



Planted Weapons

You are in an infantry unit serving in Iraq. You have been serving there for eleven months and frankly you are burned out and battle hardened. You have lost several good men to the insurgents and a few to accidents. Your unit has a reputation for being fierce in battle and has become very skilled in urban combat.

The commander have stressed increasing lethality and called for more enemy KIAs to crush the insurgency.

During a routine patrol your unit was tipped off to search a particular house. The Platoon Leader heard something suspicious in the house and tossed a hand grenade inside. After it detonated he led the patrol into the house only to find that he killed a woman and two children. The suspicious sound was a toddler shaking the crib she was playing in.

It was an honest mistake. Technically the ROE called for the use of non-lethal force, but the LT insisted that he felt that his life and the lives of his soldiers was in danger- justifying using the grenade. The LT took weapons seized earlier and planted them on the scene and took pictures making it look like the woman was armed.

You found out these details because one of the platoon members felt that what they were doing was wrong and told you of the planted weapons.

Your unit has performed heroically. One time the LT actually saved your life and the life of your driver because of his decisive action. Nobody else knows about the cover-up and false report. You are torn over what to do. Your unit is close knit and you all stick together, but you also know that the LT crossed the line. Then again, they were only Iraqis who probably supported the terrorists. Is it really worth sacrificing one of your own over this accident?

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR SOLDIERS...

Was the platoon leader right or wrong in his actions?

How would you report a similar violation of the ROE?

What is the impact on fostering relations with the village by planting a weapon on a non-combatant?

What are the consequences if you report the incident? What would the impact be on the unit? Don't you owe the LT loyalty, especially since he saved your life? What would the impact be if you didn't report the incident? Could that lead to future problems?

Should a Soldier report the incident without regard to consequences, just because it's the right thing to do? How do you know it's the right thing to do? At one time people were burned as witches, "because it's the right thing to do". Today, we consider that barbaric behavior. How can we be confident that what we believe to be right is right?

Would you report the incident if you knew it would make headlines and prove to be a major embarrassment for the United States? Loyalty is an Army value. But what is the right loyalty? Loyalty to your unit? Loyalty to the ROE? Loyalty to the Army? Loyalty to the nation? What about loyalty to the Iraqis?