

The Ethical Problems with Aviation Warrant Officers

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My ethical paper is a topic that is a very sensitive area in the aviation community. Aviation warrant officers are a very unique group that are extremely important in regards to mission accomplishment, but they are also an equally large eye sore. Although I hate to admit it, warrant officers are some of my closest friends and also my worst enemies. Below, I will discuss the make-up of an aviation company, warrant officer ethical problems in an aviation line company, ethical leadership problems, and I will summarize with my possible solutions to these ethical problems.

There are several ethical problems involved with warrant officers in a company or troop. To understand this better, I would like to explain the breakdown of a typical aviation company. Whether it's an Apache, Blackhawk, Chinook, or Kiowa Warrior helicopter, all aviation units' make-up basically mimics each other. Each battalion or squadron has a headquarters company, alpha, bravo, charlie, and delta. Headquarters company contains the motorpool, refuelers, staff, cooks, and the rest of the supporting elements. Delta company is the aircraft maintenance support to include; production and quality control, aviation supply, maintenance, and armament. A typical line company (A, B, and C) has approximately eight helicopters, 12 enlisted mechanics/crewchiefs, two section sergeants, two platoon sergeants, a first sergeant, two platoon leaders, company commander, and 14 warrant officer pilots which make up almost half the company.

This company makeup is where all the problems begin. First, the company commander, who is also an aviator, is rated and progressed on aviation skills by one of his own warrant officer instructor pilots. I believe this is an ethical problem in itself. I have seen it time and again where the instructor pilot uses his influence with the commander because of his position. The same problem also occurs with the two platoon

leaders. With a commander with 4-6 years experience in the Army and two platoon leaders with no experience, the warrant officer can use his position because of his 10-15 years experience to influence the command. The second problem involves the first sergeant. The ethical problem occurs when a first sergeant is attempting to run the company the way the Army wants it run, but lacks support of the commander with the warrant officers. It is a continual uphill battle with the warrant officers. It is almost a similar situation with the first sergeant at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. The first sergeant tries to enforce policy, but everyone at the Academy outranks the first sergeant. So, if there is no support from the command, it ends up being an extremely stressful situation for the individual trying to keep things together.

Another ethical problem with the aviation warrant officer Corp is physical fitness. When I first came in the Army, my first unit set the standard. The entire company, including the warrant officers, did physical training, Sergeants Time Training, motor stables, and Common Core Testing. The bottom line was that if a private in the company did something, the warrant officer, platoon leader, and commander was right there doing it also leading from the front. Well, that doesn't happen much anymore. The aviation warrant officer corp, as a whole, has convinced the chain of command that they can do physical training on their own. This does nothing for the comradery and bonding of a company. This also causes problems with the enlisted side of the company who doesn't comprehend why they can't have the same privileges like the warrant officers.

Another problem with the warrant officers is their utilization. When the warrants are not flying or studying they really don't have anything to occupy their time besides some minor extra duties. It is a challenge to continually motivated the enlisted Soldiers, who

are continuously working extremely long hours everyday keeping the aircraft and vehicles fully mission capable, when they see warrant officers leaving work early routinely. The command cannot place them on details because of their officer status, so they become somewhat lax when they are not flying or preparing for a mission. This causes a lot of animosity between the enlisted and the warrant officers and pushes the company apart continuously. Usually, the only warrant officer that is employed daily is the Aviation Maintenance Officer. But, that is only one out of the entire company overemployed.

I cannot just write an ethical problem paper without having some solutions, but my solutions would need the full support of the chain of command from all levels. First, the company commander and platoon leaders need to get evaluated and progressed from someone outside the company. This will remove any outside influence that the warrant officers will have over the chain of command. Once this happens, I believe that a lot of issues with physical training and other requirements, which have fallen on the enlisted only shoulders, will fall into place. In addition, I believe that the officer evaluation on physical fitness needs to change. Currently, there is only a pass or fail block on the officer evaluation. There is no incentive to do anything above the minimums. Until this change, there is no reason for warrant officers to take physical fitness seriously. I also believe that NCOs could do the same jobs as aviators. I believe this because most of the warrant officers are former enlisted soldiers. This fix would certainly solve most of the problems within the company and make it a better fighting force. Finally, the commanders at all levels need to take ownership of the warrant officer corp. Without

their support, warrant officers will continue to do their “own thing” and the problems will never go away.