

WHAT HAPPENED TO INTEGRITY

Ethics and integrity are topics that have effects on people in so many ways. So many times we witness people making unethical choices by compromising their integrity. Key elements come to mind ranging from key political personnel to first line supervisors. From Presidents to key military personnel. Foremost you have to analyze the meaning and the background of these two key words. Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary defines ethics as "*a system of moral principles or values; the study of the general nature of morals and the specific moral choices and individual makes in relating to others; the rules or standards of conduct governing the members of a profession*". Integrity is defined as "*firm adherence to a code or standard of values; soundness*". In today's military and society we have two mutually key areas of concern. The first being integrity and the second being moral obligations to society. These translate into the following areas: backgrounds, reasons, leadership enforcement, and consequences.

Emphasis on integrity or lack thereof, influences so many follow-on areas. Our upbringing, beliefs, experiences, training, and incurred value systems drive the propensity to be honest. Leaders impact life and death in just their ability to tell the truth on various, controversial questions of topics.

We base our value systems on our backgrounds. Our "degrees" for integrity reflect these systems. Some may say that a "little white lie" is ok whereas others will strongly disagree. We learn these values whether right or wrong. We learn through experiences whether to maintain or discard them. We may even have to refine them to adapt to our environment. The military Soldier has to rely on the Army value system, measure their personal values and beliefs, and adjust them accordingly.

Our norms really influence how others view our ability to be honest. If you are constantly changing your standards then so will your truthfulness. This is a direct result of conforming to different environments or people. Integrity should not be a 50/50 rule based on variation of norms. Strong leaders are grounded in their norms on a constant behavior.

Religious affirmation drives many leaders integrity process. Leaders who are reinforced, grounded in doctrine, and based by spiritual convictions values do the right thing regardless of circumstance or outcomes. Even though some may waiver, the fact that these leaders will stand the test is higher.

Honesty is the basis of getting respect, developing a morally strong and disciplined unit. The before mentioned areas will help a leader face any decision steadfastly in the face of conflict or various reasons to compromise their integrity.

Job security is a reason many people conform to what they know is wrong. This may be a desired future or present job or position. This reason for conforming does not benefit the soldier or mission.

Money has always been a reason for people to do the unethical action. If a leader is strong and has their facts together, they can reach the same outcome and be successful without compromise. This can be over or under inflating their required budget to receive surplus resources. In these times of continuous shortages, one leader's unethical decision can cause another unit to go without necessary resources.

When you reflect on numerous reason to conform and be unethical you have to remain within guidelines and be the one who will be the honest broker. There has to be

various ways to ensure that leaders do not conform and jeopardize our mission, unit, and most of all Soldier's lives.

The continuous enforcement of ethical actions must continue. The standards of conduct by leaders will affect and cause subordinates to either be morally or immorally successful. The discipline that the Warrior Ethos, Soldier Creed, NCO Creed and numerous others are constant reminders and tools that guide Soldier's actions. Each one drives each relevant population of the military of their specific and mission focused duty.

The Warrior Ethos grounds itself on the refusal to accept failure. It enforces the concept of winning the nation's war and calls for total commitment. A Soldier emphasizes their character by their values and leader attributes. Their character will help them make the right choice when faced with an ethical situation.

The Soldier Creed and NCO Creed help each group to have a guideline in maintaining their character. The lack of integrity is not a desired trait for a professional Soldier. The NCO Creed states, "I will not compromise my integrity nor my moral courage". The Soldier Creed states, "I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values". These two statements should remind all personnel that we must be honest in all actions to maintain the trust of our Soldiers and the people of our country.

These three guides are pertinent to maintaining a professional Armed Force. However, not everyone will display these necessary values. There must be consequences when this happens.

The UCMJ covers many articles that pertain to lack of integrity and the areas that surround the resulting factors. We as leaders must enforce this from the highest to the lowest level.

We as leaders must be able to maintain our character and influence others to do the same. As the saying goes "Lead By Example" in all our actions. People know us by how we operate. Our reputation and character precedes us in all we do. As the saying goes stay focused on your piece of the pie and this is one issue where we have to be open-minded and steadfast. We are an organization that our country trusts to be honest and of the highest moral character and we owe them that. There will be those that will not abide by the rules and it is our duty and moral courage to help them act within due bounds. We must have a high degree of integrity and that is not a compromising option.