

T U E S D A Y , M A

Current Serving Army Reserve
Lieutenant Colonel Responds to Special
Forces SFC Montgomery's Post About
Firearms Policy at Ft. Bliss



[NOTE: This is in response to Special Forces SFC Montgomery's post on Saturday March 14, 2009 about the recent changes in the Ft. Bliss firearms policy. To maintain the Colonel's anonymity, certain information has been removed or changed below].

Gentlemen: "***Military bureaucrats as officious little commissars, nothing more...***"

The Army has (for at least the past 28+ years I've been serving) always mandated registration of privately owned weapons (POWs). The registration of one's privately owned weapons is not a new requirement. Recently, several installations have

applied this rule to those living “on the economy”, that is, off the installation, and not just to those living in quarters or in barracks on the installation. [See recent blog posts regarding Fort Lewis.]

Rules for storage are up to the installation (garrison or base) commander. It used to be that **all junior enlisted (particularly those living in the barracks) had to store their POWs in the unit arm’s room and receive the company commander’s permission to remove them** (say, to go to the military range dedicated for shooting personally owned weapons (most of these ranges have been shut down, post 9/11) or to a public, off-post range). **NCO’s and Officers living in quarters were exempt from this rule and could store their weapons in quarters.** Regardless, one had to have a copy of the installation Provost Marshal’s registration documentation with the weapon at all times when transporting it onto or off of the base.

This was also the state of affairs when I lived at [on a naval base], 2002 – 2004. Weapons permitted in quarters, but registered with the naval base’s provost marshal’s office. (OK, truth in advertising; I registered my three primary weapons – a [shotgun, pistol and hunting rifle]. That was enough to explain the gun-safe that was wheeled into and out of my quarters when we settled in and departed. But never again.)

Apparently, some bases (Fort Bliss, others?) have changed the policy that all personally owned firearms will now be stored in unit arms rooms....

And here is probably why: ***Much of the impetus for this rule change (store POWs in the unit arms room) is likely merely an officious over-reaction by the Army in stemming the tide of suicides.*** The Army has faced a marked increase in suicides in 2008 and early 2009. There were 145 suicides in 2008, at least 24 in January 2009 and 18 more in February (although the status determination hasn't been finalized on each of the January and February cases, most will be ruled suicides – so the numbers will be close to the 24 and 18, if not 'spot on.) Currently, the Army's rate of suicide is 20.5 per 100K – more than the 19 per 100K in the American population (when adjusted to reflect the same demographics for age and gender as compared to the military population). This is the first time the Army's rate has exceeded the adjusted civilian rate since 1980.... Right now, the Army is undergoing a safety stand-down training program on suicide awareness and prevention and is very serious about peers and leaders identifying the signs of depression and suicidal ideation among their fellow soldiers, family members and civilian workforce. (Note – of the recent spate of suicides in the Army, a third have not been deployed – so it isn't merely 'high OPTEMO' causing this increase.)

Of course, given the military environment of "zero defects", commanders are most unwilling to allow any chance for the vagaries of human nature by one's subordinates adversely reflecting upon or interfering with a "perfect" career progression. Subordinates getting a DUI,

having an altercation in quarters with one's spouse, or especially the thought of someone using a POW on or off the installation to commit suicide, gives commander's the heebie-jeebies.... Can't make general that way.

So, while I fully understand SFC Montgomery's reaction to the policy and do not blame him for his intent to get out of the military, this is a case where ***mere officious bureaucracy*** is the motivator behind the rule changes which nevertheless serve to curtail our individual liberty and trample the idea of personal responsibility. **Military bureaucrats as officious little commissars, nothing more... I do not think, however, that his cited example (Fort Bliss policy) necessarily rises to the occasion for "Gun Confiscation being set up inside the military"**

This is why I am in the Army Reserve (albeit a full-timer) and will never again live on the installation or in government quarters, on or off-post. (Many installations now have "privatized" government quarters in enclave neighborhoods that are on the economy, not on the installation – but subject to the same rules as if they were....)

WD
LTC, USAR



POSTED BY STEWART RHODES AT 12:39 PM

LABELS: ARMY OFFICER, FT. BLISS FIREARMS POLICY, GUNS, ORDERS WE WILL NOT OBEY. OATH KEEPERS, RESERVE, SECOND AMENDMENT

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