

Boots to Badges: The Transition of Military Veterans to Civilian Law Enforcement

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Abstract

This paper takes a look into the transition that military veterans make when they embark on a career into civilian law enforcement. Many military veterans make this transition seamlessly, excel and become outstanding law enforcement officers. In contrast horrible failures and complete ineptitude of military veterans who became civilian peace officers have also been witnessed. The correlation between the two general roles, military service member and civilian law enforcement officer is drawn at the outset of the paper. Research was done into programs that seek to recruit military veterans into civilian law enforcement. A survey was also completed of military veterans who currently serve in civilian law enforcement, on the local and state level in northwest Florida. Finally interviews of agency heads, Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police were done to get some opinions on how veterans do as civilian law enforcement officers. The scope of the project was limited to only a small geographic area in the state of Florida. The author's hope is to further the topic along so that subsequent research may be done at the national level where issues may be identified with the goal being to have the most qualified individuals serving and protecting the citizens of our nation.

Introduction

A look into this transition will be taken of military veterans who perform civilian law enforcement jobs. What are the attractions for veterans to seek careers as law enforcement officers? What are the identifiable positive attributes that they may have that enable them to thrive in this very different but similar setting? What are the negative aspects and concerns in making the role transition? In reviewing this topic, the starting point is programs available to recruit veterans into law enforcement careers. How successful are they once they get on the job? Both success and failure of veterans as peace officers has occurred. Failures can be characterized as demotions, termination or indictment. One elusive facet of this topic is any accurate information about veterans failing as law enforcement officers. Besides discipline reports or the articles concerning their arrests, there may be some reluctance in this area of study because a person trying to broach the subject might be cast as anti-veteran or anti-military. Furthermore, it can be embarrassing to the agency so not advertising a punitive dismissal of an officer may be a common practice.

In both roles there is an expectation that you will be required to use force of violence and even kill other people if so necessary. In this regard, no other job requires so much as does military service and law enforcement. It lies inherently in the description of duties. In contrast to the job description of other first responders such as

ambulance crews and fire department personnel, only law enforcement officers face the unique duty of harming other people. This expectation contrasts a fundamental responsibility of them to protect and render medical aid as well. Sometimes this will occur during a single event. There also exists the requirement of taking an oath. An oath is a statement that one makes pledging their determination to principles, or to keep a promise. The oath that military members and law enforcement officers make also decrees that they will fight to defend others, the law and Constitution of the United States and their respective home States. The oath also pledges one's acceptance of the trust that they are receiving, obedience, and most importantly their willing acceptance to go into harm's way, to sacrifice and if necessary to give their own lives upholding their duties. In 2017, approximately 174 peace officers gave their lives or died in duty related capacities per officer.com. In 2017, which was the latest information available, there were 15 deaths of U.S. servicemen of which at least 11 were combat related. The pledging of the oath is a very serious moment in people's lives when they pledge to the death. If need be, then to the death. (Bergengruen, 2017).

The State of Florida Oath of Office as mandated by Florida Statute 30.09 (1), the following is for Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, Florida.

"I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR and affirm that I will support, protect and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the State, and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of Deputy Sheriff of Santa Rosa County on which I am about to enter, so help me God."

The oath taken to be sworn into the United States Armed Forces.

"I, (stated name), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

Literature Review

The rate of members separating from the military service is very high, by some accounts approximately 550 a day. With such a large number of potential recruits it seems that law enforcement agencies would certainly target them for recruitment, and some do. As of 2013 there were six states who offered programs to military police veterans to fast track them into law enforcement jobs. (B.D., 2014).

Depending on the curriculum of their military occupational specialty (MOS) or technical school, the participating states were prepared to welcome and encourage veterans to join their police ranks. Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen spoke of the cooperation between the Veterans Affairs Department and the Wisconsin Department of Justice, which he headed between the years 2007-2015. The Wisconsin

program targeted for recruitment current military police (MP) reservists in Wisconsin National Guard units. The recruitment seemed to be successful, how the officers fared over time remains to be seen, as little information is currently available. A similar plan at the federal level was developed by the United States Department of Justice. The Community Oriented Policing Services Program was established in 2012 under President Obama. The goal was to create approximately 600 new law enforcement jobs in 220 cities and counties nationwide. Additionally, 200 jobs that were slated to have been lost due to budget cuts were going to be maintained. This program was available to recently discharged veterans who had to have served at least 180 days on active duty, and since September 11, 2001. The outcome of this program is undetermined at this time. (Shoop, 2012).

