



"Whose Equipment Is This?"

"We typically order excess equipment with the best of intentions of taking care of our troops. In this case, it led to an ethical problem of waste and mismanagement."

- Special Agent Derek Dela-Cruz, Diplomatic Security Service, US Department of State

During Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), there was a systemic problem with accountability of equipment and materiel by battalion commanders. The logistical chain would typically ask battalion commanders what their shortages were in order to appropriately provide resupply. After some time, it was obvious that there was a trend among battalion commanders to request more items over and above what they really needed. More materials would be ordered and delivered by the supply chain in mass. Although ordered by some commander at some point in time, poor accountability standards left hundreds of unclaimed conexas scattered throughout unit areas. As units rotated in and out of country, more and more conexas would be ordered, delivered, and left behind. Millions of dollars in wasted tax-payer money were represented by these containers full of unclaimed materiel.

Ethically, commanders are liable for the equipment that is under their control. During wartime, this tends to be overlooked just because "we're going into combat."

QUESTIONS TO PONDER...

How does a unit commander balance a unit's combat readiness with the abuse of the logistical re-supply process?

What could be done to fix this current problem?

How can it be prevented in the future?

What is the dilemma, or conflict of values, that these Battalion Commanders are dealing with?

What are some of the contextual factors that are influencing the Battalion Commanders to make the decision to order and stock unnecessary excess equipment and supplies?

What are a Battalion Commander's priorities?

When looking at a morally / ethically "charged" situation we process the information through one, or a combination of, three "lenses". These lenses are a rules/process focused lens, a outcome focused lens, and a values focused lens. Which lens (s) do you think a Battalion Commander in this situation was using when making the decision to request and store extra equipment? Which one(s) would you have used? What information influenced you to use that lens(s)?

As the Battalion Commander's processed the information surrounding this situation what aspects of the following did they act on / fail to act on:

Professional values and norms?

Rules of engagement?

Laws and regulations?

Professional ethics and ethos?

Do you think their intentions matched their actions?

What aspects of the organizational culture / climate do you think influenced these commanders to make this type of decision?

If you were one of these commander's Brigade Commander How would you handle this behavior?

When reading about this case how does it make you feel?

If you were a soldier in one of these Battalion Commander's units how would you have felt about how things transpired?

THE REST OF THE STORY...

As it turned out, the contributing author, a CSS officer, was designated as the POC for all excess equipment. He traveled throughout Afghanistan personally to remedy this problem. After having each unit mark all of its conexas and equipment piles, it was much easier for him to identify unclaimed items. He inventoried each and every unclaimed conex and equipment pile and then assimilated them back into the Army's supply system.