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Enforcing Standards or Loyalty to Commander

Each individual in United States Army has the basic responsibility to do the right thing in any given situation. Our decision making process is based upon our perception of reality, right vs. wrong, and our ethics. This is why it is very important that soldiers and NCOs maintain high ethical standards regardless of rank. First, before we get started, what are Ethics? Ethics are values, traits and principles that an individual has learned or developed through his or her upbringing and experiences. Most soldiers relate ethical decisions to choosing the hard right over the easy wrong. During my assignment as a first sergeant, I faced an ethical dilemma. It was not a dilemma of knowing what was right or wrong however, it was doing what was right for the sake of loyalty to my commander. Since it was my commander who put me in the situation, it was a very hard decision to make.

After an Army physical fitness test (APFT), my unit had three failures one of which was a lieutenant. I immediately suspended all favorable actions (flag) and put all three in the special population physical fitness program. One month later the NCO in charge of the program told me the lieutenant had never shown up for the program. I counseled the lieutenant and explained to him the result of failing the APFT a second time could have on his career. I also told him as an officer in the United States Army he was expected to lead by example. During the counseling session the lieutenant acted as if he did not care. He stated the captain's board would convene next month and he would be taken care of. I informed the commander about the counseling session, he told me not to worry he

would take care of it.

Two weeks later, on Monday the commander interrupted my platoon sergeant meeting and handed me an APFT scorecard with the results of the lieutenant's APFT. I asked the commander when the test took place and he said Saturday. After he left my office, one of my platoon sergeants told me he was at the physical fitness field early Saturday morning. He was setting up for his son's soccer game and he did not see either one of them. I told him not to worry I would get to the bottom of this later.

Later that morning I sat down and talked to the commander about the situation. The commander told me he came in on Saturday and personally graded the lieutenant. I asked him who was there with him; he got real defensive and claimed he did not need anyone to help him grade an APFT. He also directed me not to question his integrity. I knew inside the APFT never took place, but what could I do about it. I asked him if he planned to lift the flag on the lieutenant and he said of course. Now I was faced with an ethical dilemma. I could not allow him to lift the flag and enable that lieutenant to get promoted. If I went to the Battalion Commander I would be disloyal to my commander. But if I did nothing I would be disloyal to my unit and the Army.

I went to see the battalion Command Sergeant Major (CSM). I explained the situation to the CSM, and he told me to make a decision and he would support me. But he advised me to be careful on the course of action I take because officers take care of their own. I decided there was only one right answer so I went to see the battalion commander. After explaining the situation to him, he called my commander and told him to come to his office. Once my commander arrived, we all went into the battalion commander's office. The discussion got real heated, with my commander giving me several dirty looks. He

claimed the lieutenant passed the APFT and I was just out to get him. He told the Battalion Commander I never liked the lieutenant and I have tried to embarrass him on numerous occasions. After hearing my commander tell these lies I felt really betrayed. Luckily the battalion commander wanted to see for his self. So he ordered my commander not to lift the flag on the lieutenant until he supervised another APFT administered correctly. The Battalion Commander directed me to administer the APFT in his presence.

I gave the lieutenant an additional thirty days and then I administered the APFT to him and the rest of the APFT failures. Unfortunately for the Commander and the lieutenant, he failed again. The Battalion Commander relieved my commander of his duties and gave him a job as the assistant S-3. As for the lieutenant, he missed his captain's board and eventually left the Army. Some senior NCOs and most of the officer corps accused me of being disloyal to my commander and failing the command team. I disagree, I say I choose the hard right over the easy wrong.

In conclusion, the incident discussed throughout this brief is an example of an ethical decision. As the morals, values and ethics of our society disintegrate before our eyes, we are the last line of defense. If the senior leaders of our Army cannot be called on to uphold a higher standard, than who can? It is a leader's responsibility to teach discipline and instill good morals, values and ethics in our subordinates. Doing what is morally and legally right is the way of life for the professional soldier. The everyday decisions they make can affect many other soldiers, the unit, or even the Army.