



# IG Newsletter

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July 1999

## PREGNANT SOLDIERS - PROCEDURES FOR SEPARATION

By SFC Ward A. Miller

Army Regulation 635-200, Enlisted Personnel, establishes the policy and procedures for separating enlisted women because of pregnancy. This is a voluntary chapter and must be requested by the pregnant soldier.

When a unit commander believes that a soldier is pregnant, the commander will direct the soldier to report for diagnosis by a physician at the servicing Armed Forces Medical Treatment Facility. If the soldier is determined to be pregnant, the commander will counsel the soldier in writing, using the pregnancy-counseling checklist.

The soldier is required to sign the counseling. The regulation does not give a set date as to when the commander must counsel the soldier, however, it should be done as soon as the commander receives a copy of the profile. This will allow the soldier and the commander adequate time to prepare and process the chapter action.

The commander will grant the soldier at least 7 days to consider her options. She must indicate her choice by completing part two of the statement of counseling. A soldier who elects to remain on active duty when counseled may request separation prior to childbirth. **The separation**

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## DITY MOVE YOU WEIGH THE BENEFITS

By SFC Matt W. Weegens

The "Do-It-Yourself" (DITY) move is a unique option for relocating soldiers. The ability to move your own personal property is an opportunity that is rare, if not non-existent, in the civilian community. Our soldiers can benefit in many ways by doing a DITY move. A military family can move their household goods door-to-door and profit from the experience, if they do their homework. The government also saves money when soldiers move their own property.

There are drawbacks associated with a DITY move. You cannot file a claim against the government for damages incurred during the move. Check your own insurance first. If you don't have any insurance that covers personal property, you might consider buying some temporary coverage. Second, the cost of doing a DITY move can skyrocket when you start buying packing material, renting trucks, and dragging extra automobiles with towing dollies. There are lots of ways to skin the cat, but your best bet is to seek advice from the installation Transportation Office. They can tell you some of the best ways to save money. Last, moving your personal property is no easy task. If your wife has health problems and/or your kids are very young, a DITY move might overwhelm you. There are boxes to pack and unpack, trucks and trailers to be loaded and unloaded, and driving to be done.

The regulation that governs the DITY move is the Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JFTR). Before you do a DITY move, you need to determine if you qualify. Any move that requires a transatlantic move cannot be done by a DITY move. You must make an appointment with the Transportation Office in order to do a DITY move. The Transportation Office cannot pay for DITY moves that were not scheduled through their office and authorized in advance. You will receive a briefing on what is allowed and what is not allowed to be done during a DITY move. During the briefing, you may find out that a government move or a partial DITY move is the best way for you to go.

By now you are saying to yourself "**SHOW ME THE MONEY**". The JFTR only allows finance to pay you 60% of the estimated amount up front. This amount will be deducted from the total 95% that the government pays on a DITY move for what it would cost them to hire a commercial mover to move your household goods. Out of this 60%, the soldier must pay

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## QUICK LOOK INSPECTIONS SUMMARY OF THE PAST SIX MONTHS

By SFC Robert A. Williams

During the past 6 months, the IG Office has conducted several Quick Look Inspections (QLI) throughout the installation. The QLI were: Smoking in the Workplace, GSA Vehicles, Family Care Plans, Training Meetings, NCOER Counseling, Soldiers Leaving the Army, and Consideration of Others (CO2) Training.

In December 98, we looked at Smoking in the Workplace. Most units and individuals were aware of a smoking policy, but were unclear as to the specifics of the regulation or directives. The DOD policy designates outdoor smoking areas that are reasonably accessible to employees, when possible, and provide a measure of protection from the elements. Smoke-break areas will only be outdoors and away from common points of ingress and/or egress into the workplace. We found that very few workplaces were in compliance with the 50-foot rule. Designated smoking areas indoors (e.g., hallways, stairways, restrooms, telephone booths, and private offices) are prohibited.

Army Regulation 600-63, Army Health Promotion, states that smoking of tobacco products is prohibited in all DA-occupied workplaces. The workplace includes any area inside a building or facility over which DA has custody and control, where soldiers, civilians, or persons under contract perform work for the Army. Exceptions to this smoking policy can only be granted by the installation commander in recreational areas (bowling areas, clubs, etc.). Hotel facilities operated or owned by the Army may also receive an exemption to the policy. Commanders and directors must reinforce the smoking cessation programs available on Fort Polk. These programs place emphasis on primary prevention practices, as well as motivate users to quit smoking.

