

Running head: DOUBLE STANDARDS IN THE ARMY

Double Standards in the Army

SGM Timothy Lamb

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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SGM Landy

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Abstract

This paper discusses the evolution of illegal orders in the military. The United States Army claims to be values based organization, yet its leaders choose their careers over promoting values. This is shown through the actions of Army leaders in the Pat Tillman and Abu Ghurab Prison incidents to name a few. Further evidence of how small infractions lead to larger concerns is shown in the Academy's own requirements of civilian dress for its students. The values the Army claims to promote must come before all other concerns if the Army is to truly be values based.

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Double Standards in the Army

On December 30, 1985 the United States Army proclaimed “values” as the official Army theme (Spisak, 2007). Additionally, the Army has organized a Standards of Conduct Office (USAASC, 2007). Yet somehow in spite of all the values training done over the last 22 years, leaders and Soldiers still seem to have problems recognizing ethical situations and making the morally and ethically decision. Its understandable junior leaders will make mistakes due to their inexperience. It takes time to embrace norms not seen in regular society. How can the Army explain the lack of values demonstrated by some senior and midlevel leaders over the last few years? Though the Army's written mission statement says it is a values based organization, in reality most leaders are regimented and only truly promote values when doing so doesn't comprises their beliefs (values are beliefs so how can they not go together? Might want to just say careers) or careers. Over the last several years the Army's leaders collectively have become careless about giving and receiving illegal and unlawful orders.

Army Values

The United States Army has identified seven values it expects all leaders and Soldiers to follow: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. For the past 22 years these values have been emphasized and taught to all Soldiers. West Point has embraced the tradition of Duty, Honor, and Country since the early sixties. After all these years and numerous generations of leaders and Soldiers, how can it be that many leaders of the Army aren't truly living the Army Values? Most junior leaders and Soldiers want to live and enforce the Army's values and ethics. It has become apparent that many leaders aren't ready to apply the seven Army Values to their actions or orders. To understand this point we will look at two recent examples of leaders failing to follow Army Values: The Pat Tillman incident and Abu Ghurab

prison in Iraq (Ethics, 2007)). The following discussion will explain how either of these incidents could occur within the Army culture.

Tillman Incident

In April of 2004, former Pro Football player Pat Tillman was serving with the 2nd Ranger Battalion in Afghanistan. During a mission Ranger Tillman died as the result of friendly fire. His chain of command was aware of this fact almost immediately. However, it took several months for the truth to be revealed to his family and the American public (CNN, 2007). Not only did the Army attempt to hide the truth from Pat Tillman's family they compounded the lie by awarding him a Silver Star (the nations 3rd highest award for bravery). It wasn't until the House Oversight and Government Chairman Henry Wasman (CNN, 2007) became involved that the Army finally came clean and properly investigated the incident (Soldier, 2007). Once all the facts were public seven high ranking Army officers would receive official reprimands (to include one three star general) (Associate Press, 2007).

Abu Ghurab

After the Army took over running the Abu Ghurab Prison in Iraq reports began to surface that accused Army Soldiers of abusing prisoners and violating the Law of Conduct. After an investigation it came out that several members of the 800th MP BDE had in fact helped torture and humiliate enemy prisoners (Hersh, 2007). The NCOs and junior Soldiers claimed to be following the orders of their superiors. Their chain of command denied this claim. However when the investigation was completed, the BDE commander (General Karpinski) would be quietly suspended (Associated Press, 2007).

How can the Army explain the Tillman and Abu Ghurab values failures? Due to the number of personnel involved in both incidents, it is impossible to claim they are individual

failures of a few select Soldiers. These abuses have occurred due to the mistaken application of loyalty that leaders within the Army have developed and practiced in their subordinates.

