
Professional Certificate in Joint Force Command and Operations

Ethics and Law of Armed Conflict

Ethics and the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) are crucial components of military operations, ensuring that forces act in a legal and moral manner during times of conflict. In this Professional Certificate in Joint Force Command and Operations, understanding key terms and vocabulary related to ethics and LOAC is essential. This explanation will cover over 30 key terms and concepts, with practical applications and examples to enhance understanding.

1. **Ethics:** A set of moral principles that govern a person's or group's behavior. In a military context, ethics involve upholding values such as honor, courage, and loyalty while respecting the law and human dignity.
2. **Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC):** Also known as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), LOAC is a set of rules that seek to minimize suffering during times of war while maintaining distinctions between combatants and non-combatants.
3. **Jus ad Bellum:** The set of ethical and legal principles that govern the decision to go to war, including issues such as just cause, right authority, and last resort.
4. **Jus in Bello:** The ethical and legal principles that govern conduct during war, ensuring that forces act in a manner consistent with LOAC.
5. **Combatants:** Individuals who are directly participating in hostilities, including members of the armed forces and certain civilians who directly contribute to military action.
6. **Non-combatants:** Civilians who are not directly participating in hostilities. LOAC seeks to protect non-combatants from the effects of war.
7. **Distinction:** The principle that requires forces to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, attacking only the former and taking precautions to avoid harm to the latter.
8. **Proportionality:** The principle that requires forces to ensure that any military action taken is proportionate to the military advantage gained, taking into account the potential harm to non-combatants.
9. **Precautions in Attack:** The measures that forces must take to minimize harm to non-combatants, including verifying targets, avoiding unnecessary suffering, and providing warnings where feasible.
10. **Military Necessity:** The principle that allows forces to take necessary and reasonable military action, but only to the extent required to achieve a legitimate military objective.
11. **Perfidy:** The act of feigning civilian, non-combatant status or surrender to gain an advantage over enemy forces, which is prohibited under LOAC.
12. **Superior Responsibility:** The legal principle that holds commanders and leaders responsible for the actions of their subordinates, provided that they knew or should have known about those actions and failed to prevent or punish them.
13. **Weapons Review:** The process of evaluating the legality and ethical implications of new weapons and tactics before their use, to ensure compliance with LOAC.
14. **Targeted Killings:** The deliberate killing of specific individuals who are deemed to pose a threat to

security, often through the use of drones or other remote technologies.

15. Cyber Warfare: The use of digital technologies and networks to disrupt, destroy, or otherwise impair the military capabilities or infrastructure of an adversary.
16. Human Shields: The practice of using non-combatants or civilian infrastructure as a means of protecting military targets from attack, which is prohibited under LOAC.
17. Civilian Objects: Property or infrastructure that is not used for military purposes, which is protected under LOAC.
18. Military Objectives: Objectives that are directly related to military action, including enemy forces, military infrastructure, and weapons systems.
19. Necessity: The requirement that military action taken must be necessary to achieve a legitimate military objective.
20. Prohibited Weapons: Weapons that are banned under LOAC, including chemical and biological weapons, expanding bullets, and blinding lasers.
21. Torture: The intentional infliction of severe physical or mental pain or suffering, which is prohibited under LOAC and international human rights law.
22. Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment: Treatment that causes unnecessary suffering or humiliation, which is prohibited under LOAC and international human rights law.
23. Prisoners of War (POWs): Combatants who have been captured by enemy forces and are entitled to protection under LOAC, including humane treatment, medical care, and access to legal representation.
24. Detainees: Individuals who have been detained by military forces for security reasons, but who may not be entitled to POW status.
25. Internment: The confinement of enemy combatants or civilians during times of war, which is subject to LOAC requirements for humane treatment and regular review.
26. Reprisals: Measures taken by one party to a conflict in response to violations of LOAC by the other party, which are generally prohibited under LOAC.
27. Occupation: The control of a foreign territory by a military force, which is subject to LOAC requirements for humane treatment and protection of civilians.
28. Belligerent Occupation: The control of a foreign territory by a military force during times of war, which is subject to more stringent LOAC requirements than peacetime occupation.
29. Genocide: The intentional destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, which is prohibited under international law.
30. War Crimes: Violations of LOAC, including crimes such as deliberate attacks on civilians, torture, and the use of prohibited weapons.
31. Command Responsibility: The legal principle that holds commanders and leaders responsible for the actions of their subordinates, provided that they knew or should have known about those actions and failed to prevent or punish them.
32. Military Advantage: The military benefit gained by taking a particular action, which must be weighed against the potential harm to non-combatants under the principle of proportionality.
33. Military Objective: A target that is directly related to military action, including enemy forces, military

infrastructure, and weapons systems.

34. Necessity: The requirement that military action taken must be necessary to achieve a legitimate military objective.

35. Precautions in Attack: The measures that forces must take to minimize harm to non-combatants, including verifying targets, avoiding unnecessary suffering, and providing warnings where feasible.

36. Proportionality: The principle that requires forces to ensure that any military action taken is proportionate to the military advantage gained, taking into account the potential harm to non-combatants.

37. Superior Orders: Orders given by a superior officer that must be obeyed, but which do not relieve the subordinate of responsibility for any illegal actions taken.

38. Weapons Review: The process of evaluating the legality and ethical implications of new weapons and tactics before their use, to ensure compliance with LOAC.

In summary, understanding the key terms and vocabulary related to ethics and LOAC is essential for military professionals involved in joint force command and operations. By adhering to these principles, forces can ensure that they act in a legal and moral manner during times of conflict, protecting non-combatants and maintaining the integrity of the military institution. Through the study of these concepts, military professionals can better understand their responsibilities under LOAC and develop the skills necessary to make informed and ethical decisions in complex and dynamic operational environments.