

Living the Army Ethic

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The Army Ethic is the guiding principle that provides every Soldier the moral compass to perform their daily duties. It is a set of beliefs based on the Army Values, and the Army culture as a whole, providing insight into what “right” looks like. The profession of arms is a service to our Nation, built on trust, and must be treated with the utmost respect. The 21st Secretary of the Army, John McHugh, captured it best when he said, “When people talk about the institutions that they trust. . .the United States Army is at the top of the list. Whether it is a man or woman in uniform or a Civilian. . .this is a team that needs to ensure that there is a mutual trust. . .so it is a very special relationship. . .forged over time.”

The Army ethic derives from beliefs and values and “lives” within our operational environment. While Soldiers have values and beliefs from their own upbringing and backgrounds, the Army provides a set of core beliefs for every Soldier. These Army values are the underlying foundation for all we believe in and stand by. The Army ethic shapes meaning into these words. It shows us not just what we do, but the overall meaning as to why we conduct ourselves in an ethical manner. Core values like duty and honor are not just words, but a lifestyle that carries an added meaning.

Integrity, an integral part of our profession, goes hand-in-hand with ethics. As an American Soldier, we have nothing if we don’t have integrity. Every day new Soldiers are coming into the profession of arms, and it is our job as leaders to impress upon them the importance of our values. This in turn facilitates the Army ethic and the conduct expected of Soldiers. As an Army, we hold a fragile relationship with the American public built on trust and it must be treated accordingly. A single action by an individual Soldier not in line with the Army ethic can ruin the Army’s reputation in an

instant. Therefore, we as leaders must enforce the standard across the board to ensure that relationship flourishes.

The Army ethic means being accountable for your actions, both on and off duty. The Army ethic provides the bedrock of all missions within our profession. It starts with the three fundamentals of competence, character, and commitment. Competence, also known as military expertise, means knowing your job. You cannot uphold the Army ethic if you are not credible in your area of expertise. Character, also known as honorable service, is the epitome of doing what is right by your unit, your organization, and the Army. The Army ethic would not survive in our organization if Soldiers did the wrong thing. As leaders, we must recognize what "right" looks like, and we must ensure those with whom we serve possess the character to perform their duties in any situation. Commitment, or stewardship, means working until mission completion. It means that as a leader, you do not go home until the job is done and your Soldiers' needs are taken care of. It means being aware of your surroundings and remaining steadfast to setting the right example for others to follow. These three pillars comprise the Army ethic and build the trust that forms the relationship with the American public.

The Army ethic is instilled in us as Soldiers from our first day in service. It is that intangible force driving us to be the best team member we can be. The Army ethic must be preserved for our Army, America's Army, to remain the greatest land fighting force known to the world.