



THE **2026**
MILITARY
COMMANDER
AND THE LAW



The Military Commander and the Law is a publication of The Judge Advocate General's School. This publication serves as a helpful reference guide for Air Force and Space Force commanders, directors, and senior enlisted leaders, providing general guidance to help clarify issues and identify potential problem areas.

Disclaimer: As with any publication of secondary authority, this deskbook should not be used as the basis for action on specific cases. Primary authority, much of which is cited in this edition, should first be carefully reviewed. Finally, this deskbook does not serve as a substitute for legal advice from any judge advocate.

Editorial Note: Some primary authorities cited in this edition may have been rescinded, consolidated, or superseded since publication. Similarly, although the substantive content has been updated IAW Executive Order 14347, many references have yet to be updated. Accordingly, references to the Department of Defense (DoD) or the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) should be construed as referring to the Department of War (DoW) and the Secretary of War (SecWar), respectively. It is imperative that all authorities cited herein be verified for currency at the Air Force e-Publishing website at <https://www.e-publishing.af.mil>.

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THE MILITARY COMMANDER AND THE LAW

Edition Twenty-Two

2026

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SOURCES OF COMMAND AUTHORITY

Article II, Section 2, of the United States Constitution provides the original source of command authority to the President as Commander-in-Chief. In Executive Order 12765, Delegation of Certain Defense Related Authorities of the President to the Secretary of Defense, the President delegated certain military authorities, including the authority to assign commanders, to the Secretary of War.

Chain of Command

- The President and SecWar exercise authority, direction, and control of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) through two distinct branches of the chain of command: (1) an operational chain of command, flowing from the President to SecWar to the combatant commanders (CCDRs), and (2) for purposes other than operational control, a chain of command flowing from the President, to SecWar, and then to the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF)
 - CCDRs exercise combatant command authority (COCOM) over missions and forces assigned to the combatant command (CCMD) and are directly responsible to the President and SecWar for the performance of assigned missions and the readiness of their commands. Unless otherwise directed by the President, the operational chain of command runs from the President to SecWar to the CCDR. Operational—or “warfighting”—authorities are specifically exercised by CCDRs. These authorities include operational control (OPCON), tactical control (TACON), and support.
 - Subject to the authority, direction, and control of SecWar, and subject to the authorities of the CCDRs, SecAF is responsible for the administration of DAF forces. Often referred to as “organize, train, and equip” (OT&E) authority, administrative control (ADCON) is generally regarded as a service-specific responsibility. SecAF exercises ADCON over USAF and USSF forces through their respective service chiefs and commanders. This branch of the chain of command is separate and distinct from CCMDs: it runs from the President to SecWar, from SecWar to SecAF, from SecAF to the major command (MAJCOM) and field command (FLDCOM) commanders, and then on to subordinate commanders.

The Concept of Command by Uniformed Military Personnel

- A commander is a commissioned officer who, by virtue of rank and assignment, exercises command authority over a military organization or prescribed territorial area. Commanders exercise control through subordinate commanders, principal assistants, and others to whom the commander has delegated authorities. With the exception of the USAF Academy, which is commanded by a superintendent, and school/academic units, which may be commanded by commandants, all DAF units are commanded by commanders.

- Staff officers are not commanders. Vice, deputy, on-scene, non-unit flight, and troop commanders, while acting solely in such capacity, are staff officers and have no command functions, unless otherwise specifically delegated by superior competent authority. Staff officers assist the commander through advising, planning, researching, and investigating. Subordinate officers must issue all directives in the commander's name.
- Commanders may delegate administrative duties or authorities to members of their staff and subordinate commanders. However, delegating duties does not relieve the commander of the responsibility to exercise command supervision.
- The authority to command is passed to an *individual*, not to a staff
- The key elements of command are authority, accountability, and responsibility. DAF commanders have four principal duties and responsibilities: execute the mission, lead people, manage resources, and improve the unit.
 - Commanders have three mission execution responsibilities: primary mission, force readiness, and mission assurance of command and control
 - Leading people centers on the following five principles: communication, discipline, training, development, and quality of life engagement
 - Management of resources focuses on manpower, funds, equipment, facilities and environment, guidance, and members' time
 - Improving the unit is a continuous process involving strategic alignment, process operations, commander's inspection program, and data-driven decisions
- Commanders must be mindful of the following constraints:
 - Duties specifically imposed on commanders by federal law, such as the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), shall not be delegated to staff officers
 - Duties that have been designated non-delegable by a higher authority shall not be delegated

Command Authority over Active Duty Forces

- The commander's authority over active duty military members extends to conduct both on and off the installation
- Articles 89, 90, and 92 of the UCMJ prohibit disrespect towards, and mandate a duty to obey, superior officers

Command Authority over Reservists

- Commanders generally have administrative authority to hold reservists administratively accountable for misconduct occurring on or off-duty, irrespective of their military status when the misconduct occurred
- Commanders have UCMJ authority over reservists only for offenses committed when in military status

Command Authority over Air National Guard Members

- Air National Guard (ANG) members ordered to active duty and placed on Title 10 status, as noted on the member's ANG Reserve Order Writing System (AROWS) orders, are assigned to the 201st Mission Support Squadron (201 MSS) for ADCON and attached to a Federal Operations/Training Mission for OPCODE and ADCON as specified, except for members assigned to the ANG Statutory Tour Program who may be ADCON to the Air National Guard Readiness Center (ANGRC) or another entity. The 201 MSS commander (201 MSS/CC) is dual-hatted as the ANGRC Deputy Commander (ANGRC/CD).
 - When ADCON is shared between the 201 MSS/CC and another Title 10 commander, coordination is required between the two commanders (or their designated representatives) on all disciplinary matters concerning ANG members
 - The 201 MSS/CC, or their designated representatives, will coordinate with the ANG member's Title 32 leadership to ensure they are aware and involved, as required, on all Title 10 disciplinary matters being handled by the 201 MSS
 - Operational commanders exercising ADCON of ANG Title 10 members are required to notify the 201 MSS as soon as practical once misconduct occurs or is discovered and to communicate any planned action regarding adverse administrative actions, nonjudicial punishment, court-martial, orders curtailment, and/or early re-deployment of the member
 - Title 32 commanders who become aware of alleged Title 10 misconduct of their members are required to notify the 201 MSS team
- Normally, when on Title 32 or state active duty status, ANG forces are under the commands of their respective governors

Command Authority over Civilians

- Commanders have certain authority over their civilian employees. Commanders and supervisors are delegated authority to take disciplinary and adverse actions against civilian employees when necessary. (See [Chapter 15, Civilian Personnel and Federal Labor Law](#), for further guidance.)

- The commander has less authority over nonemployee civilians on-base
 - The installation commander has authority to maintain good order and discipline and to protect federal resources
 - Where available, the Federal magistrate court program provides a means of enforcing discipline on-base for civilians who commit criminal misconduct. As a practical matter, authority over civilians who commit misconduct on-base may be limited to referral to the magistrate program for prosecution, detainment for civilian law enforcement officials, revocation of driving privileges, and barment from the installation. (For more information on the magistrate program, refer to [Chapter 5, Criminal and Military Justice](#). See [Chapter 6, Personnel Issues – Generally](#), for more information on driving privileges and barment.)
 - Except in limited circumstances, a commander has no authority over civilians off-base

References

- U.S. Const. Art. II, § 2
- Combatant Commands: Assigned Forces; Chain of Command, 10 U.S.C. § 162
- Commanders of Combatant Commands: Assignment; Powers and Duties, 10 U.S.C. § 164
- Command: Commissioned Officers in Same Grade or Corresponding Grades on Duty at Same Place, 10 U.S.C. § 749
- Secretary of the Air Force, 10 U.S.C. § 9013
- Articles 89–92, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- *Delegation of Certain Defense Related Authorities of the President to the Secretary of Defense*, Exec. Order No. 12765, 56 F.R. 28463 (18 June 1991)
- Joint Publication 1, Volume 2, *The Joint Force* (19 June 2020)
- DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Actions of Civilian Employees* (27 September 2022), incorporating Change 1, 31 August 2023
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 18 July 2025
- DAFI 38-101, *Manpower and Organization* (17 September 2025)
- DAFI 51-509, *Appointment to and Assumption of Command* (28 December 2023)
- AFPD 51-5, *Administrative Law, Gifts, and Command Relationships* (31 August 2018)
- AFI 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities* (15 September 2025)

COMMAND SUCCESSION

A commander is a commissioned officer who, by virtue of grade and assignment, exercises primary command authority over a Department of the Air Force (DAF) unit, and some non-units, as established by DAFI 38-101, *Manpower and Organization*.

Eligibility to Command

- (1) A commissioned officer; (2) assigned or attached to the unit; (3) present for duty; and (4) otherwise eligible is authorized to command. **Note:** an officer cannot command another officer of higher grade.
- An officer is vested with command in one of two ways: either by assuming command or by appointment to command. To ensure clear lines and scope of authorities, appointment to command is preferred. An officer may be appointed to command another officer of the same grade, but higher rank.
 - A temporary assumption or appointment is used when the commander being replaced is temporarily absent and expected to resume command. Short absences do not warrant assumption of command by another officer.
 - Assumption of command may only be by an officer assigned to the organization
- Officers cannot appoint themselves to command, and commanders cannot appoint their own successors, even for temporary absences
- There is no title or position of “acting commander”

Appointment to Command

- Appointment to command occurs by an act of the President, the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), or by his/her delegate(s). Unless otherwise restricted, all commanders subordinate to SecAF may appoint subordinate commanders.
- An officer assigned to an organization, present for duty, and eligible to command may be appointed to command if they are at least equal in grade to other eligible officers, without regard to date of rank. No officer may command another officer of higher grade present for duty and otherwise eligible to command.

Assumption of Command

- Legal authority to assume command is inherent in an officer's status as the senior officer in both grade and date of rank, so long as the officer is assigned to the unit, present for duty, and eligible to command. No officer may assume command over another officer of higher grade or rank who is present for duty and otherwise eligible to command.
- All command succession shall be announced and recorded using G-series orders. There is no need to publish G-series orders when the original commander resumes command after a temporary absence, so long as they are still equal or senior in grade to any other officer present for duty, assigned to the organization, and eligible to command.

Limitations on Eligibility to Command and Special Rules

- Enlisted members and civilians cannot exercise command. Retired officers cannot exercise command unless recalled to active duty.
 - Civilians may be appointed as directors to lead units and non-units. They may hold supervisory positions and provide work direction to military members and civilian personnel within their unit or defined sphere of supervision. Except as limited by law, a civilian leader of a unit is authorized to perform all functions normally requiring action by a unit commander of like position and authority.
 - Units designated to be led by civilian directors will not have commanders, and members of the unit or subordinate units may not assume command of the unit. Thus, a succession plan for leadership of the unit should be established in the event the civilian director is incapacitated.
 - In units with a civilian director, a competent command authority will establish procedures relating to functions that require a commander. These functions will be accomplished by attaching military members to a different unit led by a commander, or by elevating these functions to a superior command level.
 - Units subordinate to a civilian led unit may have a military commander
- Officers assigned to Headquarters Air Force (HAF) cannot assume command of personnel, unless superior competent authority specifically directs
- Chaplains cannot assume, or be appointed to, command
- Students cannot command a DAF school or similar organization
- Judge advocates may only be appointed or assume command if expressly authorized by The Judge Advocate General. **Note:** Judge advocates may assume command as the senior officer member among a group of prisoners of war or under emergency or field conditions.
- An officer designated as a medical, dental, veterinary, medical service, or biomedical sciences officer, or as a nurse, may only exercise command of units whose primary mission involves health care or the health profession
- Command of Flying Units: Only Line of the Air Force officers with a current aeronautical rating may command a flying unit. The rated officer must hold a currently effective aeronautical rating or crewmember certification and must be qualified for aviation service in an airframe flown by the unit to be commanded.
 - Certain types of organizations which have multiple missions that include responsibility for controlling or directing flying activities are considered non-flying units and may be commanded by non-rated officers

- O-9 and O-10 Commanders: Special rules exist for positions designated under 10 U.S.C. § 601. After the President nominates and the Senate confirms, the officer will be appointed to the command position. Actions associated with these appointments will be handled in accordance with DAFI 51-509, *Appointment to and Assumption of Command*, para. 8.
- Command of Active Duty Units by Reserve Officers: Only Air Reserve Component officers on extended Title 10 active duty orders (other than for training) can command regular DAF units. “Extended active duty” is defined as a period of 90 days or more during which the officer is on active duty orders.
 - The Commander, Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR)/Commander, Space Force Forces (COMSPACEFOR), or his/her delegate may authorize reserve component officers not on extended active duty orders to command Regular Air Force (RegAF) units operating under COMAFFOR/COMSPACEFOR’s authority. This authority may be delegated no lower than commanders of Aerospace Expeditionary Wings or USSF equivalent presented space forces.
- Command of Reserve Units: Regular and reserve component officers on extended active duty may only command reserve units with Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) approval

Relief of Command

- A superior competent authority may relieve an officer of command for any reason not prohibited by law or policy. An officer may be temporarily suspended, relieved of command “not for cause,” or relieved of command “for cause.”
 - Suspension: A temporary suspension of an officer from command can occur when a superior competent authority is concerned about the officer’s ability to command, but a final determination has not been made on whether relief of command is warranted and/or whether relief of command should be with or without cause. During their suspension, an officer is not eligible to command.
 - Not for Cause Relief: An assignment action where the officer’s relief of command may not be used as a basis for adverse action against the officer. An officer’s duty performance or potential can be addressed on the officer’s performance brief.
 - For Cause Relief: An action taken when a superior competent authority has lost confidence in the officer’s ability to command due to misconduct, poor judgment, the subordinate’s inability to complete assigned duties, the interest of good order and discipline, morale, the good of the organization, or other similar reasons. Relief for cause may be used as a basis to support adverse actions. (See DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions*, for additional requirements concerning notices of relief of command for cause.)

References

- Commanders of Combatant Commands: Assignment; Powers and Duties, 10 U.S.C. § 164
- Positions of Importance and Responsibility: Generals and Lieutenant Generals, Admirals and Vice Admirals, 10 U.S.C. § 601
- Command: Retired Officers, 10 U.S.C. § 750
- Designation: Officers to Perform Certain Professional Functions, 10 U.S.C. § 9063
- Command: Commissioned Officers in Certain Designated Categories, 10 U.S.C. § 9229
- Command: Chaplains, 10 U.S.C. § 9231
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 18 July 2025
- DAFI 38-101, *Manpower and Organization* (17 September 2025)
- DAFI 51-509, *Appointment to and Assumption of Command* (28 December 2023)
- DAFMAN 11-402, *Aviation and Parachutist Service* (26 January 2025)
- DAF Form 35, *Announcement of Appointment to/Assumption of Command* (12 June 2024)

FUNCTIONS OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE

The Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) is the principal legal advisor to a commander and the senior legal advisor at all levels of command. SJAs and their respective staff provide the Department of the Air Force (DAF), commanders, and personnel with professional, timely, and full-spectrum legal support for mission success in joint and coalition operations. Legal office staffs can include judge advocates, civilian attorneys, paralegals, and civilian support staff.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Judge Advocate (JA): Any United States Air Force officer designated as such by The Judge Advocate General (TJAG) who:
 - Is a graduate of a law school accredited by the American Bar Association at the time of graduation;
 - Is a licensed attorney, active and in good standing, in at least one state or U.S. territory/commonwealth; and
 - Successfully completes the Judge Advocate Staff Officer Course or an equivalent sister service course.
- SJA: On most DAF installations, the senior judge advocate designated and assigned by TJAG to the installation commander's staff
 - Serves as the principal legal advisor to the wing/delta commander
 - Supervises the members of the installation's legal office
 - The responsibilities of an Air National Guard (ANG) SJA may continue between drills. As such, ANG SJAs must be available to render legal advice to commanders.
- Deputy Staff Judge Advocate (DSJA): A judge advocate who is second to the SJA in his/her functions as the wing/delta legal advisor with supervisory responsibilities of the installation's legal office and is designated and assigned by TJAG as such
- Assistant Staff Judge Advocate (ASJA): Other judge advocates assigned to the SJA's office. ASJA's provide the legal services essential for the proper functioning of the installation. In this capacity, ASJA's may perform duties such as chief of operations law, chief of military justice, chief of civil law, etc.
- Area Defense Counsel (ADC): A judge advocate performing defense counsel duties at an installation. The ADC is not affiliated with the installation's legal office and is not rated by the installation's SJA or installation commander. The ADC has an independent chain of command through AF/JA – Military Justice and Discipline, Trial Defense Division (JJD).

- Victims' Counsel (VC): A judge advocate providing legal assistance to and representing victims of qualifying sex-related offenses, domestic violence offenses, and interpersonal violence offenses in administrative proceedings, interviews, nonjudicial punishment, and/or courts-martial. The VC is not affiliated with the installation's legal office or the ADC office and is not rated by the installation's SJA or installation commander. The VC has an independent chain of command through AF/JA – Military Justice and Discipline, Victims' Counsel Division (JAJVS).

Legal Domains and Functional Organization of the Base Legal Office

- In alignment with the National Security Strategy (NSS), the National Defense Strategy (NDS), and senior leadership priorities, the Air Force Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG Corps) centers its efforts around three national security law domains: Military Justice and Discipline, Civil Law, and Operations and International Law. At the DAF-level, the JAG Corps is structured into three directorates aligned against these domains. Leadership is at the core of all three.
 - The JAG Corps' alignment ties each legal office into the strategic framework of national security law. These legal domains reflect how legal offices are organized with the major legal functions of the JAG Corps—advising commanders, advocating and litigating, representing individual DAF service members, and informing, engaging, and partnering with stakeholders.
 - The legal office provides a wide range of legal services to the wing/delta commander and the installation. The following is a general overview of the JAG Corps' legal domains and the divisions within a typical legal office.
 - Military Justice and Discipline: To provide sound advice to commanders, administer fair and timely processes, ensure force readiness, efficiency and effectiveness, and strengthen national security. Specifically, this division advises commanders on discipline, adverse administrative actions, and military justice matters, including courts-martial, nonjudicial punishment under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), and quality force management tools such as Control Rosters, Unfavorable Information Files (UIFs), administrative demotions, Letters of Reprimand (LORs), Letters of Admonishment (LOAs), Letters of Counseling (LOCs), and Records of Individual Counseling (RICs).
 - Operations and International Law: To engage legal capabilities to expand the command decision space and enable the projection and employment of ready forces to defend the Nation and our allies. Specifically, this division advises commanders on operational and international law issues such as foreign criminal jurisdiction, Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs), Rules of Engagement (ROEs) and targeting, environmental law, and trains operators and deploying personnel on law of war principles.

- Civil Law: To deliver advice, advocacy, and engagement across all civil law practice areas to assert and defend DAF interests in the acquisition, operation, and protection of its people and assets. Specifically, this division advises commanders on civil law issues, including ethics, contract law, and labor and employment law. Other general civil law responsibilities include issues such as private organizations, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act releases, personnel issues, fiscal law, Commander Directed Investigations (CDIs), Line of Duty determinations (LODs), and legal assistance.
- *Legal Assistance and Preventive Law*: Legal assistance attorneys provide advice to service members and other eligible individuals on a range of legal issues including adoption, consumer law, divorce and child custody, income taxes, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), various powers of attorney, and wills and estates matters. This division also provides free notary services.
- Leadership: To develop leaders who provide the knowledge and talent management, training, planning, resourcing, and inspection capabilities necessary to maintain readiness. Most base legal offices have three leadership positions. The SJA is the head of the office and usually holds the rank of major, lieutenant colonel, or colonel. The DSJA is typically one rank below the SJA. The Law Office Superintendent (LOS) is the senior enlisted paralegal assigned to a legal office. The LOS is typically an E-7 or above.

References

- The Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552
- Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a
- Judge Advocate General, Deputy Judge Advocate General: appointment; duties, 10 U.S.C. § 9037
- Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3901–4043
- DAFI 51-101, *The Air Force Judge Advocate General's (AFJAG) Corps Operations, Accessions, and Professional Development* (20 June 2023), incorporating Change 1, 22 January 2025

PERSONAL LIABILITY OF COMMANDERS AND SUPERVISORS

Military personnel are generally immune from liability for decisions made and actions taken within the scope of their employment. However, they may be held personally liable, either civilly, criminally, or both, for actions deemed outside the scope of their employment (e.g., sexual harassment), or those that violate statutory or constitutional law.

Key Takeaways

- » While uncommon, some statutes and regulations permit suing a commander or supervisor in their personal capacity. If served, immediately contact your Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).
- » Professional Liability Insurance is an option for commanders and supervisors to obtain for protection against being sued in one's personal capacity
- » If a commander/supervisor is sued in his/her personal capacity, there is a potential to obtain Department of Justice (DoJ) representation if the action was taken in the scope of his/her employment. The SJA can advise on whether the action was in the scope of employment.

Representation of Federal Employees in Civil Lawsuits

- Should you or one of your personnel be served with any summons or complaint, immediately contact your servicing SJA
 - Representation by a DoJ attorney may be available if the employee was acting “within the scope of employment” and if providing representation would otherwise be in the interest of the United States
 - Time is of the essence when requesting representation by a DoJ attorney and is equally important when responding to complaints or other court filings
- Professional Liability Insurance, at one's own expense, may be available to protect military commanders and supervisors against civil (not criminal) liability. Qualified Federal employees are authorized partial reimbursement of Professional Liability Insurance under Pub. L. 104–208 § 636.

Representation of Air National Guard Members in Civil Lawsuits

- Similar to Active Component personnel, Air National Guard (ANG) personnel on-duty are usually covered by the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) and exempt from personal liability for actions taken within the scope of their employment. However, they are not covered by FTCA while on state active duty orders in support of a state function.
 - ANG members served with any summons or complaint for actions taken within their scope of employment must immediately consult with their SJA and forward the summons or complaint, through the appropriate channels, to the adjutant general, along with a request for representation and/or indemnification

References

- Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1346(b)
- Representation of Federal Officials and Employees by Department of Justice Attorneys or by Private Counsel Furnished by the Department in Civil, Criminal, and Congressional Proceedings in which Federal Employees are Sued, Subpoenaed, or Charged in Their Individual Capacities, 28 C.F.R. Part 50.15
- Representation of Federal Employees by Private Counsel at Federal Expense, 28 C.F.R. Part 50.16
- Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 104–208 § 636 (1997), 5 U.S.C. prec. 5941 note
- DODI 1400.25V885_DAFI 36-140, *Civilian Professional Liability Insurance* (26 June 2022)

ARTICLE 138 COMPLAINTS

Article 138, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), gives members of the Armed Forces who believe they have been wronged by their commanding officer the right to complain and seek redress. This right extends to military personnel in the Regular Air Force (RegAF), United States Space Force (USSF), Air National Guard (ANG) in Title 10 active duty status, and Air Force Reserve (AFR) while in federal service, whether on active duty orders, annual training, or Inactive Duty for Training (IDT).

Key Takeaways

- » Article 138, UCMJ, provides an avenue of relief for members who believe they have been wronged by their commanding officer—though many actions are ineligible for review under Article 138, UCMJ
- » Complaints may be denied or dismissed for procedural deficiencies such as complaints that are untimely, outside of the scope of Article 138, UCMJ, or when the reviewing authority determines the complaint does not warrant relief on the merits
- » Members are afforded an opportunity for relief in the form of an informal complaint filed with the commander who allegedly committed the wrong, and a formal complaint filed with the General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA)

Scope of Complaints

- Matters within the scope of Article 138, UCMJ, include discretionary acts or omissions by a commander that adversely affect the member personally and are allegedly:
 - A violation of law or regulation;
 - Beyond the legitimate authority of that commander;
 - Arbitrary, capricious, or an abuse of discretion; or
 - Clearly unfair or unjust (e.g., selective application of administrative standards/actions).
- Matters beyond the scope of Article 138, UCMJ, include but are not limited to:
 - Acts or omissions not initiated, carried out, nor approved by the member's commander;
 - Submissions seeking reversal or modification of non-discretionary command actions (e.g., mandatory Unfavorable Information File actions and mandatory filing in an officer selection record);
 - Challenge to a respondent commander's action on an Article 138, UCMJ, complaint;
 - Submissions filed on behalf of another person (however, if the member is represented by an attorney, the attorney may file on behalf of the member);

- Complaints requesting disciplinary action against another person; or
- Matters in which the member may seek redress through other forums which provide the petitioner notice, the opportunity to be heard, and review by an appellate or superior authority (or reviewing authority). For example: nonjudicial punishment, performance evaluations, decorations, and Flying Evaluation Boards.

Procedures for Informal Complaints

- Informal Complaint: To begin the Article 138, UCMJ, process, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) member (“petitioner”) must submit an informal complaint to the commander who allegedly wronged him/her (“respondent commander”)
- Filing Deadline (Informal Complaint): The petitioner must file the informal complaint to the respondent commander within 90 calendar days of discovering the alleged wrong. The commander may waive the time requirement for good cause.
- Form of the Informal Complaint: Informal complaints must be submitted in writing and the petitioner must state that the informal complaint is being submitted pursuant to Article 138, UCMJ. All submissions must contain the following information:
 - The petitioner’s current military unit and the petitioner’s military unit at the time of the alleged wrong, if different;
 - The petitioner’s current personal mailing address;
 - The name and grade of the respondent commander;
 - The name and contact information for any counsel representing the petitioner;
 - A description of the facts and circumstances of the alleged wrong;
 - A statement of the relief sought to correct the alleged wrong;
 - All supporting evidence; and
 - The specific law or regulation the respondent commander violated, if applicable.
- Proof Requirements: The petitioner has the responsibility to establish a valid basis for the complaint. The complaint should allege facts that, if true, would constitute a wrong within the scope of Article 138, UCMJ, and provide sufficient evidence to properly review the petitioner’s allegation against the respondent commander. It is the commander’s duty to resolve whether relief is warranted, not the petitioner’s.
- Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) Consultation: The respondent commander must consult his/her servicing SJA before acting on the petitioner’s informal complaint

Processing Informal Complaints

- Commander Initial Decision Deadline: No later than 30 days after receipt of the informal complaint or application for redress, the commander must notify the petitioner in writing that:
 - A decision regarding the requested relief has been deferred to gather additional facts (such a notice shall be sent every 30 days until the fact gathering is complete);
 - The requested relief is granted;
 - The requested relief is denied, in whole or in part, because the requested relief is not warranted; or
 - The informal complaint is dismissed because the submission is outside the scope of Article 138, UCMJ, untimely, deficient, or fails to establish a valid basis for a complaint.

Processing Formal Complaints

- If the respondent commander dismisses or denies (in whole or in part) the informal Article 138, UCMJ, complaint, the petitioner may, within 30 days of receiving the respondent commander's written response, request GCMCA review
- If the petitioner does not receive a response from the respondent commander within 30 days of submitting an informal complaint, he/she may request GCMCA review within 90 days from the date the petitioner submitted the informal complaint
- If the respondent commander defers the decision regarding the requested relief, the petitioner may only request GCMCA review after 90 days from original submission of the informal complaint
- The formal complaint must be in writing and must specifically state that it is a formal complaint under Article 138, UCMJ. The petitioner may submit the complaint directly to the GCMCA or through any superior commissioned officer.
- If the formal complaint is submitted to the immediate commander or a superior commissioned officer, that person has a duty to forward it to the GCMCA

General Court-Martial Convening Authority's Responsibilities

- A GCMCA may rely on staff for assistance with investigating and/or documenting findings. However, the GCMCA cannot delegate the authority to act on formal Article 138, UCMJ, complaints or to respond to petitioners.
- If a petitioner submits a formal Article 138, UCMJ, complaint to the GCMCA without first submitting an informal complaint to the respondent commander, the GCMCA should forward the complaint to the subordinate commander who allegedly committed the wrong. Any new allegations added by a petitioner when seeking GCMCA review will be forwarded to subordinate commanders for initial review and appropriate action.

- The GCMCA must obtain a written legal review from the servicing SJA before responding to a petitioner's formal complaint. The SJA legal review is privileged attorney work product and not releasable to the petitioner or other individuals and should be marked accordingly.
- No later than 60 days after receipt of the formal complaint, the GCMCA must notify the petitioner that:
 - A decision regarding the requested relief has been deferred for the completion of a proceeding or additional inquiry (such a notice shall be sent every 30 days until the fact gathering is complete);
 - The requested relief is granted;
 - The requested relief is denied, in whole or in part, because the requested relief is not warranted;
 - The requested relief is warranted, but the authority to grant the relief requested resides with another GCMCA, major command, field command, or the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF); or
 - The complaint is dismissed because the submission is outside the scope; or it is untimely, deficient, or fails to establish a valid basis for a complaint.
- If the GCMCA believes the requested relief is warranted and the authority to grant the requested relief resides with another GCMCA, major command, field command, or SecAF, the GCMCA should forward the complaint and the recommendation to grant the requested relief to the appropriate authority for final action
- After taking final action and notifying the petitioner, the GCMCA will send a complete copy of the file to AF/JA – Military Justice and Discipline's Investigations, Inquiries, and Relief Division (JAJI), and will include the petitioner's personal mailing address

References

- Articles 15 and 138, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DAFI 51-505, *Complaints of Wrongs Under Article 138, Uniform Code of Military Justice* (28 August 2024)
- AFD 51-5, *Administrative Law, Gifts, and Command Relationships* (31 August 2018)

COMMAND INFLUENCE

Military commanders are responsible for maintaining good order and discipline in the armed forces. While performing this role, they must remain fair and just in their dealings while also safeguarding the constitutional due process rights of the accused. All personnel involved in the military justice process should be sensitive to Unlawful Command Influence (UCI) and circumstances (statements and actions) that might create it.

While commanders are permitted to mentor their subordinates and address behavior that is incompatible with military service and Department of the Air Force (DAF) policy, they cannot direct a subordinate to dispose of any particular case in any particular manner. The key is to understand what statements and actions constitute proper involvement by a commander versus what statements and actions cross the line into UCI.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders may establish and communicate those policies that are necessary to maintain good order and discipline. They are also free to pass on their experience and advice regarding disciplinary matters to subordinates.
- » Commanders may not censure, reprimand, or admonish the court or any court member, military judge, or counsel, with respect to the finding or sentence adjudged by the court, or with respect to any other exercise of its functions in the conduct of a proceeding
- » No person subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) may attempt to coerce or, by any unauthorized means, attempt to influence the action of any convening, approving, reviewing authority or preliminary hearing officer, or a court-martial or court members in reaching the findings or sentence in any case
- » Commanders must not make comments that would imply that they expect a particular result in a given case or type of case, and commanders also cannot attempt to manipulate the court-martial process to ensure or encourage specific results
- » Each commander in the chain must remain free to exercise their discretion and impose discipline without inappropriate interference from a superior commander

Permissible Command Involvement in Military Justice

- Superior commanders are permitted to establish and communicate policies necessary to maintain good order and discipline. They are also free to pass on their experience and advice regarding disciplinary matters without impacting the discretion of their subordinates in the matter. They can withhold authority to dispose of any offense, offenses, or all actions regarding any individual or group of individuals to their level. Examples of lawful command involvement are:
 - Withholding a subordinate commander's authority to act in an individual case or certain types of cases (offenses) and imposing punishment oneself;

- Obtaining information from a subordinate commander about ongoing cases, investigations, or incidents;
- Generally discussing with subordinate commanders, officers, or supervisors matters to consider when disposing of alleged violations;
- Consulting with subordinates regarding the disposition of an alleged offense at the subordinate's request (however, the subordinate alone must decide what disposition decision or action, if any, to take in each case);
- Disseminating "tough talk" policy letters or giving talks/briefings on issues of concern (e.g., criminal activity or a particular criminal offense), provided they do not show an overly determined attitude or attempt to influence the finding and sentence in a particular case; and/or
- Focusing on problem areas (e.g., characterizing illegal drug use as a threat to combat readiness); however, statements made should not advocate a particular disposition, a particular court-martial finding or sentence, and should not relate to a particular accused.

Unlawful Command Influence (UCI)

- Generally:

- *Convening Authorities and Commanders*: No court-martial convening authority, nor any other commanding officer, may censure, reprimand, or admonish the court or any member, military judge, or counsel, with respect to the findings or sentence adjudged by the court, or with respect to any other exercise of its or their functions in the conduct of a proceeding
- *All Persons Subject to the UCMJ*: No person subject to the UCMJ may attempt to coerce or, by any unauthorized means, attempt to influence the action of any convening, approving, reviewing authority or preliminary hearing officer, or a court-martial or court members in reaching the findings or sentence in any case
- **Actual UCI**: A member subject to the UCMJ (typically someone acting with the "mantle of command authority"), either intentionally or unintentionally, manipulates the court-martial process to affect the disposition of a case or drive a certain result and materially prejudices the substantial rights of the accused
- **Apparent UCI**: A member subject to the UCMJ (typically someone acting with the "mantle of command authority"), either intentionally or unintentionally, engages in conduct that would cause an objective observer, fully informed of all the facts and circumstances, to have significant doubt about the fairness of the proceeding and such action materially prejudices the substantial rights of the accused. The focus of apparent UCI is on the public perception of the military justice process.

- Superior commanders must not make comments that would imply that they expect a particular result in a given case or type of case, and commanders also cannot attempt to manipulate the court-martial process to drive certain results. The following actions are unacceptable:
 - Directing a subordinate commander to make a particular disposition decision or limiting the discretion of the subordinate convening authority;
 - Deterring or attempting to deter a potential witness from participating in the investigatory process or testifying at a court-martial;
 - Influencing or attempting to influence the action of a court-martial or court members to reach a particular finding or sentence;
 - Directly or indirectly criticizing, disciplining, or expressing disapproval of any person participating in the court-martial process (e.g., military judge, trial and defense counsel, witnesses, court members, etc.);
 - Selecting members with the intent to achieve a particular result as to the findings or sentence (stacking the panel);
 - Commenting on the character of the accused or victim outside of testimony at a court-martial;
 - Establishing an inflexible policy on disposition or punishment of offenses;
 - Publicly commenting or opining on the accused's guilt prior to trial; and/or
 - Publicly criticizing court-martial punishments or judicial actions.
- Each commander in the chain must remain free to exercise his/her own discretion to impose discipline without inappropriate interference from a superior commander
 - The key consideration is whether a commander is taking disciplinary action based upon that commander's own personal belief that the disciplinary action is appropriate or whether the commander is merely acquiescing to direction from a superior to impose the action

References

- Article 37, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 104 and 306 (2024)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

SERVING AS A COURT MEMBER

At some point in your military career, you or your subordinates may be detailed to sit as members of a court-martial. Court members serve essentially the same function in a military court-martial as jurors do in civilian courts. For Department of the Air Force (DAF) service members serving as court-martial members, that service becomes their primary duty until the court-martial concludes.

Key Takeaways

- » Court members are selected by the convening authority, chosen to sit on a court-martial by a randomization process, and may only be excused from duty by the convening authority, Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), or military judge
- » All court members have an equal voice during jury deliberations regardless of rank
- » Court members listen to the evidence, arguments from counsel, and instructions from the military judge to make a decision as to whether an accused is guilty or not guilty and potentially on a sentence for the accused

Selection

- When convening courts-martial, the convening authority personally selects the potential court-martial panel members. The convening authority selects the “best qualified” for this duty, using factors such as age, education, training, experience, length of service, and judicial temperament. Article 25, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Race and gender may not be considered when selecting panel members.
- Prior to sitting as a member of a court-martial, court members may be asked to complete a court member data sheet with personal and professional information. This data sheet provides the convening authority and the attorneys for both sides information about a court member’s background and assists them in determining whether there is reason to object to a member’s participation in the court-martial.
- Once detailed to sit on a court-martial, a member must not discuss or be a party to conversations about upcoming cases to maintain impartiality

Excusal

- Excusal Requests Prior to Trial: Requests to be excused from court member duty should be based on good cause and made in advance of the dates of the court-martial. Members should not plan leave or temporary duty assignments during dates they are notified they will be required for court member duty. Court-martial duty takes precedence over all other duties unless and until properly excused.
 - Requests should be written and forwarded by the member’s commander to the SJA and then on to the convening authority. The SJA is normally delegated authority to excuse a certain portion of court members before the court is assembled.

Voir Dire

- The military judge, trial counsel, and defense counsel are all entitled to question court members to ensure impartiality. This questioning is referred to as “voir dire” and occurs prior to the court members hearing any evidence in the case.
- After voir dire, trial and defense counsel can ask the military judge to excuse any court member whose inclusion would cause the trial to be unfair or appear to be unfair. If the military judge grants a challenge to a court-martial member, that member is released from the court-martial and may return to his/her normal duties.

Duties at Trial – Findings

- The “findings” phase of the court-martial is the traditional “trial” portion of a case when members hear opening statements, witness testimony, and closing arguments
- Court members are given an opportunity to question witnesses after the counsel have completed their questioning. Court member questions are limited by the rules of evidence, and the prosecution or the defense may object to questions from court members. The military judge will rule on any objections and ultimately decide whether the question is permitted under the rules of evidence.
- At the end of the findings phase, the military judge will provide the court members with instructions on the law
- After instructions on the law and closing argument by trial and defense counsel, the court members will deliberate in a closed session. To find the accused “guilty,” the court members must be convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that the evidence presented during the trial shows the accused committed the offense. The decision of the court members is called the “finding.”
- The senior ranking court member is called the “president.” It is the president’s duty to check the vote count and announce the results to the other members. The junior ranking court member collects and counts the votes during deliberations. The president announces the finding of the court in open court in the presence of the accused and counsel.
- Each member has an equal voice and vote in discussing and deciding a case. The influence of superiority in rank must not be employed in any manner, but especially may not be employed in an attempt to control the independence of other members in the exercise of their own personal judgment. Service as a court member is not a rating factor to be considered on any member’s performance evaluation.
- Each member has a right to be free from harassment or ridicule based upon that member’s participation as a court member. Court member deliberations are conducted in private, and each member takes an oath not to disclose any member’s opinion or vote. Furthermore, no member may be compelled to answer questions about the deliberations unless lawfully ordered to do so by a military judge.

Duties at Trial – Sentencing

- If the accused is found guilty solely of offenses committed on or after 28 December 2023, the court members are excused, and the accused will be sentenced by the military judge alone
- If the accused is found guilty by a panel of members of any offense committed before 28 December 2023, the accused has the option of being sentenced by the court members or by the military judge. If the accused elects sentencing by court members, the court members will hear evidence and listen to arguments from counsel recommending a sentence and receive instructions from the military judge on sentencing procedures. The court members will then deliberate and decide on an appropriate sentence. If the accused elects sentencing by the military judge, the court members are excused.
- If the accused pleads guilty to one or more offenses committed before 28 December 2023 but decides to be sentenced by court members rather than by the judge alone, the same sentencing procedures apply as when the accused is found guilty by members

References

- Articles 25, 39, 41, and 51-53, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 501–505, 804, 806–807, 813, 901, 911–1011 (2024)

TESTIFYING AS A COURT-MARTIAL WITNESS

You or one of your subordinates may be called to testify as a witness at a court-martial or other administrative hearing. Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), both the prosecution and defense are entitled to equal access to all witnesses and evidence. No Department of the Air Force (DAF) member should attempt to influence the testimony of a witness or deter a potential witness from testifying for or against the prosecution or the accused.

Key Takeaways

- » Witnesses may be called at either the findings or sentencing phase of a trial
- » Witnesses generally must testify from personal knowledge (i.e., things they have observed or perceived)
- » No one may attempt to influence the testimony of a court-martial witness

Overview

- Both the trial counsel and defense counsel may call witnesses during the findings portion of a court-martial to provide evidence of the offense or for a defense to the charge
 - Witnesses are placed under oath. The witness's role is to provide truthful testimony based on personal knowledge—normally from his/her own observations. Witnesses must not hide relevant information from either side.
 - Witnesses should not advocate for or try to “help” either side. A witness's duty is to honestly answer the question that is asked and allow the military judge and counsel to address any objectionable questions.
- Counsel for both sides may also call witnesses during the sentencing portion of the trial. A sentencing witness may be called to testify about the character of the accused, the impact of the offenses on a victim and/or unit, or offer an opinion about the accused's potential for rehabilitation.
 - A witness may not testify about his/her opinion as to the appropriate specific sentence, including whether the accused should be punitively discharged
 - When testifying about the accused's potential for rehabilitation, a witness must have sufficient knowledge of the accused in order to form an opinion. To test that opinion, opposing counsel may ask the witness questions regarding the witness's personal knowledge of the accused.

- Before trial, the attorney(s) calling the witness may discuss, with that witness, the types of questions they expect to ask in court. They may also discuss the questions the opposing counsel will likely ask during cross-examination.
 - The opposing attorney(s) will normally interview all witnesses before trial. If the witness is also a victim of a charged offense, the victim may decline an interview with trial and/or defense counsel.
- No one should attempt to influence the testimony of a court-martial witness, to include discouraging a witness from testifying altogether or from cooperating with counsel for either side. Immediately report any attempts to influence a witness's testimony to the legal office or to the military judge.

References

- Article 46, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 701, 703, and 1001 (2024)

Chapter 2

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ADVERSE ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS – COUNSELING, ADMONISHMENT, AND REPRIMAND

Counselings, admonishments, and reprimands are quality force management tools available to supervisors, superiors, and commanders. These tools are designed to improve, correct, and instruct military members who depart from expected standards of performance, conduct, military bearing, and integrity, on- or off-duty, and whose actions degrade the individual or the unit's mission.

Key Takeaway

- » Quality force management tools help maintain standards and enhance mission accomplishment by correcting performance, conduct, and affording members an opportunity to respond

What Action is Appropriate

- The Basics: DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions*, contains guidance on Verbal Counseling, Records of Individual Counseling (RIC), Letters of Counseling (LOC), Admonishment (LOA), and Reprimand (LOR)
 - A RIC is the least severe form of written counseling. An LOC is an administrative censure for violation of standards. An LOA is more severe than an LOC. An LOR is more severe than an LOA and carries a stronger degree of official censure.
- Primary Considerations: The decision should be based primarily on two factors:
 - *Nature of the Incident*: The seriousness of the member's departure from standards should be considered before deciding the type of administrative action that is appropriate. A letter may be administered for any departure from standards. Unlike nonjudicial punishment, administrative actions are not limited to offenses punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).
 - *Previous Disciplinary Record of the Member*: These tools should be considered as part of a gradual pattern of discipline in response to repeated departures from standards

Who Takes Action

- Who May Issue: Commanders, first sergeants, supervisors, and other persons in authority
- Form of the Action: May be verbal, written, or both. However, actions should usually be in writing to document the deviation and reinforce the importance of correcting the behavior. A verbal counseling may be recorded on a DAF Form 174, *Record of Individual Counseling*.

Initiating Action

- Standard of Proof: The standard of proof for adverse administrative actions is the "preponderance of the evidence." A preponderance of the evidence exists when it is more likely than not that the performance, conduct, or behavior occurred as alleged.

- Administering Adverse Action: An LOC, LOA, or LOR must state the following: what the member did or failed to do (cite the UCMJ article violated, if applicable), what improvement is expected, further deviation may result in more severe action, how long the member has to acknowledge the action and submit a response, as well as indicate that the member's response will become part of the record. After consulting with your Staff Judge Advocate and in appropriate circumstances, consider adding context to explain the choice of forum (e.g. why an administrative action instead of nonjudicial punishment or a court-martial). The context may be especially helpful if the action could be placed in an Unfavorable Information File or Officer Selection Record, or otherwise so that future reviewers can understand the level of severity regarding the member's conduct. For example: A commander may comment that an intoxicated driving incident is addressed in an LOR, instead of a more severe forum, because civilian authorities kept the criminal jurisdiction to prosecute the case.
- Attachments: Include and list as attachments all documents that serve, in part or in whole, as the basis for the action. Supporting documents include, but are not limited to, relevant statements, portions of investigations, and reports.
 - Documents may not be released to the member without authorization from the issuing authority and all Privacy Act material and Personally Identifiable Information must be redacted and the document marked "Controlled Unclassified Information"
- Time to Respond: Provide a member in an active duty status (USSE, Regular Air Force, Active Guard and Reserve (AGR), Air Reserve Component (ARC) statutory tour members, and Air National Guard members in Title 10 active duty status) with three full duty days. During this time, the member may wish to consult with an Area Defense Counsel (ADC). The member may respond prior to the expiration of the time to respond. However, the issuer of the letter should not pressure the member into responding prior to expiration of the allowed time.
- A [template](#) LOC, LOA, and LOR is attached to this section

Processing the Action

- Final Disposition: Regardless of whether the member submits a response, the issuer of the letter must inform the member within three duty days of their decision regarding final disposition
 - If using a memorandum similar to the attachment, the issuer of the letter should fill in the date of the indorsement, strike through the inapplicable language in parentheses, and sign the indorsement
 - After reviewing the response, the issuer may withdraw the action, downgrade the action, or leave the action as written. Withdrawing the action does not bar the issuer from taking alternate or other appropriate action.

- Ensure the recipient acknowledges the final disposition of the action. Once the recipient acknowledges receipt of the final disposition, the complete action becomes a finalized record. Annotate on the administrative action if the member fails to acknowledge receipt or provide a response.

Maintaining the Record

- Contents of Record: The record of the action consists of the finalized RIC, LOC, LOA, or LOR and written response submitted by the member and/or the member's defense counsel. Additional materials submitted by the member in mitigation, extenuation, or defense are not part of the record. Evidence and any other written materials considered as a basis for imposing the administrative letter are not part of the record.
- Limitation on Rescinding LOC, LOA, and LOR Actions: Records contained in Department of the Air Force (DAF) records systems, not in a unit Personnel Information File or Unfavorable Information file (e.g., Master Personnel Records Group, Senior Officer Unfavorable Information File, Officer Selection Record) may not be rescinded by a commander. However, members who believe they have suffered an error or injustice may apply to the AF Board for Correction of Military Records.
- Inform Leadership: Issuer must inform the member's chain of command of the action. Send the letter with all indorsements, and any documents submitted by the member to the member's superiors or commander for information, action, or approval for entry in the member's Personnel Information File (PIF), Unfavorable Information File (UIF), or both.
- Privacy Act Requirements: LOCs, LOAs, and LORs are subject to the rules of access, protection, and disclosure outlined in AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program*. Therefore, they must contain a paragraph outlining the applicability of the Privacy Act to the document.

Adverse Administrative Actions for Reserve and Air National Guard Members

- Commanders, supervisors, and other persons in authority can issue LOCs, LOAs, and LORs to members of the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard (ANG) who commit an offense while in civilian (non-Title 10) status. Additionally, DAFI 36-2907 applies to ANG personnel on Title 32 status except when otherwise directed by any applicable state law(s).
- When issuing an LOC, LOA, or LOR to a Reserve or ANG member, or a USSF member not in full-time status, follow the procedures discussed above. However, the following exceptions apply:
 - If the member not in an active duty status has departed the duty area, the issuing authority may send the LOC, LOA, or LOR and supporting documents via certified mail to the member's address or best available address, and the member will be presumed to be in receipt of this official correspondence

- Members who are not in an active duty status and who depart the duty area prior to the three duty days allowed to acknowledge the intended action, have 45 calendar days from the date of receipt to acknowledge the intended actions and provide pertinent information before the issuing authority makes a final decision
- In calculating the time to respond, the date of receipt is not counted. If the member mails the acknowledgment, the date of the postmark on the envelope will serve as the date of acknowledgment.
- The member is presumed to be in receipt of official correspondence if it is delivered by certified mail at the member's address or address included in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. When personal delivery is not feasible, it may be sent by encrypted electronic mail to the member. An electronic receipt confirming delivery is included in the file.
- For members not in an active duty status, the issuer of the LOC, LOA, or LOR has 45 calendar days from the receipt of the certified letter or personal delivery of the member's response to advise the member of his/her final decision after considering any comments submitted by the member

Officer Adverse Information and Promotion Boards

- All LOCs related to a substantiated finding or conclusion from an officially documented investigation or inquiry, LOAs, and LORs will be filed in the Officer Selection Record (OSR) in accordance with DAFI 36-2608, *Military Personnel Records Systems*
- The DAF is required to furnish adverse information to selection boards considering officers for promotion to the grade of O-4 and above. Adverse actions, for purposes of this rule, include:
 - Any substantiated adverse findings or conclusions from an officially documented investigation or inquiry, regardless of whether command action was taken as a result
 - Court-martial findings of guilt
 - Nonjudicial punishment (NJP) pursuant to Article 15, UCMJ
 - LORs
 - LOAs
 - LOCs related to a substantiated adverse finding or conclusion from an officially documented investigation or inquiry
 - Notices of relief of command (for cause)
 - Developmental Education removal (for cause)
 - Notice of Relief of Wing/Delta/Installation Chaplain or Equivalent (for cause)

- DAFI 36-2907, and DoDI 1320.14, *DoD Commissioned Officer Promotion Program Procedures*, establish specific policy and provide guidance associated with furnishing adverse information to officer promotion selection, special selection, federal recognition (ANG specific), and selective continuation boards
- SJA must provide a separate legal memorandum addressing whether an officer's adverse information meets/does not meet the exception to the 10-year OSR retention rule
- Commanders must report all substantiated findings of wrongdoing and/or adverse information against field grade officers to SAF/IGQ in accordance with DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution*

References

- Information Furnished to Selection Boards, 10 U.S.C. § 615(a)(3)
- DoDI 1320.14, *DoD Commissioned Officer Promotion Program Procedures* (16 December 2020)
- DAFI 36-2608, *Military Personnel Records Systems* (16 April 2021), incorporating through Change 3, 14 August 2025
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 18 July 2025
- DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution* (4 January 2024)
- DAF Form 174, *Record of Individual Counseling* (14 October 2022)
- DAF Form 1058, *Unfavorable Information File Actions* (14 October 2022)
- AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program* (10 March 2020)

Attachment

- Sample Administrative Letter

SAMPLE ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR [RANK FIRST M. LAST]

FROM: Organization/Office Symbol [Issuer's organization and office symbol]

SUBJECT: Letter of [Counseling/Admonition/Reprimand]

1. Investigation by [cite investigating body, e.g., Issuer, Commander Directed Investigation, Security Forces] has disclosed [the basis for the action including what the member did or failed to do, citing specific incident(s) and their date(s)].

2. You are hereby [counseled/admonished/reprimanded]! [Discuss the impact of what the member did or failed to do]. [What improvement is expected]. Your conduct is unacceptable and further deviation may result in more severe action. [The statements, portions of investigations and reports, and documentary evidence considered by the issuer in support of this action are attached.] OR [There are no attachments to this action because there are no relevant written statements, portions of investigations or reports, or other documentary evidence that were produced or considered by the issuer in support of this action].

3. The following information required by the Privacy Act is provided for your information. AUTHORITY: 10 U.S.C. § 9013. PURPOSE: To obtain any comments or documents you desire to submit (on a voluntary basis) for consideration concerning this action. ROUTINE USES: Provides you an opportunity to submit comments or documents for consideration. If provided, the response you submit becomes a part of the record. DISCLOSURE: Your written acknowledgment of receipt and signature are mandatory. Any other comments or documents you provide are voluntary.

4. [For Space Force, Regular Air Force, Active Guard and Reserve, Air Reserve Component statutory tour members, or Air National Guard members in Title 10 status (officer and enlisted)]: You will acknowledge receipt of this letter of [counseling/admonishment/reprimand] immediately by signing the first indorsement. Within 3 duty days from the day you received this letter, you will provide your response by signing the second indorsement below. Any comments or documents you wish to be considered concerning this letter must be submitted at that time, and will become part of the record, consistent with DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions*, paragraph 2.4.2.5. After receiving your response, I intend to notify you of my final disposition of this action within 3 duty days.

5. [For Air Reserve Component and Space Force members not in a duty status]: You will acknowledge receipt of this letter of [counseling/admonishment/reprimand] immediately by signing the first indorsement. Within 45 calendar days from the day you received this letter, you will provide your response by signing the second indorsement below. Any comments or documents you wish to be considered concerning this letter must be submitted at that time, and your written response will become part of the record, consistent with DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions*, paragraph 2.4.2.5. After receiving your response, you will be notified of my final decision regarding any comments submitted by you within 45 calendar days.

Signature

Issuing Authority's Duty Title, Organization

[Attachment(s):

Enumerated documents as appropriate]

1st Ind to Organization/Office Symbol [of issuer], date, Letter of
[Counseling/Admonishment/ Reprimand]

Recipient's Rank First M. Last

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR Organization/Office Symbol [Issuer's organization and office symbol]

I acknowledge receipt and understanding of this letter on [date] at [time] hours. I understand that I have [3 duty days][45 calendar days] from the date I received this letter to provide a response and that I must include in my response any comments or documents I wish to be considered concerning this letter of [counseling/admonishment/reprimand].

Signature

Letter Recipient

2nd Ind, Recipient's Rank First M. Last

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR Organization/Office Symbol [Issuer's organization and office symbol]

I have reviewed the allegations contained in this Letter of [counseling/admonishment/reprimand]. (I am submitting the attached documents in response) (I hereby waive my right to respond).

Signature

Letter Recipient

3rd Ind, Organization/Office Symbol [Issuer's organization and office symbol] Date

MEMORANDUM FOR RECIPIENT RANK FIRST M. LAST

(I have considered the response you submitted on [date].) (You waived your right to submit a response to this action). I have decided to [withdraw the letter of [counseling/admonishment/reprimand] [sustain the letter of counseling/admonishment/reprimand] [reduce the action to a letter of admonishment/counseling]. [For officers only: Issuing authority must forward any adverse information as defined in paragraph 1.2.1 to the officer's commander for filing in the member's Officer Selection Record.]

Signature

Issuing Authority's Duty Title, Organization

4th Ind to Organization/Office Symbol [of issuer], date, Letter of
[Counseling/Admonishment/ Reprimand]

Recipient's Rank First M. Last

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR Organization/Office Symbol [Issuer's organization and office symbol]

I acknowledge receipt of the final decision regarding disposition of this letter of [counseling/admonishment/reprimand] on [date] at [time] hours.

Signature

Letter Recipient

Note: The 1st Indorsement (Ind) is dated the same day the member receives the letter; the 2d Ind is dated within 3 duty days (or 45 calendar days for Air Reserve Component members not in a duty status); the 3d Ind should be dated within 3 duty days (or 45 calendar days) of the 2d Ind. When the first indorsement occurs on any page other than the letterhead page, it must include the citation line for the letter. In this example, the 1st Ind is the first indorsement to occur on a new page. The citation line for the indorsement memorandum consists of the indorsement number followed by the Organization/Office Symbol, SUBJECT, and date of the original memorandum. The citation line ends with the indorsement date: for administrative actions this should be the same as the letter of reprimand date.

UNFAVORABLE INFORMATION FILE

The Unfavorable Information File (UIF) provides commanders with an official means of filing derogatory data concerning a Department of the Air Force (DAF) military member's personal conduct and duty performance. With some exceptions, the commander has discretion for what should be placed in a UIF and what should be removed. The UIF is maintained by the Adverse Administrative Actions Manager.

Key Takeaways

- » The UIF is an official record of unfavorable information about an individual. It documents administrative, nonjudicial, or judicial censures of the member's performance.
- » A UIF may only be established when some form of derogatory data is entered into it
- » Retention time depends on the nature of the document and status of the member. Early removal is authorized under certain conditions.

Establishing a UIF

- A UIF must be established by a commander or equivalent civilian director at all levels, or by any of the other individuals listed in DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions*, para. 3.1. Commanders must be on G-series orders and senior to the member.
- Certain unfavorable information requires mandatory filing into a UIF. DAFI 36-2907, Table 3.2, outlines whether a UIF filing is mandatory.
- If not mandatory, the unfavorable information may be filed into a UIF at the discretion of any of the individuals listed in DAFI 36-2907, para. 3.1
- Staff Judge Advocates (SJAs) provide a legal review when the UIF is established and when documents are added. SJAs will also conduct annual reviews of UIFs.

Contents of UIF

- A UIF must be populated with a record of unfavorable information or it ceases to exist
 - Common UIF documents include letters of counseling (LOCs), admonishment (LOAs), and reprimand (LORs), records of nonjudicial punishment (NJP) under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, control roster actions, documented instances of discrimination or sexual harassment, civilian convictions, and court-martial convictions

Documenting a UIF

- The UIF is generally established with a DAF Form 1058, *Unfavorable Information File Actions*

- The DAF Form 1058 notifies military members of the commander's intent to establish a UIF and provides the member with 3 duty days to respond. Non-extended active duty (EAD) Reservists and Air National Guard (ANG) members, as well as Space Force members not on sustained duty will have 45 calendar days from receipt of the UIF action to provide a response.
- DAF Form 1058 does not need to be referred to members when UIF filing is mandatory

Retention and Disposition

- Retention time depends on the nature of the document and the status of the member (officer or enlisted). Removal of the document from the UIF is automatic at the end of the retention period. DAFI 36-2907, Table 3.2, outlines the disposition dates for all documents filed in a UIF.
- UIF establishing authorities may remove documents from the UIF early by initiating action via DAF Form 1058 or memorandum
 - Early removal of derogatory data is not authorized if the member is still serving punishment

Access

- Only the member who has the UIF, first sergeants, rating officials, and those individuals listed in DAFI 36-2907, para. 3.1, may view UIFs
 - Military Personnel Flight (MPF) personnel, Inspector General personnel, inspection team members, judge advocates and paralegals, law enforcement personnel and investigators, Military Equal Opportunity personnel, and substance abuse counselors in the course of their official DAF duties may view UIFs with authorization from the member's commander or equivalent civilian director

Review

- All UIFs require periodic review to ensure continued maintenance of documents in the UIF is proper
- Mandatory reviews must be conducted by commanders in the following situations:
 - Within 90 calendar days of permanent assumption or appointment to command
 - When individuals are being considered for, among other things, promotion, reenlistment, permanent change of station and/or assignment, personnel reliability program duties, reclassification or retraining, or appointment or enlistment into a different component of the DAF
 - Prior to completion of performance evaluations
 - When Reserve and ANG members are being considered for in-residence developmental education or short courses, all Reserve assignments, statutory tours, or an active duty tour exceeding 30 days

References

- Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DAFI 36-2608, *Military Personnel Records Systems* (16 April 2021), incorporating through Change 3, 14 August 2025
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 18 July 2025
- DAF Form 1058, *Unfavorable Information File Actions* (14 October 2022)

CONTROL ROSTERS

A control roster is a “watch list” for members whose duty performance is substandard or who fail to meet or maintain Department of the Air Force (DAF) standards of conduct, bearing, and integrity, whether on- or off-duty. Commanders (and civilian equivalents) at all levels are authorized to use a control roster. They are maintained by the Adverse Administrative Actions Manager.

Key Takeaways

- » The control roster is used to monitor a member’s performance and/or conduct when there is a need for improvement
- » There are collateral consequences to placement on a control roster, such as limited opportunity for reassignment, promotion, and reenlistment
- » Regular Air Force and Space Force members may only be placed on a control roster for 6 months

Purpose

- A control roster is a rehabilitative tool
 - Other rehabilitative tools should be considered before placing a member on the control roster
 - A single incident of substandard duty performance or an isolated breach of standards that is not likely to be repeated should not ordinarily be a basis for a control roster action
- Control rosters assist commanders in controlling or evaluating a member’s performance and provide the member an opportunity to improve that performance
 - Placing an individual on the control roster is not a substitute for more appropriate administrative, judicial, or nonjudicial action
 - Individuals are not shielded from other appropriate actions by virtue of being placed on the control roster

Procedure

- Control roster action is documented on a DAF Form 1058, *Unfavorable Information File Actions*
- Individuals listed in DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions*, para. 4.4, have the authority to add members to a control roster. Commanders must be senior to the member being placed on a control roster.
 - Commanders may direct a performance evaluation before entering or removing the person from the control roster

- A commander placing an officer, who is eligible for or selected for promotion, on a control roster must also decide if the officer is mentally, physically, morally, or professionally qualified for such promotion. If the commander determines that the member is not qualified, he/she should initiate a promotion propriety action.
- A commander may not put members on the control roster who are in temporary duty (TDY) or Permanent Change of Station (PCS) status, including those enroute
- Only wing or delta commanders (or equivalent) or the issuing authority, whichever is higher in grade, may remove members from a control roster
- Regular Air Force and Space Force members, and Non-extended active duty (EAD) Reserve or Air National Guard (ANG) members on duty, acknowledge receipt of the action and have three duty days to respond
 - Any statement or document provided by the member in response to the control roster must be filed in the Unfavorable Information File (UIF). Additional materials submitted by the member in mitigation, extenuation, or defense are not a part of the record.
- Non-EAD Reserve or ANG members not in a duty status, as well as Space Force members not on sustained duty have 45 days from the date of receiving the certified letter to acknowledge receipt of the action and respond. The member is presumed to have received this correspondence if it is hand delivered or delivered by certified mail to his/her address.

Duration

- Regular Air Force and Space Force: six months
- Non-EAD Reserve or ANG: not to exceed 12 months
- If the member's conduct or performance does not improve during the observation period, the commander should consider whether a more severe response is required, such as initiating an administrative discharge
- A member's time on the control roster does not stop and start for periods of TDY, ordinary leave, or change in immediate supervisor

Collateral Impacts

- PCS and Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA) actions are limited
- All formal training must be canceled during the period that the member is on the control roster
- Eligibility for promotion and reenlistment is limited
- Placement on the control roster requires mandatory filing in the member's UIF

References

- DAFI 36-2608, *Military Personnel Records Systems* (16 April 2021), incorporating through Change 3, 14 August 2025, certified current 14 August 2025
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 18 July 2025
- DAF Form 1058, *Unfavorable Information File Actions* (14 October 2022)

ADMINISTRATIVE ENLISTED DEMOTIONS

An administrative demotion is a quality force management tool available to Department of the Air Force (DAF) commanders to help ensure a quality enlisted force. Administrative demotions are intended to place DAF enlisted members at a rank commensurate with their skill level and ability. AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs*, governs evaluations for Regular Air Force (RegAF), the Air Force Reserve (AFR), and Air National Guard (ANG) members. U.S. Space Force (USSF) commanders should review SPFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Guardian Promotion and Demotion Programs*, for guidance related to USSF members.

Key Takeaway

- » Administrative demotions are not intended to be punitive and should not be used when it is more appropriate to take actions specified by the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)

Demotion and Appellate Authorities

- Demotion Authority – Active Duty Members:
 - RegAF E-7 and below: Group commander or equivalent level commander
 - USSF E-7 and below: first Colonel on G-series order or equivalent level commander
 - E-8 and E-9: Major Command Commander (MAJCOM/CC), Field Commander (FLDCOM/CC), Field Operating Agency Commander (FOA/CC), or Direct Reporting Unit Commander (DRU/CC). This demotion authority may be delegated no lower than:
 - For RegAF: MAJCOM Deputy Commander, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Numbered Air Force (NAF), or equivalent level commanders
 - For USSF: FLDCOM Vice Commander, Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Human Capital, or equivalent level commanders
- Demotion Authority – Air Force Reserve Members:
 - E-7 and below: The superior commander to the initiating commander
 - E-8 and E-9: Air Force Reserve Command Deputy Commander (AFRC/CD)
 - The demotion authority may be delegated to Numbered Air Force or equivalent level commanders in writing but may not be further delegated
 - For Airmen serving on 10 U.S.C. § 12310 tours (except Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) recruiters): The next superior commander to the initiating commander
 - For AFRC Recruiters: AFRCRS Commander for recruiters E-7 and below and AFRC/CD for E-8 to E-9 recruiters

- For Airmen assigned to the following categories: Personnel Accounting Symbol S7 personnel including Non-Participating Individual Ready Reserve (IRR), Inactive Status List Reserve Section, Ready Reinforcement Personnel Section and Non-Affiliated Reserve Section (Key Federal Employees). The demotion authority is ARPC/CC. This may be delegated to ARPC/DPTSC.
- For IMAs and Participating IRRs E-7 and below: HQ RIO/CC
- Appellate Authority – Active Duty and Air Force Reserve Members: Next higher-level commander above the demotion authority
- Demotion and Appellate Authority – Air National Guard Members:
 - *Traditional Guardsmen E-1 to E-6*: State Adjutant General. However, this demotion authority may be delegated to the wing, group, or installation commander.
 - *Traditional Guardsmen E-7 to E-9*: State Adjutant General. However, this demotion authority may be delegated to Assistant Adjutant General for Air (AAG for Air).
 - *Members on extended active duty under Title 10 orders*: Director, Air National Guard, with concurrence of The Adjutant General (TAG) of the state
 - *Full-time State AGR*: State Adjutant General. While AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs*, does not specify a separate demotion authority for AGRs, the State Adjutant General holds the authority to initiate curtailment of AGR status for cause

Reasons for Demotion

- Basis for demotion includes:
 - Officer trainee or pipeline students if eliminated from training;
 - Termination of student status of members attending temporary duty (TDY) at DAF schools;
 - E-5, E-7, or E-8 with an approved EPME waiver and later dismissed for cause or declines in-residence EPME;
 - Failure to achieve or maintain the skill level appropriate for the grade;
 - Failure to fulfill responsibilities. Airmen and Guardians may be demoted for failing to fulfill Junior Airman/Guardian, Noncommissioned Officer, or Senior Noncommissioned Officer responsibilities;
 - Failure to keep fit; and/or
 - Commission of a serious offense.

- For Reservists, unsatisfactory participation in statutory training requirements outlined in 10 U.S.C. § 10147, DoDI 1215.06, *Uniform Reserve, Training, and Retirement Categories for the Reserve Components*, and DAFMAN 36-2136, *Reserve Personnel Participation*. For Guardsmen, unsatisfactory participation as having six or more unexcused absences from regularly scheduled drill.
- The basis for demotion must have occurred in the current enlistment unless the commander does not become aware of the facts and circumstances until after reenlistment
- Where appropriate, members should be given the opportunity to overcome their deficiencies prior to the initiation of the demotion action

Due Process

- The member's commander (usually his/her squadron commander) notifies the member in writing
- The member has the right to seek legal counsel and respond (orally, in writing, or both) within three duty days (30 calendar days for Reserve members and 20 calendar days for ANG members)
- Members eligible for retirement may apply for retirement in lieu of demotion. Member must apply for retirement within three duty days (30 calendar days for Reserve members) of receipt of the demotion notification, or the demotion will take effect on the date the demotion authority approves the demotion.
- Following the member's response, if the commander elects to continue the proceedings, the case file is forwarded to the demotion authority for action
- The demotion authority fully reviews the initiating commander's recommendation, the member's response, and the member's entire military record prior to taking action
 - Demotion authority can do the following: (1) decline to demote the member; (2) approve the demotion recommendation; or (3) approve a greater or lesser demotion than recommended by the initiating commander. The demotion authority should request a written legal review from the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) or legal office prior to deciding on the demotion.
- The member may appeal the decision of the demotion authority. The appeal is first reviewed by the demotion authority who can reverse his/her prior decision and restore the member's original grade. If the demotion authority does not grant the appeal, he/she must forward the case to the appellate authority without comment or recommendation.

