



# **“Is It Ethically Right or Wrong?”**

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**16 November 2005**

We have made decisions as a nation that we cannot erase, but have we made decisions that have wounded our ethical heritage is the question. The United States of America is currently waging a war on terrorism and is this war based on decisions that were made based on the definition of the word ethics? The definition of the word ethics as it stated in the Webster dictionary is “the science of morals; moral principles, and rules of conduct.” This definition should make us reflect on the position of the War that America is currently waging.

Are we prejudiced because of what happened on 11 September 2001? We all saw the images of the airliners slamming into the World Trade Center, the aftermath at the Pentagon and the evil in the skies over Pennsylvania. I do not think that any of us will argue that the events in New York City, Washington D.C., and in the skies over Pennsylvania that tragic day were anything less than evil, cowardly acts against America. These acts were directed at the framework of the Constitution that binds us all together. America suffered a tragic loss that day and our intentions since are to right that wrong. We felt this way because as Members of the Armed Forces we swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. Maybe, we felt this way because as Senior Noncommissioned Officers we have devoted our lives to defending the ideals of democracy. The questions we all have to ask are; did we just want America to get revenge, or are we doing the right thing?

First let me start by sharing with you what I believe gives Americans the authority to wage this war on terrorism and that comes from the words or orders of the President and

Commander in Chief of the United States of America. The President of the United States of America swears to an oath just as all Service Members swear to an oath. In these oaths we swear to defend the Constitution of the United States of America. In this Constitution we as Americans have a responsibility to promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty. This coupled with the overwhelming support for America, I believe gives us the right to wage this war on Terrorism.

What does it really mean to do the ethically right thing? Throughout history American Service men and woman have had to live by those words. With these words come certain responsibilities and obligations. We have a past that is filled with service members that have served with pride and honor, and represent all those things that is right. The scar that we all have because of the horrors of September 11 is long lasting and slow in healing. American leaders have made thousands of decisions that have maintained or strengthened our tradition of authentic and ethical excellence. Honesty, integrity, loyalty, selfless service, and personal courage are at the heart of the ethical base in the military.

As leaders of this great nation, it is our responsibility to ensure that our subordinates make ethically right decisions. Some of these decisions may be regarding the enemy. Compassion for a prisoner who has been linked to terrorism or a terrorist organization is much easier said than done. We have the specific rules outlined in Regulations of Engagement. These rules for guidance and maintaining ethical purity while suppressing anger and retaliation in many circumstances in no small feat. Anyone can do what is

ethically right when it does not matter, but when forced with a hard time that is where the challenge lies.

As Americans, we undoubtedly have the best weapons systems in the world. We have the single most impressive resource, which guarantees our success on the Battlefield. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen are the resources that guarantee this success. These outstanding Americans come from the rural countryside's, to the inner cities, back out towards the suburbs throughout The United States. Men and women, from all lifestyles, for a variety of reasons join the Armed Forces. This great diversity brings stronger ethical beliefs and strength to the United States Military. These great Americans have sworn an oath to establish justice, tranquility, provide for the defense, welfare and blessing of the United States of America. As American service members, we have gone through great lengths to provide our nations sons and daughters a value-based institution that continues to provide quality leadership and ethical examples to emulate. Americans citizens can count on the members of the armed forces to make the ethically right decisions as proven in history, so let us continue to lead.

In summary, we have made decisions as a nation that we cannot erase, but we have made decisions based on the glue that holds us all together as a Nation. When speaking of ethics, words such as values, beliefs, and character are often interchanged. Nevertheless, the bottom line, when dealing with ethics, is that we as a Nation should maintain a zero defects standard. We have gone through great lengths to provide all

Americans the opportunity to freedom and as leaders; we need to continue this great cause. If Soldiers can count on their leaders to make ethically competent decisions, leaders can count on their soldiers to absorb those ethical principles and become the great leaders of tomorrow. I believe that I have shown you here today that the evil, cowardly acts against the grassroots of our nation on September 11, 2001 were clear statements from terrorist organizations, but our response came from those same grass roots.