

ATSS-DAS

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for release of Student writing assignment ETHICS Paper.

1. I, JAMES R SHREVE, submitted a ETHICS Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army:

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4. I understand that the information in this paper may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and therefore, may be releasable to the public contrary to my wishes. I further understand that, within the limits of the law, the United States Army will attempt to honor the restrictions I have requested to be placed on this material.

Date: 03 MAY 11

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Organizational Ethics

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Abstract

This paper is the authors view on how the United States Army integrates its values and ethics with those of its Soldiers. The author discusses aspects of how individual morals, ethics, and values develop and mature from childhood to adult and how these traits effect decisions. Additional analysis takes place on the Army's Value system and its importance to the professional ethics portrayed by the armed forces. Further discussion covers how the Army instills these values in leaders and subordinates to help ensure that these Soldiers make ethical decisions across the entire rank structure. Finally, an examination of the effects of ethical dilemmas on individuals and the military, with a personal example offered for a point of reference, completes the paper. This paper bears value to individuals studying personal and organizational ethics or studying the effects of ethical and unethical decisions on the military.

Organizational Ethics

Every day, people make ethical decisions for both their personal lives and for the organizations where they work. For example, service members of the Armed Forces of the United States make many of these ethical decisions. While some of these decisions carry high consequences such as life or death, of self, comrades, or enemy, others may be a simple choice of doing the more difficult but correct choice over the easy wrong one. Each branch of service has a set of values that align with and guide members to the organizational ethic. In the United States Army, the Army Values set this moral compass. When making ethical decisions for the Army it is imperative that if personal feelings interfere with the Army Values or the Army's good order and discipline, the needs of the Army must come first.

Personal Ethics, Values, and Morals

A person's character is a compilation of personal values, morals, and ethics. Ethics, by definition, is a code of morality or a system of principles that control or govern the conduct considered socially acceptable and appropriate for a person, group of people, or organization (MSN, 2009). Ethical decisions are those decisions made by a person or people that have bearing on the correct morals and accepted principles of that person or group. Ethical dilemmas occur when decisions made are contrary to personal or organizational values or when personal and organizational values themselves conflict.

Ethics, morals, and values are a vital part of an individual's character. Parents, relatives, and other people such as clergy and teachers initiate ethical training as a youth. Our values and beliefs are a direct reflection of all of these influences in our lives. Because of this barrage of training throughout childhood and adolescence, ones ethics, morals and values are deeply rooted in their personality. This in turn influences the decisions people make as adults. The choices

made may not always be correct; however, individuals make those choices because of their internal understanding of what is right or wrong. Sometimes people make decisions that they know are wrong or go against their ethics, morals, and values in an attempt to help others or themselves. These types of decisions are ethical dilemmas and can be very damaging if not handled correctly. To avoid these problems people must look at issues on the grounds of what is morally and ethically correct as well as understand the consequences of their actions and decisions on these issues.

The Army's Ethics, Values, and Morals

The Army's Value system began as far back as the citizen Soldiers who served in the American Revolutionary War. The leaders of the Continental Army identified four principle elements that make up the professional Army ethic consisting of loyalty, duty, selfless service, and integrity. Further refinement and expansion of these core values led to the addition of respect, honor, and personal courage. The Army uses the acronym LDRSHIP, pronounced leadership, as a memory aide for Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. The Army further defines these values as: Loyalty – To bear true faith and allegiance to the US Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other Soldiers; Duty – fulfill your obligations; Respect – treat people as they should be treated; Selfless Service – put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own; Honor – live up to all the Army Values; Integrity – do what is right, legally and morally; and Personal Courage – face fear, danger, or adversity (physical and moral) (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006). These fundamental elements have influenced every Soldier past and present.

The Army Values are the foundation for individual Soldier and organizational morals, discipline and conduct. These values further provide the Army with a baseline or philosophy of

dealing with what is right and wrong. Even with this baseline established, the Army needs to put in place rules and regulations to define proper behavior. These rules and regulations govern the daily conduct of the Army as Soldiers perform their duties. Most are in the form of Army and Joint Regulations, Field Manuals, Standard Operating Procedures, and Policy.

The pursuit to instill organizational ethics, morals and values in Soldiers has been at the forefront of all leaders since the inception of the Army. To highlight the focus the military has on ethics, in December 2010, the Deputy Secretary of Defense stated, "Ethical conduct and moral responsibility must be a high priority... even the slightest lapse in ethical decision-making can erode the confidence placed in us..." (Deputy Secretary of Defense, 2010, p. 1). This is further evident in the Oath of Enlistment / Appointment, the original Blue Book, the Army's General Orders, the Warrior Ethos, and even the Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer. These are not just documents telling Soldiers how they should perform their duties; if followed, they also keep Soldiers doing the right thing. The Army leaders of today continue with their duty to teach their soldiers the Army Values and refine their personal moral principles so they properly align with those of the Army.