Grades to Demote DAF Members

- The following demotions are permitted:
 - Airmen and Guardians: E-2 may be demoted to E-1
 - Airmen and Guardians: E-3 may be demoted to no lower than E-2
 - Guardians: E-4 or higher may be demoted to no lower than E-2. **Exception:** Guardians whose student status is terminated can be demoted to E-1.
 - Airmen: E-4 or higher may be demoted to no lower than E-3. **Exception:** Airmen whose student status is terminated can be demoted to E-1.
 - Airmen and Guardians: A demotion of three or more grades is only appropriate when no reasonable hope exists that the member will ever show the proficiency, leadership, or fitness that earned the initial promotion
- Administrative demotions may trigger mandatory High Year Tenure (HYT) separations from the service. When a member is demoted, the member assumes the HYT restrictions of that grade and typically will be separated within 120 days of the effective date of the separation.
- Eligibility for promotion and reenlistment is limited

References

- *Ready Reserve: Training Requirements*, 10 U.S.C. § 10147
- DoDI 1215.06, *Uniform Reserve, Training, and Retirement Categories for the Reserve Components* (11 March 2014), incorporating through Change 2, 12 July 2022
- DAFI 36-2608, *Military Personnel Records Systems* (16 April 2021), incorporating through Change 3, 14 August 2025
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 18 July 2025
- DAFMAN 36-2136, *Reserve Personnel Participation* (15 December 2023)
- DAF Form 1058, *Unfavorable Information File Actions* (14 October 2022)
- AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs*, (26 September 2024), incorporating Change 1, 14 August 2025
- SPFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Guardian Promotion and Demotion Programs* (11 September 2024)
- *The Enlisted Force Structure*, 4 September 2025 (available at <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Foundation-Resources/>)

SELECTIVE REENLISTMENT PROGRAM – ACTIVE DUTY

The selective reenlistment program (SRP) is designed to ensure the Department of the Air Force (DAF) only retains and affords continued military service to enlisted members who consistently demonstrate the capability and willingness to maintain high professional standards. The program identifies members nearing the end of their current term of service and provides a process for the commander to deny reenlistment.

Key Takeaways

- » Reenlistment in the DAF is not an inherent right
- » DAF members may be considered for reenlistment if they meet eligibility requirements, have qualities essential for continued service, and can perform duty in a career field which the DAF has a specific need
- » The SRP applies to all enlisted personnel

Standard for Denial of Reenlistment

- Commanders and civilian directors have SRP selection authority as long as no other factors barring immediate reenlistment exist
- Commanders and civilian directors may non-select any DAF member for SRP at any time
 - A commander or civilian director's decision to render a DAF member ineligible to reenlist or ineligible for continued service can impact the member's retainability and opportunity to be selected for an assignment, promotion, and/or retraining
- Commanders and civilian directors will not use the SRP to deny reenlistment when involuntary separation is more appropriate

Immediate Supervisor's Role

- Immediate supervisors are responsible for ensuring members meet quality standards
- Supervisors and commanders are notified by the Military Personnel Flight (MPF) when DAF members are nearing the end of their terms of enlistment and are subject to SRP consideration. The supervisor provides recommendations for selection or non-selection to the commander.
- SRP recommendations are made using DAF Form 418, *Selective Reenlistment Program (SRP) Consideration/Denial of Continued Service for Airmen/Guardians*

Commander's Role

- Commanders determine whether a member should be denied reenlistment
 - Decisions to deny reenlistment should be based on a demonstrated lack of capability and unwillingness to maintain high professional standards. Unit commanders consider the supervisor's recommendation, the member's duty performance, and career force potential before making a decision.
 - The commander will consider: ratings on Enlisted Performance Reports (EPRs)/Enlisted Performance Briefs (EPBs), unfavorable information from any substantiated source, the DAF member's willingness to comply with DAF standards (fitness, dress and appearance, timeliness, etc.), and the member's ability to meet required training and duty performance levels
 - Commanders shall not consider derogatory information from a previous enlistment as a basis for denial of subsequent enlistments
 - If a Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) found a DAF service member fit for duty, the member may not be denied reenlistment on the basis of the same condition for which the PEB made its finding
 - Commanders may reverse their SRP selection/non-selection decisions at any time

Appeal

- For members non-selected under SRP, the commander must discuss non-selection with the member. Specifically, the commander must discuss the specific reasons for non-selection, areas needing improvement, appeal opportunity, promotion ineligibility, and the possibility of future reconsideration and selection.
- The member has three calendar days to notify the commander of whether he/she intends to appeal
- A member's appeal is due to the Military Personnel Flight (MPF) no later than 10 calendar days of notifying the commander of his/her intent to appeal
- Appellate Authorities:
 - *Group or Delta/Garrison Commander*: First Term and retirement eligible DAF service members
 - *Wing or Delta/Garrison Commander*: Second term DAF service members and those with fewer than 16 years of service at the end of their current enlistment
 - *Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF)*: DAF service members with more than 16 years of service but less than 20 years of service at the expiration of their current enlistment

- Any commander in the reviewing chain may approve a member's appeal as it is routed to the ultimate appellate authority. However, only the appellate authority has final disposition authority.
- The appeal decision is final, and the case cannot be sent to a level above the appellate authority to have the decision overturned
- A legal review is required when a member appeals SRP decisions

Collateral Impact

- SRP non-selection makes members ineligible for promotion and automatically cancels projected promotion line numbers
- Once a member reenlists, any misconduct taking place in the earlier enlistment generally cannot be used as a basis for administrative discharge action

References

- DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment* (22 May 2024)
- DAF Form 418, *Selective Reenlistment Program (SRP) Consideration/Denial of Continued Service for Airmen/Guardians* (21 May 2024)

SELECTIVE REENLISTMENT PROGRAM – AIR FORCE RESERVE AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

The quality of the Air Force Reserve (AFR) and Air National Guard (ANG) depends on the quality of its enlisted members. Reenlistment in any Total Force component, to include the AFR and ANG, is a privilege and not an inherent individual right. Members may be considered for reenlistment if they meet eligibility requirements, have qualities essential for continued service, and can perform duty in a career field in which the Department of the Air Force (DAF) has a specific need.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders have significant discretion in making reenlistment decisions. In making this determination, commanders should primarily consider the member's initial eligibility and performance.
- » Prior to the expiration of term of service (ETS), a commander will consider whether the member should be selected or denied reenlistment
- » The selection or non-selection decision will be consistent with qualitative factors and criteria and will not be based solely on the member's career intent

Standard for Denial of Reenlistment

- Commanders will consider and review: supervisor recommendations, Enlisted Performance Brief (EPB) ratings, unfavorable information from any substantiated source, compliance with DAF standards (fitness, dress and appearance, timeliness, etc.), ability to meet required training and duty performance levels, potential, grade and skill level, aptitude, education, motivation, self-improvement efforts, training and participation, derogatory information, physical condition, medical readiness, attitude and behavior, assumption of responsibilities, and other related information

Common Factors Precluding Reenlistment

- Unsatisfactory participation, performance, attitude, military bearing, or behavior
- Currently undergoing nonjudicial punishment (Article 15) action
- Under consideration for administrative discharge (but do not use the Selective Reenlistment Program or SRP to deny reenlistment or continued service when involuntary separation is more appropriate)
- Conscientious objectors whose religious convictions preclude unrestricted assignment
- Awaiting Surgeon General's (AFRC/SG) consideration of a physical disqualification
- Even when policy does not prohibit a member from reenlisting, the commander should carefully consider whether the member meets DAF's quality standards

Non-Selection for Reenlistment

- Commanders will contact the servicing legal office for a legal review prior to notifying a member of a non-selection decision
- The commander or supervisor completes DAF Form 418, *Selective Reenlistment Program (SRP) Consideration/Denial of Continued Service for Airmen/Guardians*, when not selecting a member for reenlistment and notifies the member of the non-selection
- Except for physical disability or for cause, members may not be denied reenlistment if they have completed at least 18 but less than 20 years of satisfactory service for retirement purposes. In those cases, only the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) may deny retention.

Appeals of Denial of Reenlistment – Air Force Reserve

- Members who have not been selected for reenlistment have a right to appeal
- The member must submit a written appeal to the Military Personnel Flight (MPF) (for Individual Reservists, the appeal should go to the appropriate Readiness and Integration Organization (RIO) Detachment) by the next scheduled Unit Training Assembly (UTA) or 30 days after the date he/she was notified, whichever is later
- Member may appeal non-selection for reenlistment through one of two options:
 - *Senior Rater Appeal*: Unit members may appeal to their Senior Reserve Commander for final selection or non-selection authority; or
 - *Denial of Reenlistment Appeal Board*: A member may present their appeal to a three-person appeal board which will review all documentation and make a recommendation to the member's Senior Reserve Commander for final action.
- Under either appeal option, the ultimate decision of the member's Senior Reserve Commander is final

Appeals of Denial of Reenlistment – Air National Guard

- Members who have not been selected for reenlistment have a right to appeal
- DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment*, Table 11.1, lists the ANG Reenlistment Appellate Authorities
- The member must submit a written appeal to the MPF no later than 10 calendar days if an AGR member, or if a Drill Status Guardsman, submit the appeal during the next regularly scheduled drill or 30 calendar days (whichever is later) from the date he/she notified the commander of his/her intent to appeal

- The member's appeal and supporting documentation are forwarded to the appellate authority. Any commander in the reviewing chain may approve a member's appeal. However, after the case file has been sent to the appellate authority and the appeal has been denied, the case file cannot be sent to the next higher authority to have the decision overturned.
- If the appeal is not presented to the Force Support Squadron (FSS) by the established suspense date, the member forfeits their right to appeal

References

- Enlisted Members: Retention After Completion of 18 or More, But Less Than 20, Years of Service, 10 U.S.C. § 1176
- DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment* (22 May 2024)
- DAF Form 418, *Selective Reenlistment Program (SRP) Consideration/Denial of Continued Service for Airmen/Guardians* (22 May 2024)

OFFICER AND ENLISTED EVALUATION SYSTEMS

The single most important element needed for successful mission accomplishment is performance. The Officer Evaluation System (OES) and the Enlisted Evaluation System (EES) are the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) and the United States Space Force's (USSF) programs for evaluating and documenting performance. Commander involvement in the program is critical to developing and retaining a high-caliber force. The servicing Military Personnel Flight (MPF) provides command support and guidance regarding evaluations. AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems*, governs evaluations for Regular Air Force (RegAF), the Air Force Reserve (AFR), and Air National Guard (ANG) members. USSF commanders should review SPFI 36-2401, *Guardian Evaluations Systems*, for guidance on evaluations for USSF members.

Key Takeaway

- » A properly managed evaluation system, from initial feedback to final evaluation, provides critical feedback to members, as well as to those making significant personnel decisions

Overview

- The evaluation system is generally comprised of comprehensive assessments (i.e., initial and mid-term rater performance feedback), enlisted and officer performance reviews, evaluation letters, and relevant training records
- Unit commanders should encourage first-time supervisors to obtain evaluation system training within 60 days of being appointed as a rater. Additionally, the commander should encourage all unit members to receive general evaluation training on an annual basis as needed.

Comprehensive Assessment

- The first step in the evaluation of any AF and USSF member is initial and midterm performance feedback provided to the member by his/her rater:
 - Initial Feedback: within 60 days of a change in supervision
 - Midterm Feedback: halfway through the member's rating period
- A comprehensive assessment is mandatory for all Regular Air Force (RegAF), Air Reserve Component (ARC), and USSF members in the grade of E-1 to O-6
- Sessions must provide realistic feedback, in the form of written comments, to improve the ratee's performance. Any behavior that may result in administrative or punitive action should be documented in a separate document.

- The rater provides the original assessment to the ratee. The rater shall keep a copy for personal reference, but the assessment will not be made part of any official personnel record nor be included in an individual's personnel file, **UNLESS** the ratee introduces it first or alleges that he/she did not receive required feedback or claims the sessions were inadequate.

Performance Evaluations – General Considerations

- Formal performance evaluations are critical in nearly every personnel decision within the AF. A poorly managed evaluation system inadequately identifies top performers and undermines confidence in the fairness of the system.
- Performance evaluations should take into account any adverse administrative or punitive actions taken against the individual during the rating period
- Disagreements between evaluators (i.e., primary rater and reviewer/higher-level reviewer/senior rater) should be explained in the disagreeing rater's comments block
 - Preceding evaluators are first given an opportunity to change the evaluation; however, they will **NOT** change their evaluation just to satisfy a disagreeing senior evaluator
 - If, after discussion, the disagreement remains, the disagreeing evaluator marks the "non-concur" block and must provide specific comments in their block to explain each item in disagreement

Performance Evaluations – Timing

- Officer performance evaluations are subject to a "static close out date" (SCOD). The SCOD is the fixed annual date that all officer evaluations will close-out for a specific grade. Evaluations cannot be signed before the SCOD.
- Enlisted performance evaluations are also subject to a SCOD. The SCOD is used to determine the final time-in-grade (TIG)/time-in-service (TIS) eligible pool for forced distribution allocations.
 - Enlisted personnel in the grade of E-1 through E-3 will receive an evaluation upon completing a minimum of 36 months TIS as of the E-4 SCOD, 31 March
 - Enlisted personnel in the grade of E-4 through E-9 will receive an evaluation as of the appropriate SCOD for their grade
 - Evaluations cannot be signed before the SCOD

Performance Evaluations – Required and Prohibited Comments

- Some specific comments or entries are required and must be included in performance evaluations. These comments should be drafted as stated in AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems* and SPFI 36-2401, *Guardian Evaluations Systems*. Slight deviations are allowed, but entries significantly deviating from the recommended format are unacceptable. These comments and entries include, but are not limited to:

- For a referral evaluation or training report, the evaluator must specifically detail the behavior or performance that caused the evaluation to be referred
- Comments relating to the ratee's behavior if the ratee has been convicted by a court-martial
- If performance feedback was not accomplished, the reason why it was not accomplished
- Certain comments are inappropriate to include in performance evaluations. These comments include, but are not limited to:
 - Duty history or performance outside the current reporting period, except as allowed by Air Force and Space Force regulations
 - Any action against an individual that resulted in an acquittal or failure to implement a recommended personnel action. This does not necessarily bar commenting on the underlying misconduct that formed the basis for the action, but consult with the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) before doing so.
 - Race, ethnic origin, sex age, religion, sexual orientation, or political affiliation of the ratee
 - Participation in drug or alcohol abuse rehabilitation programs

Performance Evaluations – Referrals

- Certain comments or ratings in a performance evaluation may result in it being “referred” to the ratee for comments. An evaluator whose ratings or comments cause an evaluation to become a referral, must give the ratee a chance to comment. The following comments or ratings require referral:
 - Comments in any evaluation, regardless of the ratings, that are derogatory in nature, imply or refer to behavior incompatible with or not meeting AF or USSF standards, and/or refer to disciplinary actions
- DAF and USSF regulations contain specific procedures that must be followed when referring an evaluation

References

- Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a
- DAF Form 77, *Letter of Evaluation* (28 August 2025)
- DAF Form 475, *Education/Training Report* (4 December 2024)
- AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems* (22 August 2025)
- SPFI 36-2401, *Guardian Evaluations Systems* (17 January 2024), including SPFI 36-2401_SPFGM2025-01, 27 June 2025
- AF Form 715, *Officer Performance Brief (WO/CW 1 thru 5 and O-1 thru O-6)* (8 July 2025)
- AF Form 716, *Enlisted Performance Brief* (28 January 2025)
- AF Form 724, *Airman Comprehensive Assessment Worksheet (WO/CW 1 thru 5 and O-1 thru O-6)* (4 December 2024)
- AF Form 724-A, *Airman Comprehensive Assessment Addendum* (23 July 2025)
- AF Form 931, *Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) Worksheet (AB thru TSgt)* (7 August 2025)
- AF Form 932, *Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) Worksheet (MSgt thru CMSgt)* (7 August 2025)

OFFICER PROMOTION PROPRIETY ACTIONS

Promotion is an advancement to a position of greater responsibility based on the requirements of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and the officer's future potential. It is not a reward for past service. When an officer fails to meet the requirement for exemplary conduct or is not mentally, physically, morally, or professionally qualified to perform the duties of the next higher grade, the appropriate authority initiates a promotion propriety action (PPA) to delay the officer's promotion or remove the officer's name from the promotion list.

Key Takeaways

- » If an officer is not qualified to perform the duties of the next grade or does not meet the exemplary conduct standard of 10 U.S.C. § 9233, the proper authority must initiate a PPA before the effective date of promotion
- » Commanders should consult their servicing legal office when determining if sufficient evidence exists to support a PPA; servicing legal offices should consult AF/JA1 for any questions about the PPA process
- » The DAF Form 4363, *Record of Promotion Propriety Action*, DAF Form 4364, *Record of Promotion Delay Resolution*, or command memorandum (for Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF)-directed PPAs) must specify why the officer is not mentally, physically, morally, or professionally qualified to promote to the next higher grade or does not meet the exemplary conduct standard, and must include the evidence used to support the recommendation
- » While commanders may initiate a PPA, generally only SecAF can terminate (i.e., resolve) it

Commander-Initiated PPAs

- When an officer is eligible for promotion (first and second lieutenants) or has been selected for promotion (captains and above), and a commander has cause to believe the officer may not be suited for promotion, the commander initiates a PPA using DAF Form 4363 IAW DAFI 36-2501, *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation*, Chapter 5 (Regular Air Force (RegAF) and Space Force (USSF), or AFI 36-2504, *Officer Promotion, Continuation, and Selective Early Removal in the Reserve of the Air Force*, Chapter 8 (Guard and Reserve)
- The commander may also initiate a PPA if:
 - Sworn charges against the officer are pending review and disposition by an officer exercising General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) jurisdiction over the officer;
 - An investigation is being conducted to determine whether disciplinary action of any kind should be brought against the officer;
 - The officer's record is being reviewed by a board convened under 10 U.S.C. Chapter 60;
 - A criminal proceeding in a federal or state court is pending against an officer;

- The Secretary of War or Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) is reviewing substantiated adverse information about the officer that is material to the decision to appoint the officer; or
- SecAF determines that convening a Special Selection Review Board is required.
- The initiating commander is usually but not exclusively the officer's immediate commander, and may recommend:
 - Removal of the officer's name from the promotion list;
 - An initial promotion delay not to exceed six months from the effective date of promotion; or
 - An extension of a previous promotion delay, not to exceed six months from the date the initial delay expires.
- Promotion delays are not intended to be punitive or rehabilitative. A delay is appropriate if time is needed to assess the officer's suitability to promote or if disciplinary or administrative action is pending against the officer. Removal is appropriate when disciplinary action has concluded and/or a preponderance of the credible evidence supports a conclusion the officer should not promote.
- Regardless of the commander's recommendation, notifying the officer either orally or in writing of the PPA effectively delays the officer's promotion. However, the commander must promptly notify the appropriate organization after initiation to implement the delay and prevent a promotion order from being issued. The appropriate organization is Air Force Personnel Center Officer Promotions Management (AFPC/DPMSP) for RegAF and USSF, Air Reserve Personnel Center Selection Board Secretariat (ARPC/PB) for Reserve, and Director of Manpower, Personnel, Recruiting, and Services Data Systems (NGB/A1P) for Guard.
- Using DAF Form 4363, the commander lists the specific reasons for the action, lists and attaches evidence supporting those reasons, and serves the DAF Form 4363 and evidence on the officer. The officer has five duty days (RegAF, USSF, and full-time Reserve and Guard) or 30 calendar days (other Reserve and Guard) to provide a response. **Insufficient time to respond is a common error that necessitates correction.**
 - If the officer received adverse administrative action for misconduct, include the substantiating documentation upon which the action was based (e.g., if the officer received a letter of reprimand (LOR) for substantiated findings in an investigation, include the report of investigation or relevant supporting documents, not just the LOR). Although irrelevant personally identifiable information (such as SSNs or addresses) should be redacted, do not redact witness names or other information that may make it difficult or impossible for reviewing authorities to decipher and make appropriate determinations. **Overly redacted records or insufficient substantiating documentation are common errors that necessitate correction.**

- After the member provides a response (if any), the DAF Form 4363 and response are forwarded through the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) to the reviewing commander, the first military commander in the initiating commander's DAF chain of command who is at least a wing/delta commander or equivalent. If a wing/delta commander (or equivalent) or higher commander initiates the PPA, the initiating commander is also the reviewing commander. The reviewing commander may:
 - Recommend removal from the promotion list;
 - Approve an initial promotion delay not to exceed six months;
 - Recommend approval of a promotion delay extension;
 - Disapprove and terminate the action in two narrow circumstances (if the initiating commander's recommendation is considered premature or if the delay was based upon an investigation that resulted in a finding that the allegations were unsubstantiated, and no disciplinary action of any kind was taken against the officer); or
 - Recommend termination of the action with original or adjusted date of promotion.
- After indorsement, the reviewing commander sends the DAF Form 4363 electronically to the appropriate personnel organization, which routes the package prior to SecAF (or designee) action. Legal Transit is not utilized for initial submission of PPAs.
- Notwithstanding the commander's recommendation, SecAF may approve removal from the promotion list, approve a promotion delay, disapprove and terminate the action, or disapprove/terminate the action but adjust the member's date of promotion
 - **ONLY** SecAF may remove an officer from the promotion list, and only SecAF (or designee) may approve an extension of delay beyond six months from the effective date of promotion (up to six months at a time, not to exceed 18 months total)
- Terminating a Promotion Delay: Once an officer's promotion has been delayed, generally only SecAF has the authority to terminate (i.e., resolve) it. Commanders may initiate action to end the promotion delay at any time during the delay by using DAF Form 4364. Commanders must recommend resolution of a delay prior to expiration of an approved delay; however, failure to do so does not result in the officer promoting, as the delay remains in effect until terminated by proper authority.
- The initiating commander may recommend:
 - An extension of the initial delay;
 - Termination of the promotion delay with original date of promotion reinstated;
 - Termination of the delay with an effective date of promotion adjustment; or
 - Removal of the officer's name from the promotion list.

- If the commander recommends termination of the delay with an effective date of promotion adjustment, the date the commander recommends cannot be arbitrary. The commander must articulate specific reasons why the officer was not qualified until that date, but became qualified for promotion and met the exemplary conduct standard on the date recommended. **Insufficiently justified recommendations are a common error that necessitates correction.**
- On the DAF Form 4364, the commander lists the specific reasons for the action and includes evidence supporting those reasons, then serves the DAF Form 4364 and evidence on the officer. The officer has five duty days (RegAF, USSF, and full-time Reserve and Guard) or 30 calendar days (other Reserve and Guard) to provide a response.
- After the member provides a response (if any), the DAF Form 4364 and response are forwarded through the servicing SJA to the reviewing commander. The reviewing commander may:
 - Disapprove and terminate the action in two narrow circumstances;
 - Recommend a promotion delay extension;
 - Recommend delay termination with original date of promotion reinstated;
 - Recommend delay termination with an effective date of promotion adjustment; or
 - Recommend removal from the promotion list.
- Notwithstanding the commander's recommendation, SecAF may disapprove and terminate the action, approve a promotion delay extension, approve delay termination with original date of promotion reinstated, approve delay termination with an effective date of promotion adjustment, or approve removal from the promotion list
- **Supplemental Notifications:** A commander should expeditiously initiate a PPA when there is sufficient information to question an officer's promotion. However, that may mean initiating the PPA while a disciplinary process is ongoing (e.g., an Article 15), or the commander may become aware of additional information relevant to resolving the PPA prior to its completion (e.g., more misconduct), or the commander decides to change his or her recommendation after the officer responded (e.g., from delay to removal). In such cases, when there is a substantive change to any information relevant to the PPA, the initiating commander must serve a supplemental notification on the officer via an indorsement memorandum containing the updated or new information. The officer then has another five duty days or 30 calendar days to respond, and the supplemental notification, any attachments, and any response from the officer must route to any commander who has already acted on the PPA.
 - **When a supplemental notification is necessary, servicing legal offices must coordinate with FOA/JAJI prior to service on the officer**

SecAF-Directed PPAs (Following a Promotion Withhold)

- When an officer has been selected for promotion and a post-board screen reveals adverse information in the officer's record, SecAF may withhold the officer's name from the promotion list and direct initiation of a PPA. At SecAF's direction, the commander then initiates the PPA.
 - SecAF has plenary authority to direct a PPA, for example, if additional information is required to decide if the officer should promote, or if SecAF is considering removing the officer's name from the promotion list or adjusting the officer's date of promotion
 - SecAF may also withhold an officer's name from the promotion list and direct a PPA for the same reasons as a commander-initiated PPA, outlined above
- While substantively similar to a commander-initiated PPA, a SecAF-directed PPA following a promotion withhold has **four key differences**:
 - The initiating commander uses an indorsement memorandum to initiate this type of PPA, not DAF Form 4363. The commander is typically provided the template.
 - DAFI 36-2501, para. 3.7 (RegAF and USSF) and AFI 36-2504, para. 6.11 (Reserve and Guard) govern this type of PPA, not Chapter 5 and Chapter 8, respectively
 - At least one commander must make a statement evaluating the officer's judgment as it relates to the adverse information and the officer's potential for future service. This is typically done in a separate memorandum.
 - The major command (MAJCOM) or field command (FLDCOM) commander (or designee) must indicate whether the promotion is supported. There is no requirement for any other commander to make a recommendation; inclusion of a recommendation from any other commander in the chain of command is discretionary.

Not Qualified for Promotion (NQP) to First Lieutenant

- When a preponderance of the evidence shows a second lieutenant has not met the exemplary conduct requirement or is not mentally, physically, morally, or professionally qualified to perform the duties of the higher grade, the commander may recommend to SecAF (or designee) to find the officer NQP. NQP actions are meant to address officers found unqualified for promotion and could result in the second lieutenant's separation with an honorable service characterization. For this reason, if the basis for the action is misconduct, commanders should consider recommending a delay of the member's promotion and initiating administrative discharge proceedings.
- An NQP action must route from the initiating commander to the reviewing commander, the MAJCOM/FLDCOM commander (or designee), and the appropriate personnel organization
 - Commanders must make a recommendation for immediate discharge or retention for a minimum six-month observation period starting on the date promotion would have occurred

- **ONLY** SecAF (or designee) may make the final determination as to whether the officer is NQP, and whether the officer will be discharged or retained for an observation period
 - Second lieutenants found NQP will be retained on active duty for a minimum observation period of six months unless retention is inconsistent with good order and discipline

References

- Promotions: How Made, 10 U.S.C. § 624
- Removal from a List of Officers Recommended for Promotion, 10 U.S.C. § 629
- Separation of Regular Officers for Substandard Performance of Duty or for Certain other Reasons, 10 U.S.C. §§ 1181–87
- Requirement of Exemplary Conduct, 10 U.S.C. § 9233
- Removal from a List of Officers Recommended for Promotion, 10 U.S.C. § 14310
- DAFI 36-2501, *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation* (12 January 2024), incorporating through Change 2, 2 September 2025
- DAF Form 4363, *Record of Promotion Propriety Action* (17 January 2025)
- DAF Form 4364, *Record of Promotion Delay Resolution* (12 January 2025)
- AFI 36-2504, *Officer Promotion, Continuation, and Selective Early Removal in the Reserve of the Air Force* (4 August 2023), incorporating Change 1, 1 July 2025

ENLISTED PROMOTION PROPRIETY ACTIONS

Department of the Air Force (DAF) commanders are authorized to delay enlisted Air Force promotions or remove enlisted Air Force members from an approved promotion list when the commander deems it is necessary in the interests of good order and discipline.

Key Takeaways

- » Air Force promotion policy is to select individuals for promotion based on their potential to serve in the next higher grade
- » Enlisted promotion propriety actions are a set of tools available to commanders when managing enlisted promotions

Non-Recommendation for Promotion

- An enlisted member is considered ineligible for promotion when non-recommended or removed from the promotion list by the promotion authority before the effective date of the promotion, commonly referred to as “redlining”
- Standard: The Air Force member’s behavior does not adhere to established standards
- A promotion authority can non-recommend E-3s and below in monthly increments up to six months. All other ranks are non-recommended for one specific promotion cycle at a time.
- Air Force members also become ineligible for promotion under other circumstances, as outlined in AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs*, and SPFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Guardian Promotion and Demotion Programs*, which include, but are not limited to:
 - Placement on the control roster
 - Serving a probationary period as part of an involuntary discharge action
 - Pending administrative demotion action
 - Under a suspended reduction in grade imposed through nonjudicial punishment under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
 - Disqualified from a previously awarded Air or Space Force Specialty Code (AFSC or SFSC) for cause or disqualified from a previously awarded AFSC or SFSC not for cause and awaiting discharge
 - Conviction by court-martial, or undergoing punishment or suspended punishment imposed by a court-martial, or on appellate leave
 - Conviction by a civilian court (excluding minor traffic violations), or undergoing punishment or suspended punishment, probation, or work release program, or any combination of these or similar court-ordered conditions
 - Failed or non-current fitness assessment as of the promotion eligibility cutoff date

- For Air Force Reserve members eligible for vacancy or STEP I promotions, the unit commander lines through the name of the Individual Reservist or participating Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) member not approved for promotion, briefly states the reasons for non-approval, and annotates a date for reconsideration of promotion, not to exceed 180 days

Withholding of Promotion

- The immediate commander has the authority to withhold a promotion for up to one year after a member's selection for the next higher grade, but before the effective date of promotion
- Only a higher authority (wing/delta or equivalent level commander) may approve withholding of promotions longer than one year
- Withholding a promotion is not intended to be used as a punishment or inducement for the member to conform to acceptable standards of performance. This action allows the commander to evaluate unique or unusual events so a sound promotion decision can be made.
- The reasons for withholding a promotion include, but are not limited to, when the member is:
 - Awaiting a decision on an application as a conscientious objector
 - Under court-martial or civilian court charges
 - Placed into the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment program (ADAPT)
 - Under military/civilian investigation or subject to an inquiry (formal or informal) that may result in action under the UCMJ or prosecution by civilian authorities
 - When the member fails a fitness assessment after the promotion eligibility cutoff date or after having been selected for promotion (line number)
 - When requested by the member's commander based on other reasons with prior approval from the individual's wing/delta commander

Deferral

- A deferral is a delay in promotion for a specified period of time for members serving in the grade of E-5 through E-9
- Typically, deferral duration is for 1 to 3 months, however, in some instances waivers may be submitted and approved by Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) (see AFI 36-2502, para. 4.2.3.1 and SPFI 36-2502, para. 4.2.3.1). Wing/Delta or equivalent level commanders may approve deferring promotion beyond three months to members serving in the grades of E-5 to E-7.
- A deferral action may be used to allow the commander to determine if the member meets acceptable behavior and performance standards for the higher grade. If there is clear evidence that the member is not suited to take on increased responsibilities of the higher grade because he/she does not adhere to established standards, then non-recommendation is the right course of action, not deferral.

Procedures

- When non-recommending, deferring, or withholding promotions, the commander informs the member of adverse actions before the promotion effective date
- The notification must include specific reasons, dates, occurrences, and duration of the action
- Air Force Reserve: AF Form 224, *Recommendation and Authorization for Promotion of Airman as Reserve of the Air Force*, is used to document non-recommendation actions and promotions

References

- Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs* (26 September 2024), incorporating Change 1, 14 August 2025
- SPFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Guardian Promotion and Demotion Programs*, (11 September 2024)
- AF Form 224, *Recommendation and Authorization for Promotion of Airman as Reserve of the Air Force* (26 September 2024)

Chapter 3

NONJUDICIAL PUNISHMENT UNDER ARTICLE 15, UCMJ

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NONJUDICIAL PUNISHMENT OVERVIEW AND PROCEDURES

Nonjudicial punishment (NJP) under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), provides commanders with an essential and prompt means of maintaining good order and discipline outside of the court-martial process. NJP is designed to promote positive behavior changes in service members without the stigma of a court-martial conviction.

Key Takeaways

- » NJP is designed to be an efficient means to investigate and adjudicate minor offenses under the UCMJ
- » NJP is a forum choice offered by commanders in lieu of a court-martial
- » Commanders act as finders of fact and punishment authority for the NJP process
- » Members have various due process rights with NJP, including the right to counsel, the right to review and present evidence to the commander prior to a determination on guilt, and the right to appeal

NJP Standards and Definitions

- Determining Whether NJP is Appropriate: NJP is utilized for the disposition of minor UCMJ offenses. Factors to consider for determining whether NJP is appropriate include:
 - The nature of the offense;
 - The record of the service member;
 - The need for good order and discipline; and
 - The effect of NJP on the service member and the service member's record.
- Determining Whether an Offense is Minor: Whether an offense is minor depends on several factors:
 - The nature and circumstances surrounding the offense;
 - The offender's age, rank, duty assignment, record and experience; and
 - The maximum sentence imposable for the offense if tried by general court-martial.
- NJP Authority: Generally, any commander may impose NJP for minor offenses committed by members under his/her command. Superior commanders may withhold all or part of NJP authority from any subordinate commander. Additionally, a commander may not offer NJP on a covered, known, or related offense until the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) has deferred authority over said offense(s). Consult with your Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) for situations involving host/tenant commanders, deployed members, or joint commands under a sister service's control.

- NJP Timelines: 80% of NJPs should be completed within 39 days from the date the offense is discovered
 - *Date of “discovery” to date of NJP offer*: 21 days. “Date of discovery” means the date when any investigator (e.g., Security Forces, commander, legal office, first sergeant, supervisor) becomes aware of the offense and has identified a subject.
 - *Date of NJP offer to date of NJP completion*: 18 days. Punishment should be served on them member within nine calendar days of the offer of NJP, and the SJA’s legal review should be completed within nine calendar days of the service of punishment.

Procedure

- Forum Choice: NJP is a *forum choice* for an accused member. A commander offers NJP in lieu of a court-martial. A commander cannot force a member to accept NJP.
- SJA Consultation Required: Commanders must confer with the SJA prior to both initiation of NJP proceedings and imposition of punishment. The Military Justice section of the servicing legal office prepares the NJP form (AF Form 3070).
- Standard of Proof: Preponderance of the evidence, meaning it is *more likely than not* the member committed the offense. Commanders should consult the servicing legal office for advice on whether the standard is met for any given NJP offense.
- Offering NJP: A member must always be informed of the identity of the commander who will in fact make the findings and punishment decision before the member makes an election to accept NJP or demand court-martial

Accused Member’s Rights

- Forum Choice: An accused has the right to refuse NJP and to demand trial by court-martial
 - An accused served with NJP has 3 duty days to decide whether to “accept” NJP as the forum for their case
 - “Accepting” NJP as the forum is **NOT** an admission of guilt, but rather a choice to allow a commander to determine guilt rather than facing trial by court-martial
- Right to Counsel: Accused members have a right to, and should consult with, an Area Defense Counsel (ADC). Typically, an ADC appointment will be arranged by the member’s first sergeant as soon as possible following offer of NJP.
- Right to Review Evidence: The accused has the right to examine all statements and evidence the commander considered in arriving at the decision to offer NJP. Before releasing matters to the member or defense counsel, personally identifying information must be redacted if such information is determined not relevant for due process purposes.
- Right to Present Evidence: The accused is entitled to present matters on his/her own behalf in defense, mitigation, and extenuation

- Right to Personal Appearance: An accused member is generally entitled to appear before the imposing commander, during which the accused member may present matters on his/her own behalf. There is no entitlement for the accused member's counsel to accompany the member for the personal appearance. If the imposing commander is unable to accommodate a personal appearance and alternate means (e.g., telephone or video call) cannot be utilized, the commander may appoint a designee to receive the personal appearance. The designee must prepare a written summary of the accused member's presentation.

Commander's Findings and Punishment

- After a full and fair consideration of all matters in defense, mitigation, and extenuation, the commander must first determine whether the accused member committed the offense
- If the commander determines, by a preponderance of the evidence, the accused committed the offense, the commander must then determine what punishment to impose. Commanders must refrain from considering punishment until guilt has been determined.

Punishment Limitations

- Specific Punishment Limitations: There are limitations on certain punishments (see MCM Part 5, para. 5(d) for more information):
 - *Restriction and Extra Duties*: If restriction and extra duties are combined, they must run concurrently and must not exceed the maximum time imposable for extra duties
 - *Arrest in Quarters*: For officers only and cannot be combined with restriction
 - *Forfeiture of Pay*: The maximum authorized forfeiture that a commander may impose is based upon the grade of imposing commander and the member. If a member is reduced in grade, the maximum forfeiture is calculated based on the reduced grade, even if the reduction in grade is suspended.
- Effective Dates of Punishments:
 - *Forfeiture of Pay*: Unsuspended forfeitures of pay take effect on the date the commander imposes punishment
 - *Reductions in Grade*: Unsuspended reductions in grade take effect on the date the commander imposes punishment. Suspended reductions also take effect on the date the commander imposes punishment.
 - All other unsuspended punishments take effect immediately upon **notification** to the member, unless the commander provides otherwise in the punishment

Appeals

- First Appeal – Imposing Commander: Members are entitled to appeal NJP to the commander who imposed the original punishment. Members may appeal the guilty finding, the punishment, or both. This must be done within 5 calendar days after the member is served punishment.
- Final Appeal – Superior Commander: If the imposing commander does not grant the requested relief, then the next superior commander becomes the appellate authority. The appellate authority's decision is final.

References

- Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Manual for Courts-Martial, United States, pt. V (2024), Nonjudicial Punishment Procedure
- DAFI 51-202, *Nonjudicial Punishment* (4 January 2022), including DAFGM2025-01, 2 September 2025
- DAF Form 3070A, *Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings (E-1 through E-5)* (9 December 2025)
- DAF Form 3070B, *Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings (E-6 through E-9)* (9 December 2025)
- DAF Form 3070C, *Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings (Officer)* (9 December 2025)
- DAF Form 3070D, *Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings (E-6 through E-9) – Air National Guard Only* (9 December 2025)

SUPPLEMENTARY NONJUDICIAL PUNISHMENT ACTIONS

Supplementary nonjudicial punishment (NJP) actions provide commanders with the flexibility to alter previously imposed NJP when the member's conduct or other extenuating circumstances warrant a change. These supplementary actions include: suspension, mitigation, remission, set aside, and vacation of a suspended punishment.

Key Takeaways

- » Supplementary NJP actions allow punishments to be altered in appropriate circumstances, largely to incentivize or reward positive behavior changes
- » Commanders must consult with the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) prior to taking supplementary NJP action
- » Subsequent misconduct that forms the basis for a supplementary NJP action to vacate a suspended punishment may also form the basis for a separate disciplinary action

Initiating a Supplemental Action

- With the exception of a vacation action, supplementary NJP actions are filed as attachments to the original NJP action. Post-punishment relief may be requested by the member and may be granted by the imposing commander or successor in command. Commanders may also take supplementary action of their own volition, without a request from the member. Commanders must consult with the SJA prior to acting on any supplementary action.

Suspension

- Definition: Suspension postpones all or part of a punishment for a probationary period
- Standard: Commanders can suspend punishment at the time of imposition, thereby postponing part, or all, of a punishment for a specific probationary period as a motivational tool for the member
- Suspension of a punishment may not be for a period longer than six months from the date the suspension was imposed or longer than six months from the date the original punishment was imposed
- Commanders may, at any time, suspend any part or amount of the unexecuted punishment imposed
 - An *executed* punishment of reduction in grade or forfeiture may only be suspended within four months of the date of punishment
 - When a reduction in grade is later suspended, the member's original date of rank, held before the reduction, is reinstated for the purposes of promotion. However, the effective date of rank is the date of the document directing the suspension.

- For the period when a member has a suspended reduction in grade, the member is ineligible for promotion, promotion consideration, and testing. The member is also ineligible to reenlist but may be eligible for an extension of enlistment.

Mitigation

- Definition: Mitigation is a reduction in either the quantity or level of a punishment
- Standard: Mitigation is appropriate when the member's subsequent conduct merits a reduced punishment, or if the original punishment was disproportionate to the offense
- With the exception of reduction in grade, only the *unexecuted* part or amount of the punishments can be mitigated:
 - Reduction in grade may be mitigated after it has been executed. It can only be mitigated to forfeitures of pay, and only within four months of the original punishment date.
 - Punishments involving loss of liberty may only be mitigated to less severe forms of loss of liberty (i.e., they cannot be mitigated to forfeitures or reduction in grade)
 - When restraint on liberty is mitigated, the mitigated punishment cannot last beyond the end date of the originally imposed punishment

Remission

- Definition: Remission is the cancellation of any unexecuted portion of a punishment
- Standard: Remission is appropriate when the member's subsequent conduct merits a reduced punishment, or if the original punishment was disproportionate to the offense
- Commanders may remit any unexecuted portion of the punishment imposed. An unsuspended reduction in grade is executed upon imposition, and therefore cannot be remitted, but under appropriate circumstances may be suspended, mitigated, or set aside.

Set Aside

- Definition: Set aside removes a punishment, whether executed or unexecuted. **A set aside of all punishment voids the entire NJP action** and restores all rights to the member.
- Standard: Set aside is appropriate when the authority considering the case believes that, under all circumstances of the case, the punishment has resulted in clear injustice
- Time Limits: Punishments should be set aside within a reasonable time (four months, except in unusual circumstances) after the punishment is originally imposed

Vacation of a Suspended Punishment

- Definition: Imposing punishment that was previously suspended
- Standard: Vacating a suspended punishment is appropriate if a member violates either a condition of the suspension (specified in writing by the commander in the NJP) or any punitive article of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
 - A new offense may be the basis for both a vacation action **AND** new NJP action
 - However, an offense warranting a vacation action does not necessarily have to be one that would otherwise warrant new NJP, nor does it have to be of the same nature as the original offense

Procedure for Vacation Actions

- The commander must notify and advise the member of the intended vacation, including:
 - A description of the basis for the vacation (i.e., new offense or probation violation), the fact the commander is considering vacating the suspended punishment, and the member's rights during the vacation proceedings
- Member's Rights: Unlike other supplementary actions, a vacation action is detrimental to the member and therefore comes with due process protections similar to NJP, namely: (1) three duty days to respond; (2) the right to consult counsel; (3) right to submit written matters; (4) right to request a personal appearance before the imposing commander
- Commander's Decision: Following the commander's consideration of the evidence and any matters presented by the member, the commander either imposes the originally suspended punishment or terminates the vacation proceedings
- Effects of Vacation Action on Suspended Reductions:
 - If a suspension of a reduction in grade is vacated, the member's date of rank, for the purposes of promotion, will be the date the commander imposed the original punishment. For the purposes of pay, however, the effective date of rank will be the day the suspension is vacated. The member will not be required to return any additional pay received while holding the higher rank.

References

- Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Manual for Courts-Martial, United States, pt. V (2024), Nonjudicial Punishment Procedure
- DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment* (22 May 2024)
- DAFI 36-2608, *Military Personnel Records System* (16 April 2021), incorporating through Change 3, 14 August 2025
- DAFI 51-202, *Nonjudicial Punishment* (4 January 2022), including DAFGM2025-01, 2 September 2025
- AF Form 366, *Record of Proceedings of Vacation of Suspended Nonjudicial Punishment* (29 March 2019)
- AF Form 3212, *Record of Supplementary Action Under Article 15, UCMJ* (9 December 2025)

QUALITY FORCE MANAGEMENT EFFECTS OF NONJUDICIAL PUNISHMENT

Generally speaking, there are three main possible follow-on force management ramifications of nonjudicial punishment (NJP) action: (1) placement of the NJP in an Unfavorable Information File (UIF); (2) placement of the NJP in a Senior Noncommissioned Officer (SNCO) or Officer Selection Record (OSR); and (3) follow-on “referral” Enlisted or Officer Performance Briefs.

Key Takeaways

- » All officer NJPs and enlisted NJPs with punishment exceeding 31 days are mandatory UIF entries. The remaining actions are discretionary.
- » Under certain circumstances, NJPs may be removed from UIFs early
- » All officer NJPs must be filed in the (OSR)
- » Commanders have discretion whether NJP is filed in a SNCO's Promotion Selection Record

Unfavorable Information File Nonjudicial Punishment Entries

- Mandatory Entries: Entry of an NJP into a UIF is mandatory for all officer NJPs. For enlisted, UIF entry is required if any portion of the executed or suspended punishment will not be completed within 31 days.
 - Post-punishment supplementary actions to suspend a previously imposed punishment must be filed in the UIF, with the original NJP, until the suspension period is completed
 - Actions to vacate a suspended punishment must be entered into the UIF
- Discretionary Entries: All other NJPs are discretionary UIF entries at the election of the imposing commander
- Notice: Members are entitled to notice of the action being entered into a UIF
- UIF Retention Period: NJP actions entered into a UIF must remain there until all punishment is completed or remitted, including any periods of suspension
 - *Mandatory UIF*: If the commander takes no action to remove a mandatory UIF NJP action, it will remain in the UIF for two years for enlisted members and four years for officers
 - *Discretionary UIF*: If the commander takes no action to remove a discretionary UIF NJP action, it will remain in the UIF for one year
- Early Removal of NJP from UIF: The commander may remove the NJP action and related documents from the member's UIF any time after the punishment or suspended punishment is completed (if removal is clearly warranted), or if the NJP is set aside

Related Administrative Actions

- In addition to NJP, commanders may take other appropriate administrative actions, including but not limited to:
 - Control Roster action;
 - Entry of the member into counseling or rehabilitation programs, such as the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program (ADAPT);
 - Enlisted Performance Brief (EPB) comments concerning the member's underlying misconduct (referral EPB);
 - Promotion Propriety Action (officer) if the member has been selected for promotion but not yet pinned on;
 - Administrative discharge; and
 - Removal from the personnel reliability program (PRP), withholding a security clearance, or withholding access to sensitive materials.
- NJP may also adversely affect promotion, reenlistment, and assignment eligibility

Officer Unfavorable Information File Nonjudicial Punishment Entries

- An NJP is permanently retained in the officer's Master Personnel Record Group (Correspondence and Miscellaneous Group) unless set aside in its entirety or ordered removed by the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR)
- UIF Retention Period: Officer NJP actions are retained in a UIF for four years
 - Early removal is only permissible after completion of all punishment. Only the wing commander or issuing authority (whomever is higher in rank) is authorized to remove an officer NJP from a UIF.
- Referral OPB/PRF Consideration: Commanders should also consider whether comments should be made in the next Officer Performance Brief (OPB) and/or Promotion Recommendation Form (PRF)
 - Sex related offenses punished by NJP require a mandatory notation in the officer's next OPB and/or PRF
 - A Letter of Reprimand (LOR), NJP, and court-martial conviction require a UIF

Officer and SNCO Promotion Selection Records

- Commanders must determine whether to place NJP in the SNCO selection record of all members in the grade of E-6 and above

- Disciplinary Actions filed in the officer OSR:
 - Letters of Counseling (LOC): Mandatory OSR filing if related to a substantiated finding or conclusion from officially documented investigation or inquiry. Not mandatory if LOC is a “stand-alone” action.
 - Letter of Admonishment or LOR: Mandatory OSR filing
 - NJP: Mandatory OSR filing
 - Court-Martial: Mandatory OSR filing
- Reviewing Authority: The imposing commander’s decision to file an NJP in a SNCO’s selection record is subject to review by the next senior Air Force commander unless the General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) imposed the punishment
- SNCO Selection Record Retention Period: Retention is required for two years or until after the member meets one SNCO evaluation board. Early removal is authorized only if approved by the commander who originally placed the NJP in the selection record, or successors in command.
- Officer Selection Record Retention Period: Adverse information filed in the OSR will remain in the OSR for O-6 and below promotion boards for at least 10 years, and indefinitely if the conduct at issue was punishable, if tried by court-martial, by a punitive discharge **AND** confinement for more than one year. Except for the set aside of NJP action, earlier removal of adverse information from the OSR may only be directed by the AFBCMR.

References

- Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DoDI 1320.14, *DoD Commissioned Officer Promotion Program Procedures* (16 December 2020)
- DAFI 36-2608, *Military Personnel Records System* (16 April 2021), incorporating through Change 3, 14 August 2025
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 8, 18 July 2025
- DAFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) Program* (16 September 2025)
- DAFI 51-202, *Nonjudicial Punishment* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-202_ DAFGM2025-01, 2 September 2025
- DAF Form 3070A, Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings (E-1 through E-5) (9 December 2025)
- DAF Form 3070B, Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings (E-6 through E-9) (9 December 2025)
- DAF Form 3070C, Record of Nonjudicial Punishment Proceedings (Officer) (9 December 2025)
- AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems* (22 August 2025)

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INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION OF ENLISTED MEMBERS: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Commanders and supervisors must identify enlisted members who show a likelihood for early separation and make reasonable efforts to help these members meet Department of the Air Force (DAF) standards. Members who do not show potential for continued service should be considered for discharge. Commanders must consult the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) and Military Personnel Flight (MPF) before initiating the involuntary separation of a member. DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*, governs involuntary separations for enlisted members in the Regular Air Force (RegAF), the Air Force Reserve (AFR), and the Air National Guard (ANG). This instruction also applies to U.S. Space Force (USSF) enlisted members until such time as separate service guidance is published.

Key Takeaways

- » A commander must consider the member's potential for future useful services as well as all the factors that make the member subject to discharge
- » Discharges involving post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and/or sexual assault may require special processing
- » An administrative discharge is not a substitute for disciplinary actions

General Preprocessing Considerations

- Before initiating discharge, a commander must consider the member's potential for future service, as well as all the factors that make the member subject to discharge, including:
 - The seriousness of circumstances that make the member subject to discharge and how the member's retention might affect military discipline, good order, and morale
 - Whether the circumstances that are the basis for discharge action will continue or recur
 - The likelihood that the member will be disruptive or an undesirable influence in present or future duty assignments
 - The member's ability to perform duties effectively in the present and in the future
 - The member's potential for advancement and leadership
 - An evaluation of the member's military record including, but not limited to:
 - Records of nonjudicial punishment
 - Records of counseling
 - Letters of reprimand or admonishment
 - Records of conviction by courts-martial

- Records of involvement with civilian authorities
- Past contributions to the DAF
- Duty assignments and enlisted evaluations
- Awards, decorations, and letters of commendation
- The effectiveness of preprocessing rehabilitation, when required
- A commander should **NOT** use an administrative discharge as a substitute for disciplinary action
- Generally, the acts or conditions on which the discharge is based must have occurred in the current enlistment. **The exceptions are:**
 - Fraudulent enlistment, erroneous enlistment, or the interest of national security;
 - Cases in which the act or condition occurred in the immediately preceding enlistment and the commander was not aware of the facts warranting discharge until after the member reenlisted and there was no break in service; and/or
 - Cases in which the member is being separated for failure in the fitness program and at least one instance of unsatisfactory performance is in the current enlistment. Under these circumstances, instances of unsatisfactory performance in the immediately preceding enlistment may support the basis for discharge.
- Prior to processing a member for discharge for parenthood, conditions that interfere with military service, entry level performance and conduct, unsatisfactory performance, and minor disciplinary infractions or a pattern of misconduct, commanders must give the member an opportunity to overcome deficiencies
 - Efforts to rehabilitate may include, but are not limited to, counseling, reprimands, control roster action, nonjudicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), change in duty assignment, demotion, additional training, and retraining, or other administrative actions
 - It is extremely important to properly document rehabilitative efforts and keep copies of these documents

Special Processing – Members Diagnosed with or Reasonably Asserting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injury

- All enlisted DAF members being recommended for involuntary separation who have deployed overseas in support of a contingency operation or were sexually assaulted during the previous 24 months and have been diagnosed with or reasonably assert post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) must receive a medical examination. The medical examination must assess whether the effects of PTSD or TBI constitute matters in extenuation that relate to the basis for involuntary administrative separation. The medical examination is required if the member:

- Is being administratively separated under a characterization that is not either Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions (General);
 - Was deployed overseas to a contingency operation or sexually assaulted during the previous 24 months;
 - Has been diagnosed by a physician, clinical psychologist, psychiatrist, licensed clinical social worker, or psychiatric advanced practice registered nurse as experiencing PTSD or TBI, or reasonably alleges the influence of PTSD or TBI based on deployed service to a contingency operation or a sexual assault that occurred during the previous 24 months; and
 - Is not being separated under a sentence of court-martial, or other proceeding conducted pursuant to the UCMJ.
- Members diagnosed with or reasonably asserting PTSD or TBI will not be separated until the result of the medical examination has been reviewed by appropriate authorities responsible for evaluating, reviewing, and approving the separation action, to include (if applicable): the initiating commander, administrative discharge board, convening authorities, separation authority, Air Force Review Board, and/or the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF)

Special Preprocessing Considerations for Service Members Who Have Made an Unrestricted Report of a Sexual Assault

- DAF service members who made an unrestricted report of sexual assault and who are within one year of final disposition of his/her sexual assault allegation may request a general officer to review the circumstances of and grounds for any recommendation of his/her involuntary separation from the DAF
 - The general officer review is conducted by the General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) or, if the GCMCA is not a general officer, the first general officer in the member's chain of command
 - An enlisted member entitled to GCMCA review must be notified of this right in the separation notification memorandum
 - The member must submit his/her request for GCMCA review in writing. For officer members, the request must affirmatively assert that he/she believes the pending discharge action was initiated in retaliation for making a report of sexual assault.
 - A member who submits a timely request to the GCMCA may not be separated until the GCMCA conducting the review concurs with the circumstances of and grounds for the involuntary separation

Gender Dysphoria

- Service members who have a current diagnosis or history of, or exhibiting symptoms consistent with, gender dysphoria will be processed for involuntary separation. Special procedures apply to this reason for discharge. Commanders should review current DAFI 36-3211 guidance and consult the servicing SJA.

Characterizations of Service

- The service of a member administratively separated may be characterized as Honorable, General (Under Honorable Conditions), or Under Other Than Honorable Conditions (UOTHC)
 - Honorable: Appropriate when the quality of the member's service generally has met DAF standards of acceptable conduct and performance of duty, or a member's service is otherwise so meritorious that any other characterization would be inappropriate
 - General (Under Honorable Conditions): Appropriate if a member's service has been honest and faithful, but significant negative aspects of the member's conduct or performance outweigh positive aspects of military record
 - UOTHC: Appropriate if based on a pattern of behavior or one or more acts or omissions constituting a significant departure from the conduct expected of DAF service members. This characterization can be given only if the member is offered an administrative discharge board or if a discharge is unconditionally requested in lieu of trial by court-martial.
- A dishonorable discharge and a bad conduct discharge are punitive discharges and are authorized only as a result of a court-martial sentence
- If the sole basis for discharging a DAF member with a UOTHC service characterization is a serious offense that resulted in conviction by a court-martial that did not adjudge a punitive discharge, then SecAF must approve the service characterization. However, the following courts-martial are not authorized to impose a punitive discharge, and are thus not limited by this paragraph:
 - Summary courts-martial
 - Cases referred to a special court-martial by military judge alone pursuant to Article 16(c)(2)(A), UCMJ
 - Any courts-martial where the military judge accepts a pretrial agreement or plea agreement provision whereby the accused and the convening authority agree the accused will not be sentenced to a punitive discharge
- Separation without Service Characterization: Members in entry level status will ordinarily receive an "entry level separation" without service characterization. Entry level status is defined as within **365 days** of continuous active military service.

How Characterization of Service Affects Veteran's Benefits

- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides several benefits to veterans including the GI Bill, home loan benefits, disability compensation, and other benefits. More information on the availability of veteran's benefits can be found at www.benefits.va.gov.
- To become eligible for veteran's benefits, the active duty member must have been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. The term "dishonorable" is broader in the context of determining VA benefit eligibility.
- In general, to qualify for VA educational benefits (e.g., GI bill) an honorable discharge is required

References

- Members Diagnosed With or Reasonably Asserting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injury: Medical Examination Required Before Administrative Separation, 10 U.S.C. § 1177
- Article 16, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DoDI 1332.14, *Enlisted Administrative Separations* (1 August 2024)
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025

INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION OF ENLISTED MEMBERS: REASONS FOR DISCHARGE

Specific reasons for involuntarily separating active duty enlisted members are set forth in Chapter 7 of DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*. The facts and circumstances are different in each case and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. An overview of the broad reasons for discharge of Regular Air Force (RegAF) and U.S. Space Force (USSF) enlisted members are below. Involuntary separations of members of the Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Force Reserve (AFR) are also governed by the provisions of DAFI 36-3211. Table 13.1 provides a comprehensive list of permissible reasons for enlisted separations for members of ANG and AFR.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders must consult with the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) and Military Personnel Flight (MPF) prior to initiating the involuntary separation of a member
- » With a few exceptions, a commander is generally not required to initiate involuntary separation of a member just because a reason for discharge set out in DAFI 36-3211 exists
- » Commanders must promptly either initiate discharge or seek a waiver when a member is found to have committed sexual assault, engaged in fraudulent or erroneous enlistment, been convicted of a qualifying civilian offense, abused drugs, or engaged in certain unprofessional relationships

Mandatory Involuntary Discharge Processing

- A commander **MUST** initiate discharge processing or seek a waiver of the discharge if the reason for discharge is one of the following:
 - Fraudulent or erroneous enlistment
 - Civilian court conviction for an offense for which a punitive discharge would be authorized under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) **OR** civilian sentence which includes confinement for six months or more (regardless of suspension or probation)
 - Drug abuse
 - Sexual assault (including of a child)
 - Unprofessional relationships with prospective members of the armed forces or new members during recruiting, entry level processing, entry level training or initial skills training

Convenience of the Government Discharges

- Discharge is appropriate when separation would serve the best interest of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and discharge for cause is not warranted. Such separations may be based on:
 - Parenthood, if the member fails to meet military obligations because of parental responsibilities
 - Insufficient retainability for required training, if the cost of retraining for a brief period of service may not warrant retention
 - Medical/Psychological conditions that interfere with military service but not rising to the level of “disabilities” severe enough to warrant medical discharge via a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB)
 - Mental Disorders:
 - *Documentation*:
 - Must be supported in writing by a report of evaluation by a psychiatrist or PhD-level clinical psychologist that confirms a diagnosis of a disorder contained in the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Medical Disorders;
 - Must be documented in a report as so severe that the member’s ability to function in the military environment is significantly impaired;
 - Deficiencies continued after counseling by a medical provider;
 - The documentation must show that prior to initiation of discharge the member has been formally counseled concerning deficiencies and afforded an opportunity to overcome them. [**Note:** The unit commander is responsible to ensure the counseling requirement has been met]; and
 - Must include documentation from the member’s supervisory chain that the condition or disorder has resulted in an adverse effect on the member’s assignment or duty performance.
 - *Special Processing*: Required for DAF service members who are currently serving or who have served in an imminent danger pay area and have been diagnosed with a personality disorder that is the basis of the discharge. Additionally, special processing is required, if the member deployed overseas in support of a contingency operation or was sexually assaulted during the previous 24 months and has been diagnosed with or is reasonably asserting post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI).
 - The diagnosis of a personality disorder must specifically address PTSD or other mental illness co-morbidity

- Separation **WILL NOT** be initiated if there is a diagnosis of service-related PTSD, unless the member is subsequently found fit for duty under the disability evaluation system in accordance with DAFI 36-3212, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement, and Separation*
- The DAF Surgeon General (SG) must review the diagnosis and concur with supporting documentation prior to initiation of the separation. If the SG does not concur with the diagnosis, no further action will be taken.
- Discharge for conditions that interfere with military service is not appropriate if the member's record supports discharge for another reason, such as misconduct or unsatisfactory performance
- Service is characterized as Honorable or described as Entry Level Separation (ELS)
- **Before recommending discharge**, commanders must ensure:
 - Preprocessing rehabilitation requirements in DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.2, have been met;
 - They have complied with all requirements of the specific DAFI paragraph authorizing discharge; **AND**
 - Circumstances do not warrant discharge for another reason.

Defective Enlistments

- Enlistment of Minors: A person under 17 years of age is barred by law from enlisting without parental consent
- Void Enlistments: An enlistment may be void because the individual is underage or for a reason other than minority
- Erroneous Enlistment: The DAF should not have accepted the enlistee, but the case does not involve fraud
- Fraudulent Entry: Involved deliberate deception on the part of the enlistee
- Action Required of the Commander: A commander who has information that shows an enlistment may be erroneous or fraudulent must verify the information as soon as possible
 - If the member is subject to discharge for erroneous enlistment or fraudulent entry, the commander must act promptly to recommend the member's discharge for erroneous enlistment or fraudulent entry, discharge for another reason, or a waiver of the discharge
- Authorized characterizations of service and the approval authorities are listed in DAFI 36-3211, Table 7.4
- Members approved for discharge are **NOT** eligible for probation and rehabilitation (P&R)

Entry Level Performance or Conduct

- Enlisted members in entry level status should be discharged when unsatisfactory performance or conduct shows the member is not a productive member of the DAF
- Discharge processing must start during the first **365 days** of continuous active duty
- Eligibility for discharge based on entry level performance or conduct does not preclude separation for another reason
- Before processing a member for discharge for unsatisfactory entry level performance or conduct, a commander must ensure efforts to rehabilitate the member, allowing the member the opportunity to overcome deficiencies. The commander should ensure these efforts are documented.
- Discharge under this section is described as ELS
- Members approved for discharge for entry level performance or conduct are **NOT** eligible for P&R

Unsatisfactory Performance

- Members should be discharged when unsatisfactory performance or conduct shows they are not qualified for service in the DAF
- Performance includes assigned duties, military training, bearing and behavior, as well as maintaining the high standards of personal behavior and conduct always required of all military members
- Unsatisfactory performance may be evidenced by any of the following:
 - Unsatisfactory duty performance, which may include:
 - Failure to properly perform assigned duties
 - A progressively downward trend in performance ratings
 - Failure to demonstrate the qualities of leadership required by the member's grade
 - Failure to maintain standards of dress and personal appearance, other than fitness standards, or military deportment
 - Failure to progress in military training required to be qualified for service with the DAF or for the performance of primary duties
 - Irresponsibility in the management of personal finances
 - Failure to meet fitness standards

- Before processing a member for discharge for unsatisfactory performance, a commander must ensure efforts to rehabilitate the member, allowing the member the opportunity to overcome deficiencies. The commander should ensure these efforts are documented.
- Service is characterized as Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions (General)
- Members approved for discharge should be considered for P&R

Failure in Drug or Alcohol Abuse Treatment

- Members are subject to discharge for failure in drug or alcohol abuse treatment if they:
 - Are in a program of rehabilitation for abuse of drugs or alcohol and fail to complete the program due to inability, refusal to participate, or unwillingness to cooperate; **AND**
 - Lack the potential for continued military service or need long-term treatment and are transferred to a civilian medical facility for treatment.
- Service is characterized as Honorable, General, or ELS
- Members approved for discharge are eligible for P&R

Misconduct Discharges

- Unacceptable conduct adversely affects military duty and may be a basis for discharge
- Types of misconduct include:
 - Minor Disciplinary Infractions: Includes minor infractions during the current enlistment resulting in Letters of Counseling (LOCs), Letters of Admonishment (LOAs), Letters of Reprimand (LORs), and nonjudicial punishment (NJP) actions (DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.38)
 - Before processing a member for discharge for misconduct consisting of minor disciplinary infractions, a commander must ensure efforts to rehabilitate the member, allowing the member the opportunity to overcome deficiencies. The commander should ensure these efforts are documented.
 - Members approved for discharge are eligible for P&R
 - Pattern of Misconduct: Includes misconduct more serious than that consisting of minor disciplinary infractions such as (1) discreditable involvement with military or civilian authorities, (2) conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline, (3) failure to support dependents, or (4) dishonorable failure to pay just debts (DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.39)
 - Before processing a member for discharge for misconduct consisting of a pattern of misconduct, a commander must ensure efforts to rehabilitate the member, allowing the member the opportunity to overcome deficiencies. The commander should ensure these efforts are documented.
 - Members approved for discharge are eligible for P&R

- Commission of a Serious Offense: Includes offenses for which a punitive discharge would be authorized under the UCMJ (DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.40)
 - DAF service members are subject to discharge for misconduct based on acts of aberrant sexual behavior or acts of sexual misconduct which include but are not limited to offenses such as indecent viewing, visual recording or broadcasting, forcible pandering, and indecent exposure
 - DAF service members may be discharged for misconduct based on unauthorized absence continuing for one year or more
 - DAF service members are subject to discharge for misconduct based on acts that constitute unprofessional relationships between recruiters and potential recruits during the recruiting process or between students and faculty or staff in training schools or professional military education setting
- Civilian Conviction: When the member is convicted, or there is a finding that amounts to a conviction of an offense which would authorize a punitive discharge under the UCMJ, **OR** when the sentence by civilian authorities includes confinement for six months or more (DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.41)
 - A commander must promptly initiate discharge or seek a waiver, however, **there is no time limit** for initiating discharge action, and failure to do so **DOES NOT**, at any time, constitute constructive waiver
 - It is general policy to withhold execution of discharge until the outcome of the appeal is known or the time for appeal has passed. If the appeal results in the conviction being set aside, the member may not be discharged due to civilian conviction.
 - A DAF service member whose home of record is in the continental United States (CONUS) may be discharged in absentia if he/she is in civil confinement in the CONUS or has been released from confinement in the CONUS and is absent without authority
 - A DAF service member in a foreign penal institution may not be discharged until released from confinement and returned CONUS or higher authority (Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC)) authorizes an exception
 - Members approved for discharge are eligible for P&R
- Drug Abuse: The illegal, wrongful, or improper use, possession, sale, transfer, or introduction onto a military installation of any drug (DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.43)
 - This includes prescription medication, Schedules I–V Controlled Substances, 21 U.S.C. § 812. It also includes steroids and any intoxicating substance, other than alcohol or tobacco, that is inhaled, injected, consumed, or introduced into the body in any manner for purposes of altering mood or function.

