

Running Head: FUND-RAISERS IN A TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

Fund-Raisers in a Training Environment

MSG David Rogers

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class 57

SGM Scott A. Landy

12 January 2007

Abstract

Fund-raisers are common in the US Army. Army Regulation 600-29 defines the acceptable types of fund-raising including the local fund-raising usually sponsored by units to raise MWR funds. In a training environment fund-raising takes on different challenges because of the relationship between the cadre and the trainees. A monetary donation may appear mandatory when it is a Drill Sergeant asking for the money from a trainee. Even though the fund-raiser may adhere to the words written in AR 600-29, the intent of the regulation may be broken.

Fund-Raisers in a Training Environment

From July of 1996 through December of 1998 I was a Drill Sergeant assigned to E Co, 232nd Medical Bn at Fort Sam Houston, TX. E company was a training company in an AIT environment that trained approximately 300 medical specialists, 68Ws, in one 14 week cycle. The training spanned the third, fourth, and fifth phases of the soldierization process. There were six training companies that fell under the 232 Medical Battalion.

Several times over the 14 week cycle we held fund-raisers. They were usually in the form of a hot dog/hamburger sale to the trainees during their lunch break. Drill sergeants and instructors were authorized government funded Sams cards. Members of the cadre would visit Sams prior to the fund-raiser and buy sodas, hot dogs, hamburgers, etc. During the cycle the trainees passed through the 3rd, 4th, and 5th phases of the soldierization process. In phases 3 and 4 the only food that they were allowed was from the dining facility. Except during a fund-raiser. Before the lunch break the cadre would cook the food outside of the classrooms.

Soldiers had two choices for lunch. The first choice was to march a half of a mile to the dining facility (DFAC) under drill sergeant supervision. At the DFAC they waited in line at the position of parade rest until they entered the facility. Trainees had a limited time to eat before marching back to the classrooms. Or, for an unspecified monetary donation, the trainees could eat burgers, hot dogs and chips, drink sodas, listen to music and socialize during the lunch break. They were offered something that they were normally deprived of for a price. The majority of the Soldiers chose the latter choice.

My example took place nearly ten years ago. To verify that this is still a current issue I called several of the training companies in the 232nd Medical Battalion. I talked to several drill sergeants and explained why I was asking about fund-raisers. The third drill sergeant that I spoke

with stated that fund-raisers targeting the trainees still took place. This drill sergeant also asked that his name be excluded from my paper.

Army Regulations Concerning Fund Raising

The Army regulation covering fund raising is AR 600-29. It contains a section that defines the different types of fund-raisers authorized in Army units. The type that my training unit used was the local fund-raiser. The regulation states that “provided no on-the-job fund-raising is involved, the following fund-raising activities may be locally authorized: Fund-raising in support of installation Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) activities as provided in AR 215-1, and conducted per the general provisions of this regulation” (Army, 2001). The regulation also states that specific amounts of money cannot be solicited for these types of fund-raisers. In my example the Soldiers were asked for a monetary donation of their choosing. Concerned that our fund-raising did not meet with the standards specified in the regulation I called the Brigade IG’s office. I was told that the question of the fund raising events conducted in the Battalion had been addressed and was well within the established regulation.

Cadre/Trainee Relationship Affecting Fund Raising

Soldiers in the AIT environment fall under the 3rd, 4th, and 5th phases of the soldierization process. For the first 8 weeks they are under control of the cadre. They are told what to do and when to do it. Throughout BCT and AIT the cadres places great emphasis on both discipline and excellence. Soldiers are taught to obey orders without question and to do the best that they can at everything. They are rewarded for this type of behavior and punished when they deviate from what is the established norm. This mindset does not stop when soliciting a donation from a trainee during a fund-raiser. When it is time for the Soldier to give money for his or her food, a

drill sergeant or cadre is standing there with the donation box. The relationship between the Soldier and NCO does not change. The Cadre asks for money but in the trainee's mind it is not a request. Both intimidated and wanting to excel and please, the Soldier hands over his or her money. For a burger and/or a hot dog, a bag of chips, and a cheap soda, most soldiers gave \$5.00. The cost was closer to \$2.00 to \$3.00. Multiply the profit of \$2.50 by 200 soldiers and the unit has made \$500 in one afternoon. It is not hard to understand why fund-raisers were held.

At a typical bake sale or similar unit fund-raiser, Soldiers not in a training environment give enough money to cover the cost of the purchased item and a contribution to the unit's MWR fund or whatever the cause may be. In the training environment the Soldier is only told that the proceeds go into the MWR fund. Most Soldiers don't not even ask where the money will end up. Most were relieved and elated to be able to skip another march to the dining facility, where they ate all three of their meals while in phases 3 and 4. Sitting around in a relaxed environment was a rarity and the trainees enjoyed it. The only time that they were offered this opportunity was when the unit held a fund-raiser. In other words, the only time that the unit relaxed the standards was when it could make a profit.

If this type of fund-raiser were held in a typical garrison environment the sponsors would receive less participation and smaller donations. The food served was the cheapest that could be bought. The sodas and chips were generic and everything was bought in bulk. If this type of food was used in an environment where patrons more of a choice then the fund-raiser would fail. But given the choice of the dining facility and strict regulations versus sitting around and sipping sodas, the fund-raiser becomes much more appealing. Trainees are in a controlled environment and have few choices. The cadre can manipulate those choices. Even though the fund-raiser

meets the guidelines in AR 600-29, the regulation does not take into consideration the different factors facing trainees.

Disposition of Monies from Fund Raisers

The official reason for the fund-raiser was to support the unit's MWR funds. Technically this was true and some of the money made it back to the students in the form of an end-of cycle party. At the end of each cycle the soldiers had a party with music, food, and drinks and were allowed to wear civilian clothes. The funding for this party came from the unit's fund-raisers. However, the majority of the monies went to other "MWR areas". The battalion required each of the training companies to contribute to a battalion MWR fund. The monies from this fund went to various activities including the gifts for visitors and cadre who were PCSing. There was not a mandate on how the monies were to be raised to contribute to this fund but the battalion CSM put pressure on the 1SGs to contribute monthly. I can't speak for all the training companies but E Company had its own fund that paid for gifts for the NCOs that were PCSing and ETSing. Our 1SG kept the monies and receipts in a locked box in her desk. There was a ledger in the box but it was rarely used.

Conclusion

Fund raising in a training environment is unacceptable. Strictly speaking it may not violate any of the guidelines established in AR 600-29, however it does violate the spirit of the regulation. Trainee Soldiers live under different conditions and have a different mindset while in a training environment. The trainee will jump at the chance to eat hamburgers and hot dogs in a relaxed environment rather than march to the dining facility. And when asked for a donation they

feel an unspoken pressure to do their best and donate a good amount. Most of the soldiers in AIT are Privates and make very little money. Taking money from under the guise of a fund-raiser to support their end-of-cycle party in order to fund gifts for departing cadre comes very close to thievery and is unconscionable.

References

Army Regulation 600-9. (2001). *Fund-Raising Within The Department Of The Army*, 1-2.