

Ethics Thought Paper

**Ethical Challenges in Combat as Seen through One
Warrior's Vision**

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Ethical Challenges in Combat as Seen Through One Warrior's Vision

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The War on Terror will keep us in combat zones for the duration of our careers. Senior NCOs must consistently maintain their ethics; it could ultimately be the difference between life and death in combat. Living by this code of ethics can be tough and hard to follow especially when you are behind the enemy lines, with limited resources, harsh environments and an unclear mission. Combat is stressful and unpredictable; this stress is doubled when Soldiers love ones look you in the face and say, "Bring him home the same way I gave him to you." The ethical challenge is agreeing to conditions which you have little or no control. The opposing thought is that bad things happen in combat, so just deal with it. Leaders should always know their capabilities when making decisions, especially in a combat zone. Leaders values guide ethical reasoning which guide success and failure on the battlefield.

Leaders face problems when they arrive in theater with time restraints, unforeseen deadlined equipment and demanding training requirements. This is when you must motivate your subordinates, restate the standard and remind them we are at war. Opposing thoughts may be to tell them to just suck it up and drive on. Leaders must understand how they say something can be just as powerful as what they say. The decision you make may not always be by the book or regulations, but if it passed your "COMMON SENSE TEST" deal with it and be responsible for your actions.

Another ethical challenge you may face in combat are shortages of equipment and proper resources to do your mission. Opposing thoughts are that you could list all shortcomings and state the reasons why you can't do a mission. Leaders have the ethical duty to ensure their Soldiers conform to the standard and uphold the ARMY values, regardless of the situation they may find themselves in. I experienced this problem in Baghdad. Ethically I had to look past my personal feelings and do my duty. Even though I was frustrated with the system and red tape, it was my moral duty to execute with what little I had, than to allow the mission to be unsuccessful. Senior NCOs can't let their junior leaders complain openly in front of the Soldiers, even though they do not have adequate resources. Leaders in combat have to use critical and ethical reasoning to get Soldiers through the tough times. Situations like this can lead to adversity and low morale if it gets out of control. Leaders must foster a climate that nurtures good ethical behavior.

Ethics also can stop you from accomplishing a mission, if it violates the good order and discipline of the unit. I had numerous fuel trucks and forklifts that were deadlined in Iraq. Opposing thoughts is to do whatever it takes to make mission; even if it means taking from others without their permission. Leaders cannot compromise the moral ethical fiber that the Army is built upon, in the attempt to make their equipment mission capable. To tell my Soldiers to get that equipment readiness rate up at any cost could have led to a life long negative impact on them. My ethics at this stage out weighed accomplishing the mission and meeting suspense. You can have second and third order effects on your unit when you allow unethical behavior.

Leaders face numerous ethical problems during the redeployment process. Property accountability is vital and could delay a unit from going home after their 12 months tour of duty. Leaders can let Soldiers deviate from the standard in an attempt to getting home earlier than later. Opposing thoughts are to just pack everything up because everyone is tired and ready to go home. Leaders ethically have to make sound decisions in maintaining and enforcing standards. My Soldiers learned to never compromise their integrity and do the hard right, over the easy wrong.

The last thing I will cover is how ethics guide our thought process on and off the battlefield. Leaders must know the ethical limitation in the execution of their duty or it could become deadly. One of my leaders allowed his personal values to make a solution on a Soldier's ethical problem. Opposing thoughts are Leaders in the field have to make quick decisions and depressed times for Soldiers in combat are common. This Soldier did not receive the professional help he needed and never made it home with the unit. Ethically Leaders cannot allow their personal beliefs, to out weigh the moral obligations and duty to take care of Soldiers.

The ethical challenges of combat are demanding and complex. Leaders still possess the power to mentor Soldiers. Going through the process of implementing ethical reasoning and understanding our capabilities are vital in combat. What will you say when their love ones look you in the face and say," Bring him home the same way I gave him to you?"