Combating Domestic Violence

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Abstract

The following is an ethical dilemma paper cover domestic violence in the ranks of the United States Army. As Senior Non-Commissioned Officers in the Army, it is important that we understand and that we doing everything possible to prevent domestic violence from occurring within our units. Family violence committed by soldiers does not only destroy the homes of soldiers, but it eats away at the soldier readiness and unit readiness. With today’s soldiers facing multiple deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraq Freedom, the likelihood of violence being present in the Army’s families is increasing. This paper will take a look at the occurrence of family violence within the Army as well as taking a look of statistic from the civilian sector. The information could help soldiers in combating domestic violence.
Combating Domestic Violence

As the Army moved into the 21st century, it found itself being sucked into combat to fight the evils of terrorism. The possibility of being deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom added stress to many soldiers and their families. Sadly, this stress sometimes turns to violence within the soldier’s own home. Aside from breaking all of the Army’s Core Values, which creates an ethical dilemma, committing family violence is against the law. It is important for us as Senior Non-Commissioned officers to understand and make efforts to prevent domestic violence by educating our soldiers of its harmful effects. Likewise, it is as important for us to remember that we will be the role models for future generations of soldiers. Our ethics and moral values most likely become that of future generations, so we can not afford to commit these unethical acts ourselves. Through the course of this paper, we will take a look at family violence within the ranks of the Army and compare the findings to that of the civilian sector.

Spouse abuse is an important, preventable health and social problem encountered among both military and civilian couples. Family violence committed by soldiers does not
only destroy the homes of soldiers, but it eats away at the soldier readiness and unit readiness. According to a news article, studies have shown that spousal abuse in the Army ranks occur most frequently among young couples who have not developed their joint coping and communication skills. In 2001 there was a total 14,272 allegations of family violence across the Army. However only 6,404 of the cases was substantiated, which accounted for 44.9% of the total alleged. Women and children were the victims in the majority of the cases.

Domestic violence is unique from any other form of violence, because the parties involved share a personal, emotional, and sexual relationship. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey for 1999, there were 791,210 victims of domestic violence in the United States and over 85% of the victims were female. However, the overall rate of domestic violence from 1993 through 1999 decreased by 41%. This can explain why BG Robert Decker, commander of the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center reported that domestic violence among Army families is not only lower than the national average, but are steadily decreasing.

Twenty years ago, it was considered to be a radical notion if advocates of domestic violence suggested that
women should call the police when being assaulted by their intimate partner. This mere suggestion challenged the man's authority to rule and dominate within their homes. Domestic violence is not only physical abuse it is a pattern of coercive behaviors used to intimidate and manipulate the victim in an effort to gain and maintain control of them.

As recent as 1999, 5.8 intimate partners out of every 1,000 here in the United States reported themselves as being a victim of domestic violence. Although, domestic violence does not only occur against women, violent crimes against women made up 20% of nonfatal intimate partner violence in 2001. This violence toward women is not limited to heterosexual relationships. A Research Report from the National Violence Against Women stated that women with a history of same-sex cohabitation are more likely to be victimized through intimate partner violence than those with a history of opposite-sex cohabitation.

In the year of 2001, there were a total of 691,710 victims of intimate partner violence, establishing a ratio of 3 per 1,000 persons in the United States. Simple assaults represented just over 68% of all intimate partner violence in 2001 and 89% of those assaults occurred against women.
The average medical expense per victim is $1,075 and 48.6% of the injuries treated are bruises followed by cuts, stab wounds, or internal injuries. Victimization surveys show that 51.1% of the injuries occur to the head or face of the victim and 18.1% occur on the hands or arms.

Another study showed that 69.1% of rape victims and 77.6% of physical assault victims reported that the violence started in their relationship before the relationship ended. The article “Violence Between Intimates” by the U.S. Department of Justice, states that violence between intimates include murders, rapes, robberies and assaults that are committed by spouses, ex-spouses, boyfriends or girlfriend.

In 1993, there was a rate of 9.8 per 1,000 women in the United States were victims of intimate violence and a rate of 1.6 per 1,000 for men. By 2001, that rate had dropped to 5 per 1,000 for women and 0.9 per 1,000 for men. This reduction collaborates that from 1993 to 2001, there was a significant decline of 49% in intimate partner violence against women and a 42% decline against men.

It is unclear what has sparked the decrease in domestic violence acts been committed in the Army and the civilian sector of the United States. Over the last several years, most states in the U.S. have established legislation.
requiring police action in cases where suspected family violence has occurred. Also with establishment of the Lautenburg Amendment, which prohibits convicted offenders of domestic violence from owning or possessing a firearm may have deterred some family violence circumstance within the Army. Likewise, education efforts in the Army have increased dramatically and soldier down to the lowest level seem to understand the repercussions to committing the act of family violence. Because violence between intimates often occur in private and the victims are reluctant to report the incidents due to shame or fear reprisal, this type of violence is becoming more difficult to measure. The hope is that the decrease is not the result of the victim not contacting law enforcement from the fear of their soldier loosing his/her job in the Army.

As the Senior Non-Commissioned Officers within Army units, we must manage and defuse family violence situations. We can not stand to be only reactive, be we must also proactive to help our soldiers understand and recognize the effects of family violence on their family, themselves, their unit and their combat readiness. Your failure to mentor and educate soldiers on this subject would be an unethical dilemma of an unethical situation.