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U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

**FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR**

ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG



## The 'Why' of Soldier Indiscipline

I've seen and done a lot during my years in this great Army, and it's not often that I'm easily surprised. Shortly after I arrived at the USACR/Safety Center, however, I was somewhat taken aback by a single statistic: We lose four Soldiers in off-duty accidents for every one we lose to an on-duty accident. I've been in the field throughout my career, and it can be hard to see the cumulative effects of these losses regardless of where the unit is in the Army Force Generation process. But that doesn't make the negative impacts of a Soldier's death any less real or any easier to accept for his or her battle buddies, Family and friends.

I have several ideas on what's important in Soldier safety, but I'd like each of you, particularly our junior NCOs, to think about something. Why is it your Soldiers can do everything right on duty, but mess it all up when they leave to go home? We've all seen them: the Soldier who unbuckles his seat belt right outside the gate, the one who never wears a helmet off post and the other who habitually speeds well in excess of posted limits or drives after a night of drinking with his buddies. The fact is there are always a few Soldiers who throw away everything that's important to them at the end of the day. As Leaders, it's up to us to figure out why they do so and how to reach them before something tragic happens.

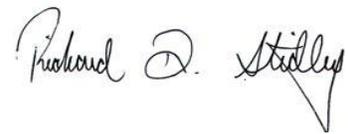
During my time as an NCO, three essential elements have remained constant in keeping Soldiers safe: discipline, enforcement of basic standards and communication down to the lowest level. We have to place the responsibility for high-risk behavior where it belongs — on Soldiers who willfully disregard the standards and Leaders who turn a blind eye to it. Indiscipline kills Soldiers, not motorcycles or cars! Whether on or off duty, the personal and professional consequences of risky behavior are high, and Leaders have to show their Soldiers they're serious about safety and the enforcement of standards.

I came to the USACR/Safety Center from the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, and had just redeployed from Afghanistan when I received notification of my assignment here. That deployment is one of the proudest accomplishments I've ever had as a Soldier. After spending a year in some of the harshest environments on earth, flying and driving hundreds of thousands of miles and completing missions that ranged from combat to humanitarian relief, every single one of our men and women came home to their Families and loved ones. This didn't happen because I was their sergeant major or because every Soldier acted safely all the time; it happened because Leaders did their jobs. We had a culture where Leaders were empowered to make tough decisions, Soldiers knew they were held to the standards and communication flowed effectively between ranks and organizations.

I share that story with you because it proves Leaders can develop a culture of safety and still execute their unit's most critical tasks. Although our Soldiers were limited in what they could do off duty and had no access to privately owned vehicles, motorcycles or anything else to potentially get them in trouble, there was plenty of opportunity for indiscipline to creep in on the roads and in the air over Afghanistan. None of our Soldiers were perfect and some might argue we were simply blessed, but there's no doubt that commitment to safety and standards played the biggest role in our success. People have to be the priority; you can replace equipment, but you can't replace a Soldier!

There's no job I love more than taking care of Soldiers, and I intend to do just that as command sergeant major of the USACR/Safety Center. This position gives me a unique opportunity to travel and visit with units around the world, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on safety and its role in our Army today. I appreciate frank and honest discussions, so please let me know how you feel and how we can help you keep your Soldiers safe. Thank you all for what you do every day!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard D. Stidley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "S".

Rick Stidley  
Command Sergeant Major  
U.S. Army Combat  
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