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Featured Flashback: Screening, Selecting, and Evaluating Marine Security Guards

Martin Wiskoff (1990)

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The nation was shocked in 1987 with the revelation that the security of the Moscow embassy had been compromised by a Marine serving guard duty. A research program was initiated by the Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Center (PERSEREC) in the same year, in support of the Marine Security Guard (MSG) Battalion to (1) identify those characteristics required for successful performance of MSG duties and (2) develop procedures for the continuing evaluation of Marines serving on guard duty.

A test battery of personality, interest, motivation, attitude and background instruments was administered to over 1,200 students at the MSG School and to over 1,000 Marines serving worldwide as MSGs. Criteria consisted of three measures of school performance (pass/fail, final score and peer ratings) and behaviorally anchored rating scales to measure job performance and off-duty behavior. Ratings on the latter scales were obtained from peers, supervisors and from subordinates

for part of the sample. Results pointed to the need to carefully attend to background variables such as minimum aptitude score, physical fitness and indebtedness in screening for Marines for the MSG School. Biodata measures demonstrated good validity against both school and job performance measures. One biodata inventory has already been introduced at the MSG School and recommendations have been made for use of others in screening and selecting for the MSG program.

A second research effort developed a continuing evaluation process (CVAL) for those Marines serving on MSG duty. The system was designed to: (1) serve as an early warning of performance and behavioral problems; (2) facilitate counseling of MSGs with problems; and (3) function as an information system for reassignment or removal of Marines if required. The CVAL process involves the using of a checklist of behavioral indicators. The program is currently being evaluated: indications are that it is being well received in the field.