In January 99, we inspected the General Services Administration (GSA) Fleet Management Service Center, and the three primary customers who used the GSA motor vehicles that were paid for with Fort Polk funds. The GSA Fleet Management Service Center serviced many other customers, such as the Louisiana Army National Guard, Army and Air Force ROTC, military recruiters, Army Corps of Engineers, and various other federal governmental agencies.

The methods of gathering information for this inspection were the conduct of interviews, review of fleet inventory, and review of applicable rules and regulations.

In Fiscal Year 98, Fort Polk spent about \$3.4 million funding 746 GSA motor vehicles for 3 primary customers. Those figures include the monthly costs per vehicle, the mileage costs per vehicle, and any bill-backs to the customer. Bill-backs are charges that GSA bills back to the customer for any damage to the vehicle that does not meet the normal fair-wear-tear criteria (e.g., motor vehicle accidents, drive train or suspension damage due to over-loading, etc.). The CG directed a 20% reduction in the GSA fleet in FY 98. Following the GSA vehicle reduction effort, only 11% of the fleet was eliminated, 9% shy of the CG's target of a 20% reduction. We determined that there were cost savings to be had. Commanders and directors can expect a GSA vehicle Process Action Team (PAT), chaired by COL Pickens, to meet in FY 99 to consider ways to reduce the fleet.

Our third QLI, February 99, involved Family Care Plans (FCP). The majority of the leaders and dual-service/single parents do not feel the FCP program presents a readiness problem. Family Care Plans are complicated, time consuming, and require an intensive administrative effort by leaders and soldiers at the company level. The majority of the commanders are not knowledgeable of the regulation and requirements for counseling soldiers.

We looked at company level training meetings in March 99. Our inspection looked at 17 separate troop/company/battery level units. We found that most training meetings were properly scheduled and conducted. NCOs were involved in the evaluation and assessment step of planning. Many commanders did not understand the "repetitive" training guidance issued by the CG. Last minute taskings continue to be the largest training distracter for commanders. Most unit commanders covered all three phases of company training meetings, which include: completed training, near-term training, and short-range training. FM 25-101, states that training meetings are non-negotiable at battalion and company level. Commanders will conduct training meetings. Training meetings provide guidance for forming training schedules. Training meetings will be held each week in AC companies. Commanders must be prepared prior to the meeting. A good agenda, read ahead packets, or pre-prepared packets are all tools used to minimize wasted time. The payoff for a well-structured, well-organized, and recurring training meeting is training that is exciting, demanding, and directly related to the unit's mission.

The 8-step training model is not codified in FMs, ARs, or Fort Polk regulations. However, it is clearly outlined in the CG's FY 99 training guidance. Most of the steps are common sense and are referred to in different portions of FM 25-100 and 25-101. The formalized 8-step model consists of:

1. Plan the training
2. Train and certify leaders
3. Reconnoiter the site
4. Issue the plan

*continued on page 3*

### (QUICK LOOK INSPECTIONS - Con't)

5. Rehearse
6. Execute
7. Conduct an AAR
8. Retrain

There are two good rules of thumb when composing training schedules. First, do not put anything on the training schedule that you do not intend to execute. Second, commanders do not need to "fill up" every minute of the training schedule. Overall, we found company level training meetings in good shape.

Our fifth QLI in April 99 was about NCOER counseling. Initial consultations with NCOs visiting the Fort Polk IG office indicated a systemic problem with counseling conducted by their raters. Counseling appeared to be sporadic and relatively meaningless, intended more to "check the block" than to be used as a tool for performance improvement. We found most NCOs were receiving counseling, but often it was untimely and poor quality.

There was minimal mentorship and little standardization of counseling programs within battalion or company size units. Leaders were not using the DA 2166-7, NCOER, as a tool during counseling. AR 623-205, Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reporting System, states that within the first 30 days of the rating period or effective date of lateral appointment to corporal or promotion to sergeant, the rater will conduct the first counseling session with the rated NCO.

