FATALITY

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS III CORPS AND FORT HOOD
FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5056

AFZF-GA-SAFE

19 February 2002

MEMORNADUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Leadership and Peer Involvement in Accident Prevention -- Fatality Memo 02-05

1. During the early morning hours Sunday of this past President's Day long weekend, another tragic POV accident took the life of a III Corps soldier. So far in FY02, six Corps soldiers have died violently in life-shattering POV accidents. The last two fatalities occurred during the last two holiday periods--marring the holiday spirit of family and friends. In this last case, the soldier was driving back to post in the early morning hours after departing a nightclub in town where he worked to earn extra money. He ran through the red light of an intersection and collided with another vehicle, killing himself. Thankfully, the other vehicle's occupants were uninjured. The soldier was partially ejected from the vehicle he was driving, indicating that he was not wearing seat belts. Although blood alcohol results have not been analyzed yet, initial police statements reflected that he had been drinking.

2. The soldier who was killed had his state license revoked over a year and a half ago due to a DWI conviction. Unit leaders required him to park his POV in the unit area and it had not been moved since the unit impounded it. As another proactive measure, the unit enrolled the soldier in alcohol/drug prevention training, which he successfully completed last month. To get around, the soldier used the POV of a buddy, who was deployed to the NTC. The soldier used a second license that he had from his state of record.

3. Just as with many other fatalities, this needless loss of life did not have to occur. My sense is that someone knew that this alcohol/drug-rehabilitated soldier had a part time job in a night club, worked early morning hours, was driving with a revoked license, and was using another soldier's vehicle. Peers and first line leaders close to the victim may have been able to recognize these high-risk indicators that signaled potential trouble and reacted to them.

4. These are the kinds of lessons that must remind us of our inherent responsibility to take care of our soldiers. I am particularly concerned about the role that off-duty employment likely played in this accident. Bottom line is soldiers' welfare, and ensuring off-duty jobs are not allowed to adversely interfere with Army business or soldier safety. Besides peers, our first-line NCOs and officers must have a clear understanding of their soldiers' off-duty activities, including part-time jobs. Further, our first-line leaders must have a decisive "contract" with their subordinates regarding their planned activities during off-duty periods, particularly weekends and holidays. If the activities are high or moderate risk, then first-line supervisors must take action to safeguard the soldier by impacting on or denying the off-duty activity. Commanders must ensure that first-line supervisors establish these contracts and follow through to ensure high-risk behavior is either mitigated or not permitted.

ENSURE WIDEST DISSEMINATION AND POST ON BULLETING BOARDS

B. B. Bell

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