Ethical Dilemmas American Fighting Forces Face in the War on Terror

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Abstract

I will use reflect my own personal opinion that face our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guard as we take the fight to the enemy in OIF and OEF. This paper will focus on the negative aspects individuals take to engage insurgents in combat. It will not reflect the ninety-eight percent of these warriors who show the highest level of personal courage and conduct themselves as an ambassador to the nations we currently fight in. All personnel that serve in the Armed Forces take an oath of enlistment to do what’s legal and morally right in the situations they may find themselves in current operations in the Global War on Terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq.
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Ethics defined as moral principles of an individual. We consistently preach the Army Core Values and follow these and live by them everyday. The values Soldiers live by are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. The values the Army instills in a Soldier along with the individual moral principles should help a Soldier in a dilemma make the correct decision even though some may question the decision. This goes back to being sensitive and caring to the local population or it can be making the decision to kill an enemy that would do it to you or your men.

I believe the Armed Forces didn’t do enough cultural training before we invaded. I think this started off with every individual’s childhood and the level of good, quality parenting a person received as a sibling. I always believed that values and beliefs came from the individual’s parents and the Armed Forces just expanded on it. Currently there are Segeant/E-5’s talking to prominent tribal leaders in OIF/OEF. This didn’t happen when we invaded. As an Armed Force, we have made drastic change in our everyday operations. TTP’s that worked three months ago won’t work on today’s battlefield. I whole-heartedly believe it’s the young Soldier that’s making the most impact in the conflicts we fight today.

Unethical conduct can also be instilled in a young man/woman from their parents. Signs of this might be skipping school, trouble with the local law enforcement agencies and just being a straight troublemaker in any situation they may find themselves. If an individual possess unethical conduct it may prevent them from joining the Armed Forces. If an individual makes it thru the screening at the MEPS station they will have difficulty attaining a security clearance and then when it catches up to them they face an integrity violation for lying to get into the military.
I will know discuss how this conduct effects and impacts our units in the operational force. Many patriotic individuals joined the military after September 11, 2001. They had the inclination that they would be facing an enemy that could kill them. They stood up for what they believed in and wanted to protect their freedom that had been giving to them in previous wars. They accepted this obligation and the dangers that go with being a service member. I wouldn’t say that military members that joined prior to 9/11 didn’t understand the events that would lead up to confronting an enemy that’s elusive and wants nothing more than to kill an American, but certain Soldiers have display questionable ethical behaviors. One good example is the individuals that run to get profile just weeks before heading down range. These are the same people who had no problem serving prior to the United States taking the lead on the War on Terror. Conscientious objectors started a huge trend in the military. Prior to going to war we rarely heard of this. We endured sharp increases across the military in the number of positive urinalysis. I heard from many reliable sources that some females got pregnant in order to avoid the deployment. We encountered a larger number of individuals that came out and identified their homosexuality. All of these are seen in a unit’s pre-deployment phase.

Many units in the forces are finishing their third combat tour in OIF/OEF. Now they have to deal with a new trend that individuals’ have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I think this is a real condition and individuals that have it, need the best care given and the best care available, but as everything we see in the military some use this as excuse not to deploy or to stay back from theater. I believe they abuse the value of personal courage when they take this route to leave their unit that has formed a bond that only a few know.

Once a unit deploys to the combat zone they execute a RIP/TOA with the unit that has been on the ground for a little over a year. During this phase, some individuals may see some
dilemmas from a unit that been in the fight for a long duration. One of the most professional
dilemmas we face are when we deal with the local populace or detainees and are trying to get
important information from them. I have witnessed tactical questioning that gave the
interrogator many dilemmas in order to deceive the detainees to get the critical information we
needed to save not only our lives but also that of the innocent Iraqi people. Leadership needs to
pay particular attention to who pulls guard duty at the detention facility located at the FOB or
COP. You can’t have Soldiers that have lost a member of their team pulling this duty in the
event he retaliates. Personnel that work at a prison may take it in their own hands to get the
information needed to defeat an IED cell and have to be closely monitored by the leadership of
that facility.

During combat patrols down a tier one IED zone, some Soldiers make a decision not to
wear their seat belts and don’t go the speed limit that’s put in place by the MNF-I Commander.
This professional dilemma continues everyday and quite often. Many feel the seatbelt hinders
their movement in and out of a vehicle when they encounter ambushes. Another dilemma that
happens frequently is the negligent discharge of a weapon. Most of these are preventable and
should never happen but in the heat of the moment during an intense fire-fight one sometimes
forgets to place the weapon on safe and upon entering the FOB they go to clear the weapon and
fire the round that was in the chamber into the clearing barrel. Many times units go through a
15-6 investigation that stemmed from abuse of a detainee. Some dilemmas arise in the
protecting of a leader or a member of your team that you have formed a bond with. The
investigating officer and individual Soldier have to do what is legally and morally right at all
times times.

In some cases there are personal dilemmas some may face. For example, what if you have
two married Soldiers with their spouses back in the states and are having an affair. If you inform your chain of command you could be labeled a snitch within your unit. This dilemma rests with the value of integrity.

The last professional dilemma I would like to discuss is the military awards process. You have to ask the tough questions. Did they earn it? Were they within the radius of the blast that warrant the award? Were they directly engaged by small arms fire or just in the vicinity of it? The senior leaders have to take a stand on this issue and follow the regulations that govern the awards. I believe if a Soldier deserves the award then do everything in your power to ensure he gets what he deserves. I’ve seen Soldiers in several IED blasts that had no signs of injury while they were in Iraq. Upon the post-deployment screening they received a diagnosis with Mild Brain Disorder and were giving a MEB and were medically retired. We need to take care of the wounded warriors since they laid their life on the line for this country and should get the award they deserve.

The ethical dilemma American Forces face today in Iraq and Afghanistan include a environment that’s violate, hostile, and present some of the most confusing situations one has ever been faced with. We entrust them to always do the right thing with little or no guidance. I believe they fully understand what they are doing there and show professionalism that many citizens have never witness before. These men and women serve with the highest distinction and honor and make-up for the mistakes of the few that perform unethically.