An initiative in New Mexico was established in 2013. It created an avenue for honorably discharged military police personnel to take a one-week course before qualifying to take the state exam. The normal program is twenty-one weeks before the state exam may be taken. This opportunity titled Transition with Honor was enacted by the New Mexico Department of Public Safety and is available to veterans of the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Army. No information was found on the program availability to Marine Corps or Coast Guard veterans (*Targeted News Service*, 2013).

Among the reasons that law enforcement agencies may prefer military veterans is their understanding of a chain of command structure. Civilian law enforcement rank structure is loosely based on the chain of command layout of the United States Armed Forces. What ranks that exist are somewhat abbreviated and based on traditional ground forces ranks of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. Ranks such as corporal and sergeant which in the military are rated as Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) have the responsibility of supervising small groups of line personnel in the field. This is equivalent to a sergeant or corporal being a squad or section leader in a military platoon. If one looks at the attributes sought after for a police sergeant and an army sergeant, they are very similar. Both positions require strong leadership. They must be proficient in their crafts and able to teach it and know the answers to the day to day questions. They are also disciplinarians and mentors, and are involved in technical or tactical command. At the higher levels in civilian law enforcement are the middle managers, command staff and executive staff. These positions are akin to the commissioned officers in the military. Ranks such as lieutenant, captain and major are present in many law enforcement organizations however, they remain very different as well. In military service a lieutenant and captain are junior officers (field grade) who are just starting their careers or with just a few years' service. In civilian police organizations these ranks are typically long tenured experienced law enforcement officers of often close to twenty or more years of experience. Neither saluting, nor the strict discipline found in the military, are expected in civilian policing. Although there does exist adherence to the chain of command, issuance and obedience to lawful orders and upholding of respect towards the senior officers. At the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office (Florida) when the Sheriff enters the room we do not stand at attention and declare "ten hut!" until he speaks, however, in other organizations this may be the case. The executive levels of law enforcement are more equivalent to the general (Flag) officers in military service. This is why the rank insignias for the most senior leaders are usually stars, clusters of stars or eagles. The Sheriff or the Chief of Police

are responsible for identifying the direction and goals of the agency, as well as the performance, good and bad, of their charges while in the line of duty. Their jobs include setting the overall vision and methods in which rank and file are tasked to achieve the goals. (More, Vito, & Walsh, 2012)

The similarities do not end at chain of command. As already stated, few jobs translate so closely to law enforcement as does the armed forces. A degree of discipline, integrity and honor are also required. The Handbook for Marine NCO's discusses the profession of arms. "Members of the profession of arms can be compared to civilian professionals--teachers, doctors, lawyers, the clergy--in many ways, but only the military professional may be required to surrender life itself if duty so demands." (Heinl, Jr. III Edition 1988. p. 35). The Colonel did overlook law enforcement personnel as having similar requirements. Agencies such as Florida Department of Law Enforcement and State Bureau of Investigations and those which are more oriented towards investigations, are not so closely in line with the military culture, although in many cases a proper rank structure will exist. City, County and State agencies which conduct uniformed patrol services seem to be more closely relatable as a quasi-military, or para military organizations. In the most elementary terms, a police force primary goals are to protect their citizens from danger, suppress and investigate crime and to serve the public twenty-four hours a day. The mission of the interior guard in the Armed Forces can be found under Responsibilities of Inner Guard outlined in the Marine Corps Guideline Handout. They are to preserve order, protect property and enforce regulations. These two missions in a basic sense, are essentially the same. (USMC, B141136 Student Handout [Pamphlet], 2015).

Service in either or both careers also correlates with effects on the members due to traumatic events that they will/may endure. Hypervigilance is a recognized attributable condition that service members and law enforcement officers accrue. According to Kevin Gilmartin, "Military personnel will spend an enlistment duration of four or so years on active duty and then leave the military for a return to civilian life. Law enforcement organizations also train their personnel for total immersion into their own unique culture of potential risk, but unlike the military, every four or so years the majority of police officers do not leave " (Gilmartin, 2002, p. 71). Whether suffering acute stress incidents singularly or the cumulative stress over time, hypervigilance can become common in both soldiers and cops.

