

POSSIBLE RANK DISCRIMINATION

Possible Rank Discrimination

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Abstract

During my 21 year career, I have witness what appeared to be many differences between the ways personnel of various ranks are treated. The articles mentioned below are only my opinion of things I have observed.

I enlisted in the United States Army on 31 January 1985. Since my completion of Basic and Advanced Individual Training, I have had the glorious opportunity to serve my country in various regions of the world to include two tours of duty as a First Sergeant during combat operations in Iraq. During my eleven assignments prior to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, I have witnessed what many would consider discrepancies between the Officer and the Enlisted Corps. Although I do not know all of the details surrounding the various punishments or non-punishments issued out, I do know from the outside looking in, it is as if special treatment were given to those serving in the capacity of Lieutenant and above.

I believe I am not the only Soldier who has witnessed this, as I am sure there are many others. Is the Officer Corps intimidated by the Noncommissioned Officers and enlisted Soldiers which make up our force? I am not sure of that, but in reality I believe so. What these discrepancies do is build a strong difference of opinion and support for the cooperation of both ranks in achieving a common goal. It destroys morale and instead of building cohesion amongst the troops, it places an even higher barrier between them. Because the Army has rules and regulations in place, they should pertain to all, and not just a few because of their rank.

During my tours, I have watched Soldiers fall out of unit cohesion runs during physical training and receive a harsh talking to from the commander, but when one of his or her Lieutenants fall out of the same run, it appeared to be funny. I know of many Soldiers who were ultimately processed for separation due to the lack of physical conditioning and abilities while being administered the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT).

In one unit, the commander failed the APFT but yet he remained in command. This was the same commander who recommended separation of the others. During the processing of his Officer Evaluation Report (OER), I know for sure there was no mention of this APFT information.

As the weight control Noncommissioned Officer in one of my previous assignments, a young lieutenant failed the tape test. After processing the paper work to have a FLAG imposed upon him, the Battalion Commander (BC) instructed my unit commander that this would not happen. As officers they were to take care of their own and by conducting any form of administrative action upon him would not reflect favorably. After extensive conversations with the Battalion Command Sergeant Major, the BC had the lieutenant moved from my unit to another.

While stationed overseas, I was the Platoon Sergeant for 57 Soldiers. One of those Soldiers, a Specialist with eight years of service received a charge of Driving Under the Influence brought against him. With the time in service, he met the requirements to appear before an administrative board and let them decide his fate of being discharged or retained in the Army. Much to my surprise, one of the board members was a Major who had only three weeks previously been charged with the same offense. What added more to this disbelief was that the Major recommended him for discharge. Some may wonder what happened to this particular officer and his charge of Driving Under the Influence. I am not sure what the entire outcome was, but I do know when he departed, he left with a Defense Meritorious Service Medal.

While serving my second tour of duty in Iraq, General Rule 1a stated that there was to be no sexual conduct of any type. Males were not allowed in female living quarters and

vice-versa. Within the battalion, six Article 15s were administered to the lower enlisted personnel for violation of this policy. All were demoted in rank and monies taken. All violators of the policy in the rank of Sergeant First Class and above would be required to see the XVIII Airborne Commanding General for punishment. As the FOB Command Sergeant Major was walking the perimeter one night, she observed a male Chief Warrant Officer 3 entering the quarters of a female lieutenant. She immediately notified the Battalion Commander of her observance and they went to where she witnessed him enter. After knocking, the Lieutenant opened the door and the Warrant Officer was found hiding under her bed with no clothes on his body. They were immediately directed to get dressed and report to the Battalion Headquarters, their command group was also notified of the situation. After completing the required documents, they were referred to the Commanding General for disciplinary purposes. No action was taken against them, not even a Letter of Reprimand. The battalion after that tried in vain to retract the Article 15s given to the lower enlisted Soldiers because of the unfair treatment of the officers compared to them.

In summary, it is not a fact that there are disciplinary differences between officers and of the enlisted ranks. One can only assume by observation what they witness. However, on the outside looking in, it appears that the Officer Corps sets their own rules for them to follow and for those of the enlisted Soldiers to follow. Stop for a moment one day, and observe the actions commanders take toward their corps, and the Corps of the enlisted Soldier and make your own assessment.