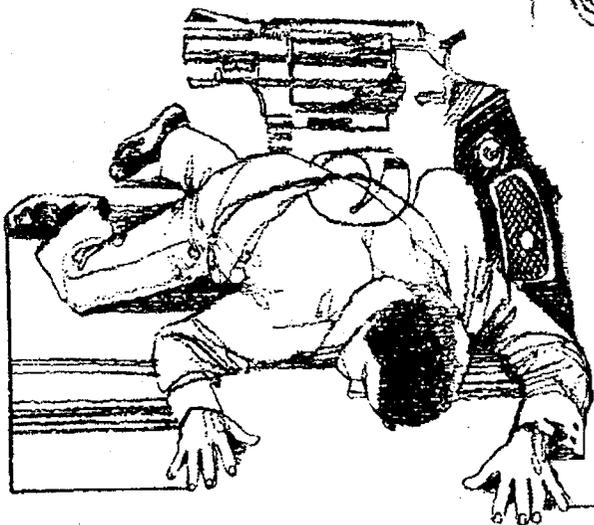
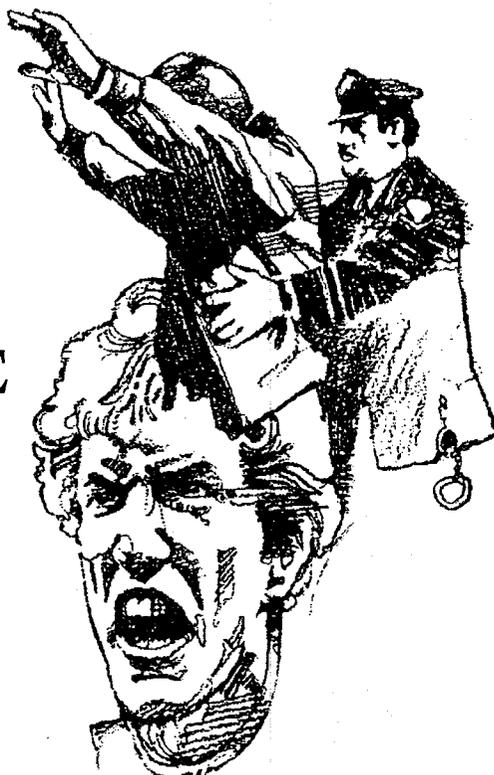


FORSCOM Pamphlet 190-1

**VIOLENCE  
IN  
THE  
WORKPLACE**



**Guidance  
For  
Leaders**

**FORCES COMMAND**



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES COMMAND  
FORT MCPHERSON, GEORGIA 30330-6000



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

AFPM

25 APR 1994

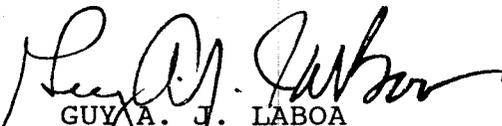
MEMORANDUM FOR

Commander, USARC  
Commanders, CONUSA  
Commanders, FORSCOM Installations  
Commanders, FORSCOM Activities/Units Reporting Directly to  
HQ FORSCOM  
Commanders, All FORSCOM Troop Units

SUBJECT: Violence in the Workplace

1. Recently, the Center for Disease Control announced that homicide in the workplace was reaching epidemic proportions. Today, violence is the third cause of workplace deaths overall, and the number one reason for occupational injury deaths of women. The current national annual average of 750 deaths attributed to workplace homicide represents only a small fraction of violent acts taking place.
2. The Army enjoys no immunity from these crimes. Several incidents have already occurred on Army installations resulting in loss of life. It is dangerous and reckless to ignore lessons learned; doing so invites repetition.
3. We have a moral and legal obligation to provide a safe and secure working environment for our people. We must use proactive strategies to identify and prevent potential workplace violence. This pamphlet and the accompanying briefing packet are provided to help leaders and supervisors at all levels develop organizational awareness.
4. Our most important resource is our people. Protecting them from violence in the workplace will require our total support.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

  
GUY A. J. LABOA  
Major General, USA  
Chief of Staff

**VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**  
Guidance For Leaders

**Overview:**

Violence in the workplace is fast becoming a common event in our society and is a growing problem. The national loss of life, man hours, and productivity caused by violence is a disease that needs preventive measures. Although there are over 750 workplace murders annually, this figure represents only 17% of the total number of violent acts taking place. Today, violence is the third cause of work place deaths overall, and the number one killer of women at work in this country. We should direct at least as much energy to prevention of these deaths as we do to other occupational hazards.