- Commanders must act promptly when information indicates drug abuse and initiate discharge or seek a waiver of discharge processing
- A member found to have abused drugs will be discharged unless the member meets all the retention criteria in DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.43.4.2. The member has the burden of proving that he/she meets all retention criteria.
- Members approved for discharge are not eligible for P&R
- Sexual Assault: Includes a broad category of sex offenses such as rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy, or attempts to commit these offenses. Sexual assault of a child includes rape of a child, sexual assault of a child, sexual abuse of a child, or attempts to commit these offenses. (DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.44.1).
- Commanders will act promptly when they have information indicating a member is subject to discharge for sexual assault or sexual assault of a child. They evaluate the specific circumstances of the offense and take prompt action to initiate discharge or seek waiver of discharge processing in accordance with applicable guidance. (DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.44.3.1).
- A member found to have committed sexual assault or sexual assault of a child will be discharged unless the member meets all retention criteria in DAFI 36-3211, para. 7.44.3.2.1. The member has the burden of proving he/she meets all retention criteria.
- Members approved for discharge are not eligible for P&R
- Misconduct: Usually, the characterization for misconduct cases under DAFI 36-3211, paras. 7.39, 7.40, 7.41, 7.43, and 7.44 should be Under Other Than Honorable Conditions (UOTHC), but characterization may be Honorable, General, or ELS in appropriate cases
- The General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA), usually the Numbered Air Force commander, will approve separation for misconduct with a service characterization of Honorable or UOTHC

Discharge in the Interest of National Security

- A member whose retention is clearly inconsistent with the interest of national security may be discharged
- Discharge may only be initiated after criteria in DAFI 36-3211, paras. 7.46.1 and 7.46.2 have been met
- Discharge may be characterized as ELS, Honorable, General, or UOTHC
- Members approved for discharge are not eligible for P&R

Failure in the Physical Fitness Program

- A member who does not meet fitness standards as set out in DAFMAN 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program*, may be discharged when the failure is the result of a cause in the member's control. Note that members of the USSF who maintain satisfactory participation in the USSF's Continuous Fitness Assessment (CFA) Program trial are exempt from the Air Force Physical Fitness Program.
- The required medical examination prior to discharge must document that there is not a medical condition that would preclude the member from meeting fitness program standards
- Characterization of service is restricted to Honorable if failure in the program is the sole reason for discharge
- Members approved for discharge should be considered for P&R

Joint Processing

- In some cases, it may be preferable to cite two or more reasons as the basis for the discharge recommendation if the member's record justifies more than one basis for discharge
 - If one of the reasons cited in the letter of notification as the basis for discharge entitles the member to a board hearing, then a hearing must be conducted unless waived by the member
 - For determining service characterization, apply the guidance for the basis for discharge that allows the most latitude in characterizing the member's service
 - If the separation authority directs discharge for more than one reason, the instrument or documentation directing the discharge must cite the primary reason. The separation in MilPDS is reported on that basis.

Gender Dysphoria

- Service members who have a current diagnosis or history of, or exhibiting symptoms consistent with, gender dysphoria will be processed for involuntary separation. Special procedures apply to this reason for discharge. Commanders should review current DAFI 36-3211 guidance and consult the servicing SJA.

References

- Schedules of Controlled Substances, 21 U.S.C. § 812
- DoDI 1332.14, *Enlisted Administrative Separations* (1 August 2024)
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 36-3212, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement, and Separation* (22 February 2024)
- DAFMAN 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program* (21 April 2022)

DUAL ACTION PROCESSING OF ADMINISTRATIVE DISCHARGE AND THE DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

“Dual action processing” is the simultaneous processing of an administrative discharge and the disability evaluation system (DES). Commanders should not abandon pursuing an administrative discharge (particularly misconduct-based administrative discharges) solely because a member is also undergoing DES processing. If both administrative discharge and DES processing are warranted, the dual action decision authority will determine which action to approve and execute.

Key Takeaways

- » AFPC/DPMNR, NGB/SGPS, or AFRC/SGP are the referral authority for the DES
- » Service members are ineligible for DES referral if pending administrative separation unless otherwise excepted (see below)
- » Both the administrative discharge and DES processes run independently
- » Dual action decision authority is withheld to the member's General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) or Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) designee
- » Consult with the servicing legal office and the member's Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO) when members are potentially eligible for dual action processing

Dual Action Processing

- Cases in which a Department of the Air Force (DAF) member is concurrently processed through both the DES and for a non-disability administrative separation
- When eligible for DES processing, both processes run independently, and final disposition is withheld to the dual action decision authority
- DES eligibility and dual action processing is not a matter of command discretion or authority
- Dual action processing is not required when the service member is found fit for duty
- Dual action processing is not required for Air Reserve Component (ARC) members processed for non-duty disability evaluation related conditions

DES Referral

- AFPC/DPMNR is the authority for processing through the DES of Regular Air Force (RegAF) and USSF members
- AFRC/SGP (Air Force Reserve (AFR)) or NGB/SGPS (Air National Guard (ANG)) is the authority for processing through the DES of ARC members
- DES referral authority may review DES eligibility at any time before the execution of a disability separation or retirement

- DAF service members are ineligible for DES processing when pending separation under provisions that authorize the characterization of Under Other Than Honorable Conditions (UOTHC), unless the DES referral authority determines they meet an exception
 - Exceptions:
 - Causal Connection. A preponderance of the evidence shows it is more likely than not the member's misconduct was **caused** by their medical condition.
 - When DES referral is warranted as a matter of equity or good conscience
 - When the member has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI) based on deployed service to a contingency operation or based on a sexual assault that occurred during the previous 24 months, and the effects of the PTSD/TBI relate to the basis for administrative separation

Dual Action Decision

- Appropriate after administrative involuntary discharge and DES processing are complete
- Authorities:
 - GCMCA for enlisted members with less than 16 years of active service
 - The Adjutant General or Commanding General (ANG) or Chief of the Air Force Reserves (AFR) for ARC enlisted members with less than 18 years of satisfactory service
 - The Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council for enlisted with 16 years or more of active service and officers
 - Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) for general officers, medical officers, all designated high interest cases, and cases not otherwise delegated

Dual Action Eligibility for Retirement

- Dual action processing is also required when a DAF member subject to discharge is also eligible to apply for retirement (20 years or more active service)
- Members qualified for retirement may be permitted to retire in lieu of involuntary separation. Members who are retirement-eligible must be notified at the time of the initiation of discharge for the chance to apply for retirement.

References

- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 36-3212, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement, and Separation* (22 February 2024)

PROCEDURE TO INVOLUNTARILY SEPARATE ENLISTED MEMBERS

Enlisted Department of the Air Force (DAF) members may be involuntarily separated through two different processes: (1) notification procedures (applicable to E-4 and below with less than six years of service), and (2) board hearing procedures (applicable to E-5 and above, members with six or more years of service, or in any case when the commander is pursuing an Under Other Than Honorable Conditions (UOTHC) service characterization). Most cases are processed using notification procedures. Administrative separation of active duty DAF enlisted members is governed by DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*. Involuntary separation of members of the Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Force Reserve (AFR) is also governed by DAFI 36-3211.

Key Takeaways

- » Members in the grade of E-4 or below and/or with less than 6 years of total active federal military service (TAFMS) will be subject to the notification discharge procedure
- » Members in the grade of E-5 with more than 6 years of TAFMS will be eligible for the board hearing procedures
- » Members whose cases are recommended for an UOTHC service characterization will be eligible for board hearing procedures
- » Members who have been victims of sexual assault or who have been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) may be eligible for special processing
- » Members who have between 16 and 20 years of TAFMS are eligible for Lengthy Service Processing
- » Members who have 20 or more years of TAFMS are eligible for Retirement in Lieu of Discharge Processing

Preprocessing Procedures

- The type of discharge processing a member is entitled to depends upon the rank of the member, the member's years of service, and the characterization of service pursued by the commander concerned
- Medical Examination: Before the member may be discharged, a comprehensive Separation Health and Physical Examination (SHPE) is required. The medical examination must document:
 - Any medical aspects pertaining to the reason for discharge; and
 - That the member is or is not medically qualified for worldwide service and separation.

- Special Processing – Victims of Sexual Assault:

- DAF service members who made an unrestricted report of sexual assault and who are within one year of final disposition of their sexual assault allegation may request a general officer to review the circumstances of and grounds for any recommendation of their involuntary separation from the DAF
 - The general officer review is conducted by the General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA), or if the GCMCA is not a general officer, the first general officer in the member's chain of command
 - An enlisted member entitled to GCMCA review must be notified of this right in the separation notification memorandum
 - The member must submit his/her request for GCMCA review in writing. In this request, the member must affirmatively assert that he/she believes the pending discharge action was initiated in retaliation for making a report of sexual assault.
 - A member who submits a timely request to the GCMCA may not be separated until the GCMCA conducting the review concurs with the circumstances of and grounds for the involuntary separation

- Special Processing – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):

- All enlisted DAF service members being recommended for involuntary separation who have deployed overseas in support of a contingency operation or were sexually assaulted during the previous 24 months and have been diagnosed with or reasonably assert PTSD or TBI must receive a medical examination. The medical examination must assess whether the effects of PTSD or TBI constitute matters in extenuation that relate to the basis for involuntary administrative separation. The medical examination is required if the member:
 - Is being administratively separated under a characterization that is not either Honorable or Under Honorable Conditions (General);
 - Was deployed overseas to a contingency operation or sexually assaulted during the previous 24 months;
 - Has been diagnosed by a physician, clinical psychologist, psychiatrist, licensed clinical social worker, or psychiatric advanced practice registered nurse as experiencing PTSD or TBI, or reasonably alleges the influence of PTSD or TBI based on deployed service to a contingency operation or a sexual assault that occurred during the previous 24 months; **AND**
 - Is not being separated under a sentence of court-martial, or other proceeding conducted pursuant to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

- Members diagnosed with or reasonably asserting PTSD or TBI will not be separated until the result of the medical examination has been reviewed by appropriate authorities responsible for evaluating, reviewing, and approving the separation action, to include (if applicable): the initiating commander, administrative discharge board, convening authorities, separation authority, Air Force Review Board, and/or the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF)
- Completion of Enlisted Performance Brief (EPB)/Letter of Evaluation (LOE): Refer to AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems*, for specific criteria on whether an EPB or LOE in connection with involuntary separation is needed for Airmen facing involuntary separation. For U.S. Space Force (USSF) members, commanders should review SPFI 36-2401, *Guardian Evaluations Systems*, for specific requirements for Guardians.

Notification Procedures

- If there is sufficient documentation and evidence supporting a basis for discharge, the commander serves a notification memorandum on the member. A sample of the notification memoranda is located in Figures 8.1 and 8.2 of DAFI 36-3211.
- After receiving the notification memorandum, the member has three duty days to prepare a response (see DAFI 36-3211, Figure 8.3 for sample memorandum)
- The commander considers the member's response, if any. If the commander still recommends discharge, the commander signs a recommendation for discharge to the Special Court-Martial Convening Authority (SPCMCA), who is usually the wing or delta commander (see DAFI 36-3211, Figure 8.4 for sample memorandum recommendation for discharge).
- The servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) prepares a legal review of the package
- SPCMCA reviews the package and the SJA's legal review
 - If the SPCMCA is also the separation authority, the SPCMCA determines:
 - If there is a basis for discharge;
 - If the member should be discharged;
 - If the member should be discharged, how to characterize the member's service; and
 - If the member should be discharged, whether to offer probation & rehabilitation (P&R), if available.
 - If the SPCMCA is not the separation authority, the SPCMCA will forward the package to the GCMCA, with a recommendation concerning the above four questions

Board Entitlement

- A member recommended for discharge must be offered a hearing by an administrative discharge board if one of the following applies:
 - The member is a Noncommissioned Officer at the time discharge processing starts (not applicable to ANG members)
 - The member has six years or more total active and inactive service, including delayed enlistment time, at the time discharge processing starts
 - The commander recommends a UOTHC characterization
 - Discharge in the interest of national security is recommended. Ensure appropriate clearance to proceed.

Board Hearing Procedures

- After receiving the notification memorandum (see DAFI 36-3211, Figure 8.5 for sample letter of notification), the member has seven duty days to:
 - Request a board hearing or unconditionally waive his/her right to a board hearing (see DAFI 36-3211, Figure 8.6 for sample letter); or
 - Waive the board hearing contingent upon receiving a specific type of discharge, which is called a conditional waiver (see DAFI 36-3211, Figure 8.7 for sample letter).
- The commander considers the member's response, if any. If the commander still recommends discharge, he/she signs a recommendation for discharge to the SPCMCA (see DAFI 36-3211, Figure 8.4 for sample memorandum).
- In cases where the member requests a board hearing, the SPCMCA reviews the recommendation for discharge and either sends the file back to the unit for further action (normally to withdraw the action or reinstate the action using different grounds or evidence) or convenes a discharge board
- The administrative board convenes, considers all the evidence, and makes:
 - A separate finding of fact on each allegation set out in the notification memorandum. The board's finding of fact will determine whether a basis for discharge exists.
 - A recommendation to discharge or retain the member
 - A recommended characterization of service if the board recommends discharge
 - A recommendation concerning P&R (if member is eligible) if the board recommends discharge
 - The servicing SJA prepares a legal review of the package and forwards the package to the SPCMCA

- The SPCMCA takes final action if referral to the GCMCA is not required or forwards the package to the GCMCA if referral to the GCMCA is required
- Lengthy Service Consideration: Members with more than 16 but less than 20 years of service are entitled to special probation consideration upon request and may not be separated before forwarding to the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) for review and processing. The final decision on a member's Lengthy Service package will be made at the SecAF level after an independent review by the Air Force Personnel Board.
- Retirement in Lieu of Discharge: Members with more than 20 years of service are entitled to request to retire in lieu of an involuntary separation. If a member requests this review, he/she may not be separated before the package is forwarded to AFPC for review and processing. The final decision on a member's retirement in lieu of package will be made at the SecAF level after an independent review by the Air Force Personnel Board.

Gender Dysphoria

- Service members who have a current diagnosis or history of, or exhibiting symptoms consistent with, gender dysphoria will be processed for involuntary separation. Special procedures apply to this reason for discharge. Commanders should review current DAFI 36-3211 guidance and consult the servicing SJA.

References

- Members Diagnosed With or Reasonably Asserting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injury: Medical Examination Required Before Administrative Separation, 10 U.S.C. § 1177
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 36-3212, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement, and Separation* (22 February 2024)
- DAFMAN 48-123, *Medical Examinations and Standards* (8 December 2020), including DAFMAN48-123_DAFGM2025-01, 29 July 2025
- DAFMAN 51-507, *Enlisted Discharge Boards and Boards of Officers* (27 July 2023)
- AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems* (22 August 2025)
- SPFI 36-2401, *Guardian Evaluations Systems* (17 January 2024), including SPFI 36-2401_SPFGM2025-01, 27 June 2025

PROBATION AND REHABILITATION FOR ENLISTED MEMBERS

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) program of probation and rehabilitation (P&R) allows the service to retain a trained resource while allowing enlisted members another opportunity to complete their service honorably. P&R is a conditional suspension of an approved administrative discharge for cause. In deserving cases, it allows a member to prove that he/she is able to meet DAF standards. Administrative separation of active duty DAF enlisted members is governed by DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*. Involuntary separation of members of the Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Force Reserve (AFR) is also governed by the provisions of DAFI 36-3211.

Key Takeaways

- » The separation authority is also the approval authority for P&R
- » P&R is not available if the reason for discharge is Discharge in Lieu of Court-Martial, Fraudulent Enlistment, Entry Level Performance, certain Unprofessional Relationships, Drug Abuse, Sexual Assault or National Security
- » The separation authority will set a specific period of rehabilitation between 6 and 12 months
- » If a member fails to fulfill the requirements of P&R, P&R can be terminated after notice to the member and instructions to respond within seven days

P&R Considerations

- Only the separation authority can suspend the execution of a discharge for P&R
- Members who have completed at least 16 but less than 20 years of active service are entitled to special consideration upon their request and their cases are forwarded to the Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Center (SAFPC) for review concerning probation
- P&R is appropriate for members:
 - Who demonstrate a potential to serve satisfactorily
 - Who have the capacity to be rehabilitated for continued military service or completion of the current enlistment
 - Whose retention on a probationary status is consistent with the maintenance of good order and discipline

Eligibility Requirements

- Members are **NOT** eligible for P&R if the reason for discharge is one of the following:
 - In lieu of trial by court-martial;
 - Fraudulent entry into the service;
 - Entry level performance or conduct;

- Unprofessional Relationships with Prospective Members of the Armed Forces or new members during Recruiting, Entry-Level Processing, Entry-Level Training; or Initial Skills Training
- Drug abuse;
- Sexual assault;
- In the interest of national security.
- Members must be considered for P&R if the reason for discharge is unsatisfactory performance or misconduct (except for reasons stated above)
 - The case file must show the initiating commander, board members if a hearing is involved, and separation authority considered P&R
 - If the initiating commander does not recommend P&R, he/she must give the reason for not recommending P&R
 - If the initiating commander recommended P&R and the separation authority disapproved that recommendation, the separation authority must state the reason for his/her decision

P&R Procedures

- Suspending the execution of an approved discharge is contingent on successful completion of rehabilitation
 - The separation authority sets a specific period of rehabilitation, which is not less than six months or not more than 12 months
 - The probationary period is usually served in the current unit of assignment, but reassignment to another local unit or within the major command may be authorized if warranted by the circumstances of the case
- If the decision is made to offer a member P&R, the immediate commander must:
 - Give the member information about the P&R program (DAFI 36-3211, Figures 9.1 and 9.2)
 - Counsel the member, emphasizing points listed in DAFI 36-3211, para. 9.7.2
 - Find out whether the member has enough retainability to complete P&R, and if not, try to get a voluntary request for extension of enlistment for the minimum time required
 - Require members who accept P&R to sign statements of understanding and acceptance of the terms of probation (DAFI 36-3211, Figure 9.3)
 - Ensure the terms of probation are set out in a letter from the separation authority and indorse the letter

- Require members who refuse P&R or fail to satisfy the retention requirements to sign a statement acknowledging understanding of the rehabilitation privilege, giving the date the commander counseled the member, and acknowledging understanding of the effects of refusal to accept P&R (DAFI 36-3211, Figure 9.3)

What Happens During P&R

- The commander is the primary judge of the member's performance
 - Commanders are not required to set up a special rehabilitation program because the member is expected to perform duties appropriate to his/her grade, skill level, and experience
 - Promotion consideration is according to AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs* (or SPFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Guardian Promotion and Demotion Programs* for U.S. Space Force (USSF) members)
 - Members are not selected for formal training while in P&R
 - Reenlistment consideration is according to DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment*

Completing P&R

- If a member successfully completes P&R:
 - Approved discharge is automatically and permanently canceled on the date the suspension expires
 - Separation at Expiration of Term of Service (ETS) will result in an Honorable service characterization
 - Future failure to maintain standards may be the basis for new discharge proceedings
 - Eligibility for reenlistment will be according to DAFI 36-2606 and none of the reasons for recommending discharge that existed before P&R began may be used as a basis for denial of reenlistment

Other Command Options

- Commanders have other options during P&R, including:
 - Canceling the probation in whole or in part where member's good conduct clearly shows goals of P&R have been met
 - Extending the probationary period where member has made progress, but the commander is not sure rehabilitation is complete. The original probationary period and the extension together must not exceed one year, and the member must consent to the extension.

Terminating P&R

- If a decision is made to initiate vacation (termination) of the P&R, the commander notifies the member by a letter, which gives:
 - The reason for the action
 - The name, address, and phone number of military legal counsel (often the Area Defense Counsel)
 - Instruction that the member may secure civilian counsel at his own expense
 - Instruction to reply within seven workdays (rebuttal or waiver of right to rebut)

Gender Dysphoria

- Service members who have a current diagnosis or history of, or exhibiting symptoms consistent with, gender dysphoria will be processed for involuntary separation. Special procedures apply to this reason for discharge. Commanders should review current DAFI 36-3211 guidance and consult the servicing SJA.

References

- DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment* (22 May 2024)
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs* (26 September 2024)
- SPFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Guardian Promotion and Demotion Programs* (11 September 2024)

OFFICER SEPARATIONS

The process for officer separations is similar to enlisted discharges. However, certain key differences exist. Unlike enlisted separations, the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) is the approval authority for all “for cause” commissioned officer administrative discharges. The below discussion is applicable to active duty officers.

Key Takeaways

- » Officer separations may be voluntary or involuntary; involuntary separations may be “For Cause” or “Not for Cause”
- » If “Not for Cause,” the least favorable service characterization is Under Honorable Conditions (General). If “For Cause,” the least favorable service characterization is Under Other Than Honorable Conditions (UOTHC).
- » SecAF or Designee action is required on all officer separations
- » Special processing is required when separating officers who have filed an unrestricted report of sexual assault and some officers who are being discharged for personality or mental disorders

Definitions

- Non-probationary Officer:

- Regular officer on the Active Duty List with six or more years of active commissioned service as determined by the officer’s Total Active Federal Commissioned Service Date (TAFCSO)
- Reserve officer with six or more years of commissioned service (inactive or active) as determined by the officer’s Total Federal Commissioned Service Date (TFCSD)

- Probationary Officer:

- Regular officer on the Active Duty List who has completed less than six years of active commissioned service as determined by the officer’s TAFCSO
 - Reserve officer who has completed fewer than five years of commissioned service (inactive or active) as determined by the officer’s TFCSD. Air National Guard (ANG) officers do not have these distinctions and are all board-entitled pursuant to DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*, paras. 20.2.6 and 23.1.1.2.
- The recommendation of a board of officers is generally required to involuntarily discharge a non-probationary reserve officer

Voluntary Separation

- Officers may apply for voluntary separation for a variety of reasons, including completion of active duty service commitment (ADSC), hardship, pregnancy, conscientious objector status, and other miscellaneous reasons
- Voluntary separations are subject to approval by SecAF. However, SecAF or designee, may disapprove applications for several reasons.

Involuntary Separations – “Not For Cause”

- Many involuntary separations are required by law (e.g., reserve officers who reach age limit, those non-selected for promotion, and officers who have reached maximum years of commissioned service or service in grade)
- Other involuntary separations include loss of ecclesiastical endorsement, failure to complete or pass medical training, nursing examinations, or nursing intern programs, and officers in health care fields who do not have required licenses
- Involuntary separations that are not for cause will normally be characterized as Honorable

Involuntary Separations – “For Cause”

- Officers may be discharged for cause for substandard performance of duty, misconduct, moral or professional dereliction, or in the interest of national security
- Education assistance, special pay, or bonus money may be subject to recoupment
- Substandard Performance of Duty:
 - *Service Characterization:* Honorable or General
 - *Basis:* Failure to acceptably discharge duties; failure in the Department of the Air Force (DAF) fitness program; failure to conform to prescribed standards of dress or personal appearance; inability to perform duties or meet military commitments because of family care responsibilities; drug abuse rehabilitation failure; alcohol abuse rehabilitation failure; fear of flying; mental disorders that interfere with the officer's performance of duty and do not fall within the purview of the medical disability process; failure to show acceptable qualities of leadership; failure to achieve acceptable standards of proficiency, efficiency, or effectiveness; failure to complete a course of instruction/training when participation is at government expense; substandard response to training; substandard attitude or character; unsatisfactory progress or failure in, or disenrollment from an active status skills-awarding education/training program; disqualification from Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) or Space Force Specialty Code (SFSC)
 - Support should include documented history of problems and efforts to correct the officer's conduct

- Misconduct, Moral or Professional Dereliction, or In the Interest of National Security:
 - *Service Characterization:* Honorable, General, or UOTHC
 - *Basis:* Serious or recurring misconduct punishable by military/civilian authorities; foreign court convictions; discreditable mismanagement of personal affairs; drug abuse; intentional misrepresentation/omission of facts in obtaining an appointment or in official documents/records; culpable failure to perform assigned duties/complete required training; loss of professional status/qualifications/licensure/certifications necessary for performance of military duties; fraternization or unprofessional relationships; improper participation in political activities; failure to follow preventive medical procedures to prevent HIV transmission; acts of sexual perversion/misconduct; sexual assault; fear of flying (rated officers); restriction of duties based on asserted moral reasons; retention inconsistent with national security; attempting to avoid deployed/hardship duty; extended confinement; unprofessional relationships with prospective/new members during recruiting/entry-level processing/entry-level training/initial skills training

Discharge Procedures

- Unit commander evaluates the information and consults with the servicing legal office
- If appropriate, the unit commander recommends discharge to the Show Cause Authority (SCA), who is usually a general officer wing commander or General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) (e.g., Numbered Air Force commander or USSF equivalent)
- If appropriate, the SCA initiates discharge action by signing a letter to the officer notifying him/her of the discharge action
- Within 10 calendar days of receipt of the letter of notification, the officer submits evidence in response, or requests a delay to respond
- An officer eligible for retirement may, at any time before the SecAF, or designee, decides the officer's administrative discharge case, apply for retirement
- Officers may tender an unconditional resignation at any time after they become aware that they have been recommended for show cause discharge action up to the time the board members go into closed session to deliberate, or for cases not involving a board, before the SecAF, or designee, takes final action
- If the SCA determines no action is warranted, the action is terminated. If the SCA determines discharge action is warranted, the type of processing that occurs depends on the officer's status and the characterization recommended.
 - Not Board Entitled: If the officer is probationary and the case does not involve a recommendation for a UOTHC service characterization, the SCA notifies the officer that the case will be reviewed by the Air Force Personnel Board (AFPB). The officer is not entitled to appear in front of or present witness testimony to the AFBP.

- **Board Entitled:** If the officer is non-probationary, or the officer is probationary and a UOTHC discharge is recommended, then the SCA notifies the officer that the officer will be required to show cause for retention before a Board of Inquiry (BOI). The officer is entitled to appear in front of and present witness testimony to the BOI.
- **ANG Officer Board Entitlement:** ANG officers not on active duty are discharged through the withdrawal of Federal recognition process in 32 U.S.C. § 323. Withdrawal of Federal recognition pursuant to 32 U.S.C. § 323(b) automatically results in discharge from a reserve of the Air Force appointment. An ANG probationary officer category is not established by 32 U.S.C. § 323(b). All ANG officers have a board entitlement for withdrawal of Federal recognition under 32 U.S.C. § 323(b).
- SecAF (or delegee) is the final approval authority for commissioned officer separations under DAFI 36-3211

Resignations in Lieu of Further Administrative Discharge Proceedings

- When the SCA notifies an officer to show cause for retention, an officer may submit a resignation or a resignation to enlist and retire (if eligible to apply for retirement in enlisted status)
- These options should not be confused with resignations for the good of the service, which an officer may submit when facing a court-martial for alleged criminal conduct
- SecAF (or delegee) is the approval authority

Special Processing Procedures

- Special processing is required for officers who have made an unrestricted report of a sexual assault
- Special processing is required for officers being discharged for personality disorder or other mental disorder not constituting a physical disability when that officer has served or is currently serving in an imminent danger pay area; or when a member has filed an unrestricted report of sexual assault; or who has self-disclosed that they are a victim of a sex-related offense, an intimate partner violence-related offense, or a spousal abuse offense during service

Gender Dysphoria

- Service members who have a current diagnosis or history of, or exhibiting symptoms consistent with, gender dysphoria will be processed for involuntary separation. Special procedures apply to this reason for discharge. Commanders should review current DAFI 36-3211 guidance and consult the servicing SJA.

References

- Withdrawal of Federal Recognition, 32 U.S.C. § 323
- DoDI 1332.30, *Commissioned Officer Administrative Separations* (11 May 2018), incorporating through Change 3, 9 September 2021
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 36-3212, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement and Separation* (22 February 2024)
- DAFMAN 48-123, *Medical Examinations and Standards* (8 December 2020), including DAFMAN48-123_DAFGM2024-01, 20 February 2024
- DAFMAN 51-507, *Enlisted Discharge Boards and Boards of Officers* (27 July 2023)

ADMINISTRATIVE SEPARATION OF AIR FORCE RESERVE AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS

DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*, applies to total force members, officers, and enlisted, unless otherwise noted. However, Chapter 13 (Enlisted) and Chapter 23 (Officer) focus on Air Reserve Component (ARC) specific reasons, processing, procedure, and authorities for involuntary administrative separations.

Key Takeaways

- » Processing requirements vary depending on a member's status—Category A (CAT A); Category B (CAT B); or Air National Guard (ANG)
- » Consult servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) PRIOR to initiating involuntary discharge—basis for discharge and legal sufficiency are critical to processing without undue delay
- » Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC), Numbered Air Forces (NAFs), and Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC) can convene discharge boards; Wings are empowered to hold them
- » Involuntary discharges for officers must be initiated by the Show Cause Authority (SCA); final decision is made at the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) level after an independent review by the Air Force Personnel Board (AFPB)

CAT A (Reserve Unit) and ANG

- Consult with servicing legal office prior to initiating involuntary discharge action
 - For enlisted members, the squadron commander initiates discharge action in most cases. The recommendation is processed through the servicing legal office to the wing commander or equivalent. The owning Military Personnel Flight (MPF) processes the case through completion to the separation authority.
 - For officer members, the Show Cause Authority (SCA) initiates discharge action. The final approval authority for involuntary separations for officers is SecAF, after independent review by the AFPB (via NGB/A1PP for ANG officers).
 - Enlisted members are notified of discharge action by a Memorandum of Notification (MON), and officer members are notified of discharge action by a Show Cause Notification Memorandum (SCNM). Each contains a description of the reason(s) upon which action is based, including identification of paragraphs in DAFI 36-3211 covering each reason; the least favorable type of service characterization authorized; a recoupment statement; supporting documentation; and an explanation of Respondent's rights. The MON is discussed in Chapter 8 and a sample MON is found at Attachment 10 (not board entitled) and Attachment 12 (board entitled). (See Chapter 23 for information on the SCNM.)

- In-person service of the MON (enlisted) or SCNM (officer) is preferred; however, if Respondent is not served in person, the MON should be sent by encrypted mail to the member. An electronic receipt confirming delivery is included with the file. If electronic mail is not available, send the MON via registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, or by first-class mail when the return receipt method is unsuccessful, to the member's address listed in the Military Personnel Data System (MilPDS). If personal delivery of the SCNM is not feasible, send the SCNM via registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, or by first-class mail when the return receipt method is unsuccessful, to the member's address listed in the Military Personnel Data System (MilPDS). The SCNM may be sent by electronic means to the member if a mailing method by U.S. mail requiring return receipt is not available to an address outside the United States.
- If notification attempts are not successful, determine whether there is another address available (see DAFI 36-3211, paras. 8.9.4 and 23.5, for more information regarding delivery options of the notification to ARC members)
- Enlisted members must immediately (within 24 hours for ARC if not served in person) acknowledge receipt of the MON and will be provided three work days (30 calendar days for ARC members not in a full-time status and 30 calendar days for members who are in civilian confinement) to make elections of rights, and submit statements on their own behalf (see DAFI 36-3211, Attachments 11 or 13 for samples). Officer members shall sign and return acknowledgement of receipt within 24 hours and shall have 15 calendar days to return all other elections or request an extension of time.
- If an enlisted member is not board entitled, not eligible for lengthy service consideration, and not retirement eligible, forward the entire discharge package through the servicing legal office to the discharge authority
- An enlisted member's failure to acknowledge receipt or respond regarding selection of rights after allotted time following receipt of MON constitutes a waiver of all rights, with the result that the case is processed based on the information available and without further notice to the member
- For enlisted members who are board entitled, have lengthy service consideration or are retirement eligible, forward entire discharge package including matters submitted by the member through command channels to the discharge authority to convene the Board (see DAFI 36-3211, Chapter 13, para. 13.1.1 for more information)
- AFRC and NAFs can convene discharge boards for Reserve personnel and TAG for ANG personnel; Wings are empowered to hold discharge boards. Coordinate with the servicing NAF/JA office to determine the most feasible location (see DAFI 36-3211, Chapter 13, para. 13.1.1 for more information).

- Additional considerations:
 - Consider placing the member in “No Pay, No Points” status while a discharge action is pending if the commander does not want the member to continue participating. This reflects a commander’s authority to proactively excuse a member from statutory participation requirements and for AFR personnel is memorialized in DAFMAN 36-2136, Table 1.2, Note 3 (DAFMAN 36-2136 does not apply to ANG).
 - Officers may submit a tender of resignation (TOR) or if eligible, apply for transfer to the Retired Reserve, at any time before the SecAF announces the decision in the officer’s case (see DAFI 36-3211, Attachment 20 for a sample resignation memo)
 - A drop from the rolls of the U.S. Air Force or U.S. Space Force action may be warranted where a member (officer or enlisted) has received a civilian conviction that includes a sentence to confinement in a Federal or state penitentiary, or correctional institution. Consult your servicing legal office or AFRC/JA. SecAF approval is required.
 - DAFI 36-3211, see Table 13.1 for rules on voluntary and involuntary discharge or separation for enlisted members, and Attachment 19 for rules on separation or discharge of officers. Also see Delegations of AFRC/CC Authority Memorandum.
 - Conduct in the civilian community of a member not on active duty or active duty for training may form the basis for an Under Other than Honorable Conditions (UOTHC) discharge, only if such conduct directly affects the performance of their military duties, and General, only if such conduct has an adverse impact on the overall effectiveness of the service, including morale and efficiency (see DAFI 36-3211, Chapter 3, para. 3.14.1.3.7 for more information on authorized types of separation)
- Many of the requirements and procedures outlined above for CAT A Reservists likewise apply to ANG members and are also outlined in DAFI 36-3211 Chapter 13 and Chapter 23
- Members may be subject to recoupment for benefits or bonuses (see DAFI 36-3211, Attachment 18 for a sample recoupment statement)

CAT B Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs)

- Discharges of IMAs are processed through the Headquarters Readiness and Integration Organization (HQ RIO)
 - HQ RIO and its seven detachments share administrative control (ADCON) of an IMA with the IMA’s Regular Air Force (RegAF) unit
 - The RIO detachment commander, to which an IMA is assigned, initiates the discharge process in coordination with HQ RIO and ARPC’s legal office (ARPC/JA)
 - An IMA’s RegAF unit commander should coordinate with the RIO detachment commander to discuss the IMA’s case, gather evidence, and recommend discharge

- ARPC/JA reviews the case file for legal sufficiency. If legally sufficient, ARPC/JA then develops the notification package and obtains the required recommendation memorandum.
- HQ ARPC/CC is the SCA for officer members and the Discharge Authority for enlisted members
- HQ ARPC/CC convenes Boards of Inquiry (BOI) and discharge boards in coordination with the wing legal office that supports the IMA's unit of assignment
- For notification only IMA discharge cases, HQ ARPC/CC makes a recommendation to the SecAF-level decision authority through the Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council (SAFPC) regarding discharge for officers and enlisted with lengthy service considerations
- For enlisted members without lengthy service considerations, HQ ARPC/CC makes the final discharge decision

Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)

- Members in certain specialty programs (e.g., Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) graduates) maintain status in the IRR pending entry onto active duty. Discharge actions for such members are processed by ARPC/JA.
- HQ ARPC/CC is the Discharge Authority to either separate or recommend to SecAF-level decision authority the separation of members of the IRR
- For cases involving potential recoupment of educational assistance or other aid, the AFPB makes a recommendation to the approval authority on discharge and whether recoupment is appropriate

Board Entitlement

- Enlisted: Recommended characterization of service is UOTHC; member is a Noncommissioned Officer; or member has six or more years of satisfactory service for retirement
- Officer: All non-probationary officers (completed five or more years of service as a commissioned officer in any of the armed forces as determined from the Total Federal Commissioned Service Date); or recommended characterization of service is UOTHC
- ANG Board Entitlement: The right to an administrative discharge board for Noncommissioned Officers does not apply to ANG. ANG members are only entitled to an administrative discharge board if they have six years or more of satisfactory service or if one of the other criteria under para. 8.2.2. apply. All ANG officers are board entitled.

References

- Reserve Officers: Limitation on Involuntary Separation, 10 U.S.C. § 12683
- DoDI 1332.14, *Enlisted Administrative Separations* (1 August 2024), incorporating Memorandum 19-008, “Expedited Screening Protocol,” July 31, 2019, as amended
- DoDI 1332.30, *Commissioned Officer Administrative Separations* (11 May 2018), incorporating through Change 3, 9 September 2021
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI 36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFMAN 51-507, *Enlisted Discharge Boards and Boards of Officers* (27 July 2023)
- Delegations of AFRC/CC Authority Memorandum (9 November 2022, or current version)

Chapter 5

CRIMINAL AND MILITARY JUSTICE

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INSTALLATION JURISDICTION

Installation jurisdiction refers to the type of legal authority to legislate and exercise executive and judicial powers over an area. This is sometimes referred to as “installation jurisdiction.” There are four main types of legislative jurisdiction: (1) exclusive federal jurisdiction; (2) concurrent jurisdiction; (3) partial jurisdiction; and (4) proprietary jurisdiction. Some Department of the Air Force (DAF) installations are comprised of more than one type of legislative jurisdiction.

Key Takeaways

- » Title and legislative jurisdiction are separate concepts. In most cases, the DAF has title (legal ownership) of the land where installations are located. In a few cases, the land is leased.
- » Exclusive legislative jurisdiction means that the federal government has sole authority to enforce its laws to the exclusion of state law
- » Concurrent legislative jurisdiction means that both the federal and state government may exercise authority over the real property in question
- » Proprietary jurisdiction means that the state exercises legislative authority over the land where the installation resides, and the federal government is just a landholder

Title

- Title, in relation to a military installation, is virtually the same as in a private real estate transaction. Title simply means legal ownership—the legal right to the use and possession of a designated piece of property.
- In most cases, the DAF has title to the properties on which its installations are located. However, some installations are on leased property or have portions of the base on leased property.
- The installation’s civil engineer (CE) squadron usually maintains the deed or lease to the installation. Real property records may also be found at the Office of the County Recorder for the county on which the installation is situated. Questions concerning title to the installation’s real property should be referred to the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).

Legislative Jurisdiction

- The concept of jurisdiction is separate and distinct from that of title
- Jurisdiction includes the right to legislate (i.e., implement laws, rules, and regulations) and enforce those laws. Having title does not necessarily include legislative jurisdiction.

Sources of Legislative Jurisdiction

- Article I, Section 8, Clause 17, of the United States Constitution confers upon Congress the power to exercise legislative jurisdiction over federal property. The government can acquire the right to exercise legislative jurisdiction in three ways.
 - Purchase and Consent: The federal government purchases the property, and the state legislature consents to giving the federal government jurisdiction
 - Cession: After the federal government acquires title to property, the state may cede jurisdiction, in whole or in part, to the federal government. The federal government can later relinquish jurisdiction back to the state, with the state's consent. 10 U.S.C. § 2683. Prior to 1940, it was presumed that jurisdiction was accepted whenever offered by the state as it was deemed a benefit. Since 1940, however, there must be an affirmative acceptance of jurisdiction before the federal government will have legislative jurisdiction. 40 U.S.C. § 3112. Check the deed to determine when the federal government acquired the property.
 - Reservation: At the time the federal government ceded property to establish a state, most commonly in the western United States, it reserved some of the land as federal property. In these cases, the federal government retained legislative jurisdiction over the property. Again, check the deed.

Types of Legislative Jurisdiction

- The inquiry does not stop with determining if the federal government has legislative jurisdiction. It is also necessary to determine what type of jurisdiction it has. There are four types of legislative jurisdiction.
 - Exclusive Federal Jurisdiction: As the term implies, the federal government possesses, regardless of the method acquired, all legislative authority and the state has not reserved the right to exercise any authority except the right to serve civil or criminal process. For some years now, it has been federal policy not to acquire exclusive federal jurisdiction. While at first blush this may seem odd, there are legitimate reasons for the policy. For instance, state and local authorities may be better able to deal with particular situations (e.g., child welfare services, domestic relations matters) than the federal government.
 - Concurrent Jurisdiction: Both the state and federal governments possess legislative authority. In other words, the state grants the federal government legislative jurisdiction over an area but reserved to itself the right to exercise the same authority at the same time. In the event of conflict, the federal government prevails under the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution.
 - Partial Jurisdiction: Both the state and federal government have some legislative authority, but neither one has absolute power. Partial legislative jurisdiction exists when the federal government has been granted legislative authority over an area but the state has reserved to itself the right to exercise other authority. As an example, the state may have reserved the right to tax private property.

- Proprietary Jurisdiction: In this case, the federal government has acquired some right or title to real property in a state but has not obtained any authority to legislate over the area. The United States is simply a tenant with no legislative authority. The federal government maintains immunity and supremacy for inherently governmental functions. The only federal laws that apply are those that do not rely upon federal territorial jurisdiction (e.g., espionage, bank robbery, tax fraud, counterfeiting). However, the installation commander can still exclude civilians from the area pursuant to the commander's inherent authority.

References

- U.S. Const. Art. I, § 8, cl. 17
- U.S. Const. Art. VI, cl. 2
- Relinquishment of Legislative Jurisdiction; minimum drinking age on military installations, 10 U.S.C. § 2683
- Federal Jurisdiction, 40 U.S.C. § 3112
- *Greer v. Spock*, 424 U.S. 828 (1976)
- DoDI 4165.70, *Real Property Management* (6 April 2005), incorporating Change 1, 31 August 2018
- AFI 32-9001, *Acquisition of Real Property* (28 September 2017)
- AFI 32-9002, *Management of Real Property* (18 December 2020)

FEDERAL MAGISTRATE PROGRAM

The federal magistrate program provides a means of enforcing federal law on-base, including civilian criminal misconduct. The availability of a federal magistrate depends on the location and jurisdiction of the base, the type and location of the offense, and the status of the offender.

Key Takeaways

- » The federal magistrate program is used to prosecute civilians who commit misdemeanors or petty offenses on federal property, such as military bases, with exclusive or concurrent legislative jurisdiction
- » Crimes enforced through the federal magistrate program may include certain state crimes, such as vehicular or traffic laws
- » The federal magistrate program is not used to prosecute military members or those who commit offenses while in a Title 10 status
- » Civilian employees and civilian dependents are subject to prosecution in front of a federal magistrate judge for violations of applicable law if they occur on a military base with exclusive or concurrent legislative jurisdiction

Overview of Federal Magistrate Program

- Magistrate judges are judicial officers of U.S. district courts appointed by the district court judges to handle certain types of matters. The authority of the magistrate is established in the Federal Magistrates Act of 1968.
- Federal magistrates may adjudicate crimes involving certain federal offenses committed on federal property. Trial before a magistrate judge generally provides a more expeditious and cost-effective forum than trial in front of a district court judge.
- Federal magistrate judges may only hear matters involving civilians; it is not used to prosecute Regular Air Force and Space Force members or others who commit offenses in a Title 10 status. Civilian employees and civilian dependents may be subject to prosecution in federal court for violations of applicable law if they occur on a military base with exclusive or concurrent legislative jurisdiction.
- Typically, offenses tried before a federal magistrate judge are misdemeanors, which are offenses for which the authorized penalty does not exceed one year of imprisonment
- Common offenses tried before a magistrate judge include traffic violations, trespassing, theft, and possession of drug paraphernalia. More serious criminal misconduct by civilians that occurs on a federal installation can be referred to the United States Attorney's Office, or, depending on jurisdiction, to state or local prosecutors.
- Only some bases have a federal magistrate program. To find out if your base has such a program, consult with the servicing legal office.

Role of Installation Personnel in Magistrate's Court

- Where an installation magistrate program is established, the installation Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) should execute a Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding (MOA/U) with the U.S. Attorney covering responsibilities and procedures for trials in front of a federal magistrate judge
- Department of the Air Force (DAF) judge advocates, when appointed by the Attorney General to act as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys (SAUSAs) pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 515(b) or 543, may represent the United States in federal magistrate court

Jurisdiction of Federal Magistrate's Court

- Criminal actions committed by civilians on a military installation may be handled in federal court or state court, depending upon the jurisdictional status of the installation and whether the alleged crime violated state or federal law
- Federal Statutes without Territorial Jurisdiction Requirements: Prosecuted in federal court regardless of the installation's jurisdictional status (e.g., counterfeiting, espionage, sabotage, bribery of federal officers)
- Federal Statutes with Territorial Jurisdiction Requirements: May be prosecuted in federal court if the installation where the crime occurs has exclusive or concurrent legislative jurisdiction
 - If the federal government has only proprietary jurisdiction, federal statutes that rely on territorial jurisdiction may not be enforced in federal court. Such offenses may be prosecuted only in state court.
 - If the federal government has exclusive jurisdiction, generally, offenses committed on an installation may not be prosecuted in state court
- State Statutes: On installations within the United States where the federal government has concurrent jurisdiction with the state, generally, state criminal law will be prosecuted in state court. However, violations of state law may be prosecuted in federal court under the Assimilative Crimes Act, 18 U.S.C. § 13.
 - The Assimilative Crimes Act makes violating a state statute on an installation with exclusive jurisdiction a federal offense. This is available where the conduct does not otherwise violate a federal statute.
- State criminal traffic laws are expressly adopted and made applicable on military installations having concurrent or exclusive federal jurisdiction under the provisions of 18 U.S.C. § 13. In those states where violations of traffic laws are not considered criminal offenses and cannot be assimilated, DoDD 5525.04, *Enforcement of State Traffic Laws on DoD Installations*, adopts the vehicular and pedestrian traffic laws of such states and makes these laws applicable to military installations having concurrent or exclusive legislative jurisdiction.

References

- Assimilative Crimes Act, 18 U.S.C. § 13
- Installation Traffic Codes, 32 C.F.R. § 634.25
- DoDD 5525.04, *Enforcement of the State Traffic Laws on DoD Installations* (2 November 1981), incorporating through Change 3, 30 September 2020
- DAFI 36-147, *Civilian Conduct and Responsibility* (11 January 2023), incorporating Change 1, 30 July 2025
- AFI 51-206, *Use of Magistrate Judges for Trial of Misdemeanors Committed by Civilians* (31 August 2018)

COURTS-MARTIAL JURISDICTION UNDER THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE

The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) applies at all times and in all places to active duty military members, as well as to members of the Air Force Reserve (AFR), Space Force, and the Air National Guard (ANG) in federal active duty “Title 10” or “inactive duty training (IDT)” status. Courts-martial jurisdiction rests upon two primary considerations: (1) commission of an offense under the UCMJ; and (2) military status of the person who committed the offense at the time the offense was committed.

Key Takeaways

- » Courts-martial have exclusive power to hear “purely military offenses.” Crimes that violate both the UCMJ and local criminal law may be tried by a court-martial, a civilian court, or both.
- » Article 2, UCMJ, lists classes of persons who are subject to the UCMJ
- » Under certain circumstances, jurisdiction extends to members of the AFR, ANG, and retirees
- » A valid discharge from military service generally ends jurisdiction. A valid discharge requires receipt of a discharge certificate, a final accounting of pay, and completion of clearing processes.

Types of Jurisdiction

- Courts-martial try offenses against military law
- Military Offenses: Courts-martial have exclusive power to hear “purely military offenses,” which are those not normally found in civilian criminal codes (e.g., absence without authority, dereliction of duty, failure to obey a lawful order, fraternization, or desertion)
- Other Offenses: Crimes that violate both the UCMJ and local criminal law may be tried by a court-martial, a civilian court, or both (e.g., sexual or physical assault, stalking, driving under the influence of alcohol, theft, or forgery)
 - Double Jeopardy for court-martial and civilian court prosecution of same misconduct:
 - A military member may **NOT** be tried for the same misconduct by both a court-martial and another federal court because doing so would constitute “double jeopardy”
 - A military member **MAY** be tried for the same misconduct by both a court-martial and state or foreign court. However, as a matter of policy, if a military member was tried by a state court and jeopardy attached, regardless of the outcome, approval of the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) is required before proceeding with a court-martial.
 - Host nation treaties and status of forces agreements (SOFAs) govern the exercise of jurisdiction over military members overseas for violations of foreign civilian law

Jurisdiction over the Offense

- Courts-martial may try any offense under the UCMJ, and, in general courts-martial, the law of war

Jurisdiction over the Person

- Article 3(a), UCMJ, authorizes courts-martial jurisdiction in all cases in which the service member was subject to the UCMJ at the time of the offense and is subject to the UCMJ at the time of trial. Article 2, UCMJ, lists classes of persons who are subject to the UCMJ.

Reserve Component and Space Force

- Articles 2(a)(1) and 2(a)(3), UCMJ, extend courts-martial jurisdiction over members of the Reserve Component (AFR and ANG) and Space Force whenever they are in Title 10 status (i.e., active duty, or for reservists, IDT, or annual tour)
 - ANG members are only subject to UCMJ courts-martial jurisdiction when they are in a federal duty status, often referred to as “Title 10” status
 - When ANG members are performing state duty (state active duty or Title 32), they are subject to their state’s code of military justice
- Article 2(d), UCMJ, authorizes a member of the Reserve Component or Space Force to be ordered to active duty by, a general court-martial convening authority, for nonjudicial punishment (NJP), an Article 32 preliminary hearing, or trial by court-martial
 - When determining whether a commander has UCMJ jurisdiction over the member, the commander must determine the: (1) military status of the service member at time of the offense; and (2) military status of the service member at the time of court-martial
 - Coordinate with the local Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) as soon as the member is identified as serving in a Reserve Component

Retirees

- Courts-martial jurisdiction continues over retired Regular Air Force and Space Force personnel entitled to military pay
- Retired members should not be court-martialed unless their conduct clearly links them with the military or is adverse to a significant military interest of the United States
- Commanders may not prefer charges against retired members without SecAF approval unless the statute of limitations is about to run out. The SJA or Office of Special Trial Counsel, if there is a covered, known, or related offense, will coordinate approval, as needed, to recall a retired member for court-martial.

Termination of Jurisdiction

- General Rule: A valid discharge from military service normally terminates jurisdiction. For a valid discharge to exist, there must be:
 - Receipt of a valid discharge certificate;
 - A final accounting of pay; and
 - Completion of the clearing processes required by appropriate service instructions.
- Exceptions:
 - A fraudulently obtained discharge does not terminate military jurisdiction
 - A DAF reserve member is not, by virtue of the termination of a period of active duty or IDT, “shielded” from jurisdiction for an offense committed during such period of active duty or IDT

Statute of Limitations

- NJP: Imposition of NJP within two years of offense
- Court-Martial: Preferral of charges within five years of offense
- Exception: There is no statute of limitations for a person charged with murder, rape, sexual assault occurring on or after 26 December 2013, rape or sexual assault of a child, or any offense punishable by death. The statute of limitations tolls for a person charged with absence without leave and may be extended for certain offenses committed in time of war.

References

- U.S. Const. Amend. V
- Reserve Components Generally, 10 U.S.C. § 12301
- Army and Air National Guard of the United States: Status, 10 U.S.C. § 12401
- Articles 2, 3, and 43, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 201–204 (2024)
- *Solorio v. United States*, 483 U.S. 435 (1987)
- National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, Pub. L. 113-66 (2013)
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI 36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

A COMMANDER'S GUIDE TO THE AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) is a Field Operating Agency within the Department of the Air Force (DAF). Its mission is to identify, exploit, investigate, disrupt, and neutralize criminal, terrorist, and intelligence threats across all domains to protect the designated vital interests of the DAF, the Department of War (DoW), and the U.S. Government. AFOSI is the DAF's designated Military Criminal Investigation Organization (MCIO) and Military Department Counterintelligence Organization (MDCO).

Key Takeaways

- » Any DAF commander may request investigative support, but only Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) may direct AFOSI to delay, suspend, or terminate an investigation
- » AFOSI generally investigates major offenses, but coordination between AFOSI, the Security Forces Office of Investigations (SFOI), and the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) (and/or the Office of Special Trial Counsel [OSTC] as appropriate) help make best use of investigative resources based upon the criminal offense(s) suspected and available manpower
- » OSI initiates investigations into **ALL** allegations of sexual assault that occur within its jurisdiction, regardless of the severity of the allegation. The allegations must be based upon credible information and have a DoW nexus.
- » Commanders must coordinate with AFOSI and the servicing SJA prior to (1) reassigning a person who is the subject of an AFOSI investigation, and/or (2) initiating a commander directed inquiry or investigation when there is an ongoing AFOSI investigation
- » AFOSI provides a Report of Investigation (ROI) to the action authority upon completion of an investigation. ROIs document information obtained through investigation and witness interviews. ROIs do not suggest or make any recommendation concerning disposition of the allegations, nor does an AFOSI ROI indicate whether or not an allegation is "substantiated" or "unsubstantiated." Those determinations are the responsibility of the action authority.
- » The action authority is required to promptly report to AFOSI all actions taken as a result of the investigation. The servicing legal office will provide AFOSI and Security Forces (SF) with disposition information for inclusion in entries to appropriate national criminal indexing databases.
- » AFOSI records, including ROIs, must be treated as law enforcement sensitive and may only be released to persons whose duties require access or as specifically provided by law or regulation. AFOSI should be informed any time AFOSI records are released. Consult with the servicing SJA and/or AFOSI prior to releasing AFOSI records.

AFOSI Organization

- AFOSI is a Field Operating Agency aligned under SAF/IG, which functions as an independent, centralized organization conducting unbiased investigations
- AFOSI's mission includes investigating allegations of criminal activity and fraud and conducting non-combat related death investigations of active duty members, as well as counterintelligence and specialized investigative activities, counter-drug activities, protective service operations, and integrated force protection. Additionally, AFOSI provides training to all its Special Agents through the USAF Special Investigations Academy (USAFSIA).

AFOSI Investigative Responsibilities

- Generally, AFOSI investigates major offenses and SF investigates minor offenses. However, the AFOSI/CC has independent authority within the DAF to initiate criminal investigations and AFOSI is required to investigate **ALL** unrestricted allegations of certain sexual crimes that occur within its jurisdiction, regardless of the severity of an allegation.
- Coordination between AFOSI, SE, and the servicing SJA (and/or OSTC) is necessary to make best use of investigative resources, technical expertise, and investigative capabilities, to identify suspected criminal offenses, and to best utilize available manpower

Requesting AFOSI Investigative Service/Investigation Completion

- Any DAF commander responsible for security, discipline, or law enforcement may request investigative support, but only SecAF or DoW/IG (for DoW/IG directed investigations only) may delay, suspend, or terminate an investigation
- AFOSI briefs DAF commanders on the progress of investigations affecting their command as necessary and appropriate. At the conclusion of an investigation, an ROI is generated and provided to the action authority.
 - ROIs detail information obtained through investigation and witness interviews. ROIs do not contain recommendations or suggestions concerning the disposition of the allegations, nor does an AFOSI ROI indicate whether or not an allegation is "substantiated" or "unsubstantiated." Those determinations are the responsibility of the action authority. Their purpose is to provide evidence for the action authority to consider.
 - The action authority is required to provide AFOSI with a report of action taken, to include times when no action is taken, upon completion of an investigation. This information is used to make mandatory entries in various national criminal indexing databases.

Command Roles and Responsibilities for Supporting AFOSI Investigations

- Operational security (OPSEC) of AFOSI investigations is critical. Restrict knowledge of ongoing investigations to a strict “need-to-know” basis to avoid jeopardizing operations and compromising efforts to neutralize criminal or counterintelligence threats.
 - Unauthorized release of information related to AFOSI sources, agents, witnesses, and investigative techniques could place persons and evidence at risk and must be avoided
 - AFOSI mission success and AFOSI agents’ safety is enhanced by concealing their rank. All commanders and civilian directors are required to ensure special procedures exist to protect agents’ personnel, medical, and other administrative records.
- AFOSI, in coordination with the servicing SJA (or OSTC), requests search and seizure authorizations from authorized commanders, judges, magistrates, or competent search authorities based on probable cause. Personnel must comply with the execution of an authorization as directed by the issuing authority.

Select AFOSI Specialized Functions

- DAF’s Counterintelligence Unit:
 - AFOSI is the sole DAF entity responsible for conducting counterintelligence (CI) investigations, collections, operations, analysis, and production activities across all domains to include CI activities in cyberspace. HQ AFOSI/JA, specifically, the National Security Law Division (NSLD), not a local or base legal office, is solely responsible for providing legal advice and support on all CI activities.
 - AFOSI investigates security incidents of espionage, suspected compromise of special access information, or deliberate compromise of classified information
- Protective Services:
 - AFOSI is the DAF’s single point of contact for protective service operations protecting senior DAF members, DoW, U.S. Government personnel, and foreign dignitaries

Select AFOSI Policies

- Apprehension/Arrest/Detention:
 - Apprehension is the taking of a person into custody. AFOSI agents may apprehend any person subject to trial by court-martial when probable cause to apprehend exists. In some circumstances, certain AFOSI agents may arrest civilians. However, this authority will be used judiciously and only when necessary.
- Arming:
 - AFPD 71-1, *Criminal Investigations and Counterintelligence*, authorizes agents to carry, concealed or unconcealed, Government-issued or AFOSI-approved privately owned firearms

- Complaints:

- Complaints against AFOSI personnel should be referred to the AFOSI member's immediate supervision for thorough and expeditious investigation by the HQ AFOSI Office of the Inspector General's Internal Affairs Section

Release of AFOSI Information

- AFOSI records are generally Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) and must be treated as law enforcement sensitive records. In addition, most AFOSI records are protected by the Privacy Act.
- The vast majority of AFOSI records (ROIs, policies, instructions, etc.) are not publicly releasable and must be safeguarded. AFOSI records may only be released/further distributed to those who have an official "need-to-know" or through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process. All requests for AFOSI information must be processed through the servicing AFOSI detachment and AFOSI/FSS/MSII. In order to avoid compromising other investigations, and unnecessary disclosure of tradecraft or law enforcement techniques, AFOSI should be consulted any time AFOSI records are released for administrative actions and courts. Consult with the servicing SJA before release.
- Only AFOSI may authorize release of AFOSI records outside the DAF. AFOSI/FSS/MSII is responsible for processing all FOIA and Privacy Act requests for AFOSI information.
- All media inquiries involving AFOSI, AFOSI investigations, or AFOSI personnel require close coordination among local and HQ AFOSI public affairs (PA), the servicing SJA, HQ AFOSI/JA, OSTC (when applicable), and local and AFOSI leadership
- All civilian subpoenas for AFOSI information or personnel must be sent to AFOSI/FSS/MSII. HQ AFOSI's SJA is the release authority for such requests.

References

- Rule for Courts-Martial 302 (2024)
- Military Rule of Evidence 315, 506, and 507 (2024)
- DoDI 5505.18, *Investigation of Adult Sexual Assault in the Department of Defense* (22 March 2017), incorporating through Change 5, 26 July 2024
- DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities* (8 August 2016)
- DAFI 71-101 V1, *Criminal Investigations Program* (24 January 2025)
- AFI 71-101 V4, *Counterintelligence* (2 July 2019)
- AFMD 39, *Air Force Office of Special Investigations* (12 February 2024)
- AFD 71-1, *Criminal Investigations and Counterintelligence* (1 July 2019)

FUNCTIONS OF THE AREA DEFENSE COUNSEL

The Area Defense Counsel (ADC) provides Department of the Air Force (DAF) members with free, confidential, and independent legal representation. DAF service members suspected of a criminal offense or facing an adverse administrative action receive legal advice from an experienced, certified judge advocate.

Key Takeaways

- » The ADC represents DAF service members under investigation, facing adverse action, and at courts-martial
- » ADCs operate outside the local chain of command and only advocate for their clients' interests
- » Civilians are not entitled to ADC representation. Members of the Air Force Reserve and members of the Air National Guard (ANG) may be represented by the ADC depending on the circumstances.
- » Local commands and legal offices should support the ADC mission

- The ADC represents DAF service members in the following areas:
 - Courts-martial
 - Administrative separation actions
 - Article 32 preliminary hearings
 - Pretrial confinement hearings
 - Nonjudicial punishment (NJP) actions under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
 - Criminal investigations, administrative investigations, interrogations, and inquiries in which the member is suspected of misconduct, has violated the UCMJ, or faces adverse administrative action
 - When a service member requests a defense counsel pursuant to the service member's right not to self-incriminate under Article 31, UCMJ
 - Any other adverse administrative actions for which legal counsel is required or authorized, including but not limited to Letters of Counseling (LOCs), Admonishment (LOAs), or Reprimand (LORs), Unfavorable Information Files (UIFs), Control Rosters, referral performance evaluations, administrative demotions, promotion proprietary actions (PPAs), officer grade determinations (OGDs), and Flying Evaluation Boards (FEBs)

- All ADCs are assigned outside the local chain of command, operate independently of the local chain of command, and maintain an office physically separate from the base legal office to avoid conflicts of interest or command influence
 - The ADC's responsibility is to represent the client zealously and ethically, which may include meeting with or advocating directly to commanders and unit leadership
 - Acting as a legal representative for the client alone, the ADC is ethically prohibited from sharing any details of the representation of the client or any confidential client communications with third parties, unless the client specifically authorizes the ADC to do so
- DAF service members facing any type of investigation or adverse administrative action should be referred to the ADC
 - Civilians are not entitled to ADC representation
 - ANG members are provided ADC representation when in Title 10 status and the command takes adverse administrative action against the member
 - Resources permitting, reservists facing administrative discharge action that are board entitled will be represented by the ADC nearest to the location of their reserve unit. Additionally, reservists facing military criminal investigation, or any other adverse administrative action, will generally be represented by the ADC nearest to the location of their reserve unit.
- The ADC program requires strong command and Staff Judge Advocate support to maintain the integrity and fairness of the military justice system
 - The ADC is available, subject to workload and client confidences, to help educate the base population on the military justice system and the ADC's function

References

- Articles 15, 31, and 32, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

COMMAND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL OFFENSES

The legal requirements related to sexual offenses are complex. It is imperative commanders consult with their respective Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) early on for any allegation of a sexually related offense.

Key Takeaways

- » The Department of the Air Force's (DAF's) response to sexual assault is both proactive and reactive. On both fronts, the DAF utilizes a multidisciplinary approach.
- » The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) office has the lead in sexual assault prevention, but every DAF member and every agency must play a role for prevention to work
- » A number of specific agencies are involved in responding to individual cases including SAPR, Family Advocacy, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI), the legal office, the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC), medical and mental health providers, the chaplain's office, and a member's chain of command
- » There are many different legal categories of sexual offenses, and this section encompasses the full spectrum

Special Considerations Unique to Sexual Offense Cases

- Authority to Investigate: Air Force OSI is the lead agency to investigate sexual allegations, regardless of the severity of the offense
 - A commander should ensure that any allegation of a sexual offense is communicated to both OSI and their respective SJA immediately
- Disposition Authority: Because the law has changed significantly in this area, including through the authority of the OSTC, commanders must consult with the SJA immediately to determine the appropriate disposition authority for a sexual offense
- OSTC holds court-martial authority over sexual offenses committed by military members, along with discretionary authority over any known or related offenses. Specifically, for sexual offenses alleged to have been committed on or after 28 December 2023, only OSTC may refer the charges to a court-martial proceeding. For sexual offenses alleged to have been committed prior to that date, OSTC has discretionary authority to refer the charges or to allow command to determine whether to refer the charges to a court-martial.
- For certain sexual assault offenses with court-martial authority remaining fully under command authority, by order of the Secretary of War (SecWar), the O-6 Special Court-Martial Convening Authority (SPCMCA) is the Initial Disposition Authority, as well as for all offenses arising from or relating to the qualifying incident(s)

- For sexual offenses under OSTC's authority, OSTC disposition is limited to: (1) preferral/referral of the offense to a general or special court-martial; or (2) deferral of the offense to command for further disposition. For sexual offenses under OSTC's exclusive authority (i.e. alleged to have been committed on or after 28 December 2023) that are deferred by OSTC, command may take any lawful disposition action, other than referral of charges for trial by general or special court-martial, to include nonjudicial punishment, administrative separation, or other administrative action. Refer to [*The Office of Special Trial Counsel*](#) section of Chapter 5 for additional information.
- Victim Collateral Misconduct:
 - Initial disposition authority is also withheld for all collateral misconduct alleged to have been committed by a victim, such as where evidence indicates a victim engaged in underage drinking or other related alcohol offenses, adultery, drug abuse, fraternization, or other violations of instructions, regulations, or orders
 - Consult the servicing legal office for assistance in assessing available and appropriate disposition of victim collateral misconduct
- Victim Consultation: Victims have a number of rights under Article 6b, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
 - In an effort to ensure victims are afforded their rights, commanders, legal offices, and OSTC are required to consult with victims of all crimes prior to taking a number of military justice related actions. Commanders should contact their legal office to ensure all victim consultation requirements are met.
- Discharging a Victim of a Sexual Assault: Victims have the opportunity to request the General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) review their discharge case if the victim made an unrestricted report of sexual assault within the 12 months prior to being notified of an involuntary discharge and the victim believes the discharge was initiated in retaliation for making the unrestricted report
- Mandatory Recommendation for Discharge for Allegations of Sexual Assault: Sexual assault is incompatible with military service
 - For offenses under command authority, including offenses deferred by OSTC (i.e., returned to command), if a commander believes it is more likely than not a member committed a sexual assault, they must take prompt action to initiate discharge or waiver action. Sexual assault, for the purposes of the administrative separation instruction, is defined very broadly.
 - The member must be recommended for discharge unless the member meets all the specified exception criteria listed in the discharge regulation
 - The initiation of court-martial charges generally takes precedence over the decision to initiate discharge, but if those charges do not ultimately proceed to court-martial, the commander is still responsible for making a discharge determination

- **Sex Offender Registration:** Federal law requires that any service member convicted in a general or special court-martial of any specified sexual offense must report for registration with the appropriate authorities in the jurisdiction in which the service member resides, works, or attends school
 - The DoW has a separate requirement for *notifying* those jurisdictions that a military member convicted of committing certain offenses plans to reside, work, or attend school in a jurisdiction. This is triggered by the offenses listed in DoDI 1325.07, *Administration of Military Correctional Facilities and Clemency and Parole Authority*. However, it is important to note that an individual's sex offender registration requirements vary by state and may be triggered by offenses not listed in DoDI 1325.07.

Commander Response to Allegations of Sexual Assault

- Commanders notified of a sexual assault through unrestricted reporting must take immediate steps to ensure the victim's physical safety, emotional security, and medical treatment needs are met, and that OSI or the appropriate criminal investigative agency is notified
- Commanders have a role in preventing retaliation against victims and their family members, as well as witnesses, first responders, and bystanders for their role in a sexual assault case
- Commanders must ensure their subordinates are aware of the responsibility not to retaliate
- The appropriate commander should determine whether temporary reassignment or relocation of the victim or subject is appropriate; upon request, this could possibly include a permanent change of station, including an expedited transfer or humanitarian reassignment
- Commanders should consider issuing no contact orders or Military Protection Orders (DD Form 2873), if appropriate
- The immediate commander of the subject of a sexual assault must keep in mind that the subject is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Monitor the well-being of the alleged offender, particularly for any indications of suicidal ideation or other unhealthy attempts to cope with stress, and ensure appropriate assistance is rendered. Consult with medical and mental health providers for appropriate courses of action, as needed.
- The immediate commander of any victim who has filed an unrestricted report is required to attend monthly Case Management Group (CMG) meetings, chaired by installation leadership, to carefully consider and implement immediate, short-term, and long-term measures to help facilitate and assure the victim's well-being and recovery from the sexual assault

References

- Articles 6b, 18, 43, 56, 120, 120a, 120b, and 120c, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DoDI 1325.07, *Administration of Military Correctional Facilities and Clemency and Parole Programs* (21 November 2024), incorporating Change 1, 6 June 2025
- DoDI 6495.02 Volume 1, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR): Program Procedures* (28 March 2013), incorporating through Change 9, 18 March 2025
- DD Form 2873, *Military Protection Order (MPO)* (March 2025)
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- DAFI 71-101V1, *Criminal Investigations Program* (24 January 2025)
- DAFI 90-6001, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program* (15 July 2020), incorporating Change 1, 26 March 2021, including DAFI90-6001_DAFGM2025-01, 16 July 2025

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) policy and responsibilities apply to all levels of command and all DAF organizations and personnel.

