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The Importance of Doing the Right Thing in Accordance With Army Regulations

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### Abstract

All leaders in the United States Army are responsible for many things, from accomplishing the unit mission to ensuring subordinates welfare that include physical, moral, personal, and their professional well-being. Many leaders are failing to accomplish the basics: to enforce the Army standards; live the Army values; and set the example. By doing so, they are creating new standards which destroy Soldiers motivation, confidence in their leaders, and create ethical dilemmas. I will describe some situations that I encountered in my last assignment as a first sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Company. I hope that my past experiences can help senior leaders to understand the importance of doing the right thing, in accordance with Army regulations.

### Personal Experience Paper

I was assigned to a unit where the first sergeant position was held by a sergeant first class. He was the acting first sergeant for the past three months and his company commander was waiting for the expiration term of his contract to leave the Army. After two weeks, I noticed that neither of the two leaders were enforcing the Army standards for the past three months or even longer. They had created their own personal standards by failing to enforce the Army standards. Soldiers' motivation was down. They didn't have any confidence or respect in their leaders and many of them were out of physical condition. Soldiers' perception was that nobody cares about them. Friction between enlisted Soldiers and Officers were developed due to double standards causing disagreement, conflict, and ethical dilemma. All these issues arise due to the leaders' lack of discipline and poor leadership that failed to accomplish the basics: To enforce the Army Standards, live up to the Army values, and set the examples.

First, the commander of this unit had established that the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) for officers will be conducted by officers. He appointed a warrant officer to administer the APFT and keep their physical fitness card. The unit training NCO felt that officers were receiving special treatment by their company commander. In fact, the training NCO brought to my attention that they had been filling in their physical fitness cards without taking the evaluation. She stated, neither seeing them attending physical fitness training in the morning or afternoon, nor taking an APFT. She also mentioned that she had failed the last Brigade Inspection; the reason was that she did not have officer APFT cards in their training files. She also stated, that the company commander never reports the correct training information in any of the Quarterly Training Briefing (QTB). He always changes the information provided to him to make his unit look better.

I recommended to the commander after my unit assessment, that we needed to make some operational changes. First, there wasn't any reason why our training NCO was failing the Brigade Inspections. Second, Soldiers' perception was that he had two standards for the APFT, one for Officers and another for enlisted Soldiers. I explained to him that this was detrimental for unit cohesion between officers and enlisted, especially when 2/3 of the unit was officers and warrant officers. Soldiers' dilemmas were why the commander had to flag enlisted Soldiers for failing the APFT or being overweight, when officers were not.

I also mentioned to him that we had to be careful with the information presented to the battalion commander during QTBs. Because the battalion commander needs a truthful assessment of his unit readiness in order for him to provide resources, including time allocated for training, making the right decisions such as changes to the long and short range training schedules, setting new goals, requesting funds, etc. I told my commander that some of his responsibilities are to "execute the approved training plan and conduct training to standard" (IAW FM 7-0 and 7-1).

Despite my recommendation, the commander decided not to do anything about these issues. I brought these and other concerns to my sergeant major's attention looking for guidance. I didn't receive any guidance and nothing was done about any of the issues. In fact, the next two company commanders had the same philosophies, thank God, that two of them got out of the Army, and the other will be in command for only 11 months.

I felt awkward around my commander, because he didn't show any concern about his Soldiers or the units' readiness, especially when we are a country at war. NCOs are responsible for leading Soldiers into the battle field and to do so we must be prepared. The readiness of our Army is in our hands. We are the ones that train and mentor subordinates and junior officers (Lieutenants) to be the future leaders of this Army.

I learned from my past leadership that the result will always be the same if you are not willing to make changes, so I made some changes. By setting the example, motivating Soldiers, and enforcing the standards, things started to change in the unit. The APFT average increased from 240 to 262, Soldier motivation was up, they had a positive attitude, and they started to enforce the Army standards. In reference to my training NCO, I spoke with the brigade training NCO and I explained to him what was happening in the unit. Later on my training NCO was always commended for her effort.

