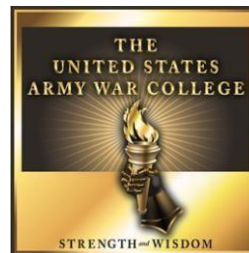# Strategy Research Project

A Cancer in the Army: Identifying and Removing Toxic Leaders

by

Lieutenant Colonel K. Scott Katrosh
United States Army

United States Army War College
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14. ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the wicked problem of toxic leadership in the U.S. Army. The paper begins by defining toxic leadership, explaining the scope of the challenge, describing its effects on subordinates and units, and examining current barriers to identification of toxic leaders. The paper explores methods to identify toxic leaders within the U.S. Army. Finally, the paper describes tools available to remove toxic leaders from military service. Taming this wicked problem requires positive and effective leadership at all levels. Leaders must first help establish a military culture that encourages Soldiers to report toxic behavior without fear of reprisal. Leaders must also make the hard choices necessary to document and remove toxic leaders from military service. The Army is moving in the right direction with several new initiatives including revamping the Officer Evaluation Report system and implementing the Commander 360 evaluations. The Army must continue to monitor and expand upon these initiatives to demonstrate its commitment to rid toxic leaders from its ranks and to protect the integrity of the military profession.

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Lieutenant Colonel K. Scott Katrosh
United States Army

Dr. Stephen J. Gerras
Department of Command, Leadership, and Management
Project Adviser

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Abstract

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A Cancer in the Army: Identifying and Removing Toxic Leaders

Now, look, I happen to know a little about leadership…And I tell you this: you do not lead by hitting people over the head. Any damn fool can do that, but it's usually called 'assault'--not 'leadership.'

—Dwight D. Eisenhower[1]

Thirteen years of war have placed a tremendous strain upon members of our military and their Families. Studies show that multiple and lengthy deployments may be related to increased rates of divorce, suicide, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among Service-members.[2] In addition to these combat-exacerbated social and health issues, the Department of Defense (DoD) has faced other challenges during the past decade, including ethical lapses by senior leaders, sexual assault, and "toxic" leadership. As we wind down combat operations in the Middle East, the DoD is developing strategies to address each of these significant challenges. This paper will address the "wicked" problem of toxic leadership within the U.S. Army.[3]

To grasp the concept of wickedness, one must appreciate the notion of fragmentation--a phenomenon describing the effect of forces tearing apart something that is whole.[4] Wicked problems are exceedingly complex problems driven by fragmenting forces. While more descriptive than definitional, wicked problems are generally distinguished by six characteristics: (1) one cannot fully appreciate the problem until one devises a solution; (2) unfortunately, there is no definitive solution to the problem; (3) one solution may be better or worse than another solution but no solution is "right or wrong;" (4) each wicked problem is exceptionally complex and unique; (5) each potential solution is costly with likely unintended consequences; and (6) a wicked problem may have no solution or a plethora of possible solutions.[5] This paper will identify ways in which to tame the wicked problem of toxic leadership.

This paper will begin by defining toxic leadership, explaining the scope of this challenge within the U.S. Army, describing its effects on subordinates and units, and examining current barriers to identification of toxic leaders. This paper will explore methods to identify toxic leaders within our ranks. Finally, this paper will describe available tools to remove toxic leaders from military service. There is no panacea that will eliminate the wicked problem of toxic leadership within the military. However, senior leaders may tame this problem by establishing a culture that encourages Soldiers to report toxic behavior without fear of reprisal and taking steps necessary to document and remove toxic leaders from our ranks.

Defining the Problem of Toxic Leadership

Over the past century, organizations have intensified the study of leadership and the impact of destructive leadership. Scholars use many terms to describe destructive leadership behavior, including: tyrannical,[6] dark,[7] abusive,[8] bad,[9] and toxic.[10] Although various authors describe these terms in different ways, they generally explain a similar phenomenon--leadership behavior which undermines the best interests of an organization and imposes significantly negative consequences upon its members. Not all negative or destructive leadership behavior fits within the parameters of the terms identified above.

Characteristics and Definitions of Toxic Leadership

The study of toxic leadership has been difficult in part because there is no commonly accepted definition of the term. Dr. Marcia Lynn Whicker, generally regarded as the person to coin the phrase "toxic leader," described such an individual as "maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent, even malicious."[11] She explained that toxic leaders often succeed in an organization by tearing down others; these individuals

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have a "deep-seated but well disguised sense of personal inadequacy, a focus on selfish values, and a cleverness at deception."[12] Jean-Lipman Blumen, another renowned author on this topic, noted that toxic leaders "engage in numerous destructive behaviors" and "exhibit certain dysfunctional personal characteristics."[13] To be toxic, however, these behaviors and characteristics must inflict serious and long-lasting harm on the organization and its members.[14]

In 2004, Colonel (COL) George E. Reed, U.S. Army, Retired, published the first article describing the scope of toxic leadership within the U.S. Army based upon results of a survey conducted at the U.S. Army War College in 2003. COL Reed noted that toxic leadership is difficult to define but can be described with terms like "self-aggrandizing, petty, abusive, indifferent to unit climate, and interpersonally malicious."[15] He further described a toxic leader as "a poison to the unit – an insidious, slow-acting poison that complicates diagnosis and the application of an anecdote."[16] A loud and demanding leader is not necessarily toxic; a soft-spoken leader can also be toxic. It is not one characteristic but the cumulative effect of the behaviors of a leader on the morale and climate of the unit that determines whether the leader is toxic.[17] COL Reed identified three elements generally possessed by a toxic leader in the military: "(1) an apparent lack of concern for the well-being of subordinates; (2) a personality or interpersonal technique that negatively affects organizational climate; and (3) a conviction by subordinates that the leader is motivated primarily by self-interest."[18]

In 2008, Andrew Schmidt conducted an empirical study to develop a more comprehensive understanding of toxic leadership and a reliable scale for its measurement (what Schmidt termed the Toxic Leadership Scale).[19] From his research

he concluded that toxic leadership includes five dimensions: self-promotion, abusive supervision, unpredictability, narcissism, and authoritarian leadership.[20] In 2013, Darrell Aubrey conducted a qualitative modified Delphi study to gather consensus of senior U.S. Army leaders on the elements of toxic leadership.[21] Aubrey identified five unique traits associated with toxic leaders: anti-social (maladaptive), egotistical, unethical, authoritarian, and abusive.[22] Aubrey further ascertained three emerging themes for associated behaviors of toxic leaders: petty tyranny, abusive supervision, and extreme narcissism.[23] These characteristics and behaviors closely resemble the five dimensions Schmidt identified.

Schmidt offered a definition of toxic leadership for use in future research, "Toxic leaders are narcissistic, self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision."[24] Lieutenant General (LTG) Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., U.S. Army, Retired, offered a similar definition to describe this phenomenon in the military context, "Toxic leaders are individuals whose behavior appears driven by self-centered careerism at the expense of their subordinates and unit, and whose style is characterized by abusive and dictatorial behavior that promotes an unhealthy organizational climate."[25] Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership*, notes a number of the characteristics described above in its definition and description of toxic leadership:

> Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization…operates with an inflated sense of self-worth and from acute self-interest. Toxic leaders consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves.[26]

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LTG Ulmer emphasized an important distinction between a tough or bad leader and a toxic leader. Toxic leadership does not describe a leader who should be called "tough but fair" or "lacking in people skills" or a micro-manager; similarly, toxic leadership does not describe a leader who simply makes poor decisions or lacks initiative. In other words, there are many poor leaders who are not toxic.[27] LTG Ulmer provided other insightful observations about toxic leaders: they are rarely toxic in front of their superior which makes identification of toxic leaders difficult; they almost never accept blame or share in accolades for accomplishments; they often have good ideas; they are often intelligent and hard-working; and most disturbingly, the boss does not know how these individuals act, or pretends not to know, and almost never documents their misbehavior.[28]

Dr. Marco Tavanti also cautioned against automatically equating transactional (or difficult) leaders with toxic leaders. A demanding but occasionally verbally abusive leader may not be toxic to the organization and its members (i.e., a good "butt-chewing" can sometimes be effective; however, this should almost always be done in a private session and should never be done as a means to belittle a subordinate in front of others); likewise, a charming leader can be toxic. It is not the manner in which a leader communicates that makes him or her toxic, it is the effect upon the organization and its members.[29] Dr. Tavanti agreed that toxic leaders are often hard to detect as they are usually competent in their job. These individuals attain short-term goals at the expense of the long-term health of the organization; they are frequently protected by the organizational structure in which they work and by the very people they abuse.[30] "In

general, toxic leaders are characterized by fighting and controlling rather than uplifting and inspiring. They like to succeed by tearing others down."[31]

Scope of the Problem within the U.S. Army

The Army began collecting data on traits and behaviors that arguably qualify as toxic as far back as 2003 when COL Reed conducted his survey at the U.S. Army War College. However, as pointed out by LTG Ulmer, estimates of the problem are just that-- rough calculations based on subjective perceptions about leaders' behaviors.[32] The true magnitude of the problem of toxic leadership within the U.S. Army remains unknown. Nonetheless, estimates suggest the U.S. Army has a high number of toxic leaders within its ranks, and that this number has remained fairly stable over the past several years.

