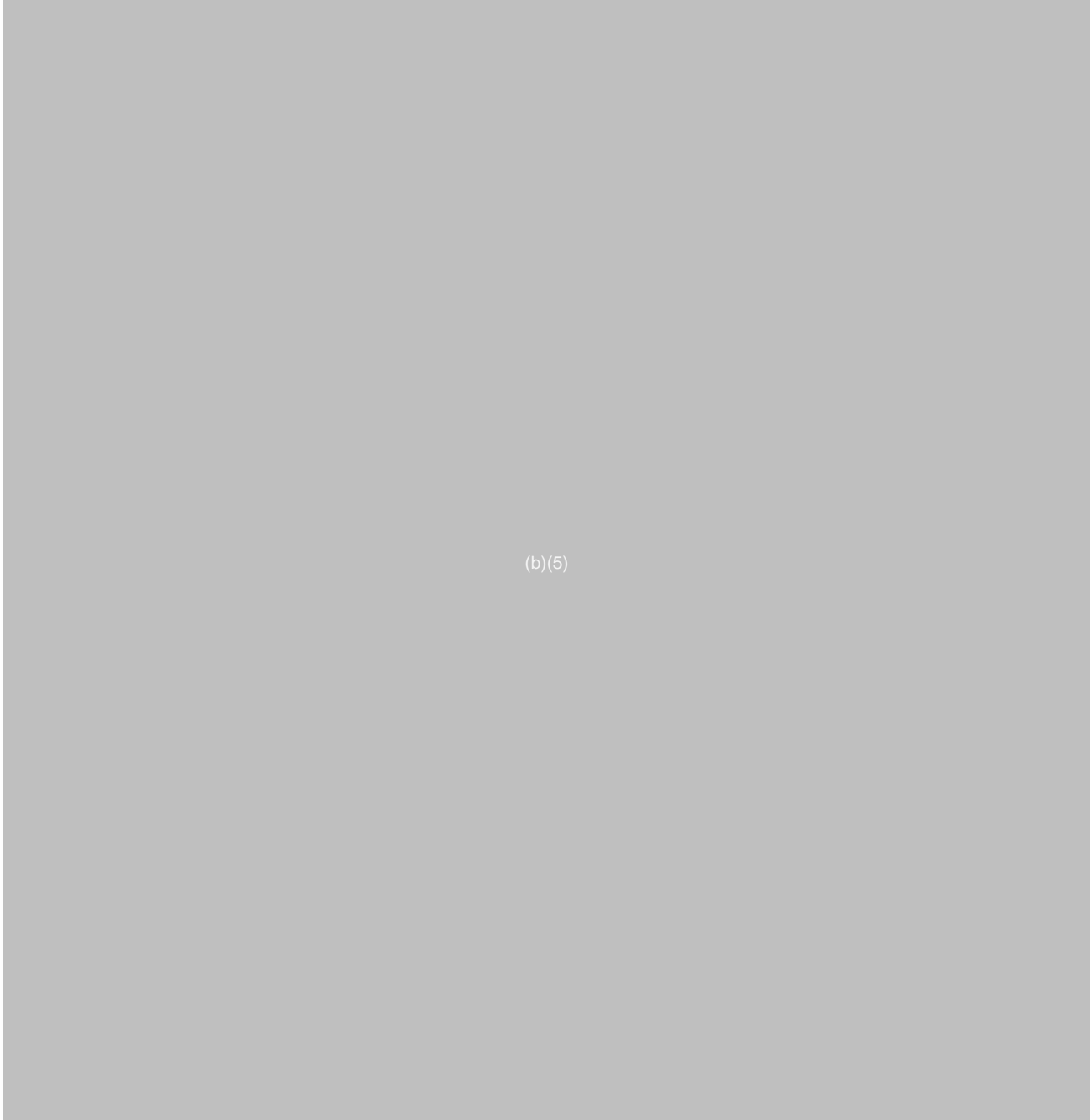
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video games all day. They report that they receive threats that poor performance will ruin career: threats of relief-for-cause NCOERs. (b)(7)b

(b)(7)b Soldiers stated they would NOT go to their station commanders and they don't trust anyone. They have seen some improvement but as these improvements are recent they feel it is only due to the suicides, and negative press. They are quite skeptical that anything will change.

Recommendations.



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Deputy Command Psychologist

Matrix of Soldier and Family Support

Living on Garrison	Geographically Dispersed Support	USAREC	Cadet Command	USMEPCOM
Garrison- Mental Health Services and Garrison Medical facility, TRICARE	Military OneSource- 24/7 support. Can receive 6 free sessions of counseling in their community, if available	X	X	X
	Medical/ TRICARE-sometimes difficult to find physicians who accept TRICARE in small communities	X	X	X
	Family Advocacy Coordinators/Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCS)	6	2 SARCS- one per Region as an extra duty	2-HQs
Mental Health Screening- not standard quality across the Army	Mental Health Screening- not standard quality across the Army	X	X	X
PDHA- voluntary disclosure from the Soldier	PDHA- voluntary disclosure from the Soldier	X	X	X
PDHRA-90 days after redeployment- voluntary disclosure	PDHRA-90 days after redeployment-voluntary disclosure	X	X	X
Garrison- Army Community Service- Family Advocacy/New Parent Support/EFMP/Financial Readiness, information and referral,etc. May have upwards of 90 staff at large posts	Soldier Family Assistants- perform information and referral for Families	44	0	1-HQs

Matrix of Soldier and Family Support

Living on Garrison	Geographically Dispersed Support	USAREC	Cadet Command	USMEPCOM
Garrison- Army Community Service- Family Advocacy/New Parent Support/EFMP/Financial Readiness, information and referral,etc. May have	Military OneSource- 24/7 support. Can receive services on line, phone, or 6 free counseling sessions.	X	X	X
	Unit Service Coordinators	2- HQs	2- Regions	1
	Military Family Life Consultant- 45 day rotations	8	0	0
	Army One Source- support closest to where they live, regardless of component	X	X	X
	Myarmylife200.com (armyonesource.com) website, search state maps for closest support	X	X	X
	Joint Family Support Assistance Program- 50 states, outreach from the JFHQ to all geographically dispersed (3-5 staff per state)	X	X	X
Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSA)- FRG support	Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSA)- FRG support	0	0	0
Financial Readiness and Army Emergency Relief (AER)- support for financial crises. Housed at ACS.	Red Cross- handles Army Emergency Relief support	X	X	X
	Personal Financial Counselor- 45 day rotation	8	0	0
	Unit Financial Counselors			Being phased out
	Military OneSource- 24/7 support. Can receive 6 free financial counseling sessions.	X	X	X

Matrix of Soldier and Family Support

Living on Garrison	Geographically Dispersed Support	USAREC	Cadet Command	USMEPCOM
Chaplain Support	Chaplains	6- one at each Brigade	0	0
	Strong Bonds- Chaplain's Marriage Weekend Retreats	X	X	X
Garrison- Physical Fitness Center	Fitness facilities/YMCAs memberships paid.	X	X	X
On post Housing	Housing off post	X	X	X
On Post Childcare	NACCRA Childcare Subsidy- makes child care affordable for the geographically dispersed	X	X	X
Respite Child Care	Respite child care- contract being worked on at HQ- CYSS	X	X	X

There is NO warm hand off to the Recruiting and Retention school if a Soldier has had issues, counseling, etc. (b)(6) stated that they receive nothing from other agencies. If the Soldier chooses to disclose information, that is when they find out about issues or problems.