The Army is not immune to these types of incidents. Among recently reported incidents are:

- a multiple murder/suicide by a civilian employee;
- a barricaded offender/suicide involving a soldier;
- the shooting of an officer by a former soldier;
- and a negotiated surrender, without loss of life.



### **A Time of Change:**

Changes in our economy, driven by global political and market realignments, have added to the existing stresses of technology and recession. The result is the “rightsizing” of government and corporate America. Many workers feel betrayed and abandoned by their employers. The loss of job security and personal control over his life presents the employee with a negative vision of the future, changing his image of the workplace.

Employees personalize Reduction in Force (RIF) actions as much as terminations for cause. Anger and hostility are common and natural reactions when one feels victimized and the primary concern is survival.



The media inadvertently contributes to the increase in incidents by providing rapid coverage. Movies, TV, books and video games all show violence being used as a reasonable solution to problems. It should therefore be no surprise that copycat incidents occur after each media covered workplace violence situation. What can be done to address the issue and minimize the possibility that our organizations are not the next victims?

### **Before an Incident:**

Leaders need concise information in order to develop an active approach that meets their local needs. This is particularly important since success will require the active support of those we want to protect. The following material is provided to help leaders create a safer environment for their workers.



### Awareness:

The first step in protecting our personnel is to make them aware of the threat without creating alarm. There is no foolproof way to predict dangerous behavior or prevent its occurrence. However, there are some common characteristics that can permit intervention before a critical situation develops.

The briefing packet that accompanies this pamphlet is designed for presentation during both civilian and military professional training. Supervisors should take an active role, reassuring workers of their concern and support. Employees must be confident that reports of potential violence will be taken seriously and given proper consideration.

### Education:

Leaders at all levels understand the need for providing a safe working environment. By applying lessons learned from previous incidents, we can take positive steps to avoid mistakes made by others. The approach is to identify stresses on our personnel; become familiar with the profile of past offenders; identify the skills necessary for defusing potentially violent situations; and apply the proper tools or assets available on the installation.

### Stress:

Stress is the primary trigger for violent acts. Conversely, when properly managed and controlled, stress can be a productive force, helping workers keep their edge while performing demanding tasks. The successful leader is able to:

- Recognize stresses on his employees
- Take steps to reduce or control the stress.

This seems to be a simplistic solution to a difficult and possibly fatal problem. However, it is more complicated than it appears at first glance. The stresses on your employees may either stem from the workplace or from the home environment. Regardless of the source, the effect is the same.





In the workplace, there are many potential stressors. An imbalance in work load can create resentment and frustration. Internal policy changes by well meaning supervisors without input from those people affected is also a source of tension. There may be personality conflicts between workers, an ongoing competition for limited advancement opportunities or even failed office romances. Each of these are easily recognized, but present a challenge when they need to be brought under control.

An additional stressor that clouds the issue is the need to maintain qualifications as technology increases. Our people must continue to study just to remain at their current levels. Actual advancement often seems beyond reasonable hope.

As we reshape America's Army, military and civilian leaders must be attuned to the stresses caused by change. During periods of restructuring, frustration and tension can significantly effect otherwise rational people. Reduction in force with no reduction in mission requirements is familiar to most of us. The resulting reorganization and realignment of jobs places burdens on the rank and file, perceived as being seldom felt or appreciated by superiors.

One mechanism available for stress reduction is home life. However, this too is often a further source of aggravation. This is where leaders can be truly effective, and managers often fail.