The most thorough review to date of toxic leadership in the U.S. Army is contained in the Center for Army Leadership (CAL) Technical Report 2011-3.[33] This report summarizes data obtained in response to surveys completed in 2009 and 2010 by more than 22,000 active duty and reserve component Army leaders in the ranks of Sergeant to Colonel, as well as nearly 5,900 Department of the Army Civilians. In these surveys, the term toxic leadership was not defined or mentioned. Instead, researchers derived this label from respondents' descriptions of behaviors they observed that resulted in a negative and harmful work environment.[34]

Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents had directly encountered a leader who was "over-controlling, inhibitive of innovative thinking, or generally created a negative working environment" in the preceding year, characteristics that researchers used to label a leader as toxic.[35] More than a third (35% in 2009; 46% in 2010) had firsthand experience with three or more leaders demonstrating these behaviors.[36] On a

scale of one to seven (one being no problem and seven being a maximum problem),

sixty-three percent (63%) of leaders surveyed in 2010 rated the severity of this problem

at five or higher (27% rated it seven; 15% rated it six; 21% rated it five).[37] Authors of the

2011-13 Technical Report concluded that roughly one in five (20%) of Army leaders

were seen as routinely exhibiting toxic behaviors.[38]

Earlier studies of U.S. Army War College participants support the conclusion that

toxic leadership is a significant problem in the U.S. Army. In 2003 and 2008, COL Reed

found that virtually all members of the U.S. Army War College who participated in his

study experienced a toxic leader at some point in their military careers.[39] In 2008, COL

Reed and Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Richard A. Olsen, U.S. Army, Retired, replicated

COL Reed's earlier study with students (active duty Majors) of the U.S. Army Command

and General Staff College.[40] From this survey, COL Reed and LTC Olsen reported that

more than half (61%) of active duty Majors who completed the survey had seriously

considered leaving the service because of the manner in which they were treated by

their supervisor.[41] In light of findings from these three studies, COL Reed and LTC

Olsen suggested that toxic leadership may be a more significant problem in the U.S.

Army than currently estimated.[42]

The most recent report discussing toxic leadership is found in the 2013 Center

for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) Technical Report

2014-01.[43] CASAL results spanning the past four years (2010-2013) establish that the

occurrence of negative leadership characteristics and behaviors associated with toxic

leadership in the U.S. Army has remained unchanged (*i.e.*, twenty percent (20%) or less

of Soldiers reported that their immediate supervisor demonstrated any of eight negative

behaviors commonly associated with toxic leadership).[44] Of note, subordinates view senior officers (General Officers, Colonels, and Lieutenant Colonels) and Sergeants Major less often as exhibiting behaviors associated with negative leadership than junior non-commissioned officers (NCOs).[45] While a twenty percent (20%) rate of toxic leaders within the U.S. Army is certainly alarming, it is the pernicious effects of these leaders upon our institution and its Soldiers that are most troubling.[46]

<u>Effects of Toxic Leadership</u>

LTG Ulmer aptly described the problem of toxic leadership as a "slowly growing organizational cancer."[47] If not properly treated, cancer can spread throughout the body and cause serious illness or death. Similarly, a toxic leader can cause substantial harm not only to individual members of the unit in which the leader belongs but to the organization as a whole. As mentioned recently by General David Perkins, current Commanding General, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, toxic leadership in some cases can have life or death consequences.[48] A 2010 study of suicides of Iraqi war veterans suggested that toxic leadership can even contribute to suicide.[49]

Dr. Tavanti explained one of the most common results of toxic leadership in the civilian sector is the disengagement of employees.[50] Unsatisfied workers contribute to low morale and decreased productivity within the organization due to the daily struggle of working in a toxic environment marked by unnecessary organizational stress and hopelessness. Disengaged workers are more likely to quit the organization in which they work, resulting in increased turnover rate, along with corresponding increased costs for recruiting, hiring, and training.[51] Toxic leadership can have similar detrimental effects on military personnel.

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In his study on toxic leadership within the U.S. Army, Darrell Aubrey identified four themes to describe the effects toxic leaders have on subordinates: dysfunctional command climate; decreased levels of trust and commitment; employee antisocial behaviors; and reduced organizational performance.[52] Command climate is a term that describes "the unspoken foundation by which team members interact with one another;" it is the critical link between team members and the organization that shapes individual behavior and organizational outcomes, such as job performance, productivity, and satisfaction.[53] Climate is a short-term phenomenon found at an organizational level that can change quickly based upon leader behavior at that level.[54] A healthy command climate is essential to the effective operation of all military organizations and begins with mutual trust and respect between subordinates and their leaders. An inevitable result of toxic leadership is the erosion of trust of those displaying toxic behavior, as well as the leadership that tolerates such behavior, and a corresponding demise of good order and discipline within the unit.[55]

A healthy command climate encourages Soldiers to communicate with their leadership, take initiative, be innovative, live the Army Values, and perform all tasks to their fullest potential. A dysfunctional command climate, on the other hand, limits subordinates communicating with their superiors (including the reporting of inappropriate or unethical behavior) due to an environment marked by intimidation and fear.[56] Soldiers in a dysfunctional organization often lack the courage to take prudent risks or to suggest innovative solutions to problems.[57] In addition, Soldiers in a dysfunctional unit exhibit reduced performance, reduced trust and commitment, and

often deviate from accepted social behaviors (*e.g.*, by resisting authority or emulating toxic behavior of leaders).[58]
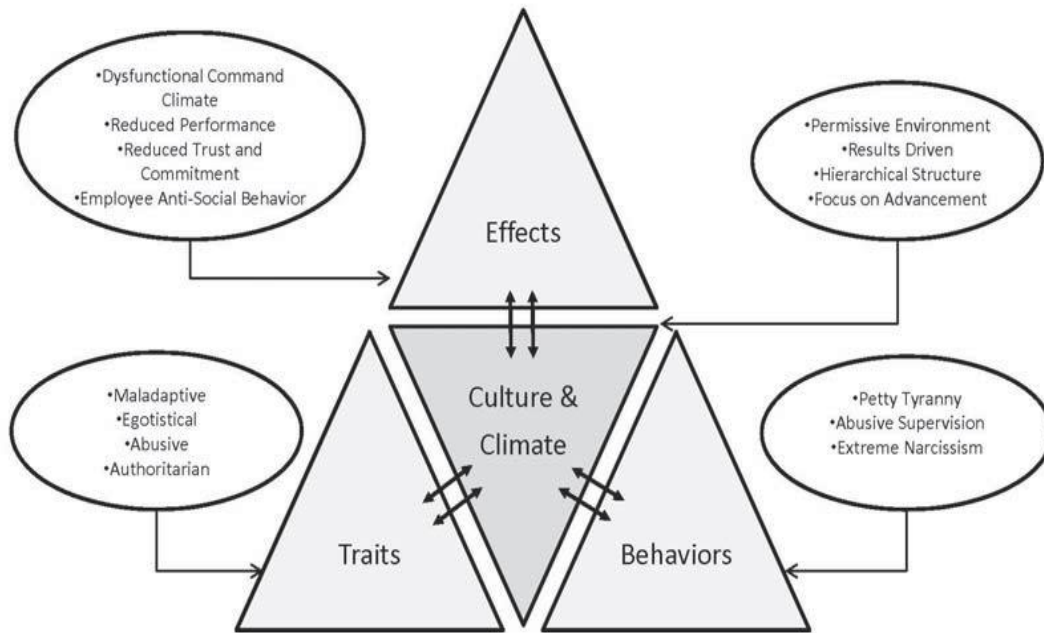
Figure 1. Darrell Aubrey's Toxic Leadership Pyramid[59]