Ethical Problems in the Army

The Army Values are the foundation and key to defining organizational ethical problems. The important point to remember is that when identifying ethical problems, swift, impartial, and accurate correction must follow. The implementation of these corrective decisions will directly reflect how other organizational leaders and their Soldiers will react to similar situations. A decision to act on an ethical problem directly reflects the Army's desire to maintain and enforce standards. This instills these same standards into the minds of the subordinate Soldiers thus perpetuating good order and discipline. Senior Noncommissioned Officers have a duty to

mentor Soldiers in the ways of the Army, to guide them toward making the unpopular right choices, even in the face of adversity when it is easier to make the wrong but popular ones. Additionally, these values may conflict with personal values in some way, shape, or form. When this occurs, regardless of personal values, the organizational or Army Values must come first. The Secretary of the Army addressed this issue in his 28 January 2011 memorandum:

I expect Army leaders, supervisors, and managers to lead by example and promote fundamental ethical values within their commands. The Army is an advocate for American values - integrity, fair play, equal treatment, impartiality, and respect - which sustain a strong ethical climate... we must hold ourselves accountable for implementing these important ethical values... to avoid even the slightest appearance of ethical compromise. (Secretary of the Army, 2011, p. 1)

Adoption and Integration of Personal and Army Ethics, Values, and Morals

Leaders at all levels must have strong, moral characters to serve as ethical role models for their Soldiers; they must always set the proper example. Russell Gough (1993) emphasized the importance of setting a good example when he stated:

... the degree which the actions flowing from your own character, for better or worse, can and do powerfully influence those around you. You influence those living with you, working with you, playing with you, watching you, listening to you, and sitting next to you and those whom you would never dreamed of influencing. (p. 111)

Every Soldier who joins the Army brings a unique set of experiences, values and beliefs. These Soldiers have grown up in different geographical areas, with varied religious practices. They may have diverse ethnic or racial backgrounds and definitely have unique family relations and situations. Most Soldiers enter at a young age, while they are still refining their character, to

include morals, ethics, and values. Because of this, leaders pick up where parents, teachers, clergy, etc. left off. They play an important role in continuing to shape these young Soldiers into the Army's ethical leaders of tomorrow. As mentioned previously, every leader must set an example for their Soldiers to emulate. This influences the character development of these subordinates and fosters correct behavior by role modeling, teaching, and coaching. Just because these values and mentorship exist, it does not mean that the Army is free of unethical behavior and issues.

When leaders sacrifice what is right in order to gain what they or others may want, they not only make unethical decisions, but also fail to live by the Army Values and the Warrior Ethos. "The Warrior Ethos requires unrelenting and consistent determination to do what is right and do it with pride across the full range of military operations" (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006, p. 4.13). In addition, leaders who do not set a good ethical role model create a negative environment in their team or unit. This destroys morale, cohesion and esprit de corps among their superiors, peers, and subordinates. In such a negative environment, it is impossible to grow future ethical leaders.

Leaders, whether they want to or not serve as ethical role models for their Soldiers. In doing so, they inherit the responsibility to develop their Soldiers into future leaders of character for the Army. The Army provides guidance for these leaders: "Becoming a person of character and a leader of character is a career-long process..." (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006, p. 4.14). Leaders must constantly monitor, assess and provide feedback to their Soldiers regarding their everyday ethical decisions. The Soldiers who consistently make good ethical decisions on a day-to-day basis are more likely to make good ethical decisions when the stakes are higher, such as on the battlefield.

Many people associate ethical decisions as those made only when stakes are high. An example would be the unethical behavior conducted by Soldiers in 2003-2004 at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq. These issues resulted in a worldwide scandal for the U.S. Army and prison sentences for some of the Soldiers involved. Even recent unethical and immoral actions in 2010 by members of the 5th Stryker Brigade in Afghanistan serve as a stark reminder that the Army is far from maintaining an ethical climate above reproach. The *Rolling Stone* online article *The Kill Team* outlines these actions where small unit leadership maintained an environment receptive if not nurturing to murder, mutilation, illegal drug use, and reprisal beatings of fellow Soldiers who rightfully reported the unethical actions (Boal, 2011).

