



**NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU**  
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NGB-SFSS

5 May 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR The Adjutants General of all States, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Commanding General of the District of Columbia

SUBJECT: Suicide Investigation Policy

1. References:

a. Army Regulation (AR) 15-6, Procedures for Investigating Officers and Boards of Officers, 2 Oct 06.

b. AR 600-8-4, Line of Duty Policy, Procedures, and Investigations, 4 Sep 08.

2. Purpose. To announce policy change associated with suicide reporting and tracking.

3. Background. The entire Army is experiencing an increase in the number of reported suicides. Because of this increase, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (VCSA) now conducts monthly briefings using the VCSA briefing format (enclosed) to discuss, in detail, all suicides. Given the difficulties associated with collecting information about these deaths, it is prudent to initiate policy that produces timely information that leads to practical lessons learned for reducing the number of suicides.

4. Policy. Commanders will conduct AR 15-6 investigations into all suspected or confirmed suicides of Soldiers assigned to their respective commands. An investigation will take no more than 10 consecutive days and the results will be e-mailed to NGB-SFSS at [sssb@ngb.army.mil](mailto:sssb@ngb.army.mil) no later than 5 working days after the investigation has been completed. The appointing authority for these investigations is the State Adjutant General.

a. Commanders are encouraged to utilize the same investigating officer to conduct both the informal AR 15-6 investigation and the formal line of duty investigation required by AR 600-8-4 whenever possible. The AR 15-6 investigation is not punitive in nature and must answer, at a minimum, all of the questions identified in the VCSA briefing format. The investigating officer will use all of the gathered information to complete the VCSA briefing format. The investigating officer will send the completed briefing to the ARNG operations center and NGB-SFSS at [sssb@ngb.army.mil](mailto:sssb@ngb.army.mil).

b. The investigating officer shall be appointed as soon as the appointing authority has reason to suspect a suicide has occurred. The investigating officer should coordinate with the casualty assistance officer to collect information from the family and coordinate with the

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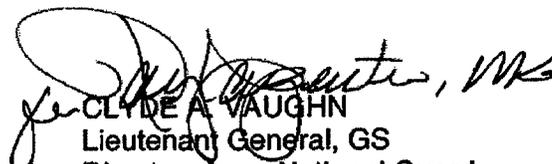
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jurisdictional investigative agency to get incident reports and details. All personnel should give extreme attention to the sensitive nature of these investigations when gathering data.

c. The investigation is not in lieu of a serious incident report (SIR). The SIR must be submitted to the ARNG operations center within 24 to 48 hours of any reported death of an ARNG Soldier. The commander will ensure that the SIR and the VCSA briefing format are provided to the Director, Army National Guard. A thorough commander's assessment is critical for gaining insight to the Soldier's mindset prior to the suicide.

5. The point of contact is Ms. Erin Thede, Chief, Soldier/Family Support Services Division, at DSN 327-7597, 703-607-7597, or erin.thede@us.army.mil.

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CLYDE A. VAUGHN  
Lieutenant General, GS  
Director, Army National Guard

ARNG-HRF  
SUBJECT: Suicide Investigation Policy Amendment

### Suicide Reporting Process Map

Step 1: A death by suicide occurs.

Step 2: The State JOC submits an SIR to the ARNG Watch Center within 24 hours.

Step 3: The VCSA 37-Line Report is submitted to ARNG-HRF NLT 5 calendar days after initial SIR is submitted.

Step 4: An Article 15-6 investigation, lasting no more than 10 days, is completed, and a copy of the investigation is sent to ARNG-HRF NLT 5 days following the conclusion of the investigation.

Step 5: An LOD is initiated as a concurrent investigative process for all suspected/confirmed suicides of Title 10/32 AGR and Soldiers who have previously deployed.

Step 6: A copy of the death certificate is submitted to ARNG-HRF immediately upon receipt from the coroner's office.