



This month I will address two areas I consider extremely important to the health and welfare of our Soldiers: training and evaluation, and suicide prevention. Two constants within any Army career field are training and evaluation. It's no different in the space and missile defense fields. Our Soldiers receive highly specialized training designed to ensure their ability to carry out their critical assigned missions. Each Soldier must pass rigorous evaluations to become certified as a crew member. Once certified, our Soldiers are tested constantly by numerous system-level exercises as well as by semi-annual evaluations during major exercises.

Soldiers assigned to the Joint Tactical Ground Station (JTAGS) receive training focused upon detecting and responding to a missile launch, while Soldiers assigned to Ground Based Missile Defense receive training focused on maintaining and launching Ground Based Interceptors. Soldiers assigned to the Defense Satellite Communications Satellite or the Wideband Global Satellite Operations Centers receive training focused upon managing communications payloads. Our Soldiers assigned to Commercial Imagery Teams or to Army Space Support Teams are trained on the capabilities and uses of current space enablers. All have a common focus, providing the Warfighter with the space and missile warning/defense tools needed to win on the modern battlefield.

The level of training and responsibility provided to our Soldiers is normally reserved for Officers and Senior NCOs in our sister services. This translates to Soldiers with increased levels of responsibility unlike any other service. Our Soldiers have learned the highly technical skills required to provide the Warfighter with, or educate the Warfighter on, space enablers. Virtually all of our Soldiers have a detailed understanding of commercial and/or military satellite communications planning/management, or space based Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, or space based wideband infrared data used to support missile warning and missile defense, or a host of other space enablers used in this era of persistent conflict.

This also means our Soldiers have duties and responsibilities that affect an entire region or area of operations. There is a great deal of job satisfaction that comes from knowing that you're helping assure the safety of our nation and operational ground forces, and are contributing to their continued success on the battlefield.

Beyond unique technical training, we also remain focused upon the fact that our Soldiers are just that ... Soldiers. We maintain current training on warrior tasks and battle drills (e.g. marksman training, physical training, professional military education), and we provide our Soldiers adequate time to focus upon professional development in addition to training on individual and collective tasks.

Finally, I'd like to take a moment to talk about Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General Peter W. Chiarelli's 14 May 2009 correspondence – Commander and Leader Responsibilities – Removing Stigma, in which he discusses the critical role leaders play in removing the stigma associated with seeking behavioral health treatment. As General Chiarelli states, "it is imperative that we treat Soldiers seeking help with the dignity that both their service deserves and is consistent with the Army Values."

There is no shame in recognizing the need for help and in taking the proactive step of seeking behavioral health treatment. I strongly urge each of you to visit <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hR/suicide/default.asp> and read this important correspondence.

*SECURE THE HIGH GROUND!*