

# DUTY of the NCO

A duty is something you must do by virtue of your position and is a legal or moral obligation. For example, it is the supply sergeant's duty to issue equipment and keep records of the unit's supplies. It is the first sergeant's duty to hold formations, instruct platoon sergeants and assist the commander in supervising unit operations. It is the duty of the squad/section/team leader to account for his soldiers and ensure that they receive necessary instructions and are properly trained to perform their jobs.

A noncommissioned officer's duties are numerous and must be taken seriously. An NCO's duty includes taking care of soldiers, which is your priority. Corporals and sergeants do this by developing a genuine concern for their soldiers' well-being. Leaders must know and understand their soldiers well enough to train them as individuals and teams to operate proficiently. This will give them confidence in their ability to perform well under the difficult and demanding conditions of disasters. Individual training is the principle duty and responsibility of NCOs. No one in the Army has more to do with training soldiers than NCOs.

Well trained soldiers will likely succeed and survive in disasters. Well trained soldiers properly do the tasks their NCOs give them. A good leader executes the boss's decisions with energy and enthusiasm; looking at their leader, soldiers will believe the leader thinks it's absolutely the best possible solution.

*"We don't need 'leaders' who stay warm on cold days... while their men freeze on the grenade ranges. If they get cold, the leader ought to get just as cold. And when he marches back to the barracks with them after that kind of day, they know he is one of them."*

Drill Sergeant Karl Baccene

There may be situations you must think carefully about what you're told to do. For example, duty requires that you refuse to obey illegal orders. This is not a privilege you can claim, but a duty you must perform. You have no choice but to do what's ethically and legally correct. Making the right choice and acting on it when faced with an ethical question can be difficult. Sometimes, it means standing your ground and telling your supervisor you think they're wrong. If you think an order is illegal, first be sure that you understand both the details of the order and its original intent. Seek clarification from the person who gave the order. This takes moral courage, but the question will be straightforward: Did you really mean for me to... steal the part... submit a false report... shoot the prisoners?

*"Moral courage, to me, is much more demanding than physical courage."*

SMA Leon L. Van Autreve

If the question is complex and time permits, seek advice from legal assistance. However, if you must decide immediately, as in the heat of emergencies, make the best judgment possible based on the Army values and attributes, your experience and your previous study and reflection. You take a risk when you disobey what you perceive to be an illegal order. Talk to your superiors, particularly those who have done what you aspire to do or what you think you'll be called on to do; providing counsel of this sort is an important part of leadership. Obviously, you need to make time to do this before you're faced with a tough call. This could possibly be the most difficult decision you'll ever make, but that's what leaders do.

Noncommissioned officers have three types of duties: specified duties, directed duties and implied duties.

**Specified duties** are those related to jobs and positions. Directives such as Army regulations, Department of the Army (DA) general orders, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), soldier's manuals, Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) publications and MOS job descriptions specify the duties. For example, AR 600-20 says that NCOs must ensure that their soldiers get proper individual training and maintain personal appearance and cleanliness.

**Directed duties** are not specified as part of a job position or other directive. A superior gives them orally or in writing. Directed duties include being in charge of quarters (CQ) or serving as sergeant of the guard, staff duty officer, company training NCO and NBC NCO, where these duties are not found in the unit's organization charts.

**Implied duties** often support specified duties, but in some cases they may not be related to the job position. These duties may not be written but implied in the instructions. They're duties that improve the quality of the job and help keep the unit functioning at an optimum level. In most cases, these duties depend on individual initiative. They improve the work environment and motivate soldiers to perform because they want to, not because they have to. For example, while not specifically directed to do so, you hold in-ranks inspections daily to ensure your soldiers' appearance and equipment are up to standards.