

The United States Army Fraternization Policy

By

MSG Charles Leigh

Ethics Paper

SGM Wilkins

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My task is to write a thought paper on an ethical dilemma facing the United States Army. The Department of Defense Fraternization Policy that officers and enlisted Soldiers are forbidden to have any type of relationship is ethically wrong. This type of relationship may be considered as fraternization. Why should the Department of Defense, particularly the United States Army forbid one group of people from having a personal relationship with another? The Army and its leaders always stress ethics and morals, yet this policy is in total contrast to the ethical decision making process as we know it. If you were in a relationship that is now forbidden, then you had a time limit to get married or terminate the relationship. Why give these Soldiers a chance to marry by a certain date, and thereafter, this relationship is prohibited? This decision alone is an ethical decision blunder. Although the assignment requires no additional research, I found it necessary to do a little homework on the words morals, values and ethics in order to clarify some of the terminology. Like most Americans, if asked, I couldn't define the difference between morals and ethics; the two were always one of the same.

These definitions were taken from the internet. The author unknown, I found an article on ethics that defined these terms clearly for me;

Morals: the rules and prima facia duties that govern our behavior as persons to persons (gentleness, compassion, fidelity, fairness)

Values: States of affairs that are desired by and for people and that we want to increase (health, wealth, freedom, happiness, human rights)

Ethics: The whole field of morals, duties, values, and virtues -- our attempts to order human conduct toward the right and the good.

Although definitions may vary, for the thoughts that follow, I will explain how the Army's uses of these words are in total contrast with the policy on fraternization and conduct. I will give my thoughts in no particular order.

While looking back throughout our Army's history, our ethical principles have changed tremendously. Not very long ago, what our Army and our society considered acceptable treatment for blacks in and out of the military, would not only be illegal but also considered ethically unacceptable today. Like wise, many profane and outlandish behaviors that were permitted by the Army in the past are now banished and prohibited today. We must understand that all policies and regulations are proposed and mandated by our senior military officers. My point being, is this policy created for the good order and discipline of the military, or some other purpose that further separates the equality level between officers and enlisted Soldiers. The Army's ethical standards are in constant change as leaders try to promote values in a train, kill and defeat based organization. Who knows what will be acceptable one hundred years from now in relation to our standards of behavior today or how acceptable behavior will be defined tomorrow?

Another point of contention is these Army policy makers implement rules of conduct that hide behind our constitutional rights. I realize how that might sound, but life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is every man's unalienable right. Therefore, how can our senior leaders tell us that it is illegal for two people to fall in love or have a personal relationship because of their rank structure group in the United States Army? I truly understand we must not confuse "our right" with "what is right". Yes, you have the right to bare arms, but not the right to kill a person with those arms. You have the right

to burn the American flag, but is that the right thing to do? We have the right to serve our country by fighting our nations battles, but no right to relationships with certain people that we may die for or beside in battle. Prior to these policies becoming in affect, where is it proven that these types of relationships demeaned the good order and discipline of the Army?

The United States Army established a professional standard of ethics that I am proud to be a part of. As we move into the 21st century, we will not only be role models, we will also assist in establishing the ethical standards for future generations. As I pointed out earlier, these standards must continually evolve in order to remain relevant. I do not advocate a lower standard, only one that is relevant and sensible. Not only is this an unintelligent policy, but one that will be too difficult to enforce. Some ethical standards are written regulations or policies, however many will not, and should not be written.

I will continue to abide by and teach my soldiers the right thing. As long as I remain in the Army, I will obey the orders of those appointed over me. That does not mean that I will agree with each and every order that is mandated by our senior leaders. We must accept the fact that all policies are made by men and that does not mean that these policies are truly just and forthright. We should be careful in the future not to over react, as in the Army's Fraternization Policy. Instead, we must establish rules and regulations that are relevant for a professional group of people, officers and enlisted, that does not contradict what our professional standards and values elude. I believe Soldiers should have the right to pursue relationships with other rank structures if they so desire. I don't agree with the Army making these Soldiers choose between getting married or

terminating their relationship by a certain date, now passed. Now, these types of relationships are prohibited by the Army's standard of conduct with no regard to the provisions implemented before the rule took affect. We should not impose a rule on relationships because of the structured groups of our rank. Let us not forget that not too long ago, the Army had rules and regulations that discriminated against people because of their color, race and gender. I believe that the Army's Fraternization Policy, designed to maintain good order and discipline, is ethically wrong.