When one embarks into a military career, they go off to recruit training for eight to thirteen weeks. From there they would go to more advanced training and then technical school dependent on their occupational specialty. As evidenced with the programs earlier described, the military police occupation (MP) would likely be the most readily translated. Troops trained as MPs are enrolled into a basic law enforcement training program for several weeks that in many ways mirror a civilian police academy. Patrol functions, defensive tactics, first aid, firearms and intermediate weapons training are all similar. Instead of state law, the MP study military law, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) which they are required to learn and enforce. The UCMJ was created and approved by President Truman on May 5, 1950 (Heinl, 1988).

In addition to the formal police training, MPs then undergo combat support training. This is the element of their job which they are primarily employed. The role in supporting combat arms troops, convoy escort and security, dealing with captured

prisoners, patrolling and rear area security are among the skills they learn. After training they receive orders into their units. In many cases MPs will patrol the bases and essentially perform the same missions as civilian patrol officers. Beyond the physical security of the installations and equipment, they conduct routine police functions. Responding to calls for service, including 911 calls, responding to domestic disturbances in the housing areas, traffic control and enforcement and taking incident reports. Many military bases are self-contained cities where ambulance services, a fire department and the military police all act as first responders within the military boundaries of the installation and where the service members may go off base. This is the training and more importantly the experience that has allowed the several states to opt for an abbreviated training program to bring veterans, especially MP veterans into civilian law enforcement. They have already had basic law enforcement training and in many instances have performed police functions in a somewhat controlled environment. Field work is altogether different. (United States Army, 2019).

So far, we have identified programs that fast track veterans into civilian law enforcement, the similarities and why they theoretically translate well. The determination of success and failure rates and why, may be too broad a scope for this research at this time. When employing a veteran and seeing that they had been honorably discharged how far do we go looking into what negative effects the service may have had on them? Beside a typical psychological evaluation, what extra steps are in place for a veteran seeking a civilian law enforcement job? We must keep in mind that only a small percent of military personnel ever serve in a combat zone. In today's low intensity and counter insurgency conflicts, even being deployed may not necessarily mean that you have experienced the horrors of war. A combat zone is less defined now than in more traditional conventional conflicts of the past, however, making the transition mentally from the battlefield to local communities as a peace officer is a huge challenge. (Thompson, 2011).

In September 2009 the International Association of the Chiefs of Police (IACP) published a summary of research that was performed on military veterans and reservists returning to civilian law enforcement. The study determined that the concerns of combat veterans returning to these roles is substantive. In many cases the environment that they served in overseas was urban with a large civilian population. This correlates directly to areas they would come back to and be expected to police. The rules of engagement, perception of dangerous situations, possible desensitization to the plights of citizens are all very valid concerns for these law enforcement officers. The IACP study also shined light on real dangers of the veterans' health, in the forms of PTSD, anxiety and hypervigilance. Four regional focus groups were detailed and went over these concerns and parameters for better integrating military veterans back into a civilian policing role. It was determined that many agencies do not have the understanding or the resources to better handle these issues. The toll that military service takes has to be better evaluated and treated for our military veterans (Saltarelli, 2009).

The Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) performed research into this matter with assistance from the International Chiefs of Police Association. Recognizing that certain problems may come with placing veterans on the streets as cops. The study revealed that approximately 20 percent of current law enforcement

officers in our nation are veterans. Twenty percent of all veterans suffer from some type of PTSD or psychological problems so we may expect that approximately five percent of law enforcement officers are out there with this condition. Being a law enforcement officer can trigger PTSD at any moment due to the danger, physical altercations and coping with armed subjects who are angry or under influence of mind-altering substances. Becoming law enforcement does entail some type of psychological screening, but this is minimal in many cases. The testing is also conducted in low stress-controlled environments. Research proves that PTSD can linger under the surface for years. Some would suggest that the stages an officer goes through during their careers may not become too rocky until about four years in. Programs to protect military members and veterans' rights such as the Uniformed Services and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) can become a hindrance if the agency feels that they need additional screening due to military deployment. Changes such as lack of empathy, impatience, violent tendencies and hyper vigilance can all negatively affect these officers. Making the role transition from military occupying force to a community servant police officer means different rules of engagement and just the way you need to react to people you encounter. Here at home does not lie an improvised explosive device around every corner, as a soldier must believe while in theatre. Knowing that law enforcement suicide rates are unusually high, as are veteran suicide rates, draws even more macabre similarities in the two jobs. Resiliency training and additional programs for returning vets are being recognized as beneficial for some. (Peterson, 2013).

