

INSPECTIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Why do we have inspections? From long experience, the Army has found that some soldiers, if allowed to, will become careless and lax in the performance of minor barrack duties in their unit. They become accustomed to conditions in their immediate surroundings and overlook minor deficiencies. Should a soldier fall below the Army standard of performance, you can be assured that someone will notice those deficiencies immediately.

Your superiors will order inspections to see that soldiers have all the equipment and clothing issued to them and that it is serviceable. Inspections serve this practical purpose; they are not harassment. You will probably agree that inspections often correct small problems before they become big problems. Sharp appearance, efficient performance and excellent maintenance are important considerations that affect you directly. They are the earmarks of a good organization and one you should be a proud member of. First line leaders should inspect their soldiers daily and should regularly check soldiers' rooms in the barracks. First line leaders should also make arrangements with soldiers who live in quarters (on or off post) to ensure the soldier maintains a healthy and safe environment for himself and his family.

TYPES OF INSPECTIONS

There are two categories of inspections for determining the status of individual soldiers and their equipment: in-ranks and in-quarters. An in-ranks inspection is of personnel and equipment in a unit formation. The leader examines each soldier individually, noticing their general appearance and the condition of their clothing and equipment. When inspecting crew-served vehicles, the personnel are normally positioned to the rear of the formation with the operators standing by their vehicle. Leaders may conduct an in-quarters (barracks) inspection to include personal appearance, field equipment, displays, maintenance and sanitary conditions. Organizations will have inspection programs that help determine the status and mission readiness of the unit and its components. These include Command Inspections, Staff Inspections and Inspector General Inspections.

- The training, instruction, or correction given to a soldier to correct deficiencies must be directly related to the deficiency.
- Orient the corrective action to improving the soldier's performance in their problem area.
- You may take corrective measures after normal duty hours. Such measures assume the nature of the training or instruction, not punishment.
- Corrective training should continue only until the training deficiency is overcome.
- All levels of command should take care to ensure that training and instruction are not used in an oppressive manner to evade the procedural safeguards in imposing non judicial punishment.
- Do not make notes in soldiers' official records of deficiencies satisfactorily corrected by means of training and instruction.

On-the-Spot Corrections. One of the most effective administrative corrective measures is on-the-spot correction. Use this tool for making the quickest and often most effective corrections to deficiencies in training or standards. Generally there is one of two reasons a soldier requires an on-the spot correction. Either the soldier you are correcting does not know what the standard is or does not care what the standard is. If the soldier was aware of the standard but chose not to adhere to it, this may indicate a larger problem that his chain of command should address. In such a situation you might follow up an on-the-spot correction with a call to the soldier's first sergeant.

SGT Park and the On-the-Spot Correction

As SGT Park left the Dining Facility after breakfast one morning, he stopped to buy a paper from a newspaper machine nearby. Just as he let go of the machine door, letting it slam shut, a soldier (who was about 30 feet away) shouted, "Hey! Hold it Open!" When the soldier saw SGT Park had let it close he said, "Thanks a lot, pal." SGT Park called the soldier over, identified himself and his unit and asked if the soldier knew the proper way to address an NCO. The soldier said he hadn't realized that SGT Park was an NCO and would have addressed him by his rank if he had. Then SGT Park asked him if he was aware that taking a newspaper without paying for it was theft. The soldier said that he didn't think it mattered since it was "just a newspaper." SGT Park told him that it did matter, just as proper execution of seemingly small,

unimportant tasks matters to the Army as a whole. The soldier, who was at parade rest and respectful throughout the conversation, nodded and said, "Alright, sergeant." SGT Park ended the on-the-spot correction by asking the soldier to think about what integrity meant and whether a soldier's honesty is important to the Army.

Keeping a soldier on track is the key element in solving performance problems. Motivated soldiers keep the group functioning, training productive and ultimately, accomplish the training objectives and most importantly the mission. Some leaders believe that soldiers work as expected simply because that is their job. That may be true. But soldiers and leaders need a simple pat on back once in a while, for a job well done. You need to praise your soldiers and let them know that you care about the job they are doing and you are glad they are part of the team. Soldiers not performing to standard need correction; use the on-the-spot correction tool. Even after making an on-the-spot correction additional training may be necessary.

- Correct the soldier.
- Attack the performance, never the person.
- Give one correction at a time. Do not dump.
- Don't keep bringing it up — when the correction is over, it is over.

More often than not, your soldiers do good things that deserve a pat on the back. In the same way you do on-the-spot corrections (but obviously for different reasons), praise your soldiers' good work by telling them the specific action or result observed, why it was good and encourage the soldier to continue. Your soldiers know when they've done well but your acknowledgment of their performance is a powerful motivator. It reinforces standards, builds soldiers' pride and lets them know you notice the hard work they do. It is also another indicator that you care about them.

"Correct errors in the use of judgment and initiative in such a way as to encourage the individual."
FM 22-10, *Leadership* (1951)

On-the-Spot Inspections. Making an informal, unscheduled check of equipment, soldiers or quarters is called an on-the-spot inspection. Stopping to check the tag on a fire extinguisher as you walk through a maintenance bay is an example of an on-the-spot inspection. Another example is checking the condition of the trash dumpster area in back of the orderly room. For any inspection, the steps are the same.

- Preparation.
- Conduct.
- Follow-up.

Pre-execution checks are key to ensuring leaders, trainers and soldiers are adequately prepared to execute operations and training to Army standard. Pre-execution checks are also detailed final checks that all units conduct before and during execution of training. Conduct Pre-execution checks at the beginning of each event or exercise as part of troop leading procedures to check personnel, equipment, vehicles and mission knowledge. The chain of command is responsible for developing, validating and verifying all pre-execution checks. Pre-execution checks ensure that all planning and prerequisite training (soldier, leader and collective) are complete prior to the execution of training. They systematically prepare soldiers, trainers and resources to ensure training execution starts properly. Pre-execution checks provide the attention to detail needed to use resources efficiently.

You are the key to inspections, checking soldier and unit readiness in personal hygiene and appearance, field equipment, displays and sanitary conditions. Inspections must be done regularly to help reinforce standards and instill discipline. Regular, impartial inspections of important areas develop confidence, teamwork and soldiers' pride in themselves and their equipment.