

Ethics in Battle

by Colonel Dave Hughes

“I have not seen within the past 3 years any new policy, strategy, or doctrine mention of ethical decision making, living by and adhering to the moral principles of the Army Profession, ethical reasoning, nor even the ethical application of lethal force (or exercise of restraint) in combat operations.”

Well, when you wrote that, it occurred to me that I might contribute an anecdote from my experience over 70 years ago during a very hard combat mission I had as a still young 1st lieutenant out of West Point for a year.

We were among the Class of '50, half of which had been sent to combat without even getting the Basic 2d Lt Branch training before shipping out. And where 42 of our classmates were killed in action.

I was the company commander of CO K, 3d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment which had already been through hard combat defending Hill 339 on September 28th, after two rifle companies from two other 7th Cav battalions had failed. We held, but lost 14 men KIA, including Lieutenant Radcliffe, and the only soldier taken prisoner from the 3d Battalion during the war so far. We left 77 dead Chinese on hill 339 inside our original perimeter, when we were ordered to attack and seize Hill 347 through an intervening Objective “Rye”. We were down to 130 men and 5 officers.

On the 5th and 6th October, we attacked and assaulted, even at night but all we had to show for it was the loss of two more officers and over 30 more wounded.

Finally, on October 7th, 1951 we tried to assault Hill 347, where, unbeknown to us a complete dug in reinforced Chinese Battalion hung on. We tried 3 times while I coordinated indirect fire and tank fire from my OP. And lost the only remaining officers besides me from Company K. When Sgt McKenzie called me asking what to do, I said hang on. And ordering all my command group, Fo's, and even Katusa

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Written by david

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South Korean Soldiers attached to my company to load themselves with grenades, we marched to the bottom of Hill 347. I ordered everyone to use 'marching fire' and get above the trench line.

The long and the short of it was we went up firing at everything that moved, and I managed to be the first man on top though my submachine gun jammed and I threw it down, so I threw grenades into the deep holes the enemy had dug.

When the firing died down, I realized there were many, many Chinese soldiers still in their deep holes. While scores were dead or dying in the open trench line. One of my soldiers knew a few Chinese words and he called into one tunnel and said to come out, we will not shoot them. Soon they started coming out, 192 Chinese soldiers were squatting in a ring on top, and we only had 15 armed men left from Company K. Several were tearful and cursing the Chinese who had killed or wounded their buddies down the hill.

One of my soldiers shouted "Lets Kill them All" I shouted no! We do not shoot prisoners. (and I said that, not because of the Geneva Convention, not because any manual told me not to) But because I was still an Officer, entrusted by the Commander in Chief to do right. And I was an American who plays fair. A West Pointer, with an embedded sense of right and wrong.

We marched the 192 POWs down off Hill 347 at dusk toward the MPs with trucks 2 miles away. Not a single Chinese soldier tried to escape. (American soldiers would have tried to escape)

I was recognized later by a DSC Award. I would have preferred a Unit Citation for all that Company K accomplished that day. But that was not to be. But I vividly remember, the values I upheld during the worst of days in my two-war career

Col (Ret) David R Hughes '50

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----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject:

RE: Army Ethic Series of Publications -Proposal for your support and comments

Date:

Tue, 8 May 2018 16:25:21 +0000

From:

T****, M***** M CTR US USA TRADOC

To:

Dave <dave@oldcolo.com>

COL Hughes, Dave, that is a great illustrious story of the Army Ethic in action. Of course in 1950 you only had the unwritten but understood Army Ethic derived from the American moral ethical values.

V/R, M*** T****

-----Original Message-----

From: Dave [mailto:dave@oldcolo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, May 8, 2018 11:54 AM

To: T****, M***** M CTR US USA TRADOC

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Army Ethic Series of Publications -Proposal for your support and commentsm

Read my attached "honorinbattle" email offering. Which I wrote today, 10 days before my 90th Birthday.

Dave Hughes

dave@oldcolo.com

On 05/07/2018 03:53 PM, T****, M***** M CTR US USA TRADOC wrote:

> Distinguished Army Professionals,

>

> COL C***** and I have been lamenting the lack of recognition and embracement of the Army Ethic as our Army's professional ethic and the failure of Soldiers and Army Civilians to identify with its moral principles. It seems no leaders are writing, talking, or even thinking about the existence of the Army Ethic, nor how it inspires and motivates people to be trusted Army professionals. I have not seen within the past 3 years any new policy, strategy, or doctrine mention of ethical decision making, living by and adhering to the moral principles of the Army Profession, ethical reasoning, nor even the ethical application of lethal force (or

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exercise of restraint) in combat operations. I sometimes see a reference to the Army Values, but as you know, they are subsumed within the Army Ethic. We are not getting our message across to the members of the Army Profession.

>

> So we have been thinking of ways to improve that. Obviously we have the formal education and training efforts and products, our Social Media and Webpage, Army Profession Seminars for face-to-face outreach, and recently the successful integration of Army Profession and Ethic concepts into PME/CES curricula at almost all levels of Army education. And we have the formal doctrine - now published for 5 years for the Profession and 3 years for the Ethic. CAPE is exploring the possibility of writing a monograph published by the AWC Strategic Studies Institute to continue the series we did with SSI 2010-2014. We are also considering writing an article for publication on Character Development in Army Magazine - like we did for the Profession and for the Ethic when those products were produced.

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> After giving this more thought and some preliminary discussion with COL C*****, we would like to explore the possibility of writing an 11 part series - a single page introductory article to start the series (to introduce the Army Ethic again and how it is applied in administrative day-to-day practice as well as in operational environments) followed by one each month (again single page) on each of the 10 moral principles and their application in practice. Maybe war stories, maybe peacetime stories - real experiences. Maybe without the names or unit IDs. What do you think?

>

> Long ago Army magazine had a page devoted to lessons in leadership at the end of each issue. I am sure many of you remember those short but illustrative articles. So what we are envisioning is something similar to that - The Army Ethic in Action. We will need help to do so, keeping up the writing each month for a year is beyond the practical capabilities of our small CAPE staff with our OPTEMPO and frequent unexpected taskings while trying to accomplish our own priority mission tasks.

>

> Surely men of your experience can recall or are aware of a current anecdotal experience that you could relate to illustrate one of those 10 moral principles. Stories are strong vicarious learning vehicles. Maybe that is why we tell them over a beer at reunions, to illustrate a point.

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> So I am soliciting your support, influence, and recommendations for how we can better communicate and promulgate the moral ideals of the Army Ethic within the

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Army Profession. I have attached a copy of the one page Army Ethic extracted from ADRP 1 The Army Profession, and a Powerpoint Slide we used to introduce the Army Ethic when we were writing and fielding it 2013-2015). If you want more explanation of any of those 10 moral obligations of trusted Army professionals, the ADRP 1 is downloadable from our website (no need for a CAC) and they are located in Chapter 2 of ADRP 1 The Army Profession.

- >
- > Very Respectfully,
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- > M**** T****, Consultant
- > Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) TRADOC, Combined Arms
- > Center, Mission Command Center of Excellence West Point, NY 10996

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