

Running Head: ETHICS THOUGHT PAPER - HONOR

Honor

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4 December 2007

Abstract

Today's Army is finding it very difficult to retain and recruit young Americans, while our sister services are slightly, but similarly challenged. I believe the decline is due to the simultaneous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other NCOs have stated it is due to the Army's recent unethical mishaps in its dealings with prisoners of war. CNN combined with anti-war sentiment has left a bad taste in the mouths of many Americans regarding the Army. This, coupled with the fact of the majority of the young Soldiers are exiting from the Army after returning from the war or before they are deployed is equally a problem. In order to rectify this problem, the Army must adopt a more effective method to recruit America's young generation, and instill in its current force, the principles of duty, honor and country.

Honor

An Ethical Problem Facing The Army Today

While discussing this topic, I asked friends what "Honor" means to them. Some found it difficult to explain and opted for the short and simple Army definition of "living up to all the Army values". In fact, even Webster's dictionary found it difficult to explain honor, in a military sense. Webster lists 13 different definitions. Only one vaguely relates to the Army's definition of honor. Additionally, when discussing a particular Army value, senior leaders and Soldiers often discover that it relates to another value that must be adhered to. The fact is, all values seem to relate to one another in some form; therefore, it is fitting that honor was chosen as the sheath with which all Army values be inherent in. Honor is not correctly understood and is still an abused value in the Army today, and has been, well before it was introduced as one of the seven Army Values in 1996. The Army's definition states that honor is living up to all the Army values. On the other hand, I find it difficult to understand that it is not as serious to those in today's Army.

Retention

How does this associate to an ethical problem in the Army today? Let's look at the few, the proud, the Marines. Since the establishment of the Marine Corps, the Marines have lived by a

simple phrase, "Semper Fi", or in Latin "Semper Fidelious" meaning, always faithful. Without going in depth regarding how strongly they feel about their Corps and what these words mean to them, demonstrates their pride to a faithful nation. You can easily relate these words to honor for several reasons, but most importantly, it is their way of life. From their stunning uniforms to their momentous achievements in past battles, Americans see the Marines as an organization of pride and honor. As seen from our younger civilian generations, the Marines are the military career of choice. Likewise, the Army is struggling to recruit, even with the most insurmountable of incentives. Most Soldiers, in today's Army, have enlisted simply for the money, not for the honor of their country and our Flag. After the recent terrorist attacks on our nation on 11 September 2001, recruiters will tell you that they did not have to try to "make mission." Americans, young and old, were lining up at recruiting centers throughout the United States because they wanted to serve. It had nothing to do with money, but was the right thing to do. Unfortunately, this mindset did not last long.

Having Pride

Our senior leaders find it easy to be proud of the Army's accomplishments. They love the Army. However, our younger Soldiers are finding it difficult, and rightfully so, since they only have a few years of experience and a difficult time

learning their jobs. Of course, they may have much to be proud of otherwise. My point is not to take that away. My point is: It is not about them or us, but this "Army Family" and our country. Most leaders will tell you they find it hard to persuade young Soldiers to think this way. There are several reasons some which have to do with things you would not think relate to honor, in the eyes of our younger generation. The class A uniform, for example, is often discussed among young and career Soldiers as being ugly, stepchild and inferior to all other military services. Let's be real! The dark and light green class A uniform should be replaced with one we can be proud to wear. Fortunately, the Army has discussed making this change over the next few years. In my opinion, it is long overdue. Another thought that comes to mind in regards to this ethical challenge is the slogan "Army Strong" which almost everyone dislikes. Do we need another slogan or motto? If so, the words should be chosen wisely and reflect the heritage of the Army. Long before the Vietnam War, which practically destroyed honor, the Army foundation was established. The Army should reflect on some former ways of conducting business. For example, the Army should revert to the khaki brown uniforms worn by the Army during WWII. Ask anyone in the Army they will tell you the same. What ever happened to Uncle Sam? in particular, what was wrong with the slogan "Uncle Sam wants You?" This slogan reflected on the very

history of America and clearly symbolized our country and its flag.

Reflecting Back

There are different ethical problems in the Army, but to instill honor, some changes in the way our Army is seen from the viewpoint of our civilian counterparts and our younger generation must be made. This viewpoint is even more negatively skewed by the violations of other Army values as portrayed by the media during recent wars. Our all-volunteer Army, which defends our nation and its beliefs, is derived of the same people it is responsible to defend. Why do we think this way? I believe it due to the way the Army is viewed through the media. The Army needs a stronger recruiting campaign derived from the roots of our history and on the values of duty, honor, and country- not the high-tech super Soldier or thousands of dollars for education.

Conclusion

Taking the Army into the 21st Century, and its importance to the success of this country, is what America should be made aware. Once this is done, our next generation will wear a uniform they can be proud of and serve with honor. On the other hand, the Army needs to restructure other ethical problems that violate the Army values. Together, these changes will instill honor in our ranks and once again in the minds of our country.