

ATSS-DAS

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for release of Student writing assignment Ethics Paper.

1. I, Ian R. Dames, submitted a Ethics Paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army:

( ) NO: Initials

(X) YES: Initials

( ) YES: with the following caveat/exception: Initials

4. I understand that the information in this paper may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and therefore, may be releasable to the public contrary to my wishes. I further understand that, within the limits of the law, the United States Army will attempt to honor the restrictions I have requested to be placed on this material.

Date: 02 June 11

Student Printed Name: Ian R. Dames

Signature: 

Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

SGA Printed Name/Date: RUBEN C. STOELTJE 02JUN11

Signature: 

Unethical Behavior during Conflicts

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United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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Class 61

Living by and operating within the framework of high ethical standards is always important. Ethical errors during conflicts have far-reaching implications that reach beyond an accusers unit. Because we are a nation fighting in a protracted conflict, the Army has experienced extremely high operational tempo (OPTEMPO). This has lead to fatigue and stress on the force. Unfortunately, it seems like each week ushers in a new headline that highlights Soldiers exhibiting unethical behavior while executing counterinsurgency operations (COIN). Those individual Soldier actions at the tactical level have negative, enduring strategic implications. As senior noncommissioned officers, we must make sure our Soldiers have a strong ethical foundation that can endure the rigors of executing diverse, complex operations in austere environments around the world. We must build strong ethical foundations by first setting the example, educating Soldiers and by enforcing regulations and policies. This will ensure our Soldiers have unwavering ethical standards that can withstand any ethical dilemma.

Since the War Terrorism started almost ten years ago members of the Department of Defense (DoD) have been scrutinized for every less than perfect action and rightfully so in some cases for illegal and unethical behavior. From a historical perspective, Soldiers have committed heinous crimes from ancient wars, World War I and II to current conflicts. One can argue that individuals that would ordinarily be viewed as excellent members of society who selected to honorable serve their country would also choose to make monumental unethical choices. Some will argue these upstanding sons and daughters of our nation may suffer from the rigors of war and its psychological effects and their unethical behavior is byproduct of war. Others would argue war has nothing do with why ordinarily outstanding service members making unethical decision, and that such individuals had the propensity to behave unethically regardless of the situation. I would say there is not enough evidence out to suggest either theory is correct or incorrect.

In a case were five U.S. Soldiers are accused of killing innocent Afghanistan civilians, the squad was lead by SSG Gibbs. SSG Gibbs was also dubbed the ringleader of a killing spree that resulted in the deaths of five civilians. SSG Gibbs grew up in Montana where he struggled to adapt socially and academically, in fact he attended an alternative high school because he could not cope with regular higher school. SSG Gibbs also failed to qualify for the Marines as so was Bradley Manning the Soldiers accused of leaking secret information to Wekileaks. Others factors included SSG Gibbs squad was drug use and other overarching leadership flaws within his organization. In this case, one could have a strong argument that SSG Gibbs underlined childhood issues manifested themselves during combat operations. In this specific case and for SSG Gibbs alone that could be an acceptable cause, however what caused the other

Soldiers to follow a leader that was clearly doing the wrong thing. SPC Jeremy Morlock who was sentenced to 24 years in prison earlier this year for his involvement with the murders was described as star hockey player in high school and all around good young man. He grew up in a home with both loving parents and his father was a retired airborne Soldier, SPC Morlock wanted to be a Soldier his entire life according to his mother. However, his father abruptly died in 2007, which affected him significantly, to what degree his father's death affected his actions are unknown. Fortunately, young PFC Stoner was the only Soldier that had the moral courage to step up and report his squad's unethical behavior and criminal acts.

There are numerous examples of Soldiers behaving unethically since the War on Terrorism started, like the Abu Ghraib incident for example, these cases if studied may reveal why some Soldiers choose to behave unethically. As a future Sergeant Major (SGM) the answer to the "Why" may help me be a more proactive SGM that can prevent other similar incidents from occurring. Understanding our Soldiers background/childhood challenges like SSG Gibbs or like Bradley Manning, leaders may be able to prevent embarrassing unethical behavior of Soldiers. Truly understand our Soldiers can give leaders the ability to possibly identify Soldiers who may have a high propensity to behave unethically or take unnecessary risk. Unfortunately, the art of learning about our Soldiers on a personal level appears to be a lost art. Identifying these types of Soldiers early would give leaders the opportunity to manage these types of Soldiers more effectively. Leaders will also know which Soldiers need to be monitored more strictly.

