

Running head: EFFECTS OF PTSD ON THE ARMY'S PERSONNEL READINESS

The Effects of PTSD on the Army's Personnel Readiness

SGM Barrington G. Ricketts

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class #58

SGM Scott A. Landy

14 December 2007

Abstract

As Leaders in the greatest Army ever assembled, we are constantly bombarded and faced with ethical dilemmas requiring the implementation and use of the ethical decision making process to make the hard right over the easy wrong decisions. Soldiers, seniors, peers, and subordinates alike entrust in us the confidence that when we are faced with the ethical dilemma of releasing our wounded Warriors to seek mental help for PTSD or stigmatizing them as weak Warriors with the intent of getting them to deny their sickness to remain with the unit for the good of Personnel Readiness we will become ethical victors and get these wounded Warriors the medical help they truly desire.

The Effects of PTSD on the Army's Personnel Readiness

As stated in FM 6-22 (2006), leaders must become fully aware of the fact that ethical reasoning is a complex process and requires critical things that involves the Army Values to resolve them successfully. With the discovery and final acknowledgement by the Army of an ancient brain disease that has been in existence in our Army since its formation there is no doubt that this disease know as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder will have a negative impact on our personnel readiness for decades to come.

To better understand the ethically impact and dilemma that us as leaders and Warriors will be face with I will begin by looking at the definition of ethics. As Webster's (1997, pg. 398) states ethics is "1. Discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation; 2. The principles of conduct governing an individual or a group." With the definition or ethics clearly defined we will now examine the ethical dilemma that PTSD will place us as leaders of the 1st century.

As the Global War on Terror continues we as leaders will continue to face several ethical dilemmas that we are required and expected to make the ethically right decisions on at all times. As leaders we are all expected and considered to be the moral and ethical mentors for our soldiers, seniors, peers and

subordinates alike. With this expectation comes a heavy burden that we will have to bear daily as long as we are accepting of our position and role as leaders in the greatest Army that ever existed.

To begin let us examine a, too often, ethical scenario that raise its ugly head whenever a unit is in the process of training up for its deployment in the War on Terror. The scenarios is as follow; during the Mission Readiness Exercise (MRX), for your unit's Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment, over 10 percent of the units personnel openly acknowledge that they are suffering from PTSD and needs to seek medical attention and might not be able to deploy with the unit. As a leader who received several briefing on the mental disease of PTSD do you fully support the Warrior that are mentally injured and get them the required help they need or do you stigmatize them as weak and fragile Warriors? As Warriors we travel around the Army and reminded constantly of the fact that PTSD is a serious illness and one that should not conjure as a sign of weakness displayed by anyone affected by this silent but deadly mental disease.

As FM 6-22 (2006) states, we as leaders must embrace the Army Values in governing personnel actions when preparing to face tough calls in life as we see in the scenarios previously stated. As witness before, when leaders are involved with the MRX of deployment and Soldiers or even leaders are surfacing

with the issue of PTSD and personnel numbers or slowly or in some instances rapidly dwindling we as leaders are then face with the ethically dilemma of whether or not to release the injured Soldiers in order for them to go seek medical help from qualified professionals at the various agencies available or do we diagnose these individuals with our ancient thought process that once you become a Warriors we are immune to the mental disease of PTSD and label them as fragile warriors and label them as outcast and resist all possible means to get them treated just to keep them and the unit personnel numbers up to deployment levels in order to prevent our unit from deploying with insufficient personnel, since we are aware of the fact that the possibility of getting a replacement for the injured warrior we lose to PTSD is very unlikely prior to deploying. This doubt of receiving a replacement is due to the fact that the leadership of the Army clearly accepts the facts that the Army is operating at below strength in personnel and the War on Terror is taking a heavy toll on the personnel engaged in the fight.

Too often as leaders when faced with this ethical dilemma we chose to make the easy wrong over the hard right decision of getting our mentally wounded Warriors the proper treatment without the stigma of them been weak and an outcast but rather too often, as I have witness in past events, as leaders we shun

these wounded Warriors and drive them into self denial of suffering from any such mental disease only to complicate the disorder more and create future problems for our warrior and society.

In summary, with the recent acknowledgement that PTSD is an actual disorder and that Warriors in the Army do suffer from its effect. As seniors, peers and subordinates, in my opinion, we are still in denial of the fact that there are any residual effects remaining with soldiers and leaders after they witness the horrifying terrors of war. This belief mechanism has a profound impact on our ethical decision making process and too often we end up making the wrong ethical choice and therefore deny our greatest Warriors the physiological help they are in desperate need of all in the name of ensuring that our units remain at the desired personnel strength to deploy and fight the ongoing War on Terror. As we embark on our leadership challenges of the future let us ensure that we are making the right ethical decisions when faced with the dilemma of PTSD and personnel readiness and keep the unit moral high while deploying with mentally fit personnel into combat.

References

FM 6-22. Army Leadership: Competent, confident, and Agile.

12 October 2006.

(1997). *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10 ed.).

Springfield: Merriam-Webster Incorporated.