

Sexual harrassment in the workplace

by ISG Lawrence Gillette

As an infantryman, I rarely had any interaction with female soldiers unless there was a real-world injury, a pay issue or an administrative action that needed addressing. With my selection to lead the headquarters company for the 41st Separate Infantry Brigade, I fell into a new sort of world that the infantry does not comprehend: female soldiers and how to interact with them.

Is this a new idea? No. Quite the contrary. Women have been serving with our military as civilians, enlisted soldiers and officers for a great many years now. This new job entailed interaction with more female soldiers than my former unit had. Was this a problem? No. As a member of the Army National Guard I also have a civilian job. My civilian job has the same set of protocols that the Army enforces. The difference is that within the military ranks a soldier can be prosecuted for criminal intent, whereas in the civilian world there can be both criminal and civil penalties.

Is sexual harassment a one-way street? No. It can be male to female, female to male or even same-gender harassment. As we all should know, harassment in any form will not be tolerated. The work environment that we currently perform in can be stressful to the point of breakdown. The possibility of situations that compromise a soldier must be eliminated as soon as they occur and reported through the proper chain for review of the situation.

Most of us think of this issue as a misunderstanding of what someone had said at some time or a misinterpre-

tation of a situation or even an act that one person performed. The guarded issue here is when do we actually investigate an allegation of sexual harassment?

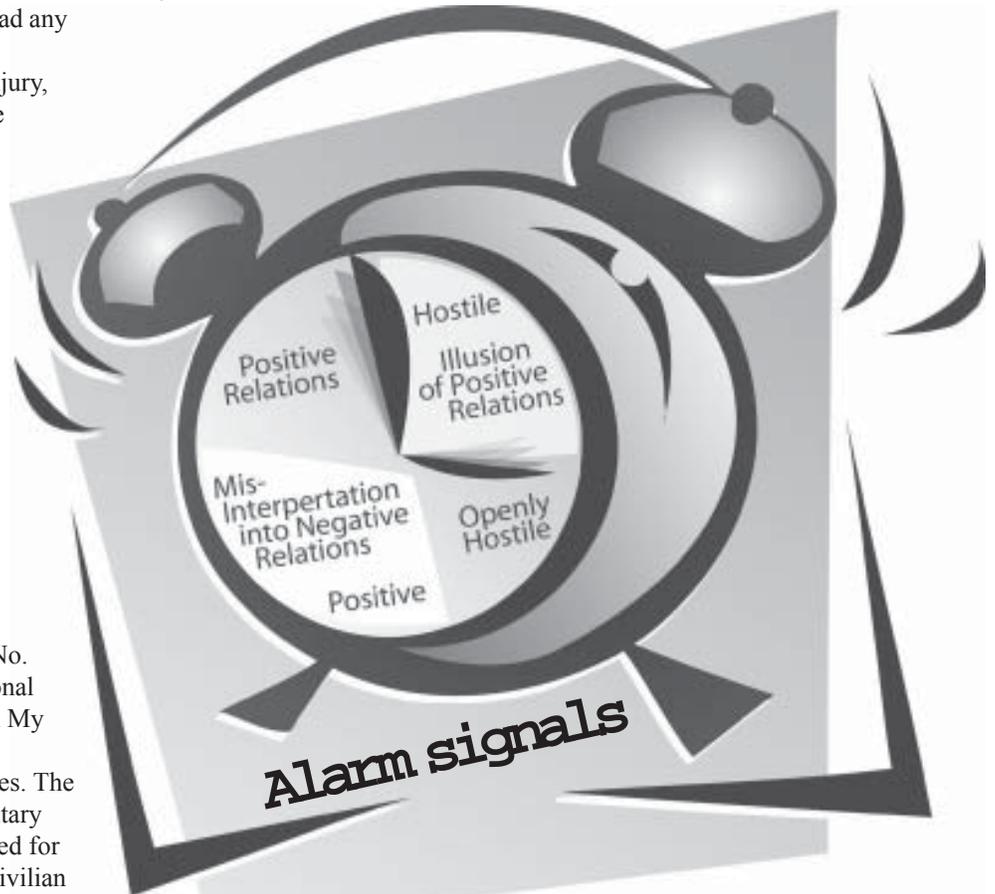
That's a tough call. Do the actions of a soldier warrant filing allegations? Do a soldier's actions as a youth provide basis for acceptance or dismissal? You are the judge. You as an NCO must make the call. You will need to weigh both sides, and there are certain protocols that must be adhered to before any decision can be reached.

Any and all allegations should be investigated, no matter the situation, rank or severity. Sexual harassment in the workplace is intolerable. We, as

the up and coming group of leaders, must stop the illusion that this is acceptable behavior. In neither the Army workplace nor in our civilian jobs will this be an acceptable behavior.

