

Running head: ETHICS

The Ethical dilemma of double standards

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Abstract

Leaders must be the example for the Army's values: they must live the Army values everyday. Leaders must build an ethical command climate in their units and lives that support the Army's values. Some Leaders like to preach standards but never live them. I would call these Leaders double standards setter and not true Leaders.

The ethical dilemma of double standards

The great institution the Army has become and can be directly linked to the personal ethics of its leaders and Soldiers. Values are the foundation for the United States Army, and because of the personal ethics of our Soldiers and leaders we are able to follow those values, making them more than words in some Army Field Manual (FM). The seven Army values separate the Army from all other organizations in the world. Whether it is another military or civilian organization, the foundations forged by the seven Army values enable the Army to set itself apart from all others. Truly the Army is a great institution because of things like the seven Army values that we follow. Having a group of individuals that believe in ideas such as Loyalty, Duty, and Selfless Service can do nothing less than make the Army a great organization. We must ask ourselves, why we follow the Army values. Did we become a new force overnight because we rewrote FM 22-100 (Military Leadership), along with printing dog tags and value cards? Of course we did not. Without the ethical foundation already in place for the seven Army values, just putting them in an FM would give them no real value. Where does the foundation for the seven Army values come from? It comes from the personal ethics of all members of the Army. The revised FM 22-100 serves to refresh us on what we know we should be doing in the Army. We always knew what the right thing to do was. We now have a manual that we can point to when we discuss the values of the Army. All Soldiers join the Army with their own ethical standard; many of these differ from Soldier to Soldier. Focusing on the seven Army values helps to bring all those different standards together and more inline with each other. Everyday in many different arenas leader's ethics are challenged. Many different ethical dilemmas demand our attention, and no two are alike. Leaders cannot develop a cookie cutter approach to dealing with soldiers, whether

it is a disciplinary or personal problem. The easy answer for us would be to say, the Army values are in black and white and there is no interpretation, Soldiers must have the personal ethics to follow them. This cannot be the case though, because we are an organization made up of people. People make mistakes and living in a zero defect society does not work. The answer to making any type of ethical decision is looking at not just the quick fix, but also all the far-reaching affects that your decisions may have. When it comes to living ethically or making ethical decisions, we cannot be expected to live in a zero defect world. We all know the zero defect attitude does not work. People do not want to think outside the box for different answers to a problem for fear their decision might be wrong. When it comes to making ethical decisions, we must analyze every situation by itself and come up with a unique answer to that problem. The zero defect mentality stifles any type of freethinking because it makes leaders afraid to make a wrong decision. The book answer becomes the only answer for many young leaders. Young leaders will be afraid to ask for any type of help in solving problems, because they will fear that senior leaders will feel they cannot make decisions. We must support our young leaders and make them realize that if they make an honest mistake we will not hang them out to dry. We must teach our leaders how to think, not what to think. Leaders at all levels must set the ethical example in all they do. Soldiers will look to their leaders as an example to follow. Leaders cannot afford to live by any type of double standards. This includes their own actions and as well as how they deal with the actions of subordinates who make mistakes. How can a leader who drinks a twelve pack after work and then drives home stand up in front of their subordinates and give a safety brief on drinking and driving. That leader does not just degrade them, but they also degrade the position they hold. Some leaders feel their job is dealing with only the work at hand and all the personal stuff that Soldiers deal with are their own problems. Some leaders do

not deal with soldiers' personal problems until those personal problems affect the soldier's job. If they are waiting this long then it is too late, the damage is already done. Leaders must be the ethical standard setter for the Army's values; they must live the Army values everyday. Leaders must build an ethical command climate in their units that supports the Army's values. They must ensure they set a proper ethical example themselves, and that there is free flowing communication throughout the unit. Soldiers must feel like they can come to the leadership for advice on ethical decisions they face. They must feel that they can do this without fear of punishment, but with the feelings that help with the decision making process will be there for them. We must ask ourselves, why we see non-commissioned officers out of uniform and all types of uniform violations. There are many times non-commissioned officers are they ones who are doing wrong and knowing better. Some of these Leaders are the ones standing in front of an formation preaching about standards and rules. Why are non-commissioned officers the ones conducting these double standards? Young Soldiers are young and still learning. Non-commissioned officers have been in the Army a few days and know better. Some can argue that everyone makes mistakes because we are all human. You would think by the time we are non-commissioned officers we would be setting the standard for the Army's values not violating them. It is questioned that these non-commissioned officers should be out of the Army. In the Army today there is a big gray area of this double standard problem. Many non-commissioned officers are sure conducting these actions and need a little attention. If one of you fellow non-commissioned officers in your organization was violating a standard, would you say something I hope anyone would correct this act. As non-commissioned officers and being in the Army for a good amount of time this type of action is not called for. The problem is some many other non-commissioned officers witness these issues daily. Why doesn't anyone say nor do anything?

It is our job as non-commissioned officers to teach and help young Soldiers to have proper ethics and become great warriors. It is hard to do that when some of these non-commissioned are conducting double standards and not concentrating on being a Soldier themselves. As a senior Soldier we hear all types of violations of standards. Especially we hear many times of non-commissioned officers receiving DUI's, drugs and marriage abuse problems. The problem lays when this Soldier just gave a brief to his Soldiers 24hrs ago about what not to do. This would be called a double standard. Other non-commissioned officers sometimes know of these actions and cover them up. Why is this tolerated and accepted? Some of these Leaders are faced with a ethical dilemma. What is the right answer and how to deal with it? As a non-commissioned officer it is easy to give guidance and a standard, the hard part is to do them yourself. As senior non-commissioned officers in your unit you will face these dilemmas. What is the right answer and how do you go about with it? Many of non-commissioned officers will do nothing. There are some that will stand up for the Army's values and correct them for this wrong doings. There is no way double standard should be out there. There is going to be some non-commissioned officers out there unfortunately continuing double standards. Standards and ethics are the meat of today's Army and young warriors. We are in a battle that depends on good ethics and non-commission officers that can make good decisions. Non-commissioned officers need not to be a double standard candidate but a true Leader. Senior Leaders need to keep our younger leaders and non-commissioned officers on the right path and keep them from drifting. You need to remember to teach non-commissioned officers how to think and not what to think. As long you are a straight shooter and have your T's crossed and your I's dotted it will all come natural.

References

“October 2006” Army Leadership, competent, confident, and agile (FM 22-100)