I have wondered for a long time—especially of late—why we acquiesce to those with military service, rarely questioning their judgement. It could be argued that, because many of these individuals courageously risked their lives on our behalf in unpopular wars (wars a large majority of Americans did not support), we feel a sense of guilt—a guilt that perhaps subconsciously causes us not to question their beliefs and actions, and to assume they are heroes. This is a textbook example of the appeal to authority fallacy.

Sadly, automatically deferring can have serious consequences. Matthew Dowd, chief strategist for the Bush-Cheney 2004 presidential campaign and current ABC News political analyst, alludes to this. He offers an important recommendation about this acquiescence as it relates to General Kelly’s praising the character of former White House aide Rob Porter: “I am hoping this latest insight in Gen. Kelly (and previous insights into Gen. Flynn) will allow us to stop reflexively giving folks with military service a pass on questioning them and their integrity. Military service does not make a man or woman honorable on its own.”

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