

Customs, Courtesies, and Traditions: “Samarra’s Sniper Son” Written Case Study

Facilitator: Reading the Case Study twice often ensures that participants are prepared to discuss the issues.

Facilitator’s Summary: "Customs" are established practices that prescribe what is expected and what is inconsistent with good order, discipline, and military bearing. "Traditions" reflect the "Army Way" of accomplishing the mission, with discipline and to standards, revealing our values, virtues, and ethos. While deployed, a Soldier's decision reflects his character, which echoes the Army's time-honored "customs, courtesies, and traditions."

Notes:

- The senior sniper was acting as an Army professional, making discretionary judgment calls within his area of expertise without supervision.
 - How did his success affect his organization?
 - How critical to *esprit de corps* was the trust his fellow professionals had in his expertise?
- What cultural tradition did the sniper identify when the Iraqi child emerged to take the sniper rifle?
 - How do American traditions and Army regulations agree in this situation?
 - How could the sniper’s decision harm his unit?
 - How could this decision affect the trust of his group?
- The Army upholds the trust of the American people by reliably meeting the nation’s ethical expectations.
 - How could shooting the child upset the nation’s trust?
 - How would a disruption of the trust relationship – between soldier and Army or Army and Americans – affect *esprit de corps*?
- What Army Values are most relevant in this situation?
 - How could the organization emphasize that Value in order to prepare professionals for tough decisions?
 - How should the Army culture change?