



Leadership, Ethics and Law of War Discussion Guide for Marines

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The primary purpose of this guide is to provide small unit leaders the tools with which to address the leadership and moral dilemmas of military service, particularly those dilemmas encountered on the battlefield. When it comes to ethical decision making, there are few situations that present black and white choices. The moral dimension of leadership, when compared to the mental and physical dimensions, is abstract. Rarely does training and education prepare the warrior for the level of ambiguity encountered in the field. The Long War promises more of the same for many years to come—whether the battlefield is Iraq, Afghanistan, or even on American soil. Marines will be asked to make rapid, life-and-death decisions based on incomplete and conflicting information. The very fate of the Nation often hangs in the balance of those decisions. Marine leaders owe their subordinates and the institution a sound and fully prepared program of development. This document can be part of that program. The secondary purpose of this effort is to introduce those yet to go into harm's way to the nature of the decisions potentially encountered. It is always difficult to simulate combat in a training environment. It is particularly difficult to simulate ethical decision making in combat. Marines receive formal Law of War, Escalation of Force, Rules of Engagement, operational culture, and ethics training beginning at the entry level and culminating in unit-level training such as Exercise Mojave Viper. Role players can simulate the stresses and complexity only so effectively. Informal discussion and "hip pocket" classes by experienced and thoughtful leaders fill in the gaps. This collection introduces those who have not undergone formal training to the nature and variables of decision-making as well as the standards and expectations of the institution. Finally, an added benefit of this book is that it gives the non-uniformed reader an appreciation for the difficulty, complexity, and consequences of the decision making that young Marines and soldiers encounter daily in the course of their duties. At no time in America's history have we asked more of our warriors. At no time in our in our history have they answered the call more magnificently. Today's young soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines should make us especially proud. They risk all for a Nation that sometimes doesn't fully understand or appreciate what it is they are doing. Many see only the result of bad decisions or failed policy. The stories of the successes, lives saved, tactical triumphs, and honor upheld rarely are widely broadcast. Take comfort knowing it is those successes that are the norm while the failings (some detailed herein) are the thankfully rare exceptions.

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