

MAG-14 NCO Leadership Program

A proven leadership program.

by Maj Andrew L. East & 1stLt Samuel Monk

On 26 December 2003, two Marine Aircraft Group 14 (MAG-14) Marines were passengers in a car that was involved in an automobile accident. LCpl Nathan Dodd, assigned to Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 14 (MALS-14), was killed instantly while Cpl William Avant, assigned to Marine Attack Squadron 231 (VMA-231), was taken to the hospital in a coma where he later succumbed to his injuries. In the aftermath of this accident the Commanding Officer (CO), MAG-14 determined that a new approach to heighten safety awareness was needed, that the routine safety approach was not having the desired effect on

youngest Marines, and they represent the strength of our Marine Corps. The focus group determined the need for greater personal responsibility between a young Marine and a respected NCO from his shop or unit. Together the focus group created a dynamic, relevant leadership program that engages NCO leadership to mentor our younger Marines. This program establishes a closer bond and higher level of personal responsibility between "a Marine and his fire team" during those periods when he is not in close contact with his unit's leadership. Utilizing the Center for Naval Analyses study of Marine Corps accidental deaths, this

required to determine the Marine's personal risk assessment and then assign the Marine to a risk category with the command's approval. These risk categories assist in determining how a Marine will execute leave and liberty and the mentor's oversight during the Marine's leave and liberty.

Program Evaluation

In October 2004 the MAG-14 safety department evaluated the effectiveness of the program. Since the NCO leadership program's inception, the number of private motor vehicle mishaps within MAG-14 for the third and fourth quarters of fiscal year 2004 (FY04) was reduced to 11, as compared to 20 in the first and second quarters of FY04, and 25 in the third and fourth quarters of FY03. Furthermore, MALS-14, which is comprised of over 1,000 Marines, reported 5 alcohol-related incidents in the last half of FY04 compared to 16 in the first half of FY04. They also reported 11 domestic incidents in the first half of FY04 compared to 4 in the last half or FY04. In the most recent data con-

The focus group determined the need for greater personal responsibility between a young Marine and a respected NCO from his shop or unit.

our youngest Marines. He promised the Dodd family that something good would come of this tragedy. That "something good" was the creation of the noncommissioned officer (NCO) leadership program and the Nathan P. Dodd Leadership Award for NCO excellence and leadership.

A New Program

The MAG-14 team established and maintains this new and innovative NCO leadership program that directly supports our Marines through active mentoring provided by our NCOs. In May of 2003 the CO, MAG-14 created a focus group consisting of one field grade officer, one company grade officer, and eight Marine NCOs from within MAG-14. The CO, MAG-14 turned to his NCOs because of their concern for our junior Marines and their close personal contact with them. As small unit leaders they are in the best position to care for and mentor our

active program enables our junior leadership to focus on our higher risk Marines. The leadership program requires that every unit select NCOs who have demonstrated maturity and leadership and designate them as mentors. The mentors are not only given a presentation and instruction regarding their role in the program, they are also presented a packet titled "NCO's Mission in Force Protection." Some information that is contained within the packet includes the role of a leader, indicators that put Marines at risk, drinking and driving, and safe driving, as well as a copy of a message from the former Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., with the subject "Marines Don't Do That." The mentors then meet with their Marines, discussing topics that include leave and liberty travel plans, financial planning, family concerns, unit culture, and personal responsibility, to name a few. The mentor is also

cerning reportable incidents from MALS-14, the squadron reported 35 mishaps in the first quarter of FY04. With 2 weeks remaining in the first quarter of FY05, MALS-14 had only 13 reportable mishaps. As stated by LtCol John Rutherford, CO MALS-14, "A 66 percent reduction in Class D mishaps is substantial, and the only change is the concentrated effort throughout the squadron with the NCO leadership program."

