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ETHICS

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Ethics are a vital element of our military profession. Today, more than ever, this important virtue needs to be taught at all levels of military training. Unethical behavior seriously undercuts the Army's core values and diminishes the public support necessary to maintain an effective fighting force. Recent changes in our mission and force structure have increased the demands on the military to educate and enforce ethical principles for all personnel. Our new privates should receive their first training during initial entry training, noncommissioned officers should receive training at all levels of the NCOES, and our officers should receive the training at all levels as well. All soldiers come from the mainstream of society. We cannot take for granted that our soldiers come from society instilled with the ethics needed to properly integrate into our Army.

The role of ethics in the military profession is one that we cannot afford to let fall through the cracks. The lack of ethical standards can have far reaching effects and will impact at all levels when the standards of ethics are violated. Ethics can be divided into two categories; personal ethics and organizational ethics. The first one is the ethics that an individual possesses. These ethics are developed from ones upbringing, his family life, and the social atmosphere that he or she was subject to while growing up. Organizational ethics is the personality of the organization. It is the norms, beliefs and values that ones sees or senses after becoming a member of that organization. The ethical culture of the Army is a difficult one to sense due to the nature of our business. We must conform to the culture of the American society as well to that of the Army and its particular mission.

As we look back into our history we can find numerous examples of leaders who have made ethically acceptable or unacceptable decisions. One of the most notorious incidents happened during the Vietnam conflict in the village My Lai. Lieutenant Calley gave an illegal order for his platoon to massacre over 300 Vietnamese villagers. This incident reinforced the already negative public sentiment against the war, and against the United States Army. This incident was one that took decades to overcome. The impact of one leader's decision affected not only the soldiers under his command, but also society as a whole. When we think of leaders who have made ethical decisions we normally associate the decisions with negative outcomes. There are also instance of ethical decisions that have had outcomes that are positive. One instance happened during Operation Desert Storm. A Special Forces unit was in a hide site along a drainage canal deep inside Iraq. During this mission the hide site was discovered by 2 small Iraqi children. The members of the unit had to make an ethical decision. The decision was to eliminate the threat and not compromise the mission or let the children return to the village and possibly alert others to their position. In the end, the children were not harmed but did return to the village and alert the authorities. The mission was compromised and a lengthy firefight followed. In both cases leaders made decisions based on individual and organizational ethics.

It is hard to say whether we can change someone's ethics through training. What is certain is that we can inform individuals of what the Army and society accept ethical principle, values and norms. It is then the responsibility of that individual to do the ethically right action if he finds himself in that position. His ethics may be different but

he knows what is ethically acceptable. Ethical decisions with good and bad results will occur daily. As an organization we must train our soldiers on ethics and also make them aware of the impact these decisions will have on our Army and the nation.

Today the United States Army continues to have problems regarding ethics. In many cases the members do not know, or just do not care about the basic concepts of right and wrong. These incidents give validity to the need for our army to continue to train our leaders and soldiers, at all levels, on the importance of making sound ethical decisions when conducting our business.

The challenges our soldiers are facing in Iraq on a daily basis bring to light the importance of making ethically sound decisions. Everyday the soldiers are conducting missions for the good of the Iraqi citizens. All it takes is an instance such as Abu Garib to discredit all the hard work and sacrifices of our soldiers. One poor decision can have a far reaching impact that takes lengthy recovery times.

As leaders we are the bearers of ethical standards and cannot afford to waiver on our ethical principles. Our behavior, decisions and overall leadership style will set the ethical climate for our unit. We have the overall responsibility of training, enforcing, rewarding, and punishing those individuals who do not conform to the ethics of our Army. We have many tools at our disposal to instill the ethical standards of our Army in our soldiers. What you say, how you act, and the decisions you make will set the tone for your soldiers to follow. Do the right thing.