There are two forms used in the evaluation process, which are DA Form 2166-7, the NCOER, and DA Form 2166-7-1, the NCO Counseling Checklist/Record. Counseling can be conducted under field environments, in motor pools, or under a tree. Pre-typed forms usually indicate "check-the-block" counseling that is rarely meaningful to the soldier. AR 623-205 states that the rater will conduct later counseling sessions during the rating period. Counseling sessions are required at least quarterly for active Army NCOs.

Oftentimes, rating schemes were posted that were not current. AR 623-205 states that rating schemes must correspond as nearly as practical to the chain of command and supervision within an organization. For all except the ARNG, official rating schemes are published by name, and are posted in the unit so that all NCOs know their rater, senior rater, and reviewer. The schemes will include the effective dates of each rating official.

Last, we looked at Soldiers leaving the Army, by special request from the CG, and Considerations of Others (CO2) training. We surveyed soldiers who were processing out of the military before their 20-year retirement date. We concentrated on the 1st and 2d term enlisted personnel and junior officers who had completed their contractual

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### (DITY MOVE - Con't)

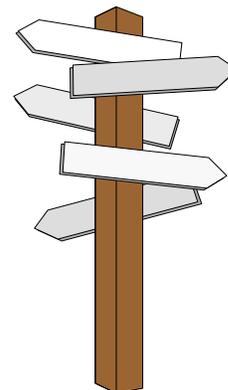
for the vehicle whether renting or using a POV. You must also consider the costs of additional insurance, gas, and other moving expenses such as boxes, packing paper, etc. And don't forget, the government does not pay for damaged goods from a DITY move.

Some other financial things you need to know about a DITY move is that the government will tax you a rate of 28% in federal taxes. You may be subject to state tax depending on which state you claim. At tax time you may be able to get some of this back depending upon your tax bracket and how you file your taxes. You may want to seek some professional advice here unless you are a pretty good tax guru. You can also deduct the cost of a DITY move on your taxes but, again, consult a tax specialist when weighing your decision to do a DITY move.

Now, for you that have been adding these percentages up, you have figured out that there is a 7% difference considering you do not have to pay state taxes. What about this 7%? If after your move you determine that you met or exceeded your estimated weight, you could be getting another check. However, the reverse is true if you overestimated your weight. You may owe Uncle Sam some money back. If in doubt, underestimate, because proof positive will show up at the weight scales.

By now I bet you probably think that the paperwork for this thing is a logistical nightmare. Well, it really is not if you follow all the instructions from the transportation experts. The first necessary form is the Travel Form, DD Form 1351-2. Next, you have the DD Form 2278, Application for Do It Yourself Move and Counseling Form. This form has your advance allowed pay amount and estimated weight amount. Third, you will need a copy of your travel orders. Last but not least, you must have weight tickets - both empty and full weights. Fort Polk has an excellent set of weight scales. You can weigh your vehicle both empty and full prior to departing the installation.

The DITY move... **"You Weigh the Benefits"!**



## **(QUICK LOOK INSPECTIONS - Con't)**

obligation or submitted their unqualified resignation. We did not include personnel who were separating under unfavorable conditions. Thirty percent of 1st term and 47% of 2d term soldiers who were departing the Army felt there were better job opportunities outside the military. Five percent of 1st term and 6% of 2d term soldiers felt that pay was a significant impact on their decision. Forty-four percent of 1st term and 43% of 2d term soldiers stated that education benefits were a significant impact on their decision. Six percent of 2d term soldiers stated that personal and/or family health care had a significant impact on their decision. Eleven percent of 1st term and 6% of 2d term soldiers stated the level of concern shown by the command had a significant impact on their decision.

From 1 Mar 99 through 31 May 99, 26 junior officers departed the Army from Fort Polk. Sixty-two percent of officers who were departing the Army felt they had better job opportunities outside the military. Twenty-three percent felt that pay had a significant impact on their decision and 46% stated that health care had a significant impact on their decision.

The primary purpose of CO2 training is to identify and resolve friction points that keep units from operating at their maximum potential. This inspection was designed to confirm compliance with the guidelines for CO2 implementation and to gauge the effectiveness of training on Fort Polk. The most interesting finding was that there is no single regulation or written guidance from a higher headquarters that specifically governs the CO2 program.

