

ATSS-DAS

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for release of Student writing assignment Bainbridge Ethics Paper.

1. I, Preston, Darrick F., submitted a Ethics Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army:

() NO: Initials

YES: Initials

() YES: with the following caveat/exception: Initials

4. I understand that the information in this paper may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and therefore, may be releasable to the public contrary to my wishes. I further understand that, within the limits of the law, the United States Army will attempt to honor the restrictions I have requested to be placed on this material.

Date: 3 May 2011

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Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

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Ethical Standards in a Deployed Environment

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Abstract

Our society contains a plethora of unethical and immoral acts and the United States Army is no exception being that it is in essence an extension of society. The Army has always had unethical issues however; the tremendous stress placed on the fighting force by the long-drawn-out wars in Afghanistan and Iraq only serves to exasperate these existing issues. Many of the unethical and immoral acts that take place in these theaters of operation are usually a direct result of three contributing factors: unique and diverse missions, decentralized operations, and leadership failures. As a result, the irregular nature of the battles waged in Afghanistan and Iraq presents opportunities for a few undisciplined Soldiers to conduct immoral acts while deployed. These issues, although isolated, sometimes have strategic consequences and continue to fuel the enemy's cause and need to serve as a reminder that leaders must continue to educate and promote high moral and ethical standards, particularly during combat operations.

Ethical Standards in a Deployed Environment

Our society contains a plethora of unethical and immoral acts and the United States Army is no exception being that it is in essence an extension of society. Soldiers in the Army come from all lifestyles and the vast majorities are upstanding citizens, although a number of Soldiers enter the Army with serious issues and are not able to distance themselves from their past lifestyles. The Army has always had unethical issues however; the tremendous stress placed on the fighting force by the long-drawn-out wars in Afghanistan and Iraq only serves to exasperate these existing issues. This coupled with the unrestricted access to the internet and extensive media coverage of the wars continues to expose these issues. Many of the unethical and immoral acts that take place in these theaters of operation are usually a direct result of three contributing factors: unique and diverse missions, decentralized operations, and leadership failures. As a result, the irregular nature of the battles waged in Afghanistan and Iraq presents opportunities for a few undisciplined Soldiers to conduct immoral acts while deployed. Irregular warfare creates significant challenges and one of the most significant of note is the unique and diverse missions that they entail.

Irregular Warfare

Irregular warfare, often referred to as unconventional warfare, asymmetric warfare, or low intensity conflict, requires more winning the hearts and minds of the local populace than kinetic operations. Until recent, the training given to deploying units had been mediocre at best and Soldiers truly did not understand what they would be required to do. Much of the abbreviated training was often not adequately resource and at times competes with all of the other mandatory requirements prior to deployment, which meant Soldiers frequently entered theater ill prepared to accomplish their assign missions. A vast amount of the missions assign to

units in Afghanistan and Iraq involve troops performing tasks that involve interacting with the locals, many of which they simply do not trust or understand. The lack of cultural awareness and understanding is not only an issue for Soldiers; it is also an issue for the local populace. The result is the classic us against them situation, which can only be dispelled through time, understanding, and trust, all of which are in high commodity in a deployed setting. Case in point, a unit has been patrolling a village for the past four months with no issues. They interact with the locals and conduct meetings with the elders, then one day they encounter an improvised explosive device (IED) while patrolling this same village and no one in the village has a clue who emplace the device. For most Soldiers, this instantly dissolves all credibility with the locals by not understanding that many of them fear reprisals from insurgents if they divulge their identities. At times young and even seasoned Soldiers find it difficult not becoming too emotionally involved in combat operations. Disconnecting from ones emotions is often a balancing act and takes time, however; becoming too far removed from your emotions can be just as detrimental. The complex nature of the missions that conventional Soldiers find themselves performing further complicates matters. Many units have been task to perform complex missions far remove from their conventional roles with very little, if any specific training. This coupled with the sheer nature of the conventional forces possessing an offensive mindset, has time and again proven to have negative consequences, especially in the early stages of battle when a large number of innocent civilians were kill due to a lack of restraint. In order to succeed during irregular warfare involves Soldiers getting out into the communities to root out insurgents, which often require units to establish decentralized operations that can sometimes have drawbacks.

