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Running head: THOSE WHO RUN AWAY

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### Abstract

In the following paper, I will examine Soldiers that are absent without leave, conscientious objectors, and deserters, an ethical dilemma facing the United States Army today. I will define each Army value (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage) using Field Manual 6-22 and relate these values to the Soldier that runs away from the military service. I will relate my personal opinion about this type of Soldier for each Army value and include the corrective action.

### Those who Run Away

Does a Soldier have the right to go absent without leave (AWOL) or declare conscientious objector status in a time of war? Some may consider this an act of treason, while others may claim that it is an individual's right to decide. Those who run away from military service are shirking their responsibility to the people of the United States, and should face the maximum punishment. My question is this, who will fight our wars and defend this great country if these acts go unpunished or the culprits remain to roam free?

Before we get deeper into this subject, it is necessary to review some definitions. Dictionary.com defines ethics as "a system of moral principals"; "the rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group". In Field Manual 6-22, ethics are concerned with how a person should behave. The Army values represent a set of common beliefs that leaders and Soldiers must uphold and reinforce by their actions. The Army values form the acronym LDRSHIP, which stand for Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. I will relate the Army values to the conscientious objector and the AWOL Soldier and let you decide for yourself which category they fall in. All definitions for the Army values come from Field Manual 6-22.

Loyalty means to "bear true faith and allegiance to the U. S. Constitution, the Army, Unit, and other Soldiers". When a Soldier enlists in the United States Army, he (or she) signs a contract and recites the oath of enlistment. I think that is necessary to review the oath to shed light on exactly what that means. The oath states that the enlistee swears or affirms that they will "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God". Nowhere in that oath

does it say that a Soldier can quit because of a change of heart. In the Army, Soldiers form a trust that few civilians could comprehend. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of a Soldier that goes AWOL or declares conscientious objector status is the burden placed on fellow Soldiers in the unit. If he is not loyal to a fellow Soldier, is it possible that he could be loyal to anyone else, including himself? I think not.

The next Army value is Duty, which is “fulfilling your obligations”. I translate that to doing your job to the best of your ability and constantly seeking improvement. After signing an enlistment contract, a Soldier pledges to serve the people of the United States for a given period. The Army invests a lot of money in the training and equipping its Soldiers and expects a return on the investment. Some Americans believe that a Soldier’s job is to go to war, and that is how we earn our paycheck. Although this is true, the sense of duty to family, friends, and comrades in arms has an entirely different meaning to a Soldier.

The next Army value is Respect, “treating people as they should be treated”. The Army’s most precious resource is the Soldier, and if not properly cared for that resource will run dry. Army Leaders recognize outstanding performance and achievements with awards, and impose punishment for violating rules or regulations. This is an easy way to understand respect, however, there is much more to it than that. Given the diversity found throughout the Army, it is necessary to learn as much as possible about different cultures and backgrounds. Relating this value to the Soldier that goes AWOL or files for conscientious objector status is simple. It is a crime and demands punishment. If someone commits a felony offense, murder for example, many law enforcement agencies join in the hunt for the fugitive. Desertion, according to the Manual for Courts Martial, is punishable by death if committed during a time of war. If this crime carries such a stiff penalty, why are these criminals not hunted down and held accountable for their actions? Perhaps this could be a good job after my military service is complete.

Selfless Service is “putting the welfare of the Nation, the Army, and subordinates before your own”. Those that have not served in the military may have a difficult time understanding the true meaning of this value. After the attacks of 911, many Americans began flying flags, tying yellow ribbons around the tree in the front yard, and displaying magnets on the automobiles saying “support our troops” and the like. Only then did many realize just how important that the military is. Most Americans get their view of the war on terrorism from the news channel, but have little understanding of the sacrifices made by Soldiers and their families every day. As for the Soldier that goes AWOL, deserts his unit, or hides under the blanket of conscientious objector status, this value does not apply because they too have no understanding of this value.

Living up to the Army values is Honor. Many traditions, ceremonies and customs in the Army revolve around honor. Most Army schools have an “honor code” which outlines unethical behavior and unacceptable standards. To be honorable you have to set a positive example, both at work and in the community. The Soldier that goes AWOL or deserts their unit is selfish and thinks only of themselves. There is no honor in being a coward or shirking responsibility.

Integrity, the next Army value, is doing what is right, legally and morally. This includes accepting responsibility for your actions, whether right or wrong. As I stated earlier, the Soldier that decides to go AWOL makes a conscious decision, knowing that it is illegal and morally unacceptable. Integrity involves truth, not only to yourself, but to your unit and your chain of command. If a Soldier is having problems, the chain of command is there to assist in resolving them. Going AWOL or deserting your unit will only add to existing problems and make things much more difficult.

Personal Courage is facing fear, danger, or adversity, and it includes two forms. Physical courage is the ability to overcome fear of bodily harm. Soldiers face dangerous situations daily and must learn to adapt to these situations. In my opinion, this is the leading cause of Soldiers

refusing to deploy into a combat theater. Fear of death or serious injury is something that all Soldiers face when notified of an upcoming deployment. For some Soldiers, self preservation instincts outweigh Army values and they take matters into their own hands, and do what they believe to be the right thing. Moral courage is the “willingness to stand firm on values, principals, and convictions. It includes being frank, open and honest with others to include peers and the chain of command. If a Soldier approaches a peer or their first line supervisor and informs them of his fears, they are likely to realize their fear is not uncommon.

In summary, a Soldier that decides to go AWOL, deserts his unit, or files for conscientious objector status commits a selfish act, thinking only of their personal safety. There are many programs and agencies that are in place for Soldiers to take advantage of. First and most importantly, the chain of command is the first line defense for resolving Soldier issues. In some cases, the Soldier may have a legitimate problem or situation that would preclude him from deploying to a combat theater. The Soldier must have faith in his chain of command and give it the opportunity to resolve their issue. For those who do not allow this opportunity and think that it is best to “take care of it myself” go against everything that the Army stands for. I believe that senior leaders need to be more aggressive in pursuing these criminals and implementing the appropriate level of justice. Failing to correct a deficiency sets a new standard, and in this time of war we cannot allow our standards to fall. I have shown how the Army values apply to the Soldier that goes AWOL, deserts his unit or files conscientious objector status and related my personal opinion, it’s time to stand up for what we believe in. I believe that America is the greatest nation on earth, worth defending and giving up my life. I will give the enemies of my country the same opportunity; to give up their life for their cause as I stand fast in the defense of America.