

## Army Goes After Bad Apples Amid Troop Withdrawals From Iraq/Afghanistan

By Greg T. Rinckey

Army soldiers who have managed to avoid getting kicked out of the military despite their illegal drug use or other misconduct will be falling into the crosshairs of commanders whose priorities are being reshuffled as the U.S. reduces its roles in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a clarion call to service members with blemished records, *Military Times* recently reported

that the Army is planning “to impose a rigorous regimen of basic soldiering and discipline.” Wanting to crack down on the high-risk behavior that has become more prevalent as the Army juggled wars on two major fronts, the branch plans to step up its use of military police, drug tests and barrack inspections. As a result, prosecutions and administrative chapters are also expected to increase, according to the article.

The reprioritizing comes as President Barack Obama is pushing to pull all or most troops out of Iraq by year’s end and from Afghanistan by September 2012. The pullouts mean soldiers will be spending more time in garrison environments, where good order and discipline processes have suffered from what the Army deems a “lapse of leadership.”

This “atrophied garrison leadership” has contributed to a decline in administrative separations since the 2001 fiscal year. Consequently, 25,283 soldiers have remained in the Army when they should have been kicked out of the service, according to the Army’s July 2010 Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention Report

. The report states that thousands of soldiers have gotten away with illegal drug use. They include:

An estimated 1,311 illegal drug users who were not tested in the 2009 fiscal year.

An estimated 3,000 soldiers expected to test positive for illegal drug use for the second or third time in the 2011 fiscal year.

An estimated 2,004 soldiers who between the 2001 and 2009 fiscal years illicitly used pharmaceuticals and who have unresolved urine drug tests urine in which samples contained potential prescription drugs.

Service members need to remember that even the Army acknowledges many of its commanders are rusty or inexperienced at properly administering discipline in garrison environments. There will be a learning curve here, and commanders and prosecutors are bound to make mistakes. As the Army attempts to raise garrison disciplinary standards, keep in mind that the mishandling of urine samples or other procedural mistakes can invalidate

positive drug tests. Additionally, two out of every five sexual assault court martial cases in the 2010 fiscal year were either dismissed or ended with acquittals, according to the Defense Department's 2010 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military

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Most importantly, soldiers targeted by this service effort and questioned by law enforcement or command officials about wrongdoing should not provide statements and invoke their right to speak to an attorney.

Greg T. Rinckey, a former military JAG attorney and federal prosecutor, is managing partner of Tully Rinckey PLLC. He concentrates his practice on military law

, federal employment and discrimination litigation

and national security clearance mitigation

. He can be reached at [grinckey@fedattorney.com](mailto:grinckey@fedattorney.com)

. To schedule a meeting with one of Tully Rinckey PLLC's military law attorneys call 202-787-1900.