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Ethical Dilemmas Facing Army Leaders

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Abstract

Command Leadership Teams face a variety of ethical dilemmas pertaining to Soldiers and the unit's deployable strength. Soldiers who enlist for the two year enlistment option, coupled with Stop Loss, and the Human Resources Command fill policy for deploying unit's places an additional burden on the decision to retain Soldiers we would otherwise discharge. The Commander potentially must decide if he wants to discharge a Soldier for the use of drugs and alcohol or deploy with him in order to fill the unit, in direct contradiction to Army Policy. The Rear Detachment Commander and the Deployed Commander create several second and third order effects during the deployment as a result of these ethical dilemmas.

Ethical Dilemmas Facing Army Leaders

Even though Commanders have some latitude to decide who should stay and who should be discharged, Army leaders must decide between retaining Soldiers for combat and discharging them per Army guidance because the unit is not deploying at 100 percent strength.

Command Leadership Teams must overcome the obstacle of maintaining troop strength in the face of combat deployments. Commanders often decide to retain Soldiers for a deployment that is in direct contradiction to Army Regulations. Some of these dilemmas are the two year enlistment policy, stop loss, disciplinary problems, and rear detachments. All of these items produce a series of second and third order affects that manifest themselves while the unit is conducting combat operations.

Immediately following Desert Shield/Storm the United States Army Recruiting command implemented a new recruiting incentive which granted young men and women the opportunity to enlist for two years active duty. This incentive program also came with a two year obligation to serve in the Army Reserve, followed by a four year commitment in the Individual Ready Reserve. This 2 + 2 + 4 incentive program equaled the eight year military service obligation that is required for first term Soldiers electing to serve in the U.S. Army. Since then a lot of Soldiers arrive at there units unable to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) many Soldiers even exceed the Army's Height/Weight screening tables and body fat authorization. Current Army guidelines state that "Soldiers not meeting body fat standards after one year from date of entry into the Active Army will be entered in the Army Weight Control Program" (Army Regulation 600-9, chapter 3-2, November 2006). When a Soldier arrives at his unit and cannot pass the APFT, or make Height/Weight, after one year he is entered into the weight control program and it takes approximately another six months before the Chain of Command can begin the

separation proceedings. The Soldier is now well over half way through his or her enlistment. The dilemma arises when a good Soldier fails to meet Army standards. This becomes a challenge for the command generating questions about do we separate per Army Regulation or allow the Soldier the finish his/her last five or six months? Is the Soldier marginal and are we facing a potential deployment were the Soldier would be caught in Stop Loss anyway, and finally does the unit need the Soldier to fill a position with the deploying unit?

Once a unit has been identified to deploy and is affected by a Stop Loss order, many factors now come to bear. The Command Leadership Team must look at the gains roster and decide who will the unit need to retain, so it can deploy at close to 100% of its authorized Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) strength. At the start of combat operations Human Resources Command (HRC) attempted to fill deploying units to at least 105% of its authorized TO&E strength, but as the war is taking its toll on the rotation cycle, units can now only expect to be filled to 90% prior to departing into theater. Where does that other 10% come from? The Command Leadership Team can make a conscious decision to go 10% short, or decide to retain some of those Soldiers that in peace time we would have discharged, per Army guidance, without a second thought. Other factors that play on this dilemma are the need to leave a percentage of the unit back to serve as the Rear Detachment (R-Det) and the time frame since the last return from theater. Was the Soldier a good trooper down range and are we willing to overlook or forgive there transgressions since our return in order to take them for one more trip?

