

# PERSONAL STANDARDS OR ORDERS

**Situation:** : Our team was in Afghanistan for about 60 days when the team's technical sergeant (TSgt) walked in on a group of guys looking at pornographic materials. The pornography was on team member Jackson's personal computer. The TSgt recommended to CPT Hall that he investigate Jackson for possession of pornography. CPT Hall knew a lot of personnel had pornography in violation of General Order Number 1B but he personally felt there was nothing wrong with the guys looking at it. He reasoned that the Base Exchange had magazines with some nudity and these were not classified as pornography. Therefore, CPT Hall decided there was no need to make a lot of noise about this and told his TSgt to speak with Jackson about getting rid of the porn. However, a few days later another team member also reported Jackson's pornography to CPT Hall and said someone from another unit was going to report it. To stay ahead of the game CPT Hall called his team director, LTC Austin to report what was happening, stating that he was going to counsel Jackson. LTC Austin suspected that CPT Hall did not understand the potential effects of a General Order violation and recommended a full investigation. However, against his better judgment LTC Austin allowed CPT Hall to talk him out of the investigation. LTC Austin allowed CPT Hall to handle the matter. Jackson was counseled for possession of pornography and sent to work with another team.

One week later, at 0530 CPT Hall received an urgent call to report that Jackson was under suicide watch and his pornography involved another Airman and other UCMJ violations. He was found with an M16 in his mouth. Even though a Sgt had talked him out of the suicide, CPT Hall now had to provide 24 hour supervision and an escort to a division medical facility for evaluation as well as answer for his failure to act on the general order violation.

After a full investigation, LTC Austin discovered that Jackson was downloading pornography and just looking months before arriving in Iraq. Once in Iraq he became involved with another team member, taking pornographic photos. CPT Hall and others had seen the photos and knew they were posted on the Internet. Rather than disclose team violations of General Order 1B, CPT Hall chose to prevent an investigation by transferring Jackson. One week later, Jackson's wife received a copy of a team e-mail with links to photos of her husband and others. It was this that pushed Jackson to consider suicide. How could he have handled this differently?

## REFLECTION...

Personal beliefs sometimes conflict with orders, and orders are viewed as unenforceable. When a leader's personal ethics and professional ethics conflict, which should prevail? At what point do you put your efforts into something you really don't want to do? CPT Hall allowed his personal standards and involvement to take precedence over a General Order. As an officer he had the responsibility enforce General Orders. Jackson received the help he needed. He is alive today, but his "just looking" had progressed into an addiction that destroyed his marriage. CPT Hall lost the respect of his team and higher ups as well because he failed to do what was right. If he had it to do over again, LTC Austin would have made an immediate decision instead of leaving it to CPT Hall. LTC Austin knew that violations to CENTAF General Order Number 1B needed an appropriate response, but from a distance the unethical behavior was unclear. It wasn't until after the suicide attempt and investigation that he realized CPT Hall's response was unethical and harmful to the military culture. In the end, it is easy to arm chair quarterback or second guess after the fact, but the most important thing is we learn from our mistakes. Hopefully, others will learn as well.

Ethical Dilemma at the Time of the Incident: CPT Hall knew the TSgt and LTC Austin were right, and an investigation was needed when first reported. However, an investigation might uncover his failures and result in UCMJ action.

Rules/Laws That Apply: Uniform Code of Military Justice, Central Air Forces Commanding General Order General Order Number 1B.

At What Point Did You Say "Enough is Enough"? When And How Did You Take Action? CPT Hall did not reach the enough point to take action, because LTC Austin made the choice for him. As for LTC Austin, enough was when he got the report at 0600. He immediately ordered an investigation. Later LTC Austin stated, "General Order 1B is for the good order and welfare of all military personnel; therefore, as leaders we must take violations seriously."

Conflict or Tension of the 7 Army Values? How Did You Resolve Those Conflicts? Leadership often means that we must look beyond our immediate decisions and determine the future consequences of our action or inaction. Self-less Service means officers place the welfare of subordinates above their own. CPT Hall feels he has learned a valuable lesson. He also now believes all General Order violations must be investigated.

Consideration of Other COAs and the 2nd and 3rd Order Effects. One Airman on suicide watch took a toll on the team's manpower, resulting in a week long delay in completing a key installation project. These problems could have been negated by taking the time to fully address the issues surrounding Jackson and the team. CPT Hall knew about the pornography but failed to act for personal reasons.

How Did You Get the Courage To Do the Harder Right? According to LTC Austin, the harder right was almost too late. When a life is almost lost, doing the right thing becomes crystal clear.