Another issue was lack of communication. The commander had never conducted a company training meeting in his unit. I explained to him that these training meetings had to be conducted in accordance with FM 7-1 and the importance of the meeting. They are the key to near term planning. I initiated my own company training meeting in my office. This paid back big dividends in the unit by improving training and communication between seniors and subordinates, increased section production, eliminated redundancies, tasks were accomplished on time, and it built team cohesion. Later on, the commander understood the importance of this company training meeting and adopted them. Lesson learned, “Nothing happens unless you make things happen”.

The next leadership issue was at battalion level. We have a new battalion sergeant major (SGM) who just graduated from the Sergeants Major Academy, in class 54. His first Noncommissioned Officer Development Program (NCODP) training was the Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOER). During training, he told the NCOs “that some times for them to obtain excellent ratings in their evaluation report they would have to kiss people behinds”. I would never forget the facial expression on these NCOs, when their senior enlisted in this battalion said such a thing. He also stated, that during his military career he had been writing

his own NCOERs. Then I understood why he had gotten promoted. This was only the beginning of many situations that would develop during his tenure as the Battalion SGM.

A week later, the Battalion Equal Opportunity (EO) NCO brought to my attention that our SGM prepared a flyer for the battalion organization day with the title “Dress Like a Red Neck”. The battalion EO stated, that the flyer had caused many concern between the Afro-American and Hispanic Soldiers in the battalion. Soldiers felt uncomfortable with the flyer and they wanted it changed to something more appropriate. SGM answered, “that he was a red neck and nothing was wrong with his flyer”. I spoke with him about it, but he didn’t want to change his mind.

Soldiers reported this issue to Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Equal Opportunity Advisor during a TRADOC Survey. They did not want to talk with the Brigade Command Sergeant Major because he was an old friend of the sergeant major. He was the one who brought him into the battalion from the Sergeants Major Academy. Later on, it came down through the chain of command from TRADOC EO office, recommending that the battalion sergeant major would have to apologize to the soldiers for the misunderstanding. One day, the SGM showed up during my company training session and apologized to the Soldiers. The battalion commander was upset because he did not know anything about this issue. His SGM never informed him that the Soldiers complained about the flyer.

To continue making things worse in the organization, the sergeant major told the S-3 NCOIC and other male Soldiers in the battalion, that he doesn’t like to work with females. The battalion S-1 who was a female NCO heard SGM talking about it. Weeks later, the battalion S-1 NCO brought to my office the battalion utilization report where the sergeant major put all female Soldiers as excess and filled in their positions with male Soldiers only. According with her, he was trying to get rid of the few females Soldiers left in the battalion.

He also removed the Rifle Team NCOIC from her position. He felt that female Soldiers did not have command voice. Regardless, that I told him that she was an outstanding Soldier, she was removed from her position without having seen her performing this duty. A few months later that Soldier won the Post NCO of the Quarter. She did it to prove herself to the SGM that she was an outstanding leader.

I can't understand how the senior enlisted soldier in the battalion could make so many mistakes. Especially when he just graduated from USASMA, Class 54. This entire situation could have been avoided by being a professional, competent, and a leader of high moral character, who does things the Army way by always enforcing the standards.

We need strong and good leadership to accomplish our goals and objectives. We are responsible for developing subordinate leaders knowledge and attitudes; building discipline while stimulating confidence, enthusiasm, and trust; anticipating, managing, and exploiting change; solving problems; acting decisively under pressure; evaluating and accepting risk to exploit opportunity; treating subordinates with dignity, respect, fairness; consistently enforcing the standards and setting the example; and ensuring subordinates welfare to include physical, moral, personal, and professional well-being (IAW AR 600-100, Army Leadership, 1993, p. 2). This will avoid ethical dilemmas, arguments, and double standards. When Soldiers deviate from these responsibilities, this translates into "Unit Failure to Accomplish the Mission".

### Conclusion

In conclusion, everybody makes mistakes and I do too. But I wish that if I have ever done something wrong or I have failed to fulfill my obligations and responsibilities, that somebody would step forward and has the moral courage to correct my actions. I hope that my past

experiences can help senior leaders to understand the importance of doing the right thing, in accordance with Army regulations. When you report to your next duty station start by enforcing the Army standards, live up to the Army values, and do not forget to set the examples for others to follow.

“A Soldier that always enforces the Army standards is never wrong”