

THE ARMY'S ETHICAL DILEMMA

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Abstract

As the result of the ever changing policies in the Army and America, ethics and moral character are failing. Though I believe that this still is the greatest nation in the world, and the mightiest Army on the planet, we have issues that need to be addressed. The moral fabric of our Army and society as a whole is torn. I will focus the majority of discussion to the ethical situations faced in America, as well as the U.S. Army. My point of view may be offensive, and even absurd to some, nevertheless, these are my opinions. Therefore, it is true and factual in my mind.

The Army's Ethical Dilemma

A vast population of civilians and Soldiers make honorable and ethical decisions everyday. They use a moral code that is either taught to them by others or possibly taught to them by some higher power. Either way, it is evident to me that some people are morally good and live their lives according to this code. The intent of this paper is to point out the fact that a larger majority of people do not. A thousand newspaper articles, broadcast and interviews could not carry all of the good news situations happening everyday in this country. However, that is not the focus of this paper. The focus of this paper is to point out the majority of those who do and will make the wrong ethical decisions when given the opportunity. Those people come from all walks of life. From policemen, to entertainers, to athletes, to government elected officials and even military personnel make poor moral decisions.

As you read the headlines or view “top of the hour” news, people from all walks of life are caught on tape violating morals, integrity standards and drowning in a sea of ethical dilemmas. Corporations, government officials on the take for bribes, parents, coaches and of course, students of all ages are choosing the moral low ground at every opportunity.

Soldiers now, are said to be the most professional now, than any other time in our history. I, first and foremost am a Soldier. I believe in my brothers in arms and am proud to be in service of my country with them. But we too have “*been weighted in the balance and found wanting*” (¶1). “*No one is more professional than I. I am a Noncommissioned Officer*” (¶2) screams our NCO Creed. It states plainly that Soldiers who are in charge will always do what is right. “*In justifying and fulfilling the trust placed in me, I will conduct my private life as well as my public service so as to be free both from impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, acting with candor and integrity to earn the unquestioning trust of my fellow soldiers--juniors, seniors, and*

associates” (¶3) boasts the Officer’s Creed. Our military men and women are a representation of our society. They too, come from all walks of life and from every region of the country. They too, have been caught in very damaging ethical dilemmas. They too, are deciding to take the moral low ground. It appears that no one is above moral scandal. Commanding Generals, “four-star Army general who was fired this week had been romantically involved with a civilian woman while separated from his wife, his attorney said. Byrnes, 52, was fired as head of the Training and Doctrine Command” (¶4).

Drill Sergeants that I have personally known and worked with have been relieved for sex scandals with trainees. Nearly all of the Drill Sergeants were married and had families. They (the Drill Sergeants) have been charged with training Americas’ sons and daughters to defend this nation of ours. But, more often than one would want to know, these so called drill Sergeants have been caught taken advantage of them. Recruiter scandals are almost the norm of the day. *“I wanted to see how far the army would go during a war to get one more soldier,” McSwane said. So he showed up at a Golden Colorado recruiting office saying he was a dropout. No problem, the recruiter said — and told McSwane in a phone call he recorded — to create a fake diploma from a non-existent school. “It can be like Faith Hill Baptist School or something — whatever you choose,” the recruiter said. So McSwane went on-line, got a phony grade transcript and a diploma ... and turned it in. “I was shocked. I’m sitting there looking at a poster that says ‘Integrity, Honor, Respect,’ and he [the recruiter] is telling me to lie,” McSwane said” (¶5).*

Instructors, recruiters, drill sergeants and even Soldiers are on parade, as the scandals continue to flood the media.

I believe that we as a society have forgotten what made us the great nation that we are. Standards. Ethical standards. We were once a nation that believed in something. That something

was greater than our personal desires, our lust and our greed. Our children were taught to respect their elders. Our athletes and entertainers acknowledged the fact that they were role models to our children. Our political leaders made decisions based on the good of the nation versus the impact of their bank accounts. It was even safe to send our kids to school without body armor and metal detectors. We pledged allegiance to our nation and our flag. God was not a dirty word and it was alright to openly discuss religion without being told “this isn’t the place for that topic”. Somewhere along the way, we as a nation have lost our way. Our moral fabric is soiled and torn.

How does the Army clean up its act? We train Soldiers on the Army Values. Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. These are the topics that Army seniors have chosen to focus on. The acronym is LDRSHIP. It has a nice ring to it and it is supposed to clean up the Army’s Soldiers. I think that the problem is larger than we are willing to believe. Mere words alone, no matter how nice sounding they are can not help us. We as leaders and Soldiers must have a purging of our hearts. A cleansing of our souls that can come only from a truthful examination of ourselves individually and collectively.

As stated earlier, our Soldiers are a product of our society. We as a nation have the ability and resources unmatched by another nation on the face of this planet. We got here by leaders who were not afraid to openly show their dependence on God. They had the resolve to stand up for what is right versus what is wrong. America and the military in my opinion is headed down the wrong path. Former President Reagan said ‘If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under’. One Nation under God. It’s written in the text of our founding documents and engraved on our nations’ greatest monuments. So why are classrooms, courtrooms, and even the government fighting to force God out of public life? We live in a

society that is trying to remove any and everything that is considered religious and sacred from the face of the government, schools, and even from public view. I think that our founding religious beliefs and the willingness to be accountable for our thoughts and actions to God is what made us the great nation that we are. When did the Nativity Scene, which is the very reason of Christmas, "IN God We Trust" and praying become offensive, inappropriate, or wrong? Time and time again, we give way to making the wrong ethical decisions for the sake of being politically correct.

In the early and mid nineteen-nineties, Army chaplains used to close every public prayer "In the Name of Jesus". Now, public prayer is watered down and closed with "in his name" or in your name". This has been done in an effort not to offend any one may believe in the Lord Jesus. Prayer is now reduced to nothing more a ritualistic, "make us feel good about ourselves", session rather than a powerful communication time between God and man. Why is it now appropriate to talk about any and everything except Jesus?

Let us not leave out the Don't ask; Don't tell policy. Another example of military leaders making the wrong ethical decision and making immoral policies because it was the politically correct thing to do. Wrong is wrong, no matter how many people it satisfies. Even here at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, senior Noncommissioned Officers find themselves in ethical dilemmas of all sorts. As we reflect on some of the discussions and comments made about others that may not look, act, or possibly think that same as we do. As we are in a "so called" circle of our peers and friends, are we living up to the Army Values? As we listen in or share in the character defamation of others. Men will someday stand and give an account of every idle word spoken. There is the power of life and death in the tongue and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A tree is known by the type of fruit that it bears. A

good man out of good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account. For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thy shall be condemned (¶6).

As a nation as individual and as Soldiers, we must get back to the basic principles of what has made this a great nation. The ethical beliefs that set us apart from other countries and the belief in a God that is loving, forgiving and one that holds us accountable. Am I my brothers' keeper?

Conclusion

As the result of the ever-changing policies in the Army, ethics and moral character of the organization is failing. I believe that this still is the greatest nation in the world, and the mightiest Army on the planet, but we have issues that need to be improved. Mere words alone cannot help us. We need to perform a self-evaluation against the ethical standards set by God.

References

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