In order to help employees, we must know them. Your workers may lack the support systems they need at home. They may have recently suffered the loss of a loved one, either through death, divorce, or PCS separation. Worries about finances or family health will surface at work, but are recognizable only to the leader who knows his people.

There are many support systems available to the extended Army family, but they are ineffective if people in need are not aware or guided to them.

**Stress Indicators:**

The indicators are familiar, having been presented during suicide prevention courses. When considering violence in the workplace incidents, we must remember that suicide is often the final act taken, following calculated acts of vengeance

Many psychologists believe the reason for this pattern is that some people strongly identify themselves with what they do for a living. When people who feel this way are terminated from employment, it is a short step to believing that their life is over. Once this point is reached, the next "logical" move is to strike out at the cause of their pain, and then to commit suicide - something that was already half completed by their "professional death."

It is important to highlight that people commonly signal their intent to commit suicide. Ignoring the indicators will only allow a continuation of the downward emotional trend. There may be more than one life at stake.

The following stress indicators are critical and demand leader intervention:

- Substance abuse
- Depression or talk of suicide
- Anger or withdrawal at work
- Sudden drop in performance levels
- Recurring sick leave without medical reason

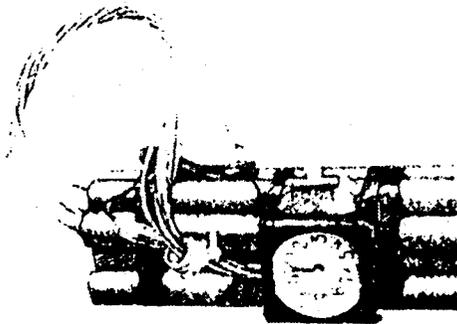


Stress is only part of the puzzle. The above indicators point out the troubled employee, but what have we learned that can help identify which people are prone to violence? If there were no other factors, many

of us would probably resort to violence after a rough day. After analysis of past cases, the FBI developed a profile of the potential offender and have named him "The Avenger".

The Avenger is the type of employee that should have been fired a long time ago. He tends to intimidate fellow workers, and has successfully done so with supervisors in the past. That is why he hasn't been fired yet. He is a product of a system that has allowed his continued employment because it's the easiest course of action.

When a supervisor finally terminates the Avenger, the initial response is disbelief; he is used to getting away with his behavior and lack of production, so this action must be unfair. If he has been sufficiently stressed prior to this action, and no attempt is made to defuse him, the Avenger may resort to extreme violence.



**The Avenger Personality Profile:**

- A paranoid personality disorder (everybody is after him)
- Male Caucasian (90%)
- 35 to 50 year old loner (or from dysfunctional family)
- No prior criminal record
- Collects power symbols (guns, knives & books about them)
- Constantly disgruntled at work
- Dislikes authority & hates criticism
- Avoids responsibility
- Keeps "book" on other workers (drops "dimes")
- Methodically chooses target (usually, the boss)
- The boss doesn't know him



**Leadership skills needed:**

**Interpersonal Skills:**

The single recurring factor over which the supervisor has complete control is the last one listed in the above profile. If the boss has good listening skills, and takes the time to know his employees; their concerns, interests, and to a certain degree, their personal lives, the potential incident can be averted.

This process of getting to know employees should include an occasional activity away from the workplace such as a picnic, luncheon or similar function. The reason for this is to promote a "bonding" that recognizes people as something other than their workplace image. The goal is to identify potential problems and defuse them before the employee is overwhelmed. The bottom line: the Avenger doesn't attack people he has bonded with.

**Professional Skills:**

If the leader had taken the time to correct the Avenger early in his employment, when it was non-threatening, it might not have been necessary to later terminate him. We must have the courage to correct poor performance when necessary. This should be done in a positive manner, reinforced by team building within the organization. Again, crime analysis shows that in most cases, this was a leadership trait that was absent.

