



U.S. ARMY
ARMY STRONG™



Preserving and protecting our Army's combat resources

U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER

FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

Gun Safety Is No Accident

We are Soldiers! From the moment we step off the bus and report in at the reception station, we are introduced to the Army's values and strict standards of discipline. Drill sergeants enforce these standards and capitalize on every opportunity to ensure we're focused, trained and ready to do what the Army requires, to defend this nation if, when and where it may be necessary.

Within days after entering basic combat training, we are familiarized with either the M-16 or M-4 weapon system. Here, we learn basic marksmanship fundamentals to include how to properly handle a weapon, disassemble and reassemble the weapon to zeroing and qualifying with it. Any sign of complacency or the mishandling of the weapon is immediately corrected by the drill sergeant and I'm sure you all know, it is not a pleasant experience.

This is serious stuff. These noncommissioned officers knew never to relax standards because doing so put Soldiers at risk of injury or death whether on the battlefield or while conducting training at home station.

With this in mind, I'm dumbfounded when reports hit my desk informing me that a member of our Army family has been killed or injured as a result of a negligent weapon's discharge or whose buddy is killed because of horse play with a loaded gun while consuming alcohol.

How does this happen when weapon safety has been drilled into our major muscle memory? From day one, we're taught to respect them... to handle them with the upmost care.

From October 2003 to the present, the Army reported a total of 275 privately owned weapon incidents, 27 of which resulted in Soldier fatality. Alcohol or illegal substance use were significant factors in 15 of those fatalities while the rest were attributed to other types of Soldier indiscipline or complacency.

These findings are hard to understand and accept. Have our Soldiers forgotten their training or are they simply ignoring the training and skills they learned during basic training? What does this say about our team? Where is the battle buddy, the leader? Who is going to step up to the plate and accept responsibility for the death or injury of a team member? Sadly, some have been leaders.

The Army values and standards of discipline that makes us indispensable in the civilian job market should be forever etched into our psyche, especially when we're at home cleaning a 9 mm pistol, in the woods deer hunting with a .308 rifle, or popping off rounds at Uncle Joe's farmhouse with a .22.

Handling a weapon safely should be second nature to us. We are Soldiers! We are examples for our families, our friends, and the rest of the world. There is no other army in the world that compares to our disciplined force.

Whenever you handle a weapon, on or off duty, it is extremely important to THINK about what you're doing.

THINK!

- Treat every weapon as if it's loaded.
- Handle every weapon with care.

- Identify the target before you fire.
- Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot.
- Keep the weapon safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to shoot.

Never handle a weapon if you're intoxicated or under the influence of any medication that may impair your judgment or motor skills, and always read the owner's manual. Learn about your weapon even before you attempt to load and fire it. It's that important.

We are all members of the Army team. Be the hero our families know we are!

We are Soldiers! Do the right thing! Army Safe is Army Strong! Hooah!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leeford C. Cain". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and a long, sweeping underline.

Leeford C. Cain
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center