Decentralized Operations

The establishment of decentralized operations typically enhances a unit's effectiveness and response time, while showing the local population the US Soldiers' commitment to the effort by living amongst them. One of the drawbacks to decentralized operations are they tend to require units to operate out of remote locations, away from the higher headquarters flagpole so to speak. This often creates an out of sight out of mind mentality in undisciplined organizations or small formations which see this as an opportunity to conduct unethical acts. Some Soldiers believe that the limited visibility from higher gives them authorization to disregard or blur the established rules of engagement to do their will. In addition to the limited visibility, another problem associated with decentralized operations is they are frequently lacking in senior leadership. This means that junior leaders are being assign tremendous levels of responsibility. Many of today's junior leaders have been asked to perform tactical missions which often have strategic ramifications if performed incorrectly. Nowhere was this more evident then the incidents that took place at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The torture and abuse of prison detainees goes against everything that the military stands for and goes to show how the actions of a select few created a rippling effect that may have contributed to the senseless deaths of numerous American and Coalition troops. To make matters worse, the close bonds formed during deployments often lead to a *Band of Brothers* mentality, governed by extreme peer pressures and roguish behavior. This turned out to be the case when five Soldiers of an Army Stryker brigade based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington were accused of staging combat situations to kill Afghan civilians. Based on testimony of Specialist Morlock, the first Soldier to be court-martial and convicted, the killings were neither justified nor accidental- he simply stated that "the plan was to kill people" (Yardley, 2011). The media which all be it is slanted at times, has uncovered numerous cases like this documenting troop misconduct in

Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite the fact that some of these cases were dismissed due to various reasons, many have been substantiated or are still under investigation. This confirms the point that if not careful, decentralized operations have the propensity to create opportunities for retaliation. Without a doubt, the combat death of a Soldier triggers extreme emotions in close knit teams and those emotions if left unchecked can result in vigilante style actions outside of the governing rules of engagement. After the death of a Soldier, most team members want someone to pay, which can also lead to retaliation against innocent civilians. In fact, this is the key reason why leaders that uphold high moral standards are a vital part of all organizations. Lastly, leadership is one of the most significant challenges that the Army will continue to face while waging the irregular battles in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Leadership Challenges

While deployed, leaders frequently find themselves being pulled in many different directions and sometimes overlook standards; however, the basic enforcement of standards is a crucial part of successful organizations. Basic standards range from minor uniform violations to more serious infractions such as proper weapons discipline which could possibly have greater consequences. When leaders fail to enforce standards and discipline, they essentially buy off on the new lowered standard which not only affects that unit, but the Army as a whole. When individuals and units lack discipline, they tend to become complacent. There is no room for complacency in a deployed environment and nowhere was this more evident than the June 2006 kidnappings of two 101st Airborne Division Soldiers while conducting a checkpoint in Iraq. Somewhere down the line, leadership failed the Soldiers by allowing them to become too comfortable in their mission, while all along the enemy was watching their every move waiting for the ideal moment to strike. This is the very reason that it is going to take engaged leaders at every level to reduce the number of immoral and unethical acts taking place in the Afghan and

Iraqi theaters of operation. Leaders must swiftly address unethical issues as they arise and not become part of the problem by committing unethical acts themselves. We all know that the quickest way to lose ones power base is to have something bad being held over your head, but somehow leaders continue to fall into this trap.

Conclusion

The nearly ten years of fighting irregular battles in Afghanistan and Iraq has shed light on some serious moral and ethical issues conducted at the hands of American Soldiers. These issues, although isolated, sometimes have strategic consequences and continue to fuel the enemy's cause. The tremendous stress placed on the fighting force by these long-drawn-out wars along with the rise in immoral and unethical acts while deployed, has to serve as a reminder that United States Army must continue to educate and promote high moral and ethical standards, particularly during combat operations. Leaders at every level must continue to live the Army Values and enforce high standards and discipline in order mitigate the rise in immoral and unethical acts. As an Army, we do not have the power to change the unique or diverse missions assign nor the change the fact that many of these missions require decentralized operations; however, one thing that we do have control of is providing the quality leadership needed to prevent these acts from ever occurring.

References

Yardley, W. (2011, March 24). *Soldier Gets 24 Years For Killing 3 Afghan Civilians*. Retrieved March 25, 2011, from New York Times:
<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110324810776.html>