Norms

As stated earlier one of the Army's values is Loyalty. The Army's definition of Loyalty is the faithful adherence to a person (your supervisor), the Army, the country, and the Constitution. It goes without saying that Soldiers must have loyalty towards each other. Somehow over the years many leaders in the Army have developed an informal norm that says disagreement with your superior is disloyalty. This norm has been re-enforced by some leaders using the OER and NCOER system to retaliate with those who would disagree with them. It an established practice that subordinate leaders could argue against a plan in private, but should support the decision while in public. In fact this practice allows for the good order and discipline within the ranks. Yet over the years, it seems like fewer and fewer leaders are willing to question illegal orders even in private. Two examples of this practice may be found here at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. The academy's standard operating procedure packet on page 20, paragraph 2-9, Estimated Cost Information, (USASMA SOP, 2007), says the student should be prepared to pay different amounts for the Dinning-In, Graduation Ball, etc... Sub-paragraph b. states the fees are course related and part of the USASMA curriculum. When questioned as to how the Academy could order students to pay money, the following responses were offered: "don't make mountains out of molehills", "its tradition", or the best yet, "don't rock the boat, remember cooperate to graduate". The issue isn't whether or not a student can afford the money, but rather is this the legal and ethical path to take. If so where does it end? Can Team Leaders demand money from their privates for the good of the Army or other unit functions? Another example would be the academy's civilian clothes policy (USASMA SOP, 2007). Page 29,

paragraph 4-2, sub-paragraph c, Student Dress Code, explains what the academy feels is proper civilian attire. So far so good, this makes sense the academy's job is to train future SGMs. Then the academy goes even further by mandating civilian attire for certain functions while at the same time ordering the Soldiers not to wear blue jeans. According to regulations, if the Army is going to dictate certain civilian attire then the unit is suppose to provide the Soldier with a civilian clothing allowance. The argument for the civilian dress code is the fact that many students don't know how to define what is proper and what isn't. If this fact is correct then maybe the proper course of action would be to conduct a block of instruction in how to dress and what constitutes proper business attire. I would offer that by dictating clothing we are operating on a slippery slope. Do we as leaders have the legal authority to demand how our Soldiers spend their personal income? Not according to the Army's own regulations. The purpose of this paragraph is to show that while orders may be well meaning (teaching Soldiers about what is proper civilian attire) some units go too far and began issuing illegal orders. Several other examples have also come to light over the last decade.

Decline

A few years ago the Army was faced with large numbers of Drill Sergeants abusing their positions and power. Once again how does this happen? Does anyone just wake up one morning and decide to start violating the law? Probably not, what is occurring is a slow decline of accepted Values and Ethics. The individual Soldiers start by dismissing minor infractions because the Soldiers feels' they are no big deal, or perhaps due to feelings of misplaced loyalty to their superiors or careers. The term misplaced loyalty is used because it is a duty and moral obligation to speak to our superiors, whether or not they want to hear it; if any of them are not following the ethical course of conduct. Over time leaders within the Army become immune to

the effects of these small illegal orders and lose their moral compass. Once this occurs the leaders confuse their personal values or goals with the Army's. It becomes very easy for these leaders to justify laying aside Army Values for what they feel is the greater good. However the truth is the Army would be better served if these leaders could admit that mistakes have occurred and take action to prevent a reoccurrence. Sadly, too many leaders seem to feel that the Army is better served by denying the truth or keeping problems hidden.

Leader's Roles

Remember this paper started out saying that leaders in the Army have become careless in the issuing and following of illegal orders. To understand how incidents like the Pat Tillman cover up and the Abu Ghurab Prison torture occur we must understand the part all leaders play in promoting Army Values and ethics. If the Army's leadership at all levels isn't willing to stand up and challenge all illegal and immoral orders then how can we expect our Soldiers to stand up for Army Values. Remember once we as leaders ignore an infraction of the rules, we have just set a new standard. This applies to illegal or unethical orders as well. Wrong is wrong no matter what the impact (big or small) and we as leaders need to quit worrying about our careers and instead worry about the health of the Army.

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