

Running Head: ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN REPORTING TRUE ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Administrative Ethics

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Abstract

In today's world of global terrorism and our war against it, unit readiness determines unit survival. True unit readiness is often obscured by the desire to deploy in support of the Global War On Terrorism. Commanders are constantly faced with the ethical dilemma of reporting accurate statistics so that their unit meets the standard to go to war. A commander with poor ethical values may create a gray area to hide the facts and to avoid reprimand from superiors for poor management.

Army values are the foundation of the true essence of the Army. Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage make the United States Army the most powerful military force in the world. How do you perfect the essence of an army? That is a question that cannot be answered in such a way to appease all. We have all taken an oath and agreed to live and act by the Army values. Our values are not perfect. A Soldier's loyalty to his commander may cause him to allow his integrity to be questioned. The Army has professional ethics that we live by. These are the actions that we take to support our values. We have rules and regulations that keep us in check to ensure that we uphold those ethics. As leaders, we are expected to be the moral role models for others to follow. But, a Soldier may sacrifice his ethics to support the Army values. Although the unit may benefit from an unethical decision, the core of this powerful military is deteriorated. Our standards are very high and we are expected to maintain those standards to perfection. The desire to uphold this standard may lead a Soldier to jeopardize some of his values.

Administrative statistics display the unit's man power and equipment readiness to go to war. The accuracy of the administrative statistics is a reflection of the unit's management capabilities and in the long run, the unit's reputation. This creates the dilemma. All Soldiers desire to be the best. They long to impress their commanders and they wish to be the envy of their adjacent units. A commander is faced with the dilemma of providing accurate statistics or fudging the numbers to make his unit appear to be better than the next. This dilemma also occurs at the lowest level. Every Soldier has the desire to be the best and be recognized by his superiors for a job well done. The competitiveness between Soldiers and units can lead to perfection. But it can reach a point that unethical decisions are made to obtain that perfection. Resource management is a breeding ground for unethical decisions. When a unit receives its

annual training ammunition allocation, it is based on the amount of ammunition that was used during the previous year. Therefore, units are compelled to expend all of their ammunition within the year so that they receive the same amount the following year. At times this results in the end of the fiscal year spendex that has no training value. All Soldiers know that the commander does not like to turn in ammunition at the end of the year. Soldiers can be very resourceful and they long to please the “respected” commander. So, they will do all that they can to adhere to the commander’s guidance. Is integrity violated for the price of loyalty?

Logistics is a nightmare in the United States Army. Billions of dollars are spent in support of the military. The result is a huge database of numbers and digits and dollar signs and authorizations and decimal points. So much that it makes the head spin. This conglomeration draws out the unethical decision because it can be easy to hide. As a result, unauthorized purchases are made, sworn statements are falsified, investigations are conducted, and more money is spent trying to recover from unethical decisions, all for the price of being the best.

The unit status report (USR) can lead a commander to the ethical dilemma. This is particularly present during preparation for deployments. If a unit is not fully prepared to go to combat then it can be deemed incapable of performing the mission and told to stand down. There are systems in place to keep a unit mission ready. Therefore, if a unit is deemed incapable, it is a direct reflection on its management capabilities. No commander desires to have that badge pinned to his chest. It could be a career ender.

The Quarterly Training Brief (QTB) gives the commander a snapshot of where his subordinate unit’s capabilities lie. It is easy for the leaders of those subordinate units to adjust the QTB statistics to make his unit look better than it is in reality. The loyalty to the commander is jeopardized when the commander expects truth and honesty. The leader will violate his

integrity for fear of reprimand by the commander. If the commander cannot trust his subordinates to do the right thing, then how can he trust him to accomplish the mission and look out for the welfare of his troops?

The Non-commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOER) and the Officer Evaluation Report (OER) can lead to the unethical decision. Our evaluation system is designed to reflect an accurate overall picture of the Soldier. It is used for promotion purposes and for advancement to positions of greater responsibility. All Soldiers know that they should choose the “hard right over the easy wrong.” But sometimes the “hard right” is much harder than a Soldier is willing to embrace. An ineffective leader may be willing to forego a disciplinary counseling on a Soldier because it’s after duty hours or he claims to be “too busy”. Time passes and the Soldier’s annual NCOER is due. All the leader can remember is that the Soldier was a good guy. He got along well with the other Soldiers and generally stayed out of trouble. The easiest thing to do is write the NCOER to reflect a successful performance. An unsuccessful rating could not be valid because there is no documentation to support it. The same is with counseling. Army regulations dictate the requirement to counsel Soldiers at specific times. The ineffective leader may find an excuse not to conduct the required counseling. He may be “too busy” or “I’ll get to it later” or he just does not have the knowledge to perform his duty. Instead of asking his peers or his superiors how to conduct this counseling, he has let his pride get in the way of success. His unethical decision has contributed to the deterioration of the core Army values specifically his duty.

The same can be said of inflated awards. Many a Bronze Stars have been awarded to Soldiers for performing their job in a combat zone. Soldiers train everyday in garrison for their job. They entered this Army with the understanding that at any time they could be sent to war.

So, if they go to war and they perform their job does that mean that they have earned the right to don the Bronze Star Medal? I don't think so. The unethical decision to inflate the narrative accompanying the recommendation contributes to the lack of Army values.

Disciplinary actions are another area that can contribute to unethical decisions. The Uniform Code of Military Justice specifically outlines the penalties for violating Army Regulations. Often times, leniency is granted because a Soldier is a great asset or the only asset. Other times, a different Soldier gets the hammer for the same offense because he didn't perform quite as well. Our leaders must be fair and just. They must treat all Soldiers equally. If they don't, they lose the respect needed to be successful.

The After Action Report (AAR) is a tool designed to improve a unit's capabilities. After every activity, the leadership reviews what happened, what went well, what didn't go well, and identify ways to improve. But no leader likes to have his or his unit's deficiencies noted. The AAR provides the Soldier with the opportunity to enhance his unit's performance by leaving out key areas of needs improvement. The selfless service of the leader is questioned when he is not willing to stand up and take the heat for his own deficiencies.

The core Army values are the foundation of our essence. They support our status as a major world power. They enhance our ability to protect the United States and its citizens. The American Soldier understands these core values and what it takes to protect them. At times, he will sacrifice one value for the price of another. He does this by making unethical decisions concerning administrative statistics. All commanders demand the truth. Sometimes the truth can be painful. Sometimes a Soldier is not willing to inflict that pain out of loyalty and respect. The pain of truth can cause a Soldier to violate his integrity. Every Soldier must understand that the Army values have supported our nation since its birth. They must be upheld at all levels from

the private on the fire team to the Commander and Chief. Our ethical decisions have a direct impact on the integrity of our core Army Values.