

Ethical Decision Problem #16

Political Behavior

Situation

You are a three-star general visiting a major military installation. In the course of your visit, you notice several indicators of political activity among Active duty personnel.

Incident #1. A regimental sergeant major proudly shows you an E-mail message he has written on his office computer calling on military personnel to fight cuts in military retirement pay. He has sent this E-mail out to everyone in his unit and all his fellow sergeants major on the base.

Incident #2. Later that day, you hear a lieutenant tell his platoon an obscene joke about President Clinton.

Incident #3. That evening in the officers' club, two of the senior officers from the base accompanying your party loudly discuss how disgusted they are with congressional Democrats for defending the President's behavior.

Incident #4. At a dinner party at an old friend's house that night, the conversation is similar.

Incident #5. The next morning, you come across a unit doing routine maintenance work while their commander plays Rush Limbaugh through a loudspeaker.

Analyze each of these situations. Do any of them present a problem? If so, why? If not, why not? What action would you take upon observing these situations or later during your visit?

EDPs involve real-world leadership challenges that usually have a significant ethical/values component. They are typical of challenges that have confronted Marines in the past and could easily be encountered in the future. Readers should analyze the problem carefully and decide what action they would take.

Turn to page 60 to see how others say they would have handled this problem.