We found a great deal of disparity in the regularity of the training. Command Policy Memorandum #68 states that units will conduct CO2 training a minimum of 8 hours per year. Although the intent is to conduct the training once per quarter, respondents had a wide range of answers, with only 22% stating their unit conducts training quarterly.

Almost 27% surveyed said their unit does not conduct CO2 training at all. Suggestions for improving the program were submitted to the CG and he revised the policy letter based on our findings. Our suggestions were to enforce the program and require the chain of command to attend the CO2 sessions. Commanders and senior NCOs should attend as many different small groups as possible. Facilitators should be hand picked based on their ability to communicate. Use facilitators from outside units to alleviate perceptions or reality of bias. Facilitators must ensure the sessions do not evolve into finger pointing or people bashing sessions, but rather used as a vehicle to develop team building and mutual respect of soldiers.

And that, folks, was the last six months.

## **THE NCOER COUNSELING PROGRAM**

**By SFC Tommy R. Edwards**

Developing future NCOs is a task that leaders at every level must be involved in to maintain an effective program. The Inspector General Office recently conducted an inspection of NCOER Counseling packets from randomly selected units assigned to the installation. The inspection results indicated that most NCOs are being counseled, but not always within the time requirements of AR 623-205, Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reporting System.

AR 623-205 requires that all NCOs receive an initial counseling within 30 days of the current reporting period. It also requires that the rated soldiers be counseled every 90 days thereafter. The NCOER counseling program is like any other good tool, only effective when utilized properly.

Raters are required to identify in the counseling sessions what the soldier must do not only to succeed, but also the requirements for excellence. The rater must prepare a fair and correct evaluation of the rated NCO's duty performance, professionalism, and potential in the military. By conducting the counseling session required by AR 623-205, the rater will have the knowledge and material to rate the soldier properly.

A physical example by leadership coupled with proper training will create an environment in which our NCOs can grow professionally and develop. By setting the example, we instill the characteristics needed in soldiers of tomorrow's Army. The rater must be capable of assessing the rated soldier's potential for career progression and future assignments. The rater should never limit the soldier, but mentor and groom the rated NCO when possible. This provides the Army with a larger pool of ready warriors prepared to lead and develop the leaders of tomorrow.

Senior raters must make themselves available to both the rated NCO as well as the rater. The senior rater should become familiar with the rated NCO's performance through the rating period. One easy way to accomplish this is by conducting periodical reviews of the counseling that has been conducted within the rating period. In addition, the senior rater should observe the rated soldier in the performance of his/her duties.

Every leader in the organization has to take an active role in the NCO counseling program. This will reinforce to the rated soldiers that there is command emphasis in the program. This will also improve the quality of the rated soldier's evaluation reports and impress upon the future raters the overall importance of counseling soldiers.

AR 623-205 and FM 22-101 provide additional requirements and other references that the rater can employ to better counsel the rated soldier. Just as history reminds us of our past, it also provides us with a list of do's and don'ts for the future. Each counseling session should serve the same purpose to the rated soldier providing him with a road map to excellence.

## ARE YOU CONTAGIOUS? ANTI-VIRUS PROTECTION FOR YOUR OFFICE OR HOME COMPUTER

By SFC Gloria F. Krauklis

In today's Army, most of us could not survive without the aid of our desktop or laptop computer to accomplish the everyday tasks we are required to accomplish. Because of this reason, each and every individual should take precautionary steps to ensure that their computer is protected against viruses.

Computer viruses are programs designed to replicate and spread, sometimes without indicating that they even exist within your system. They can produce a variety of symptoms on a computer. Some viruses multiply without causing obvious changes. More malicious strains can issue random sounds or greet you with unexpected screen messages. In extreme cases, viruses can damage files and hard disks. Anti-virus programs protect your computer from viruses by scanning your computer's memory and disk drives.

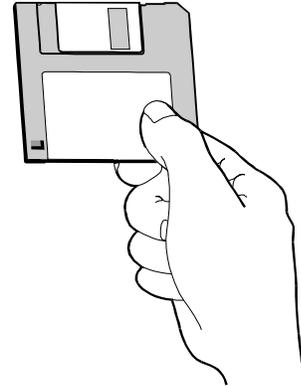
The McAfee and Symantec Norton computer anti-virus software have been site licensed for use by Department of Defense (DOD) and are available for use by the DOD anti-virus support community. This site license allows DOD employees free usage of anti-virus software and the ability to retrieve software updates throughout the period of the contract. The DOD license for use of anti-virus software was procured by the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) from Norton and McAfee with a renewal date as of 4 September 1998 with a current validity through 20 September 1999.

