Ethical Dilemmas Facing the US Army due to the War on Terrorism

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Abstract

Fighting terrorism is now a part of history and the effects that are made will lead to new changes to the Army, the American way of life and how the rest of the world sees the American Soldier and the government. Terrorist will use whatever means necessary to gain an advantage but the American Soldier, a leader too many, must remain composed, place value to life, respect religious beliefs, support the community, and instill confidence to the local community while fighting this enemy. As this war rages on errors will be made lessons are learned but the American Soldier will rise to the occasion and adjust to the situation by using previous events to ensure a better tomorrow.
Ethical Dilemmas Facing the US Army due to the War on Terrorism

The Army has faced many wars and with each war ethical dilemmas occurs and for each a new and different type of situation is created. In the world today the Army is faced with making decisions that affect people in many different ways. Religious beliefs will be affected along with the rights of many. This type of war has created situations that will involve ethical issues, political issues, human rights issues and social issues. How the US Army fights the War on Terror and reduces the effect on all the different people and issues that will be affected by the decisions made is truly complicated and difficult.

Locating the enemy, reducing the enemy’s capability to be effective, and keeping the possibility of noncombatant loss is almost impossible due to how the enemy is imbedded in the local population. How do we differentiate between terrorists and non-terrorists? Everyone who is directly involved in terror is a legitimate target. Those who are indirectly involved in terror are not a legitimate target (Yadlin, 2004). Fighting in this type of environment creates issues that impact the community and can influence the people in the community to feel that they are being violated. The threat forces the Army to implement force protection plans that will affect the movement and some of the rights of the locals. Restrictions, the constant presence of Soldiers, and all the new changes that become a part of everyday life can be confusing and irritating for many. The Army has to be careful when handling the local population to ensure that a rebellious attitude is not fermenting.

Fighting a war in a country that is built on religious beliefs and still has a tremendous religious orientation brings about situations that Soldiers have to adjust too and incorporate in their war fighting. The culture of the people is another issue that Soldiers must contend with and learn how to keep intact within the local community. The rules of engagement that must be
enforced and understood by US Soldiers are not the same for the enemy Soldiers. This situation put Soldiers in difficult life and death situations and when Soldiers let emotions influence their decisions the after effects makes an impact on the Army as a whole. Leaders are faced with decisions that will save lives and take lives but trying to eliminate an enemy that is willing to do just about anything to accomplish his or her mission creates an atmosphere of uncertainty.

As we sought to try and formulate how to fight terror, we understood that we were in a different kind of war, where the laws and ethics of conventional war did not apply. It involves not only the asymmetry of tanks hunting against guerrilla fighters or airplanes chasing terrorists. The main asymmetry is in the values of the two societies involved in the conflict - in the rules they obey. This is not a war between the U.S. and Russia or Germany and France, where the international rule of law is accepted by both sides. In this case, we are fighting with a people that have totally different values and rules of engagement (Yadlin, 2004).

The conduct of the US is viewed by the world through the actions of the people who represent the country. The war has put Soldiers and their actions in the spotlight and has created restrictive boundaries on the war fighting efforts. For example, in order to take out a known enemy target that is housing several leaders of a terrorist group, decisions have to be made that will incorporate the safety of the civilian population. The location can also cause a problem because of religious implications that will arise if the establishment is of a religious nature. Soldiers are now fighting a war, worrying about religious disruption, political backlash, support of the host country, outside influence, and the enemy. With so many different issues involved the military leaders, the government, and the Soldiers are forced to make decision that changes the original plans on how to engage the enemy.
The handling of prisoners of war has now become a serious issue facing the US Army and the actions taken to punish American Soldiers who violate policy and procedure are also a concern for the Army. The acts of abuse at Abu Ghraib has led to many discussions and brought attention to the methods used at the detainee locations, the Soldiers involved, and the capabilities of the leadership. Some of the questions asked challenged the ability of the Army to enforce policy and procedures, Soldier behavior, leadership, training of the units involved, and what actions would be taken to eliminate this type of behavior. The terrorist uses any means possible to send a message, combat the opposing forces, or deter any support to the US forces. Soldiers trying to win a fight with an enemy that is willing to sacrifice his life and the lives of others, without regret, has pushed the limits in this war that involved some poor ethical decisions from some Soldiers.

The dilemma is not limited to just the war zone, implications from the war is affecting the American society as well. Changes have been made that affect daily life and the events that transpire in places of public use. Events caused by this war has made changes in travel, protection of the borders, security of natural resources, and the way people view the government and the leaders of this country. America is together yet divided. How did this happen and what can be done to resolve this issue? These questions will be asked, pondered, discussed, and asked again until there is resolution.

Conclusion

The war on terrorism has created many ethical decisions for the American Soldier. How to fight an enemy that is willing and capable of doing anything to anyone in order to succeed has challenged the will and moral value of the American Soldier. The terrorist butcher or mutilate civilians, use self-destruction, and any means they feel necessary to turn the opinions of others
and to gain a stronghold on the people within the local community. The Army and its Soldiers struggle to remain composed and be the leaders that the rest of the world expects, but sometimes due to the situation the ethical decision of right or wrong is tested. The Army is teaching leadership and developing Soldiers that will use and enforce values no matter what the situation.
References

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