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For All Who Serve, Service for All

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Abstract

For all who serve as Soldiers in the United States Army, it is exhilarating to know we are members of this time-honored corps. However, how this fine institution is currently handling specific ethical issues is tainting its traditions and heritage. The most pressing ethical issue for today's Army is how to sustain and manage its most valuable resource, the American Soldier. This paper will outline the specific ethical issues the Army faces while recruiting, during training and professional development, and retention.

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Armies Win Wars

For more than 200 years the U.S. Army has deterred, fought, and won wars. From the French and Indian Wars of the Continental Army to Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom the United States has called upon every resource at its disposal to achieve victory. The U.S. Army's most valuable resource has always been the American Soldier. Regardless of whether the nation drafted these fighting men or if they volunteered, they were the difference between victory and defeat. The most pressing ethical issue for today's Army is how to sustain and manage its most valuable resource, the American Soldier. Every stage of the Soldierization Process requires reevaluation, from Recruiting, through training and professional development, to retention. At every stage, the Army compromises a bit of its ethics.

Uncle Sam Wants You

"A man in green came up to me, said, "Boy what do you want to be?" I said, "A lean mean fighting machine," that's all I ever wanted to be." Every Soldier begins his journey with a recruiter. This well trained experienced Soldier (salesperson) is the first example, of the Army, the recruit has ever seen. In the past, the recruiter was close to the age of the recruit,

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and from the same general area (Northern California, Central Texas), but now most recruiters are selected against their will, and assigned to stations far away from where they grew up. Creating a gap between the recruit and the Army's message of "hometown boy does good." Forcing these Soldiers into becoming recruiters detracts from their motivation to inspire others to join and creates the Army's first ethical issue; numbers not names. Most recruiters focus on making mission more so than the quality of person they are recruiting. Contributing to the issue are changes in Army policy, which lower the minimum requirements for a recruit to enlist. Recruiters are enlisting homeless, known drug users, and call girls, as long as they can get through the screening process and they count toward the mission. One would think that somewhere along the line, someone would identify this for what it is. However, more often than not, stations chains of command ignore this issue and accept the accolades from above for how they accomplished the mission.

Out of the Pan and Into the Fire

During World War II, Korea, and Vietnam once a Soldier completed basic combat training he deployed to the battlefield. In that respect, today's Soldiers are not much different. However, in that time it was required, today it is not. In an

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attempt to keep manning levels high, we are placing young inexperienced Soldiers in situations where they are doomed to fail. Although the Army has adjusted quickly by transforming Common Task Training into Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills, Soldiers are deploying into hostile fire zones just months (in some cases weeks) after learning these drills for the first time. For those that survive, they will be seasoned veterans. For those that do not, they will be in a wheelchair or fitted with a prosthetic, if they are lucky. The Army should delay new Soldiers by at least one year before entering the operational theater in order to better prepare them for what they will encounter.

Leaders Breed Leaders

Producing professional Soldiers is an arduous process. It requires a sound process that fosters interaction between seasoned veterans and inexperienced subordinates, and nurtures the morality of leadership. Due to shortages in virtually every field, it is uncommon to see a Specialist with more than three years time in service. Today's Army sees no problem with sending Private First Classes to the Warrior Leaders Course (former Primary Leadership Development Course) or sending non-promoteable Sergeants to BNCOC and ANCOC. The Army states, "We

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must grow our own." When in reality, we are placing more and more inexperienced junior personnel in vital positions, and have the gall to be surprised when they fail. Experience, maturity, and wisdom are not microwaveable items. Each takes a great deal of trial and error to attain. The problem is our young Captains, Majors, and Sergeants are learning at the expense of life and limb. It would not hurt to slow down the intense pace that has taken over the current promotion and professional development systems.

Re-Up, Re-Up You're Crazy

How an organization manages to advertise itself will attract potential employees, but how that organization treats its personnel will determine if they stay and how long they will stay. For years, the Army has viewed retention like a courtship; up until the wedding night, the bride (Soldier) is treated like a princess, but once she consummates the marriage she is expected to do the same regardless if she is treated well or not. This philosophy is the root of the Army's manning problems. The only incentive for senior personnel is retirement. Therefore, they spend the later part of their career counting down the time until they can retire. Most do not serve beyond twenty years, unless there are under some sort

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of obligation (promotion, stop loss). The majority of retention incentives are reserved for junior personnel (first and second termers), in an attempt to get them to "consummate the marriage". Through its efforts in "courting" junior personnel the Army is disregarding the significance of those individuals that have carried the load. The return for this disregard is a shortage of senior personnel, which forces the Army to promote less experienced personnel faster. Most successful corporations reward seniority, the Army should be no different. Whether it is through longevity bonuses, targeted pay raises, or improved retirement benefits for extended careers, these professionals require some sort of acknowledgement or they will continue to depart without regard for the organization.

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