

Running Head: Do What Is Right

Do Right
THOUGHT PAPER 1

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~~THOUGHT PAPER ON ETHICS: DO WHAT IS RIGHT~~

Do What is Right

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Abstract

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What is the right thing to do in an ethical situation? Ethics is nothing more than looking at a problem, determine if it's wrong, and then making the right decision based on our values. Ethics comes from our own childhood background. The army teaches us, to deal with our ethical situations through discipline, standards and decisions to use the army values as our guide. Values are another tool that our parents instill in us, but our parents also had a tremendous influence over how we rate these values. This rating is the single best or at times the single worst factor when trying to make the right ethical decision. I believe the first step a leader must take is to understand that all the army values are of equal importance, only than can we make the best ethical decision.



Thought Paper on Ethics: Do What is Right

Discipline in obeying orders is crucial in making groups of Soldiers effective in achieving military objectives, or even in protecting themselves. Nevertheless, what if they are ordered to do something immoral, such as to destroy a whole village or shoot prisoners? How should we treat captives whom we suspect are members of Al Qaeda or other organizations that kill noncombatants indiscriminately? Should they be treated as criminal suspects, as prisoners of war, or something else? Would torturing suspected terrorists be morally justified in order to prevent mass murder? If we train or otherwise allow our Soldiers to torture, their character may become morally indistinguishable from the terrorists themselves. Should we uphold the rules of war under The Hague and Geneva conventions even if our enemies do not? Yes, otherwise, we lower ourselves to terrorists, and the justice of our own cause is undermined. How much risk should our Soldiers sustain in order to minimize harms to civilians living near a combat zone, or being used as human shields? I am generally pleased with the care exhibited by U.S. forces to avoid targeting civilians and to minimize the risks of collateral damage from attacks against valid military targets.

We risk the lives of America's sons and daughters every day because Iraqi society was ruled by a wicked dictator and fostered a climate of hatred, one that separated and differentiated its citizen because of religion and historical grievances. We see and hear it everyday in the news updates and for those unlucky enough to see outside in the streets of Baghdad destroyed cars, destroyed homes, killings and murders. Within the Army, we have had significant and recent examples of racial discrimination, sexual harassment and extremist behavior.

What about the case of misconduct involved BG Hale who took advantage of his rank and position by engaging in numerous sexual acts with the spouses of several his immediate

subordinates? The gross incidents of ethical misconduct by BG Hale came on the heels of the one of the largest sexual harassment trials in the Army's history involving the Sergeant Major of the Army.

This behavior is unethical to the Army values of commitment, courage and candor; even worse, it wears down the trust we should and must have, in our fellow Soldiers, our leaders and the institution of the Army. It destroys the teamwork that is fundamental to our readiness, and makes us weaker as an organization at every level. Yet, those of us who wear green tabs must go to the next level of excellence, and we must demonstrate compassion, dignity, and respect for all of our Soldiers.

I like the Infantry motto: "Follow Me". It depends on leaders setting the example, and leading from the front. The motto depends on leaders inspiring their Soldiers and creating in their minds the confidence and the willingness to follow, because they know in their hearts that is the right thing to do. It is done by courage, candor, competence and compassion. The leadership challenge is to develop in our Soldiers a war fighting ethos but also a true respect for human dignity. This is nothing new.

I have to stress one of our core values, respect for others. We must treat Soldiers, regardless of race or gender, with the dignity they deserve. We must create a team concept where Soldiers are willing to die for each other, if necessary, rather than harass or abuse each other. We have to instill an attitude in our people to do what is right. As CSMs, we must go well beyond simply enforcing regulations and ensuring compliance. We must get into our Soldier's heads and their hearts the importance of treating each other with dignity and respect. This starts by personal example; our nation expects it and our Soldiers deserve it.

Placing an equal importance on our values allows us to define ethical violations. The

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ability to define an ethical problem does not make reaching an ethical decision easier. The way we proceed once we define a problem is perhaps the hardest part in making the right ethical choice and it is here that our personal values play the largest role.

Now, let us look at a situation that I encountered years back. I received information that two of my Soldiers had committed adultery. One Soldier required constant supervision, had no desire to advance, and was ^{flagged} flag for being in the Alcohol and Drug Program. He had two children and made it known that he was not leaving his wife over the affair. The other Soldier was one of my best NCOs. He accomplished all his missions with little or no supervision, and he was living apart from his wife pending their divorce. I have always thought that this was a personal problem best solved by the people involved. I also knew this was a direct violation of Army policy and ignoring the problem could have a negative impact on the unit. Defining the ethical problem was easy; recommending a fair and ethical solution to the commander was extremely difficult.

My recommendation to the commander was UCMJ action against the marginal soldier and a letter of reprimand against the NCO. This was an extremely hard decision to reach. The marginal Soldier had clearly violated standards of conduct and felt no remorse for his actions. On the other hand, the NCO knew that adultery was wrong and although he did not intend to reconcile with his wife, as a leader he had an obligation to the unit to set the right example.

Many ethical problems are clear-cut and once defined using the Army values as our guide we can easily reach the right decision. There will be times however when personal feelings about an individual may interfere with our decision making abilities. During these times, we must rely on the Army values more than ever. It is imperative that we look past our own personal feelings and do what is right for the Army. Allowing someone to escape from established standards and

discard the benefits of corrective training or discipline not only hurts us in the eyes of our Soldiers but also hurts the Army as these Soldiers progress through the ranks.

In conclusion, the Army values are our foundation and our key to defining Ethical problems. Most of us will make different recommendations and decisions based on our personal values and experience when solving these problems. The important point to remember is that we are able to recognize there is a problem and act to correct it. The decisions we apply and how impartial these decision's are, will directly reflect on our leadership and how our Soldiers react to similar situations. Our decision to act on an ethical problem directly reflects our desire to maintain and enforce the army standards. Most importantly, we instill in our Soldiers the need to maintain these standards even when it means doing the hard right over the easy wrong. As leaders, we may allow our personal values to implement or recommend solutions to an ethical problem, but we must never allow them to interfere with our ability to define an ethical problem. To do so will surely harm the ethical and moral fiber of our great Army in during what is right.