

Senior Leaders,

With the end of fiscal 2012 in sight, I'm pleased to report our Army is on track to sustain the near-record lows in accidental fatalities achieved during the past three years. This in itself is a remarkable accomplishment, but even better is the continued decline in off-duty fatalities as compared to the same timeframe in fiscal 2011. While we still have a couple weeks to go before the end of the third quarter and even longer until we close out this fiscal year, I am convinced this positive trend will continue in the days ahead. Congratulations to you and your Soldiers on a job well done!

The picture on duty, however, is not as bright as it has been in recent years: As of 17 June, fatalities are up 29 percent and 36 percent for aviation and ground, respectively. I am confident these numbers are just a temporary setback for our Leaders and Soldiers, but we must concentrate all our focus on fighting complacency to turn the arrow back in the right direction.

OFF DUTY

With 12 days left to go in the third quarter, off-duty fatalities remain on a downward trajectory from the same timeframe last year. This is outstanding news for the Leaders, Soldiers and Family members who continue to put tremendous effort into off-duty engagement every day. Fatalities resulting from privately owned vehicle accidents have remained relatively stable after rising sharply and then declining during this year's first quarter, but privately owned motorcycle losses are sadly up nearly 60 percent from this time last year. Spring and summer are historically the most difficult time of year for POM losses, so this increase wasn't entirely unexpected; however, a span this large demands our immediate attention, especially regarding indiscipline.

The "big three" factors associated with rider indiscipline have traditionally been speed, nonuse of personal protective equipment and alcohol. A new and disturbing trend, however, has made its way onto that list — reckless riding, most specifically improper passing. Even more worrisome is the continuing loss of NCOs on motorcycles; more than half of all rider fatalities this fiscal year have been Soldiers at the rank of E5 or above. It's counterintuitive that riders would take unnecessary risks on motorcycles, which lack the protections of conventional cars or trucks. Yet some of our Soldiers, and a growing number of our Leaders, are giving in to the tempting and deadly combination of open road and the disproportionately large engines outfitted on modern bikes.

I still firmly believe engagement is the best tool we have for fighting indiscipline, but we also have to start holding our Leaders accountable for their risky behavior. There is simply no excuse for any Soldier, but particularly a Leader, to deliberately place him or herself in harm's way. Certainly not all, or even most, Leaders are indisciplined, but it's our duty to root out those who are and intervene before tragedy strikes. We owe it to them and to their Soldiers, who shouldn't be set up for failure because of a poor example.

One final note on POV and POM trends: We must engage with our Soldiers just on the cusp of leadership — our specialists. Of the POV fatalities recorded thus far in fiscal 2012, approximately half have been specialists, and they have also comprised the greatest number of motorcycle losses after Leaders. Reaching these junior Soldiers now means they will be ready

and prepared to step into their future leadership roles as disciplined and accountable sergeants, thereby setting a positive example for their subordinates on and off duty. Please ensure your Leaders at all echelons are involved with these Soldiers and mentoring them to succeed in everything they do.

ON DUTY GROUND

On-duty ground safety has been a fantastic success for several years, but fiscal 2012 has proved challenging through now. Army Motor Vehicle fatalities have seen the most marked increase of any category, with current numbers sitting 100 percent above this timeframe last year. Conversely, Army Combat Vehicle losses are down 25 percent, although we lost a Soldier to an MRAP rollover early in the third quarter. Rollovers and ground guiding accidents make up nearly half of this year's on-duty ground fatalities, and I believe both these issues are directly attributable to complacency. In addition to being fully trained, our Leaders must ensure their Soldiers are continually cognizant of their surroundings and ready for every contingency, from private vehicles entering their lanes of travel to environmental conditions that can make roads impassable. Leaders and Soldiers alike must remember no mission is ever ordinary, and engagement and standards enforcement at every level of leadership are key to preventing future fatalities.

ON DUTY AIR

We sadly lost four Aviation Soldiers during an in-theater MEDEVAC mission in poor weather at the beginning of the quarter, with three additional accidents resulting in Class A aircraft damage but no fatalities. Alarmingly, all of this year's Class A accidents have been attributed to human error. While I've addressed Aviation Leaders directly on this issue, it bears repeating that three areas stand above all others as most critical: command climate, the three-step mission approval process, and mission briefing officer/final mission approval authority training. Commanders must reinforce a climate of accountability — no Aviator, no matter how well liked, deserves a place in the cockpit if he or she is taking unnecessary risks. Communication is key to the mission approval process, but breakdowns in step two, mission planning and briefing, continue to plague our crews both in theater and in garrison. Direct command involvement and oversight are crucial to countering poor or incomplete mission planning and preserving our Aviation assets. Lastly, please ensure mission briefing officers are trained to standard; as your eyes and ears on the flight line, their informed and involved interaction with pilots and crews is simply too crucial to take for granted.

CONCLUSION: THE VIEW FROM MY FOXHOLE

After almost four years as the Director of Army Safety, I'd like to leave you with some thoughts before I hand the reins to BG Tim Edens later this week. First and foremost, our Leaders and Soldiers are doing an exemplary job every day for safety: They "get it" and have made safe operations possible through dedicated teamwork. We must keep this tradition alive, and that's where you come in — we need Leaders at all levels to emphasize and actively participate in their safety programs. We're all busy and demands are as great as ever, but safety is too important to fall by the wayside. Please stay involved and talk regularly with your Leaders and Soldiers to gauge the safety climate in your formations; you'll be surprised at the frank and enthusiastic responses you're likely to get. Also be sure to leverage the expertise of the safety professionals in your formations. These great Civilians are a huge asset when used by commanders and Leaders, and I ask that you use their expertise and capabilities to enhance your safety programs.

Driver training has paid great dividends for POV and POM safety over the years, but you should be aware that upcoming changes to the training registration process could cause some confusion in the ranks. Beginning 1 October 2012, Soldiers looking to enroll in driver or motorcycle training programs will be required to register using the Digital Training Management System, a long-standing tool that already tracks and schedules milestones like weapons qualification and APFT scores. Transitioning to DTMS offers several advantages over the existing Army IMCOM Registration System, which will be deactivated sometime in early fiscal 2013. The switch allows Leaders to have unfettered access to their Soldiers' Army Traffic Safety Training Program training records, so deficiencies may be spotted easily and resolved quickly. And since all records will be maintained in one centralized database, Soldiers won't be required to hand carry hard-copy files from one duty assignment to another, thereby reducing the costs of duplicate training fulfilled because of lost paperwork. Please prepare your Leaders and Soldiers for this change, and always feel free to contact the USACR/Safety Center with questions or concerns.

Finally, I've already talked at length about the role of indiscipline in POV and POM accidents, but I ask again that you focus all your efforts on attacking this problem. There's no reason a Soldier or Leader can't be just as disciplined off duty as they are on the job; it's holding them accountable that will prove the biggest, though not insurmountable, challenge. The same holds true for Aviation, where overconfidence and indiscipline are claiming lives and destroying equipment. Our force is stretched thin, but we must remember that every preventable loss places even more burden, whether professionally or personally, on the Soldiers left behind.

I have no doubt BG Tim Edens will do an outstanding job in this position and can think of no better senior Leader to step into this position. As with my tenure, your feedback will prove vital to his success in the months ahead. I will be forever grateful for your help in making my tenure here the most fulfilling assignment imaginable. From the bottom of my heart, thanks to each one of you for your continued leadership, selfless service, and for all you continue to do each and every day for our Soldiers, Civilians, and Family members. Your engagement and leadership is saving lives every day. God bless you all!