

Running head: GOOD OL' BOY NETWORK

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United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class #57

30 October 2006

UNCLASSIFIED

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“It’s not what you know but who you know.” We hear this well known proverb in many occasions. It simply emphasizes the importance of connection with other people more than with one’s intellectual ability. People use this proverb with double meanings as affirmation and negation. The Good Ol’ Boy Network (GOBN) may have been originated from a good deed, serenity, or team spirit. Although this may be true, many people irrationally exercise or abuse this system quite persistently in the management or military leadership arena now days. What defines the GOBN? According to Wikipedia encyclopedia, it describes:

A system of social networking and perceptions alleged to exist prevalently among certain communities and social strata in the United States. In some areas, the good ol' boy network is said to still exert considerable influence over many aspects of local government, business, and law enforcement. Usage of the term can often imply a wrongful exclusion of others from the network; however, the emphasis is usually on inclusion of a member, as in, "doing a good ol' boy a favor.

The positive side of the GOBN will avoid ineffectiveness of complicate organizational structure and the bureaucracy since it places great personal emphasis on close ties to one’s fellowship. It could be a part of an important mentorship and sponsorship for human hierarchy. Yet, it becomes great concern when it reflects a charmed circle which discriminates against others because they are not a part of “Circle of Clicks”. In fact, social relationships and family connections are the most important role in Asian societies. Neither the culture of western countries and the United States are the same as the eastern counterpart, but both sides have exercised similar habits since our civilization. The GOBN is usually based on race, geographic origin, religion, and friendship or combination of both or more.

I have searched through many publications and information sources in order to find the Army version of the GOBN but, I could not find in anywhere. I am trying to describe the GOBN as negatively reflect on today's military environment rather than more positively considered an idealized image of rural Americans as illustrated in the movie 'the Dukes of Hazzard'. The GOBN is alive and well in the Army. Ever since I joined the Army, it's been my biggest pet peeve I have endured for over past 20 years. Because of this GOBN, I have quite a bit of friction with those groups of individuals. In the beginning of my career, I encountered for the first time with these Soldiers who treated me as an outsider and bullied me as if I was unfit for our organization. The only thing I hadn't done was the fact that I did not "hang-out with them" after work. Moving up through my Army career, these types of behavior continued as they used their official position and power to solicit or coerce me into taking their orders or guidance for the benefit of the group of Soldiers of special interest, although violating ethics principles may result in disciplinary action including being punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. What strikes me about the GOBN is that they all seem to think that the laws and regulations do not apply to them.

I have witnessed a Soldier who consistently exempted himself from the duty rosters, details, or taskings; a disqualified Soldier selected for military schooling without the order of merit list; a mediocre Soldier recommended for promotion board without demonstrating potential for the next grade. Moreover, a NCO with two DUI's within three months retained in the same unit and still reenlisted; an overweight NCO still get promoted without a proper tracking record; a male 1SG was accused for adultery and having an inappropriate relationship with a female driver and female commander, and still was transferred to another brigade unit as 1SG with a clean slate and later promoted to CSM; a senior NCO who does not show up to work for a year after

submitted a retirement packet. This type of misguided and biased favoritism clearly indicates the GOBN as illegal and unethical. Those leaders on this circle placed junior leaders and peers in ethical dilemmas whether being a whistle blower or compromising with blind eyes. Fortunately, I have learned my professional character and traits from numerous outstanding senior leaderships who inspired me with great mentorship but I never inherited any GOBN from them. The following traits are negative effects of the GOBN on Army core values:

Loyalty—The good ol' boys' bond of loyalty is limited to their own network. They are faithful to the members only. Strong bonds make Soldiers willing to die for his battle buddies. However, this lack of bondage between Soldiers leads to critical deficiency on team work during combat.

Duty—Soldiers do not strive to do their best or beyond and above their duty. They do not want to take full responsibility for their actions, instead they ask for their connection to watch over them. Although our duty requires refusal to obey unlawful order, good Soldiers have to pay for their consequences. The fear of their leader's reprisals hinder fulfillment of their duty.

Respect—The GOBN creates lack of discipline because they portrayed as a special privileged group. They believe they are superior to others. It's all about them. Thus, they show little concern for others. They respect those who have common interest and background. Therefore, these groups of Soldiers do not feel to treat others as they should be treated. This disturbing pattern of behavior promotes the hostile environment and prevent from developing unit cohesion and esprit-de-corps. It separate Soldiers as we collide.

Selfless Service—Instead of putting the nation, the Army, and the unit's needs above their own, these egotistical power-hungry individuals are self centered and strive to ask for what others can do for them. The Army cannot function as a team due to self interested and self support service behavior.

Honor—Since the GOBN demonstrates to make a wrong decision, they have to continue to cover up or submit of false documents. This will encourage Soldiers to grow a habit of cheating for each other.

Integrity—Using his or her position and proficiency to deceive the unit and Soldiers may be stated as the most dangerous form of the negative effects of the GOBN. All Soldiers should compete fairly for each position, evaluation, rewards, and advancement on the basis of merit. Thus, Soldiers fail to develop to better themselves but become willing to be dependent Soldiers.

Personal Courage—They feel discouraged to do the right thing. They become motivated to seek an easy path resistance to get their goal as quickly as possible.

We are proud to be members of the United States Army—a value-based organization. American people trust and believe in us because we live up to the Army values and our creed. This is why we must strive to be against the GOBN. Our leaders enforce the standard however, to be flexible. Take care of all Soldiers equally. No Soldier should take advantage of other's expense. Being a maintainer of good order and discipline, this unacceptable practice should not be tolerated. Unfortunately, no matter what I think and do, this corrupted behavior will not become extinct from the Army. Nevertheless, we must remove this social tumor out of our Army. I will continue to conduct myself as a leader of character, competence and remain faithful to those around me.

In conclusion, we must not only understand the Army Values and Warrior Ethos, we must believe in them, model them in our actions, and teach others to accept and live by them. This is our ethical obligation to our junior Soldiers and leaders to lead in the right direction. If we must exercise the “Old Boy Network”, as senior NCOs of the Army, it should be what is in the best

interest for the Army, not for the benefit of certain individuals or groups. We need to do our duty morally, ethically, and right in every second of our life that we are called Soldiers.

References

Retrieved October 28, 2006, from <http://en.wikipedia.org>

FM-6-22 Army Leadership. (2006)