Key Takeaways

- » A commander must immediately contact the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) upon learning of a sexual assault, whether or not the allegation occurred within the commander's own chain of command
- » Monthly Case Management Group (CMG) meetings chaired by the installation commander or deputy commander will address the holistic care of victims in unrestricted reports of sexual assault; a CMG will include the victim's commander, SAPR personnel, OSI, legal, medical and other helping agencies
- » Depending on who is exercising authority over alleged victim collateral misconduct, either commanders or the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) will have the authority to determine the appropriate disposition of such misconduct; however, commanders should consult with the servicing legal office for the most up-to-date requirements affecting disposition of victim collateral misconduct

The SAPR Office

- The Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) serves as the single point of contact at an installation or within a geographic area for integrating and coordinating sexual assault victim care from an initial report of sexual assault, through disposition and resolution of issues related to the victim's health and well-being
- The SARC is responsible for: ensuring a 24-hour/day support system and response capability for all victims falling within the SAPR program; supervising SAPR Victim Advocates (VAs) and Volunteer Victim Advocates (VVAs); and assisting commanders to meet annual SAPR training requirements. The VVA program will be phased out with an expected sunset date of 30 September 2027.
- SAPR VAs and VVAs provide victims crisis intervention, referrals, and ongoing non-clinical support, including information about available options and resources, to help victims make informed decisions about their case. At the victim's request, VAs and VVAs may accompany the victim to medical examinations and investigative and counsel interviews.

SAPR Response to Sexual Assault Allegations

- The SAPR office will determine if a victim is eligible for SAPR services
 - Service members and their dependents 18 and older are eligible for services and may make both restricted and unrestricted reports of sexual assault

- The following non-military individuals are only eligible for the unrestricted reporting option: DoW civilian employees' dependents 18 years of age and older when stationed or performing duties outside the continental United States (OCONUS), and U.S. citizen DoW-contractor personnel when authorized to accompany the Armed Forces in a contingency operation OCONUS and their employees who are U.S. citizens
- DAF civilian employees are eligible for restricted and unrestricted reporting and will have access to the full complement of SAPR services offered to service members excluding medical entitlements or legal services unless otherwise authorized by law or policy
- Victims sexually assaulted by a current or former intimate partner and victims who are military dependents 17 years of age or younger will be referred to the Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
- The SARC, VA, or VVA will meet the victim and explain reporting options
 - Unrestricted Report: Can only be made via the victim's selection of that option on a DD Form 2910, *Victim Reporting Preference Statement*. SAPR personnel must refer unrestricted reports to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) for investigation.
 - Restricted Report: Is made via the victim's selection of that option on a DD Form 2910. SAPR personnel will not refer restricted reports to OSI. A restricted report can be made at any time so long as a victim did not disclose the incident to law enforcement or previously make an unrestricted report regarding the same incident. Victims who are in law enforcement may disclose the incident to other law enforcement personnel, not in their chain of command, in personal conversations without losing their ability to make a restricted report.
 - Independent Investigations: Those initiated because information about a sexual assault was disclosed to command or law enforcement from sources independent of a victim. A victim's disclosure to command or someone in the chain of command will also initiate an independent investigation because of command's obligation to report the allegation to OSI. A victim generally retains the ability to make a restricted report in such cases so long as the victim did not personally report the incident to law enforcement and has not previously made a restricted report for the same incident.

Expedited Transfer

- Service members who make an unrestricted report that they are victims of sexual assault may seek an Expedited Transfer (ET), a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) or a temporary or Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA) to another location to help healing, recovery, and rehabilitation
 - Upon receiving a request for an ET, the installation or host wing commander can consider potential transfer of the alleged offender instead of the victim, if appropriate. Alleged offender reassignments are handled in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 674 and DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments*, and are not facilitated by SAPR personnel.

- Victims under the rubric of the FAP may request an expedited transfer pursuant to DAFI 40-301, *Family Advocacy Program*
- An ET is available to Regular DAF victims, non-prior service DAF service members performing initial skills training, and Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Reserve Component (ARC) members who have made an unrestricted report of sexual assault through either the SAPR program or the FAP. ETs are also available to service members whose adult military dependent has filed an unrestricted report of sexual assault in which the offender is a service member or has a military nexus (e.g., is an adult military dependent, is a DoW civilian employee, or is a government contractor).
- Once an ET request is made, the victim's commander (or equivalent) makes a recommendation to the host wing/installation commander for approval or disapproval; the victim's commander should base his/her recommendation upon all available information, especially that provided by OSI, and after consultation with the Staff Judge Advocate
- If the ET request is disapproved by the wing/installation commander, the victim may appeal to the first/next general officer in the chain of command; if disapproved at this level the victim may make a final appeal to the major/field command vice commander

Case Management Group Meetings

- Held monthly to discuss unrestricted reports of sexual assault on the installation as well as instances of retaliation related to the report of sexual assault experienced by the victim, bystanders, and first responders (if applicable)
 - Within 72 hours of a CMG, a victim's commander will provide the victim an update regarding the investigation, ET and any other request, and command proceedings regarding the sexual assault
- The CMG will immediately form a High-Risk Response Team (HRRT) for victims who are assessed to be at high risk of harm via a safety assessment; HRRT findings must be reported to the installation commander within 24 hours of being activated

Victim Collateral Misconduct

- An investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding an alleged sexual assault may develop evidence that the victim engaged in misconduct such as underage drinking or other related alcohol offenses, adultery, drug abuse, fraternization, or other violations of instructions, regulations, or orders. This is generally known as "collateral misconduct."
- Under the "safe-to-report" policy, disciplinary action for a victim's alleged collateral misconduct may only be taken after the determination is made that the alleged misconduct is "minor." Consult the servicing legal office for assistance in assessing available and appropriate disposition of victim collateral misconduct.

References

- Temporary Administrative Reassignment or Removal of a Member on Active Duty Accused of Committing a Sexual Assault or Related Offense, 10 U.S.C. § 674
- DoDD 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program* (23 January 2012), incorporating through Change 6, 26 March 2025
- DoDI 6495.02, Volume 1, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Program Procedures* (28 March 2013), incorporating through Change 9, 18 March 2025
- DoDI 6495.02, Volume 2, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Education and Training* (9 April 2021), incorporating Change 1, 18 March 2025
- DoDI 6495.02, Volume 3, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Retaliation Response for Adult Sexual Assault Cases* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 26 July 2024
- DD Form 2910, *Victim Reporting Preference Statement* (November 2021)
- DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments* (9 August 2024)
- DAFI 40-301, *Family Advocacy Program* (13 November 2020), including DAFI 40-301_DAFGM2025-01, 29 August 2025
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- DAFI 90-6001, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program* (15 July 2020), including DAFI 90-6001_DAFGM2025-01, 16 July 2025
- DAFPD 90-60, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program* (5 October 2022)

VICTIMS' COUNSEL PROGRAM

The Victims' Counsel (VC) program empowers victims of sex-related offenses, domestic violence offenses, and interpersonal violence (IPV) offenses through the military legal system by allowing for a confidential, attorney-client relationship between a VC and a qualifying victim. This relationship gives victims a voice in the military justice process, providing victims with an attorney who will advocate on their behalf to protect their rights throughout the process.

Key Takeaways

- » VC program provides victims legal advice, representation, and advocacy
- » VCs represent most victims of sex-related offenses and domestic violence offenses and provide consultation to victims of other violent offenses or workplace violence
- » Eligible victims must be informed of the availability of VC services as outlined in this section
- » If the victim requests a VC upon notification, then the individual receiving the request is required to contact their servicing VC office for further processing
- » VCs are assigned and operate independent from the local chain of command and serve as an advocate for the victim, not an advisor for commanders

Objectives of the VC Program

- The objectives of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) VC program are to:
 - Provide victims of qualifying offenses with independent and privileged legal advice and representation, to include investigation and prosecution of those offenses
 - Empower victims of qualifying offenses by providing professional and knowledgeable counsel to enable them to express their interests
 - Provide advocacy to protect the rights afforded to victims

Overview of the VC Program

- The Special Victims' Counsel (SVC) program was implemented in January 2013
- National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020, Section 548, mandated all Military Services provide legal counsel to eligible victims of domestic violence offenses
- In April 2021, the program expanded to provide legal services to IPV victims
- In November 2021, the SVC Division was renamed as the VC Division
- All DAF installations are serviced by a VC office, which may be geographically separated

Eligibility for VC Representation or Consultation

- Certain categories of victims of sex-related offenses and domestic violence offenses are generally eligible for VC representation
 - Regular Component, Reserve Component, United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) cadets, Space Force members
 - Air National Guard (ANG) members, but normally referred to the National Guard SVC program
 - Dependents, retirees, and others eligible for military legal assistance, so long as a Regular Component DAF commander or Office of Special Trial Counsel may exercise jurisdiction and the victim requires legal representation for active participation in an on-going military justice investigation or process
 - For sex-related offenses only, Department of War (DoW) civilians not otherwise eligible for military legal assistance, so long as the subject may be prosecuted under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and there is a nexus to DAF employment
- Basic military training (BMT) and technical training students who are involved in an unprofessional relationship that involves physical contact of a sexual nature with faculty or staff, if the qualifying offense occurs within the first six months of service
- DAF Regular Component victims of other violent offenses or workplace violence under the UCMJ
- Other victims on a case-by-case basis via an extraordinary circumstances request (ECR). Eligibility for services is outlined in 10 U.S.C. §§ 1044, 1044e, and 1565b, as well as FY2020 NDAA, Section 548, along with service policies and regulations.

Notifying Victims of Availability of Special Services

- Eligible victims must be informed of the availability of VC services upon reporting the qualifying offense, before being interviewed as a victim regarding the allegation, or when seeking assistance as a victim related to the allegation from the following personnel: Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, Victim Advocate, Family Advocacy Program, Air Force Office of Special Investigations or Security Forces investigator, Victim and Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) personnel, trial counsel, defense counsel, chaplain, mental health provider, or medical provider
 - If the victim requests a VC upon notification, then the individual receiving the request is required to contact their servicing VC office for further processing
- VCs are not permitted to solicit clients; victims must request a VC

Scope of Representation

- A VC represents sexual assault victims and domestic violence victims in a confidential, attorney-client relationship, through military legal proceedings related to the offense
- Military Justice Advocacy: VCs enable victims to assert their rights under the law and applicable regulations by: advocating to commanders, convening authorities, Office of Special Trial Counsel, Staff Judge Advocates, and military judges; attending interviews; representing clients at Article 32, UCMJ, preliminary hearings and courts-martial; assisting clients with post-trial submissions to the convening authority; advising clients on VWAP; assisting clients in seeking transitional compensation; and liaising with other helping agencies
- Advocacy to DoW and DAF Agencies: VCs assist clients with requests for/relating to Expedited Transfer (ET), victim's safety (e.g., Military Protective Orders (MPO)), access to medical and mental health care, workplace concerns, and military benefits
- Collateral Misconduct: VCs may represent victims accused of misconduct, in conjunction with a military Area Defense Counsel or alone
- Advocacy to Civilian Prosecutors and Agencies: VCs may advise clients on U.S. civilian criminal jurisdiction and may provide limited advocacy regarding a client's interest to civilian prosecutors or agencies; VCs may not represent clients in civilian proceedings
- A VC may provide an IPV victim confidential legal advice, victim education on rights and benefits afforded to crime victims, legal consultation and referrals regarding roles and responsibilities of victims' support services, and limited advocacy; IPV representation is limited to a consultation without an approved ECR

VC Qualifications

- A VC is a judge advocate certified and designated by The Judge Advocate General (TJAG) to represent the interests of victims of certain qualifying offenses
- All VCs are assigned outside the local chain of command, operate independently of the local chain of command, and maintain an office physically separate from the base legal office to avoid conflicts of interest or command influence. A VC's chain of command flows through VC districts to the Chief, Victims' Counsel Division.
- The VC's primary responsibility is to advise and zealously advocate for the client's expressed interests throughout the military justice process
- The VC is an advocate for the client, not an advisor for the command or legal office

References

- Legal Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 1044
- Special Victims' Counsel for Victims of Sex-Related Offenses, 10 U.S.C. § 1044e
- Victims of Sexual Assault: Access to Legal Assistance and Services of Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Sexual Assault Victim Advocates, 10 U.S.C. § 1565b
- Articles 6b and 32, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, Pub. L. 116-92, § 548 (2019)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- DAFI 51-207, *Victim and Witness Rights and Procedures* (14 April 2022), including DAFGM2024-01, 3 October 2024
- Under Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Safe-to-Report Policy for Service Member Victims of Sexual Assault*, 25 October 2021
- Operating Instruction, *Air Force Victims' Counsel Charter* (4 November 2021)

VICTIM AND WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Victim and Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) is an installation-level program that provides guidance for the protection and assistance of victims and witnesses. It has three primary objectives: (1) to mitigate the physical, psychological, and financial hardships suffered by victims and witnesses of offenses investigated by Department of the Air Force (DAF) authorities; (2) to foster cooperation between victims, witnesses, and the military justice system; and (3) to ensure best efforts are made to afford victims certain enumerated rights.

Key Takeaways

- » Article 6b, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), established certain rights for crime victims. Victims of an offense referred to a court-martial after 1 January 2019 have additional rights.
- » Communications between a victim and victim liaison are **NOT** privileged under Military Rule of Evidence (M.R.E.) 514
- » Installations have responsibilities toward victims including providing information about medical and social services, assisting with restitution, and consulting victims on disposition

Overview

- VWAP notifications and services are provided through the Local Responsible Official (LRO), who is the installation commander or the Special Court-Martial Convening Authority (SPCMCA). The LRO often delegates LRO duties to the installation Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), who in turn appoints a VWAP Coordinator to implement and manage the requirements as part of the VWAP. The VWAP Coordinator is also responsible for conducting annual training and can serve as a victim liaison.
- A victim liaison is an individual appointed by the LRO or delegate to assist a victim during the military justice process. Communications between a victim and victim liaison are **NOT** privileged under M.R.E. 514.
- Annually, all agencies involved in VWAP (e.g., Security Forces, Air Force Office of Special Investigations, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program, Family Advocacy Program, etc.) are responsible for training personnel assigned to their respective agencies on their responsibilities with the program. The SJA trains commanders and first sergeants.
- Each installation should prepare and maintain a victim information packet and the same local agencies listed above should be involved in its preparation. Each identified victim or witness should be provided with that packet, which should contain DD Forms 2701–05 (listed in references at end of section), as appropriate.

Victim Rights

- Article 6b, UCMJ, establishes rights for crime victims. These rights can be enforced by the Court of Criminal Appeals.
 - For the purposes of Article 6b, UCMJ, and VWAP, a victim is defined as a person who suffered direct physical, emotional, or financial harm as a result of the commission of an offense under the UCMJ
 - For VWAP purposes, there is no burden of proof for these rights to apply and a victim shall be identified at the earliest opportunity after the detection of a crime
- A victim has the following rights under Article 6b, UCMJ:
 - To be reasonably protected from the accused;
 - To receive reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of specified hearings;
 - Not to be excluded from any public hearing or proceeding;
 - To be reasonably heard at specified hearings;
 - To confer with government counsel;
 - To receive restitution as provided by law;
 - To proceedings free from unreasonable delay;
 - To be informed in a timely manner of a plea agreement, separation-in-lieu-of-trial agreement, or non-prosecution agreement relating to the offense; and
 - To be treated with fairness and with respect for his/her dignity and privacy.
- Victims also have several additional rights:
 - To petition for a hearing before a military judge for relief from an investigative subpoena;
 - To be interviewed by defense counsel only in the presence of counsel for the victim, trial counsel, or a victim advocate;
 - To petition a military judge to require a preliminary hearing officer to comply with applicable rules;
 - To submit supplemental materials for consideration by a preliminary hearing officer (PHO) or convening authority within 24 hours after the close of an Article 32 hearing; and
 - In some cases, to receive a copy of the recording of all open sessions of a court-martial, a copy of the record of trial, a copy of any action taken by the convening authority, and a copy of the entry of judgment.

- Victims also have rights in processes after the trial ends:
 - The Victim Appellate Notification Program (VANP) provides all victims, who opt in to the program, with notifications from the United States Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals and the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces on their case
 - Victims, victims' family and/or representatives may appear before the Air Force Clemency and Parole Board to present information concerning the impact of the inmate's confining offenses on the victim and/or the victims' family whenever the inmate is eligible for clemency or parole

LRO Responsibilities to Crime Victims

- In addition to the preceding victim's rights, installation commanders have several specific responsibilities toward crime victims under the VWAP. These responsibilities are executed by various personnel, including law enforcement, commanders, the SJA, confinement facilities, and the SAPR program as applicable. Some responsibilities include:
 - Inform eligible victims of the ability to consult with a Victims' Counsel
 - Inform victims of and assist them in obtaining medical, financial, legal, and other social services
 - Inform victims of restitution or other relief to which they may be entitled
 - Inform victims concerning protection against threats or harassment
 - Provide victims notice of significant events in the military justice process
 - Ensure victims are consulted regarding their preference as to military or civilian prosecution of an offense and consideration given to their views for each stage of a court-martial including preferral, dismissal of charges, pretrial restraint, and plea agreements
 - The LRO should consult with the SJA prior to revealing to the victim the specific action taken (e.g., nonjudicial punishment under Article 15, UCMJ, and/or administrative discharge) to ensure the release is consistent with the Privacy Act
 - Safeguard the victim's property if taken as evidence and return it as soon as possible.
Note: Additional safeguards and requirements exist for property taken as evidence in a sexual assault investigation. Consult with the servicing legal office for assistance.

LRO Responsibilities to All Victims and Witnesses

- Notify authorities of threats and assist in obtaining no contact orders and Military Protective Orders
- In appropriate cases, if a victim or witness requests, take reasonable steps to inform his/her employer of the reasons for the absence from work and assist in explaining to creditors reasons for any serious financial strain incurred as a direct result of the offense
- Provide victims and witnesses necessary assistance in obtaining timely payment of witness fees and related costs
- Notify victims and witnesses in cases involving adverse actions for crimes of abuse against dependents which result in the separation of the military sponsor that victims may be entitled to receive transitional compensation or payment under the Uniformed Services Former Spouses' Protection Act, 10 U.S.C. § 1408

References

- Article 6b, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Military Rule of Evidence 514 (2024)
- DoDI 1030.02, *Victim and Witness Assistance* (27 July 2023)
- DoDI 6400.07, *Standards for Victim Assistance Services in the Military Community* (15 November 2013), incorporating through Change 2, 6 July 2018
- DD Form 2701, *Initial Information for Victims and Witnesses of Crime* (October 2022)
- DD Form 2702, *Court-Martial Information for Victims and Witnesses of Crime* (October 2022)
- DD Form 2703, *Post-Trial Information for Victims and Witnesses of Crime* (October 2022)
- DD Form 2704, *Victim/Witness Certification and Election Concerning Prisoner Status* (March 2013)
- DD Form 2704-1, *Victim Election of Post-Trial and Appellate Rights* (March 2023)
- DD Form 2705, *Notification to Victim/Witness of Prisoner Status* (March 2023)
- DAFI 51-207, *Victim and Witness Rights and Procedures* (14 April 2022), including DAFI51-207_DAFGM2025-01, 25 September 2025

TRANSITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE

It is Department of War (DoW) policy to provide transitional assistance benefits, known as transitional compensation, to dependents of members who are separated for domestic abuse. Transitional compensation is an extension of benefits and/or a monetary payment for a set period of time to the abused dependents of the separated military members. Applicants initiate requests through the applicable installation's Staff Judge Advocate's office, but may also receive assistance from the member's unit commander or the installation Military Personnel Flight (MPF).

Key Takeaways

- » Transitional benefits are available to dependents of service members who are separated for dependent-abuse-related offenses or who are separated and are convicted of a dependent-abuse offense in a United States or State court, to help dependents transition away from the abuser
- » Eligible dependents request transitional compensation using a DD Form 2698, *Application for Transitional Compensation*
- » Exceptional eligibility is available through Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) approval (or lower where delegated) for dependents and former dependents who are not otherwise authorized to receive transitional compensation
- » Available benefits may include monthly monetary compensation, commissary and exchange privileges, and medical and dental care

Eligibility for Transitional Compensation

- Dependents of a member of the armed forces who has been on active duty for more than 30 days and who are:
 - Separated from active duty under a court-martial sentence resulting from a dependent-abuse offense;
 - Administratively separated from the Regular Air Force, Space Force, the Air Force Reserve, or the Air National Guard (ANG) if the basis for separation includes a dependent-abuse offense;
 - Sentenced to forfeiture of all pay and allowances by a court-martial which has convicted the member of a dependent-abuse offense; or
 - Convicted of a dependent-abuse offense in a district court of the United States or a State court, and separated from active duty pursuant to a sentence of a court-martial, or administratively separated, voluntarily or involuntarily, from active duty, for an offense other than the dependent-abuse offense.

- **Note:** Dependents are ineligible to receive any transitional compensation and will forfeit any further transitional compensation benefits if they remarry, cohabitate with the member, or are found to have been an active participant in the dependent abuse. In these circumstances, a dependent child may remain eligible, if the child does not reside with the member or the spouse. An applicant cannot receive both transitional compensation benefits and a percentage of the member's retirement pay at the same time.
- Dependent-abuse offenses are those defined by the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) or applicable civilian criminal codes, including attempts or conspiracies to commit offenses such as sexual assault, battery, murder, and manslaughter
- Exceptional Eligibility: 10 U.S.C. § 1059(m) authorizes the SecAF to grant transitional compensation benefits to dependents and former dependents who are not otherwise authorized such benefits. SecAF may delegate this authority to the first general officer (or civilian equivalent) in the chain of command of the member. Payments are subject to determination that the former member engaged in a dependent-abuse offense, but was allowed to separate, voluntarily or involuntarily, under other circumstances before a determination was made or documented.

Application Procedures

- Eligible dependents request transitional compensation by completing the DD Form 2698, *Application for Transitional Compensation*
- Requests are initiated through the installation legal office at any Department of the Air Force installation when the applicant is no longer at the installation where the member was assigned. A Victim Witness and Assistance Program (VWAP) liaison, Victims' Counsel, or unit representative will assist the dependent as appropriate with completing the DD Form 2698.
- Unit commanders will assist family members from their unit with the application process. Staff Judge Advocates will also assist qualified dependents in gathering data required to complete the DD Form 2698.
- The MPF commander will coordinate the package and obtain a written legal review from the Staff Judge Advocate. The installation commander is the approval authority, except in cases under the Exceptional Eligibility provision. The installation commander may delegate, in writing, this duty to group commanders or equivalents.
- Exceptional Eligibility applications are routed through the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC/DP2SSM) and the Military Compensation Policy Division (AF/A1PA or SF/A1PA), for SecAF's approval or disapproval, unless authority has been delegated by SecAF
- If approved, transitional compensation will last for 36 months, unless otherwise forfeited

- The statutory monthly amount for transitional compensation is adjusted every year in accordance with the Social Security Administration's annual percent cost of living adjustments, which are published in the Federal Register (10 U.S.C. § 1059(f); 38 U.S.C. § 1311(a)–(f)(4); and 42 U.S.C. § 415(i))
- Available benefits may include monthly monetary compensation, commissary and exchange privileges, and medical and dental care
- The current compensation rates can be found at the Department of Veterans Affairs website: <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/survivor-compensation/dependency-indemnity-compensation/survivor-rates/>

References

- Dependents of Members Separated for Dependent Abuse: Transitional Compensation; Commissary and Exchange Benefits, Lodging Expenses 10 U.S.C. § 1059
- Medical and Dental Care for Dependents: General Rule, 10 U.S.C. § 1076
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to a Surviving Spouse, 38 U.S.C. § 1311
- Computation of Primary Insurance Amount, 42 U.S.C. § 415
- DoDI 1342.24, *Transitional Compensation (TC) for Abused Dependents* (23 September 2019)
- DD Form 2698, *Application for Transitional Compensation* (February 2019)
- DAFI 36-3012, *Military Entitlements* (6 April 2023), incorporating Change 1, 24 October 2023

MEDIA RELATIONS IN MILITARY JUSTICE MATTERS

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) must balance three important societal interests when there is media interest in military justice proceedings: protection of the right to a fair trial, the privacy rights of all persons involved, and the community's right to be informed of and observe criminal proceedings. Release of information is subject to several legal authorities. It is critical that commanders consult with their Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) before releasing information concerning military justice proceedings.

Key Takeaways

- » DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice*, contains detailed guidance concerning release of information pertaining to military justice proceedings
- » Commanders must prevent the release of information that could reasonably be expected to interfere with law enforcement or judicial proceedings
- » Release of extrajudicial statements concerning a proceeding is ultimately the responsibility of the convening authority for that proceeding
- » If a potential extrajudicial statement is based on information contained in agency records, the office of primary responsibility for the record should also coordinate prior to its release

Providing Information and Extrajudicial Statements Generally

- DAFI 51-201 covers the rules for releasing information pertaining to military justice proceedings. It prohibits release of information that could reasonably be expected to interfere with law enforcement proceedings or deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication in a criminal proceeding.
- “Extrajudicial statements” are verbal or written statements made outside of a criminal proceeding that a reasonable person would expect to be disseminated by means of public communication
- There are valid reasons for making certain information available to the public. Extrajudicial statements should include only factual matters—not subjective observations or opinions.
- The release of extrajudicial statements is a command responsibility. The convening authority responsible for the proceeding makes the ultimate decision. Major command (MAJCOM), field command (FLDCOM), or equivalent commanders may withhold release authority from subordinate commanders.
- Rules for release of permissible extrajudicial statements are complex and vary according to the type of information to be released and its source, the type of proceeding, and the stage of the proceeding when information is released. Any release of information is potentially subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Privacy Act (PA), and the Victim and Witness Assistance Program (VWAP). Accordingly, it is critical that all release of information or extrajudicial statements only be made after close consultation with the servicing legal office.

Prohibited Extrajudicial Statements

- Extrajudicial statements relating to the following matters have a high likelihood of prejudicing a criminal proceeding and generally should not be made:
 - The existence or contents of any confession, admission, statement by the accused, or the accused's refusal or failure to make a statement
 - Observations about the accused's character and reputation
 - Opinions regarding the accused's guilt or innocence
 - Opinions regarding the merits of the case or the merits of the evidence
 - The possibility of a guilty plea or other disposition of the case
 - Information government counsel knows or has reason to know would be inadmissible as evidence in a trial
- Prior to sentencing, you should also not release facts regarding the accused's disciplinary/criminal record. Even after sentencing, do not release information about previous nonjudicial punishment or administrative actions unless they were admitted into evidence at sentencing. A statement that the accused has no prior criminal/disciplinary history is permissible.

Permissible Extrajudicial Statements

- When deemed necessary by command, the following extrajudicial statements may be made at any stage of the proceedings, subject to certain limitations (i.e., substantial likelihood of prejudice, prohibitions under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Privacy Act (PA), or Victim and Witness Assistance Program (VWAP)):
 - General information to educate or inform the public concerning military law and the military justice system;
 - Information necessary to aid in apprehending a fugitive-accused or to warn the public of possible dangers, as well as facts and circumstances of their apprehension (e.g., time and place), after consultation with the affected law enforcement agency; and
 - Requests for assistance in obtaining evidence and information necessary to obtain evidence.

- The following extrajudicial statements may normally only be made after a convening authority has disposed of preferred charges by directing an Article 32 preliminary hearing or after charges are referred to court-martial, subject to the limitations stated above (substantial likelihood of prejudice and prohibitions under FOIA, PA, and/or VWAP):
 - The accused's name, unit, and assignment;
 - The substance or text of charges and specifications, provided there is a statement included explaining that the charges are merely accusations and that the accused is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. As necessary, redact all PA- and VWAP-protected data from the charges and specifications, such as the names of any victims.
 - The scheduling or result of any stage in the judicial process, date and place of trial and other proceedings, or anticipated dates. You may also direct them to the DAF's online Public Docket; and
 - The identity of appointed counsel, convening authorities, and reviewing authorities.
- Do not volunteer the identities of the court members or the military judge in material prepared for publication unless the convening authority's SJA determines that release would not prejudice the accused's rights or violate the members' or military judge's privacy interests

Article 32, UCMJ, Preliminary Hearings

- Article 32 preliminary hearings should ordinarily be open to the public
 - Access by spectators to all or part of the proceeding may be restricted by the convening authority who directed the hearing or by the preliminary hearing officer (PHO) when, in that officer's opinion, the interests of justice outweigh the public's interest in access (e.g., protecting the safety or privacy of a witness, preventing psychological harm to a child witness, or protecting classified information)

Release of Information from Records of Trial or Related Records

- The Air Force maintains a publicly accessible docket, which lists the name, base, and charges against an accused facing a preliminary hearing or court-martial. This website also contains certain documents from the trial, which are posted after the trial ends.
- Once a completed record is forwarded, the Military Justice Law and Policy Division (JAJM) is the disclosure authority for all records

Reducing Tension with the Media

- Command should take positive steps to reduce tension with the media
 - Advise the media up-front of the prohibition against courtroom photography, television, and audio and visual recording, and provide an alternate location, room or office for media interviews, broadcasts, etc.

References

- The Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552
- The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a
- Article 32, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rule for Courts-Martial 405 (2024)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program* (10 March 2020), Corrective Actions applied on 12 May 2020
- AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Operations* (20 November 2020)
- AFI 51-110, *Professional Responsibility Program* (11 December 2018)

ADVISING SUSPECTS OF RIGHTS

Commanders should not typically directly question members about alleged misconduct. Prior to asking any questions themselves, commanders should contact their legal office. Commanders shall ensure that criminal allegations involving persons affiliated with the Department of War are referred to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations or Security Forces for investigation. If a commander or any other person subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) needs to question a member suspected of committing some form of misconduct, it is essential to follow the legal requirements of Article 31, UCMJ.

Key Takeaways

- » When a commander, supervisor, first sergeant, or law enforcement suspects a Department of the Air Force (DAF) service member has committed an offense, they must advise the suspect of their rights under Article 31, UCMJ, before questioning the suspect or requesting a statement from the suspect
- » The Article 31 advisement must include the suspected offense, the suspect's right to remain silent and that any statements can be used at a judicial or administrative proceeding
- » Failure to advise a suspect of their rights under Article 31 can prohibit use of the suspect's statement, or any evidence derived from that statement, at trial or in other judicial or administrative proceedings
- » When advising a suspect of rights under Article 31, the best practice is to read directly from AFVA 31-231, *Advisement of Rights*, a wallet-sized card

Overview

- When any person (subject to the UCMJ) with investigative or disciplinary responsibility questions or requests any statement from a DAF service member who the person suspects of having committed an offense, that person must first inform the member of their Article 31 rights
- Proper rights advisement ensures the statement can be used as evidence in a court-martial or other judicial or administrative proceeding
- Admissions, confessions, and any evidence obtained as a result of those statements made in response to an absent or defective Article 31 rights advisement cannot normally be admitted as evidence at trial

When Article 31 Rights are Required

- A person subject to the UCMJ suspects someone, who is also subject to the UCMJ, of an offense and starts questioning or requests any statement from that individual about the offense of which the person is suspected

- A request for a statement need not involve actual questions. Sometimes actions, if they are likely to elicit a response, are deemed to be enough to trigger Article 31 rights. For example, a commander declares, “I don’t know what you were thinking, but I’m assuming the worst,” while shrugging his shoulders and shaking his head. Even though the commander has not asked a question, his statement and actions could elicit an incriminating response from the member.

Who Must Provide Article 31 Rights Advisements

- Military supervisors and commanders are presumed to be acting in a disciplinary capacity when questioning a subordinate. A first sergeant is also presumed to be acting in a disciplinary capacity when questioning military members. Supervisors, first sergeants, and commanders are held to a high standard. When in doubt, consult with your Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).

What Information Must the Article 31 Rights Advisement Include

- Although it is not necessary that the advisement be verbatim, the best practice is to read the rights directly from the AFVA 31-231. If the advisement is not given verbatim, it must include:
 - The crime the member is suspected of committing;
 - The general nature of the offense is sufficient, but the allegation stated must be specific enough so the member understands what offense he/she is being questioned about
 - That the member has the right to remain silent; and
 - The consequences of making a statement (i.e., any statement can be used as evidence at a judicial or administrative proceeding).
- Although Article 31 does not include a right to counsel, the person reading Article 31 rights should advise the member that they may request free military defense counsel

Rights Advisement Must be Understood and Acknowledged by the Suspect

- Suspect must unequivocally and affirmatively acknowledge understanding of their rights, waive their rights, and consent to make a statement without counsel present
- The questioner cannot obtain consent by coercion, threats, or other deprivations of liberty designed to subvert the suspect’s rights
- Be cautious when advising an intoxicated person of his/her rights. The individual may be legally incapable of knowingly and voluntarily waiving his/her rights.
- If a suspect hesitates over whether to assert his/her rights, the best practice is to clarify and not ask any further questions until doubt is resolved. Consult the SJA if it is unclear.

Suspect Acknowledgment and Waiver of Article 31 Rights

- When possible, obtain the waiver in writing using DAF Form 1168, *Statement of Suspect*
- Have a witness present
- If, after first electing to answer questions, a suspect changes their mind and decides to stop talking, **STOP ALL QUESTIONING**

When to Stop Questioning

- If the individual indicates a desire to remain silent, stop questioning. This does not mean, however, that you cannot give the individual orders or directions on other matters.
- If the suspect requests counsel, stop questioning immediately

Re-initiation of Questioning Following an Earlier Invocation of Article 31 Rights

- There are three circumstances under which questioning may occur despite an earlier Article 31 rights invocation:
 - The suspect voluntarily re-initiates the questioning
 - You are questioning the suspect about a different offense, unrelated to the previous rights advisement
 - There has been a sufficient “break in custody” (at least 14 days) to permit the member a meaningful opportunity to seek/consult with counsel, unless the suspect unilaterally chooses to voluntarily reengage without pressure or being approached by government authorities
- Consult with the SJA before re-initiating any questioning

Documentation

- Try to get the statement in writing. The statement can be handwritten or electronically typed. Use of the DAF Form 1168 is preferred.
- Whether or not the suspect makes a written statement, prepare a memorandum for record after the session ends. The memorandum should include:
 - Where the session was held;
 - Whether you advised the suspect of their Article 31 rights, when you advised them, and what specifically you said when you advised him/her;
 - What the suspect said;
 - What activities took place during the questioning (suspect sat, stood, smoked, drank, etc.);
 - What the suspect’s attitude was (angry, contrite, cooperative, combative, etc.); and
 - Duration of the session, listing the start and stop times.

References

- Article 31, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Military Rules of Evidence 304 and 305 (2024)
- DAF Form 1168, *Statement of Suspect/Witness/Complainant* (14 April 2025)
- AFVA 31-231, *Advisement of Rights* (1 January 1999), certified current 17 June 2025

CRIMINAL INDEXING

Criminal indexing entails making entries in criminal databases, detailed below, for the subjects of criminal investigations. Indexing enables the rapid exchange of information between criminal justice organizations to assist with investigations and protect public safety. Commanders have important responsibilities under AFMAN 71-102, *Air Force Criminal Indexing*, to ensure proper criminal indexing occurs.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders must work with their servicing legal office (JA), their local Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) detachment, Security Forces (SF), and the AF Criminal Justice Information Center (AF-CJIC) to ensure their criminal indexing responsibilities are met
- » AF-CJIC oversees indexing across the Department of Air Force (DAF) and ensures indexing compliance
- » Criminal indexing may have significant consequences for individuals, as it may result in creation of permanent criminal records for them
- » Failure to index when required also may have significant consequences for public safety and the DAF, including loss of access to databases or civil liability

Protection Order File (POF)

- An FBI database of civil protection orders (CPOs) and military protection orders (MPOs) issued to prevent domestic violence, stalking, and harassment
- Impact of Entry: Civilian and military authorities will be aware of existence of CPOs and MPOs. Although civilian authorities cannot enforce MPOs, they may contact military authorities in the event of off-base violations.
- Basis for Entry: Issuance of CPO or MPO
- Expungement: Entries will be removed upon expiration or termination of the order
- Commander's Responsibilities:
 - Report issuance, extension, modification, or termination of MPO **within 24 hours** to primary law enforcement control center (law enforcement desk, base defense operations center, or OSI)
 - Notify primary law enforcement control center **within 24 hours** upon learning of issuance of CPO
 - Advise MPO-protected persons that MPOs are not enforceable off-base by civilian authorities and to consider seeking a CPO

- Review MPOs annually (documented in writing), when the investigative case is closed, and upon request by subject or protected person to determine whether the MPO and its terms remain valid and that the MPO is the least restrictive means necessary to safeguard the protected person IAW DAFI 51-201_DAFGM2025-01, *Administration of Military Justice*, para. 4.17
- Upon change of command, relinquishing commander must notify the incoming commander of the MPO within 30 days and the incoming commander must review the MPO within 30 days IAW DAFI 51-201_DAFGM2025-01, para. 4.17.3.4
- Upon permanent change of station or deployment of a member subject to an MPO, notify the losing BDOC and gaining commander of the MPO to allow for gaining commander to review the MPO within 7 days of the member's arrival IAW DAFI 51-201_DAFGM2025-01, para. 4.17.3.3

National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)

- An FBI registry of persons who are prohibited by the Gun Control Act, 18 U.S.C. § 922(g) or (n), from possessing, receiving, shipping, or transporting firearms, ammunition, or explosives, in or affecting interstate commerce
- Impact of Entry: Immediate denial of ability to possess, receive, ship, or transport firearms, ammunition, or explosives
- Basis for Entry: A determination that the individual meets the criteria set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 922(g) or (n). Categories of prohibited persons include persons who are or have been:
 - Convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year (for military members, general court-martial or civilian convictions only);
 - Fugitives from justice;
 - Unlawful users of, or addicted to, any controlled substance;
 - Adjudicated as a mental defective or committed to a mental institution;
 - Aliens illegally in the United State;s
 - Discharged from the Armed Forces with a dishonorable discharge or dismissal;
 - Renounced their United States citizenship;
 - Subject to a court order restraining the person from harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner or the child of an intimate partner (military protection orders do not qualify);
 - Convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence; or
 - Under indictment/information for a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year (for military members, if qualifying charges are referred to a general court-martial).

- Expungement: Entries will be removed, upon request, if the criteria for entry are not met
- Commander's Responsibilities:
 - (See [Firearms Prohibitions section in Chapter 7](#) for more information)

Interstate Identification Index (III)

- An FBI database of electronic fingerprints and criminal history record information (date of arrest, arresting agency, charges, dispositions) of persons who have been arrested
- Impact of Entry: Immediate creation of a national criminal history record that may affect employment and volunteer opportunities, security clearances, and the ability to purchase or receive a firearm
- Basis for Entry: A probable cause determination that the individual committed a serious offense punishable by confinement. Non-serious offenses, enumerated in AFMAN 71-102_DAFGM2025-01, Atch 5, are excluded from indexing.
- Expungement: Entries will be removed, upon request, if the offense did not qualify for indexing, if there was no probable cause at the time of indexing to believe that the offense occurred or that the person indexed committed the offense, or in the interests of justice
- Commander's Responsibilities: None

Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)

- An FBI database of DNA specimens collected from persons under criminal investigation
- Impact of Entry: Once entered, DNA is subject to comparison with other DNA profiles and used to solve crimes and link serial offenders
- Basis for Entry: A probable cause determination that the individual committed a serious offense punishable by confinement. Non-serious offenses, enumerated in AFMAN 71-102_DAFGM2025-01, Atch 5, are excluded from indexing.
- Expungement: Entries will be removed, upon request, if current or former military members were not convicted of any offense at a general or special court-martial, if their convictions were overturned, or if they were never criminally charged (e.g., if no action or administrative action only was taken)
- Commander's Responsibilities: None

National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR)

- A nationwide database of individuals who are required to register in a state, territorial, or tribal sex offender registry
- Impact of Entry: Immediate identification as a nationally registered sex offender; also, may impact employment or volunteer opportunities and may trigger related restrictions

- **Basis for Entry:** Conviction of a qualifying offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) or United States Code; qualifying offenses include sexually violent offenses or certain offenses against minors, (see AFMAN 71-102_DAFGM2025-01, para. 3.1, and DoDI 1325.07, *Administration of Military Correctional Facilities and Clemency and Parole Programs*, para. 5.7.d(1) for more information)
- **Expungement:** Entries will be removed upon receipt by the Air Force of notification from the state, tribe or territory that the individual has registered as a sex offender or is not required to do so under state, tribal or territorial law
- **Commander's Responsibilities:** None

Defense Central Index of Investigations (DCII)

- A DoW database of investigations conducted by DoW law enforcement activities (LEAs) and personnel security determinations made by DoW adjudicative authorities
- **Impact of Entry:** Investigators consult this database during criminal, security clearance, and background investigations. Entry into the DCII does not imply any degree of guilt or innocence and judicial or adverse administrative actions may not be taken based solely on the existence of a DCII entry, DoDI 5505.07, *Titling and Indexing by DoD Law Enforcement Activities*, para. 1.2.c.
- **Basis for Entry:** Credible information that the subject of an investigation committed a criminal offense
- **Expungement:** Entries will be removed, upon request, if probable cause did not or does not exist to believe that the offense for which the person was indexed occurred or that the person indexed committed it
- **Commander's Responsibilities:** None

References

- Unlawful Acts, 18, U.S.C. § 922
- DoDI 1325.07, *Administration of Military Correctional Facilities and Clemency and Parole Programs* (November 21, 2024), incorporating Change 1, June 6, 2025
- DoDI 5505.07, *Titling and Indexing by DoD Law Enforcement Activities* (8 August 2023)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI 51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- AFMAN 71-102_DAFGM2024-01, *Air Force Criminal Indexing* (15 September 2025)

INSPECTIONS AND SEARCHES

Military law authorizes a commander to direct inspections of persons and property under his/her command and to authorize probable cause searches and seizures of persons and property under his/her command. However, a commander who authorizes a search or seizure must be neutral and detached from the case and facts.

Key Takeaways

- » Searches/seizures require probable cause, or consent, and are intended to obtain evidence for disciplinary reasons
- » Inspections do **NOT** require probable cause, are usually authorized by individual commanders, and are intended for non-prosecutorial reasons
- » Due to the dynamic nature of this area of the law, commanders should seek advice from the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) office **PRIOR** to making any decisions on a search, seizure, or inspection

Key Terms

- Search: Examination of a person, property, or premises, for the purpose of finding evidence for use in trial by court-martial or in other disciplinary proceedings
- Seizure: The meaningful interference with an individual's possessory interest in property, usually by taking and withholding the property
- Inspection: Examinations of a person, property, or premises for the *primary* purpose of determining and ensuring security, military fitness, or good order and discipline

Searches

- A search may be authorized on the following people and things:
 - Persons subject to the Uniform Code Military Justice (UCMJ) and under the commander's command
 - Persons or property situated in a place under the commander's command and control
 - Military property or property of a nonappropriated fund instrumentality (NAFI)
 - Property in a foreign country which is owned, used, occupied by, or held in the possession of a member under the commander's command
- A search may be authorized for the following types of evidence:
 - Contraband or prohibited property (e.g., drugs, unregistered firearms)
 - Fruits of a crime (e.g., stolen property, money)
 - Evidence of a crime (e.g., bloody clothing, weapon, fingerprints, bodily fluids)

Probable Cause Searches

- As a general rule, probable cause is required before legally authorizing a search
 - Probable cause exists when there is a reasonable belief that the person, property, or evidence sought is located in the place or on the person to be searched
 - Probable cause may arise from your personal knowledge or hearsay/third party knowledge (or both), and may come from oral or written evidence (or both)
 - An anonymous tip, by itself, may not justify a probable cause search, but can if it has enough indicia of reliability and specifics to indicate personal knowledge
- A search authority may orally authorize a search/seizure when exigent circumstances exist. “Exigent circumstances” means there is a reasonable belief that a delay in obtaining authorization would result in the removal, destruction, or concealment of the property or evidence sought. Probable cause is still required and should be promptly recorded in writing on an AF Form 1176, *Authority to Search and Seize*.

Mechanics of a Search Request

- If you learn of information that may justify a search:
 - “Freeze” the situation (i.e., control access to the area to be searched, if within the commander’s control, so that the scene and potential evidence remain undisturbed)
 - Immediately notify Security Forces or the Office of Special Investigations (OSI). Do not personally investigate.
 - Coordinate with your servicing SJA

Consent-Based Searches

- A search authorization is **NOT** required if the individual whose person or property is to be searched consents to the search
 - Consent must be freely given and cannot result from threats, coercion, or pressure
 - The best practice is to have a third person present as a witness when requesting consent to search
 - Consent may be given orally or in writing. When possible, use AF Form 1364, *Consent for Search and Seizure*.

Electronic Device Searches

- To search *personal* computers, cell phones/tablets, or storage devices, a search authorization based on probable cause or consent is required
- To search *government* computers, cell phones/tablets, or storage devices, a search authorization based on probable cause *might* be required. Contact your servicing SJA.

- Certain electronic service providers (e.g., WhatsApp, SnapChat, Facebook Messenger, iMessage, Apple iCloud, DropBox, Google Drive) require a warrant that can only be authorized by a military judge

Inspections

- Inspections are not searches, so they do not require probable cause
- Inspections may be “announced” or “unannounced”
- Inspections may be conducted personally by the commander or by others at the commander’s direction
- An inspection cannot be used as subterfuge for a search/seizure
 - The best practice is to prepare a memorandum for record concerning the purpose of the inspection to refresh the commander’s memory if they are later called upon to testify
- Inspections must be conducted in a “reasonable manner”
 - An inspection is “reasonable” if the scope, intensity, and manner of execution of the inspection is reasonably related to its purpose
 - For example, if the purpose of an inspection is to look for fire hazards near office electrical outlets, inspecting the contents of the desk drawers would be unreasonable since items located in the desk drawers would not risk an electrical fire
- An examination for the primary purpose of obtaining evidence for use in disciplinary proceedings is not an “inspection.” It is a “search,” and if not authorized based on probable cause, it is **illegal**.
- Examples of Lawful Inspections:
 - Random urinalysis inspection program;
 - Unit or base-wide “dorm sweeps” or unit urinalysis “sweeps” (ordered by installation or unit commander) so long as it is not done to target a specific individual; and
 - “Operation Nighthawk” (selection for urinalysis of random individuals entering the installation in the late evening or early morning hours of a pre-designated day).

References

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- Military Rules of Evidence 311-317 (2024)
 - AF Form 1176, *Authority to Search and Seize* (1 February 2019)
 - AF Form 1364, *Consent for Search and Seizure* (5 August 2019)

INQUIRY OR INVESTIGATION INTO REPORTED OFFENSES

When commanders learn of an allegation of misconduct against one of their members, commanders must ensure the allegation is properly evaluated. In cases involving a potential disciplinary action or any criminal offense, commanders should consult with the legal office.

Key Takeaways

- » When a military member is accused or suspected of an offense, the member's immediate commander has primary responsibility for ensuring an inquiry or investigation is conducted
- » All allegations of a sexual nature must be referred to Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) for investigation
- » For offenses under command authority, once the commander has all the relevant facts necessary to make a decision, he/she should consider what action, if any, should be taken, and take action in a timely manner
- » For offenses under the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) authority, commanders of the victim and the accused are entitled to provide non-binding disposition input to OSTC

Initial Investigation of Suspected Offenses

- Department of War (DoW) policy requires commanders at all levels to ensure that allegations of misconduct involving persons affiliated with the DoW or any property or programs under their control are referred to OSI and/or Security Forces. (See DoDI 5505.03, *Initiation of Investigations by Defense Criminal Investigative Organizations* for more information.) For assistance in making this determination, commanders should consult with their servicing legal office upon learning of any criminal allegation.
- Minor Offenses: In some cases, the chain of command or first sergeant may be the appropriate authority to conduct the inquiry—this is often referred to as an informal inquiry (or a commander's inquiry). The commander may also consider a Commander Directed Investigation (CDI) to have a neutral individual assess the situation. For assistance in making this determination, commanders should consult with their servicing legal office upon learning of any allegation of misconduct.
- Major Offenses: In more serious cases, law enforcement agents such as Security Forces investigators or OSI will conduct the investigation and report the results to the commander for disposition of the case
- Commander/Unit Responsibility: Commanders and first sergeants are required to utilize the "Unit Commander/First Sergeant Checklist for Airmen and Guardians Under Investigation or Involved in the Military/Civilian Criminal Justice/Legal Systems" when notified that a uniformed member is under investigation. This checklist can assist with mitigating risk of death by suicide and can be found via the AFPC/DPFZ SharePoint site or your servicing legal office. (See DAFI 90-5001, para 5.2.7.3. for more information on the suicide prevention program.)

Disposition and Progressive Discipline Options Available to the Commander

- Once the commander has the relevant facts necessary to make a decision, he/she should consider what action, if any, should be taken, and take action in a timely manner
 - Ordinarily the immediate commander of a person accused or suspected of committing an offense determines the appropriate initial disposition. Sexual offenses and other victim-based offenses have different disposition requirements, and disposition authority may be significantly higher or outside of the chain of command entirely. (See “[Command Response to Sexual Offenses](#)” and “[Office of Special Trial Counsel](#)” in this chapter for more information.)
 - OSTC has authority to determine whether reported offenses are covered offenses (e.g. Article 117a – wrongful broadcast or distribution of intimate images, Article 119 – manslaughter, Article 120 – rape and sexual assault, Articles 120a-c – other sexual offenses, Article 128b – domestic violence, Article 134 – Sexual Harassment etc.), related, or known offenses. OSTC has exclusive authority to decide disposition on these offenses.
- Potential Actions the Commander May Take Include:
 - No action
 - Administrative action (e.g., letter of reprimand (LOR), letter of admonishment (LOA), letter of counseling (LOC), administrative demotion, removal from supervisory duties, denial of reenlistment, or involuntary discharge)
 - Nonjudicial punishment under Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
 - Preferral of court-martial charges (or forwarding of previously preferred court-martial charges) not under OSTC’s authority

References

- Manual for Courts-Martial, Appendix 2.1, *Disposition Guidance* (2024)
- Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 303, 303A, and 306 (2024)
- DoDI 5505.03, *Initiation of Investigations by Defense Criminal Investigative Organizations* (2 August 2023)
- DAFI 90-5001, *Integrated Resilience* (23 July 2024), including DAFI90-5001_DAFGM2025-01, 19 November 2025

THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL TRIAL COUNSEL

The Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) is an independent prosecutorial organization for the Department of the Air Force with exclusive disposition authority over certain covered offenses committed by Airmen and Guardians. Special Trial Counsel (STC) assigned to OSTC provide expert, independent, and ethical representation of the United States under the direct civilian control of the Secretary of the Air Force, in the investigation and trial-level litigation of offenses over which the office exercises authority.

Key Takeaways

- » Congress enacted sweeping changes to military justice and command authority, creating an independent OSTC with exclusive authority over offenses committed after 27 December 2023 and discretionary authority over offenses committed on or before that date
- » OSTC has exclusive authority to prefer, refer, defer, enter into plea agreements, withdraw, and dismiss 14 categories of “covered offenses”
- » OSTC operations are integrated with law enforcement and installation legal offices in a unified investigative and prosecutorial effort that includes command input
- » Commanders remain a critical stakeholder in military justice and are responsible for command climate and good order and discipline
- » Installation Staff Judge Advocates remain the primary legal advisors to commanders and convening authorities at their respective installations

OSTC & the Military Justice System

- OSTC is an integrated and unified participant in the administration of military justice, partnering with commanders, law enforcement, and legal offices to ensure accountability for perpetrators of sexual assault, domestic violence, and other victim-based crimes
 - OSTC leads a collaborative effort with law enforcement and installation legal offices to investigate and prosecute offenses under its authority. Installation judge advocates continue to serve as assistant trial counsel on covered offense courts-martial under the direction of assigned STC.
 - Based upon statutory authority, OSTC has an important, but limited, role in the greater military justice system. While OSTC is responsible for the investigation and trial-level litigation of specified offenses listed below, installation legal office personnel remain the lead for all other military justice functions (e.g., post-trial processing, Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) support, advising command, etc.).

Disposition Authority

- OSTC has initial disposition authority for 14 categories of “covered” Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) offenses, as well as known/related offenses. Command retains disposition authority for the remaining 91 categories of UCMJ offenses along with covered offenses and known/related offenses that OSTC defers back to command for disposition.

- “Covered offenses” are specifically enumerated categories of UCMJ offenses established by Congress. OSTC must exercise its authority over covered offenses committed after 27 December 2023. Congress has also given OSTC discretion to exercise authority over covered offenses committed on or before 27 December 2023. Initial disposition authority is withheld to OSTC unless the offense is deferred to command. Covered offenses include:
 - Article 117a – Wrongful Broadcast/Distribution of Intimate Visual Images
 - Article 118 – Murder
 - Article 119 – Manslaughter
 - Article 119a – Death/Injury of Unborn Child
 - Article 120 – Rape & Sexual Assault
 - Article 120a – Mail: Deposit of Obscene Matters
 - Article 120b – Rape & Sexual Assault of a Child
 - Article 120c – Other Sexual Misconduct
 - Article 125 – Kidnapping
 - Article 128b – Domestic Violence
 - Article 130 – Stalking
 - Article 132 – Retaliation
 - Article 134 – Child Pornography
 - Article 134 – Sexual Harassment (On/after 2 January 2025)
 - Inchoate offenses of any of the above offenses (attempt, solicitation, conspiracy)
- “Known offenses” are any non-covered offense(s) allegedly committed by an individual accused of a covered offense. OSTC may exercise its authority over known offenses. If OSTC exercises authority over a known offense, initial disposition authority is withheld unless the offense is deferred. If OSTC does not exercise authority over the offense, disposition authority remains within command channels.
- “Related offenses” are any non-covered offense(s) allegedly committed by a victim or witness to an alleged covered offense. OSTC may exercise its authority over related offenses. If OSTC exercises authority over a related offense, initial disposition authority is withheld unless the offense is deferred. If OSTC does not exercise authority over the offense, disposition authority remains within command channels.
- Commanders of accused members and victims of offenses under OSTC authority may provide non-binding disposition input which OSTC must consider prior to making a disposition decision. Although the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) remains the primary legal advisor to command, OSTC is available to discuss disposition decisions.

Court-Martial Authority

- For all covered offenses, and for known/related offenses over which OSTC has exercised authority and has not deferred, OSTC has the exclusive authority to refer criminal charges for trial by general or special court-martial. In these cases, OSTC also retains exclusive authority to enter into plea agreements, withdraw or dismiss charges, and grant witnesses immunity.
- Command retains all other designated authorities, to include pretrial confinement, selection of panel members, funding of experts and witness travel, authority to direct preliminary hearings, and court-martial convening authority

Deferred Offenses

- OSTC's disposition decision is limited to: (1) preferral/referral of the offense to a general or special court-martial; or (2) deferral of the offense to command for further disposition
- For covered, known, and related offenses under OSTC authority, command may not take action unless the offense is deferred
 - If OSTC chooses not to prefer or refer a covered, known, or related offense for trial by general or special court-martial, then the offense is deferred back to command for further disposition. For deferred *known/related* offenses, command may take any lawful disposition action, including referral to trial by general or special court-martial.
 - For deferred *covered* offenses occurring after 27 December 2023, command may take any lawful disposition action other than referral of charges for trial by general or special court-martial. Available disposition options may include nonjudicial punishment, administrative separation, and other administrative actions.

Nonjudicial Punishment after Deferral

- Command may offer Article 15, UCMJ, nonjudicial punishment for any covered, known, or related offense that is deferred by OSTC. If an accused turns down the offer of nonjudicial punishment and demands trial by court-martial, command options will be determined by whether the underlying offense is a covered offense or a known/related offense.
 - For covered offenses, command may not refer charges to general or special court-martial, but command may seek reconsideration of the deferral decision from OSTC. If the evidence is sufficient, OSTC may then prefer and refer charges.
 - For known/related offenses, there are no restrictions on command disposition authority, so command may prefer and refer charges without OSTC involvement

Command and OSTC

- Commanders remain a critical stakeholder in military justice and continue to be responsible for command climate and good order and discipline
- The SJA remains the primary legal advisor for command. But, in all cases, STC will be available for discussion and will work closely with the servicing legal office to ensure command is fully informed as to the status of offense investigations and prosecutions.

References

- 10 U.S.C. § 1044f enacted by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. 117-81, § 532-3 (2021)
- 10 U.S.C. § 801(17)(A) enacted by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. 117-263, § 541 (2022)
- DAFPD 51-2, *Military Justice and Other Criminal Proceedings* (27 December 2023)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (27 December 2023), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

PREPARATION, PREFERRAL, AND PROCESSING OF CHARGES

For misconduct outside of Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) authority, or for known or related offenses deferred by OSTC, if a commander determines a court-martial is the appropriate venue to handle the alleged misconduct of a member, the commander should consult with the legal office to proceed.

Key Takeaways

- » The preparation of courts-martial charges involves drafting charges and specifications with legal precision
- » Preferral of charges is the act of formally accusing a military member of a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
- » Processing the charges involves forwarding the charges and specifications to a convening authority
- » An accused's right to a speedy trial—and the impact that unnecessary delay can have on the effectiveness of military justice—require charges be disposed of promptly

Preparation of Charges

- A charge states which article of the UCMJ the member is alleged to have violated
- A specification is a concise statement of exactly how the member allegedly violated the article
- Because precise legal language is required, the legal office drafts charges and specifications
 - Charges are documented on the DD Form 458, *Charge Sheet*

Preferral of Charges

- Preferral is the first formal step in initiating a court-martial and is the act by which a person subject to the UCMJ formally accuses another person subject to the UCMJ of an offense
- Anyone subject to the UCMJ may prefer charges against another person subject to the UCMJ. For offenses under command authority, the immediate commander of an accused is ordinarily the individual who prefers charges. For offenses under OSTC authority, a Special Trial Counsel (STC) is ordinarily the individual who prefers charges.
- Preferral requires the “accuser” (the person preferring the charge) to take an oath that he/she is a person subject to the UCMJ, that he/she either has personal knowledge of or has investigated the charge(s) and specification(s), and that the charge(s) and specification(s) are true to the best of his/her knowledge and belief
 - An accuser is not required to believe the accused committed an offense beyond a reasonable doubt. They must only believe there is probable cause the accused committed the offense.

Processing of Charges

- Preferral does not require the presence of the accused. However, after preferral, the immediate commander must inform the accused of the charge(s). Notice to the accused typically occurs at the same time as preferral by the immediate commander reading the charge to the accused.
 - When OSTC prefers any charge(s), they will coordinate with the local servicing legal office for the commander to provide notice to the accused, just as the servicing legal office would do when the commander prefers any charge(s) himself/herself
- The commander then forwards the charge with an indorsement memorandum to the summary court-martial convening authority (SCMCA). Typically, in the Department of the Air Force (DAF), the SCMCA is usually also the first special court-martial convening authority (SPCMCA) in the chain, so the extra step of forwarding the charge(s) from the SCMCA to the SPCMCA (if the case is not going to be tried at a summary court-martial) is not required.
- For offenses under command authority, the SPCMCA can dismiss charge(s), return charge(s) to a subordinate commander for alternate disposition, or take the following actions if the charge(s) warrant a court-martial:
 - Refer the charge to a special or summary court-martial; or
 - Appoint a preliminary hearing officer (PHO) to conduct an Article 32 preliminary hearing.
- For offenses under OSTC authority, a STC will determine whether to dismiss the charge(s), defer the charge(s) to command, refer the charge(s) to a special court-martial, or submit a binding request to the convening authority to direct an Article 32 preliminary hearing and appoint a PHO
- The PHO completes and forwards the preliminary hearing report to the SPCMCA or STC for review, as applicable
- After an Article 32 hearing, for offenses under command authority, the SPCMCA may then dismiss the charge(s) or forward the preliminary hearing report along with the preferred charge(s) to the general court-martial convening authority (GCMCA) for review and possible referral to a general court-martial
 - The GCMCA can refer charges to a general, special, or summary court-martial, return charge(s) to the SPCMCA for disposition, or dismiss charge(s)
- After an Article 32 hearing, for offenses under OSTC authority, a STC will determine whether to dismiss the charge(s), defer the charge to command, or refer the charge(s) to a general or special court-martial

- Once the charge(s) has been referred to trial, the appointed trial counsel will then formally serve the accused with a copy of the charge(s) and the specification(s)
- Time constraints are involved in the processing of court-martial charges. An accused's right to a speedy trial—and the impact that delay can have on the effectiveness of military justice—require that charges be disposed of promptly.

References

- Manual for Courts-Martial, Appendix 2.1, *Disposition Guidance* (2024)
- Articles 30 and 32, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 306, 307, and 405 (2024)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- DD Form 458, *Charge Sheet* (May 2000)

PRETRIAL RESTRAINT AND CONFINEMENT

Pretrial restraint and pretrial confinement are tools to ensure the appearance of the accused at their upcoming court-martial and/or to prevent the commission of continued serious misconduct by the accused while awaiting court-martial. Pretrial restraint may only be imposed when court-martial charges have been preferred or are anticipated.

Key Takeaways

- » There are four types of pretrial restraint: (1) conditions on liberty; (2) restriction in lieu of arrest; (3) arrest; and (4) pretrial confinement
- » Commanders should select the least rigorous restraint necessary to assure appearance of an accused at court-martial or prevent commission of foreseeable serious misconduct pending court-martial
- » Before ordering any form of pretrial restraint, the commander must find probable cause exists that: (1) a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) was committed; (2) the accused committed it; and (3) the restraint imposed is required by the circumstances
- » Never impose any form of pretrial restraint without first consulting the legal office because most forms of pretrial restraint trigger speedy trial requirements

Who May Order Pretrial Restraint

- Officers: Only a commander in the service member's chain of command may impose pretrial restraint on an officer. This authority **MAY NOT** be delegated.
- Enlisted: Any commissioned officer may impose pretrial restraint on any enlisted member
 - A commanding officer can delegate authority to order pretrial restraint of enlisted personnel under their command to noncommissioned officers (usually the first sergeant)

Pretrial Restraint Prerequisites

- Requires a reasonable belief that:
 - An offense triable by court-martial has been committed
 - The person to be restrained committed it
 - Restraint is required by the circumstances
- Notice to Individual: The restrained individual must be personally notified of the nature of the offense that forms the reason for the restraint and terms of the restraint. Individuals placed into pretrial confinement must also be notified of the additional rights, described below.

- Release from Pretrial Restraint: Except as otherwise provided by RCM 305, a person may be released from pretrial restraint by any person authorized to impose the restraint

Types of Pretrial Restraint

- Conditions on Liberty: Imposed by orders directing a person to do or refrain from doing specified acts
 - May be imposed in conjunction with other forms of restraint or separately
 - Typical examples include orders to report periodically to a specified official, orders not to go to a certain place, and orders not to associate with specified persons
- Restriction in Lieu of Arrest: Imposed by ordering a person to remain within specified limits. Unless otherwise directed, the person will perform full military duties.
- Arrest: The restraint of a person, directing the person to remain within specified limits. Persons under arrest will not perform full military duties. An arrest is normally more restrictive than restriction in lieu of arrest.
- Pretrial Confinement: Most severe type of pretrial restraint
 - There is no “bail” in the military justice system. Therefore, placement into pretrial confinement requires a series of procedural safeguards requiring the government to demonstrate, by a preponderance of the evidence (i.e., more likely than not), that pretrial confinement is necessary under the circumstances.

Procedures upon Entry into Confinement

- The person to be confined must be promptly notified of the following:
 - Nature of the offenses for which he/she is being held
 - Right to remain silent and that any statement made may be used against him/her
 - Right to request military counsel (at no expense) or retain civilian counsel (at their own expense)
 - Procedures by which pretrial confinement will be reviewed
- Article 10, UCMJ, requires that “immediate steps” be taken to try the person or to dismiss the charges and release the person (usually requiring government to bring the accused to trial with reasonable diligence within 120 days)
- If the member is alleged to have committed an offense under Office of Special Trial Counsel’s (OSTC) authority, the servicing legal office must ensure the assigned Special Trial Counsel is notified when the member is ordered into or released from pretrial confinement

Timelines upon Entry into Confinement

- 24-Hour Notification: If the person ordering confinement is not the confinee's commander, then the confinee's commander must be notified within 24 hours of the entry to confinement
- 48-Hour Probable Cause Determination:
 - Within 48 hours of entry into confinement, a neutral and detached officer must review the adequacy of probable cause to continue confinement
- 72-Hour Commander Review:
 - If confinement is continued, within 72 hours of entry into confinement, the confinee's commander must prepare a written memorandum justifying continued confinement
 - It is not necessary to try lesser forms of restraint, but they **MUST** be considered in determining whether confinement is appropriate
 - Convenience of the unit or suicide prevention of the accused are **NOT** valid reasons for pretrial confinement
- 7-Day Pretrial Confinement Review:
 - Within seven days, a Pretrial Confinement Reviewing Officer (PCRO) must make written findings whether the confinee shall be released or remain confined
 - The PCRO must review the commander's 72-hour memorandum to determine whether the requirements for pretrial confinement are met
 - The PCRO shall consider matters submitted by the confinee, and shall allow the confinee and counsel an opportunity to appear and present a statement or evidence at the hearing
- Confinées receive day-for-day credit for pretrial confinement against any confinement adjudged by the court. Unlawful pretrial confinement, including pretrial punishment or restriction tantamount to confinement, may lead to additional credit.
- The remedy for non-compliance with pretrial confinement rules and standards can range from additional credit for each day of illegal confinement to dismissal of the charges

No Pretrial Punishment of Pretrial Confinees

- Pretrial restraint cannot be used to punish the person restrained
- Pretrial confinees must **NOT** be treated the same as sentenced prisoners, such as by being required to wear confinement uniforms, perform punitive labor, or undergo punitive duty hours
- Public denunciation and degradation can be considered prohibited pretrial punishment
- Commingling pretrial and sentenced prisoners, without more, is not automatically considered pretrial punishment

References

- Articles 10, 12, and 13, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 304, 305, and 707 (2024)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

TRIAL FORMAT

A court-martial is generally the military equivalent to the civilian criminal trial. The process is governed by the Manual for Courts-Martial (MCM), which details military criminal procedure.