Statistically speaking there is only a small number of Soldiers making unethical decision at the tactical level that lead to strategic and international consequences. Today our Soldiers are fighting counterinsurgency operations (COIN)/Full Spectrum Operation (FSO), which requires

Soldiers to be critical thinkers at lowest level. Soldiers must understand tactics but equal important is a Soldier's ability to understand the laws of war, political aspects war, different cultures, the economics of war, long term affects of their actions or inaction, and the military profession just to name a few. Soldiers should be living by the Army values, which should keep them ethically and morally straight. SGMs/CSMs and all leaders should be that example of what right looks like, Soldiers should be able to look at senior leaders behavior and clearly recognize that he or she is always ethically and morally straight. Most of the Army unethical behavior problems do not make headlines, of directly impact national strategies, but they still erode the core of Army's profession and its value.

Recent high profile firing of Commanders in the past 12 months merely scratches the surface of an underline unethical behavior problem amongst Army senior leaders. The firing of General Stanley McChrystal and three Brigade commanders over the past 12 months all for questionable unethical behavior is an indicator of the magnitude of our problem. Command Sergeants Major (CSM), SGMs, and First Sergeants (1SG) have been involved in the same type unethical behavior but less publicized. In these cases, these individuals have proven themselves to their raters and to military boards that they should be leaders at the highest levels. Senior leaders at this level also clearly know what right and wrong behavior looks like. More than likely these senior leaders have counseled, trained and punished others for the same acts they eventually commit. The question is then why would a senior leader of such a high caliber and with so much responsibility then choose to fraternize with subordinates, wear unearned awards, give illegal orders, or steal money. The answer for causes for unethical behavior by senior leaders, I think is a more difficult one answer versus that of causes in younger Soldiers. One

theory is that power can breed elitism, a belief that one is above law or a mind-set that they will never be accused or charged if caught. Another theory is these individuals have exhibited unethical behavior throughout their career but have never been caught or others have overlooked their flaws. I tend to think it can be either theory, I believe regardless of the “Why”, senior leaders are surrounded by others that have an idea of what is going on. So part of the problem is the perpetrator and the other part of the problem is the observer(s) who fail to intervene. There are some cases where no one may have clue that senior leader is doing something wrong, but I suspect those cases are far and in between. Why do senior leaders and their peers, allow others of equal or similar rank to act unethically unchecked? Maybe there is lesson to be learned from PFC Stoner’s moral courage. In my experience, peers or seniors seem to think that other person actions will go unnoticed or they turn a blind-eye or what the belief if individual action can only harm themselves and no one else. Each we as senior leaders overlook similar situations we have enabled our peers and established a new standard for junior Soldiers to follow.

I was involved in two situations, one with a fellow 1SG, and one with my CSM. With my peer, I told him what was being said about him and he should stop or else he would suffer the consequences. He failed to listen to my warning. I then elevated it to the CSM “off the record” who intern firmly warned the 1SG “off the record.” What was being said at that point was rumors, but I had a reliable source the roommate of the Soldier involved with the 1SG. The 1SG failed to listen to either warning, the truth came out and the 1SG was fired along with other UCMJ action, he was a good 1SG and a friend. In the other case a female senior NCO came to “off the record” and discussed in greater detailed, more than cared know, about a sexual relationship she was having with my married CSM, she was not in his chain-of-command.

Nonetheless, she wanted to end the relationship because he was getting too possessive, and she wanted me to talk to him before she escalated her concerns to others. I did have the moral courage to go to my CSM and tell him what was said. For all I knew it could have been all lies and the CSM could have been offended by what I was insinuating, which could lead to me begin the reciprocal of some negative energy. The CSM received what I was telling him without confirming or denying the allegations, but his behavior changed, because the NCO reported to me it did in fact change. In both cases one can argue I was at fault for not reporting both cases to someone who would have taken immediate legal or formal action, the same person would argue I acted unethically, and to some degree they would be correct.

As I reflected, on incidents that occurred in the news and those that have been involved in, I tried to take something away that would add value to life as a SGM. I learned that the military is an organization made-up of humans that came from our society, which means totally understanding the dynamics of all human behavior is impossible. However, there may be previous behavior trends that can be indicators that someone has a high probability of behaving unethically in the future. I also realized that senior leaders can succumb to unethical behavior, but chances are they have peers or leaders who can prevent or stop their unethical behavior. I was also humbled to realize that have facilitated unethical behavior to some degree. Armed with that knowledge, I will vigilantly scan my sector to ensure Soldiers I am responsible for, peers and seniors live by the Army values. I will do this by being the standard-bearer and by always being morally and ethically straight.