

Running head: CONFLICT BETWEEN PERSONAL AND MILITARY VALUES

Conflict between Personal and Military Values

MSG Crystal L. Wallace

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class 58

SGM Del Hoyo

25 December 2007

Abstract

If asked to close your eyes and reflect on your personal values would your personal values mirror those of United States Army? The United States Army provides each Soldier with seven values which play a significant part in who we are as Soldiers. The Army values hold a significant place in our military and the performance of our duties. The Army values are the glue that binds us together and they provide good order and discipline within our values based organization. However, conflict can occur between the values we personally hold and those given to us by the United States Army.

Our personal values pertain solely to us as individuals and as such they can cause conflict or ethical problems when we enter the United States Army and become part of a values based organization. As civilians living in the United States our personal values can include wanting accomplishment, peace, competency, equality, concern for others, privacy, self reliance, and prosperity. These values are a mere example; however, they mainly pertain to a person and not a group or an organization.

We form our values during our upbringing; we learn from our care givers acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Our culture and peers contribute to the adult we become and the values we possess. Our values are formed and evident in our behavior and actions.

Ethics pertain to a set of principles of right conduct, the rules of how we will act, and relate to what is good or bad. It pertains to moral duty and obligation. We as Soldiers have the moral duty and obligation to conduct ourselves so not to bring discredit to the United States Army, our units, and the uniform we wear. An ethical issue arises when we fail to have right conduct, fail to follow rules, and fail to have moral duty and obligation.

The Army values, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage are paramount of who we are as Soldiers. The Army values are about proper behavior and moral duty. They truly tell each and every Soldier regardless of their rank what right looks like. An informed ethical sense of right and wrong consistent with the Army values strengthens Soldiers to make the right choices when faced with tough issues. If a Soldier makes a decision using the Army values, they will never make a decision that will be wrong. However, our current world events and the need for Soldiers in combat have hindered our training on the Army values.

When we enter the Army, we become part of a group, a unit charged with a duty that requires cohesion to perform our mission. I can identify additional personal values and those values alone will not create ethical issue or problems. However, when we enter the Army and are provided and taught the seven Army values, conflict between our personal and military values can occur. As a Soldier we must adopt the Army values and focus on our group. It is okay to have values that pertain to the individual; however, one must except the Army Values and become part of the bigger picture. Personal values deal with the individual and me-isms can create ethical issues.

The Army values are not just a slogan or another acronym to remember, they are truly how we as Soldiers must conduct ourselves. Ethical conflicts and issues arise when we take our men and women in the Army and train them for combat leaving little time for training in the Army values. Due to the current operational tempo, our basic training focuses, with good reason, on the Soldiers ability to perform on the battlefield. We focus on their ability to shoot, move, and communicate. Once they enter the military we provide training in basic marksmanship, physical fitness, military discipline and their military occupational specialty, and then we send our young Soldiers off to war.

We have not had the time to fully form, mold, and shape their ethics and values. Their decision making process can still be focused on their personal values. For some Soldiers they will adjust quickly to take on the Army values and character. Some Soldiers will not adjust and when faced with a dilemma will make decisions from their own personal values and not those of the Army. The decisions made by these Soldiers stem from one's self and their personal values. As a Soldier we can no longer focus on ourselves but we must look out for our fellow comrades.

One universal factor evident among Soldiers is the love they share both in garrison and in combat for their comrades. The Army encourages this strong bond among Soldiers. Throughout the training environment, drill sergeants teach Soldiers to work as a team and to depend on each other. This bond further intensifies with the threat of death or serious injury in a combat environment.

Many Soldiers have paid the ultimate sacrifice and given their lives for our great country. Their heroic actions were to protect their buddy, to serve with honor, and to do their part in support of our mission during war. The Army values keep us grounded and assists us in how we react to this horrific loss. Soldiers who survive after an attack and experience the loss of a comrade go through emotional changes. Their emotions can run a gamut of different directions they will feel intense sadness, the sense of loss, and they will grieve the loss of their buddy. Some Soldiers will handle the loss using their personal values and look to seek vengeance and revenge for the death of their comrade.

On decisions on the battlefield personal are required to be concise decisions. While engaged in a fire fight, conducting maneuvers, standing guard, or while conducting searches Soldiers must be clear in their thoughts and do nothing to bring discredit to our values based organization. Unfortunately, when we attempt to make decisions using our personal values we can run into ethical dilemmas. These dilemmas can hinder mission, foster indiscipline, cause additional pain and suffering, and place lives in danger.

Our current conflicts have unconventional and insurgent warfare. The enemy often hides among the civilian population, commits death or destructions, and then disappears as he emerged into the local population. When an emotionally charged young Soldier, faced with an enemy they

are unable to locate, they have the perception that the local population is assisting in their evasion, and this could lead to disaster.

Our young Soldiers could take revenge or vengeance on the local population resulting in acts that appear on the evening news. The local population sees these acts as horrendous and thus places the lives of our service men and women in additional danger.

Additionally, ethical issues occur when Soldiers make decisions and to arrive at their decisions they use their personal values. Our personal values must never come before our Army values. Soldiers cannot selectively decide what orders or standards they will meet. Soldiers should never fail to have moral duty and obligation. Personal values may lead Soldiers down the path where they do not adhere to lawful orders and follow the instructions given to them by their leadership. Failure to adhere or follow orders will lead to ethical issues. Conflict between personal and military values can place the lives of our Soldiers in danger. It can affect our mission our unit cohesion.

The values a civilian enters the military with are not always the same as the Army values. Personal values not consistent with the Army values can and will cause ethical issues. We must take the time to instill, train, teach, coach, and mentor the Army values and proper military ethics to our Soldiers. Ethical issues will occur in our military; however, on the battlefield we should be mission focused and mission ready. This pertains to both physically and mentally. Proper training and good leadership will assist Soldiers in combat so that avoidable ethical issues will not occur.

The results of Soldiers who make decisions using their personal values especially in combat affect more than just us. Our actions and decisions, if unethical can lead to public humiliation, death of our comrades, loss of our mission focus, hinder our mission effectiveness, and bring discredit to the United States Army. We are a force protecting our nation and our way of live; we must perform our duties with the upmost competence and ensure our values are consistent with the Army values.