

Flourishing Infidelity and Unethical Behavior in the Ranks

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Class 57

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3 January 2007

Abstract

Unethical sexual behavior occurring within our ranks adversely affects the Army's ability to train and fight. Readiness suffers and an untold number of lives and marriages suffer because many leaders are not willing to take a stand and speak out against bad behavior. Leaders must stop ignoring the problem, address it, and instill in their Soldiers a higher standard of conduct and a desire to make better ethical decisions.

Flourishing Infidelity and Unethical Behavior in the Ranks

We are living in a time when the appetite for sexual pleasure seems insatiable. American society as a whole craves physical gratification to the point of rampant immorality and we are suffering the consequences. The Army is no exception to the costs associated with sexual promiscuity, infidelity, and numerous other types of unethical behavior occurring within its ranks. Unit training and mission readiness are adversely affected by Soldiers and leaders engaging in immoral acts. Unit cohesion and team trust suffer erosion and an untold number of families feel the ruinous effects of the poor ethical decisions being made. Leaders need to step up and become better role models and take this matter much more seriously.

Sexual Addiction

Since the beginning of time, many have embraced the adage, "If it feels good, do it." That belief is being lived out in America perhaps now more than ever before. With the Internet, movies, magazines, television, and media, one need not look far to find something, or someone, they desire. When viewed day-in and day-out, this barrage of sexual images and implications is like an addictive drug to millions. The more unethical behavior they indulge in, the more they require next time to attain the same desired effect. When a person becomes involved in improper or illegal sexual acts, they usually feel the need to increase

the behavior next time in order to produce the same level of pleasure. This conduct is adversely affecting our Soldiers and their families during deployments, back at the home station, and in garrison during times of non-deployment.

Sex During Deployment

Soldiers are committing immoral sexual acts and even sexual assault while deployed. Many married Soldiers are committing adultery in the war zone while their families are back home praying for their safety. Countless Soldiers, even some senior leaders, routinely access pornography on the Internet during deployment, only fueling the desire and urge to engage in some type of sex. But no one seems to want to talk about it. Leaders often refer to the behavior as a personal matter rather than one that affects unit morale and the well-being of our troops.

Sex Back Home

Infidelity is occurring back home as well. Many non-deployed Soldiers will prey on the spouses of the deployed Soldiers. They draw the lonely spouses into their lair and have sex with them, often treating it as if they are providing a service to the forlorn spouse. Again, this is not just junior Soldiers routinely committing these acts, but includes leaders as well. Not only is this demoralizing to the spouses, but the negative effect it can have on the deployed Soldier is immeasurable. Typically, that deployed Soldier will no longer

receive the same support from home as before the spouse's affair. In turn, the Soldier becomes distracted by the situation and proves less effective on the battlefield. Meanwhile, commanders and other leaders look the other way and feign ignorance to what is going on.

Sex In Garrison

When units are in garrison, sexual misconduct runs unchecked right under the noses of the leadership. Chat rooms are extremely popular and afford anyone the opportunity to engage in "cyber sex" with anyone else that is online. Some would say this is personal behavior and we as leaders have no business interfering. But when Soldiers are seeking out cyber sex partners with the intent to commit physical sexual acts with them, many of whom are underage, we do need to interfere with what our Soldiers are doing. Ignoring the behavior and pretending that nothing is going on only compounds the problem.

Leadership Denial

Leaders will often avoid any attempt to curb unethical sexual behavior for different reasons. Oftentimes, the leaders themselves are engaging in immoral acts and would simply be bringing condemnation on themselves by pointing the finger at others. These are not only weak leaders with poor ethical fiber, but they are also people lacking the strength and character necessary to lead in the Army. Ultimately, units suffer greatly

under such leadership and unit cohesion and morale are at very low levels. As stated earlier, some leaders simply look the other way and pretend there is no problem. For these, they just have low morals themselves and often label this as "boys will be boys" type behavior. They are often naïve or ignorant and the problems only worsen and escalate while their heads are buried in the sand.

Leaders are aware of the time and energy it takes to curb bad behavior. Some claim they are too busy and do not feel it is worth the effort to try to correct the problem. They will look the other way and simply hope that it does not get out of hand, not realizing that it will only worsen with time. Some leaders will fail to try and resolve sensitive and unethical behavior because they find it embarrassing. If these leaders do not have the courage to tell it like it is, then they have no business being in front of troops. This collection of failed leaders lacks the intestinal fortitude that our Army needs now more than ever.

Take Action

We cannot force good morals on our Soldiers, but some things can be done to stem the current trend of unethical and indecent behavior occurring in our ranks. First and foremost, leaders must be good role models. They have to set the example and consistently make good ethical decisions themselves. The

only way to gain the respect of our Soldiers is to actually live the Army values and not just preach them. Leaders must also be willing to be bold and honest and say it like it is. They need to be aware of what their Soldiers are doing and convey to them that good behavior is expected at all times, both on and off duty. When a leader suspects a Soldier of engaging in unethical behavior, the matter should be discussed openly with them. Sometimes a Soldier may not even see their behavior as being wrong or harmful. They should receive instruction and guidance from their leadership on making better choices. Leaders must provide education and training regularly so that no Soldier can say they did not understand the standards of conduct. The training should include that sexual promiscuity and infidelity are not only harmful to them, but also negatively affect the unit and mission readiness.

The problem of unethical sexual behavior in our society and in the Army is worsening. As a result, Soldiers and otherwise innocent individuals are being hurt, marriages are suffering, units are being rendered less effective, and ultimately, our ability to focus and fight the enemy is weakened. Leaders at all levels must stop pretending there is not a serious sexual problem occurring within our ranks. They must have the courage and commitment to stand up and take action. Do the right thing!