

## STANDARDS AND DISCIPLINE

In my most recent travels around the Army as the Sergeant Major of the Army, I've spoken to many leaders at all levels about the importance of standards and the impact enforcing standards has on discipline. Many of you have heard me talk about this in the past and I think it is time to revisit the basics.

I do this first because I was asked by senior leaders to help put some focus on standards and discipline. I am a force provider and I am here to help all of those leaders, their commanders, and their soldiers be a success in any mission they are given.

I also do this because I have some concerns from what I have seen in my travels over the last eight months. When a unit is traveling fast, has many missions to accomplish on the horizon and the pressure to provide results, sometimes they lose sight and don't focus on the fundamentals, the basic foundations that make us the elite Army we have become.

To understand how standards and discipline are related, you have to start with the basic premise of how we grow sergeants in the Army. This is a basic three step process. Step one; establish a standard.

Army Regulation 670-1, Wear of the Uniform, is a standard that tells us how to wear the uniform, items on the uniform, and all the accessories. It guides our uniform in the field. The items we wear on the uniform or carry with us is a standard usually IAW a unit SOP. The PMCS we perform on our HUMMV in the motor pool is done to a standard outlined in the Operator's manual. A patrol of soldiers coming off mission in Baghdad, Iraq clear their weapons upon entering their base camp IAW the standard published in the Weapons Handling Procedures developed by the Safety Center.

Now with an understanding of standards, step two is put someone in charge of enforcing the standards. This is where the Sergeant is now responsible for his or her piece of the Army, those three or four soldiers. It is the

Sergeant who conducts daily inspections of soldier's uniforms. It is the Sergeant who conducts Pre-Conduct Checks (PCC) of his or her soldier's arms and equipment before going out on patrol. It is the Sergeant who supervises the PMCS of the HUMMV during maintenance periods, and it is the Sergeant who over-watches the soldiers coming off patrol to ensure all have cleared their weapons to standard.

Step three in growing our leaders is to hold the Sergeant accountable. This is where the more senior leaders above the Sergeant have their responsibility. To see what is being done to standard, senior leaders have to inspect. A soldier on patrol missing a piece of equipment means it was missed during PCCs by the Sergeant and obviously missed by a more senior leader during the Pre-combat Inspection (PCI). This same analogy extends to every standard we set for our units and our Sergeants to enforce.

So for the more senior leaders above the Sergeant you must always remember your role in growing Sergeants. Lead by example by demonstrating the standard in all that you do. This leading by example empowers the Sergeant to enforce standards on their small piece of the Army. We have always said when a more senior leader demonstrates a lesser standard; this demonstration now becomes the new standard.

The demonstration of a lesser standard goes far deeper than just setting a new standard; it circumvents the authority of the Sergeant. I have learned over the years that the two basic building blocks for a Sergeant to establish his or her authority and establish discipline in the organization begin with basic uniform and saluting standards.

Enforcing basic standards and holding Sergeants accountable for their soldiers is critical to developing these young leaders. In every case where a soldier has died because of an accident and the cause of death was negligence by Sergeants to enforce standards, look to the fundamental standards and how these were enforced and the discipline within the organization.

In every case where the Sergeant stops enforcing fundamental standards and senior leaders do not hold him

accountable, the enforcement of standards in other areas begins to slip. Short cuts in performing PMCS begin to become routine, soldiers stop wearing seatbelts, PCCs are not performed in detail, complacency begins to set in and Sergeants stop making on the spot corrections.

The importance of the Squad and Platoon leadership in establishing standards and holding Sergeants accountable is critical to the performance of the organization. When you walk into an organization as an outsider and you see everyone in the same uniform, vehicle load plans are organized, basic fundamental drills are performed as routine, you learn a lot about the unit's discipline. You know as an outsider that standards are established, everyone knows the standard, and there is a leader in charge.

The bottom line, be the standard, know the standard, and enforce the standard.