As NCOs in this new fight against the oppressors of the world, we must rise above the acceptance of rude and negative sexual situations that put our soldiers in a hostile workplace. All soldiers, active, Reserve, or guard, deserve a place in which to fulfill our destiny as soldiers.

ISG Gillette is first sergeant for HHC, 41st Separate Infantry Brigade (E), Oregon Army National Guard.



Old school or new, NCOs take care of soldiers

By SFC (Ret.) Phil Tegtmeier

Noncommissioned officers face ethical decisions daily, and the intensity of living in a war zone makes those decisions more critical than ever. Yet, the NCOs of the U.S. Third Army and the Combined Forces Land Component Command deployed on Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan are getting the job done despite the ethical debate of old school versus democratic leadership.

“I’m sorry, but I was brought up in the *old Army* way,” said MSG Andrew Walsh, a man who has made Special Forces his home for the past nine years. “When I was a sergeant in a Ranger battalion, I had a platoon sergeant who was, can I say, tough on us. He held us to standards, and they were tough standards, too. Needless to say, he didn’t have a lot of friends with us junior guys.

“Years later, I saw him in an airport, and I went over to where he was sitting,” Walsh continued. “I told him who I was, and I told him that for all the stuff he’d put me through, I’d come out a much better sergeant for it. You talk about men crying. He told me through his tears that he’d waited for years for someone to tell him that. He knew what he was doing all along. He wasn’t there to be our friend; he was there to make us better soldiers. And I like to think he was successful.”

Walsh said that the way to success in the NCO Corps, whether you’re a sergeant in a Special Forces team or serving in a supply company, is to take responsibility for being a leader. People speak of a “New Army,” he said. But, he added, you don’t raise good soldiers by lowering standards so they can meet them. You do it by holding soldiers not only to the standards the Army and the mission set, but also by expecting them to exceed those standards.

“On the teams, we’re all NCOs. We do a mind meld whenever we put a mission together. Each of us has a specialty, and each of us brings something to the plan,” he said. “Then, as a team sergeant, I have to present it to the team leader. A good officer gives you that leeway to take your self-motivation and come up with a good, solid plan for an operation.”

But, Walsh said, gaining an officer’s respect isn’t automatic.

“We, as NCOs, have to show our officers we can do the job,” Walsh said. “We have to demonstrate that we’re physically fit. We have to build that officer’s confidence in us. We have to stand up to that officer if he starts getting

into NCO business and take him aside and convince him he has to let us do our jobs.”

Walsh knows how critical the NCO Corps is to the U.S. Army. He sees it in the training missions they have with soldiers from other countries.

“One of the things we do when training a unit is we ‘kill’ the officer,” Walsh explained. “We tell him to sit down, and then we tell the unit to get on with its mission. Nothing happens. Nothing. In most armies in the world, there’s no NCO Corps to keep the mission going. When you show an officer that, you teach them a lesson in why our Army is the best in the world. We have to realize that and take responsibility for our role and hold ourselves to the highest standards.”

One day not too long ago, a company commander at Fort Campbell, Ky. called in one of his platoon sergeants. “I’ve got some news for you,” the captain said, “and you’re probably not going to like it.”

