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Abstract

My Ethics paper is based on my experiences and thoughts on ethics. In the army we are trained to deal with situations and to make timely decisions that affect our Soldiers. Leaders can either build a team or brake a team. For the last twenty-three years have tried my best to train, mentor, and set the example for Soldiers to follow. I just hope that I am and have accomplished my goals by setting the standard for our Soldiers. Throughout the contingency operations I have faithfully served over the past twenty three years of military service. One thing I have found to be true through my own personal experience is that we must train our Soldiers to the Army standards. We don't know what tomorrow brings or where we may find ourselves deployed. The Army values should guide us through all situations and difficult decisions we must make. We must always remember that unethical behavior quickly destroys organization's morale and cohesion. In addition, it undermines the trust and confidence that is essential to teamwork and accomplishment of the mission.

Doing what is Right

What obligations and responsibilities do Army leaders have on ethics? It's every leader's duty to set the example for our Soldiers to follow. Only our background, values, beliefs, and experience can help us with difficult ethical problems. As leaders we must remember that everything we do has a great impact on our Soldiers and organization. Everyday we face decisions that are different from our own personal values and beliefs. Leaders should always do what is legally and morally right. One of the biggest problems that I have seen in today's Army is leaders are more worried about their career and not about training our Soldiers for combat. Today, leaders are getting promoted to fast and don't have the experience to deal with their Soldiers problems.

As leaders we owe it to our Soldiers to make the everyday ethical decisions for the better of the unit and not our own personal needs. Making the right decisions when they are not popular is what shows our Soldiers their leader's character. Soldiers will follow leaders that they can be true to and look up to.

Today, many leaders are afraid to stand up for what is right in fear of not getting a good rating. One ethical dilemma that has stayed in my mind for the past two years happened in the summer of 2003. During my Second year as a first sergeant,

my incoming commander and I had a disagreement about a noncommissioned officer who was being moved from the company. I informed the captain that the decision had been made at battalion. The incoming commander tried to talk me about the company's issue and I advised him to wait until after the change of command to talk about company issue. Before I knew it the captain went to the acting sergeant major and told him that I was not supporting him and had a problem with my loyalty.

When I went to talk to the sergeant major about my problem the only advice he gave me was that battalion commander hand picked the captain and he also told that the captain and I would not be able get along and that I may want to get out before things got worse.

That day I knew that I had a big decision to make, do I leave and save my career or stay to ensure my Soldiers were taken care off? I know that I had not done anything that was legally or morally wrong. The next day I informed the master sergeant that I would not leave and if he had something that I had done wrong to bring it out in the open. I felt it was my duty to my Soldiers to stand up for what was right.

For the next few months I found myself being the first sergeant and company commander because the young captain was never around and was always late for battalion meetings. The

battalion commander would ask him questions about Soldiers issues and he couldn't answer them.

The battalion commander was all over my company commander for not being around to command his Soldiers. The company commander was more worried about Soldiers liking him, then commanding the company. Soldiers would go directly to the commander before using the chain of command and the commander would down grade NCOs in front of the Soldiers. I advised the commander that by doing that he was undermining the NCOs.

Well once again he went straight to the command sergeant major. Shortly after, I was called in to see my battalion CSM. He informed me that my commander wanted me moved because we were not seeing eye to eye on the way to lead the company. I asked the CSM what I was doing wrong and what I could do to fix the problem. All he could tell me is that he was the commander and right or wrong, I must do what he wants done. I talked to the sergeant major about how he treated NCOs and how he was never around for me to brief him on company issues. That afternoon the company commander talked to me about what I had said to the sergeant major, word for word. From that day on I knew that I could not talk to my senior mentor about company problems.

Our sergeant major had never been a first sergeant and was not use to dealing with leadership issues. I went by to talk to my sergeant major about our conversation and I informed him that

I came to him for guidance on how to deal with my commander. I asked him why he had replied our conversation to my company commander; the sergeant major could not give me answer. I knew that day that I could not trust him or rely on him for help because he had taken sides.

Often I would see my company talking to my command sergeant major behind close doors. When I talked to the sergeant major about the situation all he would say was that the company commander was new and needed advice. I told the sergeant major that my job was to advise the captain on company issues and if I was not doing my job he should replace me. He stated that the company was doing great and I should give it time.

For the next months I tried to stay focused on training my Soldiers for the upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. When we were out training my commander could not be found and the battalion commander was losing patience with the company commander. My commander was counseled by the battalion commander several times on his leadership style and the sergeant major would talk to me about having my commander out there.

Over the next months the battalion took a turn for the worse. The battalion commander and sergeant major could not get along. The battalion commander was unhappy with the sergeant major and his ability to provide him with advice on problems surrounding the unit. Setting the standards and leading from

the front was very important to the battalion commander. The sergeant major had a P-3 profile and could not run with the unit and he was starting to gain weight. The battalion commander wanted the sergeant major taped and weighed. Thus, I was put in a difficult situation to tape and weigh my battalion sergeant major. I knew it was my job and I also knew if he did not make tape, he would look at me as the bad guy.

My company commander and sergeant majors dislike for the battalion commander brought them closer together. I now had my company commander going to my battalion sergeant major for advice on day to day problems. I had several conversations with my CSM about the situations and about his relationship with company commander. I often told him that if I was not doing my job to replace me and all he would tell me was that my commander liked talking to him.

During our deployment to Afghanistan, the relationship between the battalion commander and sergeant major got worse, and leaders started to take sides. The unethical behavior of the two leaders was destroying the unit's morale and cohesion. I had Soldiers to worry about and not leaders who were unable to sit down to work out their differences.

Two months in to our deployment the battalion commander wanted the sergeant major taped and weighed again, this time he failed the tape. The sergeant major was counseled and flagged

by the company commander and I was put in the middle of the two leaders fight. From that day forward the sergeant major looked at me as being disloyal to him. The leaders in battalion had a big ethical dilemma with both leaders talking to people about who was right and who was wrong.

To often we are forced to make difficult decisions that can hurt our units, good leader must embrace the army values, personal values, and experience to help us make the right decisions. Soldiers must be able to observe ethical behavior in the actions of their leader. Our behavior in and out of the unit will reinforce or negate the army values.

For the last twenty-three years I have seen too many senior leaders forgot our biggest responsibility, to mentor our young noncommissioned officers. By helping young leaders to fine tune their leadership skills, we will help them deal with difficult situations.

Many seniors feel that loyalty comes with the rank and it's a one way street. As senior leaders we must earn our Soldiers loyalty by doing what is right and looking out for their welfare. If you lead from the front others will follow.