

ETHICAL BRIEF OUTLINE

Red Cross Message in Combat

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All Soldiers should receive the same considerations when receiving a Red Cross Message in a combat zone. Today's Army is wide spread and getting increasingly hard to fill, requiring some units to serve twice a year in a combat zone. Most commanders look at a Red Cross Message as bad timing and a void to fill if the brigade commander agrees to let the Soldier go home. While deployed down range many Red Cross situations will occur requiring your immediate attention. Most deal with family crisis.

There are three things to consider when sending the Soldier home. (1) What role does he or she play in the unit's mission? (2) Will the Soldier continue his or her efforts or become a liability if he or she cannot go. (3) What difference will the Soldier make in bringing about a solution to the problem if sent home? Remember you can still win a war without one Soldier.

Each Soldier plays an important part in the unit's mission today. Manning roster for some, when filled, will only show one deep, a real cause for concern. The Soldier is not the problem when a Red Cross Message comes to the unit requesting the Soldier to come home because of family issues. Remember he or she is the only Soldier the system allows the unit to take with them.

First Sergeants and company commanders should know the roles of each Soldier in their unit and what values each Soldier possesses. First Sergeants and company commander must ensure cross training is a solution to avoid turbulence before that one Soldier goes home.

The battalion commander will look at it from all angles knowing he will eventually talk to the brigade commander about the issue. The battalion commander must know how he plans to cover for the Soldier, how long it will take the Soldier, and where can he expect to get

help from if needed. More importantly, he must make sure his answers satisfy the brigade commander.

Secondly, will the Soldier continue his or her efforts or will he or she become a liability. The Soldier must feel that the command understands his or her problem. Every possible consideration, dealing with sending the Soldier home, should be considered, if not the Soldier will start thinking his family is not of value. Work production will diminish, their families will become their focus, and looking for an answer becomes an obsession.

A Soldier's situation should only involve the chain of command keeping the affairs private. If you do not safeguard the situation, other Soldiers will form their own opinion about the end result. Soldiers always remember the end result and how it will impact on them receiving a Red Cross Message in the future. The chain of command must rely on the Red Cross Message for accuracy and justification when making a sound decision to send a Soldier home. Decision-making must deal with facts and not assumptions.

Some Soldiers will try to negotiate their return home by pleading their case, purely based on a conversation they had over the phone with their spouse about what the Red Cross Message says. For example, a Soldier's wife, who carries an unborn child, sends a Red Cross Messages stating her situation is grave and the spouse should come home. Another Soldier's spouse sends a Red Cross Message stating she need the spouse home to care for the children because of his or her use of illegal drugs and she cannot cope with the children. With the Red Cross Message there is no misunderstanding.

People tend to treat one situation more important than the other. All Soldiers should receive the same considerations. Side bar conversations should never play a part in a decision of

whether a Soldier seems committed to the unit, or his or her work ethics. The consideration could be any Soldier who can not think of anything but family issues back home is neither combat effective nor can they perform their duties to its full potential, and may put him or her and even the unit, in harms way.

Thirdly, if sent home, what difference will the Soldier make in bringing about a solution to the problem. In many cases, just the thought of the Soldier coming home takes away the mental stress of the spouse. Remember the solution for the spouse is the Soldier coming home. Just being there brings a change in attitude ninety-nine percent of the time. The other one percent is the spouse operating freely keeping anyone out of his or her business, because they do not want anyone to know what is going on. For example, when using illegal drugs it is hard to account for the money. Bills become unpaid and things just “go to hell.” When the Soldier return home the spouse can deal with the confrontation about what is going on, something that is hard to do when dealing with strangers.

The Soldier’s thought at this time may be “If I could just get there I can make everything better.” This may or may not be true. Remember, all problems do not have immediate resolutions. Most require long-term solutions. You must give some type of guidance that will help reinsure the spouse that things will get better.

In summary, family problems will always surface in a combat zone. How the situation is handled will make the difference. Remember the role of the Soldier, his or her efforts and the difference the Soldier will make if sent home. All Soldiers should receive the same consideration when receiving a Red Cross Message in a combat zone. An important part of command is the support of the Soldiers and their families.