In 2017, officer.com put out an article that outlines parallels between the two jobs. It highlights some of the attributes which relate positively; mission planning by use of intelligence gathering, the violence of action that is sometimes required to accomplish a mission; weapons proficiency and care and maintenance, and the discipline that many veterans have. In one case a Marine Corps veteran applied for a law enforcement job at the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office California and fit right in. This particular article really ran the spectrum from some interviewees believing that it was a perfect fit, troop to cop. Fitting in with other veterans, wearing a uniform and being armed for a mission was duck to water for them. Others saw it as them being typecast, that law enforcement may be a contingency or the only option after military service. Some felt that it perfectly translated but perhaps went too far with their thinking "Anything you want in a soldier, you want to see in a policeman". Yet another subject urged caution. Having to really take into account what scars are being worn on one's soul after being in combat, getting into law enforcement may not be such a great idea. (Peterson 2013).

Methods

The purpose of this research was to determine how well military veterans are adept to serving as law enforcement officers. Data was gathered through surveys given to members of several northwest Florida law enforcement agencies who are military veterans or reservists. These particular agencies were the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, Pensacola Police Department, Gulf Breeze Police Department and Milton Police Department. State law enforcement agencies

such as the Florida Highway Patrol and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission also had military veteran members surveyed but only in the Western Florida Panhandle region.

Survey questions were designed to determine what led military veterans to embark into a career in civilian law enforcement and what attributes they were able to bring with them to ensure their success.

Surveys were conducted over a spectrum spanning new officers all the way up to the most senior command positions. The survey was confidential but not necessarily anonymous. Because military veterans and reservists only were targeted for the responses, they had to be identified as a class. A final vehicle for data collection were interviews with department heads such as several Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police on this matter of adaptability. This final portion was intended to give a high level (or big chair) point of view on how veterans perform in the peace officer role. Weaknesses in this collected data are that it does not necessarily reflect truthfully if any of these participants are actually succeeding or failing. Often time self-analysis surveys can be skewed to more favorably reflect on the participant(s). The data was collected from a very small portion of the country. Only the most Western portion of the Northwest Florida region were surveyed, and even then, only a handful of agencies in the area. An area which also has a very strong military presence in bases and personnel.

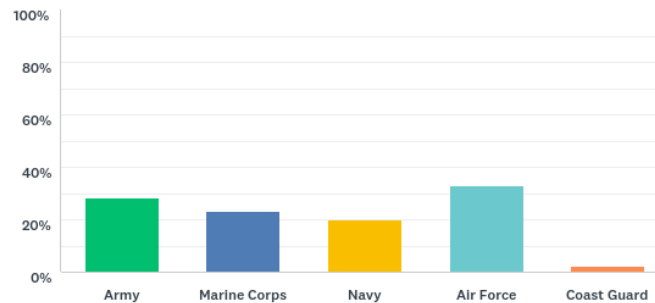
Results

A total of 446 officers were sent the survey. I cannot be certain exactly how many responded because there was a discrepancy whereas one participating agency had the survey sent to all sworn (363 people) instead of the intended sworn who are military veterans or reservists as was requested. This mishap skewed the participation percentage for the respondents, as some undoubtedly saw the questions and believing that it did not pertain to them, simply did not answer. This agency reported about 50 percent of their sworn were military veterans or reservists. I deduce that 181 people would have been reasonably expected to complete the survey from that one agency. The other five agencies reported 100 participation (of polled military veterans and reservists). That was a total of 84 between them. This would leave only 7 from the agency that sent it to 363 people. The only corrective action I had to pursue was to have each survey recipient report back that they did complete the survey. This would have invalidated it by disclosing who exactly responded. I was unwilling to do this and have to declare that the final data is unreliable. We shall now move forward.