When all else fails and it is necessary to separate the employee, it is important to follow correct procedures. After the proposal to terminate has been presented, and the employee given proper opportunity to respond according to law and federal regulations, one must be cautious. Don't be drawn into negotiation for continued employment - the decision has already been made. However, if faced with pleading, avoid the sharp "No" answer. Instead, use the two part reply: 1. "What I hear you saying is...", 2. "Unfortunately, we have to tell you this."

Focus conversation on the future, highlighting strengths and opportunities available. Offer a previously prepared letter of introduction



to potential employers that outlines these strengths. Keep the meeting short, allowing all parties to retain dignity.

Remember to consciously avoid body language that might provoke a physical response. Don't violate his space - keep at least a leg length away. Don't point a finger when talking. At the other end of the spectrum, if you show disregard, disinterest or impatience (I'm a busy man...), you may inflame him to make you interested in his point of view.

If threatened, do not counter-threat. This only raises the chance for violence. It is far better to end the interview with a hand-shake. The gesture will help defuse the situation and tends to reinforce previous bonding.

Lastly, when the termination interview is over, make sure that he has no reason to come back. Cancel the security access badge, turn in keys, change combinations, establish an escorted clearing procedure and report any threats.

**Red Flag Times:**

Following termination of a suspected avenger, there are several times when increased caution should be applied:

- Anniversary of termination
- Next payday
- Repeated visits back to the worksite
- Unemployment runs out
- Inquiries about the supervisors' schedule
- Other significant changes (bankruptcy, divorce, etc)
- IG and Boss-Line complaints
- Suicide threats and attempts

**Threat Management:**

At installation level, there are a number of assets available to assist the commander in dealing with potentially dangerous persons before violence occurs. While each are specialists in their own fields, a coordinated

approach is more flexible and responsive to quickly developing situations. It is therefore recommended that commanders and supervisors consider seeking advice from the following staff members or organizations:

- Director of Community and Family Activities
- Chaplain
- Commander, Medical Department Activity (MEDDAC)
- Public Affairs Officer (PAO)
- Provost Marshal (PM)
- Staff Judge Advocate (SJA)
- Family Advocacy (FAPM)
- Local Union
- Civilian Personnel Office (CPO)
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
- Safety Officer

To streamline the handling of complaints, consider establishing an Assessment Team comprised of some of the above activities. The team members should have the ability to meet quickly, recommend a course of action, and document any decisions. This will save time and minimize disruption while still giving due consideration to reports.



**Reaction to an Incident:**

Planning for reaction to this type of incident is slightly different than that required for other criminal acts. For simplicity, it can be included in the installation Crisis Management Plan as an annex. In any violent incident in the workplace where there has been loss of life, the following factors need consideration:

First, media attention will be intense. A lesson learned from previous cases has taught us that in order to manage the media, we must also plan to control the airspace above the incident site. This will involve



coordination with the FAA.

Secondly, a large crime scene will require lengthy processing by law enforcement authorities. Because of this effort, survivors may not be permitted back into their place of work. For many, this will prevent access to handbags, car keys, and other necessary personal items. Transportation and food may be needed for these people.

Finally, there should be an alert plan for post trauma response teams. Installation assets may not be able to handle the load, and might require augmentation from local medical and public service facilities. Coordination in advance for mutual support where allowed will speed assistance to where it is needed.

**Summary:**

Violence in the workplace is a rising category of crime throughout the country. However, leaders have a moral and legal obligation to their work force to provide a safe and secure work environment. An informed approach to create awareness of the problem and provide planning for stress management is the first step in meeting this obligation.

The Army has an advantage over the general population for dealing with this issue. Our installation staff provides more closely coordinated support for the commander than local governments can for the mayor. Through planning and training, we can address prevention by co-workers and supervisors, response by emergency services, and long term post trauma support to return operations to normal if prevention fails.

As leaders, we are empowered to take the steps necessary to prevent workplace violence. Review of current security policies and lessons learned, coupled with employee awareness and supervisor training will help us achieve that goal.