The Toxic Leadership Pyramid in Figure 1 illustrates the interrelated nature of the traits, behaviors, and effects of toxic leaders in the U.S. Army.[60] The model depicts culture and climate as central to the existence of toxic leadership. Toxic leaders are generally the product of a permissive environment that overlooks toxicity if positive results are achieved. The hierarchical nature of the military contributes to the failure of subordinates to report toxic behavior. Toxic leaders are normally focused on individual advancement as opposed to long-term organizational improvement.[61] The effects of toxic leadership are positioned at the top of the pyramid like the tip of an iceberg; leaders may recognize the consequences of toxic behavior (*i.e.*, the tip of the iceberg) but often fail to appreciate their hidden cause (*i.e.*, the massive problem lying beneath the ocean).

Barriers to Identifying Toxic Leaders

Military culture not only creates a permissive environment for toxic behavior but also makes identification of toxic leaders difficult. Military culture is an overarching term often used to describe the military's "way of thinking," its underlying assumptions, and "taken-for-granted values" taught as "the correct way to perceive, think, and feel."[62] As opposed to command climate, military culture takes longer to establish or change and is less driven by leaders' individual personalities. Military culture in the U.S. Army includes, among other things, adherence to the seven core values taught to every Soldier beginning on his or her first day of Basic Training.

A Soldier's obligation to live the Army Values includes a commitment to loyalty, duty, and respect. Soldiers are loyal not only to the Constitution, the Nation, the U.S. Army, and their unit, but also to their leaders, even those who display dysfunctional behaviors associated with toxic leadership. For many Soldiers, especially those in combat arms branches, the chain of command is sacrosanct. "Airing dirty laundry" of a unit by reporting a toxic leader is often avoided as an act of disloyalty.[63]

A Soldier's obligation to duty includes placing the mission first and completing all tasks to the best of one's ability. A Soldier is expected to embrace a can-do attitude and not complain despite a supervisor's leadership style.[64] The Army also instills in its Soldiers a requirement to respect rank and position even if one does not respect a particular leader.[65] These attributes militate against a Soldier challenging the behavior of a leader, especially a senior NCO or officer.

A troubling scenario involves a Soldier who has witnessed, or heard about, other toxic leaders who have survived in the military (including the progression in rank); this experience or understanding, whether or not accurate, may reinforce a Soldier's belief

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that leadership will not hold a toxic leader accountable for inappropriate behavior. Even worse, a Soldier may have witnessed retaliation against another Soldier who reported misconduct against a leader. For these reasons, a Soldier may deem it too risky to report toxic behavior and face the possibility of retribution or classification as a trouble-maker or complainer. Instead, a Soldier may deem it more advantageous to "wait-out" a toxic leader, as either the Soldier or leader are likely be transferred to another duty assignment in a relatively short period of time.[66]

Eradicating toxic leadership within the military requires a multi-faceted approach, with emphasis at the highest levels of leadership, to change Army culture. Leaders must create a culture that promotes treating others with dignity and respect and encourages reporting inappropriate behavior without fear of reprisal. Changing military culture is difficult and takes time but can be accomplished with the proper use of embedding and reinforcing mechanisms.

Embedding mechanisms "emplace the assumptions in an organization," while reinforcing mechanisms "support the embedded assumptions."[67] Leaders embed assumptions concerning military culture by: what they pay attention to; how they react to incidents; how they allocate resources and rewards; how they teach and develop subordinates; and "how they recruit, select, promote and attrit personnel."[68] A good example of an embedding mechanism is the Profession of Arms Campaign launched by the U.S. Army in January 2011.[69] This program is designed to generate dialogue between Soldiers and Civilians to reaffirm their role as Army Professionals and to recommit their service in accordance with the Army Ethic, as expressed in laws, the Army Values, creeds, oaths, ethos, and shared beliefs embedded within Army culture.

The Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) website provides themes, lesson plans, videos, and other materials to help leaders embed proper assumptions concerning military culture into our Soldiers and Civilians. Unfortunately, these resources are underutilized in many Army formations.

Proper embedding of military assumptions requires senior leader participation in periodic ethics, sexual assault, resiliency, and similar training to educate Soldiers on appropriate conduct, to encourage Soldiers to seek help concerning problems they are experiencing, and to encourage Soldiers to report inappropriate behavior.[70] Soldiers must know their senior leaders care about their well-being and are committed to the eradication of inappropriate behavior.[71] Subordinates must trust their leaders will treat all allegations of inappropriate behavior seriously and will not take any action in reprisal for reporting inappropriate behavior (or condone any person who takes action in reprisal for reporting such behavior).[72]

The Army recently implemented changes in the way it evaluates Soldiers that will influence military culture by creating: Multi-Source Assessment Feedback (MSAF) 360 degree surveys from subordinates and peers; new Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs) (AR 67-10 series) with significant emphasis on character and leadership attributes; and Army Commander 360 evaluations (CDR360s) which allow subordinates to provide input concerning the performance of their battalion and brigade commanders. The new OERs and CDR360s will have a significant impact on the selection of leaders to higher ranks and positions of increased responsibility in the future. It is imperative that the Army continue to monitor the effectiveness of these tools to ensure efficacy within the promotion system. The Army must also establish a program of instruction on Army Ethic

and dysfunctional leadership practices in all leadership schools. We must train our Soldiers to have the personal courage to alert senior leadership of the toxic behavior of supervisors.

Possibly the most important reinforcing mechanism for the eradication of toxic leadership is accountability. Leaders must appropriately hold subordinates accountable for their actions including relieving individuals of their commands / positions for toxic behavior, eliminating toxic leaders from the service, and when appropriate, punishing those who have violated provisions of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).[73] In consultation with their servicing Judge Advocate, commanders should make public the results of UCMJ violations to reinforce standards.

Once assumptions of military culture are firmly in place, these assumptions can be reinforced through reinforcement mechanisms, which include: organizational design and structure; organizational systems and procedures; organizational rituals along with stories about important events and people; the design of physical space; and the use of formal statements concerning organizational philosophy.[74] One of the easiest ways a leader can reinforce military culture is to discuss the importance of the Army Ethic in conversations with subordinates. General Ray Odierno, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, begins many formal presentations to Soldiers with a discussion of the importance of competence, commitment, and character. He further highlights the sacrifices and bravery of those Soldiers awarded the Nation's highest military award--the Medal of Honor--during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. These statements are designed to reinforce our military culture as an honorable profession. Other senior leaders, including commanders down to the battalion level, should take the time when speaking to their

Soldiers to reinforce the importance of the Army Ethic and the Army as an honorable profession. Over time these embedding and reinforcing mechanisms will help to establish a military culture that does not tolerate toxic behavior.

<div align="center">Methods to Identify Toxic Leaders</div>

Before a doctor can implement a plan to treat a patient, he or she must first assess the patient's symptoms and diagnose the medical condition to be treated. This paper has described the characteristics, effects, and scope of the wicked problem of toxic leadership within the Army. This paper will now examine methods to identify toxic leaders within our ranks through subordinates reporting toxic behavior and evaluating leaders, as well as raters documenting inappropriate behavior of their subordinates. The identification and documentation of toxic behavior are crucial steps toward the eventual removal of toxic leaders.

<u>Subordinates Reporting Toxic Behavior</u>

Subordinates reporting the destructive behavior of toxic leaders is essential to eradicating this problem. As previously discussed, however, Soldiers are often afraid or otherwise unwilling to report toxic behavior of their supervisors.[75] It is thus imperative for senior leaders to establish a command climate and culture that promotes treating others with dignity and respect and encourages reporting inappropriate behavior without fear of reprisal. Once subordinates trust their leadership will investigate allegations of improper behavior without reprisal and hold toxic leaders accountable for their actions, they are more likely to report inappropriate, dysfunctional, unethical, or illegal behavior by their supervisors.

