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When Mission Success collides with Army Values; The Retention
and Transition NCOs Transfer Mission

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7 November 2006

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As Army Leadership, we teach and live by the Army values. The Army values are stressed to the point that all Soldiers carry cards and Identification Tags (ID) with the values printed on them as a constant reminder. In addition, Soldiers and Noncommissioned Officers (NCO) are taught the Soldier Creed and NCO Creed that continue to stress the Army values and mission accomplishment. At what point does the mission success outweigh the Army values? Is succeeding worth a negative public image? Is mission accomplishment worth pushing great Soldiers in to the "gray area"? At what point does a competitive spirit drive a good Soldier to over look the Army values to accomplish the mission?

Are all Soldiers great at all the Army occupations? The realistic answer is No! The Army knows this, and that is why all Soldiers are tested when they join the Armed Forces. Later in their careers, some Soldiers want to help other Soldiers; therefore they ask to become Retention and Transition NCOs. However, it is assumed that every Soldier has internalized and will live by the Army values, no matter what ethical dilemmas they may have to face.

Many Soldiers become very effective as a retention NCO, but

have great difficulties performing their duties as a transition NCO. One common trait these Soldiers have is their competitive spirit. Their competitive drive is what we use to create competition between Soldiers and sections. As a whole we have a very competent Retention and Transition force. They live by the Army values and know the importance of mission accomplishment. The Retention and Transition NCOs know that they impact thousands of Army Reserve Soldiers, and the strength and readiness of Reserve units.

Realistically not all Retention and Transition NCOs will meet their transfer mission (quota), even though they are working longer hours and making more phone calls. When mission shortfall is not an option, Soldiers are faced with the pressure to achieve mission success at any cost. These are the Soldiers that may possibly take a walk into the gray area for the sake of mission success, dedication to their chain of command and a chance of spending an evening with their family.

There are many examples of when mission accomplishment has blinded good soldiers leading them to set the Army values aside just for a moment. At the end of that moment the Army was faced with a situation soon to be published and broadcast by national media. Often the response is, "the public just does not understand". Some situations can be skewed and perceived differently by the public. Unfortunately, this is not always the

case and we find Army leadership and our Soldiers portrayed in a negative light.

In the Retention and Transition field there are some Soldiers so driven they will work the hours to be the top performer. They are willing to cross into the gray area and at times step into the black side to meet what ever mission is put on them. When caught, these are the Soldiers that we will read about in the paper projecting a negative image to the public. However, when they are not caught these are Soldiers who receive accolades for their mission success.

There are many ethical dimensions within the relationship between Retention and Transition NCOs, such as; their chain of command, unit commanders, and Soldiers being transferred. Being forthright with each of these relationships is critical for the Retention and Transition NCO. If the chain of command is not happy with the Soldiers transfer accomplishment, a negative counseling or NCO-ER could be the end result. If the unit is not happy with the quality of Soldiers being transferred into their unit, then they tend to get less support from the units. When a transition of a Soldier is not forthright the Retention and Transition NCO will not get referrals from that Soldier. Retention and Transition NCOs often build their referral base through their relationship with units and the unit Soldiers. Units and Soldiers will provide referral to reliable, high-

quality NCOs. Units and Soldiers have no loyalty to Retention and Transition NCOs with poor practices and this may quickly become public knowledge. A Retention and Transition NCOs may be a hero in the eyes of their chain of command, but at what cost? Again Army values and mission accomplishment clash, and how long will the mission be accomplished without the support of the units and Soldiers.

Are we as leaders and mentors showing and pushing Retention and Transition NCOs to set aside the Army values? Do we value temporary mission accomplishment over the welfare of our Soldiers and the Army values? When even one Retention and Transition NCO compromises the Army values for the sake of mission success, the entire Retention and Transition community is affected by that lapse of judgment. It only takes one case to plant a stereotype perception of our career field. Trust, once lost, is much more difficult to regain. As Leaders we must encourage our Retention and Transition NCOs to choose the hard right, over the easy wrong. Despite that the Retention and Transition NCOs easy wrong will accomplish the mission more quickly, and with short-term success.

There possibly is no steadfast answer for our Soldiers when their mission requirements come head-to-head with the Army values. Instead, it may be the senior leaders that need to ensure that we do not put our great Soldiers into a mission and

Army values clash. The answer may be with the leaders that lead and mentor during the face-to-face mode so they can see the real efforts that their Soldiers put into the mission. My personal belief is that we need to focus on the quality and effort of the Soldiers work. Ensuring that Units and the unit Soldiers are cared for in an ethical manner in-line with the Army values. I believe that when we focus on the quality and efforts of our Soldiers work, the byproduct will be the numbers that we need to meet our mission. The end result; a transfer mission accomplished with-in an ethical environment; Our Soldiers working in an environment supporting the Army Values and not needing to cross into the "gray area".