



## Scenario: No Undo Button

### Group Size: 4-15

***This scenario may contain explicit language and references to harmful situations which may be emotionally activating for some people. If you need support, services are available through the [CAF Member Assistance Program \(CFMAP\)](#) and the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).***

"Sir, you wanted to see me?" asks Major (Maj) Deforest to Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol) Desbiens, at their office door.

"Yes, please take a seat," says LCol Desbiens who gets right to the matter. "As you are aware, posting season is upon us. You have been clear about your interest in securing a Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO) position at the battalion, which is something I would support entirely." LCol Desbiens pauses, then continues, "However, I received a call this morning from a colleague of mine who expressed a concern that could affect your career aspirations."

"What concern?" the major asks, somewhat confused.

"Their concern has to do with a paper that you wrote for a course in military studies at the local university - the one in which you criticized Canada's involvement in an overseas military operation."

"Yes, I remember that paper," says Maj Deforest. "However, I wrote it deliberately from the perspective of critics who analyze and challenge government policy. My thinking was that my arguments would be more effective if I deliberately wrote from a perspective that I don't agree with, therefore, making it a stronger paper. I don't actually believe what I wrote!"

"Well, it's well known that you are exceptionally strong academically and surely you made your argument, but the problem is that my colleague read your paper on the internet. It's posted for all to see."

"On the internet? Really?" asks the major surprised.

"Yes, and it has your name on it which also identifies you as being a Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) member," says LCol Desbiens. "Frankly, I'm a little concerned as well since it does seem that you are criticizing official government policy. You can see the problem with that perception, can't you."

"Yes," agrees the major, "but I wrote it within a university setting which certainly encourages freedom of thought and speech. I had no way of knowing that it would end up on the internet and I'm just as surprised as you."

"I understand," says LCol Desbiens, "however, it's now on the internet, and unfortunately there's no undo button."

### Categories

Principles:	Serve Canada before Self, Obey and Support Lawful Authority
Values:	Integrity, Loyalty
Cultural Themes:	Service
Misconduct Types:	Not Specific
GBA Plus Themes:	Not Specific
Audience:	Canadian Armed Forces

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# Facilitator's Guide

## Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the ethical principles of Serve Canada before self and Obey and support lawful authority.
- Discuss the ethical value of integrity and loyalty in this scenario.

## Facilitation Questions:

1. What is the problem in this scenario?
  - Open group discussion.
  - The ethical dilemma in this scenario relates the potential conflict between an individual's freedom of speech and ability to exercise their academic freedom with their professional duty, loyalty, responsibilities, and expectations within the CAF.
2. What considerations are at play with respect to Defence Ethics and the military ethos?
  - Open group discussion.
  - Maj Deforest's paper raises the concern of whether their academic expression (to criticize official government policy) aligns with their duty to serve Canada before Self.
  - LCol Desbiens has an obligation to ensure the behavior and actions of their subordinates do not undermine the chain of command or the authority of the government.
  - Maj Deforest wrote the academic paper as an academic exercise and not a reflection of their true beliefs. However, the public availability of the paper raises questions. The value of integrity suggests that they should be transparent about the intent and context of the paper.
3. Should CAF members be held accountable when posting content online, such as in an academic forum? Does this change if it's a social media post?
  - Open group discussion.
  - Discuss the permanence of online content and whether individuals should be responsible for content they created years ago, in different times and settings, etc. This raises questions about the extent of personal responsibility for digital footprints.
  - How would the ethical considerations change if Maj Deforest joined the CAF after the paper was written? How can our lives pre-CAF or pre-Public Service affect current commitments and positions?
4. What possible courses of action are there for this scenario? Which is the best option? Why?
  - Option 1: Open discussion. Maj Deforest should be open to discussing the concerns and perceptions of their superiors and colleagues. They should explain that it was an academic exercise and not a reflection of their personal beliefs or disloyalty to the military.
  - Option 2: Request the paper be removed from the academic site. Maj Deforest may try to have the paper removed from the internet or add a clarification to the paper to ensure that readers understand its academic nature (vice their personal beliefs).
  - Option 3: Consult with superiors. Both the LCol and Maj should consult with superiors or legal advisors to seek guidance moving forward.