Key Takeaways

- » The court-martial will consist of two major portions: (1) findings (guilty/not guilty determination) and, in the event of a conviction at findings, (2) sentencing
- » In most types of courts-martial, an accused may elect to be tried by a military judge alone or by a panel of court members (the military counterpart to a civilian jury)
- » All panel members must be senior in rank to the accused
- » The accused is presumed innocent of all charges and specifications

Types of Courts-Martial

- Summary Court-Martial (Enlisted Only):

- The least severe court-martial. A finding of guilty at a summary court-martial is not a federal conviction.
- Presided over by a commissioned officer, who may be a commander or a neutral judge advocate who is not affiliated with the legal office. Summary courts-martial are not typically presided over by a military judge.
- The accused may object to being tried in this forum
- Maximum authorized sentence:
 - For enlisted members E-4 and below: one month of confinement, forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for one month, and reduction to the grade of E-1
 - For enlisted members E-5 and above: forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for one month, reduction to the next lower grade, and restriction to certain limits for two months (confinement is not allowed)

- Military Judge Alone Special Court-Martial under Article 16(c)(2)(A), Uniform Code of Military Justice:

- Presided over by a military judge alone
- Maximum authorized sentence: six months of confinement, forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for six months, and reduction to E-1. A punitive discharge is not authorized.
- In certain circumstances, the accused may object to being tried in this forum

- Special Court-Martial:

- The panel is composed of four members
- The accused may elect trial by military judge alone
- Maximum authorized sentence:
 - For enlisted members: 12 months of confinement, forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for 12 months, reduction to the grade of E-1, and a bad conduct discharge (BCD)
 - Officers and cadets may be sentenced up to 12 months of confinement but may not be sentenced to a dismissal by a special court-martial. For this reason, officers and cadets are rarely tried by a special court-martial.

- General Court-Martial:

- The panel is composed of eight members (12 members in capital cases)
- Maximum authorized sentence at a general court-martial depends on the offense(s) charged and can include death or life without the possibility of parole, total forfeiture of a member's pay and allowances, reduction to E-1 for enlisted members, and a dishonorable discharge for enlisted members or a dismissal for officers

Findings

- Findings is the first part of the trial, during which it is determined whether the accused is guilty or not guilty
- An accused may plead guilty or not guilty. If the accused is charged with multiple offenses, he/she may plead guilty to all, some, or none of the offenses.
- Guilty Plea:
 - Following an accused's plea of guilty, the military judge questions the accused under oath to make sure he/she is, in fact, guilty and understands the meaning and effect of pleading guilty to the specific offenses
 - If the military judge accepts the guilty plea, the accused will then be sentenced

- Not Guilty Plea:
 - Forum Choice:
 - Enlisted Accused: An enlisted accused may elect trial by one of the following: (1) military judge alone; (2) all officer members; or (3) mixed panel of officer and enlisted members (at least one-third enlisted members included on the court-martial panel, all of whom must be senior in rank to the accused)
 - Officer Accused: An officer accused may elect trial by one of the following: (1) military judge alone; or (2) officer members (all of whom must be senior in rank to the accused)
- The accused is presumed innocent of all charges and specifications
 - The prosecution proceeds with its case first, calling witnesses and presenting evidence. The prosecution must prove the accused's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.
 - Once the prosecution has finished, the defense has an opportunity to present its case. An accused has an absolute right to remain silent and has no obligation to present evidence. The accused may choose to testify or present evidence in his/her defense.
 - If the defense presents a case, the prosecution may offer evidence or call witnesses in rebuttal. If the prosecution puts on a rebuttal case, the defense may offer additional evidence or call witnesses in surrebuttal.
 - In non-capital cases with members, three-fourths of the members, voting by secret written ballot, must concur in any finding of guilty. In capital cases with members, three-fourths of members must still concur in any finding of guilt. However, for the death penalty to be adjudged, unanimity is required with regard to both the relevant finding(s) of guilt and any alleged aggravating factor(s).

Sentencing

- Sentencing, the second part of the trial, occurs if a member is found guilty of any offense during the findings portion. In this stage, an appropriate punishment is determined.
 - Unlike many civilian courts, sentencing normally occurs immediately following findings portion of the trial
 - In non-capital cases, the sentence is decided by a military judge alone when the date of all offenses resulting in a conviction occurred on or after 28 December 2023, otherwise the member may elect to have sentencing determined by members

- Sentencing is an adversarial process that usually includes the presentation of evidence and may involve witnesses
 - The prosecution may present matters in aggravation, show lack of rehabilitative potential in society, and rebut evidence the accused presents
 - The defense may present matters in extenuation to explain the circumstances surrounding the commission of the offense and/or matters in mitigation to lessen the punishment to be adjudged by the court-martial
 - As in the findings portion of trial, the accused also has an absolute right to remain silent and present no evidence during sentencing. In addition, the accused may elect to make a statement that is not offered under oath, known as an “unsworn statement.”
 - A crime victim of an offense of which the accused has been found guilty has the right to be reasonably heard at sentencing, which can include an unsworn statement
- In capital cases, a unanimous vote of panel members is required to sentence an accused to death
- After consideration of all matters in aggravation, extenuation and/or mitigation, and the sentencing criteria and parameters applicable to a particular offense or offenses, the accused is sentenced within the discretion of the court-martial

References

- U.S. Const. Amend. V.
- Article 16(c)(2)(A), Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 201, 501, 705, 903, 910, 913, 918, 921, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1301, and 1303 (2024)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS

In the military, only certain communications are recognized as privileged and therefore protected from disclosure. Privileges are narrowly construed. Privilege may be waived by the privilege holder, which occurs when the privilege holder voluntarily discloses or consents to disclosure of any significant part of the matter or communication. For guidance regarding whether a privilege applies in a particular circumstance, commanders should consult their servicing legal office.

Key Takeaways

- » The law recognizes privilege can apply to communications made to clergy, attorneys, mental health care providers, spouses, victim advocates, and, sometimes, communications made for the purpose of drug abuse treatment
- » The Military Rules of Evidence (M.R.E.) do not recognize a medical physician-patient privilege. Disclosure of medical records and communications to physicians are governed by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- » Communications to clergy, mental health care providers, victim advocates, and attorneys are privileged only when the communications are made to such a person acting in an official capacity

Communications to Clergy

- A person has a privilege to refuse to disclose and to prevent another from disclosing a privileged communication by the person to a clergyman or to a clergyman's assistant in their capacity as a spiritual advisor, if such communication is made as a formal act of religion or matter of conscience
- The privilege extends to the chaplain's or clergyman's staff

Attorney-Client Privilege

- Privilege applies to all information divulged to an attorney who represents a person, including an Area Defense Counsel, Victims' Counsel, or legal assistance attorney, except with respect to some future crimes or frauds and other limited exceptions
- When an Air Force official acting within the scope of his or her official duties, communicates with an Air Force lawyer, the communication is generally protected from disclosure to anyone outside the Air Force. However, this does not mean that the official is a client of the Air Force attorney. It is the Air Force, not the official that benefits from confidentiality. For example, communications between a commander and Staff Judge Advocate are privileged only when the commander is acting as an agent or official of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and the commander's interests in no way conflict with those of the DAF.
- The privilege extends to non-lawyer members of the attorney's staff

Physician-Patient

- The Military Rules of Evidence do not recognize a medical physician-patient privilege

Medical Records

- Military medical records are the property of the Department of War (DoW)
- Information in the health record is personal to the individual and will be properly safeguarded pursuant to HIPAA
- Commanders or commanders' designees may access members' military medical records, but only to the extent necessary for authorized command activities, such as fitness for duty or activities essential for the military mission

Psychotherapist-Patient Privilege

- A limited privilege exists between patients and psychotherapists
 - Generally, the limited privilege protects only confidential communications which are made to a psychotherapist (or assistant) for the purpose of diagnosis or treatment of the person's mental or emotional condition in cases arising under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The privilege does not necessarily extend to diagnoses, prescriptions, and treatments contained within medical records.
 - Exceptions include: (1) when the patient is dead; (2) the communication is evidence of child abuse or neglect, or in a proceeding in which one spouse is charged with a crime against a child of either spouse; (3) when the psychotherapist believes that a patient's mental or emotional condition makes the patient a danger to any person, including the patient; (4) when the communication clearly contemplates future commission of a fraud or crime; (5) when necessary to ensure safety and security of military personnel or property; or (6) law or regulation imposes a duty to report the information
- Under DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice*, and M.R.E. 513, communications between a patient and a psychotherapist (or assistant) made for purposes of facilitating diagnosis or treatment of the patient's mental or emotional condition are confidential and must be protected against unauthorized disclosure
- A limited privilege also exists under the Limited Privilege Suicide Prevention (LPSP) Program under DAFI 51-201, which applies to communications made after notification of an investigation and placement into the LPSP program

DoW Safety Privilege

- The deliberations, opinions, recommendations, and conclusions of safety investigators and any evidence from witnesses and contractors given under a promise of confidentiality are privileged and not releasable outside DoW safety channels
- These investigations are conducted solely for DoW mishap prevention purposes and access is highly restricted even within DoW and the DAF

Victim Advocate-Victim Privilege

- A limited privilege exists between victim advocates and victims of sexual or violent offenses
 - Generally, the limited privilege protects only confidential communications between a victim and a victim advocate or between the victim and DoW Safe Helpline staff, for victims of sexual or violent offenses in a case arising under the UCMJ, made for the purpose of facilitating advice or supportive assistance to the victim
 - Exceptions include, but are not limited to: (1) when the patient is dead; (2) federal/state law or service regulations impose a duty to report; (3) when the victim advocate believes that a victim's mental or emotional condition makes the victim a danger to any person, including the victim; (4) the communication clearly contemplated the future commission of a fraud or crime; (5) when necessary to ensure safety and security of military personnel or property; or (6) disclosure is constitutionally required

Drug/Alcohol Abuse Treatment Patients

- AFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) Program*, grants limited protections for DAF members who voluntarily disclose personal drug use or possession. Those protections do not include any future drug abuse.
 - Such disclosure may not be used as the basis for UCMJ action or for the characterization of service in a discharge proceeding
 - A member must disclose their drug abuse before the use is discovered or the member is placed under investigation. The member is not eligible for the program if the disclosure occurred after either: (1) an order to give a urine sample as part of the drug testing program in which the results are pending; or (2) drug testing results have been returned as positive.
- Federal law protects medical records pertaining to drug and alcohol abuse

Marital Privilege

- A spouse may elect not to testify against the accused if a valid marriage exists at the time the spouse is to provide testimony (testimonial privilege)
- A spouse may prevent testimony by the other spouse (or ex-spouse) regarding private communications made during the marriage, even if the marriage has been dissolved at the time of testimony (marital communications privilege)
- Neither privilege (testimonial or marital communications) applies when one spouse is charged with a crime against the other spouse, child, children of either spouse, or their property, if the marriage is a sham as determined by state law, or if the spouses are co-conspirators in a crime

Medical Quality Assurance Privilege

- 10 U.S.C. § 1102 generally restricts access to information emanating from a medical quality assurance program activity. Release is authorized “[t]o an officer, employee, or contractor of the Department of War who has a need for such [information] to perform official duties.”

Family Support Center Program

- Family Support Center (FSC) staff should neither state nor imply that confidentiality exists
- The FSC Director will notify the appropriate authority when a DAF member constitutes a potential danger to self, others, or could have an impact on the mission

References

- The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a
- Confidentiality of Medical Quality Assurance Records: Qualified Immunity for Participants, 10 U.S.C. § 1102
- Confidentiality of Records, 42 U.S.C. § 290dd-2
- Rule for Courts-Martial 706 (2024)
- Military Rules of Evidence 302, 501–514 (2024)
- *United States v. Weber Aircraft Corp.*, 465 U.S. 792 (1984)
- DoDI 6025.18, *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule Compliance in DoD Health Care Programs* (13 March 2019)
- DoDI 6055.07, *Mishap Notification, Investigation, Reporting, and Record Keeping* (6 June 2011), incorporating through Change 2, 11 June 2019
- DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program* (23 May 2024)
- DAFI 36-3009, *Military and Family Readiness Centers* (4 November 2022), incorporating DAFG2025-01, 16 January 2025
- DAFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) Program* (16 September 2025)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- DAFI 91-204, *Safety Investigations and Reporting* (10 March 2021), incorporating DAFG2025-02 16 July 2025
- AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program* (10 March 2020), Corrective Actions applied on 12 May 2020
- AFI 51-110, *Professional Responsibility Program* (11 December 2018)

POST-SENTENCING MATTERS

Many courts-martial sentences do not go into effect automatically. All sentences of courts-martial are subject to post-trial review. After a court-martial conviction and sentence, the member has the right to submit post-trial matters to the convening authority for clemency consideration. When a conviction involves a victim, the victim is also entitled to submit post-trial matters for the convening authority's review. Further appellate review of the case is determined by the severity of the sentence.

Key Takeaways

- » Once the court-martial ends and after the military judge prepares a Statement of Trial Results (STR), the victim, the member (referred to in the Rules for Courts-Martial as "the accused"), and defense counsel should receive a copy of the STR
- » Both the victim and the accused can submit clemency matters to the convening authority. The victim's submission must be presented to the accused.
- » After the convening authority receives clemency matters, the convening authority will consult with the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) before taking action or deciding to take no action on the accused's findings or sentence
- » The "Entry of Judgment" will be prepared by the military judge, and will reflect the results of the accused's court-martial as well as the convening authority's decision

Statement of Trial Results and Submissions by the Accused and Victim

- Following a court-martial, the military judge prepares and signs a STR. This should take place on the day the sentence in the case is announced. The STR summarizes the findings and sentence of the case and is provided to the accused's immediate commander, the convening authority, and, in cases of confinement, the confinement facility. The accused, defense counsel, and victims(s) will also receive the STR.
- Within 10 calendar days (seven calendar days for summary courts-martial) of the sentence being announced, the accused and victim(s) in a case have an opportunity to submit clemency matters to the convening authority for the convening authority's consideration as to whether to approve findings of guilt or to approve or disapprove all or part of the sentence
 - Accused and victim(s) may also request an extension of time of up to 20 days to submit clemency matters
 - Accused and victim(s) may also waive his/her right to submit clemency matters
- Trial counsel shall make reasonable efforts to inform a crime victim of the right to submit a statement and how it may be submitted
- The accused may generally submit any clemency matters. The matters must be in writing but cannot include matters that relate to the character of a crime victim unless those matters were part of the trial evidence.

- The victim may also generally submit any clemency matters. The matters must be in writing but cannot include matters that relate to the character of the accused unless those matters were part of the trial evidence. The crime victim is entitled to only one opportunity to submit matters to the convening authority.
 - In a case where a crime victim submits matters, the accused shall be given five (5) days to submit any matters in rebuttal. The issues are limited to those raised in the crime victim's submissions.

Convening Authority Action

- After the court-martial is over, depending on the nature of the offenses and the punishment, the convening authority has limited authority to take "action" on the findings or sentence
- The convening authority is required to consult with the SJA or legal advisor before taking action on the findings and/or sentence of a court-martial. The convening authority must also review matters timely submitted by the accused and victim(s) (if applicable) and may consider other matters (to include the STR and evidence introduced at the court-martial) before taking action.
 - The way that "taking action" is described in the rules reflects recent changes in the law. Depending on when the convicted offenses occurred, "taking action" may be one of the following post-trial actions: approve, disapprove, commute, suspend the sentence in whole or in part, or formally taking no action. As part of the required consultation, the SJA will advise the convening authority on available options.
- In general and special courts-martial, after the convening authority action or notification that no action was taken, the military judge will complete an "Entry of Judgment" which ends the trial proceedings and starts the appellate process. The "Entry of Judgment" reflects the trial outcome as modified by any post-trial action, rulings, or orders.

Effective Date of Court-Martial Punishments

- General and Special Courts-Martial: Generally, the sentence takes effect when the judgment is entered into the record by military judge ("Entry of Judgment")
- Summary Courts-Martial: Takes effect when the convening authority takes action
- Exceptions in General and Special Courts-Martial:
 - *Punitive Discharge*: A dismissal, dishonorable discharge, or bad conduct discharge is not effective unless and until approved after appellate review
 - *Confinement*: Effective immediately unless deferred (i.e., a delay of the start date). Deferment ends when the military judge issues the "Entry of Judgment," unless otherwise stated by the convening authority.
 - *Reduction in Grade*: Effective 14 days after announcement of the sentence or the date on which the sentence is approved by the convening authority (summary court-martial only) unless deferred

- *Forfeiture of Pay and Allowances*: Effective 14 days after announcement of the sentence or the date on which the sentence is approved by the convening authority (summary courts-martial only) unless deferred or waived. Forfeitures cannot be deferred or waived if the member's expiration of term of service date has passed. There are a number of rules that impact the deferment and waiver of forfeitures:
 - *Automatic Forfeitures*: In certain cases, an accused automatically (i.e., by law) forfeits pay and allowances, up to the jurisdictional limits of the court-martial, during any period of confinement. These cases include: when the sentence announced by the court includes death, a punitive discharge, or confinement for more than six months. The jurisdictional limit at a general court-martial is total forfeiture of a member's pay and allowances, and the limit at a special court-martial is forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for 12 months.
 - *Waiver of Automatic Forfeitures*: When taking action, the convening authority may lessen the impact of "automatic" forfeitures of pay by "waiving" them for up to six months. This is available only in cases where the accused has dependents. The waived forfeitures are for the benefit of the accused's dependents and are paid directly to the dependents.
- Restriction and Hard Labor Without Confinement: Effective upon Entry of Judgment and executed concurrently (together, at the same time)

References

- Articles 57, 58a, 58b, 60, 60a, 60b, and 60c, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rules for Courts-Martial 1101–1114 (2024)
- *United States v. Emminizer*, 56 M.J. 441 (C.A.A.F. 2002)
- *United States v. Brubaker-Escobar*, 81 M.J. 471 (C.A.A.F. 2021)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

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TOTAL FORCE: AIR RESERVE COMPONENT

Regular Air Force and Space Force, Air National Guard (ANG), and Air Force Reserve (AFR) service members work together as a team in air, space, and cyberspace worldwide. Together, the AFR and ANG make up the Air Reserve Component (ARC). The ARC's mission is to provide combat ready forces to the Department of the Air Force (DAF) whenever needed.

Air Reserve Component Personnel Categories

- Ready Reserve: Includes the Selected Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) who are available to be involuntarily ordered to active duty in time of war or national emergency, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. §§ 12301 and 12302
 - *Selected Reserve*: Those units and individuals within the Ready Reserve approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as essential to initial wartime missions that have priority over all other reserve components. It includes Traditional Reservists (TRs), Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs), Active Guard and Reserve (AGRs), and Air Reserve Technicians (ARTs).
 - *IRR*: Individuals previously in the Regular component or the Selected Reserve and still have a military service obligation; no longer train, but are subject to recall. Reserve members may seek voluntary assignment to the IRR, or be involuntarily reassigned there for cause or due to derogatory reasons such as unsatisfactory participation or lack of readiness.
 - *AGR*: Reservist in either the AFR or ANG on full-time active duty for the primary purpose of organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training the Reserve Component. AGRs may also perform other duties prescribed as long as the performance of those duties does not interfere with the performance of their primary AGR duties. AGRs do not usually mobilize, as they are the steady force that stays to organize, administer, recruit, instruct, or train others.
 - Includes all ANG (including Inactive National Guard)
- Standby Reserve: Nonparticipating members due to key civilian position, disability, or hardship; can be activated in time of war or emergency with Secretary of War's approval
- Retired Reserve: Reservists who have at least 20 years of service and are either waiting to collect retirement pay (normally age 60; nicknamed a "Gray Area" retiree) or have reached retirement pay eligibility
- Regular Active Duty Retired: May be ordered to active duty by the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) if deemed necessary for the national defense

Types of Reserve Participation

- Reserve members must earn a minimum of 50 “points” per year credited towards their retirement. 50 points is colloquially considered a “good” year, with 20 good years needed for retirement eligibility.
 - Duty days are allocated by fiscal year and must be performed before 30 September
 - A member’s “year” is based on their retention/retirement (“R/R”) date, which is typically set based on their entry into uniformed service
- Types of points include:
 - Membership: members automatically receive 15 points at the completion of an R/R year, prorated if the member separates short of one year
 - Annual Tour (AT): typically 12 days of active duty status, worth one point per day
 - Inactive Duty Training (IDT): periods of two to four hours for training, duty, or instruction. IDTs are typically authorized for pay, but members may also perform additional unpaid IDTs for retirement point credit only.
 - Military Personnel Appropriation (MPA): specially funded authorizations to support active duty missions. Members serve in an active duty status for an authorized period of time, with one point per day.
 - Other types of participation as outlined in AFI 36-2136

Air Force Reserve

- The AFR is an integrated Total Force partner in every DAF core mission, providing combat-ready forces to fly, fight, and win. Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) is distinct from the AFR; it commands several subordinate numbered Air Forces and multiple wings, and directs efforts to ensure the mission of the AFR to provide our nation with operational capability, strategic depth and surge capacity whenever needed is met with sustained combat readiness and a full-spectrum of capabilities.
- Types of Reserve Personnel Duty Statuses:
 - *TRs (Category A):* Members assigned to stand-alone reserve units
 - Required to perform a minimum of 14 days of AT and 48 IDTs, typically during 2-day monthly Unit Training Assemblies (UTAs)
 - TRs may volunteer for additional active duty or inactive duty orders or be mobilized to fill DAF mission requirements
 - *ARTs:* DAF civilian employees providing full-time support to a unit for administration, training, and maintenance of the AFR and required to be a Traditional Reservist in the same position (“dual-status”) as a condition of employment

- *IMAs (Category B)*: Members who augment and are attached to Regular component and government agency missions and are rated by supervisors at those missions
 - Required to perform between 24 to 48 IDT periods and 12–14 days of AT per R/R year
 - May volunteer for additional orders or be mobilized to fill DAF mission requirements
- *Participating Individual Ready Reservist (Category E)*: Members who normally participate for points only; limited to specific positions (Admissions Liaison Officers, Civil Air Patrol Reserve Assistance program, and Ready Reinforcement Personnel)

Air National Guard

- ANG members have dual roles under U.S. Constitution's Militia Clause in Article 1, Section 8
 - Federal Role (Title 10 U.S.C.): Mission is to maintain well-trained, well-equipped units available for prompt mobilization under Title 10 of the United States Code during war and national emergencies; falls under the authority of the President of the United States. ANG members may only be involuntarily activated with the consent of the member's state governor or other appropriate authority.
 - State Role (Title 32 U.S.C.): Mission is to provide trained, organized, and disciplined units and individuals to protect life and property, and to preserve peace, order, and public safety within the state or territory by providing emergency relief support, search and rescue, support to civil defense authorities, and counterdrug operations; falls under the authority of the state governor (**exception**: the D.C. ANG falls under the President)
 - Technicians: ANG Title 32 dual-status technicians similar to AFR technicians who provide full-time support in both roles. Title 32 technicians must be state ANG members as a condition of federal civil service employment.
- ANG Required Training: 48 IDTs (typically performed at 12 weekend drills) and 15 days of Full Time National Guard Duty Annual Training (FTNGD-AT) annually
 - ANG members may perform Full Time National Guard Duty Other Training Duty (FTNGD-OTD) for specialized skill training, refresher and proficiency training, and professional development education programs. FTNGD-OTD may satisfy annual FTNGD-AT duty at the local commander's discretion.
 - Duties performed during FTNGD-OTD or FTNGD-AT should not deviate from the intended purpose of the orders. Adjustments to the member's duties may require authorization from the Adjutant General (FTNGD-AT) or an amendment to or curtailment of the member's orders (FTNGD-OTD).

- ANG members may also be activated under FTNGD-Other than for Training (FTNGDOT), which includes Operational Support (FTNGD-OS), AGR duty (FTNGD-AGR), or FTNGD-Involuntary

Administrative and Disciplinary Action

- Air Force Reservists:

- Reservists are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) while in active duty and IDT status, including while traveling to and from duty sites and brief breaks between consecutive IDT periods (Article 2(a)(3), UCMJ)
- Address questions of alleged misconduct or administrative actions to include separation and/or demotion involving IMAs to their respective active duty Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) and the Headquarters Readiness and Integration Organization (HQ RIO) legal advisor located at Headquarters Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC)'s legal office (ARPC/JA). ARPC/JA advises the Individual Reservist's (IR) HQ RIO Detachment Commander and the RIO/CC. The active duty commander and HQ RIO Detachment Commander share administrative control (ADCON) over the IR.
- Address questions about alleged misconduct involving Traditional Reservists and ARTs to their reserve unit's SJA, who coordinates with their respective Numbered Air Force legal office (NAF/JA) and HQ AFRC/JA
- If mobilized, look to member's activation orders for guidance

- ANG Members:

- Misconduct of ANG members is governed by the member's status at the time of the alleged misconduct. ANG personnel are only subject to the UCMJ when "in Federal service" (Article 2(a)(3), UCMJ), although they may be subject to their particular state military justice code at other times. The member must be in Federal service when disciplinary action is taken under the UCMJ.
- Activation orders show if member is in Title 10 (Federal) or Title 32 (state) status and where they are assigned for administrative control/operational control
- If in Title 10 status, contact the local SJA, who will coordinate with the 201st Mission Support Squadron's legal office (201 MSS/JA)
- If in Title 32 status, contact the local SJA, who will coordinate with the member's home unit SJA (unless orders direct otherwise)
- If in military technician status, contact the local SJA, who will coordinate through member's home unit (if in military status) or the applicable State Human Resources Office (if in civilian status)

- Adverse Administrative Actions: ARC members are not subject to the UCMJ when not in a period covered by Article 2, UCMJ. Non-UCMJ adverse administrative actions for misconduct in civilian status (including letters of counseling, admonishment, or reprimand; enlisted demotions; or involuntary separation) may be permissible and appropriate, but consultation with the servicing SJA is highly recommended prior to any action.

References

- U.S. Const. Art. I, § 8
- Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act, Pub. L. 103-337
- Reserve Forces Revitalization Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-201
- Reserve Forces Act of 1955, Pub. L. 305
- Reserve Components, 10 U.S.C. §§ 10001-18506
- National Guard, 32 U.S.C. §§ 101-908 (2004)
- Article 2(a)(3), Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DoDI 1215.06, *Uniform Reserve, Training, and Retirement Categories for the Reserve Components* (11 March 2014), incorporating through Change 2, 12 July 2022
- DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments*, 9 August 2024
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI 36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFMAN 36-2114, *Management of the Air Force Reserve Individual Reserve (IR) and Full-Time Support (FTS) Programs* (24 May 2021)
- DAFMAN 36-2136, *Reserve Personnel Participation* (15 December 2023)
- AFRCMD 024, *Organization and Functions of Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command* (2 June 2023)
- ANGI 36-2001, *Management of Training and Operational Support within the Air National Guard* (30 April 2019)

AIR NATIONAL GUARD DUTY STATUS

Members of the Air National Guard (ANG) may serve in various federal missions during their career, but upon completion of any active duty tour, they are returned to their state's control. ANG members hold dual membership in the Air National Guard of the United States (ANGUS) in their federal capacity and their state National Guard in their state capacity. ANG members have three basic types of statuses.

State Active Duty

- Application: When activated by the state for a purely state function
- Benefits: Member's pay and benefits are provided by the state and the member accrues no federal military pay or retirement benefits (but may earn state benefits)
 - Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA): Members on State Active Duty (SAD) orders are not covered under SCRA. They may be covered under any SCRA state equivalent.
 - Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits: Members on SAD orders generally are not entitled to certain benefits administered by the VA, such as service-connected disability benefits. Members may be entitled to special state health benefits.
 - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA): Applies to SAD if: (1) duty is for 14 days or more; **and** (2) duty is in support of a national emergency declared by the President under the National Emergencies Act; **or** (3) duty is in support of a major disaster declared by the President under Section 401 of the Stafford Act. Additionally, the member's state may have USERRA equivalent.
- Liability: The state is responsible for addressing any personal claims of loss by members while in SAD status. This often manifests in workers compensation claims under state law for injuries suffered while on SAD. The state may also be liable to the federal government for loss or damage to equipment caused by the member, including a requirement to reimburse the federal government.
- Discipline:
 - *Criminal*: Members are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) while on SAD. However, members must adhere to state military justice codes (alternatively, "militia codes") and may be court-martialed under state law. They are subject to prosecution by a civilian jurisdiction, which can include federal prosecution. A member can potentially be subject to prosecution under state law or the state military code, **and** also federal law, because the sources of authority are considered separate "sovereigns." Thus, double jeopardy protections may not apply.
 - *Adverse Administrative Actions*: Some Department of the Air Force (DAF) instructions may not apply to members while on SAD. Consult with the servicing SJA regarding applicability of DAF instructions and state alternatives.

Title 10

- Applicability:
 - Voluntary non-training temporary duty assignments: With the consent of the member and governor under 10 U.S.C. § 12301(d)
 - Voluntary extended active duty in the Regular DAF: With the consent of the member and governor, but with a defined end date under 10 U.S.C. § 10211 and 10 U.S.C. § 10305
 - Involuntary for **specific contingencies** or **emergencies**: “Call-up” or mobilizations under 10 U.S.C. § 12301(a), § 12302, and § 12304
- Benefits: All federal benefits and pay (but may be limited based on tour length)
- Liability: The federal government is responsible for addressing any personal claims of loss by members while in Title 10 status. The federal government may be liable to claimants for loss incurred by the actions of the member.
- Discipline:
 - *Criminal*: Members must adhere to the UCMJ and may be federally court-martialed while in Title 10 status for misconduct that occurs while in that status. They remain subject to prosecution under civilian jurisdiction, including federal prosecution. However, because the UCMJ and civilian federal courts derive their authority from the same “sovereign” (the federal government), double jeopardy protections will prevent prosecution in both fora. (See [Chapter 1, Sources of Command Authority](#), for additional guidance and requirements concerning disciplinary actions.)
 - ANGUS are attached to the 201st Mission Support Squadron (MSS), and are attached for Annual Duty Other than For Training and Active Duty Training to their Regular DAF unit or host command
 - Convening authorities for ANGUS members reside with the Regular DAF unit, host command, or with the attached USAF or USSF unit’s host command’s Numbered Air Force or Field Command. However, ANGUS court-martial actions must be coordinated with 201 MSS through the Air National Guard Readiness Center prior to disposition.
 - *Adverse Administrative Actions*: All DAF-level adverse administrative action instructions apply to members in Title 10 status. Some actions, like demotions, may not be effectuated upon the member’s return to the state. This may result in the member reverting to the higher grade. Consult with your SJA and coordinate with the member’s state commanders and servicing SJA to determine appropriate action. (See [Chapter 1, Sources of Command Authority](#), for additional guidance and requirements concerning administrative actions.)

Title 32

- “Traditional,” Full-time Duty, and Active Guard Reserves
- Applicability:
 - Drill Status Guardsman (i.e., “Traditional Guardsmen”) perform duty via Inactive Duty Training (IDT) in monthly “drills” (Unit Training Assemblies (UTAs)) and in Annual Training (AT)
 - Active Guard Reservists (AGRs) are in full-time status with a specific charter to organize, administer, recruit, instruct, or train National Guard members under Title 32
 - Technicians are “federal technicians” employed by the National Guard under 32 U.S.C. § 709 to meet the day-to-day needs of maintaining the force. They are federal employees who hold a membership and appropriate military grade in the ANG in the same position, unless the position is authorized to be non-dual status. The law authorizes state Adjutant Generals (and their subordinate chain of command) to supervise them. Benefits and disciplinary actions are determined by their employment agreement and are often quite different from other military members. Consult the servicing SJA and Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) before initiating any administrative and/or disciplinary action, change in their employment, or change in their working conditions.
- Benefits: Similar federal benefits and pay to Regular DAF members for an equivalent period of service, including the potential to earn a federal retirement pension. Duty under Title 32 is not covered under the SCRA unless the duty is more than 30 days, and may not gain entitlement to certain VA benefits. Members may be covered under the state equivalent of SCRA and may be entitled to special state health benefits. Consult with the member’s SJA for details.
- Liability: Even though the command and control of Title 32 members flow through the state, their duty is ultimately federal. Thus, the federal government is responsible for addressing any personal claims of loss by members while in Title 32 status. This often manifests in Line of Duty determinations for injuries suffered while in training.
- Discipline:
 - *Criminal*: Title 32 members are not subject to the UCMJ. They must adhere to state military justice codes (sometimes called “militia codes”) and may be court-martialed under state law. They are subject to prosecution under civilian jurisdiction, including federal prosecution. A member **can** be subject to prosecution under state law/military **code** and federal law, because the sources of authority are considered separate “sovereigns.” Thus, double jeopardy protections may not apply.
 - *Adverse Administrative Actions*: Reference DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*, DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions*, and other AFIs as they apply to Title 32 status members, unless otherwise directed by state law

Table 6.1: Air National Guard Duty Status Quick Reference Guide

Common situations and the rules that apply based on duty status.

Situations	State Active Duty (SAD)	Title 32	Title 10
Command and Control	Governor	Governor	President
Location of Duty	Determined by State Law	Territory of the U.S.	Worldwide
Funding	State	Federal	Federal
Mission Types	Determined by State Law	Training and other federally authorized missions	Overseas Training and Federal missions
Duties may include law enforcement on civilians	Yes	Yes	No
Military Discipline	State Military Code	State Military Code	Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
Adverse Administrative Action	IAW applicable DAFIs	IAW applicable DAFIs	IAW applicable DAFIs but demotions may not be permanent
Indemnity from Accidents	State	Federal	Federal

References

- Policies and Regulations: Participation of Reserve Officers in Preparation and Administration, 10 U.S.C. § 10211
- Air Force Reserve Forces Policy Committee, 10 U.S.C. § 10305
- Various Statutes on Reserve Mobilization, 10 U.S.C. §§ 12301–12304
- Technicians: Employment, Use, Status, 32 U.S.C. § 709
- Employment and Reemployment Rights of Members of the Uniformed Service, 38 U.S.C. §§ 4301–4335
- DoDI 1215.06, *Uniform Reserve Training, and Retirement Categories for the Reserve Components* (11 March 2014), incorporating through Change 2, 12 July 2022
- DoDI 1235.12, *Accessing the Reserve Components (RC)* (7 June 2016), incorporating Change 1, 28 February 2017
- DAFI 36-2619, *Active Duty Operational Support (ADOS) – Active Component Man-day Program* (15 January 2025)
- DAFI 36-2907, *Adverse Administrative Actions* (14 October 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 18 July 2025
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI 36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- ANGI 36-101, *Air National Guard Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) Program* (21 April 2022)

AIR FORCE RESERVE ACTIVE GUARD AND RESERVE CURTAILMENTS

The Air Force Reserve Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) Program is established by Department of War (DoW) policy and implemented in the Department of the Air Force Manual (DAFMAN) 36-2114, *Management of the Air Force Reserve Individual Reserve (IR) and Full-Time Support (FTS) Programs* for the Air Force Reserve (AFR) and Air National Guard Instruction (ANGI) 36-101, *Air National Guard Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Program* for the Air National Guard (ANG). AGRs are part of the “full-time support” to the Reserve Components (RCs) who are primarily responsible for assisting in the organization, administration, recruitment, instruction, and training support of the RCs. In other words, AGRs provide full-time service in a reserve position, as opposed to TRs and IMAs who only perform part-time service in a unit. AGRs are a members of a Reserve component who have been placed on active duty for a period of service under 10 U.S.C. § 12301(d) to perform duties as described in 10 U.S.C. §§ 101, 10211, and 12310.

- Members who serve 6 cumulative years as an AGR are eligible for “career status” which allows for continued service in the AGR program beyond the initial term of commitment. The AGR career program provides Airmen with opportunities for promotion, career progression, retention, education, and professional development. This program may lead to regular retirement after attaining the required years of active service.
- Initial entry into the AGR program is by individual application for selection assignment
- A curtailment occurs when an AGR member voluntarily or involuntarily leaves a status or tour prior to completing the prescribed tour length
- Voluntary Tour Curtailment: AGRs may request curtailment based on position realignment, personal hardship, or retirement
 - AGRs submit a curtailment request through the chain of command to arrive at the Air Reserve Personnel Center’s (ARPC) Assignments Division (ARPC/DPAA) (O-5 and below) or the Air Force Reserve Senior Leader Management Office (AF/REG) (E-9/O-6) at least 120 days prior to, and no more than 365 days before, the requested date of separation (DOS)
 - Curtailment requests for the purpose of retirement must be received by ARPC/DPAA (O-5 and below) or AF/REG (O-6) no later than 60 days prior to the requested permissive temporary duty assignment (TDY)/terminal leave start date, but not less than 120 days before the retirement date

- **Involuntary Curtailment:** Commanders considering involuntary curtailment should use all quality force management tools available prior to initiating an involuntary curtailment
 - Depending on the nature of the involuntary curtailment, commanders should consider discharge in lieu of involuntary curtailment
 - Commanders should consult with ARPC/DPAA (O-5 and below) or AF/REG (O-6) and their servicing legal office (AFR) or the Human Resource Officer (ANG) to determine if an involuntary curtailment is appropriate. For the ANG, the member may be curtailed immediately if a preponderance of evidence indicates that the member may be a threat to others, the ANG or national security.
 - Commanders must notify members of the intent to curtail their AGR assignment in writing prior to taking action. Members facing curtailment must be informed of their option to apply for retirement or separation, for another vacancy in the Selected Reserve, or to be assigned into the Individual Ready Reserve.
 - Involuntarily curtailed AFR members must be notified of the decision and are given 15 days to appeal the curtailment action to the appropriate appellate authority. Curtailed ANG members may request reconsideration if significant new information is obtained.
 - For ANG AGR members, most states have their own state supplement which can change the career service timeline of an AGR member. As such, ANG commanders should consult their state's Staff Judge Advocate regarding state-specific requirements.
 - AGR assignments may also be affected by mission realignment, total force initiatives, base realignments and closures, end-strength limitations, or other total force actions. Such actions are considered "involuntary releases" rather than curtailments. AGR assignments may also be affected by officers reaching maximum years of service, enlisted members reaching high year tenure, or AGRs who reach 20 years active or reserve service. In all instances, consult the appropriate AFR or ANG instruction for component-specific practices.

References

- DoDI 1205.18, *Full-Time Support (FTS) to the Reserve Components* (5 June 2020)
- DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments* (9 August 2024)
- DAFMAN 36-2114, *Management of the Air Force Reserve Individual Reserve (IR) and Full-Time Support (FTS) Programs* (24 May 2021)
- ANGI 36-101, *Air National Guard Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Program* (21 April 2022)

REASSIGNMENT TO THE INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVE

The Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is a manpower pool consisting of individuals who have had some training and who have served previously in the active component or in the Selected Reserve. Members may voluntarily participate in training for retirement points and promotion, in accordance with DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments*. Transfers to the IRR may be voluntary or involuntary.

Voluntary Reassignment to the IRR

- Members who no longer desire to actively participate in the Air Force Reserve (AFR) may request to be reassigned to the IRR
- Commanders **MUST** deny “voluntary” requests for reassignment to the IRR when discharge is more appropriate
- Application: Members request reassignment to the IRR by submitting DAF Form 1288, *Application for Ready Reserve Assignment*, or a personal letter to the unit commander or the HQ Readiness and Integration Organization (RIO) detachment commander for the Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) program
 - As part of completing DAF Form 1288, members must certify whether they have or have not received an Unfavorable Information File (UIF) within the last two years (enlisted) or five years (officers). If the member has had a UIF during this period, the last five Officer Performance Briefs (OPBs) or Enlisted Performance Briefs (EPBs) must accompany the assignment request.
- Approval Authority:
 - Wing commander or equivalent (unit program) or the RIO detachment commander (IMA program) is the approval authority for voluntary requests
 - In the unit reserve program, any commander in the chain of command may disapprove a request for reassignment and must notify the member with the reasons for disapproving the request
 - In the IMA program, the RIO detachment commander may disapprove a request for reassignment and must notify the member with the reasons for disapproving the request
 - Approved requests for voluntary reassignment from the unit or IMA program must have an effective date of change of strength accountability not earlier than 6 months from the date requests are approved. (See DAFI 36-2110 for waiver authorities to this provision.)

Involuntary Reassignment to the IRR

- Involuntary reassignment to the IRR from the Ready Reserve for cause is generally inappropriate
 - Use involuntary reassignment only as a last resort
 - Initiate involuntary reassignment for cause or derogatory reasons only after all appropriate disciplinary and/or administrative actions have been taken and documented
 - Consider exceptions to these policies on a case-by-case basis
- Involuntary reassignment is not a substitute for discharge. If administrative discharge is warranted, process in accordance with DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*.
- Appropriate Situations: Some potential situations where involuntary reassignment may be appropriate include (but are not limited to):
 - *Unexcused Absences*: In the unit reserve program, if a member has nine or more unexcused absences from Unit Training Assemblies (UTAs) in a 12-month period, commanders should reassign the member to the IRR if not discharging the member
 - *Failure to Meet Fitness Standards*: Members of the IRR maintaining an unsatisfactory fitness level after a second 90-day period are referred to the commander of the unit of assignment or attachment for appropriate action, per DAFMAN 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program*
 - *Health Assessment Non-compliance*: Failure to comply with requirement for reserve component periodic health assessment
 - *Whereabouts Unknown*: Member not immediately available, but not missing in action
- Evaluation: Unit commander (or RIO detachment commander) will examine and evaluate any information received that indicates a member should be considered for involuntary reassignment
- Memorandum of Notification: If a commander determines grounds exist to warrant initiation of involuntary reassignment action, a Memorandum of Notification (MON) is sent to the member. DAFI 36-2110 includes the information that must be provided to the member.
 - *Personally Deliver*: When feasible, the MON should be personally delivered
 - The delivery official must obtain a written acknowledgement of receipt
 - If member refuses to acknowledge receipt, the delivery official makes an annotation to that effect on the receipt, including the date and time of delivery of the notification. The receipt should be kept in the case file.

- *Certified Mail:* When personal delivery is not feasible, the unit should send the MON by certified mail to the member's last known address, with return receipt requested
 - If attempts to deliver the MON by certified mail are unsuccessful, send the MON by first-class mail
 - If the member resides outside the United States, an equivalent form of notice may be used
- *Undelivered:* If postal service returns the MON without indicating a more current address, file the returned envelope in the case file
 - If an address correction is received from the postmaster or if a returned envelope discloses a more current address, update the record, and send the MON to the member at that address
 - If all attempts to deliver the MON by certified and first-class mail are unsuccessful, complete the Affidavit of Service
- Review:
 - *Member:* Member must be allowed 15 calendar days after receipt of the MON to consult with legal counsel and submit statements or documents on his/her behalf. If the member fails to submit statements or documents during this period, the case may proceed based on the information available, without further notice to the member.
 - *Commander:* The commander reviews any matters submitted by the member and determines whether to continue involuntary reassignment action
- Determination:
 - If the commander elects to continue the involuntary reassignment action, the case file must be processed through the servicing Staff Judge Advocate and chain of command to the approval authority
 - The approval authority reviews the case to determine whether the facts are properly substantiated
 - The approval authority then approves or denies the reassignment and notifies the member
- It is in the best interest of both the Department of the Air Force and the member to process the case as expeditiously as possible. Commanders should monitor the process to ensure cases are processed without undue delay.

References

- DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments* (9 August 2024), incorporating Change 1, 17 September 2025
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI 36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFMAN 36-2136, *Reserve Personnel Participation* (15 December 2023)
- DAFMAN 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program* (21 April 2022)
- DAF Form 1288, *Application for Ready Reserve Assignment* (15 September 2025)

INSTALLATION BARMENT

Installation commanders have broad authority to control activities on their installations, including the authority to remove or exclude any person whose presence on the installation is unauthorized or disrupts good order and discipline. This authority enables a commander to fulfill his/her responsibilities to protect personnel and property, and to ensure the successful, uninterrupted performance of the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) mission. The terms debarment, barment, and barred are often used interchangeably to mean that an individual is no longer permitted access to a specific DAF installation.

Key Takeaways

- » Installation commanders may deny access to the installation with a barment order
- » Barment orders should be in writing
- » Anyone entering an installation after receiving notice of barment is subject to prosecution under 18 U.S.C. § 1382

Who is Subject to Barment

- Members of the armed forces are not normally barred. Service members being involuntarily separated may, in conjunction with their discharge, be barred from their former place of duty if their presence would interfere with the mission or be prejudicial to good order and discipline.
- Non-affiliated civilians may be barred from a military installation
- Dependent family members and retirees **may not** be completely barred from an installation. They must be granted limited access to the installation to receive any medical or dental care they are entitled (statutory right under 10 U.S.C. §§ 1074 and 1076).
- Civilian employees may be barred, but they should be placed on enforced leave with the intent to take removal action prior to being completely barred
 - Otherwise, the employee may still be entitled to collect a salary
 - Check with the local Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) to determine if the local collective bargaining agreement, should one exist, contains additional due process requirements
- Salespersons and businesses may be barred for misconduct. Misconduct may lead to barment of a single agent or an entire firm.
- Contractors may be barred for misconduct. Contractor employees with security clearances are not entitled to greater protection from barment. Actions to bar contractors must be coordinated with the local contracting office.

Procedural Requirements

- A person who is barred from an installation should be notified, in writing, that they are prohibited from entering the installation. The notification (called a “barment letter”) should state the reason for and period of the barment. It should also include an exception for access to medical or dental care if the person subject to barment is entitled to such care. Oral barment orders must be documented in the blotter and a written barment order must be issued within one duty day.
- The barment is for the specific installation and does not prohibit access to other military installations not subject to the control of the issuing installation commander
- Determining the barment period is a matter of discretion
 - Commanders should consider the individual, the reason for the proposed barment, and the need for good order, discipline, and security. The bottom line is what is reasonable given all the circumstances.
 - Length of the barment period should be stated in the barment letter. The commander may bar an individual for a specific length of time or, in appropriate cases, the barment may be permanent.
- Individuals can ask the installation commander to remove the barment at any time, regardless of whether the barment is for a set period or permanent
- A copy of the barment letter should be hand-delivered to the individual. If the individual is unavailable, the letter will be sent by certified mail to ensure a record of receipt.
- An individual who enters an installation after receiving notice of barment from the installation commander is subject to federal criminal prosecution under 18 U.S.C. § 1382. Maximum penalty for violation of the law is six months confinement and a fine.

References

- Medical and Dental Care for Members, Certain Former Members, and Dependents, 10 U.S.C. §§ 1074, 1076
- Entering Military, Naval, or Coast Guard Property, 18 U.S.C. § 1382 Penalty for Violation of Security Regulations and Orders, 50 U.S.C. § 797
- Installation Entry Policy, Civil Disturbance Intervention and Disaster Assistance, 32 C.F.R. § 809a
- DoDI 5200.08, *Security of DoD Installations and Resources and the DoD Physical Security Review Board (PSRB)* (10 December 2005), incorporating through Change 3, 20 November 2015
- DoDM 5200.08V3_DAFMAN31-101 V3, *Installation Perimeter Access Control*, Guidance Memorandum 2025-01 (1 April 2025)

DRIVING PRIVILEGES

Driving on a military installation, whether in a government motor vehicle (GMV) or a privately owned vehicle (POV), is a privilege granted by the installation commander. This authority may be delegated to the deputy installation commander (CD), mission support group commander (MSG/CC), or other appropriate official not occupying a law enforcement, investigative, or other position raising the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Key Takeaways

- » Driving on a military installation is a privilege granted by the installation commander
- » Driving privileges may be suspended or revoked due to intoxicated driving or other traffic violations

Operating a POV on the Installation

- A person must do the following to drive on a Department of the Air Force installation:
 - Lawfully be licensed to operate motor vehicles in appropriate classifications and not under suspension or revocation in any state or host country
 - Comply with all laws and regulations governing motor vehicle operations on the installation
 - Comply with installation vehicle registration requirements
 - Possess, while operating a motor vehicle, and produce upon request by law enforcement personnel, the following:
 - Proof of ownership or state registration, if required by state or host nation
 - A valid state driver's license (or host nation/status of forces agreement license)
 - A valid record of vehicle safety inspection, if required by state or host nation
 - Documents that establish identification and status of cargo and vehicle occupants, when appropriate
 - Proof of valid insurance
 - Operators of GMVs must have proof of authorization to operate the vehicle

Implied Consent

- When operating a motor vehicle on a military installation, a driver is deemed to have given consent to certain evidentiary tests:
 - Consent to test for the presence of alcohol or drugs in their blood, on their breath, and in their urine, provided there is a lawful stop, apprehension, or citation for any impaired driving offense committed while driving or in physical control of a motor vehicle on a military installation
 - Consent to the removal and temporary impoundment of their POV if it is illegally parked, interfering with military operations, creating a safety hazard, disabled by accident or incident, abandoned, or left unattended in a restricted or controlled access area

Suspension

- An installation commander can administratively suspend or revoke installation driving privileges
 - A suspension of up to six months may be appropriate if a driver continually violates installation parking standards
 - The installation commander is authorized to immediately suspend installation driving privileges pending resolution of an intoxicated driving incident under any of the following circumstances:
 - Refusal to take or complete a lawfully requested chemical test for the presence of alcohol or other drugs in the driver's blood
 - Operating a motor vehicle with blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.08 percent by volume or higher, or more than the applicable BAC level in the local civilian jurisdiction, whichever is applicable
 - Receipt of an arrest report or other official document showing apprehension for intoxicated driving

Revocation

- An installation commander will immediately revoke driving privileges for a period of not less than one year in any of the following circumstances:
 - Person is lawfully apprehended for intoxicated driving and refuses to submit to or complete tests to measure blood alcohol or drug content
 - Conviction, nonjudicial punishment, or a military or civilian administrative action resulting in the suspension or revocation of a driver's license for intoxicated driving

Procedures

- A point system is used to provide a uniform administrative process to impartially judge driving performance of military and DoW personnel, their family members, and other personnel operating a motor vehicle on-base. Points are also assessed for violations of motor vehicle traffic regulations on-base, and for offenses involving GMVs. Certain procedural guidelines apply before an individual's driving privilege may be suspended or revoked.
 - An individual has the right to a hearing before a designated hearing officer. The individual must be notified of his/her right to a hearing, but it is only held if the individual requests it within the prescribed time period.
 - A suspension for driving while intoxicated offense may be effective immediately if based on reliable evidence. Such evidence can include witness statements, a military or civilian police report, chemical test results, refusal to complete chemical testing, video tapes, written statements, field sobriety test results, or other evidence.
- Civilian offenders may be prosecuted before a U.S. Magistrate for on-base traffic offenses. However, jurisdiction is dependent upon the installation where the offense occurred.
- If an Air National Guard (ANG) base is co-located with a Regular Air Force (RegAF) installation, the authority to grant and deny driving privileges and establishment of driving rules rests with the RegAF installation commander (or designee). If an ANG base is not co-located with a RegAF installation, the ANG installation commander holds the authority and responsibility of granting and denying driving privileges and creating and enforcing driving rules.

Reference

- DAFI 31-218_DAFGM2021-01, *Motor Vehicle Supervision* (10 December 2021) (incorporating AR 190-5, *Motor Vehicle Traffic Supervision* (22 May 2006))

ARMY AND AIR FORCE EXCHANGE SERVICE AND COMMISSARY BENEFITS

Although Department of War (DoW) directives and inter-Service regulations govern exchange and commissary benefits, installation commanders may exercise some discretion in granting, suspending, or revoking privileges of patrons who abuse these privileges. The installation Force Support Squadrons work with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) and DeCA (Commissary) managers to maintain a positive retail environment and ensure military families are adequately supported.

Key Takeaways

- » Exchange and Commissary benefits are important elements of our military benefits
- » Continental United States (CONUS) and outside the continental United States (OCONUS) installation commanders have considerable discretion in approving patron benefits for classes of users other than uniformed service members
- » Commander's remedies for abuse of privileges include suspension and revocation of Exchange and Commissary patron benefits
- » Installation commanders should have open channels of communication with AAFES and Commissary facility managers to ensure the needs of military families are met

AAFES

- The establishment of an exchange is authorized by the Department of the Army and Department of the Air Force (DAF) at any federal or state installation and other locations where DoW military personnel are assigned
- An exchange may be established at other locations, such as state-operated National Guard installations or Reserve Training Centers, provided it is cost-effective

AAFES Privileges

- Unlimited exchange privileges extend to all uniformed, retired, and other personnel (such as Medal of Honor recipients) and their dependents
- Unlimited exchange privileges may be extended to government departments or agencies outside the DoW when:
 - Local commander determines the desired supplies or services cannot be conveniently obtained elsewhere; and
 - Supplies or services can be furnished without unduly impairing the service to exchange patrons.

- Limited exchange privileges extend to some government civilian employees and to others, such as members of foreign military services visiting a military installation
- In non-foreign OCONUS areas (e.g., Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico), the responsible commander may extend limited or unlimited privileges to other personnel or organizations if it is in the best interest of the mission of the command concerned
- Exceptions involving patron privileges are based on alleviating personal hardships and may only be granted by the Secretary of the Army or Secretary of the Air Force upon request by the appropriate installation commander through command channels
- All honorably discharged veterans may utilize the AAFES online catalog service to purchase goods

Abuse of AAFES Privileges

- Exchange patrons are prohibited from abusing privileges, including:
 - Purchasing items for purposes of resale, transfer, or exchange to unauthorized persons;
 - Using exchange merchandise or services in the conduct of any activity to produce income (**Note:** for-profit businesses operating out of base housing may not compete with AAFES even if they do not use exchange merchandise or services in their operations); and
 - Theft, intentional or repeated presentation of dishonored checks, and other indebtedness.

Commander Actions when Abuse of AAFES Privileges Occurs

- When an abuse of privileges occurs, the commander will take prompt disciplinary and other appropriate action, such as revocation or suspension of exchange privileges
 - Commanders may revoke exchange privileges for any period deemed appropriate, however, the minimum period of revocation is six months for shoplifting, employee pilferage, and intentional presentation of dishonored checks
 - The individual concerned will be provided notice of the charges and the opportunity to offer rebutting evidence
 - On appeal, the commander who revoked the privileges, or the next higher commander, may reinstate exchange privileges for cogent and compelling reasons

Commissary Privileges

- The DoW operates commissaries as an integral element of the military pay and benefits system and as an institutional element to foster the sense of community among military personnel and their families. The intent of patronage is to provide an income benefit through cost-savings on food and household items necessary to subsist and maintain the household of the military family.

- Authorized Patrons:

- Several classes of individuals are authorized commissary privileges by regulation, including active duty and their dependent family members, retired personnel and their dependent family members, reservists, and others
- At overseas locations, military commanders or Secretaries of military departments may extend commissary privileges to certain individuals and groups of individuals, provided it is without detriment to the ability to fulfill the military mission

- Restrictions on Purchases:

- Authorized personnel may not sell or give away commissary purchases to individuals or groups not entitled to commissary privileges. However, patrons may purchase commissary items intended as a bona fide gift for friends and family members or intended to be consumed as a part of a meal they prepare.
- Personnel are prohibited from using commissary purchases to support a private business. However, patrons may use their commissary privileges to support limited charitable endeavors (e.g., preparing a meal for their place of worship or a homeless shelter).
- Sanctions for violating restrictions on purchases range from temporary suspension or permanent revocation of commissary privileges to appropriate action under regulation, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), or federal or state law

Appointing Agents for Authorized Users

- An installation commander is authorized to extend exchange and commissary privileges to the agent of an authorized user. Appointment typically occurs when the authorized user is unable to exercise their privileges on their own behalf. This often occurs when a custodial parent is not an authorized patron, but the non-custodial parent is a DAF service member.

References

- DoDD 5124.02, *Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness* (23 June 2008)
- DoDI 1330.17, *DoD Commissary Program* (18 June 2014), incorporating through Change 2, 14 September 2018
- DTM 21-003, *Access to Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, Category C Online Activities, DoD Commissaries, and Military Service Exchange* (12 April 2021), incorporating through Change 2, 19 April 2023
- DAFI 34-110(I), *Army and Air Force Exchange Service Operations* (23 January 2024)

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Drug abuse, alcohol misuse, and other wrongful uses of substances that affect mood or function negatively impact behavior, duty performance, and physical and mental health and are incompatible with Department of the Air Force (DAF) standards.

Key Takeaways

- » Drug abuse is incompatible with military service and all DAF service members who abuse drugs, even once, are subject to discharge for misconduct
- » Military members and civilian employees who self-identify as having issues with drugs or alcohol may avoid certain negative consequences
- » The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) program is focused on prevention and comprehensive clinical treatment of members with substance abuse issues
- » Commanders should encourage members to seek help for problems with drugs or alcohol without fear of negative consequences

Unit Commanders and Supervisor Responsibilities

- Evaluate potential or identified abusers through the evaluation process of DAFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) Program*. The provisions of this instruction also apply to Air National Guard (ANG) members when eligible for Department of War (DoW) medical services.
- Provide appropriate incentives to encourage members to seek help for problems with drugs or alcohol without fear of negative consequences
- Command involvement is critical to a comprehensive treatment program, as well as during aftercare and follow-up services

ADAPT

- The ADAPT program attempts to identify and assist military members with drug problems, but the focus of the ADAPT program is prevention and clinical treatment
- ADAPT staff members evaluate all members suspected of drug or alcohol abuse to help the commander understand the extent of the substance abuse problem and to determine the patient's need for treatment and the level of care required

Referrals to ADAPT

- Positive drug test results **mandate** a substance abuse evaluation
- Self-Identification:
 - Military members who voluntarily disclose evidence of alcohol-related misconduct, personal drug use, or possession are granted limited protections. Such disclosure may not be used against the member in UCMJ actions or in characterizing an administrative discharge so long as they:
 - Are seeking treatment and voluntarily disclose evidence of personal substance abuse to the unit commander, first sergeant, ADAPT staff member, or a military medical or mental health professional; **and**
 - Have not previously been apprehended for drug involvement or alcohol related misconduct, placed under investigation for drug abuse or alcohol related misconduct, ordered to give a urine sample as part of the drug testing program in which the results are still pending or have been returned as positive, advised of a recommendation for administrative separation for drug abuse or for a basis involving alcohol-related misconduct.
 - DAF members with alcohol abuse problems are encouraged to seek assistance from their commander, first sergeant, ADAPT staff member, a military medical professional, or mental health professional
 - Self-identification is reserved for members who are not currently under investigation or pending action based on drug or alcohol-related misconduct
- Commander Referral: A unit commander will refer all service members for assessment when substance use or misuse is suspected to be a contributing factor in any misconduct or is suspected of impacting the member's duty performance, interpersonal relations, physical or mental readiness, or health
 - Voluntary disclosure of alcohol-related misconduct, alcohol misuse, or personal drug use or possession by the member in response to assessment questions following a commander referral to ADAPT **CANNOT** be used against the member for Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) actions or considered for characterizing service in an administrative discharge
- Incident to Medical Care: Medical personnel must notify a member's unit commander and the ADAPT program manager when a member is observed, identified, or suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, receives treatment for any injury or illness that may be the result of substance abuse, is suspected of having a substance use disorder diagnosis, or is admitted as a patient for alcohol or drug withdrawal management

Mandatory Administrative Discharge Processing for Drug Abuse

- Pursuant to DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*, drug abuse is incompatible with military service and members who abuse drugs one or more times are subject to discharge for misconduct
- Drug Abuse Includes:
 - Improper use of prescription medication;
 - Any Controlled Substance in Schedules I, II, III, IV, and V of 21 U.S.C. § 812;
 - Anabolic/androgenic steroids; and
 - Any intoxicating substance, other than alcohol or tobacco, introduced into the body in any manner for purposes of altering mood or function.
- Generally, a member found to have abused drugs will be discharged unless the member can prove that they meet required retention criteria in DAFI 36-3211

Civilian Employees

- The Air Force Drug Demand Reduction Program, which includes the Air Force Civilian Drug Testing Program, is designed to achieve a drug-free workplace, consistent with Executive Order 12564, Drug-Free Federal Workplace
- Similar to military members, civilian employees who self-identify for illicit drug use are provided a “safe haven” from disciplinary action if they:
 - Voluntarily identify themselves as a user of illicit drugs prior to being notified of the requirement to provide a specimen for testing or being identified through other means (e.g., drug testing, investigation);
 - Obtain and cooperate with appropriate counseling or rehabilitation;
 - Agree to and sign a last chance or statement of agreement; and
 - Thereafter refrain from illicit drug use.
- Commanders should consult with the Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) and/or the legal office if they suspect a civilian employee’s poor performance, discipline, or conduct may be caused by drug abuse

References

- Controlled Substance Act, 21 U.S.C. § 812
- DAFI 34-107, *Alcoholic Beverage Program* (5 July 2023)
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) Program* (16 September 2025)
- DAFMAN 44-197, *Military Drug Demand Reduction Program* (5 September 2023), incorporating Change 1, 1 August 2025
- AFMAN 44-198, *Air Force Civilian Drug Demand Reduction Program*, certified current 5 October 2022

PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

Private Organizations (PO) are non-Federal entities recognized by the installation commander, per AFI 34-223, *Private Organizations Program*, to operate on the installation because they will contribute to the morale, welfare, and quality of life of assigned Department of the Air Force (DAF) service members and their families. POs are usually formed around a specific special interest (e.g., snowmobiling, golfing) or to support a specific DAF unit or activity. POs may be chapters of larger non-Federal entities.

Key Takeaways

- » POs are allowed to operate on the installation because they contribute positively to the quality of life of the installation community. However, their activities cannot prejudice or discredit the DAF.
- » POs must undergo annual financial review with the Force Support Squadron (FSS) and have specific financial controls based on their cash holdings
- » POs may engage in continuous retail operations or occasional fundraising events (three per quarter) with installation commander permission
- » POs may form around a specific racial, ethnic, national origin or religious interest, but may not restrict membership to any particular class

Definitions

- A PO is a self-sustaining special interest group, set up by individuals (DAF service members and family) acting exclusively outside the scope of any official position they may have in the DAF
- POs are **NOT** any of the following:
 - Federal entities, and should not be treated as such;
 - Nonappropriated fund instrumentalities (NAFIs), nor are they entitled to the sovereign immunities and privileges given to NAFIs or the DAF;
 - “For us, by us” (FUBU) fundraising entities as defined in DAFI 36-3101, *Fundraising*;
 - Unofficial unit-affiliated activities, (although such activities whose current assets exceed a monthly average of \$1,000 over a 3-month period must apply to the installation for PO recognition; or
 - Organizations not considered POs covered by AFI 34-223 but are also governed by specific Department of War (DoW) directives and instructions such as scouting organizations, military relief societies, banks or credit unions, Red Cross, and United Service Organizations (USO).

Establishing a Private Organization

- A PO must submit a written constitution and bylaws to the FSS and legal office
- POs must be approved in writing by the installation commander or designee when they determine a PO will make a positive contribution to the quality of life of base personnel
 - Authorization may be withdrawn if the PO prejudices or discredits the United States government, conflicts with government activities, or for any other reason or just cause
- A PO must resubmit certification every two years or when there is a change in the purpose, function, or membership eligibility of the PO

Operating Rules

- POs must prevent the appearance of an official sanction or support by the DoW
 - POs may not use the seals, logos, or insignia of the DoW or DAF
 - POs operating on an Air Force or Space Force installation may use the name or abbreviation of the DoW, DAF, or installation in the PO name if the status of the PO is unambiguous and there is no appearance of official sanction or support by the DoW
 - POs promptly display the following disclaimer on all print and electronic media mentioning the PO: "THIS IS A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION. IT IS NOT A PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WAR OR ANY OF ITS COMPONENTS AND IT HAS NO GOVERNMENT STATUS."
- Service members may not perform activities for a PO while in an official duty status

Financial Controls

- POs must be self-sustaining, primarily through dues, contributions, service charges, fees, or special assessments of their members
- POs must use budgets and financial statements
- FSS Resource Management flight chiefs review each PO annually to ensure financial statements, documents, records, and procedures are in order
- POs with certain levels of gross annual revenue must undergo audits and financial reviews at the PO's own expenses
- POs will not engage in activities that duplicate or compete with Army and Air Force Exchange Service or Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs

Private Organization Fundraising

- POs are prohibited from conducting games of chance, lotteries, or other gambling activities, except in very limited circumstances such as certain types of raffles (see AFI 34-223, para. 10.20, and the *Joint Ethics Regulation* for further guidance on raffles)
- The installation commander or designee approves PO continuous thrift shop sales operations and occasional on-installation events for fundraising purposes. Occasional fundraising is defined as not more than three (3) events per calendar quarter.
- POs will not sell or serve alcoholic beverages on DAF installations with very limited exceptions (see AFI 34-223, para. 10.14 for further guidance)
- POs must have liability insurance unless waived by the installation commander
 - Insurance should be required unless the PO's activities are negligible in risk
 - PO members are jointly and severally personally liable for the obligations of the PO
- POs desiring tax-exempt status must file an application with the IRS and state taxing authority
- POs may not directly solicit cash donations for their organization on-base

Private Organizations and Staff Office Support

- Installation legal offices should not provide legal advice to prospective and currently recognized POs
 - However, legal advisors may assist POs by identifying guidance on formation, certification, annual financial reports, dissolution, and other provisions, particularly in the case of DAF-affiliated POs on a joint base where another Military Service is the lead component
- POs may not unlawfully discriminate, or give preferential treatment, in hiring practices, membership policies, or officership eligibility, on the basis of age (over 40 years old), race, religion, color, national origin, disability, ethnic group, or sex
- POs may form around a demographic characteristic (e.g., race, sex, religion) but must not run afoul of merit-based principles of the DAF and all events must be appropriate for affiliation with the DAF. If advertising for, or attendance at, a PO event spills over the registered membership of the PO, or if the PO requests logistical assistance from the installation, then the installation will ensure that the event is compliant with DAF Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies. As such, events which celebrate the accomplishments of a single demographic category or of an individual because of their demographic category, will usually not be approved for installation affiliation. Religiously oriented POs may be authorized on installations if:
 - Requests by similar organizations are also approved;
 - Authorization is for non-exclusive use of government facilities;

- No sign or insignia or other organizational identification is placed on or inside government facilities except when the organization's activities are in progress;
- Membership is not restricted to members of the religion involved; and
- Installation staff chaplain coordinates on the request.

