

**UNITED STATES
SERGEANTS MAJOR ACADEMY**

**“A Tour in Korea: The Case of Human Trafficking,
Prostitution and Underage Drinking”
By**

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A tour in Korea can be detrimental in shaping the opinions of our Soldiers in terms of ethical and moral behavior. For the past 50 years, South Korea has demoralized and manifested a culture of illicit behavior, sexual exploitation, and outrageous “entertainment” that goes against everything the Army values stand for. The Army should heavily consider not sending first term Soldiers to Korea as a first duty station due to the many challenges that are faced within the country. A typical tour in Korea has several disadvantages ranging from human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and many cases of underage drinking. There are systems in place that tries to mitigate and combat this behavior but there is still so much to be done.

South Korea is a major source, transit, and destination country for women from the Philippines, Thailand, and other countries in Southeast Asia. On a typical day in Korea, the scene is quite simple. You see hundreds of Filipina women standing in store front clubs and shops inviting our Soldiers in for a drink and other illegal activities. The term was coined “drinky or juicy girls” meaning you buy them a twenty dollar drink in return for their company. A typical drink costs the Soldiers approximately ten dollars. Inside of the drink is nothing more than orange juice or fruit punch. Our leaders at every level know about this, yet we still don’t enforce the policy. It wasn’t until 2002, when Fox news broke the story on the magnitude of human slavery and exploitation. The US military maintains a zero tolerance policy regarding human trafficking and prostitution is illegal in Korea. Human trafficking is a billion dollar industry in South Korea. Ten years ago, Korean females served as sexual slaves to GIs but since Korea’s economic growth of the late 90s, females from other country has been the brunt of sexual exploitations.

After spending over 18 years in the military, I've often wondered on exactly what is the difference between "ethics" and "morals". We constantly hear the words "be morally and ethically sound." Morals and ethics are sometimes intertwined but there are major differences. Morals are the concepts of what is "good" and what is "bad" and how one should behave. Given this; moral norms get formed and become a tradition in a certain society for a certain period of time. The moral rules may be very different in different countries or even in the same country in different epochs. Morals are a subjective phenomenon since most of their rules do not follow from objective necessity and advisability. The moral rules are about how to dress, where and how much one can bare the body, what turns of speech are decent and what are not, what one should be ashamed of, what is "appropriate" to do and what is not, etc. Ethical principles are objective. They follow from real necessity and advisability. They are based on one's understanding of the Path to Perfection, to God. Ethics is the science about the **correct attitude** of man.

During my two-year tour in Korea, leaders and Soldiers faced ethical challenges on a daily basis. We have all heard the old saying, "what happens in Korea, stays in Korea." What does this really mean? Do we turn a blind eye when we see married leaders and Soldiers openly commit adultery and fornication? How does one correct these behaviors and attitudes that seem to be so much apart of the fabric and culture of an unaccompanied tour?

As I stated earlier, our leaders at all levels know this is still happening and yet unless done openly it is not enforced. There are mechanisms in place to suppress or minimize

human trafficking by having NCOs and officers work as Courtesy Patrols (CPs) as an additional duty to show presence but yet our Soldiers still manage to engage in these illegal activities. During the tour of duty you see immoral and unethical behaviors. For example, Soldiers are allowed to have table dances as long as they don't solicit the woman to enter a private room to have sex, but they can rub, touch, and even kiss during their ordeal. This is an accident waiting to happen.

Also, the legal drinking age in America is age twenty-one but in Korea, the legal age is twenty. What makes the law change to twenty knowing that our Soldiers already have insurmountable odds to overcome while assigned to South Korea? During my tenure in Korea, I have never seen so much drinking by our Soldiers and leaders. In Korea, the culture seems to support drinking as a common pastime. There are many instances when you see the Soldier and his NCO engaged in behaviors that compromise the integrity of that NCO and the values that he or she suppose to represent.

As leaders we must constantly be reminded that we are on display at all times. Our Soldiers are constantly watching our behaviors and values. Duty in Korea is challenging but as leaders, we must ensure that the correct atmosphere and culture represents the values of our Army. Remember, Korea is sometimes our Soldiers first duty station and many opinions are formulated from that one-year tour. Our responsibility is to ensure the right climate is set and that we give Soldiers the right leadership. The Army needs to understand what this tour can do to our Soldiers overall look at life. America's mother and fathers send their sons and daughters to the military to better their lives, not engage in activities that would make them ashamed or undermine everything that's good about our Army.