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Professor Becky Rouse

Module 2: The Security Environment D14

22 July 2025

## Session 2.4 DBF

### Response

Primary Post (*by July 22, 2025*)

#### **Gold Thomas DBF 2.4**

There is no moral gray zone in silence. There is complicity. The ethical failure in Hiding in Plain Sight is leadership by omission, and a quiet green light to deception. As Commanding Officer, letting the XO and CMC sideline sailors based on appearance, despite compliance, sends a louder message than any inspection: integrity is situational.

Rules first. The UCMJ does not whisper here; it shouts. These sailors meet standards. Period. Moving them for optics or bias fractures that standard without cause. It invites subtle rot. Kelley and Pratt (2023) say the rules lens asks, “What is the right behavior based on laws, rules, norms, principles, or duties?” (p. 1). Hiding people is not right. It is a workaround in uniform.

Now results. If I stay silent, the Admiral walks away impressed. Maybe the CMC earns a nod. But underneath, trust erodes. Good sailors learn the wrong rules. Next time, it will not be about body composition but race, background, or favoritism. And when word spreads. The crew will

wonder what else their leaders will bury. As Pratt (2023) warns, we must weigh “second and third order effects” (00:02:39). Ignoring this sets precedent. It is fear of judgment, not courage.

Then people. The sailors named and quietly sidelined deserve better. They are not liabilities.

They are part of the crew. As the video reminds us, we must ask, “What is the most overall virtuous action to take?” (Pratt, 2023, 00:03:26). Virtue here means presence. Inclusion. Saying we do not hide our own.

The course of action is blunt. I reject the plan. I tell my XO and CMC, “No, we’re doing this by the book.” Not to punish. Not to posture. But to lead. Because the standard is not just a regulation. It is a promise.

## **References**

Kelley, K., & Pratt, M. (2023). A tool for thinking about ethical challenges. U.S. Naval War College.

Norton, R., & Pratt, M. (2023). Hiding in plain sight. U.S. Naval War College.

Pratt, M. (2023). 2RP Tool – Introduction and Application [Video]. U.S. Naval War College.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skNssQY9ifc>

## Secondary Post #1 (*by July 24, 2025*)

### SECONDARY POST RESPONSE

Daniel,

Your post threads the needle with precision, and I am with you, as silence here is not neutral, it is a signal. But let us widen the aperture. This is not just a rules violation; it is a tectonic test of whether character bends when rank enters the room. You said it best that this situation demands “unwavering consistency.” I would go further. This is about moral memory and the institution’s ability to remember what it demands of the junior when it is the senior in question.

From the Rules lens, yes, the regs are unambiguous. Jones should have self-reported. But the harder edge lies in the Results. If you do nothing, it does not just preserve one career, it potentially endorses a shadow standard. You rightly call this out. But consider what happens when the junior enlisted see who gets grace and who gets burned. We train them that justice scales with rank.

And People? That is the gut punch. Jones shaped your career. He is the guy. But as Pratt (2023) puts it, ethics is often “less about choosing between right and wrong than about choosing between right and right” (00:03:42). The temptation is mercy, deference, loyalty. The requirement is candor, duty, integrity.

You chose discretion and reporting. So would I. Quiet professionalism without scandal or spotlight, but the truth, routed through the right channel. Not because you want to. Because the profession needs you to.

### References

Pratt, M. (2023). Session 2.20 – Moral and Ethical Foundations [Video]. U.S. Naval War College. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_MFBEI-91Gg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MFBEI-91Gg)

Wright, E. C., & Pratt, M. (2023). The Sea Daddy. U.S. Naval War College.

## Secondary Post #2 (*by July 24, 2025*)

### **DBF 2.4 SECONDARY POST RESPONSE**

Emmanuel,

You framed the central tension well as rules versus loyalty, career versus conscience, but I think this scenario is not about “friendship” at all. It is about the illusion of immunity. The Admiral is not just a former mentor; he is now a mirror held up to the profession itself. And that reflection is not flattering.

You rightly cite integrity under the Rules lens, but I would argue the breach is not just failure to self-report. It is an abuse of silence. The Admiral knows this did not disappear. He is betting no one will speak. And if you, the CO, do not? Then that bet pays off. As Kelley and Pratt (2023) emphasize, the rules perspective forces us to ask, “What is the right behavior based on laws, rules, norms, principles, or duties?” (p. 1). There is no ambiguity here. The same standard applied to E-4s must apply to Flag officers, or the term “profession” becomes decorative.

You hint at personal cost under Results, but the bigger picture is institutional corrosion. Failing to act lets the next Sailor believe in two tiers of justice, where there is one for the powerful, and another for the rest. It is not empathy. It is erosion. Pratt (2023) reminds us that ethical challenges often pit “right and right” (00:03:42). But one of those rights wears the uniform of principle. The other wears comfort.

So yes, report. But not out of duty alone. Do it because silence from those who know better is the deadliest betrayal of trust.

## **References**

Kelley, K., & Pratt, M. (2023). A tool for thinking about ethical challenges. U.S. Naval War College.

Pratt, M. (2023). Session 2.20 – Moral and Ethical Foundations [Video]. U.S. Naval War College. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_MFBEl-91Gg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MFBEl-91Gg)

Wright, E. C., & Pratt, M. (2023). The Sea Daddy. U.S. Naval War College.

Secondary Post #3 (*by July 24, 2025*)

## **DBF 2.4 SECONDARY POST RESPONSE**

TODO

## **References**

TODO

## EXTRA CREDIT *(July 24, 2025)*

### **Assignment:**

(Extra credit for anyone who reads this whole message and sends to me an email at my address above with your own real or notional ethical/moral dilemma scenario. A sentence or two is plenty; due before the week is over.)

### **Answer:**

Queen of All Knowledge (Quak),

Wishing you strength and a smooth recovery from the shingles diagnosis. I hope things ease up soon and that the worst is behind you.

Here's my ethical dilemma scenario:

A legacy system, ugly as sin but proven in fire, could solve a major operational gap. But the commander wants the slick commercial toy with all the animations and none of the rigor. You've been asked to brief the commander and have been told privately by a superior to "read the room" and avoid advocating for the legacy system too strongly. Do you push the truth and risk the project, or stay quiet, smile politely, and watch capability give way to optics?

Respectfully submitted by,

Sir Jeff Thomas of the Ethical Quandaries

JPME Phase I: Module 2: The Security Environment D14