

Command Climate

Topic: Sexual harassment, online conduct

Situation: Squad Group Text

You are new to the unit, and your squad leader adds you to the group text. Over the weekend, several squad members start sharing funny memes that everyone seems to enjoy. You can tell this is a close-knit group and you show your spouse your phone, expressing your happiness about being assigned to this squad. Then, one squad member sends an offensive meme and another replies with a meme about “chubby chaser” - having sex with overweight or obese people – with the tag line “it’s like riding a moped – it’s cool and fun as long as your friends don’t see you.” The squad leader immediately “laughs” at the text. You are very uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation and send the squad leader a separate text expressing your concern, mentioning that the joke is inappropriate and you wouldn’t want your spouse to see it. The squad leader replies “fine – I can drop you from the group and just text you individually when I have information to pass on.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What did you notice was happening in this vignette?
2. What is your reaction to what is happening here?
3. If confronted with a similar situation, what would you do?
4. What Army values have been violated and how could you use the Army Values to address/intervene in this situation?
5. Where on the continuum of readiness does this fall?
6. What is the responsibility of those who know of inappropriate conduct?
7. What could have been done?
8. Why do you think nobody intervened?

Solution: This vignette demonstrates a toxic atmosphere where inappropriate jokes and comments are not just tolerated but encouraged. The squad leader sets the tone for the climate of the squad and all the Soldiers should have spoken up or gone to their chain of command for guidance.