

**Ethics Thought Paper**  
**MSG James L. DeShong**  
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**Military Favoritism: The Good Old Boy Network Still Exists.**  
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**FA SGM Ordaz**

Military Favoritism: The Good Old Boy Network Still Exists.

MSG James L. DeShong

Selecting the most qualified Soldier to fill positions as they become available through attrition, reorganization, and modern force restructuring initiatives follows Army doctrine. The “backbone of the Army” has become more than a figure of speech. Senior enlisted Soldiers become very resourceful as indispensable and integral parts of the United States Army. Professional noncommissioned officers have strengthened their corps through institutional knowledge, experience, and advanced education. Often, Soldier selection for promotion, duty assignment, and additional rewards, such as Temporary Duty at locations known by many as a popular vacation destination, have little to do with qualifications or the need of the United States Army. Selection has everything to do with the dubious decisions of individuals in positions of influence who maintain the good old boy network.

It is not my intention to articulate that most senior leaders are unethical, deceitful, fraudulent, or do not make a good faith effort to uphold army values. On the contrary, senior leaders have inspired and provided much-needed mentorship throughout my career. The United States Army NCO Corps is peerless.

Noncommissioned officers must do what is right. Several occasions present themselves in the decision making process required of a senior leader. Considerable thought and contemplation will result in a sound and wise recommendation to the commander on promotion, evaluation, and duty assignment matters.

Senior board results published without any external knowledge of the exact promotion criteria continue as standard operating procedure. Why are they not subject to the scrutiny of

those evaluated? How were those promoted selected over those deemed less deserving? Soldier technical and tactical expertise, military occupational specialty (MOS) proficiency, and overall general qualifications are open to subjective interpretation.

At first glance, the selection process for duty position or promotion has the appearance of formal procedure pursuant to all applicable regulations. Commander's intent, executed flawlessly according to indiscriminant observers, did not take place. The exact opposite has transpired. Immediate and long-term negative impact is difficult to measure. Negative effects can range from loosing key Soldiers who fail to reenlist to declining unit moral and poor motivation. Rumors spread regarding the Soldier's promotion or placement into a position long before their accumulated time in service or experience should otherwise dictate.

Race, ethnic background, and sex also play an unofficial part in the selection process. A Soldier's official military photograph may portray the stereotypical Soldier, while another candidate's photo may not fit the part. It is good press when the army can utilize media channels to promote good will sentiments by spewing data that clearly show that the army is an equal opportunity employer in every category.

In many cases, the path of least resistance is selection of the lesser of two or more candidates. Possible challenges by not choosing the lesser candidate through Equal Opportunity channels, could require too much of the selecting Soldiers time and effort to fight wrongful allegations.

Those who would take an opposing view to my theory would be quick to say that the good old boy network no longer exists. Mechanisms are in place to prevent unfair practices, prejudices, and injustices. To take such a position would equate stating that discrimination does not exist in the military simply because bias is against well-publicized army doctrine. Most

commanders stand by the decisions of the responsible leaders to whom they have delegated authority. However, blind faith without an occasional follow-up leads to corrupt practices. The highest levels of government in the most powerful nation in the world must resign itself to checks and balances between all three branches of government.

Oposing views may also contemplate the idea that I am crying foul due to my personal opinion that I have been unjustly treated in the past. To that notion, I must reply that every good thing that has ever happened to me is due to my twenty-eight years, eleven months, and ten days affiliation with the military. I do not know a better way of life.

Profuse evidence throughout the military becomes painfully obvious with regard to positions filled by the inept. Mechanisms exacerbated by the continuous chain of those who pass the problem to the next squad, section, or company to contend with, have historically continued unabated with barely a cursory mention. Only serious infractions deemed worthy of the time and effort required to halt further flagrant violations hamper the vicious cycle.

Politics become increasingly complex the further one advances in the military structural food chain. Competition is brutal. Phone calls take place. Fellow Soldiers confide in one another to discuss options. Gaining insight into the intricate world of available duty positions takes significant effort. Positioning oneself to be in the right place at the right time can be a full time occupation.

Supply and demand stipulates that few available positions with many seeking to stake their claim to them can only lead to a highly controversial outcome. Quota managers must distribute duty assignment orders fairly and equitably. Promotion board members, bound by army regulation, must select the most qualified and trained leaders for promotion and duty assignment. The president of the promotion board has the duty to guide board members in the

promotion process and remove all bias in pursuit of the army's best interest. Likewise, fair and equitable Soldier evaluation and duty assignment placement must adhere to the same principles. Noncommissioned officers that remain positive, treat Soldiers fairly, and never give-up become tomorrow's leaders.

In summary, ethical dilemmas will continue to present themselves whenever outcomes rely upon subjective criteria. Cultural background, personal character, principles, and ethical values all play a part in how decisions emerge. The good old boy network will rarely divulge confidential behind the scene scenarios to those outside their immediate circle. Intermediate results may run contrary to any resemblance of common sense. However, common sense ultimately prevails. I will not hold my breath, write my congressional representative, or file an Inspector General (IG) complaint in reaction to the facts presented. Favoritism happens every day. Moreover, the good old boy network is alive and well.

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