

Ethics L564

“Hard Right Over Easy Wrong”

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Ethics

As the Army continues its transformation, we as Senior Non-Commissioned Officers will be the role models for future generations of Soldiers to come. Our Ethics and moral values become that of future generations of Senior NCOs. As such, we must re-evaluate what it is that makes us professionals. What it is that we believe in, and what foundation our NCOs gave us as we ascended up the ranks? To do that, we have to go to the dictionary, for although we all have an idea what Ethics are, we want to insure that we have the correct idea. As Webster's dictionary states, "Ethics". 1. "The study of the general nature of morals and the specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others". 2. "The rules or standards of conduct governing the members of a profession."

Let's break this definition down into parts so we can look at and study it. First, "specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others." As Senior Non-Commissioned Officers we have a duty to mentor our subordinates based on Army values, morals and ethics. To teach them to make the right choices even when it would be easier to bend the rules or take a short cut. This is where we need to step in and guide them to do the right thing "the hard right over the easy wrong." As an analogy we can look at the old saying, "If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around does it make a sound?" Now we can change that to, "If we do the right thing and no one is around will anyone know?" That is what Ethics is all about, if we know no one is around will we do the right thing, or because there are Soldiers watching then we must do the right thing.

Second, "The rules or standards of conduct governing the members of a profession." What are these rules? They are the rules, regulations and policies that govern our conduct as we go about our daily duties. Most, if not all are written down.

They are reviewed in all NCOES that we attended, while others are those inherent standards are implied, the norms that we have had ingrained in our personalities and characters.

As a Senior Non-Commission Officer, we have all faced this question at one time or another. We have observed our fellow Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers put in situations where they have had to make these choices. How they made their decision to do the right thing usually is a direct reflection of what that Senior NCO observed from his or her supervisors and leaders. If a young Soldier observes his Chain of Command constantly taking short-cuts and disregarding regulations and policies, then more than likely when that Soldier is in a position of authority he or she will have that attitude toward Ethics. I will not say that this is always the case, but there may be some soldiers that become Senior NCOs and emulate this behavior. Ultimately the ones that are affected by this are the Soldiers that this Senior NCO is charged with leading.

In these times of downsizing and shrinking dollars we are all going to have to do our part to reevaluate those attitudes that in the past were okay. Like the TDY trip, that in reality, we could have done on the phone. Most Commands now have VTC capabilities or another form of collaboration tools. Most conferences or meetings can be taken care of with these tools. Taking the cheaper airlines and not flying business class and scheduling your flight on a week day instead of a weekend. Not one that we will get the most bonus mileage so that you can take that personal vacation down the road when you have enough mileage. When we go to visit the troops in the field we take along a cot or we request sleeping arrangements with the troops instead of a hotel downtown. Soldiers will not see a Senior NCO coming out to the field for a few hours and then going downtown to have a hot meal and sleep in a warm cozy room, when they have to eat from the Field food and sleep on a cot.

We as Senior leaders sometimes lose sight of the fact that being promoted into positions of leadership mandates we lead from the front. We must always remember that we are leaders first and managers second. We must set the example by picking up the torch and moving out in front to lead. Many have risen to these positions and blinded by the excesses of those that went before them. But let us not forget that we are always under a microscope by those that we lead and mentor. Do not be self-deceived into believing that they do not observe our actions.

So as we move forward into the next century let us take the time to judge our actions before we commit ourselves. Once you have done the action, it is no time to try it again. There will always be someone there to point out our mistakes. We must live with the outcome of those actions and be judged by them. We must also take into account that it is not just the Soldiers we lead that judge us by our actions.

Our country is at war and, the media and the public have us under a microscope. Lets take the Aberdeen incident as an example, when the public saw Senior NCOs taking advantage of young impressionable female Soldiers. America will not tolerate Army leaders using there daughters as sexual toys for there own personnel pleasure. The American public pays the bills and they have the right to expect, that as professionals we will handle ourselves in an ethical and moral way. It is for this reason that they have entrusted their sons and daughters in our charge. So that we can teach them the discipline and instill the ethical and moral attitude to carry these young people into the future.

As another old saying goes, "What you put in is what you will get out." For the future of America, it is on our shoulders to instill those values in the Soldiers that we lead. But first we must look within ourselves and determine if we meet that standard. It will not be an easy road there will be a lot of temptation in our daily lives that will make you stop and ponder "Am I

doing the right thing.” As Senior NCOs we must and will hold ourselves to that standard. If we do not feel that we are up to it, then we must ask ourselves how we made to this point in our career. We must stop and ask ourselves, and consider “Am I doing the hard right or the easy wrong?”