



Readiness begins with YOU

This month marks our nation's 238th birthday, and while that might seem like a long time, we're still young compared to many countries around the world. What's helped set us apart and make us a global power in just a couple centuries, however, has been the dedicated service and sacrifice of our military members. Thank you for what you do every day to ensure our freedoms endure!

Many of you will celebrate the Fourth of July with a long weekend and enjoy further getaways with Family and friends now through the end of summer. As you do, I ask that you reflect on your importance to the Army and the influence you have on your battle buddies, whether good or bad. While accidental fatalities are overall about on par with last year's figures, a worrying increase in personnel injury-other deaths and the continuing upward trend in fatal motorcycle mishaps threatens to derail the progress you've all worked hard for these past few years. I know you don't want that to happen, and you need to realize the power you have in making sure it doesn't.

Several Soldiers killed in this year's PI-O accidents (mishaps like drownings or falls during hikes or after a night of drinking) were not alone when they died. Usually, at least one other Soldier was with them during the accident. "Was there anything I could have done for my friend?" is a question that will probably haunt them for a very long time. Taking care of our battle buddies is a deeply engrained Army value that has saved Soldiers in conflicts throughout American history, especially so in Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, the roster of our most recent Medal of Honor recipients reflects the selflessness and dedication of leaders to their Soldiers and Soldiers to one another.

As a value, that feeling of obligation — our sense of duty — shouldn't end once we leave the war zone or post at the conclusion of the workday. Even when we're having fun, we still have a responsibility to never leave a fallen comrade, even if he or she is "fallen" in the sense of incapacitation by alcohol or taking unnecessary risks on the water. A Soldier lost to an accident is no less a tragedy than one killed by enemy action, and each loss affects unit readiness equally. All Soldiers are an integral part of their unit, which is an integral part of our Army, which is a critical part of our nation and the world as a whole. There is no such thing as "just one Soldier out of a million." Instead, we have a million unique reasons to play it safe in everything we do: our brothers and sisters in uniform, and by extension, their Families and the citizens we're sworn to defend. Safety equals readiness, and readiness equals you. It's really as simple as that.

Again, please take just a few moments to consider how you can make your holiday and the rest of summer safer for yourself and your battle buddies. Poor decisions can be corrected before they end in heartbreak, so give yourself credit for the impact you have on safety. Tragic outcomes aren't inevitable or a cruel twist of fate, and you can often prevent them with the most minor of words or actions. Whether what you do saves a battle buddy under fire, one who's too drunk to drive, or another who exhibits immature or even dangerous tendencies when operating a vehicle or motorcycle, you've done your duty.

Thank you again for all you do on behalf of this great nation, and please enjoy her birthday as you would your own. It's yours to celebrate, but remember to always play it safe.

Army Safe is Army Strong!

TIMOTHY J. EDENS
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding