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Soldiers are Short Handed Regarding Army Spending

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Ethics Thought Paper

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Abstract

In my opinion, Army spending is a major ethical issue facing the Army today. Soldiers are not receiving what they should for the amount of money the Army has been spending since the global war on terror started in 2001. With this in mind, I would like to share my thoughts on why I feel soldiers are being short handed when it comes to, equipment issues, training issues; as well as the money the Army is spending on Government contracts, compared to what they are paying the individual soldier. Remember, these thoughts I am going to discuss are my opinions only and in no way show any disrespect to the decision makers for the US Army.

Soldiers who are proudly serving their country in the United States Army are being short handed by the Army. Soldiers are not receiving the absolute best training they can receive; they are not receiving their equipment in a timely manor as they should be; and they surely are not being paid what there worth. SO is this an ethical situation in the Army? I certainly believe so. When soldiers are not being taken care of; I feel the Army is not following the standards they have brought into existence.

Having said this, I would like to discuss my first concern regarding our soldiers being shorthanded. Our soldiers are not receiving the quality training they need to be totally successful on the battlefield. For example, most of the active duty equipment is in either Afghanistan or Iraq. So when units are not deployed and are in their training cycle they do not have their equipment to train on. What units have to do to combat this issue, is train as small units with the little equipment they do have. This issue is common practice amongst all units through out the Army.

I recently read an article by Greg Jaffe who interviewed Lt. Col. Clifford Wheeler. Lt. Col Wheeler is a Battalion Commander for the First Brigade, Third Armored Division. In the article, Lt. Col Wheeler stated his troops could have used more local culture and language training; instead his troops were having to spend the language and culture time; learning to use the new equipment they should have received months earlier (www.post-gazette.com) . The new equipment Lt. Col Wheeler was referring to was new M-4s with sites. This is an equipment issue which I will discuss later. So what was Lt. Col. Wheeler actually saying? In my opinion, he was saying, our soldiers are not receiving the best training they could receive.

This issue is affecting all branches of the US Army including the Army Reserves and National Guard. I am an Army Reservist. I will give one more example regarding training.

I know first hand about this example because this happened to me. In August of 2004, I was activated and cross-leveled to another IT Division on the East Coast. Upon my arrival, at our mobilization station is when I was first informed of our intended mission. We were told we were going to Iraq, to train the new Iraqi Army. We received 34 days of training then sent to Iraq. This training probably would have been sufficient if we would have been on an Iraqi base as it was intended, however I was assigned to an Advisor Support Team (AST), where our mission was to conduct combat operations with a newly trained Iraqi Battalion in the city of Mosul. To the active duty soldier you would think, no problem, however for a Reservist it was a major problem. Why do I say this? Before 2004, our Reserve unit had no weapons assigned, no TA-50, no equipment whatsoever. We had to beg, borrow, and steal to even be able to qualify once a year with the outdated M-16A1. Then it was only 20 rounds at a 25 meter target. I never even heard of the blue force tracker until I arrived at the mob site. I could go on and on with examples about not being properly trained for combat, however that is not my intent; I am just showing a training issue the Army needs to be aware of so it doesn't happen to other soldiers.

This brings me to my second issue regarding soldiers being shorthanded. Our soldiers are not receiving the best equipment they can receive in a timely manor. Don't get me wrong, the Army is providing the best equipment available out there, however sometimes soldiers are not receiving the equipment until they are already in country. It is a little difficult to become proficient with new equipment when you are going out on a combat mission. Oh yes, our soldiers have had to do that.

Second, The Army is not receiving the money they should for weaponry. From 1990 to 2005, the US military spent over 1.9 Trillion dollars for weapons. The Air force received 36%, the Navy received 33% and the Army received 16%. I realize the argument could be the Air force

and Navy have to purchase ships and aircraft which cost a lot more than an individual soldiers weapon, however my argument is since 2001, we are not fighting the war with a large scale Air force and Navy; we are fighting the war with individual ground soldiers. These are the soldiers who need to be taken care of and issued weapons and equipment in a timely manner, not after they arrive in country

This last issue is the most disturbing to me. Where is the money going that is allocated to the US Army? For example, in 2006 the US Army budget was 168 Billion dollars. I am no genius, but for 168 Billion dollars you would think the Army could afford to issue all the proper equipment and weapons to the individual soldier in a timely manner. Another words we definitely should not have a shortage.

I can tell you where a lot of that money is going. It is being outsourced to civilian contractors. I personally don't have anything against civilian contractors as I do believe they are needed to support the troops in the field today. However, I do have a problem with the corruption and fraud that is being conducted by some of those contractors. What are the Army leaders doing about this issue? This is the question I have, because it doesn't appear that enough is being done to curtail this situation.

Now for my last point, what about the individual soldier, who believes in his country, is fighting for his country; is trying to make a good living for his family? What is the Army doing for him or her? It is my opinion, not a whole lot. In 2008, the US Army is receiving a 2.5 % pay raise. That brings the basic pay for an E-1with 1 year in service to a whopping 1347.00 a month. A Sergeant with 8 years who is receiving the highest pay raise is going to make 2570.00 a month. So where is the ethical issue here you ask? How can the US Army, hire civilian contractors to do security work and pay them up to 30,000 a month, while the Army soldier is

doing is same work for 2570.00 a month? This is one ethical dilemma I have not been able to understand. A person would think, with a US Army budget of 168 Billion dollars a year, an individual soldier would be able to make more than 1347.00 a month.

The point is the US Army is spending a great deal of money on everything but what counts; that is the US Soldier.

I realize and I know an argument can be made that some of these issues are out of the Army's hands and that decisions are being made by congress and so on; and that the individual soldier doesn't do it for the money. It can also be argued that these issues are not unethical; they are just facts of life and are something the soldier just has to deal with.

These statements are all true to an extent, and can be manipulated to be whatever the person who is reading this wants it to be.

However this is my point and the reason I feel these issues are unethical. For the past 21 years of my military career, I have been taught over and over again. Take care of your Soldiers! At least once a day I hear someone say, make sure you take care of your Soldiers!

Is the Army taking care of the Soldier when they are not receiving the very best training they can receive? Is the Army taking care of the Soldier when they are not providing them with the very best equipment in a timely manner? Is the Army taking care of the Soldier when the Army is paying civilian contractors up to 30,000 dollars a month, while the private E-1 makes 1347.00 a month?

I guess it all depends on your definition of Ethical. My definition says the Army is short handing the Soldier, therefore it is unethical.

References

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