

ETHICS PAPER

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M12 – USASMA
22 November 2005**

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“Is the Army Regulation Always the Answer?”

Ethics is the principles of right and wrong. An individual or society accepts these principles, based on their beliefs and upbringing. Therefore, in any given situation, there is not a clear and defined ethical solution. One individual's perspective of right may very well be another's definition of wrong.

The Army gives clear and concise instructions on how to handle almost any situation. The Army gives these instructions in the form of Army Regulations. If every leader conformed to these regulations word for word, we might not be the most powerful military in the world. This is because there would not be many soldiers remaining; they would all be chaptered out.

I have served in a First Sergeant position for four years in my military career. I have a full understanding of Army Regulations. I also realize that they are needed in our military to maintain good order and discipline. However, I do not look at everything in black and white. This brings me to my ethical dilemma; *am I wrong for not always sticking to the regulations?* When dealing with Soldiers lives, is the regulation always the correct approach to take?

I realize that NCOs are paid to enforce the standards. Furthermore, I realize that the standards are outlined in Army Regulations. Many leaders in the military feel that if it is in the regulation, then you must abide by it. Furthermore, many leaders are afraid that they may be jeopardizing their own careers if they veer from the regulation. How can a leader go wrong by sticking to black and white? I do not always see it that way.

Anytime I am faced with a Soldier issue, I always consider three things: *the soldier, the situation, and the circumstance*. Let us say, for example, that SPC Stellar and PVT Dirt-bag both show up to Monday morning PT, drunk. The situation would be that they are both drunk on duty and the regulation calls for administrative or non-judicial action. The easy answer would be

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about 10 Air Medals, the Distinguished Flying Cross, a Silver Star and a Purple Heart. This pilot had more knowledge and experience than any Aviator that I have known in my 20 years of service. He loved to take this knowledge and teach young pilots. He was great for the unit and the Army. However, he was over 45 years old and his age was weighing heavily on his PT and his weight. Personally, I had a hard time about riding him about this issue. I would talk to him about it but I would never go to the Commander about it. At the same time, I had young soldiers on remedial PT for the same reasons. An outsider could look at this as not upholding the standards of AR 600-9. I look at it as taking care of the unit and a true American Hero.

I am not saying that a leader should just ignore Army Regulations. I am saying that the regulations do not always give the exact answer to every question that a leader has to face. A leader must know the regulations and apply them when needed. However, a leader also has to factor in the “*human equation*” approach when making decisions that affect other people.

Army Regulation 670-1 sets the standard for the wear and appearance of the military uniform. I have no problem enforcing strict adherence to this regulation. This regulation is not dealing with Soldier’s lives, careers, or future. This regulation is an example of black and white with little or no deviation. However, not all regulations fit this mold, in my opinion.

The leadership style that I have talked about may get me relived some day. If that ever happens, I will walk away with my head held high, knowing that I did what I thought was the right thing to do for the soldier, the unit, and the United States Army.