

Standards of Officers and Enlisted
In the United States Army

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ETHICS

The Army of today strides to be the moral leader for our nation. The Army teaches us values that are instilled from the first day we enter the military. Senior leaders are trusted to live by these values, make wise decisions and enforce standards.

The Army slogan of “Be all you can be”, created an atmosphere that was competitive and worked against the team building process, which the Army also teaches. Competition between Soldiers can make or break a unit. From one instance it can create an environment that makes a unit perform up to its capabilities. On the other hand it can have negative affects that ruin the unit and its soldiers. As senior leaders, we must never take away a Soldiers competitive spirit; their survival could depend on it. But we must simply encourage our Soldiers to maximize their potential.

The “zero defect” Army of the 1990s put many senior leaders careers in jeopardy. This type of thinking cultivates ethical dilemmas for leaders at all levels.

As Platoon Sergeant, while serving in Germany, I had a situation that arose that included a LT and a SPC. They both were charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. The specialist received his first and the platoon leader insisted that we give training to the rest of the platoon to ensure that all knew the consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol. About ten days later, the Platoon leader was charged with driving under the influence. And was promptly relieved of his duties as Platoon Leader. The paperwork indicating the blood alcohol level of each shows the Platoon Leader consumed a greater amount of alcohol. The Platoon Leader’s test revealed a two to one ratio over the Specialists. As the time approached for UCMJ, the Battalion Commander and Sergeant Major met with the Battalion to discuss the two incidents. The Battalion

Commander stated that, everyone that gets a DUI would be punished. He went on to say, that the punishment might not seem fair to everyone, but circumstances and the fact that one was a Officer dictates how one is punished against the other. As judgment day came for the Specialist, he had assembled a squad of NCOs and Warrant Officers to speak on his behalf. But the bottom line was that he had violated an order that the Battalion Commander was hard on. The Specialist was reduced to PV2, forfeited the max amount allowed and given 45 days of extra duty.

As time passed, there was no action taken against the Officer, other than the removal from his position. I talked to my First Sergeant, who in turned talked to the Command Sergeant Major, who stated that the LT punishment was coming. Instead of punishment, the LT was put in another leadership position in another company. What kind of message was this sending to the Soldiers in the Battalion? How could a leader be so hard on the Specialist, who was married and had two small children and yet let one of his officers get away with the same crime?

Ethics is defined by Webster's dictionary as, (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." The Army trusts that its leader will enforce standards and live by the Army values. We must pass these valuable lessons to the next generation of Soldiers. Leaders of today must establish an ethical environment that creates an atmosphere for learning and doing the right thing. We must instill in our Soldiers that doing the right things are the right thing to do and there's no substitute for right. As senior leaders, we must be patience with our young soldiers and put them in the position to succeed.

As the leaders of today's Army, we must step up and lead the new Soldiers the way our past leaders led us.