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Abstract

As leaders in today's Army someone always puts our decisions, policies, ideas, and ethics in check. Whether it is a superior or subordinate, we will and are observed and watched by all. Leaders' actions can make or break a unit's morale and the way it functions. This is a brief summary of noticed issues by members of a unit while in Iraq and the effects they had.

Questionable Ethics

When commanders put out policies and procedures, they are to obey and follow. What happens when those that made and wrote them do not follow them? While in Iraq and even in Garrison I did see this quite often along with some questionable ethics. Over the next few pages I will give a few examples and the effects they had throughout the unit.

There were policy letters and memorandums put out throughout the Brigade (BDE) before and after arriving in Iraq by the BDE Commander (BC), Deputy Brigade Commander (DBC) governing everything from leaves, weapons, personal gear, and ofcourse when things change. Policy for personnel going on leave or pass was to turn in the weapons into the arms room, inventory personal equipment and property, and turn it into the supply room connex. The weapons of course were a “no brainer” and the inventory or property and equipment was also a good idea. Even though turning them in was quite painful due to personnel having to carry it across the compound to the company. The very ones that wrote and put it out to everyone else did not follow this procedure and they may have not known that it was known through out the unit but of course the unit knew. How did they know? There are a couple of different ways this could have happened. One is that Soldiers talk with one another all the time and when a knowing person talks with another, it starts a chain reaction. The other being somewhat of the same, by conducting sensitive item inventories monthly and the unit armors are usually of the rank of SGT or below and are conducting the inventories with a SFC or above. When conducting the sensitive items inventory all weapons and sensitive items, they are all accounted for by either physically seeing them or seeing paperwork showing where they are. As it was, when the command group went on leave, they left their weapons locked in a small locker at the BDE headquarters, as you would see at a bowling alley. Not only did they have a 9mm each but also an M-4 but only

carried their 9mm. Two policies broken there, one of which was from them and the other that you need to have your weapon with you at all times while in theater. Some Soldiers will talk with their leaders if they feel comfortable with talking about issues such as these and then in turn leaders talk with other leaders, friends, and what not. Therefore you get the question of “why do I have to if they don’t?” What is a direct supervisor to say when asked this from a subordinate? We of course would tell them to worry about what is happening up and only look down (to lower rank) and then again what if they get to that level and do the same? Have we really taught them right? What are we teaching that rank has its privileges and you don’t have to abide by the things you write and put out to others?

Prior to leaving the installation the COL had a BDE formation and stated to everyone that if there weren’t a mission for them, these personnel would not deploy and or return to CONUS early. As commercialization of communications was under way through out Iraq less tactical equipment and personnel were in use and trucks and equipment parked in motor pools and personnel without jobs put on details.

Another issue I came across while conducting Staff Assistance Visits (SAV). One of the battalions had just redeployed back to the U.S. while the rest of the BDE was getting ready to go. This battalion deployed to the southern region of Iraq about five months after the rest of the BDE. Before arriving in country the BDE knew there wasn’t going to be much of a mission for them though they were to bring everyone and equipment with them. While the battalion was still sitting in Kuwait the BDE was still trying to figure out where to put them. While conducting the SAVs throughout the country I also went to see this battalion after they had set up and running for a while. Upon arriving I learned that there was even a total of one company’s equipment in system and that most of the personnel were not busy doing much of anything and that of course

wondering why they were there. Just having returned from one deployment to leave again within the year it was not only the lower enlisted thinking this. With the Army reorganizing and units going away was no different for us as we knew all knew were going away as well and that the possibilities of redeploying again in a new unit was very likely as well. There were a couple of different things going through their minds other than they were going to make the best of a bad situation. Of course they were thinking they got the short end of the stick by deploying again this soon and that they were not told the truth about possibly returning early if not needed. Another was that they came over to boost the BDE numbers of personnel and equipment the BDE commander was responsible for during a deployment in order to get promoted. What to you think that did to morale within the unit? If in fact this was the case of getting promoted?

Some other issues that one can see quite regularly throughout the Army are taking responsibility for your actions. Making yourself look good at the expense of others or taking credit for what they did instead of giving credit to the one deserving. These are a few examples and some of which happened directly to me and we all thought at this point in our career that you would not be in competition with anyone. When going on leave we have to give someone our work and what is going on with it so in general we usually give it to someone in charge. What happens when we give them our work on a pin drive and they have the same thing on their computer but not updated and save what they looked at or did on the wrong drive? If it was a person that cared for what he was doing for you would typically try and fix it before there was a problem but, not in this case. I returned from leave and a little chewing out while this very person was standing next to me and not saying a word for not being up to date and of course he knew what had happened and not saying a word until a few days later and only to me. What good did that do? He still looked good from the command's point of view and didn't say a word about

what had happened. Another instance from the same person and coming from my direction. I let my chain of command know what was going on and what I was doing at all times but, sometimes we need to let more people know other than that which I learned the hard way. In modern days the internet can be our friend or foe. By letting the section NCOIC know what is going on seemed to defeat the purpose at times and we learn whom we can talk with and share our thoughts without having to think twice about them. I would let this individual know what I was doing and had accomplished verbally and then get on the internet and see an email sent to me telling me what I needed to do (which is what I had just done) and then see the message forwarded to the command group as if it was his idea to get things done and his plan to begin with. Most of us have seen this happen a few times and what is the right or ethical answer in trying to fix the problem other than confronting them? In most cases you will still not get the credit for anything that you done because the other person is doing such a good job within the command and for the most part from everyone else's work.

Probably the biggest issue currently in the Army would be awards given for a deployment. There are many higher awards handed out to those that are undeserving and the Soldiers that deserve are not getting them because of their rank. If we would take a look back into history, there was not a Bronze Star Medal (BSM) given for sitting at a desk in a fortified building for a year while your troops went out on missions. The Soldiers that went out on missions regularly and put themselves or were put at risk didn't receive near what their command received, BSM versus an Army Achievement Medal (AAM). In these cases I am talking about those that went out on convoy and flying missions while their boss sat safely or relatively safely and received a much higher award for doing not ever going outside the wire at all.

In closing there are a few things that leaders need to work on. We as leaders should give recognition where it is due and not take credit for it and not give the Soldier recognition just because they are of lower rank. That is telling our Soldiers they are expendable or that we really don't care as long as we move up and that is most definitely the wrong answer. Many of all different ranks are quick to shift the blame on others for their actions or decisions and not take responsibility for them. They will take on more responsibility by getting promoted or the job they are incompetent of taking and what we call riding the system. While others will profit from the lower enlisted or officers to excel and of course is seen by all and hope that they will learn from the bad and the good. All of us have had good leaders and bad leaders that we will either remember or learn what to do or not to do from. A few forget where they came from or wish not to think of how they got there but the bottom line would be to do the right thing whether we were taught that or not. Another thing to remember is, as a leader someone is always looking so never put yourself in a compromising position to give doubt at any of your Soldiers.