There are a number of ways a Soldier may alert his or her leadership of a problem with a toxic supervisor. The Army encourages its Soldiers to use the chain of

<div align="center">15</div>

command to resolve problems at the lowest level possible; however, Soldiers should not feel compelled to initiate a complaint of inappropriate behavior below the level of the supervisor in question. If a Soldier is having trouble resolving an issue below the commander level, he or she is encouraged to utilize the commander's open door policy to discuss the issue directly with the commander before elevating it to the next level of command or raising it outside command channels.

If a Soldier is not getting proper attention to his or her problem by the chain of command, is concerned about possible reprisal, or simply desires to discuss the matter confidentially with someone outside the chain of command, he or she may file a complaint with the local Office of Inspector General (IG).[76] IG complaints are reviewed by a member of the IG staff who makes an independent assessment of whether or not the complaint raises a potential violation of law, regulation, or policy meriting further inquiry or investigation. There are two primary advantages for filing an IG complaint: (1) it provides a means to confidentially report inappropriate behavior;[77] and (2) it provides whistleblower protection against reprisal for making a lawful protected communication.[78] Another advantage is that substantiated IG complaints (*i.e.*, found to have merit) are maintained in a central IG database that is reviewed before promotion of senior officers and selection to certain positions.[79] A substantiated IG complaint is a powerful means to identify a toxic leader that will make it very difficult for him or her to continue service at the highest levels within our military.

A Soldier may always file an inquiry raising an issue about military service with his or her Congressional representative who will contact the unit to request an explanation of the problem and what the military is doing to resolve it. Protected

communications with a member of Congress are also afforded whistleblower protection.[80] A Soldier who is unsure of his or her rights, or needs further assistance raising an issue of toxic leadership with his or her chain of command, is encouraged to seek legal assistance from the local Office of the Staff Judge Advocate.

Subordinates Evaluating Leaders

Anonymous evaluation of leaders by subordinates is a vital step to eliminating toxic behavior within our ranks. The Top 50 companies in the Fortune 1000 have been utilizing peer and subordinate feedback programs for more than two decades; these tools provide valuable insight into employees' strengths, weaknesses and blind spots. More importantly, these mechanisms provide subordinate buy-in in the selection of individuals for positions of increased responsibility fostering employee engagement, commitment, and innovation.[81] The U.S. Army has been utilizing various feedback programs for many years; however, these efforts must be revised and expanded to maximize their usefulness for the identification of toxic leaders.

Command Climate Surveys (CCS) allow subordinates to provide feedback to leadership concerning an organization's climate and overall effectiveness. Army Regulation (AR) 600-20, *Army Command Policy*, requires a new company commander to administer a CSS within 30 days of days of assuming command (120 days for the Army National Guard and United States Army Reserve). A subsequent CSS must be administered 6 months after the initial CSS, and thereafter, on an annual basis.[82] The results must be provided to the next level commander within 30 days of receipt of the report. While not currently required by regulation, the next level commander should review the results of the CSS with his or her subordinate commander. This author recommends the amendment of AR 600-20 to require a commander to submit an action

plan to his or her next level commander with the CSS to ensure the concerns identified in the CSS are properly addressed. Moreover, the CSS and action plan, as signed by the commander and his or her commander, should be sent to the next level commander for situational awareness.

Although the CSS is a great "temperature check" to evaluate the existence of a poor command climate in organization, it currently has limited usefulness in identifying toxic leaders. Since 2005, the Army has been utilizing the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS). The DEOCS measures climate factors associated with equal opportunity and equal employment opportunity (EO/EEO) programs, organizational effectiveness (OE), discrimination / sexual harassment, and sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR).[83] The DEOCS does not measure climate factors specifically associated with toxic leadership. While commanders may supplement the DEOCS with up to ten focus questions, some of which may uncover traits, behaviors, and effects of toxic leaders (see Figure 1), this author recommends DEOMI expand DEOCS to measure specific toxic leadership climate factors in every CSS. DEOMI should work with CASAL to determine the specific climate factors to be studied. Answers to these questions will help alert commanders to potential issues with toxic leadership. Overall statistics for these responses should be provided to CASAL on an annual basis to help it conduct trend analysis relating to the prevalence of toxic leaders in our formations.

MSAF surveys are designed to provide unbiased objective feedback from multiple perspectives so a leader can gain personal insight into his or her leadership strengths and weaknesses. While MSAF surveys are a great tool to help mentor peers

and subordinates, their value is also limited in identifying toxic leaders. First, MSAF surveys, much like command climate surveys, are not designed to look specifically for traits, behaviors, and effects of toxic leadership. Second, because Soldiers select those who will provide feedback in an assessment, the results are inherently biased (*i.e.*, Soldiers are more likely to select peers, subordinates and/or superiors who will provide positive vice critical feedback). Third, since MSAF feedback reports are not shared with supervisors, they will not change the behavior of many toxic leaders (*i.e.*, those who know they are toxic and do not care how others, except their supervisor, perceive them). Finally, while Soldiers are required to conduct an MSAF assessment at least once every 3 years, there is no enforcement of this requirement. The new OER, discussed more fully below, should be modified to extract the completion date of the last MSAF directly from the MSAF system (*i.e.*, the Evaluation Entry System where OERs are now created should not allow a rater, senior rater, or rated officer to sign an OER without a timely completed MSAF). Despite these limitations, this author recommends retaining the MSAF survey as a self-assessment tool separate and apart from 360 evaluations discussed below.

Army CDR360s are a new but not yet fully-implemented tool that should provide a means to identify toxic behavior. CDR360s are the result of a plan spearheaded by the Army Chief of Staff to further develop senior leaders (currently limited to battalion and brigade commanders, specifically Centralized Selection List LTCs and COLs).[84] There are three primary differences between CDR360 evaluations and MSAF 360 surveys. First, CDR360s were specifically designed to measure factors required for successful command. Second, in CDR360 evaluations the rated commander does not

select the personnel who complete the survey; the rated commander may nominate two persons (one peer and one subordinate), but the ultimate decision of who provides feedback rests with the commander's rater. Third, unlike MSAF surveys, the results of CDR360s are provided to the rated commander and his/her rater for "developmental discussion." This provides a rater an opportunity to mentor his/her commanders before each prepares a leader development plan (LDP) identifying ways in which to improve his/her leadership.[85]

While a rater may not use feedback information from a CDR360 when completing an OER, the results will provide him/her invaluable insight into the leadership qualities of his/her subordinate commanders. CDR360s may identify "red flags" worthy of further monitoring, such as behavior that potentially qualifies as toxic. CDR360s will also provide a rater a better "whole person" understanding of his/her commanders that may enable the rater to more accurately determine who has the potential for service at higher levels within the Army, including which commanders are worthy of an "Excels" rating on an OER (limited to the top 49% of officers at the same grade).[86] While time is needed to monitor the success of this program, this author recommends the Army consider expanding the requirement for similar 360 degree type evaluations for non-commander LTC and COL staff positions.[87] Many of these senior leaders supervise dozens of subordinates; their behavior can have a substantial effect on the organizations they lead and are worthy of inclusion in an evaluation process that includes anonymous feedback from subordinates.

Raters Documenting Improper Behavior of Subordinates

Once a rater is informed of potential toxic behavior by a subordinate, he or she must determine whether or not the reported behavior is true and rises to the level of

behavior warranting disciplinary or administrative action. Depending upon the nature of the allegation, and in consultation with a servicing Judge Advocate, the rater can either conduct an informal inquiry himself, refer the matter to a commander to conduct a Preliminary Inquiry pursuant to Rules for Court Martial (RCM) 303, or refer the matter to an appropriate level commander to appoint an informal investigation pursuant to Army Regulation (AR) 15-6, *Procedures for Investigating Officers and Boards of Officers*, to more carefully evaluate the reported misbehavior.

