



In early January, 2012, military leaders at Joint Base Lewis-McCord (JBLM), which is located near Tacoma, Washington, conducted a “routine inventory” and noticed that certain “sensitive” military hardware was missing—and [they determined](#) that the hardware had been stolen. The missing equipment included “laser-targeting gun sights, night-vision goggles, and weapons scopes with a ‘high-dollar value’ in the ‘six-figure range,’ according to the JBLM spokesperson quoted by Reuters in the article.

Leaders at JBLM confined roughly 100 soldiers of the 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division to their barracks in a “lockdown,” to facilitate the investigation into the stolen equipment. The 4th Brigade was one of JBML’s three combat Stryker brigades, and had been deployed to Iraq twice. Currently, the brigade is preparing for a near-term deployment to Afghanistan.

The Reuters article reported—

A lockdown means the soldiers are confined to barracks and office areas of the unit, so the troops are not permitted to go home if they have families residing outside the barracks, the Army said.

On Saturday, the restrictions were loosened to allow soldiers' families to visit them in confinement, [the JBLM spokesperson] said.

A criminal investigation has been launched, and a \$10,000 reward offered. As the lockdown continued for six days, further details emerged. Apparently, the hardware had been accounted-for in the December 2011 inventory—and it appeared that the optics had been stolen over the Christmas holidays, when the majority of soldiers were off-base. Meanwhile some of the enlisted soldiers

[accused](#) their officers of “incompetence” and asserted that the entire brigade was being punished for the

negligence of a few officers.

That assertion turned out not to be entirely correct. In February the Army [charged](#) 22 year-old Private Nicholas Solt with the theft of “\$630,000” worth of equipment for the purpose of resale. The NewsTrib reported---

Solt faces 59 years in prison if he’s convicted on six charges including larceny of military property, entering a government building with the intent to commit a crime, attempting to sell optical and targeting equipment, threatening to kill another person, possessing narcotics and possessing steroids.

The Army says it recovered 98 percent of the gear Solt allegedly stole by collaborating with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Eventually, the Army prosecuted two other enlisted soldiers for the theft, and they have been convicted, according to

[this recent story](#)

at The NewsTrib. The article reported—

Spc. Joshua Chandler, 21, was convicted July 11 of larceny of government property and conspiracy to commit larceny. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, forfeiture of all pay and reduction in rank to private and was dishonorably discharged.

Spc. David Green also pleaded guilty to charges of larceny and conspiracy to commit larceny. He was sentenced to one month of confinement and a reduction in rank to private and received a bad-conduct discharge. Solt’s case is still pending. A court-martial date was not reported.

In previous blog articles we have criticized military leaders for failures in internal control. We have also criticized what we saw as overly light sentences meted-out to those who betrayed their uniforms. In this story, however, we are pleased to applaud the military leaders of JBLM who took quick, decisive, action to investigate the missing equipment and who quickly identified the (alleged) culprits for prosecution. And we are pleased to see lengthy sentences for those found guilty.

We are very sorry that these young men, who served their country in a time of war and who risked their lives to accomplish the nation’s national security objectives, made very poor choices that led to their lives being ruined. But we think such examples need to be made, when those who wear their country’s uniforms ignore their duty and betray the trust placed in them. Soldiers considering similar misdeeds in the future may think twice if they know the downside of getting caught.