

Ethical Decision Problem #6

The problem below involves a situation that a Marine, Active or Reserve, encountered sometime during his or her military service—a situation that raised troubling ethical considerations. Readers are urged to reflect on the situation and decide what action they would have taken had they been involved. They can then compare their approach to those proposed by two other Marines and published elsewhere in the magazine. The published approaches are not “school solutions,” not officially approved positions; they are simply how two other Marines said they would react when they were confronted with the EDP in the same manner as the reader.

The Gazette welcomes brief letters commenting on EDPs and on what readers consider to be the notable strengths or weaknesses of the alternate approaches. These will be considered for possible publication in the Letters Section of the Gazette, 3 months after the EDP appears.

Readiness/Maintenance

Situation

You have just taken command of a company in a light armored reconnaissance battalion. During your first week the battalion commander asks for you to come into his office and give him a readiness update. You immediately go to your maintenance chief and ask him for a detailed status report on all vehicles. He looks at you and says, “Officially or what we report to the old man?” You look at him with a puzzled look and say, “What do you mean?” The maintenance chief tells you that there are a lot of vehicles down, but the company doesn’t report them because they don’t want to highlight the company as having a readiness problem. He says, “Don’t worry about it, all of the companies do it.” He also says, “The old man even knows it, because if he reported all of his vehicles down, then he would be highlighting himself.”

You walk away telling the maintenance chief that you will get back to him later. You go over

to Company B and ask a fellow captain about the maintenance reporting system around here. He looks at you and says, “When I first checked in, I reported actual vehicle status. I continued to do this and during all of the Friday updates the maintenance officer would always brief that my company had the lowest readiness percentages in the battalion. It became very frustrating, and I was very hard on my company. Come fitrep time, the CO ranked me 4 of 4. He told me that my readiness was the result of my leadership. Eventually a buddy of mine leaving the battalion told me the way to do business around here. Every since then, my paper readiness has increased dramatically, and the CO has told me on many occasions that he “is truly pleased with my progress.”

You look at your watch and see that it is time for your meeting with the CO. What do you intend to say in your readiness update? Explain the rationale behind your decision.

Once you have your solution in mind, you can compare it to the alternative approaches on page 84.