

Running Head: Taking care of Soldiers is not allows taking care of the Army

Ethical Standards of Behavior: Taking care of Soldiers is not allows taking care of the Army

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The two responsibilities for all noncommissioned officers (NCO) are to accomplish the mission and taking care of Soldiers. Taking care of Soldiers is a large and open-ended task. Not every noncommissioned officer view taking care of Soldiers exactly the same way. An ethical dilemma facing the Army, particularly the Army Reserve, at present is the disappointment of how noncommissioned officers take care of junior noncommissioned officers and Soldiers. There are several common approaches that Reserve leadership in particular does to take care of the Soldier that are not necessarily illegal but certainly questionably immoral. The main discussion points of taking care of Soldiers are inflating Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reports (NCOER), failing to use the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) or enforce discipline, providing additional orders for Soldiers who are not needed for missions, and placing personal needs before the unit's needs. By incorrectly focusing on how we as leaders take care of Soldiers, NCOs take care of Soldiers at the expense of the long-term effects of our mission and the Army.

Inflating NCOERs

NCOERs are essence of an NCO's worth on paper. The written evaluation on an NCOER paints a picture about that NCO. Specific comment omissions on an NCOER speak volumes about the NCO as well. NCOs who actually performed well and is actively involved in the unit should easily receive a well deserved good NCOER. Those who perform extremely poor can get an easily written NCOER provided that the documentation is there. The majority of the NCOs are in the middle where they don't necessarily do anything wrong but the problem is that they don't do much at all. They don't take charge. They don't take initiative. They don't lead by example. They don't try to do anything to improve the section or unit. They are passive in their performance and expectation. This is because oftentimes they never receive counseling or

mentorship to perform at optimum level. Proper counseling and mentorship requires active leadership from the rater and senior rater. Most in the Army Reserve do not put that much effort into providing good leadership. It's too much responsibility and work. In short, it's too hard. Many leaders in the Army Reserve like to be in charge that is to tell junior Soldiers and NCOs what to do. But what they don't like is to be responsible. When things go wrong, it's never their fault. Poor leaders blame failure on others, their higher headquarters, the environment or the lack of resource but never themselves. Where these NCOs fail is to supervise properly and follow through in mission accomplishments. Because there are many leaders like this, many mediocre Soldiers and NCOs benefit from such leaders. Mediocre Soldiers receive respectable NCOERs undeservingly so. They are getting credit for things that they have not done or have minimally participated in. No one wants to get a bad NCOER and most don't want to give a bad NCOER. Giving a mediocre NCOER to a mediocre NCO is the right thing to do if the NCO was properly counseling and supervised. Because counseling rarely happens in the Army Reserve, fear of possible controversy from the rated NCO, and raters and the desire for senior raters to take care of their NCO, mediocre NCOs receive undeservedly good NCOERs. There is some self interest in raters and senior raters to inflate NCOERs. The flawed reasoning is that a good NCOER must mean that the rater was a good supervisor. A mediocre NCOER must also mean that the rater was mediocre in providing guidance, supervision and leader skills. The results are that a cycle of this pattern builds upon itself. Promotion boards are promoting mediocre NCOs based on their undeservedly good NCOER and they don't have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to perform to expectations. They learn that taking care of Soldiers means giving them a good NCOER whether they deserve them or not. When leaders do such things like this, it fails the Army and the system.

In the long run, such a cycle end up hurting the Soldier and the Army as a whole because these Soldiers and NCOs will lead and manage people and systems that they are not prepared for.

Discipline and UCMJ

Discipline is what keeps a unit running. There are many problems with supervisors not enforcing standards. Uniform violations, tardiness and absenteeism and the basic observance of customs and courtesies are lacking. Overweight failures and physical fitness tests failures requires flagging actions but are not often not performed at all or sometimes inequitably. Article 15s are almost non-existent in the Army Reserve during battle assemblies and annual training. Discipline action is often limited to admonishments and possibly counseling. There is the option to withhold pay but it is seldom done except when a Soldier doesn't come in to Battle Assembly at all or comes in very late. Absenteeism is frequent in the Army Reserve. Because the Army Reserve is concerned about improving their attendance reports, maximum opportunity is give for a Soldier to come in later, often at their convenience to make up their missed battle assembly. Such leniency creates an atmosphere for undisciplined Soldiers. This results in an undisciplined unit and Army Reserve force.

Additional Orders For Soldiers

Another example of taking care Soldiers at the expense of unit and Army is placing Soldiers for additional orders solely because the Soldier needs additional income. Reserve Soldiers come for many walks of life and employment outside the Reserve unit isn't always stable. Many Reserve Soldiers request additional orders so they can bring some kind of income for themselves. Additional orders are possible but are set aside to pay Soldiers when the unit's requirements need additional support. It is beneficial to the Soldier as well as the unit. The system can be abused when there is no legitimate requirement for additional support at the unit.

Sometimes, Soldiers come in and often perform minimal work. Some Soldiers further abuse the system by arriving late or leaving early for some “unforeseeable” emergency. Leaders, especially senior leaders, try to help Soldiers however; there is a point where that help will hurt the unit and Army. The help must be for the benefit of the Army and the Soldier in order to justify additional orders.

Personal Needs Before Unit Needs

Another area where leaders take care of Soldiers at the expense of the unit is allowing Soldiers too much time to take care of personal business, especially the full time staff. Personal business is inevitable for every Soldiers but giving too much time away hurts the unit and its mission. Some leaders allow Soldiers to schedule their routine appointments where they will miss most of the day’s work to go to their appointment. Soldiers enroll on college classes do so during the duty day where they sometimes miss one or two full work days to attend college. Education is important but the Soldier’s mission at the unit is not to attend college. Unit mission should always have priority. This does not happen. For part-time Army Reserve Soldiers, priority planning does not place battle assemblies toward the top of their needs. There is always something else that seems to be more important. We as leaders focus too much on taking care of Soldiers that missions and job requirements fail. Oftentimes others take on the workload. Sometimes no one does. In both instances, the leadership has failed. Overburdening others is unjust. Failing duty requirements is negligence. There are legitimate reasons when Soldiers’ need must be taking care of before the mission. Those times are subjective. Leaders must be vigilant and exercise prudent judgment on when and how much we allow Soldiers to take care of their issue. In the end when the leaders are not careful, the unit and Army eventually suffer; all for the sake of taking care of Soldiers.

Summary

In summary, the Army Reserve likes to take care of its Soldiers but it is not always taking care of the future for the Army. We, as leaders, must place our focus on the primary mission of the unit. Successful mission accomplishment, whether it is routine tasks or directed task, is the goal. Inflating NCOERs, disciplining Soldiers, and placing Soldiers first before mission are wrong. The Army grows weaker when leaders allow this to happen. Leaders should start by looking at their own sphere of influence and make any necessary changes. The Army, the unit and the Soldier will be better for it.