

Discussion of EDP #9 Presented on Page 51

Possible Malingering

Alternative A

As LCpl Church's officer-in-charge, I have clear responsibilities to him. I need a better understanding of what is driving him to pretend that he is seeing "shadow people." It is possible that I and the senior NCOs in the unit have been insensitive to what is troubling him and have failed to provide leadership—guidance or encouragement—when it was needed. It is our duty to know the man and assess his well-being and his growth in the unit.

At the same time I have responsibilities to the Corps. I doubt that he has a serious mental condition; I believe he is seeking an unwarranted psychological discharge. It would be an injustice to separate this man from the Corps and pay him extended benefits. Beyond that, allowing him to run from his problems instead of learning to face them intelligently is

not in his own best interest.

I am not a doctor and cannot make a medical diagnosis. I need to talk to the doctor and ensure that he understands the evidence upon which I base my suspicions of malingering. Then I need to talk to LCpl Church in a very candid, honest manner—hopefully a manner that is compatible with the doctor's advice and at the same time makes two things perfectly clear to Church: First, I will not let him carry out a dishonest charade at the expense of the Corps or get away with telling different stories—lying—to different officials. Second, I will help him with whatever problems he is having that makes his day-to-day life so miserable.

These actions should bring the matter to a head. Either further psychiatric evaluation or better leadership within the unit will take us to the correct solution.

Alternative B

This is a real-world problem that in one form or another is frequently encountered. Command pressure to reach recruiting quotas, and reduce the number of Marines failing to complete their enlistments (i.e., non-EAS attrition) impacts standards and sometimes widens the mesh in our screening procedures. Despite the high quality of most Marines, many units find they still have a troublesome percentage of marginal performers who lack a commitment to the Corps.

As I see the scenario, I have two realistic options: I can work with the doctor and facilitate his departure, or I can take action to prevent his departure. There are a number of things that have to be considered in deciding which option to follow. Although Church seems to be a marginal Marine of questionable value to the Corps, with proper leadership and the investment of much time and effort, he could possibly be transformed into a satisfactory Marine. The Marine Corps has already made a significant

investment in him. As his OIC, I am charged with making every effort to develop my subordinates. Under this line of reasoning I may move to keep him in the Corps and start more extensive counseling to solve his personal problems and adjust his attitude.

On the other hand Church's lack of commitment and dishonest behavior diminish hope of turning him around. He was a poor prospect to begin with. Recruiters, drill instructors, and School of Infantry staff probably recognized him as such but ultimately opted to take a chance on him. Based on the evidence, I may conclude the chance did not work out, and that the effort he would require could better be invested in the well-being of my other Marines. If this is my final decision, I would facilitate his departure in the most expeditious manner possible. We cannot be an elite Service or preserve the standards we desire if we retain deadwood or let "body count" again become the overriding consideration.

These approaches represent the immediate reactions of individual Marines and should not be construed as official solutions. Comments are welcomed.