

ETHICS PAPER BRIEF

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ETHICAL PROBLEMS FACING THE ARMY TODAY

Everyone in the military came in with their own morals and ethics. Merging these beliefs, along with the Army Values, seems to be hard for many NCOs to accomplish. We must learn how to integrate our own morals and ethics with the Army Values. We as professional leaders in the Army today must set good examples when making ethical decisions. Our NCO creed charges us with two basic responsibilities: accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of our soldiers. NCOs must ensure that when taking care of soldiers it does not compromise the Army Values or Army regulations.

“Do as I say and not as I do” is a double standard that takes place frequently by NCOs daily. For example, consuming several drinks during NCO call and driving home is a problem Army wide. We as leaders stand in front of our soldiers and give them a safety briefing about drinking and driving. Despite this briefing, a leader may leave one of these social events after consuming alcohol, and be arrested for drinking and driving. How could this leader be able to face his soldiers the following day?

Fraternization is a severe problem that we face in our Army today. There are many leaders who counsel soldiers on the Army Fraternalization Policy but do not adhere to this policy themselves. I know of one Command Sergeant Major who was recently relieved of his duties due to sleeping with two female soldiers in his unit. This senior NCO knew that this was a violation of Army regulations but chose to perform this act anyway. This situation is ethically and morally wrong and will end a career immediately.

The incident at Abu Ghraib prison shows an ethical dilemma faced by PFC England who says that she was told by her leaders to perform ethically questionable acts. PFC England was found guilty, and sentenced to eleven years in prison. Spc Grainer was the only other soldier to stand trial for this abuse and was sentenced to ten years in prison. However, what about their leaders? Leaders at all levels teach soldiers how to treat POWs in accordance with the Geneva Convention. The Army has cleared four top officers including the three star general who commanded all U.S. forces in Iraq of all allegations of wrongdoing in connection with the prisoner abuse. This is a serious ethical dilemma; my belief is that all leaders directly in charge of the incident should have been punished right along with their two other soldiers. What kind of message does this send out to our soldiers and the U.S Army?

Another instance is the case of LTC Allen B. West, a battalion commander of the 4th Infantry Division, Iraq. LTC West fired two shots away from the interrogate and scaring him into giving up two other Saddam loyalist thugs suspected in former and planned ambushes, bombing, and sniper activities directed against U.S. soldiers. His actions possibly stopped further attacks against his unit and may have saved the lives of other soldiers. However, for his actions, he was relieved of command and forced into retirement. LTC West clearly violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice but was looked up to as a hero by his troops for his actions. The military takes great pride in the ethical treatment of POWs. We treat POWs with dignity and respect with the hopes that American service men and women who fall into the enemy's hands will be treated in the same manner. What Allen West did was wrong, but there is nothing he did that warrants a court martial or a felony conviction.

It is clear that the lawyers and the careerists in the Army have decided to make an example of him. However, an example of what? After clearing the officers of PFC England who abused a prisoner, how does it help to court martial another that intimidated a prisoner without injuring him, and actually got information that may have saved American lives?

Being fair and impartial when recommending awards is another problem that we faced in our Army today. Awards are incentives for soldiers who perform their duties in an outstanding manner. For example, there was a major who was on leave in Las Vegas during the same time his Battalion was in the field during a major field training exercise. The dining facility was competing in an Army wide Connelly competition and won first place. The soldiers all received AAM's for their outstanding performance during this two-week competitions. However, the Major who was not present during this time received a MSM. There has been a limit on the type of award to give soldiers for their performance for too long. If a Soldier, NCO or Officer is entitled to an award because of outstanding duty performance or good deed, he or she should receive the same award.

Leaders should set good examples and not live double standards. Showing the right way to carry oneself will give soldiers someone to look up to. Choosing ethically and morally wrong acts can easily cause one to lose their pay, career or freedom. Sometimes it is easier to take the easy wrong over the hard right. Don't do it! Live the Army Values.