



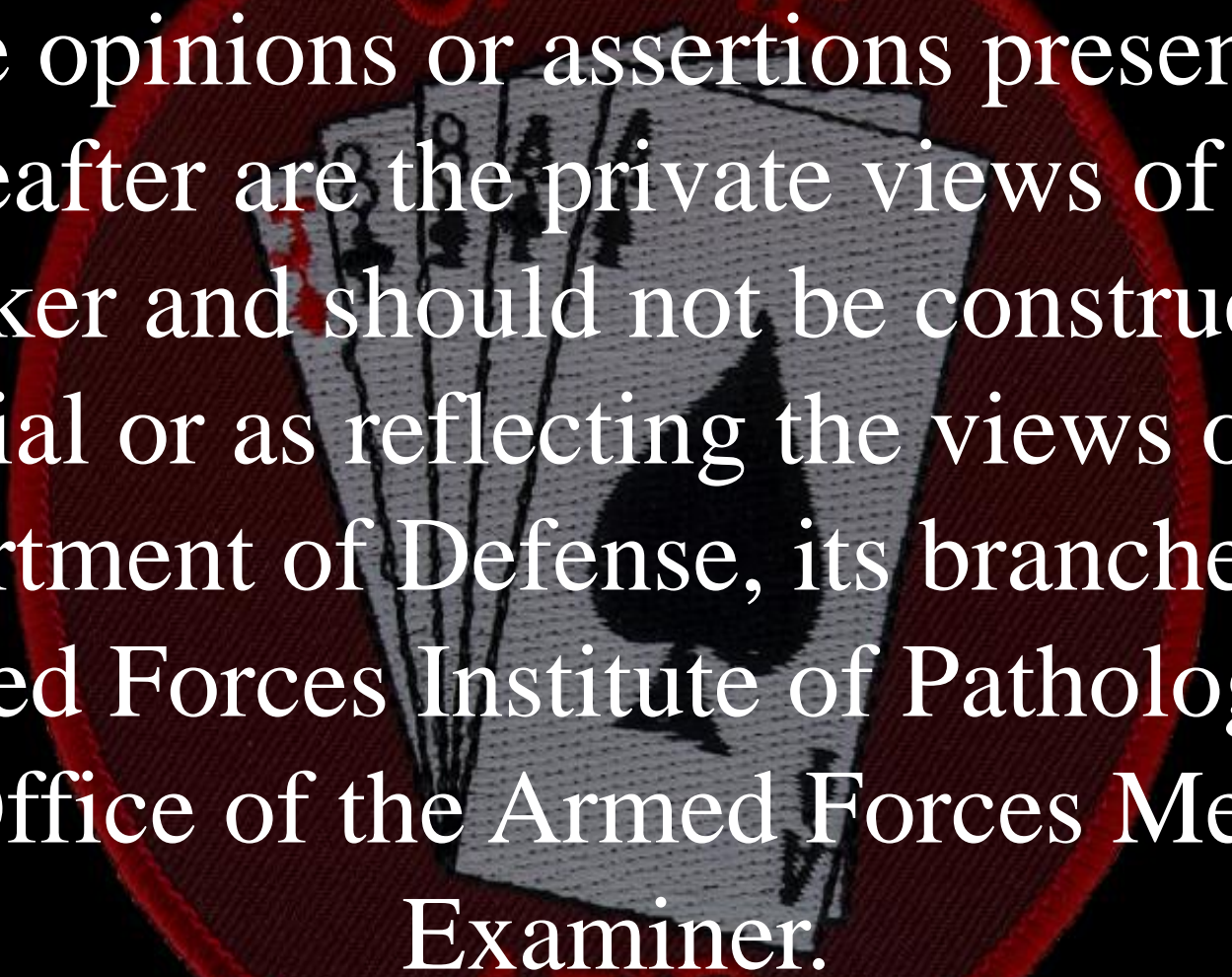
OFFICE OF THE ARMED FORCES MEDICAL EXAMINER ARMED FORCES INSTITUTE OF PATHOLOGY



DoD Policy on Psychological Autopsies

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DoD Policy on Psychological Autopsies (PAs)

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- Chief Deputy Medical Examiner
- Psychological Investigations Division
- Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner (OAFME)
- Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP)
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DoD Policy on Psychological Autopsies

- Governing Policy: DoDI 5154.30 March 2003
- History and Areas of Confusion
- PA Investigation and Report
- Psychological Autopsy vs. Other Investigations