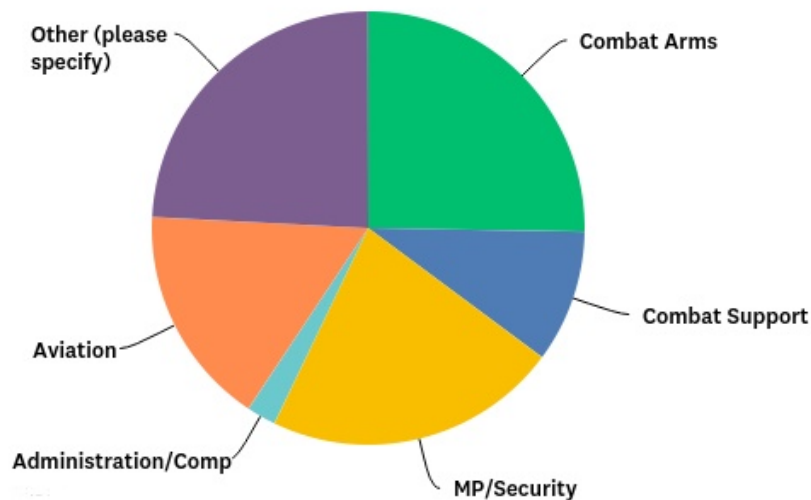
Questions one through three were designed to gather demographic information from the respondents. Their age, gender and education levels were asked. From this I ascertained that 93.41 percent were male, 6.59 percent were female. Fifty three percent were between the ages of 43 years old and 54 years old. One respondent skipped filling out their age. Forty four percent had some college or a college degree whereas only less than five percent had only a high school diploma or equivalency. Question four asked the branch(s) of service that the participants had served in. This question was to be marked all that apply since some folks do serve in different branches. All five U.S. uniformed services were represented. The results were that Air

Force veterans comprised 32.97 percent of the respondents, Army at 28.57 percent, Marine Corps at 23.08 percent, Navy at 19.78 percent and the Coast Guard at 2.2 percent.

Q4 In which branch (or branches) of the United States military have you served? (Check all that apply)

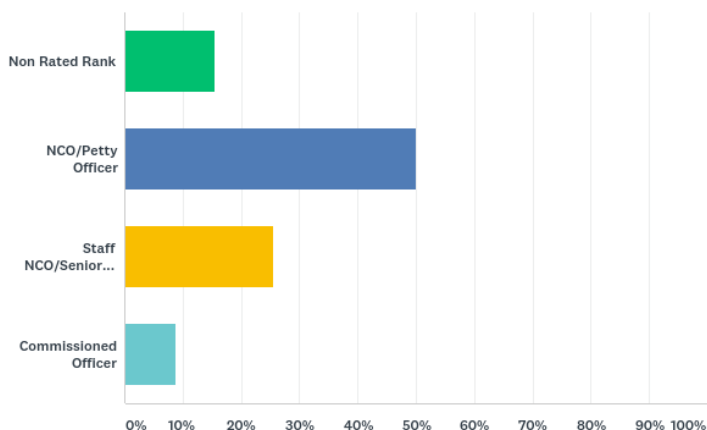


Question five set out to identify, generally what they primarily did or do while in the military service. Typically, only a small percent of service men and women are in the combat arms occupations. Jobs were generalized and broken down into categories of Combat Arms, Combat Support, MP/Security, Administration/Computers, Aviation and Other Please Specify. It was important to identify those who did work MP and security as these occupations are thought to correlate best to civilian law enforcement. This was verified later in the survey in question 17. For the 24 percent who checked other, three respondents identified themselves as law enforcement or security. It would be proper to then adjust the results from 21.98 percent who worked in the MP/Security field to 25.27 percent. Combat Arms came in at 25.27 percent as well, the highest in the unadjusted survey. So, for the 91 who answered, it was dead even between Combat Arms and MP/Security.



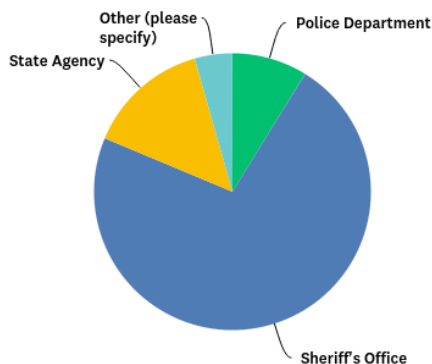
Question six verified that the majority of those polled served a single four year term and the next highest range of service were over 21 years in the military. Question seven determined that the majority, 50 percent served as junior noncommissioned officers and petty officers. A total of almost 9 percent did earn a commission as a military officer. One respondent skipped answering this question.

Q7 Please indicate your highest rank while serving in the military



Question eight revealed that 90.11 percent were not recruited into civilian law enforcement. Of the 9.89 percent who were, I did not determine what methods of recruitment were used. Question nine revealed that 23.08 percent of the participants have been in law enforcement for 19 to 24 years. The next highest percentage group were law enforcement officers for between 4 and 8 years. Over 72 percent are deputy sheriffs, 4.4 percent of participants served in multiple roles between state and local law enforcement.

