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Western Sudan: The Darfur Tragedy

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Class 57

Abstract

The tragedy taking place in Western Sudan has created an ethical dilemma for our nation and the international community. Ethics has been defined in many different ways. In general, ethics is the attempt to arrive at general moral standards that tell us how to judge right from wrong, or good from bad, and how to live moral lives. As leaders, we must always seek to do what's right for our Soldiers, the Army, and our nation at all times. Some ethical situations may test a leader's ability to make the hard right over the easy wrong decision. On the global spectrum, the atrocities taking place in Sudan present ethical issues which the leaders of the world must address and take the right course of action to stop the devastation.

You could say Ethics is nothing more than looking at a problem, determine if its wrong, and then making the right decision based on our values. So what is the right thing to do in an ethical situation? We all posses our own set of ethics so does that mean we are right every time we make a decision. Maybe not to everyone, but in our mind there is usually no doubt that we have made the right ethical choice. The Army teaches us, when faced with an ethical decision to use the Army values as our guide.

Fortunately, most of us had these same values instilled in us by our parents, but our parents also had a tremendous influence over how we prioritized these values. This prioritizing 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 realize that all the Army values are of equal importance, only than can we make the best ethical decision. Placing an equal importance on our values allows us to define ethical violations. The 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.

On a border scale, our nation address ethical problems throughout the international community. For example, the tragedy that is going on in Western Sudan. It is now ten years since the Rwandan genocide. Are we witnessing another genocide of Rwandan proportions in Western Sudan? Or is it merely "ethnic cleansing?" At the United Nations, delegates carefully avoid the "G" word, which would force them to act.

Meanwhile, villagers in Darfur are being systematically murdered, raped, and chased from their homes by militias sanctioned and armed by the Sudanese government. The government denies it is culpable, but it has denied access by humanitarian agencies to this desert region the size of France. Governments at the UN, including members of the Security Council, have failed to use political pressure to end these atrocities.

The Sudanese government must stop the militias, allow aid agencies into the area, and remove the bureaucratic impediments to effective aid delivery, for the scale of casualties is truly frightening. Although estimates are little more than educated guesses, the loss of life to date may exceed 50,000. In addition, the population subject to acute malnutrition and otherwise extremely vulnerable has been estimated at 1.2 million and rising daily. Will the nations of

the world again let violence destroy tens of thousands of innocent lives while the international community hesitates? I fear that, once again, those with the capacity to act will neglect their responsibilities. Many have already perished and thousands more will die before this indescribable crisis is over.

Fortunately 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 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's right for the Army. 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 implement and how impartial these decisions 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.