



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER

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Unintended discharge incidents see recent decline

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Losing one Soldier to an unintended discharge from a service or privately owned weapon is one too many, but such accidents have been on the decline across the Army in recent months.

No Soldiers were killed in unintended (also known as accidental or negligent) discharge incidents through the first three quarters of fiscal 2015, and the trend has Army leaders cautiously optimistic.

“We need to seize the momentum that is now working to reduce these tragic losses,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Leeford Cain, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. “Army leaders at all levels are having a positive impact in reducing unintended discharges in our Army. But the circumstances with each loss speak for themselves and show us how they can happen on and off duty.”

In one incident, a Soldier was killed when a round discharged from a handgun and struck him in the head. The Soldier was on PCS leave and had been drinking with friends prior to the accident. Another Soldier died when the pistol he was holding to his temple discharged. That Soldier had also been drinking; he was at his apartment with another Soldier at the time. The third Soldier was killed while on duty in Afghanistan. He was serving as a range coach for live-fire qualification and was struck when another Soldier lost his footing while firing from a kneeling position.

“From the moment we step off the bus and report in at the reception station, we’re introduced to the Army’s values and strict standards of discipline,” Cain said. “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.

“If you demonstrate any sign of mishandling your weapon, your drill sergeant will set you straight right then and there.”

Although Soldiers are trained to properly handle and use a weapon from day one in the Army, unintended discharge tragedies touch the entire force. Alcohol or illegal substance use were significant factors in a number of those tragedies, while the rest were attributed to other types of indiscipline or complacency.

“Unintended discharges hurt our readiness,” Cain said. “I’m literally stunned when I receive a report that a member of our Army Family has been killed or injured as a result of an unintended weapons discharge or whose buddy is killed because of horseplay with a loaded gun while consuming alcohol.”

Whenever you handle a weapon, on or off duty, think about what you’re doing — 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, and keep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to shoot.

For more information on weapons safety, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.