All DOD employees should obtain, install and begin using the DOD site licensed McAfee or Norton Anti-Virus tool as soon as possible. Ensure the AV tool is kept up to date by obtaining and installing the most current version of the software as soon as it is available from the DOD distribution center.

For the purpose of these licenses, DOD refers to "all employees of" and "personal computers (PCs) owned by" the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard (in time of war only), defense agencies and military

### DISCLAIMER:

The Secretary of the Army has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business as required by law of the Department. The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or of the command, but wherever possible, are supported by referenced Army regulations, policies or procedures.



academies (on-site/campus only). DOD contractors may use anti-virus software while working on DOD owned PCs. However, DOD contractors may not use site-licensed anti-virus software while working on their company owned PCs at their workplace. **DOD employees may also use the anti-virus product on their own personal computers at their home.** This is designed to reduce incidents of virus infiltration from home computers owned by DOD employees where a significant virus point-of-entry exists. However, DOD contractors may not use the site-licensed AV software on their personal PCs at home.

Software updates covered by this license can be either automatically or manually downloaded from the Local Area Network (LAN) or the Internet directly to your computer or can be loaded onto disk and transferred to your computer if you do not have access to the LAN or the Internet.

There are trained representatives within each unit who can assist you in insuring your computer is safe from viruses. For guidance on how to download software from the LAN or the Internet, users should contact their:

1. Unit System Administrator if their computer is linked to the Fort Polk LAN.
2. Assistant Information System Security Officer at the company level.
3. Information System Security Officer at the battalion or brigade level.

The following is a list of several recommended Internet sites that provide information pertaining to anti-virus protection and usage.

Army Computer Emergency Response Team

<http://www.acert.belvoir.army.mil>

Automated Systems Security Incident Support Team

<http://www.assist.mil>

Army Network and Systems Operation Center

<http://www.ansoc.army.mil>

These sites provide a vast amount of information describing the current viruses affecting computers and also provide a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) link that allows users to download the most current virus protection to their computer.

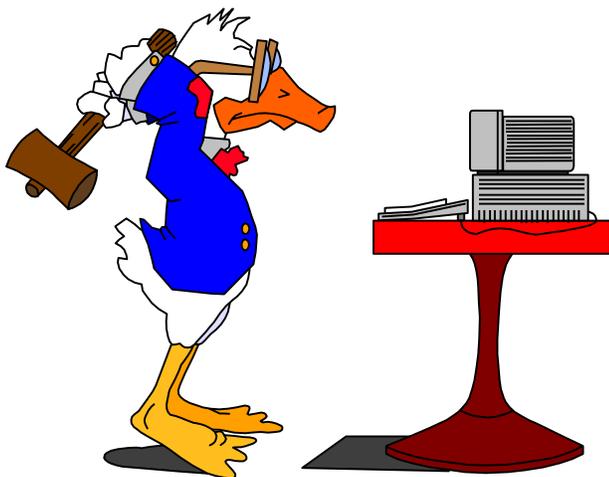
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## (ARE YOU CONTAGIOUS - Con't)

Other assets that are available to users to protect a computer are internal systems tools for each computer such as Scandisk and Disk Defragmenter. Scandisk is used to check files and folders on your hard drive for errors and also scans the disk surface for errors. It can be setup to automatically fix errors that it discovers and can provide a read out upon completion of the scan. It is recommended that this tool be utilized on a monthly basis unless other problems occur with your system. Otherwise, you should conduct a scan more often.

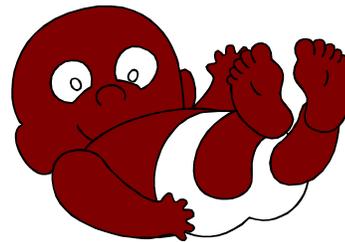
Disk Defragmenter is used to reorganize your hard drive space. As programs "read from" and "write to" your hard disk, information that is stored on the disk can become fragmented. Fragmentation occurs when a file is broken into pieces that are stored in different locations on the disk. Fragmentation doesn't affect the validity of the information. Your files are still complete when they are opened. However, it takes much longer for your computer to read and write fragmented files than it does to read and write unfragmented files. The defragmenter analyzes the data on your hard drive and recommends a defragmentation option to optimize your disk space. At a minimum, it is recommended that this tool be used at least once a week.