After an allegation of inappropriate toxic behavior is substantiated, the rater must determine whether action is warranted to document the behavior in the Soldier's military records. There are three primary administrative tools used to document inappropriate behavior by officers that does not rise to the level of criminal misconduct: relief for cause, administrative reprimands, and negative performance evaluations. Raters should consider use of these tools to properly identify toxic leaders to promotion and selection boards, thereby reducing the chances that they will be put into positions of increased responsibility and setting the conditions necessary to limit their remaining in service in the Army.[88]

Relief for cause includes relieving a subordinate commander from a command position and a non-commander from a specific duty or assignment. While the regulation governing each is slightly different, the result in both cases is the receipt of a referred OER that will most likely mark the end of the Soldier's career. AR 600-20, *Army Command Policy*, allows a senior commander to relieve a subordinate commander from his or her position when the senior commander "loses confidence in the subordinate commander's ability to command due to misconduct, poor judgment, the subordinate's

inability to complete assigned tasks, or for other similar reasons."[89] Normally, a commander will not relieve a subordinate commander before attempts to remedy a concern with formal counseling; unless the particular circumstances make counseling impractical. If the relief is based on an informal investigation pursuant to AR 15-6, the referral procedures of that regulation must be followed prior to initiating the relief from command. Final action to relieve a commander cannot be completed until the first general officer in the chain of command approves in writing the requested relief from command.[90]

AR 623-3, *Evaluation Reporting System*, allows a senior officer to relieve a subordinate officer from a specific duty or assignment for failure to "complete assigned tasks in a competent manner" or failure to comply with "the accepted professional officer standards consisting of attributes and competencies as part of the Leadership Requirements Model."[91] If the relief is based on an informal investigation pursuant to AR 15-6, the referral procedures of that regulation must be followed prior to initiating the relief for cause; this is in addition to the referral procedures outlined in paragraph 3-28 of AR 623-3. The relief for cause OER must specify who directed the relief and the reason for this decision.

Relief for command or assignment is appropriate in some cases of inappropriate behavior, including toxic behavior that has a demonstrable impact upon safety, command climate, performance, or trust of subordinates. In recent times, senior leadership has appeared more willing to relieve toxic leaders than in years past. Overall, however, senior leaders relieve few toxic leaders from command or assignment. In

consultation with a servicing Judge Advocate, senior leaders must carefully consider

relief for cause as a viable option to address substantiated allegations of toxic behavior.

Administrative reprimands are administrative tools used to censure Soldiers for

failure to comply with established standards, such as conduct demonstrating lack of

high moral character on or off duty.[92] Only a general officer may order that a reprimand

issued by a subordinate commander be filed permanently in a Soldier's Army Military

Human Resource Record (AMHRR) formerly known as the Official Military Personnel

File (OMPF).[93] The Army has effectively used reprimands to document leadership

failures of various kinds in the past; this remains an important tool to identify toxic

leaders to promotion and selection boards.

A negative performance evaluation is another administrative tool that may be

used to identify toxic behavior. Negative evaluations for purposes of this paper cover

not only referred OERs but also evaluations containing sometimes subtle signals to

board members that an officer may not be suited to serve at a higher rank or position.

IAW AR 623-3, *Evaluation Reporting System*, OERs will be referred to the rated officer

for comment before submission to Human Resources Command (HRC) when a rated

officer: fails the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT); fails to maintain height/weight in

accordance with the standards of AR 600-9; receives a rater overall performance

evaluation of "Unsatisfactory" in part IV (DA Form 67-10-1 and -2); receives a senior

rater overall potential rating of "Not Qualified" or "Unsatisfactory" in part V (DA Form 67-

10-1, -2, -3); receives any negative or derogatory comments in parts IV, V or VI; or

receives a "relief for cause" report submitted under the provisions of paragraph 3-54.[94]

As discussed above, a referred OER sends a strong message to board members that an officer is not suited for positions of increased rank or responsibility. Referred OERs, however, are fairly rare. Unless a complaint followed by an investigation substantiates an allegation of toxic leadership, an officer is not likely to receive a referred OER for display of toxic behavior. While useful, referred OERs are unlikely to identify a substantial number of toxic officers within the Army.

Recent changes to the OER system make it more likely that raters will begin to capture negative leadership traits and behaviors associated with toxic leaders in evaluations without triggering the OER referral process. Gone are the days when OERs merely evaluate the performance of the rated officer. The legacy evaluation system allowed toxic leaders who performed at a high level, often at the expense of subordinates, to excel on paper. Raters are now required to comment on a rated officer's character and leadership attributes. Leaders must consider the rated officer's adherence to Army Values and Warrior Ethos. Leaders must also evaluate whether the rated officer supports a positive command workplace environment, treats subordinates in a fair, respectful and consistent manner, develops subordinates through coaching, counseling, and mentoring, and uses influence techniques to empower others.[95] It is imperative that raters honestly evaluate Soldiers' abilities to lead others in addition to their work performance. A rater's failure to write positive comments about a subordinate's leadership attributes may say just as much to a board as writing negative comments. While it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the new 67-10 series OERs, the new system is expected to have a positive impact on the identification of toxic leaders within the Army.

Methods to Remove Toxic Leaders

Once a physician diagnoses a patient with cancer he or she must devise a plan

to eliminate the cancerous cells from within an affected area before they spread and

destroy the body. This paper has examined ways to identify toxic leaders and will now

describe methods to remove such individuals from the Army including judicial

punishment in rare occasions of serious criminal misconduct and administrative

eliminations in cases where toxic behavior is properly documented in an officer's

AMHRR. Removal of toxic leaders is a critical embedding mechanism necessary to

establish a military culture that does not condone toxic behavior.

Judicial Punishment of Toxic Leaders in Violation of the UCMJ

Given the lack of a common definition of toxic leadership, it is axiomatic that the

UCMJ does not specifically prohibit toxic behavior. Provisions of the UCMJ that

arguably encompass certain types of toxic behavior include Article 93, cruelty and

maltreatment, Article 133, conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman, and/or Article

134, indecent language and communicating a threat. However, a commander is not

likely to proceed with judicial or non-judicial punishment against a toxic leader for an

alleged violation of one of these offenses without additional acts of criminal

misconduct.[96]

In a rare occasion, a leader who displays toxic behavior may also violate a

specific and more serious provision of the UCMJ (*e.g.,* adultery, sexual assault, *etc.*). It

is incumbent upon senior leaders to pursue significant action, up to and including

judicial or non-judicial punishment as dictated by the circumstances of each case, when

toxic leaders commit serious offenses of criminal misconduct. Senior leaders must

establish a commitment to rid the Army of toxic leaders by action and not merely a

verbal commitment to take action. Moreover, higher ranking offenders should generally face more severe consequences than lower ranking offenders, a scenario which is arguably not evident today. While admittedly useful in only a handful of cases, judicial punishment is an available tool that senior leaders should use to remove toxic leaders who commit serious offenses of the UCMJ.

Adverse Administrative Eliminations

In addition to the court-martial process, officers may be eliminated from military service administratively for misconduct, substandard performance of duty, or the existence of derogatory information in their AMHRR. Non-probationary officers, those with more than five years of commissioned military service, receive more due process rights prior to administrative elimination than probationary officers, including the right to appear before a Board of Inquiry (also known as a Show Cause Board). AR 600-8-24, *Officers Transfers and Discharges*, contains a non-exclusive list of reasons justifying the elimination of an officer for misconduct or substandard performance or duty.[97]

A General Officer Show Cause Authority (GOSCA)[98] may initiate an elimination action against an officer for misconduct, including but not limited to, "acts of personal misconduct" or "conduct unbecoming an officer."[99] A GOSCA may also initiate an officer elimination action for substandard performance of duty, including *inter alia*: "a downward trend in overall performance resulting in an unacceptable record of efficiency, or a consistent record of mediocre service;"[100] "failure to exercise necessary leadership or command expected of an officer of their grade;"[101] "failure to properly perform assignments commensurate with an officer's grade and experience;"[102] or "apathy, defective attitudes, or other characteristic disorders to include inability or unwillingness to expend effort."[103] Depending upon the circumstances of a particular case, toxic

behavior could fit into one or more of these categories of misconduct or substandard performance of duty.[104]

A GOSCA may also initiate an officer elimination action when there exists derogatory information in an officer's AMHRR, including an Article 15, a relief for cause OER, or a letter of reprimand, which combined with other known deficiencies justifies elimination.[105] This provision reinforces the importance of properly documenting toxic behavior in a relief for cause OER or AMHRR-filed letter of reprimand as discussed in the previous section. It is important to note that U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC) requires the initiation of elimination proceedings against any Army Reserve officer who has received adverse information (*e.g.*, Article 15, letter of reprimand, referred OER, etc.) in his or her AMHRR since the last centralized selection board reviewed the Soldier's AMHRR. In other words, the USARC Commander has eliminated the discretion of U.S. Army Reserve GOSCAs to initiate elimination proceedings against those officers who receive derogatory information in their AMHRR.[106] This author recommends the U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 consider revising AR 600-8-24 to eliminate GOSCA discretion in similar circumstances for Regular Army officers. While arguably underutilized, adverse eliminations are valuable tools to remove toxic leaders whose behaviors have been substantiated and properly documented in their AMHRR.

