



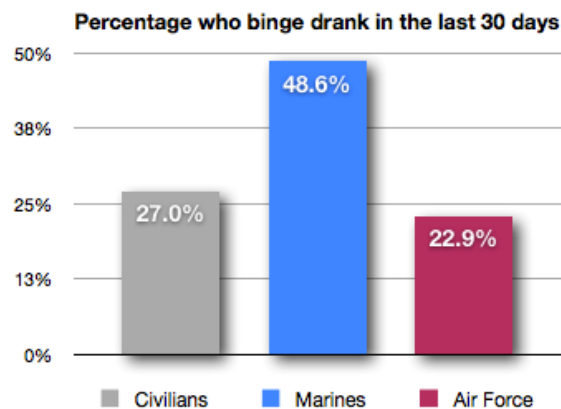
AUGUST 2014 NEWSLETTER

Alcohol in the Military...a Deadly Foe!

By Lise Gervais

Drinking has long been part of the culture of the military. Being in very stressful situations, being away from family and home for long periods, being a young adult-- all of these factors contribute to, and booster an environment where heavy drinking is commonplace.

Of course this isn't new. During the first world war, British Chancellor David Lloyd George declared that "We are fighting Germany, Austria and drink...the greatest of these deadly foes is drink." While this sounds extreme, there is a link between overconsumption of alcohol and the kind of behavior that erodes unit cohesiveness.



Source: 2011 Department of Defense Health Behaviors Study

At a Department of Defense press briefing in May, Secretary Hagel said that more than 5,000 service members reported being sexually assaulted in the previous year, and more than 2/3 said that alcohol was consumed by the victim and/or the perpetrator. It's possible that only a very small percentage of

these crimes are actually reported.

Also at this briefing, Major General Jeffrey Snow said that the military's policies on alcohol should "encourage responsible sales practice and training of providers, and involve the support of the communities around our installations to reduce the risks posed by alcohol."

Attempting to get a handle on the problem, the DoD consulted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who recommended that they look at a number of state-level initiatives that have had some success. One is California's Responsible Beverage Service program, which trains servers to understand how alcohol is consumed, its effects on the body and measures servers can take to slow down the intoxication of patrons. Another is Arizona's Safer Bars Alliance which trains bar personnel to watch for signs that things are getting out of control among patrons.

In some cases the military has decreased hours of sale and limited advertising. In Norfolk, VA, the location of one of the largest naval bases in the world, alcohol can no longer be sold between 10 pm and 6 am and no more than 10% of floor space in mini-marts can be devoted to alcohol products. The Marine Corps has followed these measures and also limited promotion and marketing on bases.

Overseas, where high profile incidents in Japan and Korea have resulted in unwanted attention on the U.S. Military, alcohol is no longer available at base shopettes, and liquor stores can no longer sell after 10pm. Several bases in Germany have taken similar measures. There is still a lot of drinking going on, but it's

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believed that slowing it down could lead to fewer incidents. As DoD Advisor Neal Galbreth put it, "Do you really need to sell someone five fifths of bourbon at 2 o'clock in the morning? Probably not."

In an attempt to make the message of moderation relevant to the younger demographic of service personnel, the Department of Defense commissioned an app called "That Guy" (as in, "you don't want to be *That Guy*"). It uses games and humor to profile "types" that emerge when people drink too much. Characters like "The Downer Guy", "The Dancing Guy", "The Drama Queen", etc. might be easily recognizable at any party or bar. The app encourages moderation as a way to avoid circumstances where one might embarrass one's self or one's friends, or jeopardize one's career. Effects like pay rate, rank, ability to reenlist and permission to go on leave are highlighted. Potential health effects of binge drinking, both short term and long term, are laid out. There's also a calculator that helps determine how much money one might be spending on drinking per year-- and lists fun ways that those dollars could be spent instead.

"Pier Pressure" is a Navy app that has several games based on a typical day at work followed by a hypothetical night out. Higher amounts of alcohol consumed during the night out will lower the skill level for the following day of work. A blood alcohol content calculator and a real-world local taxi search are also part of this app.

The Navy also has a campaign called "Keep What You've Earned". Posters show the downside of a wild night on the town to remind sailors that they have worked hard to get where they are, and that an alcohol or drug violation can undo all of their efforts.

As young people seem to be consuming more spirits instead of the traditional lower alcohol-content beer, it will take a combination of regulation and education to bring moderation to such an engrained culture of hard drinking.

A personal note from Pamela Erickson about the age limit of 21 and the military: "I am dismayed at people who advocate for a lower drinking age in the military saying if you can fight for your country, you should be able to drink. It is an insensitive comment. My stepson was US Marine deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq when

he was under 21. He described how extremely alert and cautious they needed to be to avoid the Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and many other hazards while serving in a war zone. It is exceptionally important that our soldiers not be impaired in any way when serving our country. This is only one of the many reasons we should support the military's efforts to reduce alcohol problem."

Alcohol Deregulation by Ballot Measure in Washington State

A Status Report on the Implementation of Measure 1183 is now available.

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