Guidelines on how to use these two tools can be found in the user's guide for your particular personal computer. You may seek additional assistance through your AISSO or ISSO. There is much information available on the types of viruses that can affect your system and what methods of protection are available to the user. Are you protected?



## IGLETS (Generic questions of interest to commanders)

**How can a commander stop a fully qualified (but marginal) soldier from re-enlisting?** IAW AR 601-280, (para 8-1a) a commander who wishes to disapprove a request for reenlistment or extension, and the soldier is fully qualified, must concurrently submit a bar to reenlistment.



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## (Pregnant Soldiers - Con't)

**authority is required to separate the soldier, but may set the separation date.** A soldier may also request, in writing, that her separation request be withdrawn.

The separation authority, based on the circumstances of the case and the best interest of the Army, will determine, in writing, whether separation or retention is in order.

The soldier must be separated not later than 30 days prior to the expected date of delivery or the latest date her physician will authorize her to travel to her home of record, whichever is earlier. This means the command must take an active interest in this chapter to ensure that the soldier is processed out prior to this date, or the soldier may not be eligible for the chapter.

Soldiers that remain on active duty and are at the 28th week of pregnancy will only work an 8-hour workday. This workday begins when the soldier reports for duty and ends 8 hours later. The 8-hour period includes personal hygiene, physical training, lunch breaks, and the required rest periods.

The intent of the regulation is to protect the unborn child. Commanders must understand this intent and comply accordingly. Pregnant soldiers and commanders need to maintain a continuous line of communication to ensure that all issues are addressed. Commanders must ensure that the correct chapter is used when separating soldiers from the Army.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

By SFC Martha E. McClelland

Army Regulation 608-99, Family Support, Child Custody, and Paternity, is our primary source of information on financial support matters within the Office of the Inspector General. The regulation sets forth Department of the Army (DA) policies, responsibilities, and procedures for financial support of family members, child custody and visitation, paternity, and compliance with court orders regarding these and related matters.

The following are answers to a couple of the most frequently asked questions regarding financial nonsupport inquiries:

**Question:** What are a commander's responsibilities regarding nonsupport issues and when does the Office of the Inspector General become involved?

**Answer:** Upon receipt of an inquiry about nonsupport concerning an assigned soldier, the company or battalion commander (if applicable), will inform and question the soldier regarding the nature of the inquiry. The company commander handles first inquiries. The battalion commander handles those inquiries in which the company commander has not enforced the regulation, but in all cases the company commander is responsible for questioning the soldier and gathering pertinent data.

The responsible commander has 14 days to respond to inquiries, whether first time or subsequent in nature, involving nonsupport issues. When responding to an Inspector General inquiry, the commander will include all documents that prove the soldier complies with financial support guidelines. The company or battalion commander, as appropriate, will provide complete and accurate information to the Inspector General concerning all inquiries within 14 days as specified by the regulation.

The Office of the Inspector General becomes involved in nonsupport issues when a family member does not receive assistance from the commander in obtaining financial support. In accordance with Army Regulation 608-99, the Office of the Inspector General reports non-compliant company commanders to the battalion commander. Any inaction on a battalion commander's part will result in reporting up the chain of command until nonsupport issues are resolved by the soldier's chain of command. The bottom line is, Army families are important and we take care of our own. Before responding to the inquiry, we recommend commanders consult the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate for assistance to determine whether a violation of AR 608-99 or other applicable laws has occurred.

**Question:** In absence of a court order or written agreement, what is the interim support amount a family member is authorized?

