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Staff Sergeant Pete's Dilemma

MSG Roy A. Velez

U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy

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CSM(R) Diane Williams

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Abstract

The Army instills values that a Soldier must uphold in order to maintain good order and discipline. They conduct classes on what you can expect and how to deal with many situations mentally. The Army also conducts physical training so that you will be physically fit to go the distance. No one knows how they might react during battle, but the army teaches how one should. In the summer of 2005 while deployed in support of the war in Iraq, SSG Pete's physical condition, mental condition, and values were tested. SSG Pete's toughest challenge during his deployment was dealing with an ethical dilemma that involved a fellow NCO and friend.

Staff Sergeant Pete's Dilemma

Define the Problem

Staff Sergeant Pete (fictional Soldier) was the NCOIC of the X-Ray Department in the 123rd Combat Support Hospital (fictional unit). During this incident he and his unit were deployed to Iraq. SSG Todd (fictional Soldier) was also assigned to his section and worked the night shift. The two of them had known each other for over three years and became real close, in fact, best friends. Their spouses got along great as well as their children. The two families spent many weekends and holidays together while they were in the rear. As a result of them working opposite shifts, they shared a government computer where they performed their daily duties. It was common knowledge that SSG Todd also used the computer to chat with his wife during the slow times of his shift and often sent pictures to her. He kept these pictures on the hard drive and SSG Pete frequently browsed through them. On one such occasion, SSG Pete noticed a folder that was hidden and labeled “downloaded”. He opened the file and found hundreds of pornographic photographs. He began looking through the photos and the more he looked, the younger the ladies became. He began to notice that many of them were underage and obviously under the age of eighteen. He believed some to be fewer than ten years of age. His dilemma was obvious. His friend and fellow NCO was viewing adult and child pornography. Now he needed to decide what to do about this situation.

Know the Relevant Rules

At the time he discovered the photos, SSG Pete had been in the Army for over ten years. He knew that viewing pornography on a government computer was illegal and did not conform

to good order and discipline. While in theater, the viewing and possessing of pornographic material was also forbidden by the hospital commander. The only question he really wanted to answer was what would happen to his friend if he told his chain of command what he had found? He knew that SSG Todd was planning on making a career out of the military. He was also concerned about how this would affect SSG Todd's family. He understood that his friend's conduct is contrary to the Army's values and illegal, but he still worried that he would ruin his career if he reported his conduct to the chain of command. Even knowing all this, he had to do something.

Develop and Evaluate Courses of Action

After some internal deliberation, SSG Pete knew that he had three courses of action that he could take. His choices were:

1. Do nothing and hope his friend stops this behavior on his own. This was the easy option that he could choose. No one would know that he ever found the photos. If someone else located the photos then it would not be his fault if his friend and comrade got into trouble. In evaluating this course of action, SSG Pete knew that it did not uphold the Army values or the best interest of the service. He realized that as an NCO he had the responsibility to take action to correct this degradable conduct.
2. Confront his friend and ask him to seek counseling for his problem. This was a possible option that he considered. If he could make his friend understand that what he was doing was morally and legally wrong, then maybe he would stop and seek counseling on his own and this would enable him to maintain his career and dignity. In evaluating this course, SSG Pete felt that it was not contrary to the Army values and if counseling was successful, it would be in the best

interest of the NCO and the U.S. Army. His only concern was that if he allowed his friend to seek help on his own and he did not, any outcome of his behavior would be his fault. He could not take a chance that SSG Todd would act out his fetish on a child as a result of him not reporting the photos.

3. Report the incident to the chain of command for action. Although this would be the hardest decision, it upheld all the Army values and was in the best interest of the service. He knew that by reporting the photos to his chain of command, action would be taken to correct his friend's behavior. This would also end their friendship and more than likely SSG Todd's career. When he considered the relevant rules, SSG Pete understood that not only was this behavior immoral but also illegal. As an NCO, it was his duty to report this infraction to his superiors.

Choose the Course of Action that Best Represent the Army Values

After some internal deliberation, SSG Pete decided that the course of action that best represented the Army values was to report the incident to his chain of command. He maintained his friend's privacy and kept the incident quiet until he reported the problem to his section supervisor. He received positive feedback from her on his decision which reinforced that he had made the correct choice. SSG Todd's behavior was unethical and illegal and had to be reported. Any other choice could have resulted in him acting out his thoughts on a child in the future. Although it was a hard decision, he made the right one.

Conclusion

Because the Army is made up of Soldiers from all over the world with different backgrounds they are taught very early in their careers about the Army Values. We have them so that no matter where or how you were raised we must all adhere to the seven Army values. Everyone

has their own values and beliefs but we must always ensure that the decisions we make support the seven Army Values. There will come a time in everyone's life where they will be faced with an ethical dilemma. The decision you make when faced with an ethical dilemma could be easy or very difficult depending on how well you live the Army values.