Governing Policy: DoDI 5154.30

March 18, 2003, AFIP Operations

- SUPERSEDES Service Specific Regulations, ie., AR 600-63 (Rapid Action Revision (RAR) 9/09; 5/07) and Informational Pamphlets, ie., DA PAM 600-24 (11/09)
- PRIMARY PURPOSE OF PA: ASSIST THE Medical Examiner (ME) in ascertaining the MANNER OF DEATH (MOD) (Natural, Accident, Suicide, Homicide, Undetermined)
- PA is NOT designed to inform:
 - Suicide event surveillance for epidemiological purposes
 - The provision of clinical crisis services to the unit and family in the aftermath of death
 - Preventive policies and programs



Organization Chart

Armed Forces Institute of Pathology

Director, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology

Director of Field Operations

Armed Forces Medical Examiner

Regional Armed Forces ME's

Operations

AFDIL/AFSSIR

Mortality Registry

OAFME

Forensic Toxicology

Psychological Investigations





Governing Policy: DoDI 5154.30/2003

- Psychological Investigations (PI) Division established by DoDI 5154.30
- The Armed Forces Medical Examiner (AFME), delegated authority regarding PAs to the Chief Deputy Medical Examiner, PI Division, (Chief(PI))



Governing Policy: DoDI 5154.30/2003

- Maintain a PA registry supporting medico legal death investigations that require a behavioral analysis such as the following:
 - Cases where the MOD has not been determined and suicide is a possible manner of death
 - Cases where the MOD has been determined to be an accident, homicide, or natural, and additional objective evidence is found that raises suicide as a possible MOD
 - Selected suicides, **ONLY WHEN APPROVED BY THE AFME**



Governing Policy: DoDI 5154.30/2003

- Coordinate and supervise PAs, and conduct peer reviews/quality assurance of PAs
 - Military Services are responsible for PAs of their Service Members
 - ME requests PA, or
 - Military Criminal Investigative Organizations request PA
 - Chief(PI) discusses case with AFME; ME; Chief Deputy Medical Examiner, Operations; and Military Criminal Investigative Organization for additional information as needed



Governing Policy: DoDI 5154.30/2003

- If PA request approved by Chief(PI), appropriate military service is notified and case is assigned
 - Mental Health Professional who has an active, unrestricted license and who has received SPECIFIC FORENSIC TRAINING* to conduct the assessment is authorized to conduct PAs and to submit report of findings
 - PA report provided to ME, with a copy to the Military Criminal Investigative Organization
 - PA report provided to Next of Kin, if requested
 - PA materials SHALL NOT BE USED OR DISCLOSED FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE, unless pertinent statutory or regulatory authority requires use or disclosure

* Forensic Psychiatrists or Forensic Psychologists



Governing Policy: DoDI 5154.30/2003

- Provide consultation (including, as required, diagnostic and consultative services and medico legal opinions, testimony, and evidence) on medico legal investigations and related matters to the judge advocates and criminal investigative agencies of the Armed Forces and other Federal Agencies



History

- 1958: LA Medical Examiner consulted the LA Suicide Prevention Center for further classification of equivocal deaths
- Center's Co-Founder and Co-Director, Psychologist Edwin Shneidman, coined the phrase, “psychological autopsy” during the course of the above investigations



Military History: US Army

- DA Pam 600-24, “Suicide Prevention and Psychological Autopsy” 1988
 - PA: Attempts to clarify the nature of death by focusing on the psychological aspects of the death. Its primary purpose is to understand the circumstances and state of mind of the victim at the time of death. The procedure involves the reconstruction of the lifestyle and circumstances of the victim, together with details of behaviors and events leading to the death of the individual



Military History: US Army

- DA Pam 600-24, 1988
 - Commander or Special Agent In Charge (SAIC) of CID investigates all suicides or suspected suicides IAW AR 195-2
 - *PA required by AR 195-2*
 - PA conducted IAW AR 600-63



Military History: US Army

- DA Pam 600-24, 1988
 - Provide victim's commander with information
 - Enable the unit and the Army to develop future prevention programs and lessons learned
 - Promote the epidemiological study of suicide
 - Brings Mental Health Officer in direct contact with survivors of suicide victim, facilitating bereavement counseling