Logistical Support to Private Organizations

- The use of government equipment and systems for other than official purposes is limited
- Government communication systems may be used to inform DAF members of PO events of possible interest to the unit and its families
 - However, official communication systems should not be used to advertise PO fundraiser and membership events, unless the primary purpose of the communication is for a purpose other than the PO's fundraising effort, such as to inform DAF members of a local event of possible interest (e.g., sale of alternate lunch option in unit parking lot)
- POs must furnish their own equipment, supplies, and other materials with limited exceptions
- Logistical support to POs may be permitted if the installation commander determines the request meets the test under DoDI 5410.19, Volume 2, *Community Outreach Activities: OSD Outreach Programs, Speaking Engagements, and Support to Non-DoD Organizations*, para. 3.2.a
- POs in overseas areas may be able to request additional logistical support. Always consult the Staff Judge Advocate for such requests.

References

- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- DoDI 5410.19, Volume 2, *Community Outreach Activities: OSD Outreach Programs, Speaking Engagements, and Support to Non-DoD Organizations* (29 September 2021)
- DAFI 34-107, *Alcoholic Beverage Program* (5 July 2023)
- DAFI 36-3101, *Fundraising* (25 October 2022)
- AFI 34-223, *Private Organizations Program* (13 December 2018)

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, FREE SPEECH, DEMONSTRATIONS, OPEN HOUSES, AND EXTREMISM

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders must balance members' constitutional right of free expression with the responsibility to execute the mission and protect good order and discipline
- » Military members are prohibited from actively participating in extremist activities
- » While military members are encouraged to carry out their rights and responsibilities of citizenship, they are prohibited from engaging in certain political activities

Commander Responsibilities

- Commanders have the inherent authority and responsibility to execute the mission, protect resources, and maintain good order and discipline. This authority and responsibility includes placing lawful restrictions upon participation by Department of the Air Force (DAF) members in certain dissident, protest, or partisan political activities.
- Commanders balance this inherent command responsibility with individual DAF members' constitutional right of free expression. Commanders preserve members' right of free expression to the maximum extent possible, consistent with good order, discipline, and national security.
- To properly balance these interests, commanders must exercise prudent judgment and should consult with their Staff Judge Advocate (SJA). In appropriate cases, commanders may find it advisable to confer with higher authorities before initiating action to that would restrict a member's free expression.

Extremism

- Extremist activities are inconsistent with the responsibilities of military service and can be prohibited even in some circumstances in which such activities would be constitutionally protected in a civilian setting
 - Military personnel are prohibited from actively participating in extremist activities
 - The term "extremist activities" is defined within DoDI 1325.06, *Handling Protest, Extremism, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces*, Enclosure 3, para. 8.c.(1). Extremist activities include, but are not limited to, advocating or engaging in: terrorism; the overthrow of the U.S. Government or its subdivisions; unlawful force or violence to achieve goals that are political, religious, discriminatory or ideological in nature; or the disruption of military activities.

- The term “active participation” is defined within DoDI 1325.06, Enclosure 3, para. 8.c.(2). Active participation includes, but is not limited to: Advocating or engaging in the use or threat of unlawful force or violence in support of extremist activities; providing materials support or resources to individuals or organizations the promote extremist activities; recruiting, fundraising, or making personal contributions to groups or organizations that engage in extremist activities; actively demonstrating or rallying in support of extremist activities (as opposed to merely observing such demonstrations); or, knowingly displaying paraphernalia, words, or symbols, in support of extremist activities.
- Commanders should remain alert for signs of future extremist activities. Commanders should intervene early, primarily through counseling, when observing such signs even though the signs may not rise to the level of active participation or threaten good order and discipline, but only suggest such potential.
- Upon a credible report or suspicion of extremist activities, commanders **WILL** notify the appropriate Military Criminal Investigative Organizations, counterintelligence organizations, command security manager, legal office, and the Insider Threat Hub

Publication of Personal Writing Matters

- DAF members may not distribute or post any unofficial printed or written material within any DAF installation without permission of the installation commander
- DAF members may not write for unofficial publications during duty hours or use government resources, even off-duty

Controlling or Prohibiting Demonstrations and Protests

- Commanders may also take measures to control or prevent demonstrations and protest activities within the installation
 - Demonstrations or related activities on a DAF installation may be prohibited if:
 - They interfere with mission accomplishment; or
 - They present a clear danger to loyalty, discipline, or morale of service members.
 - No one may enter a military installation for any purpose prohibited by law or regulation, or reenter an installation after having been barred by order of the installation commander
 - DAF members are prohibited from participating in demonstrations when they are on-duty, when they are in a foreign country, when they are in uniform, when their activities constitute a breach of law and order, or when violence is likely to result

Political Activities by Members of the Department of the Air Force

- It is DoW policy to encourage DAF members to carry out their rights and responsibilities of United States citizenship. While on active duty, however, members are prohibited from engaging in certain political activities in order to maintain good order and discipline, and to avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of improper endorsement in political matters.
- DAF service members may register to vote and express personal opinions on political candidates and issues, but not as a representative of the Armed Forces
- (See DAFI 51-508, *Political Activities, Free Speech and Freedom of Assembly*, paras. 2.3 and 2.4 for a list of permitted and prohibited political activities.) Note that the restrictions on partisan political activity do not apply to activity related to social issues, even when those social issues may be considered politically charged in a colloquial sense. Signs, symbols and other material associated with such social issues may only be banned in Federal workplaces when they reasonably have the potential to become disruptive to the orderly workplace. For further guidance, consult with your installation SJA.
- The Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7321-7326, governs political activities of Department of War (DoW) civilian employees. Among other restrictions, the Hatch Act prohibits most (“Less Restricted”) employees from engaging in partisan political activities (activities directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group) on-duty in a federal workplace, while wearing a government uniform, or official insignia, and while using a government vehicle.

Open House Requirements and Responsibilities

- An open house where the general public is invited onto the installation does not, in and of itself, cause the installation to lose its status as “closed” for the purposes of limiting political or ideological speech. “Closed” means that non-DoW personnel are not permitted to enter without express permission of the commander. The base is not a public forum for protests or demonstrations, or other ideological expression.
 - Open houses are for local community relations and are accomplished primarily through aerial demonstrations. Commanders retain the authority to restrict political or ideological speech or demonstrations on the installation during an open house.
 - Commanders should prohibit demonstrations inside an installation that could result in interference with the mission or present a clear danger to loyalty, discipline, or morale of military forces
 - If a demonstration or unauthorized activity begins to take place during an open house, commanders and Security Forces should be ready to respond immediately

- If a person or group attempts to engage in political or ideological expression or demonstrations on an installation, the commander may escort the offending party or parties off the installation, and issue a barment letter, the violation of which can subject the offender to criminal penalties
- An installation loses its status as “closed” for the purposes of preventing political or ideological speech or demonstrations **ONLY IF** the commander allows political or ideological speech or demonstrations to occur or by abandoning control over the installation or parts of it
- Installation commanders should be careful about whom they invite onto the installation and what they allow those people to do. It is important to work closely with the SJA to plan open houses so that potential problems can be prevented and to solve free speech issues should they arise.

References

- The Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7321–7326
- DoDD 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces* (19 February 2008)
- DoDI 1325.06, *Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces* (27 November 2009), incorporating through Change 2, effective 20 December 2021
- DAFI 51-508, *Political Activities, Free Speech and Freedom of Assembly of Air Force Personnel* (24 March 2023)
- AFMAN 10-1004, *Conducting Air Force Open Houses* (23 August 2018)

RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

Issues involving religion have an inherent potential to generate media, advocacy group, and political attention quickly. Resolution of religious issues, such as accommodation requests, religious speech or practices in a duty context, and potential religious endorsement, is always highly dependent on the facts and circumstances and seldom amenable to simple, bright line, “one-size-fits-all” rules. It is essential that commanders consult their staff chaplains and judge advocates when religious issues arise.

Key Takeaways

- » Leaders at all levels must balance constitutional protections for free exercise of religion with the constitutional prohibition against governmental establishment of religion
- » Commanders must ensure their words and actions cannot reasonably be construed as official endorsement or disapproval of any faith, belief, or absence of belief
- » Follow the provisions of DAFI 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force*, when reviewing and analyzing requests for religious accommodation

Constitutional and Statutory Basis

- First Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...”
 - *Establishment Clause*: Provides that the government is prohibited from exercising preference for one religion over another, or religion over non-religion
 - *Free Exercise Clause*: Provides constitutional protection for religious speech and practices (but does **NOT** absolutely protect all religious expression under all circumstances)
- Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA): Establishes rights beyond those protections afforded by the Constitution’s free exercise clause by creating a heightened standard of review for government actions that substantially burden a person’s exercise of religion

General Principles for Leaders

- Leaders at all levels must balance constitutional protections for free exercise of religion with the constitutional prohibition against governmental establishment of religion
- Commanders must ensure their words and actions cannot reasonably be construed to be officially endorsing or disapproving of, or extending preferential treatment for any faith, belief, or absence of belief
 - Commanders must be sensitive to the potential for real-world military implications when religion and official business intersect. Context is critical and commanders should exercise caution before engaging in activities in the military setting that would leave a reasonable observer with the impression that the commander is endorsing, sponsoring, or inhibiting religion.

- Not all members of the command will share the commander's beliefs and may feel alienated or marginalized when their commander espouses a particular religious belief or preference for one religion
- Commanders must be prepared to accommodate a sincerely held religious belief or practice that is substantially burdened by law or policy or be prepared to justify why such accommodation cannot be granted to the requestor because of a compelling government interest and that no less restrictive means are available to meet that interest
- Some may question whether they will be viewed with impartiality or with disfavor if they do not agree with their commander's religious views

Religious Expression in the Workplace

- Department of the Air Force (DAF) service members may permissibly engage in voluntary discussions of religion, even if conducted in uniform, to the same extent that they may engage in comparable private expression about subjects not related to religious issues, where it is clear that the discussions are personal, not official, and they are free from coercion or appearance of coercion
- A DAF member may share his/her faith or invite another co-worker to attend his/her place of worship as long the member respects the views and requests of the co-worker
- Restrictions on such expression must be based on generally applicable content-neutral factors, such as whether the expression would disrupt mission accomplishment or would have an adverse impact on good order and discipline. Additionally, restrictions on religious-related expression are appropriate if the member's expression can reasonably be attributed to the DAF, thus constituting an impermissible endorsement.
- When religious expression is directed towards other DAF members, the speaker must refrain from such expression when a member asks that it stop or otherwise demonstrates that it is unwelcome
- Leaders should be mindful that subordinates could perceive their religious expression as coercive, even if it is not intended as such. Consequently, commanders and supervisors should be mindful of the supervisor and subordinate relationship during such discussions.

Prayer

- As a general rule, prayer constitutes protected religious expression. However, in official circumstances, or when superior/subordinate relationships are involved, superiors must be sensitive to the potential that personal religious expressions may appear official or coercive.
- Public prayer must not endorse, or appear to endorse, religion
 - Prayer may not be part of routine official business (e.g., staff meetings)
 - If a chaplain is asked to pray at an official event, the choice of prayer is in the discretion of the chaplain as long as the prayer does not state or imply any DAF endorsement of a specific religion

- Leaders should avoid leading prayers at official functions. Any prayers should be led by a chaplain, if possible, or another DAF member.
- Religious content/prayer is acceptable as an exercise of free exercise in ceremonies that are primarily personal to the honoree, such as retirements or promotion ceremonies. If a commander is the presiding official for the event, the commander could ask to have the “emcee” announce that the religious content/prayer is at the request of the honoree.
- Attendance at National Prayer Breakfast activities in uniform is neither prohibited nor encouraged (i.e., it is left to attendee’s discretion)

Religious Displays

- Displays of religious articles are permissible in government offices where it is clear that the articles are personal and are not used to promote a specific religious belief to office members
- Supervisors may restrict all posters regardless of content, or posters of a certain size, in private work areas, or require that such posters be displayed facing the employee, and not on common walls. However, a supervisor is not permitted to specifically single out religious posters (e.g., the Ten Commandments) for either negative or preferential treatment compared to other posters.
- Context is critical. While the Ten Commandments may be permissible in the employee’s cubicle, religious displays have the potential to send a message of endorsement of particular religious beliefs.
- Commanders and others in leadership positions must be sensitive to the nature, extent, and circumstances of their religious displays

Official Communications

- Chaplains at all levels of command are encouraged to work with Public Affairs (PA) to generate communication plans for the dissemination of information for chapel-sponsored religious services, activities, or events
- As part of this communication plan, PA will recommend appropriate internal and external communications channels
 - Distribution of information about chapel-sponsored services, activities, or events, should be consistent with the tools commanders use to inform DAF members and their families about other command programs or events (e.g., Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR), Military and Family Readiness Center (M&FRC), Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR), etc.)

- Commanders at all levels who are considering personally disseminating information about chapel-sponsored religious services, activities, or events, should balance constitutional protections for their own free exercise of religion—including individual expressions of religious beliefs—with the constitutional prohibition against governmental establishment of religion. Commanders should ensure their words and actions cannot reasonably be construed to be officially endorsing, disapproving of, or extending preferential treatment for any faith, belief, or absence of belief.
 - For example, a commander may disseminate the installation chapel's schedule of events for the month and encourage attendance at events/activities that are open to all DAF members (and their dependents), of all faith groups and belief systems
 - However, a commander may not endorse or encourage attendance at an activity or event that is limited to members of a single faith, especially if the commander is also a member of that faith

Accommodation of Religious Practices

- The DAF places a high value on the rights of its members to observe the tenets of their respective religions or to observe no religion at all
- Pursuant to DoDI 1300.17, *Religious Liberty in the Military Services*, the DAF will approve an individual's request for accommodation of a religious practice unless the request would have an adverse impact on readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, health, or safety
- Commanders and supervisors must fairly consider requests for religious accommodation. Except in the case of immunization or medical practice, DAF members requesting accommodation will continue to comply with directives, instructions, and lawful orders from which they are requesting accommodation unless and until the request is approved.
- Religious expression in the DAF is governed primarily by the Free Exercise Clause, RFRA, DoDI 1300.17, provisions of AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards*, and DAFI 52-201
- RFRA provides broad protection for religious liberty and provides the government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion unless the burden is:
 - In furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and
 - Is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.
- RFRA requires the Air Force to specifically show that it has a compelling interest in refusing to grant an accommodation to the requestor. Courts have held that this requires a "focused inquiry" that requires identification of the duties of the requestor and why someone with those duties should be denied accommodation. Broad justifications will not suffice.

- RFRA also requires the Air Force to conduct a “focused inquiry” to show no other alternative means exist to achieve its interest as applied to the requestor. Again, courts have held that this requires identification of duties specific to the requestor that prevent all other options of achieving its interest. Generic reasoning will not suffice and if other accommodations have been granted for secular (i.e., medical or administrative) reasons, then it must explain why identical accommodation cannot be extended on religious grounds.
- Follow the required processes and procedures in DAFI 52-201 in reviewing and acting on religious accommodation requests. Consult your Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) regarding any questions pertaining to the analysis of such requests.

Outside Advocacy Groups

- Interest group advocates (including lawyers) seeking a particular resolution of a religious issue of which they have become aware might call commanders directly, advising that the law “requires” the commander to adopt a specific position. If this happens, commanders should consider the following guidelines:
 - Commanders should avoid sounding sympathetic or agreeable to the group’s pronouncements
 - Threats of adverse publicity or litigation are to be expected. Commanders should inform PA and their SJA of the identity of the caller and the nature of the call (including the requests and demand of the caller) and advise the caller that such consultation will occur.
 - Commanders should not take unilateral action (i.e., action without first consulting SJA and/or PA) to do what the caller is requesting or demanding
 - Commanders may thank the caller for bringing the matter to their attention but should not make any promises to investigate or take action within a specific time frame
 - Commanders who believe a follow-up response is required should make that known to their SJA, PA, and chaplains, but should disengage themselves from further communication with the advocacy group

References

- U.S. Const. Amend. 1
- Religious Apparel: Wearing While in Uniform, 10 U.S.C. § 774
- The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000bb *et seq.*
- DoDI 1300.17, *Religious Liberty in the Military Services* (1 September 2020)
- DAFI 36-2903_DAFGM2025-02, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel* (11 July 2025)
- DAFI 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force* (23 June 2021)
- AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards* (18 August 2023), incorporating Change 1, 24 August 2025
- AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Operations* (20 November 2020)
- AFI 48-110, *Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases* (7 October 2013), certified current 20 May 2023

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Social media includes, but is not limited to, weblogs, message boards, video sharing, streaming, and other media sharing sites. The rules for use of social media can be divided into two categories: official use (use by the Department of the Air Force to conduct official Air Force and Space Force duties) and personal use. In its official capacity, social media is a tool that allows the Department of the Air Force to conduct outreach with the general public, as well as for Airmen and Guardians—military and civilian—to interact personally with friends, family, the media, elected officials, and strangers.

Key Takeaways

- » Look to AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Operations*, regarding guidance on official use of social media
- » Look to AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards*, regarding guidance on the personal use of social media

Official Use

- Official use of social media must comply with all Department of the War (DoW) and Department of the Air Force guidance as outlined in DoDI 5400.17, *Official Use of Social Media for Public Affairs Purposes*, and AFI 35-101, Section 5D
- Before expanding an organization's social media presence on a new social media platform, the site must have been vetted through the Defense Information Systems Agency's Application Vetting Environment
- Any official use of social media must be approved by a Department of the Air Force Public Affairs Office (PA) and follow policies established by the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs (SAF/PA)
- Official Department of the Air Force social media presences must be registered on the websites: <https://www.defense.gov/Resources/Register-a-Site/>; <https://www.digital.gov/services/u-s-digital-registry/>; and <https://www.af.mil/AFSites/SiteRegistration.aspx>. Closed social media sites will not be accepted in the registry.
 - Federal-compatible Terms of Service (TOS) agreements may modify or remove problematic clauses in standard TOS agreements and allow federal employees to legally use these tools. Before deciding to use a social media tool (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), organizations should seek the advice of an Air Force or Space Force social media team for an updated list of federal-compatible services.
- Air Force and Space Force official social media sites may not contain any non-public information or link to any site that contains non-public information
 - DoDI 5400.17 requires local PA officials and social media managers to establish communication plans to ensure information posted to social media has been reviewed and cleared for release

- All Air Force and Space Force official social media sites should have the organization's patch or logo, a link back to the organization's .mil website, and a .mil email address on their pages to verify that they are a valid Air Force or Space Force page
- Official Air Force and Space Force social media will not link to offensive or unrelated commercial material
 - No surveys may be conducted via official social media without prior approval
- All Air Force and Space Force official social media sites must contain disclaimers, comment policies, and privacy policies. Contact your local PA office for sample disclaimers and comment policies.
- Comments received on Air Force and Space Force official social media sites must be moderated for topic and language, as outlined in the comment policies. Direct or private messaging on Air Force and Space Force official social media sites should be conducted with care, and direct or private messages may not be sent if they automatically expire (e.g., Snapchat).
- All Air Force and Space Force official social media posts and comments received must be maintained in accordance with Air Force and Space Force records retention guidelines

Personal Use

- Generally, the Air Force and Space Force views personal social media platforms positively, and it respects the right of Airmen and Guardians to use them as a medium of self-expression, even if their status as Airmen and Guardians is apparent
- Personal social media accounts should not be used to conduct official business, with exceptions for emergencies and other critical mission needs, when official communications capabilities are unavailable, and when it is in the interests of Air Force or Space Force to do so
- For Airmen and Guardians with official social media accounts, DoDI 5400.17 requires distinctions to be made between their official and personal online personas. All Airmen and Guardians must ensure their personal social media accounts avoid use of DoW titles, insignia, uniforms, or symbols in a way that could imply official endorsement of the content.
- Social media and electronic communication generally encourage informal, sometimes intimate, and at times adversarial interactions. Military members and civilian employees must remember that, generally, actions prohibited in person are not otherwise condoned or tolerated through social media or electronic communication.
 - The use of social media and other forms of communication that allow communication with a large number of people brings with it the increased risk of magnifying operational security lapses. Classified, Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), and other official DoW information and documents are prohibited from being posted on social networking services or transmitted via non-DoW email accounts without proper authority.

- Airmen and Guardians' obligation is to maintain appropriate communication and conduct with officer and enlisted personnel, peers, superiors, and subordinates (to include civilian superiors and subordinates). This is applicable whether communicating via a social networking service or other forms of communication, such as email, instant messaging, or texting.
- Airmen and Guardians must avoid offensive and/or inappropriate behavior on social networking platforms and through other forms of communication that could bring discredit upon the Air Force or Space Force or that would otherwise be harmful to good order and discipline, respect for authority, unit cohesion, morale, mission accomplishment, or the trust and confidence that the public has in the United States Air Force or United States Space Force
- Airmen and Guardians who provide commentary and opinions on social media platforms that they host or on others' platforms may not place comments on those blog sites which reasonably can be anticipated, or are intended, to degrade morale, good order, and discipline of any members or units in the U.S. Armed Forces, are service discrediting, or would degrade the trust and confidence of the public in the United States Air Force
- When expressing personal opinions on social media sites where members can be identified as an Airman or Guardian, they should make clear that they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the Air Force. While service members may generally use their rank and service even when acting in their personal capacity, they should not do so in situations where the context may imply official sanction or endorsement of their personal opinions.
- Airmen and Guardians should recognize that social network "friends" and "followers" may potentially constitute relationships that could affect determinations in background investigations and periodic reinvestigations associated with security clearances
- If Airmen or Guardians violate federal or state laws and regulations and policies through inappropriate personal online activity, or any other form of communication, they may be subject to disciplinary action

References

- DoDI 5400.17, *Official Use of Social Media for Public Affairs Purposes* (12 August 2022), incorporating through Change 2, 14 February 2025
- DoDI 8170.01, *Online Information Management and Electronic Messaging* (2 January 2019), incorporating Change 1, 24 August 2021
- AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards* (18 August 2023)
- AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Operations* (20 November 2020)

SPECIAL EDUCATION LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBERS

Public schools are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children whose education is impacted by a qualifying disability. IDEA provides 13 disability categories. To be eligible for special education and related services, a child must meet the criteria in at least one of these categories. Legal assistance attorneys can help families to understand their rights under IDEA and navigate special education challenges for students with disabilities.

Key Takeaways

- » Students whose educational performance is adversely impacted by their disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education
- » Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans are the vehicles used to capture the unique needs of a child with a disability
- » Subject to Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) approval, legal assistance attorneys can attend IEP meetings and similar administrative hearings
- » IDEA and Section 504 provisions are applicable to schools receiving federal funds. Private schools are generally not subject to the provisions of the IDEA or Section 504.
- » Legal assistance attorneys can help families navigate special education issues for students with disabilities. Families with exceptional family members should reach out to their local legal office for assistance with special education disputes.

Federal Laws Governing Special Education

- IDEA is the Federal Law that governs the identification and eligibility of children with disabilities, and the provision of special education to those students who qualify
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities, in programs that receive federal financial assistance such as public schools
- The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) provides that parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and to review the student's education records maintained by the school. They also have the right to request that schools correct records they believe to be inaccurate or misleading.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination solely on the basis of disability, in employment, public services, and accommodations. Title III of the ADA expressly lists "a nursery, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, or postgraduate private school, or other place of education" as a public accommodation.

Applicability of Federal Special Education Laws

- IDEA generally applies to all public schools, including Department of War Education Activity (DoWEA) Schools. The law requires schools to conduct eligibility testing and evaluations to identify children in need of special education and related services. In coordination with the parents, an IEP is then developed and implemented to meet the child's unique educational needs.
- Section 504 provisions generally apply to all public schools, including DoWEA Schools. This program covers a broader range of disabilities than IDEA and provides accommodations in the classroom, around the school building, and transporting children to and from school.
- The ADA is not conditioned upon the receipt of federal funding and therefore applies to public and private schools. Under the ADA, a private school must accommodate any individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

The Special Education Process

- Generally, the special education process begins when a parent suspects their child may be experiencing challenges with the educational curriculum and requests an evaluation
- When a child has been found eligible for special education services under IDEA, the vehicle that is used to capture that agreement is called an IEP. The IEP and other disability related documents represent an agreement with a State or Federal agency and should reflect the parents' understanding of what the organization has offered to provide to the student.
- When a child with an IEP starts at a new school during the school year, the gaining school must continue to provide FAPE, including services comparable to those described in the IEP, until the new school adopts the current IEP, conducts any necessary evaluations and/or develops a new IEP if appropriate and consistent with Federal and State law. IEP decisions should be made in consultation with the parents.
- By federal law, IEPs must be reviewed annually. Evaluations must be done tri-annually. If a secondary disability is suspected, the school would have reason for an earlier re-evaluation. Parents can also request evaluation earlier than the federally prescribed tri-annual period. The school may consider the parent's requests, but they do not have to act on them.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides accommodations or approaches for students with disabilities, including life-threatening allergies, asthma, epilepsy, and diabetes, to protect against discrimination in education. Needed accommodations should be outlined in a written 504 plan targeted at provisions such as assisted technologies, accessibility, nutrition blocks, and time for testing and completion of class work.

Assistance in Special Education Matters

- Families have multiple avenues of support in special education matters, including:
 - School Liaisons (SLs): SLs provide special education support, guidance, and resources for families;
 - Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) Family Support Coordinators (FSCs): FSCs assess EFMP families for community needs and provide local, state, and federal resources to help improve quality of life; and
 - Legal Assistance: Legal assistance attorneys assist families to understand special education laws and to advocate for the rights of their children. Subject to SJA approval, legal assistance attorneys can attend IEP meetings and similar administrative hearings. Further information on special education and special education legal services can be found on the EFMP's website, <https://daffamilyvector.us.af.mil/>.

Educational Reassignments

- The EFMP may provide reassignment when a DAF service member is assigned to an area and a new medical, special education, related service, or early intervention need arises for which the needed services are not available within the assignment locale
- Legal assistance may help to resolve educational disputes and avoid reassignment requests

DOWEA

- Department of War (DoW) implements IDEA in accordance with the DoW implementing regulations (DoD Instruction 1342.12 and its accompanying Manual). Per DoDI 1315.19, *Exceptional Family Member Program*, designated EFMP and military personnel staff conduct assignment coordination activities to verify the availability of the medical and educational services at the projected locations based on the documented needs of family members. Legal assistance attorneys cannot represent clients in special education cases where there is a direct conflict with DoWEA. However, attorneys are able to educate clients on applicable special education laws, points of contact for resolving conflicts, and provide general information and advice with respect to preparation for returning to stateside schools.

References

- The Family Educational and Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1232 *et seq.* (2002)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 *et seq.* (2004)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §§ 794 *et seq.*
- Prohibition of Discrimination by Public Accommodations, 42 U.S.C. § 12182
- DoDI 1315.19, *Exceptional Family Member Program* (23 June 2023)
- DoDI 1342.12, *Provisions of Early Intervention and Special Education Services to Eligible DoD Dependents* (17 June 2015)
- DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments* (9 August 2024)
- AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law and Tax Programs* (22 August 2018)
- DAF Family Vector website, <https://daffamilyvector.us.af.mil/membersite/>

RECORDS MANAGEMENT, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, PRIVACY ACT, AND CIVIL LIBERTIES COMPLAINTS

Commanders are required to properly maintain and dispose of records (when required) created under their command. Any Air Force record can be requested by the public, and can only be released, or withheld, under specific federal law or other legal authority, such as a court order. Federal law also protects from improper use or public release the personal information of individuals that the Air Force collects and maintains on individuals in order to accomplish their missions. Airmen and Guardians can file complaints to their commander alleging a violation of their constitutional civil liberties, which must be addressed by the command.

Key Takeaways

- » Appropriate records management is a commander's responsibility
- » Air Force records can only be withheld from public release according to specific federal laws
- » Information collected about Airmen and Guardians and records kept on them can only be used and shared within the Department of War (DoW) and outside the DoW according to federal law. Records must be properly secured to prevent unauthorized access.

Records Management

- The Federal Records Act of 1950, and as amended, requires all federal agencies to properly store, maintain, and, when required, either destroy (when no longer needed), or permanently archive with the National Archives and Records Administration, all records, in whatever format (paper, electronic, to include email and text, video, and photographic), the federal agency creates in order to accomplish its mission(s)
 - In the Department of the Air Force (DAF), this is a command/commander responsibility. The DAF Records Officer within SAF/CN (Office of the Chief Information Officer) provides records management guidance to commander appointed personnel, who are charged with the responsibility for managing their command's records.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966

- The FOIA requires federal agencies to disclose its records to any member of the public upon written request. The basic goals of the FOIA are to ensure an informed public, to serve as a check against corruption, and to hold the government accountable.
 - No requested record can be denied under the FOIA unless one of nine (9) specific FOIA exemptions apply, or other appropriate legal authority, such as a court order, permits denial. FOIA Initial Denial Authorities at the HQ, major command and base level are specifically appointed to make release decisions for records created and controlled at these different levels of command.

- The nine exemptions protect from release matters such as personally identifiable information, sensitive government information, such as classified information or controlled unclassified information, or information that another federal law prohibits from being publicly released

Privacy Act of 1974

- The Privacy Act (PA) has the opposite purpose of the FOIA. It is designed to protect from improper use, or public release, the personal information of individuals that federal agencies maintain in order to accomplish their missions. The PA also controls a federal agency's ability to collect information about individuals.
 - A federal agency cannot share or use the PA record of an individual without consent of the individual, unless one or more of twelve (12) specific PA exemptions apply. PA exemptions include using PA records whenever necessary for an agency's internal official use purposes; releasing records as required under the FOIA; or other required releases of information, such as to Congress.
 - Examples of some of the over 250 different types of PA records the DAF maintains on individuals include criminal investigative records, disciplinary and other personnel records, and medical records

Civil Liberties Complaints & Reporting

- DAF service members can file complaints with various DAF investigative entities when they believe a constitutional civil liberty under the U.S. Constitution has been denied to them. These civil liberties include those under the First Amendment (speech, religion), Second Amendment (right to bear arms), and Fifth Amendment (right to due process).
 - DoW requires that civil liberty complaints handled through the Commander Directed Investigation process be reported bi-annually to DoW (April and October). This data is captured at all command levels by servicing legal offices and are sent to the Office of The Judge Advocate General.

References

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- Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552
 - Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a
 - The Federal Records Act of 1950, 44 U.S.C. §§ 3101, *et seq.*
 - DoD 5400.11-R, *Department of Defense Privacy Program* (14 May 2007)
 - DoDM 5400.07_AFMAN 33-302, *Freedom of Information Act Program* (27 April 2018)
 - AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program* (23 March 2020), incorporating Change 1, 28 July 2021
 - AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program* (10 March 2020), Corrective Actions applied on 12 May 2020

DELIVERY OF MILITARY PERSONNEL TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES FOR TRIAL

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) expects military personnel, employees, and family members to comply with court orders issued by federal, state, and local authorities. Upon the issuance of a warrant or court order to testify, commanders must cooperate with civilian authorities to ensure the appearance of DAF service members facing felony-level criminal charges.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders will cooperate with civilian authorities and act promptly to ensure delivery of DAF service members facing felony criminal charges
- » Personnel may not use military service to avoid prosecution by civilian U.S. authorities
- » The DAF has the authority to deliver military members to civilian custody. DAF-affiliated civilians may face administrative consequences for failure to comply with court orders.
- » Military members may be placed in pretrial restraint or detention pending delivery to civilian authorities. However, consult with the servicing legal office before doing so.
- » DAF policy is to request criminal jurisdiction of military members from civilian authorities if the underlying offense is also an offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)

Compliance with Court Orders to Testify

- DAF service members, civilian employees, and family members are expected to comply with orders issued by a federal, state, or local court unless non-compliance is legally justified. This applies equally to members stationed outside the United States. DAF members who fail to comply with civilian court orders may face adverse administrative action, including administrative separation.
- DAF officials will ensure members, employees, and family members do not use assignments or officially sponsored residences outside the United States to avoid complying with valid court orders. Failure of a family member located outside the United States to comply with a court order may be the basis for withdrawal of command sponsorship from the family member.

Procedure: Delivery of Military Personnel Located Outside the United States

- In general, members stationed outside the United States who are charged with, or convicted of, any felony or unlawful removal of a child from the jurisdiction of the legal custodian will be expeditiously returned for delivery to civilian authorities. Commanders must act on requests to return military members within 30 days of receipt. Commanders should consult their servicing legal office prior to taking action. Similarly, the servicing legal office must consult with the Military Justice Law and Policy Division (JAJM) on all requests.

- Approvals must come from a general court-martial convening authority (GCMCA), an installation commander who has been delegated the authority by a GCMCA, or The Judge Advocate General (TJAG)
- Denials must come from the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (USW(P&R)) in felony cases or certain child custody offenses. TJAG may deny all other requests.

Procedure: Delivery of Military Personnel Located Within the United States

- Requests for, and delivery of, military personnel located within the United States generally follow the same procedures outlined above for the return of members outside the United States, with the exception of involvement by the USW(P&R)
 - The requirement to follow this procedure is only necessary when the military must play a role in the delivery of the member. For example, a request from civilian authorities to access an installation to arrest the member would trigger this requirement, but an off-base arrest made without any military involvement would not.

Commander Responsibilities and Authority

- Commanders must take the following action when acting on return requests:
 - Inform the requesting authorities of the member's travel itinerary, port of entry, and estimated date and time of arrival at least 10 days before the member's arrival;
 - Provide the member an Instruction Letter (DAFI 51-205, *Delivery of Personnel to United States Civilian Authorities for Trial and Criminal Jurisdiction Over Civilians and Dependents Not in the United States*, para. 3.4.2.3). Commanders should consult with their servicing legal office to obtain the Instruction Letter, which is located on the Virtual Military Justice Deskbook (VMJD); and
 - Execute an Acknowledgement and Agreement Letter with the requesting civilian authorities (DAFI 51-205, para. 3.4.2.4). Commanders should consult with their servicing legal office to obtain the Acknowledgement and Agreement Letter, which is located on the VMJD.
- Commanders may restrain or confine a military member whose delivery has been requested by civilians if the commander determines there is probable cause that the member committed the charged offense, and that restraint or confinement is necessary. However, military pretrial restraint procedures and requirements under Rule for Courts-Martial 305 apply in any situation where a military member is restrained or confined.

Initial Actions Following Report of Service Member Arrest by Civilian Authorities

- When a commander receives notice that a member of his/her command is charged with a crime or detained by civilian authorities, the commander should contact the civilian authorities, inform them the person is a military member, and gather the following information:

- The charge(s) against the member;
- The facts and circumstances surrounding the charged offense(s); and
- The level of the criminal offense (i.e., misdemeanor or felony).
- **DO NOT** take the following actions:
 - State/imply the DAF will guarantee the member's presence at subsequent hearings; or
 - Post bond for the member or personally guarantee any action by the member.

Release of Criminal Jurisdiction by Civilian Authorities to Military Authorities

- When a military member commits an offense off-base in violation of both civilian and military law (e.g., rape, robbery, murder), the member is subject to prosecution by both civilians and the military
- While separate civilian and military prosecutions for the same offense is permissible, DAF policy is that it will only prosecute under the UCMJ if the civilians do not take jurisdiction of the case. As a matter of policy, the DAF, generally through the applicable Office of Special Trial Counsel district office for covered, known, and related offenses under Articles 1(17) and 24a, UCMJ, or the installation staff judge advocate's office for all other offenses, will request criminal jurisdiction from civilian authorities if the underlying offense is also an offense under the UCMJ.

Civilians Associated with the DAF

- Commanders ordinarily do not have authority to compel civilian compliance with court orders but will strongly encourage civilians associated with their organizations to comply with valid orders of federal and state courts. Failure to comply may result in adverse administrative action against civilian employees and withholding of official command sponsorship for military dependents, where appropriate.

References

-
- Articles 1(17), 14, and 24a, Uniform Code of Military Justice
 - Rule for Courts-Martial 305 (2024)
 - DoDI 5525.09, *Compliance with Court Orders by Service Members and DoD Civilian Employees, and Their Family Members Outside the United States* (23 April 2019)
 - DoDI 5525.11, *Criminal Jurisdiction Over Civilians Employed by or Accompanying the Armed Forces Outside the United States, Certain Service Members, and Former Service Members* (3 March 2005)
 - DAFI 51-205, *Delivery of Personnel to United States Civilian Authorities for Trial and Criminal Jurisdiction Over Civilians and Dependents Not in the United States* (19 January 2023)
 - DAF Form 2098, *Duty Status Change* (12 July 2022)

CITIZENSHIP FOR MILITARY MEMBERS

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provides naturalization options for United States military members and certain veterans of the military. Foreign nationals who are serving or have served in the U.S. military may pursue naturalization through peacetime military service (8 U.S.C. § 1439), through military service during a period of hostilities (8 U.S.C. § 1440) or naturalization may be pursued posthumously for members who served during a designated period of hostilities (8 U.S.C. § 1440-1).

Key Takeaways

- » Non-citizen service members can become U.S. citizens through their military service
- » Service members needing assistance with the naturalization process should contact their local legal office for legal assistance

Naturalization through Peacetime Service

- A member who has served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time may be eligible to apply for naturalization under Section 328 of the INA (8 U.S.C. § 1439). The military community refers to this as “peacetime naturalization.”
- In general, an applicant for naturalization based peacetime service must:
 - Have served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces for one year, or periods aggregating one year;
 - Be a lawful permanent resident at the time of your naturalization interview;
 - Be able to read, write, and speak English (unless qualified for a waiver/exception);
 - Demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history and government (civics);
 - Demonstrate good moral character for at least five years prior to filing the application until the time of his/her naturalization;
 - Have an attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution and be well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States during all relevant periods under the law; and
 - Have continuously resided in the United States for at least five years and have been physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the five years immediately preceding the filing date of the application, **UNLESS** the applicant has filed an application while still in the service or within six months of an honorable discharge. In the latter case, the applicant is not required to meet these residence and physical presence requirements.

Naturalization through Qualifying Service During Periods of Hostilities

- Members of the U.S. Armed Forces who serve honorably during specifically designated periods of hostilities are eligible for naturalization under Section 329 of the INA (8 U.S.C. § 1440). Although the INA allows a service member's citizenship application to be accelerated for active service, this does not apply to Air National Guard service unless the unit is federally recognized as a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- In general, an applicant for naturalization based on service during a period of hostilities must:
 - Have served honorably in an active duty status during a designated period of hostilities and, if separated from the U.S. Armed Forces, have been separated honorably;
 - Have been lawfully admitted as a permanent resident **OR** have been physically present in the U.S. or certain territories at the time of enlistment, reenlistment, or induction;
 - Be able to read, write, and speak basic English;
 - Demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history and government (civics);
 - Demonstrate good moral character prior to filing the application until the time of his/her naturalization; and
 - Have an attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution and be well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States during all relevant periods under the law.
- An applicant who files based on military service during hostilities is exempt from the general naturalization requirements of continuous residence and physical presence
- The designated periods of hostilities include: 2 August 1990 – 11 April 1991 (Persian Gulf Conflict), and 11 September 2001 to the present (Executive Order 13269, 3 July 2002).
Note: The current designated period of hostilities will terminate when the President issues an Executive Order terminating the period.

Application Processing

- Service members must apply for naturalization through United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Service members are not charged filing or biometrics fees associated with the naturalization process.
- Service members who fail to obtain citizenship during their initial enlistment may not be eligible for reenlistment (see DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment*, para. 5.11.13 for further guidance)

- Service members must complete Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, and Form N-426, Request for Certification of Military Naval Services, and can request assistance from the legal office. The forms may be accessed at <https://www.uscis.gov>.
- Authority to certify honorable service (via USCIS Form N-426) is with the first commanding officer in the grade of O-6 or higher within the individual's chain of command. These commanding officers may re-delegate certification authority to officers serving under their direct supervision in the grade of O-6 and may not delegate any further.
 - As of 9 May 2025, the DoW has not issued any new guidance on a time-in-service requirement for certifying N-426 Forms. *Ange Samma v. DoD et al*, 486 F. Supp. 3d 240 (D.D.C. 2020).

References

- Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. §§ 1101 *et seq.*
- Naturalization through Service in the Armed Forces, 8 U.S.C. § 1439
- Naturalization through Active Duty Service [...] Periods of Military Hostilities, 8 U.S.C. § 1440
- *Ange Samma v. DoD et al*, 486 F. Supp. 3d 240 (D.D.C. 2020)
- DoDI 5500.14, *Naturalization of Aliens Serving in the Armed Forces of the United States and of Alien Spouses and/or Alien Adopted Children of Military and Civilian Personnel Ordered Overseas* (4 January 2006)
- DAFI 36-2606, *Reenlistment and Extension of Enlistment* (22 May 2024)
- OUSD (P&R) Memorandum, Certification of Honorable Service for Members of the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve and Members of the Active Components of the Military or Naval Forces for Purposes of Naturalization (13 October 2017), as amended by OUSD (P&R) Memorandum, Compliance with Court Order in Case of *Ange Samma v. DoD*, 31 August 2020 (see SAF/MR Memorandum, Compliance with Court Order in Case of *Ange Samma v. DoD*, 3 September 2020)
- USCIS: <https://www.uscis.gov/military/military>
- USCIS Military Help Line: 877-247-4645

SPACE FORCE MILITARY PERSONNEL SYSTEM

The United States Space Force has unique personnel authorities providing a variety of avenues for service as a Guardian. Relevant personnel policies and associated guidance will be updated as part of the phased implementation process.

Key Takeaways

- » The United States Space Force obtains unique personnel authorities in the FY24 NDAA to be implemented in phases through 2028
- » Guardians to transition from Regular Space Force to Space Force active Status with both full-time work roles (sustained) and part-time work roles (not on sustained) duty types
- » United States Space Force personnel law will address Guardian careers from active service to retirement
- » The United States Space Force military personnel system transition applies to Guardians and Air Force Reserve space career fields volunteers

New Guardian Legislative Authority

- Upon establishment of the Space Force in 2019, Regular Air Force members serving in space-related career fields and space professionals from other armed forces were invited to transfer into the Regular Space Force from 2020 to 2024. All Department of the Air Force (DAF) personnel supporting the space mission serve under DAF personnel policies.
 - As of late 2024, approximately 10,000 Guardians serve in the Regular Space Force. Separately, approximately 1,500 Air Force Reserve members serve in space career fields as Airmen.
- The passage of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, Pub. L. 118-31 (2023), brought into law the *Space Force Personnel Management Act (PMA)* to establish an alternative military personnel system at subtitle F of Title 10. This legislation authorizes the Space Force to transition from a single regular component force to become the only armed force without separate regular and reserve components.
 - This new system will be implemented in phases through 2028
 - PMA implementation guidance will appear in updates to Department of War (DoW) issuances, DAF publications, and new Space Force Instructions and Manuals
 - Air Force Reserve members in space career fields are eligible to apply for transfer to the Regular Space Force to serve on active duty under current inter-service transfer policies as PMA is implemented in phases through 2028

Transition to a “Space Force Without Component”

- Members of the Space Force will be managed through a single military personnel management system, without separate regular and reserve components. The statutory transition period for the Space Force began with the FY24 National Defense Appropriations Act’s enactment and ends no later than 30 September 2028. (See Pub. L. 118–31, § 1731 for further guidance.)

Space Force Duty Status Types

- Each member of the Space Force will be placed in one of the following duty statuses:
 - Space Force Active Status: Consists of members serving in full-time work roles on “sustained duty” under 10 U.S.C. § 20105 and members serving in part-time work roles “not on sustained duty” under 10 U.S.C. § 20103
 - *Sustained Duty*: Considered active duty in a regular component at 10 U.S.C. 20108(2)
 - *Not on Sustained Duty*: Considered active, inactive, or other duty in a reserve component at 10 U.S.C. § 20108(1, 3–4)
 - Guardians will be able to move between full-time and part-time work roles in the Space Force with the member’s consent and based on the needs of the service. Conditions of service for part-time work roles are controlled by agreement.
 - Transition between full-time and part-time work roles will **NOT** require in inter-component transfer process as PMA removed the regular and reserve component distinction in the Space Force
 - Space Force Inactive Status: Includes members so designated under regulations prescribed by the Secretary and the law pertaining to the Standby Reserve and applies to the service such members may perform at 10 U.S.C. § 20106(b)
 - Space Force Retired Status: Includes members who receive regular or non-regular retired pay, and those who but for being under the eligibility age for a non-regular retirement, would be eligible for retired pay at 10 U.S.C. § 101(e)

PMA Transition Process

- Members of the Regular Space Force will automatically transition to the new Space Force without component as PMA is implemented in phases. However, covered members of the Air Force Reserve (those in space related Air Force Specialty Codes) may volunteer to transfer into full-time (sustained duty) or part-time (not on sustained duty) work roles as application windows open.
- The initial application window for covered Air Force Reserve members to transfer to Regular Space Force opened in late 2024. Non-covered members may apply as designated by the Secretary of the Air Force. (See Pub. L. 118–31, § 1733 for further guidance.)

- Transitioning from the current Regular Space Force to a space service without separate regular and reserve components affects many members and their organizations within the DAF. AF/JACP personnel are available to address questions related to these changes as the transition gains momentum.

References

- Alternative Military Personnel Systems, 10 U.S.C. §§ 20001–20605
- Pub. L. 118–31, div. A, title XVII, §§ 1701–1723, December 22, 2023, 137 Stat. 627 (FY24 NDAA)

Chapter 7

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THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE URINALYSIS PROGRAM

The purpose of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) urinalysis program is to assist commanders ensure their troops are mission ready by deterring DAF members from using illegal drugs and other illicit substances. DAFMAN 44-197, *Military Drug Demand Reduction Program*, sets forth procedures regarding Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) activities for Department of the Air Force personnel.

Key Takeaways

- » The Air Force Drug Testing Laboratory (AFDTL) can test for the presence of all drugs on the Department of War (DoW) standard drug testing panel. For a list of the current DoW standard testing panel, contact the AFDTL Legal Advisor.
- » Each sample must undergo at least two tests before it may be considered positive:
(1) screen and (2) confirmation
- » Upon receipt of a positive test report, regardless of type of test (with the exception of post-mishap toxicology results), the unit commander should immediately contact the servicing legal office
- » Commanders' options following a positive drug testing result depend on the reason for the test. Authorized actions are outlined in Table 9.1 of DAFMAN 44-197.
- » Upon notification of a positive urinalysis test, law enforcement from the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) or Security Forces (SF) will schedule an interview with the service member. Do not advise the service member of the test result in advance of the interview.

Air Force Drug Testing Laboratory

- The AFDTL can test for all drugs on the DoW standard drug testing panel. For a list of the current DoW standard testing panel, contact the AFDTL legal advisor.
- The AFDTL uses a DoW-prescribed combination of analytic techniques to determine whether specimens are positive for various drugs
 - Each sample must undergo at least two tests before it may be considered positive:
(1) screen and (2) confirmation
 - Screen Test: Conducted using immunoassay testing, with occasional directed screen testing using liquid chromatography/tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS)
 - Confirmation Test: Conducted using gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) or liquid chromatography tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) Urinalysis

Testing Collection Basis

- The installation DDR office facilitates urinalysis drug testing. The Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) inspects the DDR program's regulatory compliance quarterly using the checklist provided by AFDTL.

- In addition to the random drug testing program, there are five common situations that may justify urinalysis testing: the member consents, probable cause exists, commander directs, inspection, and as part of medical care. Each of these testing reasons has its own legal considerations regarding sample collection and how results can be used, so consult with the servicing SJA before determining which basis to use.
- Consent:
 - A Commander who suspects a subordinate of having used drugs in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), may not question the member about such use without first informing the member of the offense he/she is suspected of having committed and advising the member that he/she does not have to make a statement and that any statement made may be used as evidence against him/her in a trial by court-martial. Article 31, UCMJ. Commanders are not required to give these Article 31, UCMJ, rights if they limit their question to asking the member to consent to drug testing. However, evidence that a member was read these rights may be used to help demonstrate that any consent obtained was the member's voluntary choice.
 - Whenever possible, consent should be documented in writing, using an AF Form 1364, *Consent for Search and Seizure*
- Probable Cause:
 - To have probable cause, there must be a *reasonable* belief that illegal drugs, or drug metabolites, will be present in the individual's urine
 - Requires a search and seizure authorization from a neutral and detached commander with authority over the person being searched to seize a urine specimen
- Commander-Directed:
 - Appropriate where the member displays strange, bizarre, or unlawful behavior or where the commander suspects or has reason to believe drugs may be present but probable cause does not exist
 - Results obtained through commander-directed tests can be used as a basis for administrative discharge but cannot be considered when characterizing the member's service upon discharge
 - Results can be used to support administrative actions such as Letters of Reprimand (LORs) and promotion propriety actions, but **CANNOT** be used to take UCMJ action, such as courts-martial or nonjudicial punishment
- Inspections:
 - Urine specimens may be ordered and collected as a part of an inspection under Military Rule of Evidence 313(b). The primary purpose of an inspection is to determine and ensure the security, military fitness, or good order and discipline of the unit.

- One type of inspection is through the random urinalysis testing program
- Another type of inspection, sometimes called a “unit sweep,” tests an entire unit or part of a unit. Individual members **MAY NOT** be targeted for an inspection.
- Coordinate “sweep” inspections with the installation Drug Demand Reduction Program Manager (DDRPM). Do not announce the inspection in advance to those being inspected. Inspection testing is the best deterrent available against drug abuse.
- Medical Care:
 - A urine specimen collected as a part of a patient’s medical treatment (for a valid medical purpose), including a routine physical, may be subjected to urinalysis drug testing
 - A member who self-identifies for drug abuse and enters the Alcohol Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program may have limited protections in how their disclosures are used. When a member qualifies for these protections, the information that the member provided will not be used in a UCMJ action or to characterize the member’s service. (See DAFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Treatment (ADAPT) Program*, for more information.)
- Special Considerations:
 - Specimens collected as a result of aircraft incidents/accidents must be collected by the military treatment facility laboratory. DDRPMs and/or Drug Testing Program Administrative Managers (DTPAM) may assist with collection of these specimens upon request. (See DAFMAN 91-223, *Aviation Safety Investigations and Reports*.)

Positive Results

- Upon receipt of a positive test report, the unit commander should **immediately** contact the SJA
- Commanders’ options following a positive drug testing result depend on the reason for the testing. Authorized uses of positive test results in administrative actions are outlined in Table 9.1 of DAFMAN 44-197.
- Authorized administrative actions following a positive drug test result can include, but are not limited to, Letters of Counseling (LOCs)/Letters of Admonishment (LOAs)/ LORs, denial of re-enlistment, removal from the Personnel Reliability Assurance Program status, removal from duties involving firearms, and suspension of security clearance
- Upon notification of a positive urinalysis test, OSI or SF investigators will schedule an interview with the service member. Do not advise the service member in advance of the interview of the positive test result.

References

- Article 31, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Military Rule of Evidence 313 (2024)
- DAFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Treatment (ADAPT) Program* (16 September 2025)
- DAFMAN 44-197, *Military Drug Demand Reduction Program* (5 September 2023), incorporating Change 1, 1 August 2025
- DAFMAN 91-223, *Aviation Safety Investigations and Reports* (20 September 2022)
- AF Form 1364, *Consent for Search and Seizure* (5 August 2019)
- Quarterly and Annual DDR Inspection Checklist, October 2023

UNPROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND FRATERNIZATION

Unprofessional relationships and fraternization are detrimental to good order and discipline. AFI 36-2909, *Air Force Professional Relationships and Conduct*, establishes a detailed discussion of Department of the Air Force policy concerning unprofessional relationships and fraternization.

Key Takeaways

- » Familiar relationships within a supervisory chain are at high risk for becoming unprofessional, as are familiar relationships between officers and enlisted members generally
- » Retaliation is a form of unprofessional relationship that also includes maltreatment and ostracism
- » Commanders and supervisors must take corrective action as soon as possible when an unprofessional relationship develops, beginning with counseling and orders to cease behavior

Overview

- Professional relationships are essential to the effective operation of all organizations. The nature of the military mission requires confidence in command and adherence to orders that may result in inconvenience, hardships, or, at times, injury or death.
- Personal relationships become matters of official concern when they adversely affect or have the reasonable potential to adversely affect the Air Force or Space Force by eroding morale, good order, discipline, respect for authority, unit cohesion, or mission accomplishment

Unprofessional Relationships

- Unprofessional relationships, whether pursued on or off-duty, are relationships that detract from the authority of superiors or result in, or reasonably create the appearance of, favoritism, misuse of office or position, or the abandonment of organizational goals for personal interests
- Unprofessional relationships can exist between officers, between enlisted members, between officers and enlisted members, and between military personnel and civilian employees or contractor personnel
- Certain kinds of personal relationships present a high risk of becoming unprofessional:
 - Familiar relationships in which one member exercises supervisory or command authority over another member
 - Shared living accommodations, vacations, transportation, or off-duty interests on a frequent or recurring basis in the absence of any official purpose or organizational benefit

- Specific laws and rules for unprofessional relationships exist in the recruiting, training, and education environments. These rules establish specific types of prohibited activities between recruiter-recruits and trainer-trainees, including prohibited locations, and limitations on some personal interactions.
 - Article 93a, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), prohibits sexual activities between military recruits or trainees by persons in positions of special trust. Consent to the sexual act or sexual contact by the recruit or trainee is not a defense. “Prohibited sexual activity” means inappropriate physical intimacy, including a “sexual act” or “sexual contact” as defined by Article 120, UCMJ.
- All military members share in the responsibility to maintain professional relationships, but the senior member bears primary responsibility for maintaining professionalism within a relationship

Fraternization

- Fraternization is a unique form of unprofessional relationship. Fraternization exists when a relationship between an officer and an enlisted member places the enlisted member on terms of military equality with the officer resulting in prejudice to good order and discipline or is of a nature to bring discredit upon the armed forces.
- AFI 36-2909 specifically prohibits officers from engaging in the following activities with enlisted members and may be prosecuted under Articles 92, 133, and/or 134 of the UCMJ, with reasonable accommodation for married members or members related by blood or marriage:
 - Gambling
 - Lending or borrowing money, or other financial involvement
 - An exception exists for infrequent, non-interest-bearing loans of small amounts for exigent circumstances (e.g., an individual who forgets his/her wallet or purse and cannot pay for lunch at a unit function)
 - Sexual relations or dating
 - When evidence of fraternization exists, the fact that an officer and enlisted member subsequently marry does not preclude appropriate command action based on the prior fraternization
 - Shared living accommodations, except when reasonably required by military operations
 - Personal business enterprises or solicitation, except as permitted by DoD 5500.07-R, *Joint Ethics Regulation* (JER)

Retaliation

- AFI 36-2909 prohibits retaliation against an alleged victim or other member of the Armed Forces for reporting a criminal offense. The term retaliation includes *ostracism* and *maltreatment*.
- Retaliation against individuals who report criminal offenses is unlawful, erodes good order and discipline, respect for authority, unit cohesion, and mission accomplishment
- Commanders and supervisors at all levels share the responsibility to ensure compliance with policies prohibiting retaliation
- Retaliation may be prosecuted under Article 132, UCMJ, or a state's equivalent criminal law
- Commanders, supervisors, and first sergeants have a duty to prevent retaliation and may be held accountable for failing to act in appropriate cases

Command and Supervisory Responsibilities

- A commander or supervisor must take corrective action when an unprofessional relationship develops. They must also take action if the unprofessional relationship reasonably appears to degrade morale, good order and discipline, or unit cohesion regardless of whether the unprofessional relationship actually causes such degradation.
 - Orders, in writing, should be issued to cease the relationship or the conduct
 - Disciplinary action should normally be the least severe necessary to terminate the unprofessional aspects of the relationship
 - Counseling is often an effective first step in curtailing unprofessional relationships. However, the full spectrum of administrative actions is available and should be considered.
 - Nonjudicial punishment (NJP) should be considered in more serious cases
 - A court-martial may be appropriate in aggravated cases

References

- Articles 92, 93a, and 132-134, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- DoDI 1304.33, *Protecting Against Inappropriate Relations During Recruiting and Entry Level Training* (28 January 2015), incorporating Change 1, 5 April 2017
- AFI 36-2909, *Air Force Professional Relationships and Conduct* (14 November 2019)

HAZING

Department of War (DoW) policy recognizes the adverse effects hazing can have on morale, operational readiness, and mission accomplishment. Hazing is prohibited and should never be tolerated.

Key Takeaways

- » Hazing is a form of harassment where service members or DoW employees injure or create the risk of injury toward another service member or DoW employee for the purpose of group affiliation
- » Hazing can be physical, psychological, written, verbal and/or nonverbal conduct
- » Hazing jeopardizes combat readiness and weakens trust within the organization
- » Commanders must investigate all allegations of hazing and take appropriate action to prevent it

Definitions

- Hazing is a form of harassment where service members or DoW employees physically or psychologically injure or create a risk of physical or psychological injury to other service members or DoW employees for the purpose of affiliation with a particular group. Affiliation often includes initiation, admission, change in status or continued membership with the group.
- Hazing does not have a proper military or other governmental purpose, even if it takes place in connection to military service. Hazing can be conducted in person or through use of electronic devices or communication, including social media.
- Hazing is evaluated using a reasonable person standard and includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Physically striking another person or threatening to do the same
 - Oral or written berating of another person for the purpose of belittling or humiliating
 - Encouraging another person to engage in illegal, harmful, or dangerous acts
 - Playing abusive or malicious tricks
 - Branding, handcuffing, duct-taping, tattooing, shaving, greasing, or painting another person
 - Subjecting another person to excessive or abusive use of water
 - Forcing another person to consume food, alcohol, drugs, or any other substance
 - Soliciting, coercing, or knowingly permitting another person to solicit or coerce acts of hazing

- Promotion ceremonies carry a unique risk of hazing. Hazing includes pressing any object into another person's skin, regardless of whether it pierces the skin, such as "pinning" or "tacking on" of rank insignia, aviator wings, jump wings, diver insignia, badges, medals or any other objects.
- DoW hazing policy does not prohibit tapping a promotee's cloth rank insignia on the member's sleeves during the traditional "tacking on" portion of the enlisted promotion ceremony. However, local commanders may provide more restrictive guidance on this issue in consultation with the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).
- A military member or DoW employee may still be responsible for an act of hazing even if there was actual or implied consent from the victim and regardless of the grade/rank, status, or service affiliation of the victim
- Hazing does not include properly directed command activities that serve a legitimate purpose or the requisite training activities required to prepare for such activities (e.g., administrative corrective measures, extra military instruction, or command-authorized physical training)
- Hazing is prohibited in all cases, including off-duty or in "unofficial" celebrations and unit functions and settings

Command Action

- Commanders and Senior Noncommissioned Officers must promptly and thoroughly investigate all allegations of hazing and take appropriate action if a hazing allegation is substantiated
- A commander's options begin with counseling and reprimands and extend to court-martial for serious cases that involve assault, aggravated assault, maltreatment of subordinates, etc.
- Commanders must evaluate all activities that appear to be an initiation or "rite of passage" to ensure that the dignity and respect of all members are maintained

Punitive Regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice

- There is not a punitive Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) article that directly deals with hazing, and the Department of the Air Force does not have a specific punitive regulation that addresses it. However, commanders may pursue disciplinary action under the UCMJ for dereliction of duty and the underlying misconduct, such as assault, battery, maltreatment of subordinates, and other behavior commonly associated with hazing.

References

- DoDI 1020.03, *Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces* (8 February 2018), incorporating through Change 3, 17 January 2025
- DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program* (23 May 2024), incorporating Change 1, 23 July 2025
- AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards* (18 August 2023)

PERSONAL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Department of the Air Force (DAF) members are expected to timely and properly satisfy financial and family obligations. Failure to do so can result in administrative or disciplinary action and/or their debt being paid involuntarily through garnishment or involuntary allotment.

Key Takeaways

- » DAF members are required to provide financial support to their dependents. The amount of support that must be provided is determined by use of the formula set forth in Figure 4.1 of DAFI 36-2906, *Personal Financial Responsibility*.
- » The DAF cannot resolve debt claims or require members to pay a debt without a civil judgment/court order
- » DAF service members have a statutory right to file for bankruptcy. However, doing so may affect their eligibility for a security clearance.

Unit Commander Responsibilities

- Review and assess the basis of any allegation of financial irresponsibility and respond to complainants within 15 days for Regular Air Force and Air Force Reserve and 60 days for Air National Guard. Complainants should be provided attachments 2 and 3 of DAFI 36-2906, which address involuntary allotments of a member's pay, if appropriate.
- Advise member and complainant that the DAF has no authority to arbitrate disputed cases of nonsupport or personal indebtedness. **DO NOT** provide information to the complainant regarding administrative or disciplinary action contemplated or taken against the member.
- Refer members with demonstrated financial irresponsibility to the appropriate base agency for assistance (normally the Military and Family Readiness Center (M&FRC) and legal assistance at the installation legal office)
- Consider whether administrative or disciplinary action is appropriate for continuing financial irresponsibility
- Monitor complaints until resolved

Financial Support to Dependents

- DAF service members are required to provide adequate financial support to their spouses and children and must comply with financial support provisions of court orders or written support agreements. DAFI 36-2906, Chapter 4, outlines the required amount of financial support in the absence of a court order or financial support agreement.
- DAF can terminate or recoup the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) with dependent rate allowances for those failing to provide adequate financial support to a family member

- Members who fail to support their dependents or who falsify support documentation can be subject to disciplinary or administrative action

Child Support and Alimony Payments

- Complainants seeking alimony or child support from a military member can either secure an allotment or provide a garnishment order to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) and receive a portion of the payment directly. Complainants who are eligible for legal assistance may consult the legal office for assistance.
- Commanders should ensure the military member involved in these processes has access to a legal assistance attorney if they are not already represented by a civilian attorney

Third Party Allotments

- Creditors whose bona fide efforts to collect a debt from a military member have failed can secure an involuntary allotment to satisfy a final judgment from a court. The DAF has no authority to resolve disputed claims or to require members to pay a private debt without a civil judgment.
- Complainants who attempt to serve DAF with documents should be referred to DFAS. When a request for involuntary allotment is received, DFAS notifies the member and the member's commander.
- (See Attachment 3, "Fact Sheet: Personal Indebtedness and Involuntary Allotments for Civil Debts" in DAFI 36-2906 for additional information on creditors and debt collectors)

Bankruptcy

- Filing for bankruptcy protection in federal court is a statutory right of all citizens and does not provide a basis for adverse action. However, filing for bankruptcy may affect a member's security clearance. Service members may consult with the M&FRC as well as the installation legal office for limited assistance with personal bankruptcy.

References

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- Protection Against Discriminatory Treatment, 11 U.S.C. § 525
 - Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3901–4043
 - Articles 123a and 134, Uniform Code of Military Justice
 - DoD 7000.14-R, *Financial Management Regulation*, Volume 7A, (May 2024)
 - DoDI 1344.09, *Indebtedness of Military Personnel* (1 February 2022)
 - DD Form 2654, *Involuntary Allotment Notice and Processing* (December 1999) **Note the form on the top right corner says updated 20250407 but the bottom still reads 1999**
 - DAFI 36-2906, *Personal Financial Responsibility* (31 March 2025)

CIVILIAN JURY SERVICE BY MILITARY MEMBERS

When a Department of the Air Force (DAF) member on active duty receives a summons to state or local jury duty, the member should inform his/her immediate commander, who will consult with the installation's Staff Judge Advocate (SJA). For the purpose of jury service, "active duty" includes full-time duty in the active military service, full-time training, annual training, active duty for training, and attending a service school while on active military service.

Key Takeaways

- » Members on active duty may be exempt from State or local jury duty under certain circumstances
- » Members who receive a summons to State or local jury duty should inform his/her immediate commander, who will consult with the installation's SJA
- » Certain members are categorically exempt from jury service, while other members are only exempt where the commander has determined that the jury duty would interfere with military duties or adversely affect readiness

Exemption from Jury Service

- Categorical Exemption: All general officers, commanders, operating forces (forces whose primary missions are participating in and supporting combat), personnel in a training status, and personnel stationed outside the United States are categorically exempt from serving on a State or local jury
- General Exemption (Not Categorical): For all other personnel, the member's commander determines whether jury duty would unreasonably interfere with military duties or adversely affect the readiness of a unit, command, or activity to which the member is assigned

Air National Guard Command Note

- State Law Disqualification: Many state laws categorically disqualify members in the active service in the armed forces of the United States from jury service. However, many states define active military service of the United States in such a way as to exclude Air National Guard members not serving in a Title 10 status. Consult with your SJA for state-specific applicability.

Procedures

- If the member is categorically exempt, the immediate commander or designee notifies the issuing state or local official by written notice (complying with the format in AFI 51-301, *Civil Litigation*, para. 2.8.3.4)

- If the member is generally (not categorically) exempt, the immediate commander decides whether jury duty would unreasonably interfere with military duties or adversely affect the readiness of a unit, command, or activity to which the member is assigned
 - The commander may consider, among other factors, the travel time that would be required of a member between his/her duty location and the place where the jury duty would be served, the potential effect such travel time would have on the member's ability to return to productive military duties, and the possible length of time the member would be away from the unit if selected for jury duty
 - If jury duty would not unreasonably interfere with military duties or adversely affect the readiness of a unit, command, or activity, the member must perform jury duty
 - If the immediate commander decides jury duty would unreasonably interfere with military duties or adversely affect the readiness of a unit, command, or activity, the immediate commander requests approval of the exemption from the Special Court Martial Convening Authority (SPCMCA); the SPCMCA may then decide whether:
 - Exemption is **inappropriate** and instruct the member to comply with the jury summons; or
 - Exemption is **appropriate** and direct the immediate commander to send a written notice of exemption to the issuing state or local official (complying with AFI 51-301, para. 2.8.3.4). The SPCMCA's determination is final.

Fees and Reimbursement

- Time spent by military members on jury duty service should not be charged against them as leave, nor should pay or entitlements be deducted for the period of jury service
- Military members are not entitled to keep any fees for jury service. Any fees should be made payable to the U.S. Treasury and turned in at the local finance office.
- Military members may receive and keep reimbursement from the state or local jury authority for expenses incurred in the performance of jury duty, such as transportation costs or parking fees

References

- Members: Service on State and Local Juries, 10 U.S.C. § 982
- DoDI 5525.08, *Service Member Participation on State and Local Juries* (7 January 2021)
- AFI 51-301, *Civil Litigation* (2 October 2018)

HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a viral disease involving the breakdown of the body's immune system. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) tests all members for HIV, medically evaluates all active duty diagnosed members, and educates members on means of prevention. Medical experts believe the nonsexual, person-to-person contact that occurs among co-workers within the workplace does NOT pose a risk for transmitting the virus.