Other Involuntary Separations

Finally, officers may be involuntarily separated from military service by various administrative boards conducted by Human Resources Command (HRC). Part of HRC's responsibility is to screen the files of officers who have been passed over for promotion to the next higher grade on two occasions rendering them ineligible for further service on active duty. HRC is also charged with implementing tools used to shape the force

including Selective Early Retirement Boards, Officer Separation Boards, and Release from Active Duty Boards (REFRAD). These tools are likely to eliminate those officers serving on active duty with derogatory information in their AMHRR.

Military officers serve in an "up or out" system. An Army officer twice non-selected for promotion to the grade of Captain (CPT), Major (MAJ), LTC, Chief Warrant Officer 3 or 4 (CW3 or CW4) may be involuntarily separated from active duty unless within two years of eligibility for retirement or "selectively continued" to remain on active duty for a specified period of time.[107] During the decade of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, many two-time non-select officers were selectively continued because of manpower requirements. Following the withdrawal of forces in Iraq, the Army ended most selective continuations and is now rigorously enforcing standards for retention on active duty.

A promotion board is almost certain not to select an officer today for promotion to the next higher rank if he or she has derogatory information in his or her AMHRR which may include a relief for cause OER or letter of reprimand for toxic behavior. Eventually, HRC will involuntarily separate such an officer once designated as a "two-time non-select." Alternatively, HRC will require the two-time non-select officer with eighteen years, but less than twenty years, of active federal service (AFS) to retire upon reaching twenty years of AFS.

In an effort to draw down active duty forces to a projected end-strength of 450,000 Soldiers, or as low as 420,000 if sequestration returns in FY 2016, the Army is once again using involuntary separations known as Selective Early Retirement Boards (SERBs), Enhanced Selective Early Retirement Boards (eSERBs), and Officer

Separation Boards (OSBs).[108] A SERB considers for involuntary retirement senior officers (normally LTCs and COLs) who have either been twice non-selected for promotion to the next highest grade (in the case of LTCs) or have served at least four years' time-in-grade and not selected for promotion to the next highest grade (in the case of COLs).[109] Approximately 200 out of more than 800 LTCs and COLs were selected for early retirement by a SERB in FY 2014.[110]

An eSERB considers for involuntary retirement CPTs and MAJs who have at least 18 years of total AFS and have not been selected for promotion or retirement.[111] If not already eligible for retirement, officers selected by an eSERB are allowed to remain on active duty until they reach twenty years of AFS.[112] An OSB, on the other hand, considers for involuntary separation CPTs and MAJs with more than six but less than eighteen years of AFS.[113] Approximately 1,100 CPTs and 500 MAJs out of more than 19,000 were selected for early retirement or separation by an OSB or eSERB in FY 2014.[114]

The United States Army Reserve is also utilizing REFRAD boards to shape the reserve force.[115] A REFRAD board considers Active Guard Reserve (AGR) LTCs who have at least two years' time-in-grade and 18 years of AFS. Additionally, a REFRAD board considers AGR LTCs with less than 18 years of AFS who have at least six years' time-in-grade. A REFRAD board also considers AGR COLs regardless of AFS who have at least two years' time-in-grade or three years' time-in-grade for Medical Services Corps officers. Currently not eligible for consideration by a REFRAD board are AGR COLs and LTCs in the Judge Advocate General Corps and Chaplain Corps, AGR COLs in the Nurse Corps, and AGR LTC Army Medical Department officers.[116]

While SERBs, eSERBs, OSBs, and REFRAD Boards are force shaping tools, they may contribute to the enhancement of Officer Corps by eliminating from service early many officers who are not likely to progress in rank. Of the CPTs and MAJs selected for separation during last year's SERB/OSB, 440 had derogatory information in their AMHRR and 190 had below-center-of-mass evaluations demonstrating little or no potential for promotion to the next grade.[117] It is possible that some of these officers, who were destined to be separated from service as a two-time non-select down the road, displayed characteristics of toxic behavior. As the Army intends to use these force shaping tools in at least the next few years it is likely to rid the Officer Corps of additional toxic leaders. While reductions are not welcomed news to those in uniform, they may contribute to some level of good to the force.

Conclusion

This paper addresses the wicked problem of toxic leadership in the U.S. Army. Taming this problem requires positive and effective leadership at all levels. Leaders must first help establish a military culture that encourages Soldiers to report toxic behavior without fear of reprisal. Leaders must also make the hard choices necessary to document and remove toxic leaders from our ranks. The Army is moving in the right direction with several new initiatives including revamping the OER system and implementing CDR360 evaluations. The Army must continue to monitor and expand upon these initiatives to demonstrate its commitment to rid toxic leaders from its ranks and to protect the integrity of the military profession.

Endnotes

[1] Emmet John Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years* (New York: Antheneum, 1963), 124.

[2] Finding that "the hazard of divorce increases as a function of cumulative time deployed" is in contradiction of earlier studies. Sebastian Negrusa, Brighita Negrusa and James Hosek, "Gone to War: Have Deployments Increased Divorces?" *J. Popular Economists* 27, no. 2 (April 2014): 473-496, 494; Noting a recent study which found an increased rate of suicide for Soldiers deployed between 2004 and 2009 in contradiction of an early study. Matthew J. Friedman, "Suicide Risk Among Soldiers: Early Findings From Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers (Army STARRS)," *JAMA Psychiatry* 71, no. 5 (May 2014): 487-489; Noting "the association between combat exposure and PTSD is well established in the literature".Lindsey A. Hines, *et al.*, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Post Iraq and Afghanistan: Prevalence Among Military Subgroups," *CanJPsychiatry* 59, no. 9 (September 2014): 468-479, 471.

[3] K. Scott Katrosh, "Sexual Assault within the Military," Course Paper for Strategic Leadership (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, September 30, 2014), 1. Wherein the author used a similar introduction to begin a paper discussing the problem of sexual assaults within the military.

[4] Jeff Conklin, "Wicked Problems & Social Complexity," in *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems* (Wiley, 2005), 1, http://cognexus.org/wpf/wickedproblems.pdf (accessed December 16, 2014).

[5] Ibid., 7-8.

[6] Blake Ashforth, "Petty Tyranny in Organizations," *Human Relations* 47, no. 7 (July 1994): 755-778.

[7] Jake Conger, "The Dark Side of Leadership," *Organizational Dynamics* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 44-55.

[8] Bennett J. Tepper, "Consequences of Abusive Supervision," *Academy of Management Journal* 43, no. 2 (April 2000): 178-190.

[9] Barbara Kellerman, *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004).

[10] Marcia Lynn Whicker, *Toxic Leaders: When Organizations Go Bad* (Wesport, CT: Quorom, 1996); George E. Reed, "Toxic Leadership," *Military Review* 84, no. 4 (July/August 2004): 67-71; Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Alure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians--and How We Can Survive Them* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2005); Marco Tavanti, "Managing Toxic Leaders: Dysfunctional Patters in Organizational Leadership and How to Death with Them," *Human Resource Management* 6, no. 83 (June 2011): 127-136; Kathie L. Pelletier, "Leader Toxicity: An Empirical Investigation of Toxic Behavior and Rhetoric," *Leadership* 6, no. 4 (November 2010): 373-389; Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., "Toxic Leadership," *Army* 62, no. 6 (June 2012): 47-52.