Q10 Please identify the type of law enforcement agencies you have served.



Approximately 96 percent of respondents indicated that their military served did help prepare them for civilian law enforcement duties. Question 12 asked if they saw military veterans struggle or fail in law enforcement, over 72 percent answered in the affirmative, interestingly 3.3 percent were undecided. Question 13 asked if they felt that military veterans can be effective leaders in law enforcement. Almost 97 percent agreed with half of that number agreeing strongly. Two percent had no opinion with 1.1 percent strongly disagreeing.

Question 14 presented to the participants what attribute of their military service has been beneficial to their job performance in law enforcement. Seventy two percent went primarily with Mission Management. The next two most prevalent responses were chain of command and rank structure. Question 15 asked the participants what style of law enforcement officer they believed themselves to be. The highest responses were Problem Solver at 74.73 percent, Enforcer of Laws and Community Servant were tied for second at 50.55 percent. Question 16 revealed that 7.78 percent of respondents are assigned to additional military duties as a law enforcement officer, this would be out military reservists. The final question asked if military reservists who are in civilian law enforcement should receive additional training upon returning from deployments. Of the affirmative answers, there were themes that stood out. Updates in laws, policies and procedures should be covered when reservists return to full time LE work. De-escalation training and rules of engagement training was also mentioned and repeated. Many of the respondents spoke about how the length of deployments mattered, what they specifically did while deployed and noted that brief refresher field training when coming back to their civilian law enforcement jobs was advisable. One respondent skipped this question.

Of interest, the majority of these participants believed that their military service has helped them in their civilian law enforcement careers. That military veterans can make effective leaders in civilian law enforcement, yet the vast majority have also seen military veterans struggle or fail in civilian law enforcement. A follow up for responses were considered for the question of veterans struggling or failing, but this was not implemented due to being too open ended. The final question pertaining to what additional training should be conducted for reservists when they resume jobs in civilian law enforcement was beneficial and the responses as to what type of training these reservists/veterans recommend should be looked at by agencies. This is training that the officers themselves recommend, who better to say what training would be best than them.

Discussion

The goal of the survey and interviews were to attempt to quantify some data as to how military veterans actually do as civilian peace officers. The scope of this project was extremely narrow in light of this being a national issue. The topic rates a much more in-depth look including reviewing personnel records, disciplinary reports and psychological and exit interviews. So many veterans separate from the armed services and as stated civilian law enforcement does seem a very reasonable match for their skills and backgrounds. Personally, I found the transition and fit to be almost seamless.

I had enlisted with the intention of serving one term and then embarking into a career as a civilian police officer. The training that I received in the Marines including the law enforcement training was far superior to the training that I received at my civilian academy. Performing police functions on base and in off base housing areas were relatively controlled and safe. I considered this great “live fire training” for what I would later encounter in the “real world” of civilian policing. The types of extremely violent, intoxicated and mentally unstable individuals that civilian police encounter on a daily basis is far more substantial than what would be encountered on base. Of the three years of patrol and security work I did I had only a handful of use of force situations and all of those except one were minimal level instances. As a deputy sheriff I have on numerous occasions had more than one use of force in a single shift. Even that being in a relatively quiet rural county in Northwest Florida. My theory is that military veterans make great candidates for civilian law enforcement officers. How long they served, with which branches they served, where they served and in what roles they served should be evaluated due to the expansive variance of these factors. Probationary periods must be used properly to evaluate these candidates and only the very best suited for these jobs should be invested in and retained. The issue of reservists is more complicated. When a reservist activates and serves overseas they may encounter many different stimuli that renders them changed when they return. The screening processes seem minimal in the area that I looked at. Some of the laws that are intended to protect returning veterans can curtail some of the screening processes that would be valid by employers to ensure that these folks are ready to re-engage in civilian policing. It should be a priority for agencies to more thoroughly address the re integration of the returning military veterans. As noted in the survey concerning the last question. Almost half of the 91 respondents went on to recommend additional training to reservists that split their time on duty here at home and abroad. Refresher training, rules of engagement, de-escalation training and some type of decompression would all be beneficial. We have responsibility to the citizens whom we are charged with serving and protecting, along with our law enforcement officers to ensure that we are up to the task.