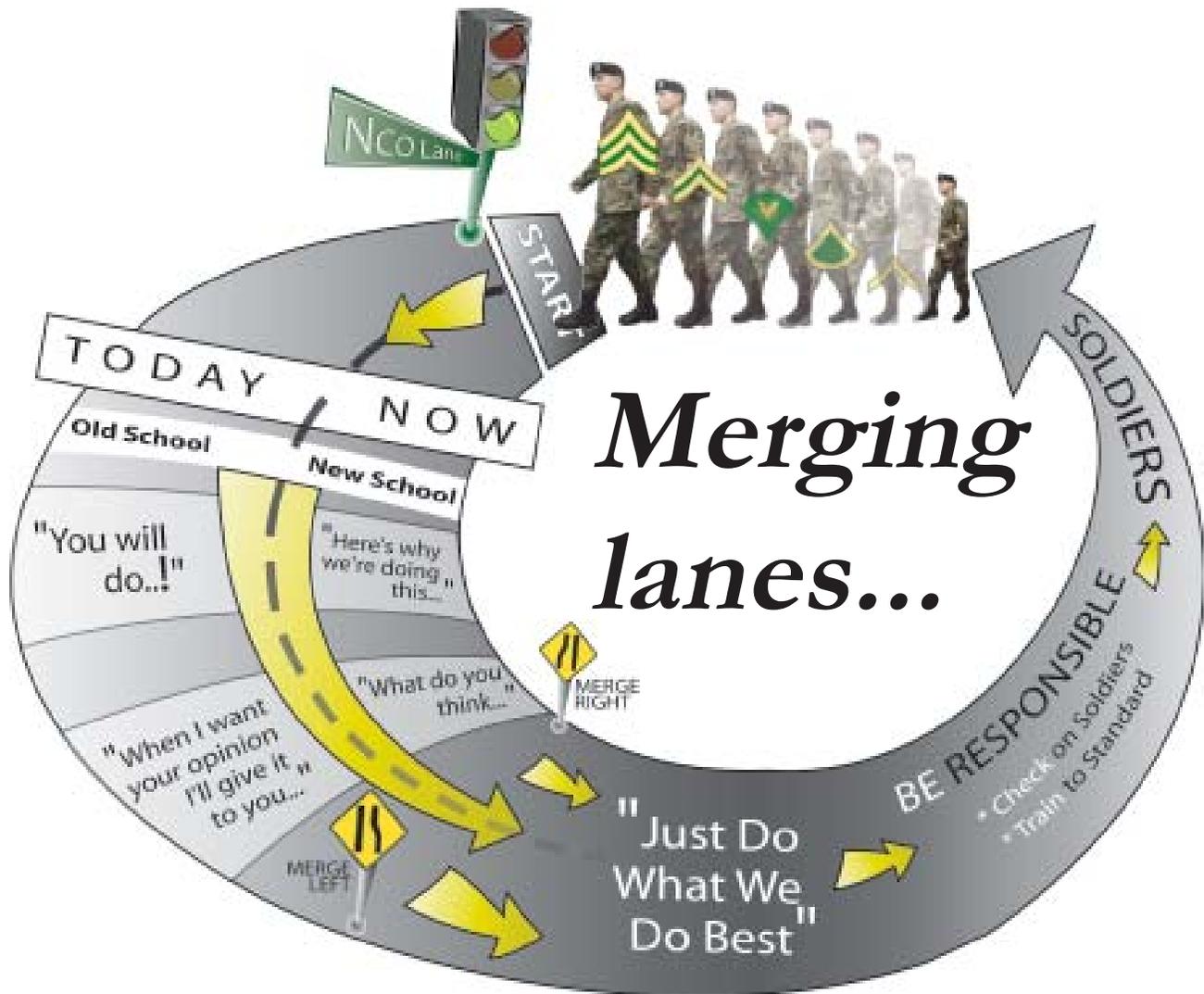
A week before deploying to Operation Enduring Freedom, SFC Kellyjack Luman learned that he’d be going into combat not as a platoon sergeant, but as a platoon leader. He was pulled out of his platoon and assigned to another one in the company as its platoon leader, taking the place of a lieutenant who wouldn’t be deploying with the unit.

“I’ve been a platoon sergeant for a while,” Luman said. “I’ve been a coach and a mentor to many lieutenants in the past, so I knew a lot about what the job entails. I came from the old school where my leaders had a confidence that you could see in their eyes. If your leader has confidence in you, you can have confidence in him. As a platoon sergeant, I would sit down with my platoon leader and we would make a sort of contract. Each of us would set goals and standards we expected of ourselves and the men, and each of us would enforce them. We’re all one team where one guy can make a difference, so it was our job to make sure everyone was ready.”

Luman said that as a platoon leader, he has to make sure he stays in his role and let his platoon sergeant take care of the sergeant’s business, but he has to balance that with ensuring that he still mentors his sergeants to pass on his NCO experience.

“Raising soldiers is like being a parent,” Luman said.

“People talk about old school/new school, but the bottom line is that you get what you pay for. You don’t know ahead of time when the call’s going to come down, so you have to



raise your soldiers to be adults, just like you try to raise your kids. My focus is on conducting combat-oriented training. We cross train our soldiers. We focused on the fundamentals of war during the 11-week training cycle we had before coming here. Now, instead of training, we're maintaining. We still do battle drills. We still do PT. And, because we did our training to standard, my guys are ready.

"Anyone can be a leader," Luman continued. "It's your choice to stand up and be one. We play a little game at night here, telling each other what our feelings are about 9-11. When the guys stop and think about what other people went through that day, it keeps them from feeling sorry for themselves. And when a leader lets his soldiers know why they're doing a thing, morale gets higher, and people step up and do what they have to do."

What CFLCC is doing in the desert represents its country's response to terrorism. Generals and colonels move the pieces on the big chessboard. Statesmen coordinate the coalition effort. And soldiers do it in the dirt.

"That guy on the line doesn't think about strategy when the bullets start flying," said CFLCC's CSM Vince Myers. "He's thinking about the guy on his left and the guy on his right. That's who he's fighting for. That's *esprit de corps*, and that's what holds us together."

Myers weighed in on the old school/new school debate, settling the discussion with one simple thought.

"There's no old Army. There's no new Army. There's just one Army," he said. "NCOs do now what they've always done, and that's take care of soldiers. We don't need to create some new way of doing things; we need to sit down and do what we do best. We need to check on soldiers, we need to train our soldiers, and we need to be responsible for our soldiers. They will take care of the buddy on their right and the buddy on their left, and the mission will get done."

SFC (Ret.) Tegtmeier is the NCO Journal Managing Editor.