[11] Whicker, *Toxic Leaders: When Organizations Go Bad*, 11.

[12] Ibid., 11-12.

[13] Lipman-Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, 18. (emphasis original)

[14] Ibid., 19-21: Lipman-Blumen further explained that toxic leaders include not only those who specifically intend to harm others, or seek to enhance themselves at the expense of others, but leaders who unintentionally inflict serious and enduring harm on the organization and/or its members.

[15] Reed, "Toxic Leadership," 71.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 67.

[19] Andrew A. Schmidt, *Development and Validation of the Toxic Leadership Scale* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, 2008), 2-3. Schmidt noted that toxic leaders do not include those who simply exhibit poor management or leadership skills, those who make bad decisions, or those who are suffering from mental health problems.

[20] Ibid., 74.

[21] Darrell Wayne Aubrey, *Operationalizing the Construct of Toxic Leadership in the United States Army* (Phoenix: University of Phoenix, 2013).

[22] Ibid., 88, 94-96.

[23] Ibid., 88, 92-94.

[24] Schmidt, *Development and Validation of the Toxic Leadership Scale*, 57. This definition was accepted in a recent dissertation by James M. Dobbs. James M. Dobbs, *The Relationship between Perceived Toxic Leadership Styles, Leader Effectiveness, and Organizational Cynicism* (San Diego: University of San Diego, 2014), 17.

[25] Ulmer, "Toxic Leadership," 48.

[26] U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 1, 2012), 3.

[27] Ulmer, "Toxic Leadership," 48.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Tavanti, "Managing Toxic Leaders," 129.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ulmer, "Toxic Leadership," 48.

[33] U.S. Department of the Army, *Center for Army Leadership Technical Report 2011-3, Antecedents and Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army: A Two Year Review and Recommended Solutions* (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Leadership, June 30, 2011).

[34] Ibid., 8-9. The original toxic leadership behavioral typology was made up of nine behaviors (micromanaging, mean-spirited/aggressive, rigid/poor decision-making, poor attitude, narcissistic, inconsistent, interfering with work or processes, unreachable, and incompetent) and later reduced to four (poor attitude, rigid/closed-minded, mean spirited-aggressive, and micro-managing).

[35] Ibid., 11, 35: In the final discussion of the report, the authors appear to equate these traits to those displayed by toxic leaders when they conclude, "data indicated the vast majority of U.S. Army leaders observed a toxic leader in the last year, and over a third indicated they had firsthand experience with 3 or more toxic leaders, indicating a significant prevalence."

[36] Ibid., 11.

[37] Ibid., 21.

[38] Ibid., 10 (Wherein the authors estimate from 2010 data points that one in five uniformed leaders are viewed negatively); Ibid., 36 (wherein the authors conclude that one in five leaders are seen as exhibiting toxic behaviors). These authors further note that Army Soldiers rated their supervisors as abusive at a rate higher than other occupations studied using the Tepper abusive supervision scale.

[39] Reed, "Toxic Leadership," 68. In 2003, virtually all of those surveyed from the U.S. Army War College indicated experience working with toxic leaders; George E. Reed and R. Craig Bullis, "The Impact of Destructive Leadership on Senior Military Officers and Civilian Employees," *Armed Forces & Society* 36, no. 1 (October 2009): 10-11. In 2008, all of those surveyed from the U.S. Army War College indicated experience working with leaders displaying destructive leadership behaviors; 17.7% of those indicated such behaviors occurred within the past year.

[40] George R. Reed and Richard A. Olsen, "Toxic Leadership: Part Deux," *Military Review* 90, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 2010): 58-64.

[41] Ibid., 61.

[42] Ibid.

[43] U.S. Department of the Army, *2013 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL),* Main Findings Technical Report 2014-1 (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Leadership, April 30, 2014).

[44] Ibid., 57.

[45] Ibid., 57-60. Perceptions of negative leadership behaviors are most prevalent among non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in the ranks of Sergeant and Staff Sergeant who generally hold positions as squad leaders and platoon sergeants).

[46] Robert A. Mueller, *Leadership in the U.S. Army: A Qualitative Exploratory Case Study of the Effects Toxic Leadership Has on the Morale and Welfare of Soldiers* (Minneapolis, MN: Capella University, 2012).Wherein his research supported the conclusion that toxic leadership is a widespread problem in the U.S. Army.

[47] Ulmer, "Toxic Leadership," 50.

[48] Daniel Zwerdling, "Army Takes on Its Own Toxic Leaders," *NPR News*, January 6, 2014, http://www.npr.org/2014/01/06/259422776/army-takes-on-its-own-toxic-leaders (accessed December 16, 2014).

[49] In 2010, Dr. Dave Matsuda, an anthropologist, studied eight cases of suicide in the Army involving victims who had recently served in Iraq. After interviewing friends of the victims, he found that in addition to a number of significant personal problems, many of the victims had a leader, or multiple leaders, who made their lives exceedingly difficult. While Dr. Matsuda found no evidence to establish that these leaders caused the Soldiers to commit suicide, the friends of the victims believed the leaders helped to push them over the edge. Dr. Matsuda submitted a report to the U.S. Army concerning his study which concluded that "[s]uicidal behavior can be triggered by … toxic command climate."

[50] Tavanti, "Managing Toxic Leaders," 128.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Aubrey, *Operationalizing the Construct of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, 112-118.

[53] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic mperative," September 2003, 3, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=248 (accessed December 16, 2014).

[54] Ibid., 5.

[55] Aubrey, *Operationalizing the Construct of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, 112-118; *CAL Technical Report 2011-3*, 16. Noting that one outcome of toxic leadership in the Army is erosion of trust.

[56] Ibid., 113-114; U.S. Department of the Army, *Center for Army Leadership Technical Report 2011-3*, 12. Noting that only 45% of Soldiers believed the Army allows people to offer candid opinions without fear of repercussion.

[57] Aubrey, *Operationalizing the Construct of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, 113-114.

[58] Ibid., 114-118; U.S. Department of the Army, *Center for Army Leadership Technical Report 2011-3*, 17. Noting "toxic leadership impacts turnover intention via reduced morale"; Ibid., 16. Noting outcomes of toxic leadership include "reduced effectiveness, commitment and retention"; Ibid., 16. Noting toxic leadership, like a disease, can easily spread affecting "dozens or hundreds of Soldiers, and abused subordinates will, in turn, negatively affect even more personnel"; Ibid., 36. Noting nearly 20% of participants in the 2010 CASAL indicated they emulate the leaders they found to be toxic; U.S. Department of the Army, *2013 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership, Technical Report 2014-1*, 62-64. Further reporting the impact of negative leadership behaviors associated with toxic leaders.

[59] Aubrey, *Operationalizing the Construct of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, 133.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 96-98.

[62] Stephen J. Gerras, Leonard Wong, and Charles D. Allen, *Organizational Culture: Applying a Hybrid Model to the U.S. Army* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, November 2008), 2.

[63] Reed, "Toxic Leadership," 68.

[64] Ulmer, "Toxic Leadership," 50.

[65] Reed, "Toxic Leadership," 68.

[66] Ibid. *CAL Technical Report 2011-3*, 19. Noting that Soldiers failed to question or report negative behavior in more than two-thirds of incidents.

[67] Gerras, *Organizational Culture*, 17.

[68] Ibid., 17-19.

[69] *Center for the Army Profession and Ethic Home Page*, http://cape.army.mil/aaop/ (accessed December 16, 2014).

[70] Katrosh, *Sexual Assault within the Military*, 4-5.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ulmer estimated in April 2010 "that roughly 8-12% of Army officers in the rank of colonel and higher are so toxic that they need to be removed from command." U.S. Department of the Army, *CAL Technical Report 2011-3*, 10.

[74] Gerras, *Organizational Culture*, 19-21.

