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## ENLISTED PAY "A Joke?"

Today's enlisted Soldier enters the military with a higher education and receives up-to-date technological training prior to reporting to their first duty station. The pay a Soldier receives for their dedication to duty as well as their expertise is somewhat below that of their civilian counterparts. Whether the enlisted member is a private or the Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA), the responsibilities and requirements of today's soldiers is far greater than ever before. But more importantly the difference between them and their counterparts, the officers, plays much more than one would tend to think. In years past, the officer has always been paid more than the enlisted member due to their education and responsibilities. But time has come to narrow this wide gap. Although the pay difference is clearly visible, one could argue that the officer should always receive more pay than their enlisted counterparts for various reasons. Ethically, today's Soldier is worth more to the fight than what they are getting paid. Let's now examine why the enlisted Soldier should receive a higher wage for what they do.

In 1999, the U.S. military was challenged because they were unable to meet all of its military personnel recruitment and retention goals. It has been argued by the Armed Services Committee that these shortfalls arose, in large part, because military personnel are paid much less than civilians with similar jobs in the private sector. It is also argued that people can be driven out of the military if their compensation and living standards are not at least somewhat close to those of their demographic and educational counterparts in civilian life. Wage increases in the civilian sector have been greatest for those with four or more years of college, which heightens the incentive for high school graduates to go to college rather than join the military, even though they might not complete all four years. In today's military the long-term outlook would be disturbing if they saw its traditional market for high-quality recruits to shrink. But

today's visions of our future force sparkles with claims of technological expertise and information superiority. It is unlikely that the military's demand for high achievers will fall. Hence the individual soldier will be expected to have a high degree of knowledge for these technological advances we use today and for tomorrow. This shows the need to increase the pay at which the enlisted Soldier receives for devoting part or all of their life to the military. It could be argued that the crucial character of the military's mission of national defense, and its acceptance of the professional ethic that places survival below mission accomplishment, demands certain levels of compensation.

Basic pay is the one element of military compensation that all military personnel in the same pay grade and with the same number of years of service receive. The pay scale between the enlisted and the officer is one, which there is a high degree of discrepancy. In 2004, according to the Army pay scale, a Major at a 04-pay level with 10 years of service was \$5,733.00 a month. A Master Sergeant (MSG) or First Sergeant (1SG) pay at 16 years of service was \$3,517.50 a month. A senior Non-Commissioned Officer, at the rank of Master Sergeant, performs a duty description that is equivalent to that of a Major or even higher, but their difference in pay is over \$2,000 dollars. The 1SG is in charge of the companies training program, the enforcer of standards, and the soldiers themselves. His duties and responsibilities are the welfare of the Soldiers and the readiness of the company for any wartime mission. He or she usually has had some civilian education or has been successful in acquiring either an Associates or Bachelors degree during their limited off time. By the time the individual reaches the grade of MSG or 1SG, they have gained a wealth of knowledge and are very experienced compared to a Major that has been in for approximately 10 years. The requirements and achievements of a Master Sergeant or First Sergeant have a higher impact on the units mission

than those of a major who does little in his daily duties that effect individual Soldiers. These duties usually include executive officer duties or as a battalion training officer.

To further understand the extremes of the pay difference is to examine the Specialist (SPC) pay compared to that of a Lieutenant. A SPC base pay is \$1,814.10 with 4 years time in service. He is at this time fully trained in his Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and performs his duties without immediate supervision. His duties are to achieve the mission goals so that the unit can be successful on the battlefield. The First Lieutenant at 4 years of service receives \$3,537.00 base pay. The Lieutenant is just becoming accustomed to his job as a leader, learning his job whither being a Platoon Leader or a Company Commanders special project. The difference between the SPC and the Lieutenant is \$1,722.90. Also a First Lieutenant, of four years in service, base pay is more than that of what a 1SG or MSG receives for having 16 years in service. The 1SG makes \$19.50 less than the lieutenant. This comparison shows the absolute need for an overhaul of the Armed Forces pay scale and of how unethical our pay scale really is.

Pay raises are also unethical and unfair to those that serve in the military, especially the enlisted member. The ethical dilemma here is that only those that are officers highly benefit when a pay raise has been approved. When Congress approves a pay increase, they approve that all service members, no difference in rank, receive a certain percentage increase. Everyone is treated equally. This makes it fair for all those that serve. But actually this is not what is really happening. For example this year the congress has approved a 3.1 percent pay increase. Take a major, at his current pay scale, gets a 3.1 pay increase. His pay goes up \$200.70. That's his pay raise. As a MSG, his pay goes up only \$129.90. This is totally wrong. Why does the officer receive more than the enlisted? The answer to this is that it is based on the percentage, the higher the pay you receive then the higher the raise. The pay raise is an issue that needs to be

addresses and to be replaced with a better system. When a pay raise is given today, it should be the same across the board. Just like everything else in the military, everything is a set standard and everything is equal. A 3.1 percentage pay raise is the same no matter of how you look at it. For instance, it should work out so that Congress looks at the dollar amount they can afford to give the military for a raise. They then break it down to where each service member would receive the same amount of a raise. For example, say you have 1500 soldiers in your military. You deem it necessary to increase their pay by 3.1 percent. At the time you are considering the pay raise, the military budget annually is set at \$90,000,000. So you then multiply \$90,000,000 by 3.1 percent. This would give you the amount of the pay increase. In this scenario, the pay raise would be approximately 2.79 million dollars added to the budget for that year. This would come out to be a 155-dollar pay raise for each individual Soldier. This doesn't seem too hard to figure out.

All Soldiers are equal when it comes to receiving a pay raise. We all fight for the same cause, to protect our freedom. The effectiveness of the U.S. military probably depends on the quality of its personnel more than on any other single factor. The current pay scale should be based on the requirements, education, maturity, and scope of which your position requires of you. The pay scale needs to be overhauled so that the difference is based on today's society, not on thirty years ago mentality. If this were to take place then the soldier would have a mind set that he or she can receive impartial pay and raises. It would also be correct to say that the level of monetary return provided to service members is a major factor in their decision to join or remain in the military. He or she will think twice about getting out of the service if the pay is right and everyone is treated equal. Their life is worth it, don't you think?