FATALITY

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

AFZF-GA-SAFE

21 April 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Motorcycle/Fatality Carnage -- Fatality Memo 02-11

1. Only one day separated the deaths of our last two traffic fatalities this past week. Two soldiers were killed in similar motorcycle accidents. Both were sergeants, were speeding at the time, and neither wore required helmets. Both died from brain damage. The sergeant in the first incident was drunk with a BAC in excess of 0.2. Because of the alcohol and speed, he lost control, struck the curb of a traffic circle and was thrown off. He died two days later. His civilian passenger, who did not wear a helmet either, was almost killed, too. The sergeant in the second incident ran a stop sign and was broadsided by a sports utility vehicle. The soldier was not licensed, having just bought the motorcycle the day before the accident. Alcohol test results in this second case are not back yet. There were no records found that either sergeant had attended required motorcycle safety training. The last III Corps motorcycle fatality occurred in November of 2000 involving a senior NCO. In that case, alcohol and speed were also involved; the NCO was not wearing a helmet, and had not attended motorcycle safety training.

FATALITY

2. We were on track during the first half of this fiscal year to post a better safety record than last year. However, we have abruptly fallen off track in the last month. Our soldiers are dying in accidents at an alarming rate. We have experienced ten accidental fatalities, including two dependents, in the last four weeks alone. At this pace, we will have one of our worst years in a long time. This is unacceptable and 180 degrees out from our safety goals. What really troubles me about this recent trend is that of the eight recent soldier fatalities, five were NCOs - leaders. It requires dedicated, caring, and energized leaders who take the safety and welfare of their soldiers personally, to preserve our most precious resources – our soldiers and families. America's parents entrust their sons and daughters to our stewardship - and we must not disappoint them. Every time I sign another Red Hash fatality memo, I feel as though we have let them down again.

FATALITY

3. My sense is that while leaders are probably reaching the majority of soldiers with the standard safety messages, the undisciplined and reckless require a different message to "see the light." Peers and junior NCOs/officers, who have frequent and close contact with them, know who they are. They usually know those soldiers who take their motorcycle helmets off when leaving the post. I want our leaders to "dig deep" and develop bold, new, and fresh POV safety approaches geared toward curbing aggressive driving behavior and outlining associated consequences. Safety training cannot be a "check the block" approach. Include aggressive driving safety in summer safety campaigns/safety days. Identify soldiers who demonstrate high risk driving habits, such as excessive alcohol consumption or reckless behavior. Identify potential risk-takers with the Next Accident Test, as we did back in December. Provide appropriate counseling and training. Conduct safety-sensing sessions to find common safety problems. Stop this needless loss of life due to recklessness by ensuring your motorcycle operators attend required safety training and are properly registered on post. Inform them that IAW Army regulation and common sense, Army motorcycle riders are required to wear helmets and protective clothing at all times both on and off post. The best defense for this motorcycle carnage is continued engagement by first line supervisors with subordinates. Our first line supervisors have to change the behavior patterns of those who would kill themselves and endanger others. Deaths will continue to mount unless we take direct and meaningful actions.

ENSURE WIDEST DISSEMINATION AND POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS

B. B. Bell

B. B. BELL
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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