FATALITY

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

AFZF-GA-SAFE

13 June 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: HMMWV Accident Takes the Life of a III Corps Soldier -- Fatality Memo 02-13

1. Only five days after two III Corps soldiers died in two POV accidents, we experienced our 20th accidental fatality for this fiscal year. An M1114, Armored HMMWV rolled over, ejecting the gunner from the turret, which resulted in fatal head injuries. The HMMWV, operating on a secondary road, was coming out of a low water crossing site when it went into a broadside skid and flipped twice. The HMMWV came to rest on its right side; facing the direction it came from. Besides the gunner, four other soldiers (five total pacs in a four seat HMMWV!) who were on board were injured, none life-threatening - luckily for them. The details and causes of the case won't be known until the U.S. Army Safety Center team that is investigating the accident publishes its finding. What we do know so far is that excessive speed for road conditions and stream crossing was involved. Military Police estimated the speed to be about 35-37 mph. "Hitting" a water obstacle at this estimated speed would certainly produce the tragic results associated with this crash. This was a horrible, unnecessary loss of life. Standards enforcement and discipline could likely have prevented this loss.

2. With nine of our 20 accidental fatalities this fiscal year occurring in just the last two months alone, it's easy to see that we are on a fast track to posting our worst fatality record in many years. Our leadership is not effectively penetrating and correcting dangerous and irresponsible behavior by soldiers. We owe it to our soldiers to figure out the code required to slow this race down. If we don't figure it out, more soldiers will be horrifically killed in the coming months.

3. Most (if not all) accidents are preventable. This might sound a bit trite, but, it must be the objective toward which your leaders build safety programs. To reach that objective, our leaders -- especially first line supervisors -- must be 100% engaged in effective accident prevention efforts. We cannot just check the blocks. Senior leaders must arm subordinate junior leaders with the correct tools to accomplish their mission of reaching and changing the behavior of young soldiers. If this requires leader training - we must do it. We must evaluate the safety briefings that our leaders give to ensure they are meaningful, effective, and cover the right subjects. Most importantly, leaders must know, train, and enforce standards -- 24 hours a day. The carnage will only stop when our senior leaders empower and demand of our first line supervisors that they penetrate their squads, sections, and crews, and positively change irresponsible and dangerous behavior -- on and off duty.

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B. B. BELL
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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