A Personal Experience with an Ethical Dilemma

I experienced an ethical dilemma while serving as a First Sergeant of my National Guard unit in 2006. The unit was attending pre-mobilization training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi and recently completed all requirements for onward movement to theater. A situation unique to the National Guard is that Soldiers serve together for many years to the point of becoming almost to close and or knowledgeable of each other. My ethical dilemma arose when a Platoon Sergeant, whom I had known for 15 years along with his Platoon Leader, decided to have a little party for their Platoon two nights before the unit got on the plane for Iraq. While against the rules and General Order Number One, there was an abundance of alcohol at the party. That combined with the nerves felt by all in attendance of what was to come, the party quickly got out of hand and the Military Police (MP) arrived to break it up. Once the MPs arrived, the Platoon Leader tried to step up and take control of the situation but was not in a good “mental” state to do so. Recognizing this intoxication, the MPs asked to speak to the Commander or First Sergeant. At this point, the Platoon Sergeant grabbed a case of beer and ran off with some of the MPs in

pursuit. He preceded through the barracks of another platoon and into the wood line where he evaded the MPs the remainder of the night. The MPs then insisted on addressing the Commander directly on this issue. I found out about these events first thing the next morning when I met the Commander for breakfast.

As First Sergeant, I called both the Platoon Sergeant and Platoon Leader into my office to discuss the situation. The Commander was adamant on punishing the platoon leadership for this issue through either the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) or other means. The Platoon Sergeant claimed he grabbed the beer and ran to diffuse the situation. I inquired as to how evading MPs, having them pursue him through the barracks of another platoon, and leaving his entire platoon behind to take the responsibility was diffusing the situation as opposed to escalating it. He immediately brought up the long history that he and I had. He repeatedly asked that I hold my loyalty to him during this process because of how far back we go. After hearing the story and confirming some of the details with some other witnesses and the MPs, I thought long and hard on the situation.

Granted I had known this Platoon Sergeant for a long time and we had served in several units together, but something struck me wrong when he played the loyalty card. The more I thought about it the more it bothered me. This internal struggle brought about a realization that I must have instinctively known all along. While there is an important need for loyalty to those with whom you serve, the ultimate loyalty lies with the reason you serve, to uphold the Constitution of the United States, to live the Army Values. Would I let my loyalty to this Platoon Sergeant override my loyalty to my unit or the Army and govern my decision? If so, I would not be living up to the Army Values, I would not be maintaining good order and discipline, and I would not be making a fair and impartial recommendation for punishment. I

made my decision and suggested to the Commander that both of these individuals be relieved from their leadership positions, receive relief for cause evaluations, transfer to other non-leadership positions in the company operations center, and deploy to theater with the unit. She concurred and two days later, we flew to Iraq with new Platoon leadership assigned and additional staff members available in our Company Tactical Operations Center.

Approximately six months into the deployment, while the Platoon Sergeant who had been relieved was on R&R leave, I discovered a lot more had happened the night of the party than what I had initially known or been told. During a discussion with another Platoon Leader about how things were going, he stated he was surprised that the only punishment for these two individuals was the relief for cause. I asked why he said that and he told me that apparently, this Platoon Sergeant had nearly stripped naked, coaxed subordinate female members of his platoon to do the same, and then fraternized with them by kissing their bare breasts and buttocks. To top it all off, immediately after I had my initially discussion with the Platoon Sergeant the morning after the party, he went to the platoon and told them to get rid of any evidence that they may have. Upon hearing all of this, I discussed everything with the Commander who now wanted to pursue UCMJ action. During the ensuing investigation pictures of the nudity and fraternization surfaced, the Platoon Sergeant went through an ugly fourth divorce, and both of these leaders are now out of the service.

Had I not followed my instincts and let my loyalties align with this individual instead of with what was good for the Army, just imagine what kind of message I would have sent on ethics and standards to the members of my unit, specifically to the members of this platoon and to the leadership of other platoons. Many leaders forget that ethical decisions do not just occur on the battlefield; they can occur every day and in every location. The trivial, seemingly

unimportant, decisions that leaders make daily continue to serve as the foundation for the ethical decisions that may confront them or their Soldiers in the future. Others have offered a similar opinion:

It's not as though most of us are confronted on a daily basis with complex and controversial dilemmas like mind-boggling and heart-wrenching life and death issues that are beyond our immediate ethical comprehension. What typically is the rule in our daily lives is not a matter of knowing what is right and good but having the character to do what is right and good. (Gough, 1998, p. 54)

Conclusion

Every ethical decision, no matter how big or small, matters. When ethics are pushed aside to pursue personal agendas, the effect can snowball, leading to ethical disasters. Leaders in today's Army must take their responsibility seriously to serve as the ethical role models of their Soldiers. Leaders must further realize that they hold the future character of Army leaders in their own actions and decisions. They are responsible for establishing the ethical climate in their units. To do this they must examine themselves and determine how well they reflect the Army Values. When making ethical decisions for the Army it is imperative that if personal feelings interfere, the Army Values must prevail.

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