

Ethical Responsibility

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11 November 2007

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Class Number 58

When we are having difficulty in defining our actions as right or wrong, that is an ethical dilemma. Ethical dilemmas happen when individuals do not understand or ignore where their ethical responsibility lies.

Located in the dictionary between erratic and evil, ethics is a topic that easy to teach, but not always enforced. Although ethical responsibility is required for all Soldiers and leaders, it is usually erratic when confronted by doubt and evil when it is forsaken or not enforced.

It is my experience that when leaders or Soldiers are in positions for long periods of time; positive ethical behavior becomes a challenge. It is not that the individual has become complacent in his job or abilities; it is that he has established friendships or professional relationships that may bring his ethical values into conflict with his duties, unless he understands exactly where his ethical responsibilities are and enforces them.

There are many cases where an individual puts themselves into an ethical dilemma because they forget their responsibilities and decide to ignore or not enforce them because of relationships, friendly or professional. When harm happens to someone because of the lack of action, is that relationship really worth the sacrifice of one's honor?

A particular incident comes to mind which will set the trends that I have seen.

In Germany, as with everywhere else, the Army supplements its workforce with civilian workers. These workers can be foreign nationals or American citizens. All American citizens working as Department of the Army Civilians (DACs) have in their contract an ethics clause. In layman's terms they are to follow the Army's values just like Soldiers, or there can be disciplinary actions taken.

Adultery is an immoral act that erodes military discipline and family trust. For a Soldier caught committing adultery with a family member of another spouse the punishment can be

severe. This also policy applies to civilians as well, although the disciplinary action will be different than that of a Soldier punished by the Unified Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).