

SPC Joe Darby

What Happened?

SPC Joe Darby was from an Army Reserve unit from a small town. SPC Darby had been in Iraq for seven months when he was first handed the photographs on a CD. It was lent to him by a colleague, Charles Graner. Among the photographs were the infamous pictures of abuse at Abu Graib. Joe Darby knew what he saw was wrong, but it took him three weeks to decide to hand those photographs in. When he finally did, he was promised anonymity and hoped he would hear no more about it.

But he was scared of the repercussions from the accused soldiers in the photos. “I was afraid for retribution not only from them, but from other soldiers,” he says. He was especially troubled by the fact that he could be killed as he slept. When the accused soldiers were finally removed from the base, he thought his troubles were over. However, his anonymity came undone one day and he really wondered how he would be treated. Rather than turn on him for betraying colleagues, most of the soldiers in his unit shook his hand. It was at home where the real trouble started.

His wife had no idea that Mr. Darby had handed in those photos, but when he was named, she had to flee to her sister’s house which was then vandalized with graffiti. Many in his home town called him a traitor. Mr. Darby and his family have moved to a new town. They have new jobs. They have done everything but changed their identities. But he does not see himself as a hero, or a traitor. Just “a soldier who did his job – no more, no less”, he stated. “I’ve never regretted for one second what I did when I was in Iraq, to turn those pictures in,” he says.

Questions to Discuss With Your Soldiers...

Loyalty and Duty are two of the seven army values. Do these values conflict in this scenario? And if so, how?

Why do you think it took SPC Darby three weeks to turn in these photographs to the authorities?

As a result of reporting the scenario, the American soldier in Iraq lost credibility with the Iraqi population. Would this outcome have affected your decision to report the crimes?

As a leader, if this had happened in our organization, how would this affect your decisions?