

## LESSON NUMBER 16

**TASK:** “THEY WOULD HAVE ISSUED YOU ONE”

**CONDITION:** In a small group discussion environment.

**STANDARD:** All participants will explain the relationship between family concerns and duty performance in the context of a military unit.

The number of married personnel in the Army continues to increase. Army family members are an overwhelmingly positive contribution to the Army. At times, however, conflicts arise between family and duty. A recent Army study indicated that military spouses remain very concerned about unplanned time away from home in garrison environments.

*Discussion questions:* How many of you are married? How many have kids? What positive effects has the Army had on your family? Have there also been stresses? What are they?

We are now going to review the following situation, about an extremely good NCO, SFC Washington. SFC Washington is NCOIC of his section, jumped into Panama with the 82<sup>nd</sup>, went to Desert Storm, Somalia, and Haiti; and has just returned from a six-month deployment to the Sinai. He is married, and this situation takes place on his daughter's seventh birthday.

As SFC Washington prepares to leave for the day, 1LT Blumquist walks in. He is SFC Washington's OIC. He informs SFC Washington that another NCO has come down sick, and that SFC Washington will need to stay tonight and pull sergeant of the guard. (SFC Washington knew that he was up for that duty the next day, in this unit it comes around about every five weeks.)

SFC Washington explained to his OIC that his daughter was having a birthday party, which he promised that he would attend. The OIC, who was single, was less than impressed; and explained to SFC Washington that duty was duty, he was next on the list, and that his daughter would have many more birthdays. SFC Washington replied, rather heatedly, that he had missed three of his daughter's birthdays in a row because of deployments, and that a last minute change in a routine duty roster was not a good enough reason to miss another birthday, especially as he had looked his daughter in the eye that morning and promised he would be there.

The OIC told SFC Washington that he understood that SFC Washington had personal problem, but that battalion policy was that when an NCO could not report for duty, that it moved to the next name on the list, and that if he didn't pull duty that night someone else would have to. The OIC then reminded SFC Washington that soldiers work for the Army

24 hours a day, that there was not a lot of time to discuss this matter further, and that he needed to call his wife and report for duty in 45 minutes.

Two months later, the Company Commander asked the company 1SG why SFC Washington, a fine soldier with an absolutely outstanding record, who would certainly reach the rank of SGM if he stayed in the Army, was not reenlisting.

*Discussion Questions:*

How could this situation have been handled better?

Should SFC Washington have made that promise to his daughter?

Should the OIC have taken a different approach? If so, what?

Assuming that (a) the NCO who went off the roster was really sick, (b) someone really did have to pull duty that night, and (c) that the OIC correctly understood battalion policy, what are the rights and wrongs of this situation?

If you were the OIC what would you do?

If you were SFC Washington, what would you do?

What do you think is the correct balance between duty and family concerns?

Are there situations like this in your unit? How are they handled?



