

Running Head: The Army Needs Raging Rivers

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Abstract

My paper will focus on leadership problems that I encountered while on recruiting duty. I will explain the ethical dilemma and explain the lack of judgment of my Station Commander and the lack of his leadership. I will also address the pressure that Commanders put on recruiters and how recruiters may cross the line on ethical decisions. I will close the paper with my philosophy of a strong leader, and how strong leaders are needed in the Army.

What is a leader? What are the responsibilities of a leader? What kind of an example is a leader supposed to set for our younger Soldiers? My definition of a leader is someone that will always choose the hard right over the easy wrong. A leader is someone that will not allow peer pressure, pressure from a superior, or anyone else allows him or her to jeopardize his or her integrity to accomplish the mission. A strong leader in the United States Recruiting Command is hard to find because many give in to the pressure and put their career and the careers of their Soldiers in jeopardy. Many leaders turn into a "mountain stream" where they go with the flow and follow the path of least resistance when they should remain a raging river and form the path for their Soldiers to follow.

My ethical dilemma happened in the winter of 1998. I was assigned to the United States Recruiting Command. The office that I was assigned to had not made "Mission Box" in over 3 years. Mission box is a term used in USAREC. Each station is assigned a monthly mission, and it is the responsibility of all the Army and Army Reserve recruiters to make the month mission. If the station makes the mission, they are considered "Mission Box" for the month. Making mission box was a rare accomplishment.

During the winter of 1998, the office I was assigned was one contract from making mission box. We were short one high school graduate that scored above a 50 on the Armed Service Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test. We had about a week to find this one person. After about 2 days of intense prospecting, I interviewed a young man for about 2 hours, and he agreed to join the Army Reserve. I did a complete brief on him asking him many personal questions, medical questions, and legal question. At that time, he did not reveal any disqualifying information. I notified my Station Commander that I had a young man that was ready to join and that I would be completing his enlistment packet the next morning. My Station Commander then sat down with the young man and again briefed him on his medical issues, legal issues, and any personal problems he had. Again, the young man did not admit to any problems. My Station Commander then called my Commander and 1SG to notify them that we had a young man interested in joining the Army Reserve, that he would be taken to the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in 3 days to take the physical and process for the Army Reserve. He stated that there were no personal, medical, or legal issues, and that the station will make the monthly mission. I then left the office for the day and scheduled a time to pick the young man up for the physical.

The next day I started to process the young man's paperwork. I faxed the paperwork to all the local law enforcement agencies to check his background, requested birth verification, and left the office to finish his paperwork. While at the young man's house, I briefed his parents on the enlistment process. I asked his parents if the young man had any medical problems, legal problems, or personal problems. Once again, I received a no, and the young man was good. I finished the young man's enlistment packet, get signatures on all the paperwork, and went back the office. I briefed my Station Commander on the young man's status, and confirmed that I would pick him up the next day and escort him to the hotel and process the day after.

On the day that I was to pick the young man up and take to the hotel is were the problems started. I met the young man at his house. I told him that I had to run by the local police department to pick up his background check. I noticed that he got nervous and started to ask many questions. He wanted to know what would happen if the Army found out someone had lied about his or her background. I asked him if he was hiding something and he responded no. When I got to the Police office, his background check was waiting for me. The original sheet was filled out, but the

young man's law violations were on a separate sheet of paper. He had a few traffic tickets, but the killer was a criminal mischief charge. When I got out to the car, I asked him what the charge was. In the civilian world, criminal mischief was not that big of a deal. His charge was for "Mailbox Baseball". The young man and a few of his friends were driving on gravel roads and hitting mailboxes with a baseball bat. This made the offence a Federal offence, and in turn, he would need a felony waiver to enlist into the Army Reserve.

I called my Station Commander and notified him of what had happened. I decided to have the young man take the ASVAB and physical as scheduled, however, he would not be able to enlist as planned. When I got back to the office, my Station Commander brought me in to his office and closed the door. He stressed how important it was that this young man enlists into the Army Reserve and that the station make mission box. He had projected the young man as an enlistment, and the Company Commander was expecting him to join. I told my Station Commander that I could not allow the young man to with hold information about his past law violations, and I would not hide anything. He explained that by the time the young man's security clearance came back, he would be out of basic training, AIT, and well on

his military career. Once again, he stressed how important it was that this young man enlists. I then told my Station Commander that I would send the young man for processing only if the Station Commander places his name and social security number on the young man's packet. This way, if anything happened he would be the one that would have to answer the investigation. At that point, my Station Commander locked me up, calls me every name in the book, and walked out of the office and explained to all the other recruiters how I was not a team player. When the others had found out what had happened, they all knew that the Station Commander had crossed the line. He was looking for the glory of making mission, when he should have been looking out for the career of his Soldiers.

Strong leaders do the right thing. Strong leaders are able to take a negative situation, turn it into a positive situation, and show others how to learn from it. Strong leaders forge the path ahead for their Soldiers, like a raging river. Weak leaders sit back and fold under stressful situations. Weak leaders will point fingers at other Soldiers and blame them for their failures. Weak leaders are like a trickling stream that always picks the less resistant path. There is no place in our Army for weak leaders.