Military History: US Army

- AR 600-63, “Army Health Promotion,” 17 Nov 1987 & 28 Apr 1996
 - PA: Clarification of the nature of death focusing on the psychological aspects of the dead person. Primary purpose is to reconstruct and understand the circumstances, lifestyle, and state of mind at the time of death
 - Report of PA will be included in the CID Report of Investigation IAW AR 195-2
 - PA reports are sent by the preparing officer through the MACOM to each of the following:
 - HQDA (SGPS-CP-F)
 - HQDA (DAPE-MPH)
 - Commander, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research



Military History: US Army

- AR 600-63, 1987 & 1996
 - *IAW AR 195-2, PA will be conducted by a mental health officer and provided to CID for following deaths:*
 - Confirmed or suspected suicides
 - Single car MVAs with no survivors, when requested by commander of local CID office
 - Accidents involving unusual or suspicious circumstances, e.g., deaths due to substance abuse, or resulting from self-inflicted GSWs
 - All cases in which the MOD is equivocal, that is, death cannot be readily established as natural, accidental, suicide, or homicide
 - Other cases when requested by the commander or SAIC of the local CID office



Military History: US Army

- AR 600-63, “Army Health Promotion” RAR Issue Date 20 Sep 09 (7 May 07)
 - PA: A procedure designed to clarify the nature of an individual’s death by focusing on the psychological aspects of the person. The primary purpose of the PA is to reconstruct and understand the circumstances, lifestyle, and state of mind of the individual at the time of death
 - Commands from all components will *conduct an AR 15-6 investigation on every suicide or equivocal death* being investigated as a possible suicide
 - PAs will ascertain the MOD for AD deaths *only in cases where there is an equivocal cause of death*
 - PAs will *be initiated only at the request of the involved ME or CID*
 - Senior commander *may request PA* through CID



Military History: US Army

- AR 600-63, 2009
 - Medical Department Command/Center commanders will provide a credentialed mental health officer to conduct a PA when required by regulation
 - PAs are completed by *fellowship-trained forensic psychiatrists or psychologists*
 - PA report provided to CID
 - PA results will be made available for review to the DCS, G-1 ASPP; the local SPTF; and the USACHPPM *determining trends, pulling data points, and capturing/distributing lessons learned*
 - Data from PA will be collected and maintained by the USACHPPM suicide analysis cell (in conjunction with DCS, G-1, ASPP): *Statistical understanding, identify trends, lessons learned*



Military History: US Army

- DA Pam 600-24, “Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention” 24 November 2009
 - CID commander or SAIC investigates all suicides or suspected suicides IAW AR 195-2
 - PA: Attempts to clarify the nature of death by focusing on the psychological aspects of the death. Its primary purpose is to understand the circumstances and state of mind of the victim at the time of death. The procedure involves the reconstruction of the lifestyle and circumstances of the victim, together with details of behaviors and events leading to the death of the individual



Military History: US Army

- DA Pam 600-24, 2009
 - PA is a forensic investigative tool used to confirm or refute the death of individual by suicide/PAs assist in ascertaining MOD when equivocal: Not used for gathering of information for suicide event surveillance for epidemiological purposes
 - PAs *may be requested by the AFME and/or CID* on AD deaths under special circumstances IAW AR 600-63, par 4-4: Equivocal deaths (9/2009)
 - Senior commander *may request PA* through CID
 - PA will be conducted by a *forensic psychiatrist* and provided to CID for inclusion in the death investigation report
 - Provide the victim's commander with information about the death
 - Enable the unit and the Army to develop future prevention programs and capture lessons learned



Military History: US Army

- DA Pam 600-24, 2009
 - Serves to increase the accuracy of reports & will *promote the epidemiological study of suicide*
 - CID, CHPPM, ASPP, SPTF will use the results of the PA IAW AR 600-63 guidelines for *determining trends, pulling data points, and capturing/distributing lessons learned*
 - CID commander or SAIC provides the task force extracts from CID reports of investigation (including PA)



Military History: US Army

- DA Pam 600-24, 2009
 - CHPPM suicide analysis cell in conjunction with DCS, G-1 ASPP (AR 600-63, par 4-4) will collect and maintain information gathered from the PA: *Statistical understanding, identify trends, lessons learned*
 - Fatality review board review the results of the PA to look for possible causes & if necessary *evaluate prevention* efforts and make recommendations to the commander
 - DoDI 5154.30 is listed as a related source of additional information: User does not have to read it to understand DA PAM 600-24