Interviews were also conducted with three Sheriffs and three Police Chiefs of Northwest Florida. Sheriff Bob Johnson of Santa Rosa County, Sheriff David Morgan of Escambia County, Sheriff Larry Ashley of Okaloosa County, Chief Anthony Tindell of Milton Police Department, Chief Tommie Lyter of Pensacola Police Department and Chief Richard Hawthorne of Gulf Breeze Police Department. The goal of these interviews was to obtain opinions of executives who run law enforcement organizations at the very highest level concerning their experiences with military veterans in law enforcement. Some of these executives are veterans themselves, some are not. The executives were asked six questions, all but Sheriff Ashley were met with in person for sit down interviews and short discussions. The questions were;

1. Do you have a mixture of military veterans/reservists within your ranks?
2. What percentage of your sworn staff are military veterans?
3. What positive attributes do you feel military veterans bring to law enforcement?

4. What negative attributes do you feel military veterans bring to law enforcement?
5. Do you have supervisors that are military veterans, if yes what attributes do they bring?
6. Have you seen military veterans fail in LE? If so why do you think this occurred?

All of the executives have military veterans or reservists within their ranks of sworn personnel. The percentages of veterans/reservists who comprise the agencies were approximated at within 15% to 50%, with the average being 32%. Question 3 answers can be summarized in that veterans are more mature for their ages when they are younger and fresh off of active duty as opposed to non-veteran 22 to 25 years old. They can have more life experience likely due to the melting pot of people from different places that are encountered during military service. A higher level of self-discipline and adherence to orders from their supervisors was also mentioned in the executive responses. Question 4 asked what negative attributes veterans may bring to law enforcement. Being overly aggressive or too strict on citizens in their upholding of law was a recurring answer. The issue of PTSD and the lack of proper screening was also mentioned. For those law enforcement officers who are military reservists, the time that they spend away can be hard on the agency when they are left short on personnel.

Chief Hawthorne advised that military veterans can sometimes be inflexible when carrying out civilian policing functions. They may expect the obedience and respect from citizens that are often shown by military members to those of higher rank or in positions of authority. Hawthorne, R. (2019, May 31). Personal interview. Question 5 revealed that five out of the six agencies have supervisors who are veterans. In answering what attributes are observed by veterans who make supervisor in the agencies were being more “squared away”, having a higher level of discipline and that their shifts work very well together. These supervisors are also seen as being better disciplinarians, representing the agency well and have good fundamental leadership skills. These are all skills that the military strives to instill into its members, especially those in formal leadership roles.

The final question was perhaps the most important one relating to this research. Five of the six executives related that they had seen military veterans fail in law enforcement. Sheriff Johnson’s answer to this question was that he had, however the failure rates were lower than non-veterans. Johnson, R. (2019, July 15). Personal interview.

Sheriff Morgan told me that he had to demote a veteran from the rank of deputy sheriff captain and that military service was not a “ticket to success” in civilian law enforcement. Additionally, Sheriff Morgan said that some civilian police agencies may shy away from hiring veterans who were in the military police field, due to the retraining issue. Morgan, D. (June, 21). Personal interview.

Chief Lyter told me that his experiences were that sometimes a veteran who became a police officer could not adjust to the new mission that he/she was now required to fulfill. An officer once quit telling him that the call load was too high for him to manage and he was much less busy serving overseas. Despite some failures that he

has witnessed, Chief Lyter indicated his willingness to hire military veterans due to the characteristics that they possess. He has also reached out to the military presence in his area, Naval Air Station Pensacola where Marine NCOs were invited to come and conduct leadership training for his patrol sergeants. Lyter, T. (2019, June 7) Personal interview.

Chief Tindell answered this question by telling me that sometimes when one retires from the military they typically hold a substantial rank and then must start over as a non-rated police officer. They may have been accustomed to being in charge and spoken to and treated a certain way. Starting over was difficult for them. Tindell, A. (2019, May 30). Personal interview.

Sheriff Ashley's response to this question was "Yes, I've seen military veterans fail in law enforcement however antidotal evidence suggest that these failures have nothing to do with military service, training or work ethics but rather are the result of some personal character flaw(s) which were not vetted or dealt with well enough while in military service" Ashley, L. (2019, July 1). Personal Interview.

