

Double Tapping in Today's Army

By

MSG Timothy N. Johnson

CMDMC Jimmy Carlisle

Group Room M5

16 November 2005

Double Tapping in Today's Army

I consider double tapping a wounded enemy Soldier the correct thing to do when circumstances prevent rendering first aid. Double tapping, simply defined, means the placing of additional rounds of munitions in the body of an already wounded enemy combatant with the intent of killing him. There are many opposing views to this method of ensuring my fellow Soldiers safety. The media, fellow Soldiers, the American public, and many religious groups would argue that this method might be criminal and the American public shouldn't condone it. I disagree because for one to understand the situation that many of American Soldiers find themselves in, one must place him in that position.

I guess I would start this argument by first saying to search the seven Army values and find what is consistent with your personal values. Loyalty to your comrades comes to mind first. How can you, or I, live with ourselves if that one enemy combatant kills when we should have taken care of business? What about the personal courage one faces in this difficult situation? You must learn to get past how you will feel personally and focus that this is a professional issue.

Over the years, documentation shows many cases of American Soldiers wounded or killed because of an enemy combatant that either played wounded or suffered wounds. These same combatants then picked up weapons and shot the Americans. How can anyone then fault an American Soldier whose priority is to ensure the safety of his fellow man? Infantrymen are taught to kill the enemy and only render first aid if the option is available.

We see a video clip of helicopters engaging what we suspect is an enemy combatant who has wounds. How do we know that the individual has received wounds? How do we know that the enemy combatant is not just trying to low crawl away from the fire, retrieve a weapon, and

fire that RPG at the helicopter? How do we know that the enemy combatant, while wounded, will not be the same enemy who will plant the next IED killing more Americans? How can we not end his life to preserve another Americans or coalition Soldier's? If we have the ability to render first aid then I support that but I don't believe in a distant engagement where a pilot allows the wounded enemy combatant to go free because he has wounds. He will live to fight another day and take American lives with him.

The Army implements a checks-n-balance method determining if an action requires prosecution. A 15-6 is an investigation the Army conducts to either exonerate or recommend additional action. If a double tapping situation occurs, then I would expect a report filed and the proper investigation initiated. I don't condone double tapping just to double-tap and a 15-6 should identify a wrongful shooting. We must let the Army investigative system run the course before judging someone for what we believe is an illegal shooting.

Now let's look at what happens if we feel a sense of morality. Our American Soldiers will die and this is plain and simple. The enemy combatant crawls away, nursed back to health by the enemy or civilians, and kills again. Whom will we blame then? The Soldier who didn't kill when he had the chance? Whom will the parents blame? Will they blame the President, the unit, surely not the enemy? Who would the parent rather live? Their son or daughter, or the enemy combatant?

We as Soldiers will always suffer at the hand of second guessers. Whether it's the parents, media, or the world's population, someone will always wonder, "Should he have shot that Soldier again instead of rendering first aid?" If we approach every enemy combatant with this in mind then one of ours will die for sure. We will think twice before pulling the trigger and

then maybe even you will become a casualty as a result. You and I cannot afford to hesitate. We cannot afford to second-guess ourselves.

No one is more deadly on this issue than the media. What we find is they show footage of video with a Soldier or helicopter double tapping a wounded enemy combatant. Of course, they don't show or tell the whole story. How about the Soldier who just entered the room after the enemy ambushed his convoy and killed three of his comrades. He is room clearing and shoots an enemy combatant. He passes the wounded combatant and only then does the camera operator shoot footage of the scene as the American Soldier shoots the wounded combatant. The prior footage doesn't make it to the American television audience. Only the "morality" portion does and then the media and public judge, convict, and jail the Soldier and the military as a whole. This double tapping isn't a result of emotions based on the convoy incident, but on the fact he does not have time to treat the wounded combatant. He has more rooms to clear and enemy to kill or capture. However, the media would lead all to believe that we Americans are doing the wrong thing, that we are the baby killers of the Vietnam War. This is far from the truth as we are the protectors of freedom and democracy and sometimes it comes at a cost.

The religious groups of America have the same opinion on this subject as those who oppose us from around the globe. I would ask these groups to take a moment to think of how can they say double tapping is immoral but at the same time it is all right for those same religious fanatics we are fighting to kill our own people. You can't have it both ways.

The enemy takes advantage of the double tapping and uses it to their advantage. They take it one-step further than the media in that they use it to incite the Muslim world against the Americans. They also don't tell the whole story. They use the bits and pieces as a recruiting tool for future terrorists and fighters against democracy. Where are the moral media and morally

right religious groups when the enemy beheads one of our citizens in some remote location of Afghanistan or Iraq?

Another group who oppose the method of double tapping is our fellow Soldiers. Some suffer because of guilt or morality. You must first find yourself placed in this situation to develop a hard-core attitude against those who have done it or the thought of doing it yourself. Judging someone who has done it while wearing the same uniform, I find interesting. Does this mean that one of our fellow Soldiers who object to this is a conscientious objector? Not by definition but then how can those same people consider the ones who pull the trigger a murderer? You must talk to those who have pulled the trigger and find out why they did what they did. I will guarantee you that they didn't do it for kicks; they did it to protect themselves and their fellow comrades.

The group that has the most damaging affect on this subject is the world and their opinion. They develop their opinions based on the media as do Americans, but the difference is outside of our borders it seems everyone is looking for reasons to lash out at what we are doing. Just one of these incidents of double tapping fuels their fires and the next thing we know, world opinion says we shouldn't be there. Forget the circumstances behind what happened. Forget that the Americans have just removed a dictator or a terrorist from a position of power. They judge us on what they see. It seems that when extremists capture a citizen of another country or a Soldier and beheads them, there is little public outcry for what happened. Leaders of those countries might pull their Soldiers out and that is it. However, when double tapping happens and becomes public knowledge, world opinion is Americans are ruthless, infidels, and need to leave that country. This reaction is far worse than a beheading.

In summary, I would again like to confirm my stance that “double-tapping” of an enemy combatant is the correct thing to do in situations where rendering first aid is impractical. Seeing or hearing fellow Soldiers have fallen on the battlefield because of another’s moral issue upsets me. We see repeatedly how the enemy has slipped away due to our own conscience and then to hear that same enemy killed one of ours later. If we can handle the moral portion of this issue then more Soldiers will live and more enemies will die without taking another American with them.