While researching the program's effectiveness, not only was there a decline in the number of reportable mishaps, but there were numerous testimonials from Marines who were positively influenced by the program as well. Mentors have positively influenced leave/liberty plans, emergency leave situations, domestic violence assistance, unsatisfactory housing conditions, and recognizing and assisting in suicide prevention. The success of this program can be directly attributed to the method

that was utilized in the creation of the NCO leadership program. MAG-14 officers gave guidance to the programs creation, but the following eight Marines developed the concept and foundation of the NCO leadership program:

- Sgt Michael R. Colon, MALS-14
- Sgt Joseph S. Meisel, Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 2 (VMAQ-2)
- Cpl Chad K. Webb, VMAQ-3
- LCpl Edward Z. Roder, MAG-14
- Sgt Wesley A. Gilbert, MALS-14
- Sgt Jose F. Torres, Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 252 (VMGR-252)
- Sgt Paula A. Turner, Marine Attack Training Squadron 203
- Sgt Brandon J. Lemke, VMAQ-1

Annual Award

In addition to the creation of the NCO leadership program, the CO, MAG-14 established the Nathan P. Dodd NCO Leadership Award in honor of LCpl Nathan Dodd. (Prior

to his death LCpl Dodd's squadron had submitted his name for meritorious promotion to corporal.) The Dodd award is an annual award that recognizes the NCO who has demonstrated superior leadership, sound mentorship, and unparalleled inspiration to the young Marines of MAG-14. In October 2004 Sgt Shauna Ralston of VMGR-253 was the first recipient of this annual award. During the award ceremony the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps presented Sgt Ralston with a Certificate of Commendation, a plaque provided by the Marine Corps Association, and a signed copy of *Marine Rifleman* (an autobiography of Col Wesley L. Fox, USMC (Ret)) provided by the Marine Corps University Foundation. Also in attendance at the award ceremony were the parents of LCpl Dodd, who where able to witness his legacy being carried forward and the good that has come from their tragedy.

On 1 November 2004, the Commanding General, II Marine Expedi-

tionary Force (II MEF) instituted an NCO leadership program based on MAG-14's model. The genesis of the MEF basing their program on MAG-14's program was due to the positive influence that the NCO leadership program has had on the safety culture and mentorship of the MAG-14 Marines. This program is decisively aiding MAG-14 in meeting the Secretary of Defense's goal of reducing mishaps by 50 percent over 2 years.



>Authors' Note: The authors want to thank Col Robert A. Fitzgerald, CO, MAG-14, and LtCol Todd W. Schlund, XO, VMA-223, for providing the guidance and oversight for this program.

>>Maj East is the Director, Safety and Standardization, MAG-14.

>>>1stLt Monk is the Fiscal Officer, MAG-14.



Gulf Coast MILITARY EXPO

Marine Corps Association and U.S. Naval Institute



10-11 May 2005

Hilton New Orleans Riverside
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.gcmexpo.org

The Marine Corps Association and the U.S. Naval Institute present...

How Do We Make Homeland Defense and Homeland Security Seamless?

**FREE
ADMISSION**

Tuesday, 10 May 2005

Welcome by the Honorable C. Ray Nagin, Mayor, City of New Orleans
Panel Discussion: What Are the Maritime Gaps and How Do We Address Them?
Featured Address: Vice Admiral Vivien Crea, USCG, Commander, Coast Guard Atlantic Area
Panel Discussion: What Are the Land Gaps and How Do We Address Them?

Wednesday, 11 May 2005

Breakfast Roundtable Discussion: What Is the Role of the Reserves and the Guard in Homeland Security and Homeland Defense?
Address: Major General Bennett Landreneau, Adjutant General, Louisiana National Guard
Panel Discussion: Is the National Response Plan Up to the Task?
Panel Discussion: How Can We Use Technology to Bridge the Gap?

CHAIRMAN SPONSOR: **Raytheon**

CORPORATE SPONSOR: **BOEING**

GULF COAST MILITARY EXPOSITION AND SYMPOSIUM

MARINE CORPS ASSOCIATION: 715 Broadway • Quantico, VA 22134-0775 • Ph: 800-336-0291 • Fax: 703-630-1446 • www.mca-marines.org
U.S. NAVAL INSTITUTE: 291 Wood Road • Annapolis, MD 21402-5034 • Ph: 410-295-1067 • Fax: 410-295-1049 • www.navalinstitute.org