

"A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do." As an Honor Board president during my senior year at the United States Military Academy, it was my job to preside over hearings for cadets accused of violating the Cadet Honor Code. The service academy codes are unique in that they punish cadets for unethical behavior conducted both inside and outside the confines of academia. I remember, for example, a three-day hearing for a cadet who was accused of lying about being sick so that he could skip classes. In another case that I witnessed, a cadet had to explain to a peer jury why he'd stolen a vehicle to get back to West Point late at night. Other hearings concerned garden-variety cheating on academic papers and tests. What I cannot remember is any case in which a cadet was accused of *tolerating* another cadet for lying, cheating, or stealing. In other words, I don't remember anyone who faced expulsion for failing to live up to the Code's requirement to "blow the whistle" upon witnessing unethical behavior.

In retrospect, I realize that the total absence of "toleration" cases was the result of an unspoken code of camaraderie between cadets: Don't be a rat. There was a constant tension between this implied rule and the formal Honor Code. After sitting through an hour of professional military ethics after lunch - "it is your duty to report those who lie, cheat, or steal" - we'd be sent off to military science class where we'd be reminded that trust between Soldiers is the bedrock of unit success. "No one will follow you into battle unless they believe that you've got their backs." We were told to report our classmates for cheating on math homework, but also that those same classmates needed to believe that we "had their backs."

It should have been no surprise to me that when a cheating ring formed amongst my peers at an officers' course immediately following graduation from West Point, no one jumped to report it. I certainly did not report it. Even as a former Honor Board president who had moderated hearings that resulted in the expulsion of cadets for moral violations on the grounds of "military professionalism," I consciously ignored the Code in my first assignment in the Army. I flattered myself into believing that I would not report the cheating in the name of "camaraderie."

Before any taxpayers lose hope in the moral integrity of America's junior military officers, I can thankfully relate that one of our peers, a woman of uncommon courage (and great talent as an officer generally), finally reported the cheating. With this act, she reminded us all that camaraderie and honor are not mutually exclusive obligations. The Soldier who "has your back" is not the person who looks the other way when you cut corners; instead, the Soldier you want next to you in battle is the person who consistently reminds you to do things the right way. The moral way. The only way our military can and should succeed in battle.

Though many of us often lack the moral fortitude to report ethical wrongs committed by family, friends, or employers, we can at least appreciate the brave citizen who does make the choice to blow the whistle. The whistleblower, as the conscience of a family, or an organization, or more broadly of society, is perhaps a greater embodiment of camaraderie than us all.