

## ETHICS THOUGHT PAPER

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Ethics are principles we follow that lead us to do the right thing. Ethical leaders do the right thing for all the right reasons even when no one is watching. Doing the right thing is not always easy but to fulfill your duty, maintain your integrity and serve honorably, you must be able to apply ethical reasoning. Leaders set the example in his or her actions for others to follow. The Army's position concerning ethics has not changed despite violations by Army members that have been in the news. The long-standing values implemented since the beginning of the Army are still in place. The four basic elements that make up the professional Army ethics are *duty*, *loyalty*, *selfless service*, and *integrity*. These fundamentals have influenced every leader past and present.

At the seam of these fundamentals is the "glue" that binds them together. The "glue" represents commitment, competence, candor, compassion, and courage. These words echo the Army concept "Be, Know, Do." Personal beliefs, norms, and values affect how leaders comply with the Army's ethics policies and adhere to the qualities required of the professional soldier.

The scandals of the 90's involving sexual misconduct within the military brought to the forefront an awareness of ethical misconduct throughout the ranks and at every level of command. These violations of the basic principles of the Army's ethical policies must stop. In the Army complex situations do occur, but ethics mandate that we must live by sound professional values even when placed in an ethical dilemma.

Our laws in the military parallel those of federal and state laws that govern ethical behavior in our civilian communities. Together they outline the standards that all civilian and military personnel must follow. Incidents of sexual misconduct still

occur even though conviction means possible loss of job, family, future, and self-respect. Ethical dilemmas occur when two or more deeply held values collide. It is imperative that Army leaders utilize Army policies to assist them in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

As leaders, we have three general ethical responsibilities:

Firstly, all leaders are role models. Setting the example in everything we do on and off duty and leading from the front. Secondly, avoid putting subordinates in compromising positions. Placing soldiers in situations of ethical dilemma, where the possibility exists that he or she might make the wrong decision because of misinterpreted instructions. Finally, we must develop good ethical traits in subordinates, constantly re-enforcing the fundamentals of duty, loyalty, selfless service, and integrity.

One such case of misconduct involved BG Hale who took advantage of his rank and position by engaging in numerous sexual acts with the spouses of several of his immediate subordinates. BG Hale was recalled to active duty, tried and found guilty on several counts including sexual harassment and adultery. He was subsequently sentenced to a reduction in rank, and fined a substantial sum of his retirement pay. This gross incident of ethical misconduct by BG Hale came on the heels of one of the largest sexual harassment trials in the Army's history involving the Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA McKinney). Occurring almost simultaneously was the sex scandal which led to the largest investigation of misconduct ever in the history of the Army. We must find the intestinal fortitude and moral courage to do what is right at all times. We must remember at all times that as leaders the misuse of our position affects more than our selves. We are ambassadors of the Army, and as Army leaders our unethical actions are not only viewed as our own but as standard practices of the Army.

In summary everyone faces some type of ethical dilemma in life. Using the decision-making process in ethical situations can help identify the course of action that will result in the greatest moral outcome. Interpret the situation and all factors that relate to the dilemma. Choose the course of action that best serves the nation, your family and yourself and then implement that course of action that will lead to the right outcome.