[75] U.S. Department of the Army, *CAL Technical Report 2011-3*, 19. Noting that the 2009 CASAL revealed more than two-thirds of the time negative behavior was neither questioned nor reported.

[76] A Soldier may also file an IG complaint online. *Office of the Inspector General Home Page*, http://www.daig.pentagon.mil/ (accessed December 16, 2014).

[77] U.S. Department of the Army, *Inspector General Activities and Procedures,* AR 20-1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, July 3, 2012), para. 1-12. Describing the IG "tenet of confidentiality". While the identity of a complainant is protected to the maximum extent possible, if disciplinary action is ultimately taken against the subject of an investigation the identity of the complainant may be required to be disclosed to the offender.

78 U.S. Department of Defense, *Military Whistleblower Protection*, DoD Directive 7050.06 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, July 23, 2007), para. 4.4. Prohibiting any person from "tak[ing], or threaten[ing] to take an unfavorable personnel action, or withhold[ing], or threaten[ing] to withhold a favorable personnel action, in reprisal against any member of the Armed Forces for making or preparing to make a protected communication"; AR 20-1, *Inspector General Activities and Procedures*, para. 1-5b(4). Noting that "10 USC 1034 provides for lawful protected communications by military personnel to Members of Congress and IGs and prohibits retaliatory personnel actions in reprisal for those protected communications". Ibid., para. 1-13b. Describing prohibitions against reprisal; Ibid., para. 1-13b(2). Noting that a "lawful communication" includes "information that the Soldier reasonably believes provides evidence of a violation of law or regulation, including a law or regulation prohibiting sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination, gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds or other resources, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety".

79 AR 20-1, *Inspector General Activities and Procedures*, para. 1-4b. Describing the Inspector General Action Request System commonly referred to as IGARS; Ibid., para. 7-1k(3). Noting that "AR 600–8–29 requires a review of IG records in conjunction with senior officer promotion boards. Other IG records reviews are conducted for certain sensitive assignments and at the direction of senior Army leaders".

80 *Protected Communications*, U.S. Code 10, Section 1034 (accessed January 8, 2015). Describing protected communications and prohibitions against retaliatory personnel actions.

81 Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate," 19.

82 U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Command Policy*, AR 600-20 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, November 6, 2014), Appendix E-1, 97.

83 U.S. Department of the Defense, *Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey: Sample Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) Docs 4.0* (Patrick AFB, FL: May 20, 2014), 2. https://www.deocs.net/DocDownloads/ SampleDEOCSSurvey20May2014.pdf (accessed December 16, 2014).

84 Michelle Tan, "360-degree Evals for Commanders Start Oct. 1," *Army Times*, December 28, 2013.

85 Bill Ackerly, "Army Implements New Self-awareness Program for Commanders," (Fort Leavenworth: September 26, 2014), http://www.army.mil/article/134580/Army_implements_new_self_awareness_program_for_com manders/ (accessed December 16, 2014).

86 Ibid. It is anticipated that critics may argue CDR360s violate a rated commander's due process rights. However, due process is already built into the OER system and need not be duplicated in the CDR360 process (*i.e.,* an officer who receives a referred evaluation is entitled to the referral procedures outlined in AR 623-23).

87 Ibid., 2. Beginning October 2014, all Centralized Selection List Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel level commanders must complete two CDR360s during their command tenure. The first must be completed within 3 to 6 months from assumption of command; the second must be completed between the 15th and 18th month of command.

88 This paper focuses on the identification and removal of toxic officers; however, many of the methods described herein apply equally to the identification and removal of toxic NCOs.

89 U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Command Policy*, AR 600-20 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, November 6, 2014), para. 2-17.

90 Ibid.

91 U.S. Department of the Army, *Evaluation Reporting System*, AR 623-3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, March 31, 2014), para. 3-54.

92 U.S. Department of the Army, *Unfavorable Information*, AR 600-37 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 19, 1986):

> An administrative reprimand is generally referred to as a letter of reprimand or memorandum of reprimand; a reprimand issued by a general officer is referred to as a general officer memorandum of reprimand (GOMOR).

93 Ibid., Chapter 3. A Soldier is provided an opportunity to rebut the allegations of inappropriate behavior before a filing decision is made by either a general officer or a commander exercising general court-martial jurisdiction. A reprimand not filed in a Soldier's AMHRR will have no significant impact on the Soldier's career.

94 AR 623-3, *Evaluation Reporting System*, para. 3-26.

95 Ibid., para. 2-12.

96 Judicial punishment refers to a court-martial, whereas non-judicial punishment refers to an Article 15. The burden of proof for both is guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

97 U.S. Department of the Army, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, AR 600-8-24 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 13, 2011), para. 4-2.

(For officers serving on active duty for a period of 30 or more consecutive days); U.S. Department of the Army, *Separation of Officers*, AR 135-175 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 4, 2011), paras. 2-10 and 2-11 (for Army Reserve and Army National Guard officers serving on active duty or active duty for training for a period of 90 days or less).

98 AR 600-8-24 defines a GOSCA as a Commander, "exercising general court-martial authority and all general or flag rank officers in command who have a judge advocate or legal advisor available. Any GOSCA by assignment or attachment may initiate or process an elimination." AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, Glossary.

99 AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 4-2(b)(5), (8); AR 135-175, *Separation of Officers*, para. 2-11(f), (o).

100 AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 4-2(a)1; AR 135-175, *Separation of Officers*, para. 2-10(a).

[101] AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 4-2(a)3; AR 135-175, *Separation of Officers*, para. 2-10(c).

[102] AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 4-2(a)5; AR 135-175, *Separation of Officers*, para. 2-10(f).

[103] AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 4-2(a)6; AR 135-175, *Separation of Officers*, para. 2-10(g).

[104] An officer discharged from military service for misconduct may be issued an Honorable, General (Under Honorable Conditions), or Other Than Honorable Discharge certificate. An officer discharged solely based upon substandard performance must be issued an Honorable discharge certificate. AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 1-22; AR 135-175, *Separation of Officers*, paras. 2-10, 2-11.

[105] AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 4-12(c).

[106] Jeffrey W. Talley, "Involuntary Separation of Army Reserve Officers and Warrant Officers," (Washington, DC, February 25, 2013).

[107] AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 5-9.

[108] Michelle Tan, "2 Star Outlines Impending Officer, NCO Separations," *Army Times*, June 2, 2014, http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Farchive.armytimes.com%2Farticle%2F20140602%2FCAREERS03%2F306020020%2F2-star-outlines-impending-officer-NCO-separations&ei=YpKQVJaQCImcyQTqg4L4Cw&usg=AFQjCNFztfVMCw1KG-9n7pAEadpsHufEVA&sig2=8lExNhSmRt1dOfampJjyLg (accessed December 16, 2014).

[109] *See* AR 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, para. 6-29.

[110] Tan, "2 Star Outlines Impending Officer, NCO Separations." Those selected by a Selective Early Retirement Board (SERB) receive full retirement pay and eligibility for healthcare and other military retirement benefits.

[111] U.S. Department of the Army, Human Resources Command, Frequently Asked Questions for Officers Selected for FY 2014 Captain and Major Army Competitive Category Officer Separation Board (OSB) or Enhanced Selective Early Retirement Board (ESERB)," July 31, 2014, https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/assets/pdf/osb-eserb_faq.pdf (accessed November 22, 2014).

[112] Ibid. These officers also receive full retirement pay and eligibility for healthcare and other military retirement benefits once retired.

[113] Ibid. Officers selected by an OSB are entitled to involuntary separation pay provided they have at least six years of AFS; if they have at least fifteen years of AFS, they are eligible to apply for early retirement under the Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA).

[114] Tan, "2 Star Outlines Impending Officer, NCO Separations."

[115] U.S. Department of the Army, Human Resources Command, *Military Personnel (MILPER) Message Number 14-104, FY 2014 AGR Release From Active Duty (REFRAD) Board as a Force Alignment Tool*, April 11, 2014.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Brad Hardy, "Here's Why The Army Needed To Cut Officers With a History of Bad Decisions," *Task & Purpose*, August 26, 2014, http://taskandpurpose.com/heres-army-needed-cut-officers-history-bad-decisions/ (accessed on December 16, 2014).