As the unit draws closer to its scheduled departure the Command Leadership Team faces the serious issue of illegal drug use and alcohol abuse. With reference to positive urinalysis the Army party line has been for years if you are an NCO or Officer you are gone, if you are an enlisted Soldier two strikes and you're out. Soldiers know this and will willingly accept the field

grade Article 15 or in some cases a Courts Martial to avoid going into combat. The Commander with the advice of the Command Sergeant Major and the Soldiers Chain of Command are forced to decide between chaptering the Soldier for Drug use, or taking the Soldier into combat to maintain the unit's strength. Alcohol abuse by Soldiers returning from theater is another area that challenges Commanders ethics. Soldiers who performed well while deployed, or who are underage to drink are getting in trouble. Often it is blamed on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and we try to rehabilitate the individual. Since the treatment has taken us deep into the deployment time line what happens when the Soldier is a rehab failure, and we were expecting him to deploy with the unit? Army Policy says "Soldiers who are rehabilitation failures will be processed for administrative separation" (AR 600-85, Chapter 5-5), but again the Command Leadership Team is placed in the position of retaining the Soldier against Army Policy, or discharging him and going into combat short. If we leave the Soldier home then it is expected that our R-Det will chapter the Soldier while we are in theater.

The R-Det most often comes out of the unit's deployment strength, and is staffed minimally, since we need every capable body for combat operations. The Detachment Command Leadership Team has a daunting task in support of the forward deployed unit, the Family Readiness Group (FRG), its higher R-Det, and the installation. As the detachment is supporting the unit and providing a direct link to the FRG, the installation often task these small compact units to provide support, such as flag detail, post police, and other daily duties in support of the post. Now the R-Det is faced with the dilemma of using the Soldiers we left back for the purpose of chaptering from the service, or delaying the chapter in order to support the demands of the Brigade and Installation placed on it. As the R-Det is providing these vital duties it is also beginning to receive replacements for the deployed unit, and with the replacements comes the

same baggage that the Command Leadership Team faced. So on top of all it is accomplishing it is now trying to ready those Soldiers to deploy, and using them for the wide variety of tasking it is receiving. This often has the affect of delaying Soldiers being chaptered and Soldiers being sent forward. The ultimate balancing act is the dilemma of do we use the Soldiers we are chaptering to train the Soldiers we're receiving for deployment? I will not address the wounded warriors in this forum, but rest assured they provide another whole series of dilemmas. The forward Command and the R-Det Command have made ethical decisions that manifest themselves while the unit is deployed.

The two separate Command Teams have made decisions that are now driving second and third order effects. One of the most obvious, but overlooked, is the Commanders Personal Security Detachment (PSD). Current operational policy is that we travel in convoys of four vehicles. Each vehicle has a minimum of three personnel for 12 personnel minus the Commander is 11, however most commanders require a personal body guard, so the number to fill is still 12. The dilemma arises from the question of do I use four vehicles from either the Scout Platoon or the Mortar Platoon, or pull 12 personnel from the line Troops? If we take from the Scouts or Mortars then we take away from that combat power to move the Command Leadership Team around the Battlefield. If the Command Leadership Team decides to draw from the line Troops, who do you think they will take? It will be the Soldiers that they believe will give the Command Leadership Team the best change of survival. It will not be the Soldier or Soldiers that were standing in night court for drug or alcohol violations, nor will it be the Soldiers we retained in spite of not meeting the Height/Weight standards. We will leave them down at the platoon level, so we have pulled good Soldiers from the line platoons and left them with the marginal Soldiers who were a problem before deployment. The final effect is that if the Soldier did not have the

discipline to meet Height/Weight, or exercise before deployment, likely they will not make the time to exercise given the pace of combat operations. Soldiers who resorted to the use of drugs and or alcohol in the rear will resort to using them when placed under the pressures of near continuous operations. As we know from experience a Soldier, if nothing else, is very resourceful when it comes to getting drugs and alcohol when he wants them. Finally, on redeployment the Command Leadership Team will likely change out and new Leadership Team will be faced with the same repeating cycle of events

Although Commanders are given some latitude to decide who should stay and who should be discharged, Army leaders are caught between retaining Soldiers for combat and discharging them per Army guidance. Commanders who face deployment with a unit that is not at 100% strength face the ethical dilemma of following Army Policy, that is discharging and deploying short of Soldiers, or not discharging some Soldiers and taking potential risk with those same Soldiers while in theater.

References

Army Regulation 600-9 (27 November 2006) Army Weight Control Program

Army Regulation 600-85 (24 March 2006) Army Substance Abuse Program