Key Takeaways

- » All DAF military members are screened for HIV infection every two years
- » Per Department of War (DoW) policy, service members who have been identified as HIV-positive, are asymptomatic, and have undetectable viral loads are not automatically restricted from joining the military, deploying, or commissioning solely due to their HIV positive status
- » Air Force policy limits the use of information obtained during epidemiological assessments in administrative actions and disciplinary actions
- » Upon notification of laboratory evidence of HIV infection, the unit commander must issue an order to follow preventive medicine requirements
- » DAF civilian employees are not generally tested for laboratory evidence of HIV; HIV infection is considered a disability with protections afforded individuals against discrimination

HIV and Military Members

- All active duty and Air Reserve Component (ARC) personnel are screened for HIV infection every two years, preferably during their Preventive Health Assessment (PHA). Additionally, ARC personnel must have a current HIV test within two years of the date called to active duty for 30 days or more.
- An active-duty member who tests positive for HIV is referred to the HIV Medical Evaluation Unit, located in the Joint Infectious Disease Service of the San Antonio Military Medical Center (SAMMC) for medical evaluation and to determine status for continued military service
 - Members with laboratory evidence of HIV infection who are able to perform their duties may not be separated solely on the basis of laboratory evidence of HIV. An active duty member with laboratory evidence of HIV determined to be fit for duty will be allowed to serve in a manner that ensures access to appropriate medical care.
 - HIV-infected members on flying status must be placed on duty not involving flying (DNIF) status pending medical evaluation or a waiver determination. Waivers are considered using normal procedures established for chronic diseases.
 - Service members testing positive for HIV are not automatically referred to the Disability Evaluation System (DES) but are generally retained with an assignment limitation code

- A service member with laboratory evidence of HIV, who is asymptomatic and has an undetectable viral load, is not considered non-deployable solely because they are HIV-positive. Decisions on deployability are made on a case-by-case basis. A service member with laboratory evidence of HIV currently cannot be discharged solely on the basis of ineligibility to deploy.
- Per DoW policy, dated 6 June 2022, the presence of HIV or laboratory evidence of infection is not, in and of itself, disqualifying for certain covered personnel seeking a commission (including Academy cadets, contracted Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets, and other participants in in-service commissioning programs). Such individuals are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Policies barring accessions for individuals solely due to their HIV-positive status remain the subject of ongoing litigation. A temporary Exception to Policy (ETP) barring accessions of HIV-positive individuals was issued on 18 October 2024. The ETP provides that the DAF may not bar individuals who are asymptomatic and have an undetectable viral load from assessing solely due to their HIV-positive status.
 - As of 4 September 2025, there is a case pending appeal in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth District, *Isaiah Wilkins v. Hegseth*, following a District Court ruling that the U.S. military's policies prohibiting the commissions and retention of asymptomatic HIV-positive service members with undetectable viral loads were irrational, arbitrary, and capricious, in violation of the equal protection component of the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause

Limitations on Use of Information

- DAF policy strictly safeguards results of positive HIV testing as set forth in Attachment 10 of AFI 44-178, *Human Immunodeficiency Virus Program*
 - In accordance with DoDI 6485.01, *Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in Military Service Members*, the privacy of a service member with laboratory evidence of HIV infection is protected consistent with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Privacy Act
 - Very limited release within the DAF is permitted on a "need-to-know" basis only (e.g., unit commanders should only inform First Sergeants and/or supervisors if a determination is made that those individuals truly need to know)
- Laboratory test results confirming HIV infection may not be used as the sole basis for separation of a member or as an independent basis for any adverse administrative or disciplinary action, including punitive action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
- Information obtained from a member during, or as a result of, an epidemiological assessment interview **MAY NOT** be used to support any adverse personnel action against the member

Order to Follow Preventive Medicine Requirements

- After a member is informed that he/she has tested positive, the member's unit commander will be notified expeditiously
- For active duty members, the unit commander will issue an "Order to Follow Preventive Medicine Requirements" to the HIV positive member. An example order may be found in AFI 44-178 at Attachment 13. For unit assigned reservists, this order is issued only after the member's immediate commander determines the member will be retained in the Selected Reserve.
- A service member who knows he/she is HIV positive, but violates an order to follow preventive medicine requirements, can be punished under the UCMJ for violation of the order, including engaging in the following conduct:
 - Failing to inform sexual partners of HIV status prior to engaging in sexual relations
 - Failing to use proper methods to prevent transfer of body fluids during sexual relations
 - Failing to inform emergency health care personnel of HIV status as soon as they are physically able to do so
 - Donating blood, sperm, tissues, or organs

HIV and Air Force Civilian Employees

- The DAF does not test its civilian employees for HIV, except for those civilian employees (appropriated or nonappropriated) selected for assignment overseas who will be screened for HIV infection pursuant to host nation requirements. Civilian employees are also tested for occupational exposures (e.g., civilian medical providers).
- HIV infection is considered a disability under federal civil rights laws, and discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability is prohibited

References

- *Harrison v. Austin*, 597 F. Supp. 3d 884 (E.D. Va. 2022)
- *Wilkins v. Austin*, 745 F. Supp. 3d 375 (E.D. Va. 2024)
- DoD Regulation 5400.11-R, *Department of Defense Privacy Program* (14 May 2007)
- DoDD 6485.02E, *DoD Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Prevention Program (DHAPP) to Support Foreign Militaries* (6 December 2013), incorporating Change 1, 1 June 2018
- DoDI 6130.03-V1, *Medical Standards for Military Service: Appointment, Enlistment or Induction* (6 May 2018), incorporating through Change 5, 28 May 2024
- DoDI 6130.03-V2, *Medical Standards for Military Service: Retention* (4 September 2020) incorporating Change 1, 6 June 2022
- DoDI 6485.01, *Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in Military Service Members* (7 June 2013), incorporating through Change 2, 6 June 2022
- DoDM 6025.18, *Implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule in DoD Health Care Programs* (13 March 2019)
- AFI 44-102, *Medical Care Management* (17 March 2015), certified current 22 April 2020
- AFI 44-178, *Human Immunodeficiency Virus Program* (4 March 2014), certified current 28 June 2016
- SecDef Memorandum, *Policy Regarding Human Immunodeficiency Virus-Positive Personnel Within the Armed Forces*, 6 June 2022
- OUSD (P&R) Memorandum, *Exception to Policy to Comply with Court Order in Wilkins v. Austin*, Case No. 1:22-cv-1272 (E.D. Va.)
- DHA-PI 6485.01, *Guidance for the Identification, Treatment, and Care of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) among Persons Infected with HIV* (10 December 2021)

IMMUNIZATIONS

Vaccines are administered to personnel on the basis of military occupation, the location of a deployment, duty station, health status, travel plans, or other mission requirements. Barring an accommodation or exception, refusal to take a required vaccine may result in adverse administrative actions, up to and including involuntary administrative discharge, and may be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) or state equivalent military code.

Key Takeaways

- » Service members can be mandated to take fully licensed vaccines. If a vaccine is authorized for emergency use, a Presidential waiver may be required before the vaccine can be mandated.
- » An order to comply with a vaccine mandate is a lawful order enforceable under the UCMJ
- » Service members may request a religious accommodation or medical or administrative

Vaccine Mandates

- A vaccine authorized under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and not yet fully licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which requires that individuals be informed of an option to accept or refuse the vaccine, generally may not be mandated for service members absent a waiver by the President

Enforcement

- Commanders are responsible for the accomplishment of the military mission and the protection of the health and readiness of the force. Commanders must ensure military and nonmilitary personnel under their command receive required immunizations and chemoprophylaxis. Orders for military members to comply with vaccine requirements are lawful and enforceable under the UCMJ.
 - If a member indicates they have or will refuse a required vaccine, the commander should ascertain why, provide the member with appropriate education regarding the purpose of the vaccine, and refer the member to the appropriate subject matter expert (e.g., concerns about vaccine safety should be referred to the supporting medical organization; concerns about the threat should be addressed by intelligence personnel; etc.)
 - If the member is still reluctant to take the vaccine after receiving additional education, send the member to the Area Defense Counsel for an explanation of potential consequences of refusal

- Following appropriate counseling, commanders should again order the member to take the vaccine. If the member continues to refuse, the commander should consult with their servicing Staff Judge Advocate for appropriate action.
- For the purposes of vaccination, medical personnel will not administer medical care against a patient's wishes. If a military member refuses to receive a vaccine, commanders are limited to administrative enforcement only.

Religious Accommodation

- Members may seek a religious accommodation to a vaccine mandate, which must be processed in accordance with the procedures found in DAFI 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force*
- Religious accommodation requests (RARs) are reviewed by the Commander and are analyzed under the provisions of the *Religious Freedom Restoration Act* (RFRA). Religious Resolution Teams (RRTs) also review RARs and provide recommendations to the Commander.
 - If a member has a sincerely held religious belief that is substantially burdened by vaccination, the government must prove that it has a compelling interest in vaccinating the requesting member beyond the general interest in mission accomplishment and health and safety of the force
 - In addition, the government must prove that there are no other means short of vaccination that achieves its compelling interest
- Commanders must be prepared to provide RRTs with detailed information on the member's duties and why no less restrictive means (e.g., masking, social distancing, changing duties/assignment, etc.) are available to assist. **Note:** RARs are closely scrutinized when medical and administrative exemptions have been granted for the same vaccine.

Medical and Administrative Exemptions

- Members may seek a medical exemption based on a medical contraindication to a specific immunization in accordance with AFI 48-110_IP, *Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases*. Health care providers determine whether a medical exemption is appropriate based on the health of the individual and the nature of the specific immunization.
- Members may seek an administrative exemption in accordance with AFI 48-110_IP or other applicable guidance. For example, for a member within 180 days of separation or retirement, an administrative exemption may be granted from required deployment (mobility) immunizations.

References

- Emergency Use Products, 10 U.S.C. § 1107a
- Religious Freedom Restoration Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb
- DAFI 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force* (23 June 2021)
- AFI 48-110_IP, *Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases* (7 October 2013), certified current 20 May 2023
- AFMAN 48-105, *Public Health Surveillance* (11 October 2023)

COMMAND DIRECTED EVALUATIONS

Commanders or supervisors who have concerns about a member's safety or fitness for duty may direct the member to the mental health clinic for an involuntary Command Directed Evaluation (CDE) in accordance with DoDI 6490.04, *Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Military Services* and AFI 44-172, *Mental Health*. Members may also self-refer to mental health care at any time under the Brandon Act.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders and supervisors should encourage help-seeking behavior and may make non-mandatory recommendations for service members to seek care from a Mental Health Provider (MHP)
- » Commanders or supervisors with concerns about safety, fitness for duty, or significant changes in performance or behavior which might be attributable to a mental status change can order a CDE
- » Under the Brandon Act, service members may request a referral for any reason or on any basis and are not required to provide a reason or basis to request and receive a referral
- » A commander or supervisor shall not order a CDE in reprisal for a member who made a protected communication

Commander/Supervisor Responsibilities

- Commanders or supervisors may make informal, non-mandatory recommendations for service members to seek care from MHPs when circumstances do not require a CDE based on safety or mission concerns
- Commanders or supervisors may request a CDE for a variety of concerns, including fitness for duty, safety, occupational concerns, and significant changes in behavior or performance that may be attributable to potential mental status changes
 - Commissioned officers or civilian employees in a grade-level comparable to a commissioned officer who exercise supervisory authority over a service member due to the member's current or temporary duty are authorized, due to the impracticality of involving an actual commanding officer in the chain of command, to direct a mental health evaluation
 - When possible, MHPs will assist the commander or supervisor in determining whether to direct a CDE
- Emergency CDEs: A commander or supervisor shall refer a member for an emergency CDE as soon as practicable when: (1) the member intends to or is likely to cause serious injury to themselves or others, (2) the facts and circumstances indicate the member's intent to cause such injury is likely, or (3) the commander or supervisor believes the member may be suffering from a severe mental disorder

- Commanders or supervisors ordering an emergency CDE must remember safety is the first priority and take appropriate precautions. Commanders will report the circumstances and observations that led to the emergency CDE to the MHP.
- A senior enlisted member may be designated to order emergency CDEs for enlisted service members. Officers that are senior in rank may be designated to order emergency CDEs for commissioned officers.
- Non-Emergency CDEs: When the commander or supervisor determine a non-emergency CDE is required, they must (1) advise the member there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health services, (2) refer the member to a MHP with name and contact information, and (3) tell the member the date, time, and place of the scheduled CDE

CDE Procedures

- CDEs are conducted in accordance with DoDI 6490.04 and AFI 44-172. The MHP will advise the commander or supervisor of any duty limitations, recommendations for further monitoring, evaluation, and/or treatment, guidance on how to assist the member's treatment, and recommendations for continued military service.
- CDEs may not be conducted in embedded settings, as set forth in AFMAN 48-149, *Flight and Operational Medicine Program (FOMP)*

Brandon Act – The Commander/Supervisor Facilitated Referral Program

- Service members can initiate a self-referral for a mental health evaluation through a commanding officer or supervisor who is in a grade above E-5 on any basis, at any time, and in any environment, including continental United States (CONUS), outside the continental United States (OCONUS), deployed, TDY, or leave
 - A referral under the Brandon Act differs from a command-directed or independent referral in several ways. A Brandon Act referral is initiated by the service member to their commander/supervisor, while a command-directed mental health referral is initiated by a commander or supervisor and is mandatory. An independent self-referral is handled completely by the member themselves.
- Service member patient rights and confidentiality are protected as much as possible, in accordance with requirements for confidentiality of health information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and applicable privacy laws and regulations
- The commanding officer or supervisor will refer a service member to a mental health provider for a mental health evaluation, as soon as practicable, following the service member's request. The individual making the referral will provide the member's contact information to the MHP and advise the member of the date, time, and location of the scheduled evaluation.
 - Commanding officers or supervisors in a grade above E-5 will ensure measures are in place so a service member under their command understands the procedures to request a referral for a mental health evaluation

- MHPs will conduct the mental health evaluation as soon as possible and provide necessary clinical care. They will assess the service member's medical readiness for duty with specific consideration for mental health, risk of harm to self or others, symptom severity, prognosis for return to duty, and risk of decompensation, aggravation, or further injury if participation in occupational activities continues.

Involuntary Inpatient Hospitalization

- Military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs): At bases where the MTF has an inpatient psychiatric unit, a member will be involuntarily admitted for inpatient evaluation and/or treatment only when a qualified provider determines the member has, or likely has, a severe mental disorder or poses imminent or potential danger to self or others and outpatient treatment would not result in adequate medical care
 - A qualified provider must review the admission within 72 hours to determine whether continued involuntary hospitalization is clinically appropriate. The member must be notified of the purpose of the 72-hour review and the right to have legal representation during the review by a judge advocate or an attorney of the member's choosing at the member's expense.
 - Members must be afforded the right to contact a friend, relative, chaplain, attorney, any office of Inspector General (IG), or anyone else the member wishes as soon after the admission as the member's condition permits
- Civilian Facilities: In the case of referral for an involuntary admission to a civilian facility, a member can be admitted to a civilian facility through the processes established by state law, which often differ from DoW standards. In a foreign country, applicable host nation laws must be followed when involuntary admission to a host nation facility is required.

Command Notification

- MHPs are prohibited from notifying a service member's commander when the member voluntarily obtains mental health care or substance misuse education services, unless the member authorizes the disclosure or one of the following exigent circumstances are met:
 - The provider believes there is a serious risk of harm to self, others, or a specific military operational mission
 - The member is in the Personal Reliability Program (PRP) or another pre-identified special program
 - The member is admitted or discharged from any inpatient mental health or substance use disorder treatment facility
 - The member is experiencing an acute mental health condition, a substance misuse induced condition, or is engaged in an acute medical treatment regimen that impairs their ability to perform assigned duties

- The provider has determined that the member requires treatment for a substance misuse disorder
- The mental health services were obtained as the result of a CDE
- Certain special circumstances, as determined on a case-by case basis by a healthcare provider at the O-6 or GS-15 level or above, as detailed in DoDI 6490.08, *Command Notification Requirements to Dispel Stigmas in Providing Mental Health Care to Service Members*. In making a disclosure, healthcare providers may release only the minimum amount of information necessary to satisfy the purpose of the disclosure as set forth in DoDI 6490.08.
- In making a command notification, HCPs will only provide commanders with the minimum amount of information necessary to address the exigent circumstances

Prohibited Practices

- A commander or supervisor may not refer a member for a CDE as a reprisal for making a protected communication or restrict the member from lawfully communicating with the member's attorney, the IG, or other authority about the referral

References

- Brandon Act, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. 117-81, § 704 (2021)
- DoDI 6490.04, *Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Military Services* (4 March 2013), incorporating Change 1, 22 April 2020
- DoDI 6490.08, *Command Notification Requirements to Dispel Stigmas in Providing Mental Health Care to Service Members* (6 September 2023)
- DTM 23-005, *Self-Initiated Referral Process for Mental Health Evaluations of Service Members* (5 May 2023), incorporating through Change 2, May 2, 2025
- AFI 44-172, *Mental Health* (13 November 2015), certified current 23 April 2020
- AFMAN 48-149, *Flight and Operational Medicine Program (FOMP)* (13 October 2020), incorporating through Change 2, 19 October 2022

LIMITED PRIVILEGE SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Those who are under investigation are much more likely to commit suicide than other military members. Commanders who have concerns that a member under their command may be at risk of suicide should encourage the member to seek mental health treatment or may direct the member to the mental health clinic for a Command Directed Evaluation (CDE) in accordance with DoDI 6490.04, *Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Military Services*. The Limited Privilege Suicide Prevention (LPSP) program affords protections beyond the psychotherapist-patient privilege (Military Rule of Evidence (M.R.E.) 513) to encourage at-risk members facing disciplinary action to receive timely mental health treatment. (See DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice*, para. 8.10 for more information.)

Key Takeaways

- » The objective of the LPSP program is to facilitate timely mental health treatment for Department of the Air Force (DAF) members facing disciplinary action who are at risk of suicide
- » DAFI 51-201 is the governing instruction for the program and provides guidance for commanders and others to facilitate mental health treatment for those members who, due to the stress of being under investigation, pose a risk for suicide
- » The LPSP program operates in conjunction with the guidance on CDEs as well as the psychotherapist-patient privilege under M.R.E. 513, and the protections afforded under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Eligibility and Procedures

- Eligible Members: The LPSP program applies to DAF members who have been officially notified (written or oral) that they are under investigation or suspected of violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). **Note:** LPSP program only applies to Air National Guard (ANG) members when activated under Title 10 active duty.
- Initiation: An eligible member enters the LPSP program when the member receives treatment or care from a Mental Health Provider (MHP) subsequent to the notification that triggers eligibility. The treatment or care may be the result of a CDE, on the member's own initiative, or a continuation of ongoing or previous treatment.
- Duration: The enhanced protections offered by the LPSP program continue until the member is no longer receiving mental health treatment or until the investigation and subsequent disciplinary action, if any, is closed. Matters disclosed while the member was in the LPSP program retain the enhanced protections of the LPSP program.

Limited Protection

- Members in the LPSP program are granted limited enhanced protection with respect to information revealed in, or generated by, their clinical relationship with MHPs. Any such information may not be used in any existing or future UCMJ action or when weighing the characterization of the member's service in an administrative separation. However, the enhanced protections **do not apply to:**
 - The use of the information as evidence for impeachment or rebuttal purposes in any proceeding in which information generated by and during the LPSP relationship was first introduced by the member concerned
 - Disciplinary or other action based on independently derived evidence

References

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, Pub. L. 104–191
- Military Rule of Evidence 513 (2024)
- DoDI 6490.04, *Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Military Services* (4 March 2013), incorporating Change 1, effective 22 April 2020
- DoDM 6025.18, *Implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule in DoD Health Care Programs* (13 March 2019)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- DAFI 90-5001, *Integrated Resilience* (23 July 2024)
- AFI 44-172, *Mental Health* (13 November 2015), certified current 23 April 2020

HEALTH INSURANCE PORTABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule provides safeguards for individually identifiable health information held by medical providers, insurers, and facilities. This type of protected information is typically referred to as protected health information (PHI). The rule permits certain uses and disclosures, even without the individual's authorization.

Key Takeaways

- » HIPAA protects health information held by health care entities from unlawful use or disclosure. HIPAA does not apply to health information held by military commanders.
- » Where health information of a service member is needed to accomplish the military mission, there is generally a way to obtain it from a health care entity consistent with HIPAA
- » When a commander receives health information regarding a member under his/her command, the information remains subject to the Privacy Act

Background

- The Department of War (DoW) has implemented the HIPAA Privacy Rule through DoDM 6025.18, *Implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule in DoD Health Care Programs*
- HIPAA's Privacy Rule applies to organizations that meet the definition of "covered entities." Covered entities generally include healthcare providers, healthcare facilities such as medical treatment facilities (MTFs), and health plans such as TRICARE.
 - Effective 30 September 2021, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1073c, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) is responsible for the administration of every MTF. Requests for PHI from MTFs will generally be handled by DHA personnel with legal advice from DHA's Office of General Counsel.
 - Commanders are generally not considered "covered entities." This means that health information possessed by a commander, even if received from a "covered entity," is not protected by HIPAA, though it remains protected by the Privacy Act of 1974.
- Certain records that might be considered quasi-medical have been determined by the DoW to not be subject to HIPAA. For example, the DoW drug testing program is not subject to HIPAA. DoDM 6025.18, para. 1.1.b., contains a comprehensive list of health-related records and activities in the DoW to which HIPAA does not apply. HIPAA does not apply to health information in employment records.

Permissible Disclosures

- Under HIPAA, even without the individual's authorization, an MTF may disclose PHI for certain purposes when certain requirements are met as outlined in DoDM 6025.18, Section 4.4. Some specific provisions which allow for such disclosures include:
 - As required by law (includes requirements in DoW and DHA publications, as well as Department of the Air Force (DAF) service level regulations and instructions to the extent consistent with DoDM 6025.18)
 - For public health activities
 - Victims of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence
 - For judicial and administrative proceedings
 - For certain law enforcement purposes
 - To avert serious and imminent threats to health or safety
 - For "specialized governmental functions," including the proper execution of the military mission
- Accounting of Disclosures: The MTF must document most disclosures of PHI, including who received the information, when, and for what purpose. The MTF must maintain the accounting for six years and provide the information upon the patient's request.
- Minimum Necessary Rule: When HIPAA allows a use or disclosure of PHI, MTFs are typically required to provide only the minimum amount of information necessary to satisfy the intended purpose of the disclosure

Command Access to Information

- Under the "specialized government functions" provision, commanders can access PHI of Armed Forces personnel (not including dependents or civilian employees) for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities to assure the proper execution of the military mission. This rule generally permits disclosures for fitness for duty purposes.
 - For example, commanders may need PHI related to readiness, such as vaccinations or profiles, or to verify the whereabouts of subordinates, such as confirming the service member was at the MTF
- Under the "minimum necessary" rule, any release of PHI must be limited in scope to what the commander actually needs to accomplish the mission
 - For example, if a member has a foot injury that precludes prolonged standing, the MTF may disclose PHI to the commander related to the foot injury because it impacts the duties the member can be assigned. The MTF could not disclose the member's dental records or other information unrelated to the foot injury because that would exceed the minimum necessary.

- There is no “blanket rule” concerning disclosure of PHI to commanders. In each case, the nature and extent of PHI needed should be fully articulated in the request.
- A commander’s access to information may be further limited by other law or DoW policy, such as confidentiality for sexual assault victims, DoW policies on reducing the stigma of mental health treatment, or other applicable policy
- DAF uses the Aeromedical Services Information Management System (ASIMS) to allow commanders to monitor force health and mission readiness. While ASIMS is a health record system to which HIPAA applies, it has a command module that provides commanders timely access to individual medical readiness data and deployment fitness status of service members under their command.
 - ASIMS tracks all medical profiles issued to a member (AF 469, *Duty Limiting Condition Report*); commanders and their designees are able to view the profile for any member issued a profile by a military healthcare provider, including duty restrictions, shaving waivers, etc.

References

- Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a
- Administration of Defense Health Agency and military medical treatment facilities, 10 U.S.C. § 1073c
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, Pub. L. 104–191
- DoDI 6025.18, *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule Compliance in DoD Health Care Programs* (13 March 2019)
- DoDI 8580.02, *Security of Individually Identifiable Health Information in DoD Health Care Programs* (12 August 2015)
- DoDM 6025.18, *Implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule in DoD Health Care Programs* (13 March 2019)
- DD Form 2870, *Authorization for Disclosure of Medical or Dental Information* (November 2023)
- AFMAN 41-210, *Tricare Operations and Patient Administration* (10 September 2019), incorporating Change 1, 22 June 2021

PERSONNEL RELIABILITY PROGRAM

The Personnel Reliability Program (PRP) ensures only designated persons who demonstrate reliability are certified to perform specified duties associated with U.S. nuclear weapons systems, nuclear command and control (NC2) systems, material equipment, and special nuclear material (SNM). PRP is a critical link in nuclear surety by determining an individual's fitness for PRP duties.

Key Takeaways

- » Individuals on PRP are personally responsible for continuous monitoring and evaluation of their reliability, as well as situations that may impact the reliability of others in the unit and have a duty to report to the PRP monitor and or certifying official
- » Certifying officials judge the reliability of each individual identified for PRP based on personnel security investigations, review of personnel and health records, position qualification requirements and a personal interview
- » Members may be removed from PRP duties through suspension or decertification

Responsibilities

- Wing Commanders are generally the reviewing official (RO) and are responsible for the Wing PRP
 - ROs are responsible for review of all permanent decertification case files started by subordinate units. ROs also ensure base PRP meetings are conducted quarterly at the Wing level.
- Group and unit commanders who control or have access to nuclear weapons, weapon systems, or critical components, are generally the certifying officials (COs)
 - COs certify and initiate decertification for their personnel. They may delegate this duty in writing to their vice/deputy in limited instances such as TDY/extended absence.
 - COs and their delegates must be certified in a PRP category equal to, or higher than, the personnel they are certifying
- Individuals in the PRP are subject to continuous evaluation of their reliability and are responsible for complying with the intent of PRP at all times, even while away from their duty station (e.g., leave, TDY, etc.)
 - Individuals must also monitor others in the unit PRP for reliability and have a duty to inform supervisors, the unit PRP monitor, and/or certifying official of situations that may affect reliability
 - Individuals must inform the unit PRP monitor and/or CO of medical and mental health treatment that may affect an individual's reliability and submit documentation to the Competent Medical Authority (CMA)

PRP Certification Requirements

- COs judge the reliability of each individual identified for PRP based on personnel security investigations, review of personnel and health records, position qualification requirements, and a personal interview
- Personnel assigned to PRP must be dependable; mentally alert; technically proficient commensurate with their respective duty requirements; flexible in adjusting to changes in the working environment, including the ability to work in adverse or emergency situations; have good social adjustment, emotional stability, personal integrity, sound judgment, and allegiance to the United States; and have a positive attitude toward nuclear weapons duty
- Initial certification also requires verification of security clearance eligibility
 - *Critical Position*: Initial certification for critical positions must have Top Secret eligibility completed within the last five years and favorably adjudicated
 - *Controlled Position*: Initial certification for a controlled position must have Secret eligibility or a higher investigation that was completed within the last five years and favorably adjudicated

PRP Suitability Factors/Potentially Disqualifying Information

- In determining suitability for PRP duties, any of the following traits or conduct is potentially disqualifying information (PDI):
 - Personal conduct involving questionable judgement, untrustworthiness, unreliability, dishonesty, or unwillingness to comply with rules or regulations;
 - Emotional, mental, and personality disorders; negative financial habits or circumstances; a history or pattern of criminal conduct;
 - Substance or drug misuse and improper or illegal involvement with drugs; perpetrator of sexual harassment or assault;
 - Noncompliance with security regulations; and
 - Misuse of information technology systems.

Removal from PRP

- Members may be removed from PRP duties through suspension or decertification
- Suspension immediately removes an individual from PRP related duties, initially up to three months, without starting decertification action. The CO may extend the suspension up to one year, in three-month increments.
 - After one year, if the reasons or conditions for suspension still exist and impact reliability, the individual will be decertified

- The CO makes the final decision and can return an individual to PRP duties at any point during the suspension timeframe
- A CO who is suspended may perform PRP administrative functions
- Mandatory Decertification or Disqualification Occurs When:
 - The individual is diagnosed with an alcohol use disorder and subsequently fails a required after-care program or fails to participate in the prescribed rehabilitation program or treatment
 - The individual is involved in trafficking, cultivation, processing, manufacture, or sale of any controlled substance or illegal drug, including cannabis-based products
 - The individual has ever used a drug that could cause flashbacks
 - The individual is diagnosed with a severe substance use disorder
 - Loss of confidence by the certifying official in the reliability of the individual
 - The individual's security clearance has been revoked
- Within 15 workdays of decertification, the CO will advise the individual, in writing, of the reasons for decertification and of the requirement for review by the reviewing official

References

- DoDM 5210.42, *Nuclear Weapons Personnel Reliability Program* (13 January 2015), incorporating through Change 4, 9 May 2022
- DoDM5210.42_AFMAN 13-501, *Nuclear Weapons Personnel Reliability Program (PRP)* (3 April 2024)
- DAFI 91-101, *Air Force Nuclear Weapons Surety Program* (26 March 2020), incorporating Change 1, 6 April 2022
- AFI 31-117, *Arming and Use of Force by Air Force Personnel* (6 August 2020), including DAFGM2024-01, 6 May 2024

FIREARMS PROHIBITIONS

The Gun Control Act of 1968, 18 U.S.C. § 921, *et seq.*, as amended by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993, Pub. L. 103-159, prohibits certain persons from possessing, receiving, shipping, or transporting firearms, ammunition, or explosives, in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce. It also requires initiation of a background check before firearms may be purchased or received.

Key Takeaways

- » Felony convictions, domestic violence convictions, and drug abuse are several of the categories prohibiting firearms possession
- » The length of prohibition ranges from one year, to event-dependent, to permanent
- » Commanders, Staff Judge Advocates (SJA), and law enforcement personnel are responsible for properly notifying members of qualifying prohibitions and then reporting the notification to the Air Force Criminal Justice Information Center (AFCJIC), both within 24 hours of occurrence
- » Commanders have specific responsibilities to ensure that government-owned firearms and ammunition are not issued to personnel with qualifying domestic violence convictions
- » Persons prohibited by the Brady Act from possessing, receiving, shipping, or transporting firearms, ammunition, or explosives are entered into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)

Commanders' Responsibilities

- Notify members that they qualify for certain firearms prohibitions
- Be aware of the statutory exception that allows firearms prohibited personnel to carry and use government weapons for official business and document authorization granted to do so
- Ensure personnel are informed of the Lautenberg Amendment and its requirements and ensure that personnel who have a qualifying domestic violence conviction do not possess, receive, ship or transport government-owned firearms or ammunition

Notification of Firearms Prohibitions

- Commanders are responsible for notifying personnel of certain qualifying firearms prohibitions, identified in AFMAN 71-102_DAFGM2025-01, *Air Force Criminal Indexing*, Table 4.1, within 24 hours of notice of the occurrence, utilizing the DAF Form 177, *Notification of Qualification for Prohibition of Firearms, Ammunition, and Explosives*
- Commanders serve the DAF Form 177 upon notice that members meet the following firearms prohibitions:
 - Conviction in a civilian court of an offense punishable by > 1 year imprisonment;

- Administrative discharge for drug abuse or failure in drug rehabilitation;
- Adjudication as mental defective or committed to mental institution (not involving court-martial proceedings);
- Conviction in civilian court of misdemeanor crime of domestic violence (MCDV); and
- Indictment in civilian court of crime punishable by > 1 year imprisonment (if DAF law enforcement does not open investigation).
- Within 24 hours of serving the DAF Form 177, commanders must email the DAF Form 177 to AFCJIC at daf.cjic@us.af.mil and to the servicing legal office and provide the original to OSI or SF
- AFCJIC enters personnel into the NICS upon receipt of the DAF Form 177

The Exception to the Gun Control Act

- 18 U.S.C. § 925(a)(1) and DoDI 6400.06, *DoD Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse Involving DoD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel*, para. 9.2.b, allow firearms prohibited personnel, except those with domestic violence convictions, to possess, receive, ship or transport government-owned weapons for official government business
 - IAW AFMAN 71-102_DAFGM2025-01, para. 4.2.3, commanders must:
 - Affirmatively authorize firearms prohibited personnel to utilize government-owned weapons and ammunition for official government business; and
 - Document such authorization in writing and maintain it in the member's personnel file.
- Firearms prohibited personnel, including those convicted of qualifying domestic violence offenses, may work with major military weapons systems or crew-served military weapons and ammunition (e.g., tanks, missiles, aircraft), IAW DoDI 6400.06, para. 9.3.c

Lautenberg Amendment to the Gun Control Act, 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(9)

- The Lautenberg Amendment of 1996 added a prohibition to the Gun Control Act for individuals convicted of MCDVs
- Under 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(33), an MCDV is defined as a misdemeanor offense (generally punishable by one year of imprisonment or less) that:
 - Involves the use or attempted use of physical force, or the threatened use of a deadly weapon; and
 - Is committed by a person who has a specified relationship with the victim, including:
 - A current or former spouse, parent, or guardian;
 - A person with whom the victim shares a child in common;

- A person who is cohabiting with or has cohabited with the victim as a spouse, parent, or guardian;
- A person similarly situated to a spouse, parent, or guardian; or
- A person who is in, or has recently been in, a dating relationship with the victim.
- A “dating relationship,” as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(37), is a relationship between individuals who have, or have recently had, a continuing serious romantic or intimate relationship. This determination is based on the length and nature of the relationship, as well as the frequency and type of interaction between the individuals.
- Per DoDI 6400.06, para. 9.2, the firearms prohibition of the Lautenberg Amendment applies to any domestic violence conviction at a GCM, special court-martial, or civilian court, of a misdemeanor or felony (generally punishable by imprisonment for more than one year); the prohibition does not apply to summary courts-martial or nonjudicial punishment
- Commanders are responsible for ensuring personnel are informed of the Lautenberg Amendment and its requirements, IAW DoDI 6400.06, para. 9.4.a, including:
 - Notice that personnel have an affirmative, continuing obligation to inform their supervisors of qualifying domestic violence convictions;
 - The required use of the DD Form 2760, *Qualification to Possess Firearms or Ammunition*, to obtain information regarding qualifying domestic violence convictions; and
 - Posting of notices about the Lautenberg Amendment and its requirements in all facilities where firearms, ammunition, or explosives are stored, issued, disposed, or transported.
- Once personnel are found to have a qualifying domestic violence conviction, or if there is credible information to believe they have a qualifying conviction, steps should be taken IAW DoDI 6400.06, para. 9.3.d, to:
 - Immediately retrieve all government-issued firearms and ammunition from the individual;
 - Suspend their authority to possess government-issued firearms and ammunition; and
 - Advise them to surrender, transfer, and dispose of privately-owned firearms, ammunition, and explosives.

References

- Gun Control Act of 1968, 18 U.S.C. §§ 921 *et seq.*
- Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, Pub. L. 103-159
- DoDI 6400.06, *DoD Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse Involving DoD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel* (15 December 2021), incorporating through Change 4, 29 August 2025
- DD Form 2760, *Qualification to Possess Firearms or Ammunition* (21 March 2023)
- DAF Form 177, *Notification of Qualification for Prohibition of Firearms, Ammunition, and Explosives* (13 February 2025)
- AFMAN 71-102_DAFGM2025-01, *Air Force Criminal Indexing* (15 September 2025)

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE

Even when the draft made military service an obligation, Congress recognized that certain individuals and groups hold convictions against the use of force in any form. Members may still apply for administrative separation or reassignment based on certain sincerely held moral, ethical, or religious beliefs.

Key Takeaways

- » Members may be granted administrative separation or reassignment of duties due to conscientious objection
- » Beliefs must be based on a moral, ethical, or religious belief and must be firm, fixed, sincere, and deeply held
- » Applicants have the burden of proof to establish a claim of conscientious objection by clear and convincing evidence

General Policies

- A conscientious objector (CO) is a person who is opposed to participation in war **in any form** or the bearing of arms, based on sincerely held morals, ethical, or religious beliefs, or a combination of such beliefs
- The objection to war must be all-inclusive, not to specific wars and conflicts or based solely on considerations of policy, pragmatism, expediency, or political views
- COs are classified as either Class 1-O, which is a person who sincerely objects to participation in combatant and non-combatant military training and service in war in any form, or as Class 1-A-O, which is a person who sincerely objects to only participation in combatant military training and service, but whose convictions will permit him/her to serve in non-combatant status
- Administrative discharge by the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) prior to completion of term of service is discretionary based on the facts of each case
- Applicants for CO status who are awaiting disposition of their case should be assigned to duties that conflict as little as possible with their beliefs. Applicants must comply with the normal requirements of military service and perform duties they are assigned to include active duty or transfer orders in effect at the time of the application or subsequently issued.

Application Procedures

- Applicants have the burden of proof to show they meet CO status, and they must establish the following by clear and convincing evidence:
 - They oppose participation in war in any form or the bearing of arms;
 - Their belief is firm, fixed, sincere, and deeply held;
 - Their belief is based on a moral, ethical, or religious belief, or a combination of such beliefs; and
 - The nature or basis of their claim falls under the definition of conscientious objection in DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*.
- Applicants generally submit their applications to the servicing Military Personnel Section (MPS)/Career Development Element. Applicants in the Air Force Reserve (AFR) or Air National Guard (ANG) that are not serving on extended active duty (EAD) submit their applications to their immediate commander. (See DAFI 36-3211, Chapter 29, for information that should be included.)
- The MPS notifies the unit commander, reviews the personnel records of the applicant for pertinent information, and counsels the member about the effect of a CO determination on Veterans Affairs (VA) entitlements. MPS also schedules interviews with a chaplain and a psychiatrist.
- A chaplain personally interviews the applicant to determine sincerity and depth of conviction against war. The chaplain must submit a written report detailing conclusions but does not make any recommendation concerning the application.
 - An appropriately credentialed mental health professional interviews the applicant to determine the presence of any mental disorder warranting medical or administrative disposition. Again, no recommendation on the application is made.
- For active duty and AFR non-EAD members, the Special Court-Martial Convening Authority (SPCMCA) appoints a judge advocate as an Investigating Officer (IO) to interview the applicant under oath, assemble all the relevant material, and interview other witnesses. For ANG non-EAD members, the wing or group commander exercising control over the servicing Force Support Squadron appoints the IO.
- Guidelines for approving or disapproving applications are found in Chapter 29 of DAFI 36-3211. Generally, the reviewing authorities must find:
 - For conscientious objection (1-O) classification, the applicant's moral and ethical beliefs oppose participation in war in any form and that the applicant holds these beliefs with the strength of traditional religious convictions;
 - For assignment to noncombatant training and service based on conscientious objection (1-A-O), the applicant objects to participation as a combatant in war in any form due to their deeply held moral and ethical beliefs, but their convictions are such as to permit military service in a non-combatant status;

- For either classification, the applicant must show that these moral and ethical convictions (1) have directed the applicant's life in the way traditional religious convictions of equal strength, depth, and duration have directed the lives of those whose beliefs are clearly found in traditional religious observances and (2) are the primary controlling force in the applicant's life; and
- The applicant sincerely holds this belief, including through the applicant's conduct, outward manifestation of their belief, thinking, and lifestyle.
- The commander who appoints the IO makes a recommendation before forwarding the file up the chain of command. For ANG cases, the Director or Deputy Director, Air National Guard, and judge advocates are required to review and make a recommendation on all conscientious objector applications. Final decision for all applicants regarding conscientious objector status is made at the SecAF level after an independent review by the Air Force Personnel Board (AFPB). (DAFI 36-3211, para. 29.4.1.1).
- Members determined to be COs, either 1-O or 1-A-O where further service is not desired by the Air Force or Space Force, will be processed for administrative discharge according to the applicable Department of the Air Force instruction, with "convenience of the government" as the basis for separation

References

- DoDI 1300.06, *Conscientious Objectors* (12 July 2017)
- DAFI 36-2023, *The Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council (SAFPC)* (3 June 2022)
- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI 36-3211_DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025

PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM AND PHYSICAL FITNESS ASSESSMENTS

The goal of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Physical Fitness Program is to motivate all members to participate in a year-round physical conditioning program that emphasizes total fitness, to include proper aerobic conditioning, muscular fitness training, and healthy eating. An active lifestyle will increase productivity, optimize health, and decrease absenteeism while maintaining a higher level of readiness. Commanders and supervisors must incorporate fitness into the DAF culture by establishing an environment for members to maintain physical fitness and health to meet expeditionary mission requirements. The Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) provides commanders with a tool to assist in the determination of overall fitness of their military personnel. The program promotes the primary physical fitness components of cardiorespiratory endurance (aerobic), body composition, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility of each DAF member.

Unit/Squadron Commander's Duties

- The unit/squadron commander's duties are outlined in DAFMAN 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program*, and include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Establishing an environment that supports, encourages, and motivates a healthy lifestyle through optimal physical fitness and nutrition and ensures compliance with DAFMAN 36-2905
 - Establishing and enforcing the unit's physical fitness program and ensuring appropriate administrative action is taken in cases of non-compliance
 - Appoint, in writing, individuals to conduct PFAs in support of the Fitness Assessment Cell (FAC), appoint Physical Training Leaders if unit physical training is implemented, and appoint a Unit Fitness Program Manager (UFPM)
 - The Air Reserve Component (ARC) Commander must promote and support unit physical fitness programs as mission requirements and resources allow. Additionally, they must appoint the installation's Fitness Information Manager (FIM) and FAC Manager. The FIM should be a Noncommissioned Officer or Senior Noncommissioned Officer of any Air Force specialty code appointed by the installation commander, ARC wing commander, or equivalent.

Physical Fitness Standards

- Members will receive a composite score of 0 to 100 based on component scores for aerobic fitness (60 points max), muscular strength (20 points max), and core endurance (20 points max). Effective December 2020, the DAF permanently removed the waist measurement from the PFA.
- The following fitness levels are determined by a member's composite score:
 - Excellent: All component minimums met and member scores at/above 90. DAF service members in this category will test at least annually (12 months from prior excellent score).

- Satisfactory: All component minimums met and member scores 75 to 89.99
 - Regular Air Force (RegAF), Air Force Reserve (AFR), and Air National Guard (ANG) members on Title 10 Statutory Tour and Title 32 Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) who obtain a satisfactory score on a PFA shall test every six months (twice a year)
 - ANG Title 32 Drill Status Guardsmen (DSGs) must complete an official PFA at least annually and must be tested by the last day of the 12th month following the previous satisfactory test
- Unsatisfactory: One or more component minimum not met and/or member scores less than 75 total points
 - RegAF, AFR, and ANG (Title 10 Statutory Tour or Title 32 AGR) Airmen and Guardians who fail to attain a passing PFA score must retest within 90 days (180 calendar days for Title 32 DSGs)
 - Although members may voluntarily retest before the end of the 90-day reconditioning period (180 calendar days for Title 32 DSGs), retesting is not recommended for a minimum of 42 calendar days (90 calendar days for ANG Title 32 Drill Status Guardsmen) to allow sufficient time for reconditioning
 - Members wishing to test earlier than the 42 calendar days (90 calendar days for ANG Title 32 DSGs) must obtain their commander's approval
- Exemptions may be granted from the various components or all of the components of the PFA in accordance with DAFMAN 36-2905, Table 4.1. Airmen and Guardians with exemptions prohibiting them from performing one or more components of the PFA will be assessed on the remaining components. Chapter 4 lists the categories of exemptions and explains the rationale for granting them.

Fitness Improvement Program

- The fitness improvement program (FIP) targets nutritional and exercise behavior changes necessary to improve a DAF service member's health and fitness utilizing various intervention options
- FIP is mandatory for all DAF service members with an unsatisfactory PFA score and is available for any member who wishes to improve their overall health and fitness. DAF service members and their commanders select an option such as BE WELL online and Military OneSource Health Coaching as appropriate to their fitness improvement needs and/or desires.
- RegAF, Title 10 Statutory Tour, Title 32 AGR, and AFR/AGR Airmen and Guardians must start the FIP within 10 duty days of their unsatisfactory PFA. Title 32 DSGs and Traditional AFR personnel are required to accomplish FIP within 60 calendar days of the unsatisfactory PFA.

Diagnostic Physical Fitness Assessments

- Diagnostic PFA (DPFA): A non-attribution assessment aimed to provide feedback and help Airmen and Guardians identify and improve any problem areas. DPFA's will follow the same standards and procedures for an official PFA. In other words, a DPFA is an unofficial PFA conducted under official conditions.
- DAF service members with a current PFA on file (regardless of score or exemption status on last PFA) and not presently exempt may voluntarily complete a DPFA no later than 16 calendar days in the month their current PFA is due. Members who are not current are not eligible to take a DPFA.
- DAF service members may attempt no more than three DPFA's within a 365-day period
- DAF service members will be notified of their overall score after completing the DPFA
 - If the result is a passing score (satisfactory or excellent), the service member must elect to accept or decline the result
 - Only after a service member elects to count the DPFA will the results be recorded in MyFitness
 - DAF service members may not be directed to make a DPFA official

Administrative and Personnel Actions

- Members are expected to always comply with DAF fitness standards. When members fail to comply with those standards (receive an unsatisfactory PFA score), they potentially render themselves to adverse action. Commanders should consult with their servicing Staff Judge Advocate before taking such action.
- Prohibited Actions:
 - Commanders may not impose nonjudicial punishment solely for failing to achieve a satisfactory fitness score
 - While units may perform unofficial practice tests for diagnostic purposes, commanders will refrain from taking adverse action based on the results of these tests
 - A member is not subject to adverse personnel action for inability to take the PFA if the member is on a 365-day PFA exemption that has been validated by the military treatment facility

- Authorized Actions:

- Unit commanders will consider adverse administrative action upon a member's unsatisfactory fitness score on an official PFA. If adverse administrative action is not taken in response to an unsatisfactory fitness score on an official PFA, unit commanders will document in the member's fitness case file as to why no action is being taken. The lack of such commander documentation does not discount the testing failure as a basis in support of administrative discharge action.
- As appropriate, unit commanders will document and take corrective action for a member's unexcused failure(s) to participate in the fitness program such as failing to accomplish a scheduled PFA, failing to attend a scheduled fitness appointment, failing to complete mandatory educational intervention, or failing to maintain the required documentation of exercise while on the fitness improvement program
- Enlisted DAF members failing to have a current/passing PFA score at the Promotion Eligibility Cut-Off Date (PECD) are ineligible for promotion. Likewise, commanders should consider delaying the promotion of officers who fail to have a current/passing PFA at his/her projected date of promotion.
- It is within a commander's discretion to document within an Enlisted Performance Brief (EPB) or Officer Performance Brief (OPB) a referral for a non-current/failing PFA at the evaluation close-out date, or EPB Static Close-Out Date (SCOD)
- Unit commanders **MUST** make a discharge or retention recommendation to the separation authority (enlisted DAF members), show cause authority (officers), or appropriate discharge authority for Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard members when an individual remains in the Unsatisfactory fitness category for a continuous 12-month period or receives four unsatisfactory PFA scores in a 24-month period. For ANG Title 32 members (DSG), unit commanders must make a discharge or retention recommendation to the appropriate discharge authority when the member receives four unsatisfactory fitness assessment scores within a 36-month period. However, prior to initiation of discharge action, a military medical provider must rule out medical conditions precluding the member from achieving a passing score. If the sole reason for an administrative separation is for failure to meet physical fitness standards, then only an honorable characterization may be given. As with administrative separation of other bases, administrative separations of officers are approved at the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) level after an independent review by the Air Force Personnel Board (AFPB).
- DAFMAN 36-2905, Attachment 6, contains guidance on optional administrative and personnel actions for members failing to meet fitness standards on one or more PFAs, with options covering the full range of administrative tools for progressive discipline. The guidance contained in Attachment 6 is illustrative and non-binding.

References

- DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations* (24 June 2022), incorporating Change 1, 20 November 2023, including DAFI 36-3211 DAFGM2025-01, 12 August 2025
- DAFMAN 36-2905, *Department of the Air Force Physical Fitness Program* (21 April 2022)
- AFI 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion and Demotion Programs* (26 September 2024), incorporating Change 1, 14 August 2025, certified current 14 August 2025

UNAUTHORIZED ABSENCE

Most forms of unauthorized absence, from simply being late for work (failure to go) to an extended absence without leave, are punishable under Article 86, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), while desertion is punishable under Article 85, UCMJ. Department of the Air Force service members who intend to abandon their military duties permanently are classified as deserters and may be punished for desertion in violation of Article 85, UCMJ. There are certain requirements and considerations a unit must satisfy when handling cases involving an unauthorized absence.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders (on G-series orders) must take both immediate and scheduled actions when a member appears to be absent without authority
- » Military law enforcement personnel or commissioned, warrant, petty, and noncommissioned officers may apprehend absentees and deserters
- » United States authorities may apprehend absentees and deserters in foreign countries only when an international agreement with the country authorizes it or under an agreement with proper local authorities that does not violate an existing international agreement. Always consult the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) in these cases.

- When an unauthorized absence is discovered, it is important to note the date and time
 - Failure To Go: An absence of less than 24 hours is classified as a “failure to go” for administrative purposes
 - Absence Without Leave (AWOL): When a member has been absent for more than 24 hours but less than 30 days, the member’s unit must change the member’s administrative status to “absence without leave”
 - Deserter: If a member has been absent for more than 30 consecutive days, the member’s unit must change the member’s administrative status to “deserter”
 - The administrative status affects pay and allowances and puts the member’s name in a database that facilitates the apprehension efforts of military and civilian law enforcement authorities
 - Taking these administrative steps **WILL NOT**, standing alone, prove the member committed an unauthorized absence in violation of the UCMJ
 - Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown: Regardless of the reason for the absence, if the commander’s initial investigation reveals the possibility of an involuntary casualty and there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the member is missing or deceased, a status of “Duty Status-Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN)” may be appropriate. Consult DAFI 36-3002, *Casualty Services*, the Military Personnel Flight (MPF), and the servicing SJA for advice in such cases.

- For Air National Guard (ANG) cases: The specific action you take against an absent ANG member will depend on whether the ANG member is on active duty, full-time national guard duty (AGR), annual training (AT), or is merely missing a regularly schedule unit training assembly (UTA). If the ANG member is absent from AT or UTAs, or is an AGR, you should check with your unit SJA for guidance on any state military code, regulation or policy governing Unsatisfactory Participation and AWOL. For ANG members on Title 10 active duty, follow Regular Air Force (RegAF) guidance and notify 201 MSS.

Commander Responsibilities

- Under DAFI 36-3802, *Force Support Readiness Programs*, Chapter 8, and in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. 117-81 (2021), if the member reasonably appears to be absent without authority, the commander on G-series orders must take the following actions:
 - Immediate Actions:
 - Notify the relevant military criminal investigative organization regarding the requirement to enter all relevant information into the Missing Persons File of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database
 - Notify local law enforcement agencies with jurisdictions in the immediate area of the military installation
 - Contact MPF and inform them of the member's status
 - Consult with the servicing SJA to determine whether the member's status should be changed to "deserter"
 - Criteria include duty or travel restrictions, access to top secret or other qualifying classified documents, request for asylum or residence in a foreign country, uncompleted action for a previous AWOL, escaped prisoner, under investigation for UCMJ violation or awaiting trial at a general court-martial, believed likely to commit violent acts or harm oneself or others, or evidence of intent to remain away permanently
 - Evaluate the case to determine whether the casualty services provisions of DAFI 36-3002 apply
 - After 24 Hours of Absence: Prepare an DAF Form 2098, *Duty Status Change*, changing the absentee's status to either AWOL or deserter as appropriate, and forward it to MPF, with a copy to the local finance office. Consult the servicing SJA.
 - On the 3rd Day of Absence: Prepare and forward a 72-hour inquiry to the Security Forces Squadron (SFS) and MPF and re-evaluate whether DAFI 36-3002 applies

- If the member is administratively classified as a deserter, the commander prepares, signs, and distributes DD Form 553, *Deserter/Absentee Wanted by the Armed Forces*, and changes the member's duty status within 24 hours of the decision to place the member in deserter status
- On the 10th Day of Absence: Prepare and forward letters to the next of kin and allotment payees, and provide copies of these letters to MPF
- On the 31st Day of Absence:
 - Ensure processing of DD Form 553 (MPF will assist in preparation) and decide (with the assistance of SFS and MPF) to whom DD Form 553 should be sent
 - Initiate AF Form 2098 changing status from AWOL to deserter
 - Notify MPF of the member's continued absence and retrieve dependent ID cards as required by DAFI 36-3026V1_IP, *Identification Cards for Members of the Uniformed Services, Their Eligible Family Members, and Other Eligible Personnel*, Table 8.3, when member is placed in deserter status. Dependents lose medical benefits and shopping privileges in accordance with DAFI 36-3026V1_IP, Table 9.2.
 - Consult with SJA about filing court-martial charges
 - Prepare 31st day status report
- On the 60th Day of Absence: Notify SFS and MPF of the member's continued absence, obtain updated input from SFS, and prepare and forward the 60-day status report
- On the 180th Day of Absence: Military Personnel Data Systems (MilPDS) program automatically drops absentee from the unit rolls. Commander notifies SFS of status change and consults with SJA concerning other options and/or requirements.
- Military law enforcement personnel and commissioned, warrant, petty, and noncommissioned officers may apprehend absentees and deserters. Civil officers authorized to arrest offenders under federal and state laws may arrest a deserter and deliver the offender into the custody of the Armed Forces. These civil officers may also arrest absentees at the request of military and federal authorities.
- United States authorities may apprehend absentees and deserters in foreign countries only when an international agreement with the country authorizes it or under an agreement with proper local authorities that does not violate an existing international agreement. Always consult the SJA in these cases.

References

- National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Pub. L. 117-81, § 548 (2021)
- Articles 85 and 86, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DoDI 1325.02, *Desertion and Unauthorized Absence or Absence Without Leave* (26 October 2021)
- DD Form 553, *Deserter/Absentee Wanted by the Armed Forces* (February 2025)
- DAFI 36-3002, *Casualty Services* (15 July 2025)
- DAFI 36-3026 Volume 1, *Identification Cards for Members of the Uniformed Services, Their Eligible Family Members, and Other Eligible Personnel* (1 June 2023), including DAFGM2025-01, 13 January 2025
- DAFI 36-3802, *Force Support Readiness Programs* (9 January 2019), incorporating Change 1, 21 November 2021
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- DAF Form 2098, *Duty Status Change* (12 July 2022)

LINE OF DUTY DETERMINATIONS

A Line of Duty (LOD) determination is a finding regarding the circumstances of a member's injury, illness, disease, or death. The finding determines: (1) whether an illness, injury, or disease was sustained by a member while in a qualified status, (2) whether the illness, injury or disease existed prior to service (EPTS) and, if so, whether an EPTS condition was aggravated by military service; (3) whether the illness, injury, disease, or death occurred while the member was absent without authority; and (4) whether the illness, injury, disease, or death was due to the member's misconduct or willful negligence. On the basis of the LOD determination, the member or their next of kin may be entitled to benefits administered by the Department of the Air Force (DAF) or exposed to liabilities.

Key Takeaways

- » An LOD determination is a finding regarding the circumstances of a member's injury, illness, disease, or death
- » An LOD determination must be initiated for any death and certain injuries
- » Members on orders more than 30 days are presumed in Line of Duty (ILOD). The government bears the burden of rebutting this presumption.

Use of the LOD Determination

- An LOD determination may impact the following:
 - Disability, retirement, and severance pay
 - Forfeiture of pay
 - Extension of enlistment
 - Survivor Benefit Plan
 - Basic Educational Assistance Death Benefit
 - Medical benefits and incapacitation pay for members of the Air Reserve Component

Limits on Use of an LOD Determination

- An LOD determination shall not be used as a basis for disciplinary actions
- An active duty member cannot be denied medical treatment based on an LOD determination. Further, an LOD determination does not authorize recoupment of the cost of medical care for active duty members. Reserve component members will be financially responsible for medical expenses in accordance with DoDI 1241.01, *Reserve Component (RC) Line of Duty Determination for Medical and Dental Treatments and Incapacitation Pay Entitlements*.

When an LOD Determination is Required

- An LOD determination must be initiated on an AF Form 348, *Line of Duty Determination*, when the following occurs:
 - Death of a member: In every case involving the death of a member in any duty status, to include travel to and from a duty station
 - An injury involving likelihood of a permanent disability
 - An injury or disease involving alcohol or other drugs
 - A self-inflicted injury
 - An injury or disease possibly incurred during a period of unauthorized absence
 - The injury, disease, or medical condition may be due to the members intentional misconduct, or willful negligence
 - An injury or disease possibly incurred during a course of conduct for which charges have been preferred under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ); or the state military code for Air National Guard (ANG) members
 - For members of the Air Reserve Component (ARC) when:
 - The member incurs or aggravates an illness, injury, or disease, or receives any medical treatment while serving in any duty status, regardless of the member's ability to perform military duties
 - The member dies, or incurs, or aggravates an illness, injury or disease while traveling directly to or from the place at which duty is performed
 - The member dies, or incurs, or aggravates an illness, injury or disease while remaining overnight immediately before or between successive periods of inactive duty training (IDT), at or in the vicinity of the site of the IDT, if the site is outside reasonable commuting distance from the member's residence
 - Members have up to 180 days after completion of their current duty status to request consideration of their medical conditions for a LOD determination, absent special circumstances

Possible LOD Determinations

- In Line of Duty (ILOD): Means the illness, injury, disease, or death was not due to the member's misconduct and was incurred or aggravated when the member was in a qualified duty status
- Not In Line of Duty (NILOD):
 - *NILOD – Not Due to Member's Misconduct*: Means the member's illness, injury, disease, or death was not incurred or aggravated in a qualified duty status, and was not due to misconduct

- *NILOD – Due to Member’s Misconduct*: Follows a formal investigation that determined clear and convincing evidence that the member’s illness, injury, disease, or death was caused by the member’s misconduct

Standard of Proof for LOD Determinations

- Active duty members and reserve component members in a qualified duty status are presumed ILOD. The burden of proof is on the government to rebut this presumption using the appropriate standard of proof outlined below.
- *NILOD – Existed Prior to Service, Not Service Aggravated (EPTS-NSA)*: The standard of proof used to rebut an ILOD presumption, if the service member was in status for more than thirty days, is **clear and unmistakable evidence**. Clear and unmistakable evidence means undebatable information that the condition existed prior to military service or if increased in service was not aggravated by military service. In other words, reasonable minds could only conclude that the condition existed prior to military service from a review of all of the evidence in the record. It is a standard of evidentiary proof that is higher than a preponderance of the evidence and clear and convincing evidence. If the service member was in status for thirty days or less, the standard of proof used to rebut an ILOD presumption is preponderance of the evidence.
- *NILOD – Due to Member’s Misconduct*: Service members are presumed in the line of duty unless **clear and convincing evidence** demonstrates that the condition was the proximate cause of the misconduct. **Clear and convincing evidence** is defined as evidence indicating that the thing to be proved is highly probable or reasonably certain. It is a burden of proof that is higher than a preponderance of the evidence but lower than clear and unmistakable evidence.

Types of Processing for LOD Determinations

- *Administrative LOD*: Are permissible when a military medical provider sees a member under any of the below circumstances, he/she makes an administrative determination that the member’s condition is ILOD. This determination is final, and no further action is required.
 - As a hostile casualty (other than death)
 - As a passenger in a common carrier or military aircraft
 - The injury, illness or disease clearly did not involve misconduct, abuse of drugs or alcohol, or self-injurious behavior
 - The injury or illness is simple, such as a sprain, contusion, or minor fracture, and is not likely to result in permanent disability
 - For ARC, the medical provider may make an administrative determination to document a minor condition as ILOD if there is no likelihood of permanent disability, hospitalization, or requirement for continuing medical treatment

- **Informal LOD:** Are permissible when an administrative determination is not appropriate. The commander investigates the circumstances of the case to determine if the member's illness, injury, disease, or death occurred while the member was absent without authority, is due to the member's own misconduct or EPTS.
- **Interim LOD (ARC Only):** May be made to establish initial care and treatment for ARC members pending a final LOD determination. An Interim LOD determination should not be made if clear and unmistakable evidence shows an EPTS condition or that the member's misconduct was the proximate cause of the illness, injury, or disease.
- **Formal LOD:** Are made by higher authorities based upon a thorough investigation conducted by a specially appointed disinterested Investigating Officer (IO), in the grade of O-3 or above and senior to the member being investigated
 - Required to support a determination of NILOD due to a member's misconduct
 - The immediate commander may also recommend a Formal LOD determination when the member's illness, injury, disease, or death occurred under strange or doubtful circumstances or under circumstances the commander believes should be fully investigated
 - Follow guidance in DD Form 261, *Report of Investigation Line of Duty and Misconduct Cases*

LOD Determination Processing for Sexual Assault Cases

- A member who has incurred an injury, illness, or disease as a result of sexual assault while performing active duty service or IDT must have his/her LOD processed in accordance with DoDI 6495.02, Volume 1, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Program Procedures*
- The LOD determination process will vary depending on whether the member elects unrestricted or restricted reporting

LOD Determinations for Specific Situations

- (See DAFI 36-2910, *Line of Duty (LOD) Determination, Medical Continuation (MEDCON), and Incapacitation (INCAP) Pay*, Attachment 2, for guidance on common LOD situations)

References

- DoDI 1241.01, *Reserve Component (RC) Line of Duty Determination for Medical and Dental Treatments and Incapacitation Pay Entitlements* (19 April 2016)
- DoDI 1332.18, *Disability Evaluation System* (10 November 2022)
- DoDI 6495.02, *Volume 1, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Program Procedures* (28 March 2013), incorporating through Change 9, 18 March 2025
- DD Form 261, *Report of Investigation Line of Duty and Misconduct Status* (March 2021)
- DAFI 36-2910, *Line of Duty (LOD) Determination, Medical Continuation (MEDCON), and Incapacitation (INCAP) Pay* (3 September 2021), incorporating Change 1, 28 September 2022, including DAFGM2023-02, 17 November 2023, Reissued 12 November 2024
- AF Form 348, *Line of Duty Determination* (16 October 2020)
- AF Form 348R, *Line of Duty Determination for Restricted Report of Sexual Assault* (20 October 2015)

DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

The Disability Evaluation System (DES) is the mechanism for determining fitness for duty because of disability. The Secretary of the Air Force may retire, or separate service members who, because of a disability, (1) are unfit to perform the duties of their office, grade, rank, or rating, (2) represent a decided or obvious medical risk to themselves or others, or (3) impose unreasonable requirements on the military to protect or maintain their health or safety. When appropriate, the DES ensures fair compensation to members whose military careers are cut short due to service-incurred or service-aggravated medical conditions. Department of the Air Force service members, to include active duty, Guard, Reserve, Air Force cadets, and basic military training (BMT) trainees, who are facing medical separation, can all be referred into the DES.

Key Takeaways

- » When notified, a commander must provide a statement describing the impact a member's medical condition(s) has on his/her ability to accomplish unit missions
- » For those members eligible for the Limited Assignment Status (LAS) program, a memorandum from the service member's commander is required
- » Commanders must inform the Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO) of any pending administrative or unfavorable action arising before or during a service member's DES processing
- » ODC legal counsel is available for all members in the DES

Commander's Role and Responsibilities

- The member's immediate commander provides a retention recommendation via DAF Form 1185 describing the impact of the potentially unfitting medical condition(s) on the member's ability to perform assigned military duties in-garrison and in a deployed location
 - Commanders should consult with the member's primary care provider (PCM) to address any questions or concerns regarding the member's ability to perform assigned military duties
 - Commanders must review the contents of the impact statement with the service member
- Provide completed Line of Duty (LOD) determinations
- Must ensure service members are available to attend all required DES-related appointments
- Must ensure members are assigned military duties appropriate to their condition
- Will inform the PEBLO if an action is initiated that may lead to administrative discharge or any unfavorable actions

Pre-DES Screening Review

- In order to minimize inappropriate referrals, there is a pre-DES screening process for all potential Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) cases
 - Airman Medical Readiness Optimization (AMRO Board) review. The AMRO board is comprised of a team of medical professionals that review service members with conditions that may affect mobility, retention, or long-term physical fitness concerns.
 - The AMRO Board may dismiss a case if the service member is found to be fit for continued military service, or the AMRO board may apply an AAC 37 code and initiate an Initial Review in Lieu of (IRILO)
 - Airmen with conditions that may render them unfit for continued military service or unable to deploy must undergo an IRILO. This is an initial review of medical records in lieu of a full medical examination. Commanders are required to submit an DAF Form 1185, *Commander's Impact Statement for Medical Evaluation Board*.
 - AFPC/DPMNR or ARC/SGs are the referral decision authorities for referral into the DES and may determine Return to Duty

DES Processing

- Service members referred into the DES proceed through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) process unless an exception for the Legacy Disability Evaluation System (LDES) applies
 - IDES is the joint Department of War (DoW)/Veterans Affairs (VA) process by which DAF determines whether ill or injured Service members are fit for continued military service, and the DAF separates or retires members for disability based on a single set of disability ratings provided by the VA
 - LDES is the process by which DAF determines both whether ill or injured Service members are fit for continued military service, and determines the disability rating used to determine whether the member is separated or retired for disability. The Military Treatment Facility Commander or designee (O-6 or GS-15 equivalent or higher) may direct members into LDES by election of the service member or for compelling and individualized reasons Service members approved for LDES may apply for veterans' disability benefits through the VA Benefits Delivery at Discharge Program or upon attaining veteran status.
 - Non-Duty Disability Evaluation System (NDDES) is the Air Force process to determine whether an ARC service member with a nonduty related condition is fit for continued military service. Disability ratings are not assigned.

Disability Evaluation System Phases

- MEB:

- The MEB marks the first official phase of the DES
 - If the MEB determines the service member has a potentially unfitting condition(s), the MEB refers the case to the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) at the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC)
 - If the MEB determines the service member does not have a potentially unfitting condition(s) the MEB recommends the service member be returned to duty

- PEB:

- The PEB marks the second phase of the DES. The PEB is further divided into the Informal Physical Evaluation Board (IPEB) and the Formal Physical Evaluation Board (FPEB).
 - The IPEB and FPEB generally recommend one of the following five outcomes: return to duty, medical retirement, discharge with severance pay, discharge without benefits, or return without action for further processing
 - Service members have the right to appeal an unfit determination from the IPEB to the FPEB

PEB Appeals

- Service members have the right to appeal their results from the FPEB to the Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council (SAFPC). Additionally, members who believe the DES decision represents an error or injustice may appeal the decision to the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records following separation from service.