**Answer:** The 1998 Authorization Act combined all housing allowances into a new Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH). As announced last year, the BAQ amount is still available as the "BAH II", and it remains the basis for calculating the interim support amounts under Army Regulation 608-99. Since there is no floor for BAH, the BAH rate a soldier receives in some low cost areas will be less than the BAH II rate for that soldier's grade. Until the regulation is changed, the interim support requirement remains defined using BAH II. For reference, the 1999 BAH II rates (BAQ) are listed in the table below (for convenience, the BAQ-DIFF has been calculated):

Grade	BAQ WITH	BAQ DIFF	Grade	BAQ WITH	BAQ DIFF	Grade	BAQ WITH	BAQ DIFF
E1	\$385.20	\$169.50	W1	\$533.70	\$128.10	01E	\$613.20	\$158.10
E2	\$385.20	\$143.40	W2	\$616.80	\$132.60	02E	\$663.60	\$134.70
E3	\$404.40	\$106.80	W3	\$670.80	\$125.40	03E	\$735.30	\$112.80
E4	\$434.40	\$130.80	W4	\$732.00	\$ 83.10	01	\$522.60	\$107.70
E5	\$499.80	\$150.90	W5	\$798.30	\$ 67.50	02	\$584.40	\$127.20
E6	\$555.60	\$177.30				03	\$684.30	\$107.70
E7	\$601.50	\$183.60				04	\$827.10	\$108.00
E8	\$647.70	\$158.40				05	\$938.40	\$162.30
E9	\$702.60	\$169.50				06	\$973.50	\$167.70
						07-10	\$1081.20	\$202.80

## PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

By Mrs. Nancy H. Mantooth

During the past Quarter, FORSCOM conducted a follow-up assessment of Private Organizations (PO). The assessment included interviews, record reviews, and sensing sessions with soldiers at several FORSCOM installations.

The significant problem found during the assessment involved coercion of soldiers to join and participate in PO fundraising which also translated into preferential treatment and endorsement of those POs by the command. Both DOD and Army Regulations clearly prohibit these practices. FORSCOM concluded that the problems associated with POs are non-compliance and a lack of education rather than lack of clear policies.

During the assessment, soldiers continually voiced their concerns about coercion to volunteer for activities other than approved POs operating on their installations. Examples include details to support local school mentoring programs, family support groups, and unit funds. All of these activities should be supported on a volunteer basis. Additionally, commercial solicitations and solicitations by religious groups were other areas of concern raised unanimously by soldiers. Personnel who conduct these types of solicitations frequently gain access to barracks by using their connections with active and retired installation personnel.

So, what does this mean to the average hard-charging, top-block commander and command sergeant major? Looking through the handy dandy IG publication on POs, a common word that keeps coming up is "favoritism". Any involvement should be conducted with that word first and foremost in mind. No one organization should be supported in a manner that any other approved organization could not also receive. Soliciting support and volunteers can not be done in such a manner that soldiers feel that they either must agree to maintain good standing in the unit or risk losing approval if they do not participate.

Another key word to remember is "appearances". Participants in POs cannot use their position in the Army to enhance a PO function. Conversely, they cannot use their position in a PO to gather supporters for the organization in their units. Wearing the uniform while acting as a spokesman for a PO cannot be done. Basically, anything done with or for a PO must be undertaken very carefully, after much thought and planning. When in doubt, contact the SJA for a talk with the Ethics Counselor.

Locally, Fort Polk is involved with very few POs. However, these organizations can have as many mine-fields as Kosovo. Specifically, the main concern is with Family Support Groups. Participation by family members

can be encouraged, but not required. In addition, commanders cannot require the active duty spouses of their soldiers to attend their functions. Only a soldier's commander can require their attendance at a meeting. A commander can require his own soldier to attend Family Support Group meetings in lieu of his spouse, should the spouse decline participation. This is a function of readiness, and one of the main purposes of the Family Support Group is the dissemination of information.

Fund raising by POs is another touchy topic. Certain organizations, granted permission by the Directorate for Community Relations, Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs are covered by Army regulations. Fund raising by these organizations (such as AER) can receive support. Local organizations (again, the Family Support Groups), must follow very strict guidelines, both in fundraising activities and solicitation of support and volunteers. The Private Organizations Office at the Directorate of Family and Community Activities is a good starting point for fundraising guidelines.

So, to sum it up - don't play favorites; don't use the Army to support organizations without approval from (much) higher headquarters; don't make your troops do anything they don't want to; and always, Always, ALWAYS contact your Ethics Counselor at the SJA for advice when dealing with Private Organizations.

