

# FATALITY



AFZF-GA-SAFE

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



27 August 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Alcohol and Drug Abuse Can Lead to Death – Fatality Memo # 02-18

1. Over the past weekend, a Corps Artillery soldier died as a result of heart failure that may have been aggravated by excessive use of alcohol and habitual use of illegal drugs. Last Saturday evening, the soldier performed extra duty and immediately after that was released to his room pursuant to a UCMJ imposed restriction. Subsequently, he was found passed out in the barracks, apparently from excessive alcohol and the MPs were called for assistance. Emergency CPR was performed and the soldier was rushed to the post hospital. During the next day, his blood pressure worsened, his condition deteriorated, and he died of heart failure.

2. Although the case is still under investigation, we can glean some useful lessons from it. The lesson to be learned here is about a soldier with a known substance abuse problem who was somehow able to continue to abuse alcohol and perhaps drugs -- likely in the barracks! What does this tell us about the effectiveness of the chain of command and leader engagement in the barracks lives of their soldiers?

3. The ongoing investigation might uncover additional facts that we can use for lessons learned. However, in the interim, I want you and your leaders to assess your procedures for handling and monitoring soldiers struggling with substance abuse problems to ensure standards are met and soldiers receive appropriate, special attention. That is the only way leaders can pick up on abnormal behavior that might be detrimental to the soldier. Leaders must immediately respond to signals from soldiers that indicate improper actions and behavior.

**ENSURE WIDEST DISSEMINATION AND POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B B Bell".

**B. B. BELL**  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Commanding

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