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The Ethical Dilemma Soldiers Face by not going to Combat

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### Abstract

We have a duty and responsibility as Soldiers to live the seven Army values. When we chose to ignore these values it becomes an issue that undermines a unit's ability to fight. A Soldier not wanting to go to combat places a strain on not only the chain of command, but also our very foundation of freedom and liberty. Every Soldier who is physical and mentally fit to go to combat should go, and leaders have a responsibility to ensure they uphold that commitment and trust each Soldier had when they volunteer for the Armed Forces.

## The Ethical Dilemma Soldiers Face by not going to Combat

The United States Army has an ethical dilemma it faces daily as Soldiers go to and from combat. There are 95% of deployable Soldiers that are doing the right thing and 5% of our junior and Non commission officer (NCO) that are doing the wrong thing when it comes to combat and deploying with there units. As leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure that every unit goes to combat as close to 100% as possible. The Soldier that are getting out of combat for reason that are not valid are doing more harm to a unit's moral than good. There is not a deploying unit that deploys to combat with every Soldier and the reason they don't deploy varies from one to another. As long as the Soldier has a valid reason why he or she should not deploy, we should not force them to go to combat. Too many times, we allow Soldiers to get out of deployments for family care plan when they had one that was working months early. As it gets closer to deployment, it doesn't work anymore. The Army spends thousands dollars depending on your Military Occupation Specialist (MOS) training you on your job, but when its time to go to combat we allow Soldiers to stay behind for invalid reasons.

During my lasted two deployment to Operation Endurance Freedom (OIE), I have been faces with the ethical dilemma of telling NCOs they must get out of the Army because of there failure to have a working family care plan. I had to let five NCOs go with only one out of the five for a valid reason and four of them waited until weeks before the deployment to say that they do not have a care plan. At first, the Commander and I thought it was we not doing something right but after checking and re-checking paperwork. I came to the conclusion that it was not we, but the NCOs using excuses to getting out of the deployments. This led me to check with other Company First Sergeants to see if they were having the same issues; and they were. As NCOs, we should not want our Soldiers to ever think that we are running away from combat,

but this is what they are thinking. I asked brigade legal officer if there was something legal that could be done, so we could send a message to our Soldiers that this was unacceptable. Only to be told, we could only process these Soldiers out of the Army on failure to maintain a family care plan. We could have accepted this, if we would have chapter these Soldiers out of the Army, but we allowed some to stay in the Army on Rear-D. This was not the message that needed to be sent to our Soldiers that continue to do the right thing everyday. No, the higher allow these Soldiers an either stay on Rear-D and move to another units that was not deploying. This should never be the standard in dealing with and issue like this. These NCOs shouldn't be allow to remain in the services, if they are not willing to go with their units to war they should not be allow to continue to get a pay check. Time and time again we allow Soldiers to make a mockery of the system we fight so hard to protect. The only one who feels the pain of these actions is the Soldiers in the unit that are in harms way. The system we have is not perfect but our higher Headquarters need to understand when they allow things like this to happen it effects the mission and the morale of the Soldiers in that unit.

As a senior NCO, I think we need to stop blaming the companies for this and start looking at the Soldiers. When a care plan is given to the chain of command, we always call the person whom will be the guardian. So they are aware of their name being on the family care plan and this not be a total surprise to them. If our higher Headquarters would allow us to process the Soldiers who fail to provide us with a working care plan out of the Army, and not allow them to think that if they wait until a few weeks before deployment they will not go. This trend of Soldiers looking for the easy way of getting out of deployment would stop. We also need to make examples out of some of these NCOs, by taking action in the form of Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) on the ones that are using this to get out of a deployment. If we do this

it will eliminate Soldiers thinking they don't have to go on a deployment like everyone else. It starts with senior NCOs talking to the Commander and making sure the decision they make or what is good for the units and Army, and we hold Soldiers accountable for their actions. For too many times we blame the units for not deploying with all of its Soldiers, but the units can only do so much and the Soldiers need to be held accountable for his or her actions.

Using the family care plan excuse is a trend that needs to be broken with our NCOs in the Army. We can not allow them to wait until the last few weeks before a deployment and then put the chain of command in an ethical dilemma of doing what's right for the Soldier or what's right for the Army. We, as NCOs, need to realize that yes, it's an honor to be an NCO and we have a duty and responsibility to look out for the well being of our subordinates. By us not being there for the Soldier, we are not doing our job during combat. If you are a leader and your family care plan fails you, come on line and tell the chain of command immediately, and do not put yourself in a dilemma. Time and time again, these NCOs allow the chain of command to question their integrity or will to go to combat. All of our young Soldiers need to see the NCO leading the way to combat, not the ones making excuses so they don't have to go to combat. Soldiers and above all NCOs should not be allowed to stay away from combat or leave their Soldiers when they are needed the most. Yes just like everything that happens in life there are some exceptions to everything if a Soldier is hurt or has an issue that makes him non-deployable, we should do the right thing and keep this Soldier from deploying. On the other hand, if the Soldier waits until one week before deployment and makes up an excuse why they cannot deploy. We should punish the Soldier to the maximum under Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). They should not be allowed to stay in the military on Rear-D while their units deploys.

We are facing a growing problem with the number of deployments that we ask our

Soldiers to go on and put their lives on the line. The Soldiers in our formations are expected to be professional and have a sense of pride in knowing they are doing the right thing by going to combat. Leaders at all levels need to understand that we must not allow Soldiers who duck combat to stay in our ranks. We must be committed to what's good for the country by removing those Soldiers from services and not allow the Soldiers whom we put their lives on the line to think that we are favoring our NCOs. Our failure to do this can only undermine the trust and confidence the Soldiers have in us and lead to a unit that has little or no moral. Any Soldier who fails to go to combat with their unit should not be there when the unit returns from a 15-month deployment. The Army has a hard enough time of getting quality Soldiers and training them. We do not need to let the good Soldiers after a long deployment see this Soldier when they return still in the Army. If a Soldier cannot get a working Family Care Plan so he can deploy with his unit, we should process those Soldiers out of the Army and not keep them to help with Rear-D. We have the obligation to take care of these Soldiers, but we also need to have one standard and let them know it when they join the military and re-enforce it thru out their Army careers. We are counting on every Soldier to deploy when called on, and the importance of a family care plan. If we can fix this one thing we can not only bring our deployable troop strength up, but also increase the moral of deploying Soldiers and their family member. Also we can send a message to Soldiers who are thinking of ways to get out of combat that we will check all family care plans and hold you to it. UCMJ action will be taken on Soldiers whom are found to be lying about a care plan so they do not have to go to combat.

We are deploying units to combat daily and they need to be as close to 100% as possible. As leader, if we can do our part by deploy every Soldier that can possibly deploy to combat. If we do this, we can ensure every Soldier gets their chance to do what they enlisted in the Army

to do, and allow some of our Soldiers who are on their third and fourth deployment to take a knee and refit.