



"It All Comes Down To Your Honor"

"Our values, our ethics, and our honor separate us from the insurgents and make us different from them... If you don't want to be treated like an insurgent, then don't act like one."

- LTC Robert Haycock, IN, Infantry Battalion Commander, OIF

Area of Operations (AO) Eagle was one of the hardest hit areas in the Iraqi theater resulting in 19 soldier deaths and 44 vehicle combat losses in a one-month period. As a result, the battalion commander decided to close Route Texas in order to validate the improvised explosive device (IED) threat. 1st Platoon, Alpha Company was given the mission to block Route Texas to all coalition and Iraqi civilian traffic. However, an Iraqi farmer failed to comply with the order and instead made trips along Route Texas daily. Finally, SSG Felix decided that he was going to take matters into his own hands, so he slashed the farmer's tires in order to make a point to the farmer once and for all. The battalion commander heard about SSG Felix's actions and asked to see the company commander to validate the story. The company commander confirmed the actions of SSG Felix and justified his behavior. Although SSG Felix's actions did not necessarily violate the rules of engagement (ROE), the battalion commander believed that his actions were not in accordance with the Army Values. As a result, the commander suggested that SSG Felix make a formal apology to the farmer and then compensate him for the slashed tires. SSG Felix agreed, and then he looked up the cost of the tires on line and prepared a formal apology. The next day, the farmer appeared near the checkpoint as he did every day, and SSG Felix asked to speak with him. SSG Felix apologized for his actions and told the farmer that he was wrong for slitting the tires. As reimbursement, SSG Felix offered the farmer \$55 in compensation. The farmer was in disbelief that an American soldier would display such honorable character. In turn, the farmer accepted his offer but said, "Since you are such an honorable man, I, too, must be honorable. The cost to replace the tires is only \$15 dollars," said the farmer as he handed back \$40 to SSG Felix. This act in conjunction with the security measures that the battalion implemented in the AO may have contributed to the decrease in IED attacks. Additionally, SSG Felix's honorable actions improved the image of American soldiers and therefore improved relations with the local population, especially with that Iraqi farmer.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER...

1. How does stress and frustration affect decision-making?
2. What Army Values did SSG Felix violate?
3. Were there any other possible ways that SSG Felix could have handled the situation? If so, describe them.
4. How can we train our soldiers to use honor in their decision-making processes?