Military History: Navy and Air Force

- PAs for selected cases only (5-10% of deaths)
 - Equivocal deaths
 - Select high-profile cases
 - Done only by highly trained psychologists on staff at NCIS and OSI
 - Interviews done by psychologists or agents
 - Worked closely with forensic scientists and investigators



Military History

- USS IOWA, 1989: FBI Equivocal Death Analysis
- DoD IG Report 1996: Review of DoD Policies & Procedures for Death Investigations
 - Expedite the issuance of an overall DoD policy for conducting and using the results of PAs
 - Recommendations to Military Departments
 - Develop implementing procedures
 - Develop quality assurance
 - Disclaimer on the front cover



Military History

- Delay in Policy
 - Numerous attempts at DoDDs and DoDIs
 - Non-concurrence from the Services
 - Different definitions of PAs
 - Different staffing/resources
 - Army wanted to continue getting “Lessons Learned”
- Policy Issued
 - Health Affairs Policy Letter signed June 4, 2001
 - Signed by Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense
 - Sent to Assistant Secretaries of the Army (M&RA), Navy (M&RA), and Air Force (SAF/MI), and the Director of AFIP
 - Interim policy on PAs prior to 2003 DoDI on AFIP Operations



Military History

- Health Affairs Policy Letter, 2001
 - PA had previously been used to describe both a psychological investigation after a confirmed suicide & an investigation as to the MOD when suicide has not been ruled out
 - **POLICY LETTER: PRIMARY PURPOSE OF PA is to assist in ascertaining the MOD where the manner of death has not been determined, or IN OTHER UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES, when APPROVED BY THE AFME, a PA may be performed to amplify information or help explain circumstances relating to a suicide**



PA Investigation and Report

- Source/Reason for Request
- Demographics
- Disclaimer
- Sources of Information
- Records & Documents
 - Autopsy/Toxicology Report
 - Medical, MH, Police, Legal, Criminal, School, Financial, Military Records
 - Suicide note (10-33%)
 - Electronic data/Forensic analysis
 - Journals/Diaries
- Death Scene/Evidence
- Personality & Lifestyle
- Recent Stressors/Precipitants
- Significant relationships/Social Supports
- Developmental & Social History
- Educational History
- Occupational History
- Military History/Service Record Review
- Financial History
- Legal History



PA Investigation and Report

- Psychiatric History
 - Prior Suicidal Behavior
 - Prescribed Medications: Efficacy & Compliance
 - Hospitalization
 - Outpatient Treatment
 - Recent Symptoms/Behaviors
 - Insomnia
 - Feelings of worthlessness and/or hopelessness
 - Agitation
 - Anxious
 - Impulsivity
 - Excessive risk-taking behaviors
 - Confusion, psychosis, disoriented
- Substance Use History
- Medical History
 - Chronic illness and/or pain
 - Medications
- Family Medical & Psychiatric History
 - Suicide or SA
 - Abuse
 - Substance Use Disorder
 - Mental Disorders
- Spirituality/Religious Beliefs
- Reactions to Death
- Timeline



PA Investigation and Report

- Analysis of Manner of Death
 - Suicide Risk Assessment
 - Lethality
 - Motive
 - Intent
 - Rescue/Intervention Possibility
 - Changes in Appearance, Personality, Habits, Behavior
- Forensic Opinion
 - Reasonable Degree of Medical or Psychological or Psychiatric Certainty
- Typically take 20-50 hours to complete; Average 2-4 months
- Reports: 10+ pages



PA versus Other Investigations

- PA: Also called Equivocal Death Psychological Autopsy (EDPA)
 - Purpose: Assist ME in determining MOD
 - Forensically-trained psychiatrist or psychologist
 - USN & USAF: NCIS & OSI Psychologists
 - USA: No psychologist, referral to WRAMC Forensic Fellowship Programs, USA forensically-trained staff, USN forensically-trained staff
 - Drug-related deaths, Autoerotic Asphyxia, Drownings, MVAs, “Suicide by Cop,” Staged Death Scenes



PA versus Other Investigations

- Behavioral Analysis Review (BAR): Also called Suicide Psychological Autopsy (SPA)
 - Purpose: To understand which psychosocial factors contributed to the suicide for the purposes of intervention and risk mitigation
 - USN & USAF: NCIS and OSI Psychologists
 - USA: Local Mental Health Provider
 - Commander can order AR 15-6 Investigation for quality purposes (FOIA exempt) to identify the psychosocial factors that contributed to a suicide for the purposes of intervention and risk mitigation



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Questions?