The Sheriff's and Chiefs were instrumental in helping understand how this transition actually occurs. They have obviously given this thought and researched the successes and shortcomings of military veterans who join the civilian law enforcement ranks. Their cooperation was much appreciated.

Recommendations

Recruiting new law enforcement officers is a challenge. Being involved in the processes of hiring on and training new deputies at my agency has given me insight as to the difficulties of this challenge. Other ranking members in nearby agencies whom I associate with also have the same plight. Particularly in this day and age, being a cop is not entirely popular. Often, prospective new hires come very young and with little life experiences. How can we expect a twenty-year-old to effectively deal with people's domestic issues, children and emotional high stress incidents? The burden of solid recruiting then leads us to the pool of military veterans. It is difficult enough to identify and recruit suitable people for law enforcement. To retain them over time is also challenging and the changes that we undergo over the years do negatively affect many of us. When you throw in the military reservist aspect of one who may be deployed overseas in a deplorable environment, where fear, danger and negativity prevail and upon return they are essentially dropped right back into a civilian policing role, the consequences can be profound. Fortunately, the men and women who have been doing this are in my opinion top notch professionals who want to serve. Ultimately however something tragic will occur, then as a community we shall have to make some changes in our processes. One bad officer can make a huge negative impact on the entire law enforcement community. Many of us have seen this firsthand and then the remaining community who go out and do great things have to answer or share the blame and shame thrust on them for the misgivings of that bad officer. The job that law enforcement officers are required to do is extremely demanding. Training budgets continually face cuts and our actions or inactions are reviewed to the most minor details which led up to critical incidents that may have went awry. I do believe that military

veteran and reservists can make fine peace officers. If however fundamentally we have underlying character flaws it will be difficult to reveal them at the outset of the civilian career. What improvements that can be made in the screening and readjustment period of veterans/ reservists into civilian law enforcement, we should invest in implementing.

Captain Jason Erlemann has been with the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office for 21 years. He began his law enforcement career enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps under a Military Police contract in 1991. Upon completing his initial training, he attended the USMC Basic MP School at Lackland AFB, Texas. After serving his four-year enlistment he entered Northwest Florida State College (formerly Okaloosa Walton Community College) where he completed the basic law enforcement academy. He also obtained his Associates of Science Degree in Criminal Justice at that time. Upon joining Santa Rosa S.O. in 1998, he worked as a Patrol Deputy, Field Training Officer, Patrol Sergeant, District Lieutenant and currently as the Patrol Division Commander.

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Appendix A

1. Please identify your gender

Male
Female

2. Please indicate your age

19-24
25-30
31-36
37-42
43-48
49-54
55 and over

3. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Less than high school degree
High school degree or GED
Some college but no degree
Associate degree
Bachelor degree
Graduate degree

4. In which branch (or branches) of the United States military have you served? (Check all that apply)

Air Force
Marine Corps
Coast Guard
Navy
Army

5. Please identify your occupation performed while you served in the military

Combat Arms
Combat Support
MP/Security
Administration/Computers
Aviation
Other (please specify)

6. How long did you serve in the military?

Under 1 year

1-4 years

5-8 years

9-12 years

13-16 years

17-20 years

21 years and over

7. Please indicate your highest rank while serving in the military

Non Rated Rank

NCO/Petty Officer

Staff NCO/Senior Petty Officer

Commissioned Officer

8. Were you recruited into civilian law enforcement?

Yes

No

9. How long have you been a law enforcement officer?

1-3 years

4-8 years

9-13 years

14-18 years

19-24 years

25 years or more

10. Please identify the type of law enforcement agencies you have served

Police Department

Sheriff's Office

State Agency

Other (please specify)

11. Do you feel that your military service has helped prepare you for civilian law enforcement?

Yes

No

12. Have you seen military veterans struggle or fail in law enforcement?

Yes

No

Undecided

13. Military veterans can be effective leaders in law enforcement
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
14. What attributes of military service have been beneficial to your job performance in law enforcement?
- Rank structure
 - Job description
 - Mission management
 - Chain of command recognition
 - Importance of role in society
15. What style of law enforcement officer are you?
- Problem Solver
 - Enforcer of laws
 - Community Servant
 - Guardian
 - Mediator
 - Warrior
16. Are you currently assigned to additional military duties as a law enforcement officer?
- Yes
 - No
17. Do you feel that military reservists should receive additional training upon returning from active duty deployments?
- Yes
 - No
- If yes please provide examples of preferred training