

Running head: ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY

Ethics and Responsibility

Andrew J. Wynn Sr.

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class #58

Warrant Officer I Bak

10 December 2007

**UNCLASSIFIED**

## **ABSTRACT**

There's no doubt that ethics and military service is the core values for which service to country and traditions have evolved. Ethics is the process of constantly doing the right thing even when no one is watching. The four basic guiding principles in military Army ethics: Duty, Integrity, Loyalty, and Selfless Service. This paper discusses ethics between military personnel and civilian employees within the government. In most cases, certain principles of conduct and behavior can be summarized in a so-called code. Acknowledgments of these codes of business conduct and ethics will create an attractive, healthy working environment for all personnel consistent with the military's core values, and further project a positive image throughout the world.

**UNCLASSIFIED**

## INTRODUCTION

Ethics is at the very core of any successful organization. On a daily basis, civilians and military personnel are faced with some type of ethical dilemma. Ethics can be defined as a system guiding one's moral principles. Military members inherently speak of ethical dilemmas that affect our institution. Put simply, ethics is a system of moral principles that is the foundation for military service. Bottom line...ethics is doing the right thing regardless of the situation in which one finds oneself. In today's war on terror, it is imperative that leaders display and uphold the highest level of integrity for the greater good of their nation.

Scandals from Wall Street to the White House demonstrate the cost on a global scale of a lack of integrity and increased ethical dilemmas that continually affect our nation's ability to secure global dominance. However, the ethical dilemmas do not stop there. Officers and Non-commissioned Officers affect our reputations as well and continue to tarnish our professionalism as an extension of policy architects. It is our responsibility to project and live by the Seven Army Values and constantly do the right thing when no one is watching regardless of the circumstances involved. George Washington perhaps said it best when he advised, "Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark or celestial fire called conscience." (Smith, 3)

The Officer Corps sets policy, however the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps implements policy. If the NCO Corps fails to personify the true meaning of being a leader then as a corps we have failed our young Soldiers as standard bearers. Leaders

UNCLASSIFIED

must do more than just teach standards, we must instill in them and be the standard.

Professional Soldier's live every minute doing what's right by constantly analyzing what if scenarios. Six years of war has drained the force, whether multiple deployments, family pressure, equipment shortages and most importantly personnel shortages have projected not only recruiting shortfalls but a nation that visually sees numerous scandals plaguing the institution. It is our job to learn from indiscretions from the past and reinforce value base training at all levels of leadership.

In most cases, certain principles of conduct and behavior can be summarized in a so-called code. As a professional Army, the professional standards are based off four fundamental principles: Duty, Integrity, Loyalty, and Selfless Service. In my opinion, our military service needs to increase awareness and educate Soldiers in this area.

Ethical dilemmas continue to plague military services. Drill Sergeants from Aberdeen Proven Grounds utilized their grade and position over trainees that created a hostile work environment. The cause and affect transcended into leaders' reluctance to enforce counseling procedures of the opposite gender with a fear of reprisal. Abu Grab prison scandal highlighted our countries shortcomings in the area of prison handling procedures and ultimately the need for strong leaders to accept responsibility for their actions. In all of these cases, if leaders are properly educating their personnel on doing what is right, in the end all will be right. In some ways, it is in my opinion that we promote our Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer corps early in some grades. At some grades maturity, experience, and professionalism is paramount in case of a ethical dilemma. Leaders have

**UNCLASSIFIED**

plagued the Army with ethical dilemmas and scandals that detract from our mission. From top civilian military leaders, Generals, and CSM's alike inundate the news for past and or present indiscretions. However, the backbone of the corps continues to follow status quo.

For instance, the basic principles of picking up trash are not adhered too. Leaders will chastise junior leaders for walking by trash or not making a correction to a Soldier that violates uniform policy. But on the opposite end of the spectrum, the same senior leaders say in the foreseeable future will be at war, so relax. I disagree with that philosophy wholeheartedly, as leaders we at all times should and will enforce the standard.

Do as I say...but not as I do. Everyone has seen this philosophy before. However today, at service schools leaders and future leaders continue to not successfully complete the standard to participate or effectively graduate academy schools. What are we telling our junior leaders...it is okay to not make the standard? Or is it the need for personnel that drives us to shift policy? Although, we send these non-compliant individuals to lead our future leaders for tomorrows challenges. Think about that one....

Leaders at all levels have been entrusted with America's sons and daughters. The simple things such as pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections can save a Soldiers life. Military articles talk about combat operations; however the article that sticks with me the most is from the CSM's corner. The article talks about some things that a CSM's notice while visiting different units in Iraq. He states, "That units are doing their pre-

combat checks and pre-combat inspections. However, more often than not he observed elements as they prepare to exit the FOB, COB, JSS, combat outpost or battle position. Soldiers literally throw their gear on or throw it in a vehicle and rush outside the wire. This complacency leads to Soldiers losing their lives.

For 221 years, the Non-Commissioned Officers have lead from the front; today however we find our corps in a different type leadership mode. It seems as if we have lost the morals that have been instilled in us. Values are taught as a foundation at a yearly age and to do on to others as we would have them to do unto you. In other words, if we as leaders deprive the new generation of Soldiers quality training and mentorship, we will nothing more that create a quantity in numbers of unprofessional future leaders. As seen in the Vietnam generation a breakdown in the true Backbone of the Army!

In 1986, I started a journey in what seemed to be an exciting and full filling experience. At a young age, I realized that this was going to be my career and strived to be the best Soldier I could be. I was humbled and honored to receive the rank of Sergeant, but the true love was representing past, present, and future Non-Commissioned Officers. I have dedicated my life to always doing the right thing and will continue to do right thing by my superior, peers, and subordinates alike. Like those that have stood before me, ethical dilemmas will continue to face themselves in front of all individuals. The true test is how a person handles those challenges that dictate the outcome.

**UNCLASSIFIED**

The future of our Army depends on YOU...always doing the right thing and exemplifying those inherit core values to serve and protect this great nation. This Academy is a part of creating future leaders that mold and develop junior Soldiers. That is my role as a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer. No one is more professional than I...

## **CONCLUSION**

When considering ethics there are at least two other ways of determining if a behavior or activity is appropriate or should be avoided, which are:

- 1) Common sense. The appropriateness of a practice or activity should generally be guided by common sense and good moral judgment.
- 2) Public scrutiny. If one would not want to read about his or her action on the front page of the newspaper, then he or she is not supposed to do it.

The main objective of the ethic codes is to prevent wrongdoing and to promote honest and ethical conduct, including the ethical handling of actual or apparent conflicts of interest between personal and professional relationships; full, fair, accurate, timely and understandable information in reports and documents; compliance with applicable rules and regulations.

To sum up, one can say that adherence to the established rules of behavior and conduct will bring about effective results and positively influence the work atmosphere in the majority of cases. Therefore abiding the rules of ethics should be responsibility of every individual.



***REFERENCE LIST***

Smith, P (2002). *Rules and tools for leaders*. New York, New York: Berkley Publishing Group Inc.