Limited Assignment Status

- Service members found unfit for duty by the PEB may apply for continued military service in a permanent limited duty status
- To be eligible for LAS, members must meet the following criteria:
 - Have 15 or more but less than 20 years active service or deemed combat wounded;
 - Possess qualification in a needed skill or shortage Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC);
 - The unfit medical condition must be essentially stable;
 - The ability to function in a normal military environment without adverse effect on member's health or the health of others, and without need for excessive medical care; and
 - Commanders must provide a retention recommendation for LAS applications.

Dual Action Processing

- In cases where a service member is concurrently processed for both disability evaluation and non-disability involuntary administrative separation
 - Commanders inform the PEBLO of any pending administrative or unfavorable action arising before or during the member's DES processing
 - Commanders should inform their servicing legal office of a pending disability evaluation concerning a member who is also pending involuntary administrative separation
 - (See DAFI 36-3212, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement and Separation*, para. 1.6, for specific guidance on dual action processing)

Office of Disability Counsel

- Government legal representation is made available for all members in the DES
- Regular Air Force (RegAF) and ARC judge advocates, civilian attorneys, and paralegals work at the Office of Disability Counsel (ODC)
 - The ODC's mission is to deliver prompt, professional, independent legal counsel to fit, ready warriors determined to return to the mission and to ill, injured, and wounded Airmen and Guardians facing medical separation from military service
 - Prior to referral into the DES, the ODC can provide general information to assist members in understanding any applicable rights and responsibilities. As members progress through the DES phases, the ODC can provide more specific advice aimed at developing a strategy to reach desired outcomes, such as being returned to duty, medical retirement, or receiving a medical discharge with severance pay.
 - The ODC provides representation at the FPEB and at SAFPC in instances of a DES related appeal. The ODC also assists with appeals of Veterans Affairs (VA) ratings for any unfitting condition(s) and MEB rebuttals.

References

- DoDI 1332.18, *Disability Evaluation System (DES)* (10 November 2022)
- DAFI 36-2910, *Line of Duty (LOD) Determination, Medical Continuation (MEDCON), and Incapacitation (INCAP) Pay* (3 September 2021) incorporating Change 1, 28 September 2022, including DAFGM2023-02, dated 17 November 2023, Reissued on 12 November 2024
- DAFI 36-3212, *Physical Evaluation for Retention, Retirement and Separation* (22 February 2024)
- DAFMAN 48-108, *Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO) Functions: Pre-Disability Evaluation System (DES) and Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) Processing* (5 August 2021)
- DAFMAN 48-123, *Medical Examinations and Standards* (8 December 2020) incorporating DAFGM2025-01, dated 29 July 2025

PROFILES AND DUTY LIMITATIONS

Service members may develop injuries, illnesses, or disabilities that impact their ability to perform military duties or deploy. Profiles and Duty Limiting Condition (DLC) procedures have been developed to ensure maximum utilization and readiness of personnel, while preserving members' health and minimizing risk of further injury or illness.

Key Takeaways

- » Healthcare providers should promptly notify commanders when a service member's health or ability to accomplish the mission is at risk due to health concerns
- » DLCs that restrict mobility for 365 consecutive days or 365 cumulative days in a three-year period will trigger review by the Airman Medical Readiness Optimization (AMRO) for potential referral to the Disability Evaluation System (DES)
- » Healthcare providers may disclose limited medical information to commanders, or another person designated by the commander, to determine a member's fitness for duty. Consult servicing legal representative for specific guidance.

Responsibilities

- Healthcare Providers:

- Determine at each encounter whether service members are able to perform duties required by their Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) or Space Force Specialty Code (SFSC), deploy, meet medical retention standards, and perform fitness assessments
- Use AF Form 469, *Duty Limiting Condition Report*, to promptly notify commanders when a service member's health or ability to accomplish the mission is at risk due to health concerns. Include specific recommendations regarding duty limitations and/or restrictions for service members.
- Department of the Air Force (DAF) medical providers will render the final authority on deployment, medical retainability and physical limitation recommendations made from civilian medical consultations

- Commanders:

- Ensure unit and individual medical readiness
- Ensure unit service members are available for and complete examinations including required follow-up studies and final disposition in a timely manner
- Ensure appropriate medical and occupational duty restrictions are relayed to supervisors while protecting sensitive health information
- Because commanders must know whether their subordinate members are fit for duty, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) allows for limited disclosures of health information to commanders in some circumstances, including fitness for duty determinations

- Commanders may consult with the medical unit's Senior Profiling Officer to appropriately utilize personnel with DLCs. An assessment based on operational risk to personnel assigned to a unit is critical to maintaining unit readiness at the highest degree possible.
- Commanders must contact the installation's Chief of Aerospace Medicine (MDG/SGP) within seven duty days of receipt of the mobility restricting AF Form 469 to contest any findings. The MTF must then re-adjudicate and resubmit the profile to the commander, within an additional seven duty days.
 - If the MDG/SGP and unit commander still disagree after the re-adjudication, the profile will stand, as it is a medical recommendation, and the commander can choose to accept the recommendation or not
- DAF Service Members:
 - Report any new medical condition, or any change in medical status, to the appropriate medical provider at the time of onset, and will report all medical or dental treatment obtained through civilian sources to the primary care team
 - Must attend all scheduled medical appointments as directed and inform unit supervisor of required follow-up evaluations and appointments
 - Must make all attempts to resolve medical conditions in a timely manner, including, but not limited to, attendance at all appointments, active participation in rehabilitation, and using medications as prescribed
 - When a service member's failure to comply with medical assessment requirements renders the Air Force Medical Service (AFMS) unable to determine the current medical status, the following actions will be deferred: clearance actions for deployment; PCS; retraining; attendance at service academies or professional military education (PME); military personnel appropriation (MPA) or Reserve Personnel Appropriation (RPA) orders; or any other orders status to include medical continuation (MEDCON) orders (ARC)

Duty Limiting Conditions

- A DLC is a medical condition which impairs, restricts, and/or prevents the military member from performing at least some requirements of military service or duties expected to be part of the member's AFSC/SFSC or a current or projected assignment
- DLCs annotated on an AF Form 469 must be reviewed for appropriateness and accuracy at every appointment/clinical encounter between the service member and a provider. Additionally, at a minimum, the AF Form 469 must be re-validated and renewed or revised at each preventative health assessment. A service member may only have one active AF Form 469 at a time.

- Any one of three circumstances will trigger special review by the AMRO board and potential referral to the DES: (1) a DLC that restricts mobility for 365 consecutive days; (2) any DLC that restricts mobility for 365 cumulative days in a three-year period; or (3) a DLC that may be considered unfitting for continued military service

Fitness Restrictions and Fitness Assessment Exemptions

- If a service member has a medical condition affecting fitness, but not impacting mobility, retention, or AFSC/SFSC duties, the provider who initially assesses the condition will generate an AF Form 469
- Permanent Profiles: May only be for fitness; require approval at the AMRO board prior to signature; require a note from the orthopedist or other appropriate specialist documenting medical condition is permanent, not likely to improve, and which recommends avoiding specific fitness activities; and require annual validation during Preventative Health Assessment (PHA) review
 - Permanent profiles may have multiple fitness restrictions without necessarily requiring further DES processing, so long as the member can still perform required actions for duty and deployment
- If the service member has a valid AF Form 469 and changes duty locations, the Form 469 is valid at the gaining installation for fitness restrictions (FRs) and fitness assessment exemptions (FAEs)

References

- DoDM 6025.18, *Implementation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule in DoD Health Care Programs* (13 March 2019)
- DAFMAN 48-123, *Medical Examinations and Standards* (8 December 2020), including DAFGM2025-01, 29 July 2025
- AFI 48-133, *Duty Limiting Conditions* (7 August 2020)
- AF Form 469, *Duty Limiting Condition Report* (31 January 2020)

OFFICER GRADE DETERMINATIONS

The Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) can retire regular and reserve officers in a lower grade than their highest grade held if their service has not been “satisfactory.” This authority has been delegated to the Director, Air Force Review Boards Agency, for those in the grade of colonel and below. General officer cases require SecAF resolution, with or without referral to a formal Officer Grade Determination (OGD) Board. Contact AF/JAJI – Investigations, Inquiries, and Relief for guidance on general officer cases.

Key Takeaway

- » OGDs are required where an officer’s conduct or record raises questions as to the quality of his/her service in a particular grade

Process

- When an officer applies for retirement, any commander in the officer’s chain may initiate an OGD if there is evidence the officer’s service in their current grade has been less than satisfactory
 - In making the “satisfactorily held” determination, consider the nature and length of the officer’s improper conduct, the impact the conduct had on military effectiveness, the quality and length of the officer’s service in each grade at issue, past cases involving similar conduct, and the recommendations of the officer’s command chain. A single incident of misconduct can render service in a grade unsatisfactory despite a substantial period of otherwise exemplary service.
- A commander or other appropriate authority **MUST** submit an OGD if the officer has:
 - Applied for retirement in lieu of judicial or administrative separation;
 - A conviction by court-martial;
 - A conviction by a civilian court for misconduct which did (or would) result in a mandatory comment and referral in the member’s next Officer Performance Brief (OPB), training report (TR), or Promotion Recommendation Form (PRF), in accordance with AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems*;
 - Received nonjudicial punishment pursuant to Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice, or a Letter of Reprimand, since the officer’s last promotion; or
 - Been the subject of any substantiated adverse finding from an officially documented investigation, proceeding, or inquiry (except minor traffic infractions), regardless of the command action taken against the officer (if any), since his/her last promotion.

- A commander **MAY** submit an OGD in other cases if he/she believes an OGD is appropriate
- At the time an officer applies for retirement, the commander will review the officer's record to determine if any of the above conditions exist. If, based on that review, one of the above conditions exists, the commander initiates an OGD.
 - The commander must notify the officer that an OGD is being initiated and why
 - All information relevant and material to the determination of "satisfactory service" must be provided
 - The officer is given 10 business days to respond
- All commanders within the officer's chain of command, up to and including the major command/field command (MAJCOM/FLDCOM), will make a recommendation regarding the officer's retirement grade
- For retirement in lieu of judicial or administrative separation, the officer is considered on notice that he/she is subject to an OGD based on that administrative or judicial action. The officer's commander is not required to separately notify the officer of the OGD unless the commander intends to add or consider evidence that was not already provided to the officer during the underlying administrative or judicial action.
- OGD packages, including matters and documents submitted by the member, are forwarded through the MAJCOM/FLDCOM to the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), which sends the case file to the Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council (SAFPC) for decision
- Any questions concerning officer misconduct, reporting requirements, or the appropriate administrative or judicial response to misconduct should be addressed through the servicing Staff Judge Advocate or MPF

References

- Regular Commissioned Officers, 10 U.S.C. § 1370
- Officers Entitled to Retired Pay for Non-Regular Service, 10 U.S.C. § 1370a
- DAFI 36-2023, *The Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council (SAFPC)* (3 June 2022)
- DAFI 36-3203, *Service Retirements* (5 July 2025)
- AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluations Systems* (22 August 2025)

TATTOOS/BRANDS, BODY PIERCING, AND BODY ALTERATION

DAFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Department of the Air Force Personnel*, governs the use of tattoos, body piercing, and body alterations by Department of the Air Force (DAF) members. Failure to abide by these instructions may subject DAF service members to prosecution for violation of a lawful general regulation under Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Additionally, commanders retain authority to be more restrictive for covering tattoos, body ornaments, and personal grooming based on legal, safety, sanitary, or foreign country cultural reasons.

Key Takeaway

- » DAFI 36-2903 governs the use of tattoos, brands, body markings, body piercing, and body alteration/modification by members both on- and off-duty
- » Members who violate the policy are subject to administrative action and/or prosecution under Article 92, UCMJ

Tattoos, Brands, or Body Markings

- Commanders will use the provisions in DAFI 36-2903 in determining the acceptability of tattoos, brands, and body markings displayed by members in uniform
 - A tattoo is defined as a picture, design, or marking made on the skin or other areas of the body by staining it with an indelible dye, or by any other method, including pictures, designs, or markings only detectable or visible under certain conditions (such as ultraviolet or invisible ink tattoos)
 - A brand is defined as a picture, design, or other marking that is burned into the skin or other areas of the body. Body markings are pictures, designs, or other markings as a result of using means other than burning to permanently scar or mark the skin.
- Authorized: Tattoos, brands, or body markings are authorized on the chest and back, arms, legs, feet, hands, and neck
 - Authorized hand, arm, leg, neck, and ring tattoos can be exposed/visible while in any uniform
 - Chest and back tattoos will not be visible through any uniform, or visible while wearing an open collar uniform
 - One tattoo on the neck is authorized and it will not exceed 1-inch in measurement in any direction. The neck tattoo will only be placed behind a vertical line at the opening of the ear orifice around the back to a vertical line at the opening of the other ear orifice and includes behind the ear.
 - Ring tattoos are limited to a single band on one finger of each hand, no more than 3/8-inch in width below the knuckle and above the finger joint (portion closest to the palm). In addition to the ring tattoo, a single tattoo is authorized on each hand; the tattoo will not exceed the size of 1-inch measured in any direction.

- Cosmetic tattooing (for men or women), when directed by qualified medical personnel to correct a medical condition, illness, or injury. Also permitted for women if done to apply permanent facial makeup and for men if for permanent cosmetics for scalp only to create a natural hair appearance.
- Members may request an exception to policy (ETP) for location or size of tattoos prior to receiving them in accordance with procedures outlined in DAFI 36-2903
- Unauthorized: Tattoos, brands, or body markings anywhere on the body that are indecent or obscene, commonly associated with gangs or extremist/supremacist organizations, or that advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are prohibited in and out of uniform
 - Commanders should contact their servicing Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) unit for additional information on potential identification of gang/hate group tattoos, brands, or body markings
 - Tattoos, brands, or body markings with unauthorized content that are prejudicial to good order and discipline, or the content is of a nature that tends to bring discredit upon the Air Force or Space Force, are prohibited both in and out of uniform
 - Likewise, other than those authorized in DAFI 36-2903, tattoos, brands, or body markings are prohibited on the head, face, tongue, lip, eyes, and scalp
 - Airmen and Guardians may not simply cover up tattoos, brands, or body markings with bandages or make-up in order to comply with this policy

Tattoo Removal/Alteration Policy

- DAF members who have or receive unauthorized content tattoos, brands, or body markings are required to initiate tattoo, brand, or body marking removal and alteration. At the commander's discretion, members may be seen on a space and resource available basis in a Department of War (DoW) medical treatment facility for voluntary tattoo, brand, or body marking removal. When DoW resources are not available, members may have the tattoo, brand, or body marking removed or altered at their own expense outside of DoW medical treatment facilities. Permissive TDY is not authorized for this purpose; travel is at member's expense.
- Members who fail to remove or alter unauthorized tattoos, brands, or body markings in a timely manner will be subject to appropriate administrative and disciplinary actions. The requirement to comply with DAF guidance is not negated by an inability to obtain removal at government expense. The member is ultimately responsible for complying with DAF guidance, while supervisors and commanders are charged with enforcing standards via appropriate actions.

Body Piercing

- Earrings:

- Male DAF service members are not authorized to wear earrings while in uniform or in civilian attire for official duty but are authorized to wear earrings in civilian attire while off-duty on a military installation
- Female DAF service members may wear small (not exceeding 6 mm in diameter) conservative (moderate, being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme) round or square white diamond, gold, white pearl, or silver earrings as a set with any uniform combination. If member has multiple holes, only one set of earrings are authorized to be worn in uniform and will be worn in the lower earlobes. Earrings will match and fit tightly without extending below the earlobe unless the piece extending is the connecting band on clip earrings.
- On official duty in uniform or civilian attire (on or off a military installation): With the exception of earrings for females (see previous paragraphs on earrings above), all members are prohibited from attaching, affixing, or displaying objects, articles, jewelry, or ornamentation to or through the ear, nose, tongue, eyebrows, lips, or any exposed body part (includes visible through clothing). Transparent spacers are not allowed for male or females service members in ear holes outside of the lower earlobes or any other piercing holes visible in uniform. Piercing holes will not be large enough to permit light to shine through.

Body Alteration/Modification

- Dental Ornamentation: Teeth, whether natural, capped, or veneered, will not be ornamented with designs, jewels, initials, etc. The use of yellow gold, white gold, or platinum caps (permanent or temporary) merely to add ornamentation to the teeth and not required by dental/medical necessity is prohibited. Waivers are not required for Air Force members or recruits with permanent yellow gold, white gold or platinum caps that were applied as a result of dental/medical necessity. Members with official documentation that they received permanent yellow gold, white gold, or platinum caps which were not applied as a result of dental/medical necessity prior to 13 June 2011, are exempted. No other dental ornamentation is exempted.
- Members are prohibited from altering or modifying their bodies if the alteration is intentional and results in a visible, physical effect that disfigures, deforms, or otherwise detracts from a professional military image
- Examples include, but are not limited to, tongue splitting or forking, tooth filing, and acquiring visible, disfiguring skin implants, and gauging (piercing holes large enough to permit light to shine through)

References

- DAFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Department of the Air Force Personnel* (29 February 2024), Guidance Memorandum dated 11 July 2025
- SPFGM2023-36-01, *Space Force Guidance Memorandum Establishing United States Space Force (USSF) Dress and Appearance Standards* (8 November 2023), Corrective Action, 30 November 2023

RETALIATION

Retaliation is punishable under Article 132, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), or AFI 36-2909, *Air Force Professional Relationships and Conduct*. Retaliation against individuals who report criminal offenses or make protected communications is unlawful and erodes good order and discipline, respect for authority, unit cohesion, and mission accomplishment.

Key Takeaway

- » Military members shall not retaliate against an alleged victim or other military member who makes, or is planning to make, a protected communication or reports a criminal offense
- » Protected communications include communications to a member of Congress or an Inspector General (IG), or complaints/disclosures of a violation of law or regulation
- » Retaliation is a broad term that includes retaliation, ostracism, and maltreatment, all of which are punishable under AFI 36-2909
- » Commanders and supervisors must take appropriate action when they believe retaliation has occurred and may be held responsible for failing to act in certain circumstances

Overview

- Retaliation is a categorical term that includes retaliation, ostracism, and maltreatment
 - Pursuant to Article 132, UCMJ, the offense of retaliation involves the abuse of otherwise lawful military authority for the purpose of retaliating against any person for reporting, or planning to report, a criminal offense or for making, or planning to make, a protected communication
 - Article 132, UCMJ also prohibits the use of military authority for the purpose of preemptively discouraging any person from making a criminal report or protected communication
 - Article 132, UCMJ, specifically prohibits taking adverse personnel actions, or withholding favorable personnel actions, for unlawful purposes
 - Personnel Action: Any action taken that affects, or has the potential to affect, that service member's current position or career. Examples include disciplinary or other corrective action, transfer or reassignment, performance evaluations, decisions concerning pay, benefits, awards or training, relief and removal, separation, referral for mental health evaluations, and any other personnel action defined by law.
 - A significant change in duties and responsibilities inconsistent with the service member's grade may also constitute a personnel action

- Pursuant to AFI 36-2909, Chapter 5, retaliation may also take the form of ostracism or maltreatment
 - Ostracism is wrongfully excluding a military member from social acceptance or membership in, or association with, a group of which such member was a part, or a reasonable person would conclude wanted to be a part. Furthermore, there must be a nexus to the individual's military service.
 - The efforts to exclude the military member must involve the intent to do any of the following: (1) inflict emotional distress on the military member; (2) discourage reporting of a criminal offense or sexual harassment; or (3) otherwise discourage the due administration of justice concerning a criminal offense or sexual harassment
 - Maltreatment is treatment by another, that, when viewed objectively under all the circumstances, is cruel, abusive, or otherwise unnecessary for any lawful purpose, that is done with the intent to discourage reporting a criminal offense, or otherwise discourage the due administration of justice
 - If the maltreatment is done to a subordinate, the perpetrator may be punished under Article 93, UCMJ
- Supervisors and commanders who retaliate against subordinates for complaints of discrimination, protected communications, or general "whistleblower complaints" may subject the Air Force to civil liability

Protected Communications

- Preemptively discouraging any person from making a protected communication is a form of retaliation
- There are two types of protected communications:
 - A lawful communication to a member of Congress or an IG; or
 - A communication to a covered individual complaining of or disclosing a violation of law or regulation (including sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination) or reporting gross mismanagement, gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.
 - Covered individuals include (but are not limited to): a member of Congress, an IG, a member of a Department of War (DoW) audit, inspection, investigation, or law enforcement organization, any person or organization in the chain of command, a court-martial, or any other person or organization designated pursuant to regulations for such communications

Command Actions in Response to Retaliation

- Commanders, supervisors, and first sergeants, at all levels have the authority and responsibility to ensure subordinates do not retaliate against an alleged victim or other military member who reports a criminal offense. Commanders, supervisors, and first sergeants have a duty to prevent retaliation and may be held accountable for failing to act in appropriate cases.
- Commanders, first sergeants, and supervisors should evaluate cases involving retaliation or allegations of retaliation to determine if they involve a reprisal for making a protected communication or an attempt to restrict someone from making a protected communication. If so, the allegation must be immediately referred to the Inspector General Complaints Resolution Program.
- As soon as practicable, the alleged victim, or other military member who is believed to have been retaliated against, will be informed that command is aware of the suspected act or acts of retaliation, and that the alleged offenders have been ordered to cease from engaging in any further retaliation
- The individual retaliated against will be advised to report any further acts of retaliation

References

- Articles 93 and 132, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program* (23 May 2024), incorporating Change 1, 23 July 2025
- DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution* (4 January 2024)
- AFI 36-2909, *Air Force Professional Relationships and Conduct* (14 November 2019)

NO CONTACT ORDERS AND MILITARY PROTECTION ORDERS

Commanders may issue two kinds of protective orders: “no contact orders” and Military Protection Orders (MPOs). “No contact orders” can be issued by commanders, first sergeants, and other members senior in rank to the recipient of the order. They are issued to temporarily stop communications between two or more parties who are involved in a dispute that does not rise to the level of a criminal investigation or to safeguard the investigative process in a criminal matter. MPOs may only be issued by a commander (an officer on G-series orders) and are typically issued to protect a person from a subject during criminal investigations and prosecutions (usually to stop spousal, child, or intimate partner abuse).

Key Takeaways

- » No contact orders and MPOs are directed towards military personnel and prohibit them from having communication or physical contact with a particular person or persons
- » Only a commander may issue an MPO
- » MPOs must be completed on a DD Form 2873, *Military Protection Order*
- » No contact orders should be in writing with a written receipt from the recipient. A verbal no contact order should only be given in exigent circumstances and should be issued in writing as soon as possible.
- » Protective orders cannot preclude a member from contacting defense counsel and cannot preclude defense counsel from contacting potential witnesses as part of an investigation

Standard

- Reasonably necessary to ensure the safety and security of persons within a command or to protect other individuals from persons within the command

Purpose

- To protect others, safeguard the investigative process, or prevent continuing misconduct (e.g., prevent continued contact between parties accused of unprofessional relationships in violation of AFI 36-2909, *Air Force Professional Relationships and Conduct*, or fraternization in violation of Article 134, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ))
 - Most often used to protect victims of domestic violence, child abuse, or crime victims from contact with the accused pending investigation or court-martial
 - If a victim of sexual assault requests either a no contact order or MPO, the commander may either issue the order or deny the request. If the request is denied, the reasons must be documented and forwarded to the installation commander as the final approval authority.

Scope

- MPOs/no contact orders must be tailored to meet the specific needs of an individual victim. Limitations may include, but are not limited to:
 - Prohibiting communication or physical interaction
 - Refrain from contacting, harassing, or touching certain named persons
 - Do, or refrain from doing, certain acts or activities
 - May also include provisions to remain a specific distance away from protected persons and/or locations
- MPOs/no contact orders **MAY NOT** preclude the defense counsel of a member from contacting a potential witness as part of counsel's investigation in a pending case

Duration

- No contact orders should state the term length, be limited in duration, and may be renewed as circumstances warrant
- MPOs do not expire but may be modified or rescinded by the commander and must be completed via DD Form 2873-1. Due to MPOs not expiring, commanders are required to review MPOs periodically.
- The subject of the MPO may request a review of that MPO from the issuing commander

Form of Protective Orders

- No contact orders should be in writing with a receipt confirmed in writing by the recipient. Verbal no contact orders should only be issued under exigent circumstances and should be put into writing as soon as possible after issuance.
- Commanders must use DD Form 2873 when issuing an MPO

Relationship of Military Protective Orders to Civilian Protective Orders

- MPOs can be issued in conjunction with, or in addition to, Civilian Protective Orders (CPOs) (a.k.a. Restraining Orders) issued by civilian courts. Commanders will advise MPO-protected persons that MPOs are not enforceable by civilian authorities, so protected persons may want to pursue a CPO off-base in addition to an MPO. However, civilian law enforcement may notify military law enforcement of an MPO violation if the MPO is properly indexed in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and therefore visible to civilian law enforcement. Civilian authorities also may not enforce no contact orders. A no contact order cannot be indexed in the NCIC, therefore it may be prudent to advise no contact order protected persons of the availability of a CPO or possibly an MPO, as well.
- Civilian court issued restraining orders have the same force and effect on a military installation as they would have within the jurisdiction of the court that issued such orders

- The terms of a no contact order/MPO should not be less restrictive than the terms of a CPO. However, a commander may issue a no contact order/MPO with terms that are more restrictive than those in the CPO.
- Violations of a CPO are enforceable in the civilian court that issued the order. The military may pursue administrative or disciplinary action for violations of CPOs/MPOs/no contact orders.

Enforceability

- Violation of a no contact order or an MPO may be punishable under the UCMJ, including under Articles 90 and 92

References

- Civilian Orders of Protection: Force and Effect on Military Installations, 10 U.S.C. § 1561a(a)
- Duration of Military Protective Orders, 10 U.S.C. § 1567
- Mandatory Notification of Issuance of Military Protective Order to Civilian Law Enforcement, 10 U.S.C. § 1567a
- Articles 90 and 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Rule for Courts-Martial 304 (2024)
- DoDI 6400.06, *DoD Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse Involving DoD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel* (15 December 2021), incorporating through Change 4, 29 August 2025
- DoDI 6495.02, Volume 1, *Adult Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: Program Procedures* (28 March 2013), incorporating through Change 9, 18 March 2025
- DD Form 2873, *Military Protection Order* (March 2025)
- DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI 51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025
- AFI 36-2909, *Air Force Professional Relationships and Conduct* (14 November 2019)
- AFMAN 71-102, *Air Force Criminal Indexing* (21 July 2020), including DAFMAN71-102_DAFGM2025-01, 15 September 2025

Chapter 8

PERSONNEL ISSUES – FAMILY AND NEXT OF KIN

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FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The mission of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is to build healthy communities by implementing programs and policies for the prevention and treatment of domestic abuse, child abuse and neglect, and Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Youth (PSB-CY). The FAP enhances DAF readiness by promoting family and community health and resilience through prevention services, maltreatment intervention, and research and evaluation.

Key Takeaways

- » FAP aims to promote healthy families, healthy communities, and resilience in service members and their families
- » Commanders must report incidents of domestic abuse to military law enforcement and FAP
- » Commanders must report any credible information or reasonable suspicion of child maltreatment to FAP
- » Command participation is critical to the success of the DAF FAP

Applicability of FAP to Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard

- Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC):

- The AFRC does not maintain a FAP. Reserve service members and their families, when not eligible for care in a military treatment facility (MTF), are routinely managed by civilian social services agencies in conjunction with civilian law enforcement agencies.

- Air National Guard (ANG):

- The DAF FAP provides services to ANG members when they are serving in a Title 10 or Title 32 status and are not in the dual status Technician Program
- When a member who is suspected of domestic abuse or child maltreatment is in the Technician Program, the case will be considered by the ANG installation unit Director of Psychological Health for information and referral. Consult with the servicing Staff Judge Advocate to determine applicability.

Command Responsibilities

- Domestic Abuse: Commanders are required to refer any incident of domestic abuse reported or discovered independent of law enforcement to military law enforcement or the appropriate criminal investigative agency and to FAP. Adult victims of domestic abuse have two reporting options:
 - *Unrestricted Reporting*: Allows the adult victim to report an incident using chain of command, law enforcement, or FAP for clinical intervention and may pursue command or criminal investigation

- *Restricted Reporting*: Allows an adult victim to report an incident to a domestic abuse victim advocate (DAVA), FAP staff member, or any health care provider for the purpose of receiving medical care and supportive services without triggering the investigative process or notification to the victim or alleged offender's command
- Child Maltreatment: Commanders are required to report all known or suspected incidents of domestic abuse or credible information of child maltreatment to FAP
- Commanders will direct regular component alleged abusers to FAP for assessment. If the Central Registry Board (CRB) determines that an incident meets criteria for maltreatment or abuse, the commander directs the active component offender to complete recommended treatment.
- Commanders ensure no contact orders and Military Protective Orders are issued in accordance with DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice*
- Commanders must ensure that, when applicable, family members are aware of eligibility for transitional compensation

FAP Structure and Key Elements

- The ultimate responsibility to implement FAP rests with the installation commander. The MTF service commander administers and monitors the installation FAP.
- Family Advocacy Committee (FAC): The FAC coordinates local policies, agreements and procedures with installation agencies and community partners to ensure the safety of victims of domestic abuse and child maltreatment, alleged offenders, family members and the community at large. The FAC includes multidisciplinary members of the installation community as set forth in DAFI 40-301, *Family Advocacy Program*.
- Central Registry Board (CRB): The CRB is the DAF Incident Determination Committee (IDC) for the FAP. The CRB makes administrative determinations regarding whether alleged domestic abuse or child maltreatment incidents meet DoW criteria, requiring entry into a central registry database for substantiated incidents. Membership is determined set forth in DAFI 40-301. Squadron Commanders attend and serve as voting members for incidents involving members of their squadron.
- Clinical Case Staffing (CCS): The CCS is the forum for clinical management of domestic abuse and child maltreatment cases; the CSS makes recommendations for each new or open domestic abuse or child maltreatment case. The CCS is chaired by the Family Advocacy Officer (FAO) and includes relevant FAP staff and healthcare personnel.
- Child Sexual Maltreatment Response Team (CSMRT): This multidisciplinary team is activated immediately upon receipt of a child sexual abuse allegation to manage the initial response, minimize the risk of trauma to the victim and family, and ensure coordinated decision making and case management. Membership is in accordance with DAFI 40-301.

- The CSMRT also addresses PSB-CY, defined as behavior initiated by someone under 18 that involves sexual body parts in a manner that deviates from normative and typical sexual behavior and is developmentally inappropriate or potentially harmful
- High Risk for Violence Response Team (HRVRT): This multidisciplinary team is activated when there is a threat of immediate and serious harm to family members, unmarried intimate partners, FAP staff, or command in relation to FAP incidents. The HRVRT addresses safety issues and risk factors to develop and implement a coordinated plan to manage the risk. Membership is as set forth in DAFI 40-301.

Managing Child Safety in Foreign Locations

- At foreign locations, host nation laws apply to all civil matters; host nations generally maintain jurisdiction of cases where the welfare of a child is at risk, unless otherwise agreed upon in a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), or other treaty, or international agreement
- DAF defers to host nation authorities unless emergency conditions require immediate action to protect a child from an imminent risk of death or serious bodily harm or neglect. In such cases, the installation commander may direct separation of the child and the alleged offender for up to 48 hours. (See DAFI 40-301, Attachment 5, for further guidance.)

References

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- DoDI 6400.01, *Family Advocacy Program (FAP)* (1 May 2019)
 - DoDI 6400.03, *Family Advocacy Command Assistance Team (FACAT)* (25 April 2014), incorporating Change 1, 3 April 2017
 - DoDI 6400.06, *DoD Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse Involving DoD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel* (15 December 2021), incorporating through Change 3, 11 July 2024
 - DoDI 6400.10, *DoD Coordinated Community Response to Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Youth* (30 December 2021), incorporating Change 1, 26 August 2025
 - DoDM 6400.01, Vol. 1, *Family Advocacy Program (FAP): FAP Standards* (22 July 2019)
 - DoDM 6400.01, Vol. 2, *Family Advocacy Program (FAP): Child Abuse and Domestic Abuse Incident Reporting System* (11 August 2016)
 - DoDM 6400.01, Vol. 3, *Family Advocacy Program: Clinical Case Staff Meeting and Incident Determination Committee* (11 August 2016), incorporating Change 1, 16 July 2021
 - DAFI 40-301, *Family Advocacy Program* (13 November 2020), including DAFGM2025-01, 29 August 2025
 - DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice* (24 January 2024), including DAFI51-201_DAFGM2025-01, 18 March 2025

CHILD CUSTODY AND THE MILITARY

Child custody laws vary by state, but generally employ a “best interest of the child” standard. Courts will usually look at many factors in determining the child’s best interests. Military members will likely need assistance in navigating court proceedings and managing substantial stress and emotions. Service members should be aware of state and federal laws that protect their custodial interests and prohibit using military service as a sole factor in deciding custody.

Key Takeaways

- » If a Department of the Air Force (DAF) service member is going through a child custody dispute, they should be encouraged to seek advice from an attorney
- » A court may consider the possibility of deployments in drafting alternative visitation arrangements, but military service cannot be the sole factor considered regarding custody
- » DAF service members with unresolved custody disputes may suffer complications with their court proceedings if consideration is not given to military requirements such as a permanent change of station (PCS)
- » Commanders must ensure all DAF service members establish a Family Care Plan choosing individuals that would in fact be able to care for children in an emergency
- » At a minimum, Airmen and Guardians should support dependents as required by DAFI 36-2906, *Personal Financial Responsibility*

State Jurisdiction

- The Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (UCCJEA) limits jurisdiction in child custody cases to the child’s “home state.” Forty-nine states and the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the UCCJEA; while as of July 2025, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa have not. However, the Massachusetts Senate unanimously passed legislation to conform with the UCCJEA and are currently pending the House of Representatives for consideration. Courts of any UCCJEA state will enforce the child custody rulings of courts in other UCCJEA states.
 - The “home state” is defined as the state where the child has lived for six consecutive months (or since birth if the child is less than six months old) prior to the commencement of the custody proceedings
 - If state jurisdiction cannot be established as described, then it can be established by (1) “significant connections” with the child and one parent; and (2) “substantial evidence concerning the child’s care, protection, training, and personal relationships.” If more than one qualifies, then the states must agree which will assume jurisdiction.

- Continuing Exclusive Jurisdiction: The state that makes the initial custody determination maintains jurisdiction for modifications unless the court determines that the child, the child's parents, and any person acting as a parent no longer have a significant connection with the state or until any state determines that the child, the child's parents, and any person acting as a parent no longer reside in the decree-granting state
- **Note**: A child's relocation for the duration of a parent's deployment could result in a change of jurisdiction
- Emergency Jurisdiction: A court in a state other than the home state may assume temporary jurisdiction when a child is (1) present in the state; and (2) has been abandoned or subjected to or threatened with mistreatment or abuse

Best Interest of the Child Standard

- Courts will usually make custody decisions based primarily on the child's best interest. Factors the court may consider include, but are not limited to:
 - Child's age; sex; mental/emotional/social development; comfort in their home, school and community, degree of emotional attachment of the child to each parent, or child's preference (for children over ages 12–14 in most states)
 - Physical, emotional, social, and financial stability of each parent, history of domestic violence or child abuse, involvement with the child, and willingness to cooperate with the other parent

Deployment as a Factor in Determining Custody Arrangements

- The effects of deployment are often considered by the courts as one of the factors in determining the best interest of the child. Several laws were enacted to help ensure custody is not determined solely based on the issue of deployment or the threat of deployment. For instance:
 - Nearly every state has laws addressing custody and visitation of deployed parents, including 17 states that have adopted the Uniform Deployed Parents' Custody and Visitation Act (UDPCVA). The key aspects of the UDPCVA are that it forbids consideration of military service as a negative factor in determining custody, and that a "military absence" of a military parent won't be used to deprive that state of custody jurisdiction.
 - The UDPCVA also allows delegation of a deploying parent to petition for delegation of parenting time to a third-party adult with whom the child has a close relationship (such as a stepparent or grandparent) rather than to the non-deploying parent. Some non-UDPCVA states have laws with similar provisions (e.g., Arizona, Illinois, and South Carolina).

- The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) also limits a state court's consideration of a member's deployment as the sole factor in determining the best interest of the child and this law applies in all states
- Despite these prohibitions, parents with primary custody should consult with a lawyer in developing their Family Care Plan prior to a deployment. In some states, courts have found that long absences due to deployments are a "change in circumstances" warranting a change in primary custody.

Mobility as a Factor in Determining Custody Arrangements

- The impact that a change to a child's environment (e.g., frequent Permanent Change of Station moves) has on a child's well-being is also likely to be considered by individual judges and guardians ad litem in determining the best interest of the child. While states are prohibited from discriminating against service members in making custody decisions, service members should be aware of this and make efforts to dispel myths judges may have about military service and highlight the benefits that military service provides a child.
- While PCSs can disrupt a child's life, it also gives them unique and profound opportunities to live and experience different cultures and learn about the world around them. Each child handles the stressors of military life differently and the individual needs of the child need to be considered.
- Commanders should encourage members to take advantage of the many resources available to support military families, including mental health services, child development centers, outdoor recreation and recreational sports leagues, religious services, Military and Family Readiness Centers, military treatment facilities, and other base activities. Service members should highlight these resources to their counsel and judges to ensure these are considered when making custody decisions.
 - DoDI 1342.19_DAFI 36-2908, *Family Care Plans*, requires certain service members plan for contingencies in the care and support of dependent family members
 - The following service members, including civilian employees who are members of the Department of War (DoW) Civilian Expeditionary Workforce, shall develop and submit a family care plan on an DAF Form 357, *Family Care Certification*
 - Single parents and service members who have primary responsibility for dependent family members
 - Dual-service member couples with dependents and married service members with custody or joint custody of a child whose non-custodial biological or adoptive parent is not the current spouse of the service member, or who otherwise bears sole responsibility for the care of children under the age of 18, or for others unable to care for themselves in the absence of the member
 - Civilian employees and contractor personnel in essential positions are also strongly encouraged to establish family care plans

- Service members, particularly those with primary custody, should consult with their attorney to consider what impact their Family Care Plan could have on their custody arrangement

Child Support

- Child support issues also fall under state law and are determined by state courts
 - Military members who are going through a divorce or custody determination should document the support they provided
 - In accordance with DAFI 36-2906, *Personal Financial Responsibility*, military members will provide financial support to dependents for which the member receives allowances for support. Military members must comply with a written support agreement or court order to provide support, but absent that, commanders will use the guidance in DAFI 36-2906 to calculate the support required for a service member's dependents.
 - DAFI 36-2906 contains a formula for determining the financial support required of service members. (See DAFI 36-2906 for more details on how to complete this calculation and to see various exceptions.)

References

- Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3901 *et seq.*
- Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (citation varies by state)
- Uniform Deployed Parents' Custody and Visitation Act (citation varies by state)
- DoDI 1342.19_DAFI 36-2908, *Family Care Plans* (10 March 2023)
- DAFI 36-2906, *Personal Financial Responsibility* (31 March 2025)
- DAF Form 357, *Family Care Certification* (20 June 2023)

FAMILY MEMBER MISCONDUCT

Installation commanders are often called upon to resolve difficult problems arising from family member misconduct. The installation commander is responsible for maintaining good order and discipline and protecting Department of the Air Force (DAF) resources. However, the installation commander has no authority to punish civilians. Nonetheless, there are certain actions available to address family member misconduct.

Key Takeaways

- » Installation commanders have several options for allegations of family member misconduct, up to and including barment
- » The forum for prosecution of civilian criminal offenses depends on the type of jurisdiction on-base
- » Early return of dependents from a foreign country based on family member misconduct may be authorized under certain conditions

Administrative Actions

- The installation commander may suspend or revoke certain privileges in the event of family member misconduct. This can include: access to the Base Exchange/Commissary, access to Morale, Welfare, and Recreation facilities, and a driving suspension on base. **Note:** driving suspension may be mandatory in certain circumstances (e.g., drunk driving).
- The installation commander may also terminate military family housing. This requires a written notice 30 days in advance. In the event that military family housing is terminated, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) will pay for the family's move. However, partial dislocation allowance is not authorized.
- The installation commander may bar family members from base, either permanently or temporarily. Entering an installation after being barred is a crime under 18 U.S.C. § 1382. Note that barment should be in writing and should include the specific reasons for barment as well as the time period. If a family member is still authorized to receive medical treatment, their barment must provide access to the base for the purpose of medical treatment.

Criminal Actions

- Where criminal actions occurring on a military installation will be prosecuted depends upon the legislative jurisdiction of the base. Consult with your servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) for guidance on prosecuting civilians for offenses committed on a military installation.
- If the base is under exclusive federal jurisdiction, family members may be prosecuted before a U.S. Magistrate. In most cases, at least one of the attorneys in the legal office serves as a Special Assistant United States Attorney (SAUSA) and handles these prosecutions in coordination with the local United States Attorney's Office.

- If the base has concurrent jurisdiction, either federal court or state court may be the proper forum for prosecuting family members
- If the base has only proprietary jurisdiction, which means that the state retains law enforcement authority, the state may prosecute family member misconduct (involving only state crimes) occurring on the installation. Any family member misconduct should be referred to the local authorities for prosecution.
- Some installations have established programs for handling juvenile misconduct. These programs go by a variety of names such as Juvenile Correction Board, Youth Misconduct Board, Juvenile Intervention Council, etc. These boards consider cases of misconduct committed by juveniles (unmarried non-military persons under the age of 18 years old) and recommend to the installation commander how to handle the matter. Although participation in the program is voluntary, juveniles who choose not to participate may be subject to other actions to include, but not limited to, barment from the base.

Early Return of Dependents (OCONUS)

- Table 5-20 of *The Joint Travel Regulations* (JTR) specifies the eligibility and allowances for the early return of dependents when a command sponsored dependent of a member stationed in a foreign country becomes involved in an incident that is any of the following:
 - Embarrassing to the United States
 - Prejudicial to the command's order, morale, and discipline
 - Facilitates the conditions in which the dependent's safety can no longer be ensured due to adverse public feeling in the area or due to force protection and antiterrorism considerations
 - Requires the dependent to register as a sex offender under the laws of any jurisdiction

References

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- Entering Military, Naval, or Coast Guard Property, 18 U.S.C. § 1382
 - The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), current edition
 - DoDM-5200.08_Volume 3_AFMAN 31-101_Volume 3, *Installation Perimeter Access Control* (27 February 2020)
 - DAFI 34-110(I), *Army and Air Force Exchange Service Operations* (23 January 2024)
 - DAFI 36-3026, Volume 1, *Identification Cards for Members of the Uniformed Services, Their Eligible Family Members, and Other Eligible Personnel* (1 June 2023)
 - AFI 32-6000, *Housing Management* (18 March 2020), including DAFGM2024-01, 2 May 2025
 - AFI 51-206, *Use of Magistrate Judges for Trial of Misdemeanors Committed by Civilians* (31 August 2018)

ON-BASE FAMILY HOUSING

Congress established the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) in 1996 with the goal to improve the quality of life for service members. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020 established the elements of the MHPI Tenant Bill of Rights. These 18 elements are codified in 10 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 2890, and military commanders should generally be aware of them.

Key Takeaways

- » The Tenant Bill of Rights was established to ensure safe, quality, and well-maintained living conditions and communities as well as fair treatment of tenants by privatized housing companies
- » The Formal Dispute Resolution process provides tenants a means for resolving disputes with privatized housing landlords. The installation commander serves as the deciding official.
- » Military tenants and their dependents are entitled to the assistance of a legal assistance attorney for privatized housing issues

Tenant Bill of Rights

- The goal of the MHPI Tenant Bill of Rights is to ensure safe, quality, and well-maintained living conditions and communities as well as fair treatment from private partners (privatized housing companies) that operate and maintain privatized housing. The Tenant Bill of Rights contains eighteen rights, such as the right to reside in a housing unit with working fixtures, appliances, and utilities, to seek legal assistance housing matters, and the right to a written lease with clearly defined rental terms.

Formal Dispute Resolution Process

- 10 U.S.C. § 2894 requires a standardized Formal Dispute Resolution Process for tenants to resolve disputes with privatized housing companies. This process can be found in the MHPI universal lease.
 - In order to utilize the Formal Dispute Resolution Process, tenants must first attempt to resolve the dispute through the Informal Dispute Resolution Process, working directly with the privatized housing company
 - If the Informal Dispute Resolution Process is unsuccessful, the tenant may elect to submit a written request for Formal Dispute Resolution in accordance with the lease. The Military Housing Office (MHO) receives all Formal Disputes. The installation commander serves as the “deciding authority” and must appoint a neutral investigator to investigate the tenant’s claims.

- Under certain circumstances, tenants can request that their rent payments be held in a separate account (known as “Rent Segregation”) pending resolution of the dispute. The MHO makes this determination.
- Tenants are not required to utilize this process before seeking remedies through civilian courts

Termination from Privatized Housing

- Tenancy may be terminated by the privatized housing company if a member/tenant does not abide by the terms of the signed tenant lease
- Military members and their dependents are entitled to legal assistance from the base legal office regarding issues related to privatized housing

References

- Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants of Housing Units, 10 U.S.C. § 2890
- Landlord-Tenant Dispute Resolution Process and Treatment of Certain Payments During Process, 10 U.S.C. § 2894
- AFI 32-6000, *Housing Management* (18 March 2020), including DAFGM2024-01, 7 May 2024
- SAF/IEI Formal Dispute Resolution Implementation Guidance, 29 June 2021

AIR FORCE CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAM

Installation commanders are required to mandate appropriate facilities, funding, and manpower to operate the child and youth programs (CYPs) on their installation. The goal of the CYP is to assist Department of War (DoW) personnel in balancing duty and family life obligations by providing family services for youth from birth to 18 years of age. These services take the form of child development centers (CDC), family childcare (FCC) homes, school age care (SAC), and youth programs.

Key Takeaways

- » AF/A1 and the AF Services Center manage the Department of the Air Force (DAF) CYP enterprise including child development center, school age care, and family child-care homes
- » Airmen and Guardians have a variety of childcare options available on the installation that meet their family's needs, duty location, and best fit for their child(ren)
- » When waiting times exceed needs or families prefer off-installation care, the contracted Child Care Aware of America can arrange placement and fee assistance for community resources
- » Unlicensed on-base childcare providers that routinely provide more than ten (10) hours of childcare will be investigated by the CYP and Force Support Squadron (FSS) Commander or designee

Eligibility

- Eligibility for CYP services is contingent on the status of the sponsor. Eligible patrons are outlined in AFI 34-144, *Child and Youth Programs*, and DAFI 34-101, *Air Force Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs and Use Eligibility*. Generally, eligible children and youth have sponsors who are:
 - Active duty military and Coast Guard members;
 - DoW civilian employees;
 - Air National Guard or Reserve members on active duty orders or inactive duty training status;
 - Surviving spouses, and loco parentis guardians of youths that would otherwise be eligible;
 - Combat related wounded warriors in an active duty status;
 - Gold Star spouses of military members who die from a combat-related incident;
 - DoW contractors with specific contractual eligibility; and
 - In the case of unmarried, legally separated parents with joint custody or divorced parents with joint custody, children or youth are eligible for childcare only when they reside with the eligible sponsor at least 25% of the time in a month.

- Children and Youth Program services may be available to those who do not qualify for the above categories on a case-by-case and space-available basis
 - Space-available patrons must make way when space is needed for the above listed groups
- Community based fee assistance programs are available to families who do not have access to installation programs. For example, assistance is available through the Child Care Aware of America website at <https://www.childcareaware.org>.

Child Development Programs

- CDC: Provides care to children from six weeks to five years of age
- SAC: Provides care to children and youth from five to 12 years of age
- FCC: Provides care to children and youth from two weeks to 12 years of age. Childcare is provided in certified homes located on or off the installation. FCC likewise provides nontraditional childcare needs (e.g., nights, weekends, unique childcare).
 - All on-installation childcare is subject to regulation by AFI 34-144 and must be certified by the installation Mission Support Group Commander
 - Uncertified, regular (more than 10 hours per week), on-installation childcare will be investigated by the installation FCC Coordinator, accompanied by the FSS Commander or designee. An unannounced visit will be made to individuals living in government-owned housing or privatized housing. The individual will be provided a written request to complete the certification procedures and cease providing care until they become certified. The Security Forces Squadron (SFS) will be contacted if there are suspected violations of law.

Certification of FCC Homes

- Not issued until the applicant provides evidence required for liability insurance
- Valid for no more than 12 month
- Active-Duty personnel may not be primary FCC provider but may be standby provider
- Must comply with most restrictive of state, local and/or DAF requirements
- Inspected for fire, safety, first aid, liability insurance, and criminal background checks
- Random, unannounced visits by FSS personnel occur on a monthly basis (weekly while in Line of Sight Supervisory status pending completion of background investigation)

References

-
- DoDI 6060.02, *Child Development Programs (CDPs)* (5 August 2014), incorporating through Change 2, 1 September 2020
 - DAFI 34-101, *Air Force Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs and Use Eligibility* (7 March 2022)
 - AFI 34-144, *Child and Youth Programs* (2 October 2024)

SUMMARY COURT OFFICER

For deceased Department of the Air Force (DAF) active duty members and other entitled individuals, the DAF collects, safeguards, and promptly disposes of their personal property and effects. The installation commander appoints a summary court officer (SCO) to perform these duties in accordance with DAFI 34-160, *Mortuary Affairs Program*. For deceased Department of War (DoW) civilians, see AFI 36-167, *Civilian Survivor Assistance*.

Key Takeaways

- » The SCO works with the Mortuary Officer (MO) and the family member that the decedent named to direct disposition of the personal property and effects and arrange shipment
- » If the decedent did not name a Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD), AFI 34-501 provides a default list of family members to fulfill this role
- » SCOs must use good judgment and tact as they may have to work with off-base landlords or decide what personal effects/property may cause undue grief to survivors
- » If a DAF service member is missing in action for at least 30 days, the installation commander will appoint a SCO to inventory and take possession of property/effects

Definitions

- **Personal Effects:** Any personal item, organizational clothing, or equipment physically located on or with the remains. Some examples of personal effects include eyeglasses, jewelry, wallets, insignia, and clothing.
- **Personal Property:** All of the other personal possessions of the decedent. Some examples of personal property include household goods, mail, pets, personal papers, and privately owned vehicles.

Prioritized List of Recipients to Receive Personal Property and Personal Effects

- Surviving spouse or legal representative
- Children in order of age. If the recipient is a minor, forward the property as instructed by the minor's surviving parent, guardian, or adopting parent.
- Parents in order of age. If the parents are divorced or legally separated and the divorce or legal separation occurred while the deceased was a minor, then the recipient is the custodial parent. In a shared custody arrangement, the custodial parent is the parent who had physical custody at the time the deceased reached the age of majority or entered the military.
- Siblings in order of age
- Next of kin of the deceased. If there are several persons equal in relationship to the deceased, the oldest is the recipient.
- A beneficiary named in the will of the deceased. Where there are several primary beneficiaries, the oldest is the recipient.

Handling and Disposing of Personal Effects

- The MO must inventory and document all personal effects using DD Form 1076, *Record of Personal Effects of Believed to Be (BTB) Deceased*. The inventory sheet must accompany the personal effects at all times and a copy should be maintained in the case file. The MO must also clean the personal effects and lock them in a secure area.
- SCO collects and returns all issued organizational clothing and individual equipment to the member's squadron commander
- Once the MO ensures the authorized recipient has been officially notified of the death, the MO asks the authorized recipient to provide instructions for disposing of the personal effects
- MO may only destroy personal effects after receiving written authorization by the authorized recipient and any such destruction must be documented on the DD Form 1076. Mortuary personnel do not have the authority to arbitrarily destroy or discard personal effects.

Handling and Disposing of Personal Property

- SCO obtains property disposition instructions and the name, telephone number, and address of the authorized recipient ("PADD") from the MO
- SCO corresponds with the authorized recipient at least once a week about progress in resolving property matters and annotates all correspondence in a log of events
- SCO alerts organizations on-base to make a claim for any unpaid debts. Alternatively, the SCO may accomplish the base-wide notification via email. In all cases, the SCO should coordinate with the installation Public Affairs office for message release.
- SCO inventories all property on DD Form 1076
 - Promptly gathers the uniform and clothes needed for burial and gives to the MO
 - Collects organizational clothing and equipment for turn in
 - Removes any questionable items and determines the disposition of this property based on criteria set forth in AFI 34-160, para. 13.15.4. Generally speaking, questionable items are those with no intrinsic or sentimental value, unfit to forward to the authorized recipient, or inflammatory items which could cause further grief.
 - Coordinates with the Travel Management Office (TMO) to arrange shipment and/or storage of household goods and personal property
 - Even if TMO or a Household Goods (HHG) contractor packs/ships the personal property, the SCO is responsible for the items to be shipped in an orderly and respectful manner and properly received by the intended recipient

- The servicing legal office provides guidance to the SCO on disposition of personal property and reviews the summary court file for legal sufficiency
 - Generally, SCOs have no authority to inspect and remove the decedent's property from off-base quarters, but with the concurrence of both the landlord and a Power of Attorney from the PADD, SCO may settle security deposit claims and arrange for the final transportation of personal effects and personal property

For Missing, Detained, and Captured Persons

- The MO secures and holds the property for at least 30 days or until the member's status is changed from missing to detained, captured, or the member returns
- If, after 30 days, (1) the missing member's status is changed to detained or captured, or (2) there is no change in status, the installation commander will appoint a SCO to secure, inventory, and give or ship the property to the authorized recipient
- If the missing member returns, the property is released to the member
- SCO secures, inventories, and disposes of the property to those authorized to receive it in the event of the member's death

References

- Disposition of Unclaimed Property, 10 U.S.C. § 2575
- Disposition of Effects of Deceased Persons by Summary Court-martial, 10 U.S.C. § 9712
- DoDD 1300.22, *Mortuary Affairs Policy* (30 October 2015), incorporating through Change 2, 2 September 2021
- DAFI 34-160, *Mortuary Affairs Program* (3 March 2022)
- DAFI 36-167, *Civilian Survivor Assistance* (18 April 2023)
- DAFI 36-3002, *Casualty Services* (4 February 2021)
- DD Form 1076, *Record of Personal Effects of Believed to Be Deceased* (August 2015)

Chapter 9

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

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OVERVIEW OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The armed services may, in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 1044, provide legal assistance to eligible beneficiaries in connection with their personal civil legal affairs. Legal assistance is governed by AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law, and Tax Programs*. The legal assistance program supports and sustains command readiness and enhances resiliency for eligible clients.

Key Takeaways

- » Legal assistance can only be provided to eligible clients, which primarily includes active duty service members, Air Reserve component members (in certain statuses), retirees, and dependents
- » Legal assistance is provided for personal civil matters; not matters for third parties, commercial enterprises, criminal matters, or other matters excepted below
- » The legal assistance program gives priority to solving mobilization and deployment related legal issues—that is, a member's legal issues that could negatively affect command readiness
- » Legal assistance can be provided in a large variety of legal areas; however, certain clients will still have to be referred to more specialized offices, another government agency, or a private attorney for assistance

Eligibility for Legal Assistance

- The following individuals are generally eligible for legal assistance services (see AFI 51-304 for more details):
 - Active duty members, including reservists and guardsmen on federal active duty under Title 10 of the U.S. Code, and their dependents who are entitled to an ID card
 - Air Reserve component members performing Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) tours
 - Members of reserve components (not otherwise covered), following release from active duty, who were under a call or order to active duty for more than 30 days. The period of eligibility equals to twice the length of the order to active duty. Dependents entitled to an ID card are eligible during the same time period.
 - Members entitled to retired or retainer pay or equivalent pay and former members of reserve components entitled to retired pay under 10 U.S.C. § 12731. This includes members receiving retired pay as a result of retirement due to permanent disability or placement on the temporary disability retired list. **Note:** “Gray Area” reservists are not entitled to legal assistance (e.g., those who have retired, but are not yet entitled to retired pay under 10 U.S.C. § 12731).
 - Civilian employees stationed outside of the United States and its territories, and their family members who reside with them outside the continental United States (OCONUS)

- Reservists and National Guard members not in Title 10 status, but subject to federal mobilization in an inactive status, are eligible for only mobility/deployment related legal assistance
- Department of War (DoW) civilian employees deploying to or in a theater of operations for contingencies or emergencies shall be furnished assistance with wills and powers of attorney
- Foreign military personnel assigned to the United States under official orders for purposes of combined missions with the United States or for training programs sponsored by the United States. Assistance will be limited to matters involving the interpretation or application of United States domestic law pertinent to the person's relocation and requirement to be present in the United States (e.g., landlord-tenant, consumer affairs, driver's license, customs, tax relief, and similar assistance).
- Estate representatives for members who die on active duty or as a result of an injury or disability that resulted in retirement from active duty
- Staff Judge Advocates (SJAs) may authorize legal assistance to persons not specifically identified above as an eligible beneficiary in unique situations where a military obligation is relevant to the legal problem

Legal Assistance Services Provided

- The following legal topics may be addressed as resources and expertise permit:
 - Wills, living wills, powers of attorney, and notary services;
 - Family law, to include adoptions, dependent care issues, child custody, domestic relations (divorce and separation), and financial responsibilities;
 - Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA);
 - Consumer law, to include bankruptcy, consumer fraud, identity theft, illegal lending practices, and vehicle leases;
 - Immigration/naturalization law;
 - Tax assistance;
 - Assistance to victims of crime, including domestic violence victims;
 - Landlord-tenant and lease issues, including military privatized housing;
 - Education Law matters, including matters involving Exceptional Family Members such as special education disputes between a service member and a local school district; and
 - Other issues deemed connected with personal, civil legal affairs.

- **Referral:** Due to the scope and limitations of the program, as well as the particular needs of the client, the legal office may refer clients to other resources, such as a civilian attorney (through various referral services), Area Defense Counsel (ADC), Victims' Counsel (VC), chaplain, equal opportunity (EO) counselor, military personnel flight, family advocacy, the family support center, or available "pro bono" (free) legal services

Preventive Law

- Each base will have a preventive law program, with a focus on educating members on preparing for mobilization and deployment, seeking timely legal advice, the consequences of signing legal documents, and maintaining vigilance to identify and avoid legal/financial scams
- Education programs are designed to allow Airmen and Guardians to focus on mission requirements and reduce the time and resources needed to correct legal problems that occur

Matters Specifically Outside the Scope of the Program

- The following are generally outside the scope of legal assistance:
 - Issues involving personal business or commercial enterprises. **Exception:** legal assistance may be provided to service members business owners if related to the SCRA.
 - Criminal issues. **Exception:** advice to crime victims.
 - Official matters in which the Air Force or Space Force has an interest or is involved in the investigation or final resolution (e.g., reports of survey)
 - Legal issues or concerns raised on behalf of third parties, even if the third party is eligible for legal assistance
 - Issues involving private organizations
 - Representation in a civilian court or administrative proceeding. **Exception:** In certain circumstances under AFI 51-304's Expanded Legal Assistance Program (ELAP), and for Education Law clients, with SJA concurrence, represent clients at Individualized Education Program (IEP) or other administrative meetings.
 - Drafting or reviewing for legal sufficiency real estate sales or closing documents, separation agreements, divorce decrees, transfer on death deeds, *inter vivos* trusts, and other types of pleadings prepared for off-base court proceedings unless the SJA determines an individual attorney within the office has the expertise to do so

Attorney-Client Relationship

- Air Force attorneys establish an attorney-client relationship with their legal assistance clients and, as such, any information or documents received from or relating to a client are considered privileged and confidential
- Privileged information may be released only with the client's express permission, pursuant to a court order, or as otherwise permitted by the Air Force Rules of Professional Responsibility

References

- Legal Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 1044
- Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3901 *et seq.*
- DoDI 1350.04, *Legal Assistance Matters*, 3 February 2022
- AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law, and Tax Programs* (22 August 2018)
- ANGI 51-504, *Air National Guard Legal Assistance Program* (20 November 2014), certified current 25 February 2019

NOTARIES

Many important documents are required by law to be notarized. Notarization demonstrates that a person with notary authority—that is, a notary public—confirmed the identity of the person signing the document and witnessed the signature. It can also confirm, if required, that the person made an oath as part of executing the document. Notary services are available to eligible service members, dependents, and some civilian employees, under Title 10 of the U.S. Code, as part of the military legal assistance program.

Key Takeaways

- » Notarization demonstrates that a person with notary authority confirmed the identity of the person signing the document and witnessed the signature
- » Members of the armed forces, other persons eligible for legal assistance, and persons serving with the armed forces outside of the United States are eligible for notary services
- » Department of the Air Force members with notary authority include judge advocates, civilian attorneys, and enlisted paralegals. Others may be appointed as notaries at locations where no judge advocate is assigned.

Eligibility for Notary Service

- Personnel eligible for military notary services are:
 - Members of any of the uniformed services;
 - Other persons eligible for legal assistance under 10 U.S.C. § 1044 or other regulations of the Department of War (DoW), to include AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law, and Tax Programs*;
 - Persons serving with, employed by, or accompanying the armed forces outside the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands; and
 - Other persons subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) outside the United States.

Persons with Notary Authority

- Under 10 U.S.C. § 1044a, state laws, AFI 51-304, and ANGI 51-504, *Air National Guard Legal Assistance Program*, the following individuals have the general powers of a notary public and of a consul of the United States in the performance of all notary acts:
 - All judge advocates, including reserve judge advocates when not in a duty status;
 - All civilian attorneys serving as legal assistance attorneys;
 - Air National Guard (ANG) judge advocates and paralegals while performing duty under Title 10 or Title 32 or if qualified as a notary public under state law;

- ANG judge advocates and paralegals, even when not in a duty status, have the general powers of a notary public in the performance of all notarial acts;
- ANG commanders may name civilian employees to serve as notaries as part of their official duties provided they qualify under the laws of the state where they will serve;
- Other civilian employees must qualify as a notary under state laws;
- All civilian paralegals serving at a military legal assistance office if supervised by a military legal assistance counsel. A military legal assistance counsel is a judge advocate or a civilian attorney serving as a legal assistance officer.
- Enlisted paralegals on active duty or performing inactive duty training; and
- Commissioned officers or master sergeant and above stationed at geographically separated units (GSUs) or remote locations where no judge advocate or paralegal notary is assigned, and who have been designated in writing by the GSU's servicing general court-martial convening authority's Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) and received proper training.

References

- Authority to Act as Notary, 10 U.S.C. §§ 1044, 1044a
- DoDI 1350.04, *Legal Assistance Matters*, 3 February 2022
- AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law, and Tax Programs* (22 August 2018)
- ANGI 51-504, *Air National Guard Legal Assistance Program* (20 November 2014), certified current 25 February 2019

WILLS AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY

Wills and powers of attorney (POAs) are useful legal documents for members to manage their personal and financial affairs. A will is an instrument by which a person, known as a “testator,” provides for the disposition of their property after death. A POA is a document by which a person (the “principal”) authorizes another person (the “agent”) to conduct specific acts on their behalf. Commanders should emphasize to their Airmen and Guardians the importance of preparing wills and POAs, especially prior to deployment.

Key Takeaways

- » Wills are an important tool to ensure loved ones are properly cared for after death; they can be used to distribute property to specific people and name a guardian for minor children
- » POAs enable a person to name an agent to act on their behalf. While highly useful, POAs also can be abused—choose trustworthy agents, and tailor the POA to the specific situation/needs.

Wills

- Though it must be a free and voluntary act by the service member, **ALL commanders** should encourage their Department of the Air Force service members to make a will. Even if a testator has little property, settling affairs with a will ensures the testator’s wishes are honored after death and is often easier for the family.
- A will is particularly important for the following:
 - Personnel with minor children. The court will generally follow the designation of a guardian for the children in a will, which often alleviates confusion and family disputes about the parents’ intention concerning the care of their child. Personnel with special needs children may require advanced estate planning advice to ensure the children are properly cared for and that any inheritance received does not disqualify or remove the special needs child from government programs.
 - Personnel with business interests or high-value estates. On a case-by-case basis, it may be advisable for members with business interests or substantial estates to seek outside counsel for a more comprehensive estate plan.
 - Personnel in a subsequent marriage or with blended families where either spouse comes to the marriage with children from a prior relationship
 - Personnel who are divorced or widowed
- State law dictates the requirements for making a valid will. These laws vary widely from state to state. For this reason, service members should seek the services of the base legal office and avoid “do-it-yourself” will programs.

- If a service member dies without a will, their property will be distributed according to state law, and the result can sometimes be unexpected
- A will remains in effect until changed or revoked by the testator
- Certain life events may impact provisions in a testator's will, such that it would be advisable to create a new will. A testator should review their will periodically and consider updating it, especially with these changed circumstances:
 - The birth, death, or change in circumstances of any person affected by the will;
 - The marriage or divorce of the testator; or
 - A substantial change in the testator's estate.

Powers of Attorney

- A POA is a document that enables a person (the principal) to grant someone else the authority to act as their legal agent, or "attorney-in-fact." These documents are available at all base legal offices and can be particularly important for mobilizing personnel.
- Third parties (e.g., banks and businesses) may be unwilling to accept the authority granted within a POA. Additionally, granting an agent overly broad powers increases the risk that the agent will abuse the authority given to them in the document. Therefore, to minimize the risks of rejection and abuse, it is usually best to choose a trustworthy agent and tailor the POA to the given situation and/or the specific act and/or location (e.g., bank) required of the agent. Some financial institutions may require use of their specific POA forms.
- Although copies are usually acceptable, it is best to provide the agent with the original, executed POA in order for them to perform the authorized acts
- To revoke a POA before its expiration, personnel may retrieve the original document (and any known copies) and destroy it or execute a revocation of a POA and give a copy to any person that might deal with the person who has the original POA
- There are several types of POAs, as described below:
- General POA: Gives comprehensive authority over virtually all legal and some non-legal affairs. Basically, the attorney-in-fact can do anything the principal could do.
 - Because the authority granted is so expansive, this type of POA should only be used if a special POA, described below, will not suffice and if the agent is completely trustworthy. A person with a general POA could cause serious financial or legal problems for the principal because of the vast and comprehensive authority given.
 - Many banks and realtors will not accept a general POA for the purchase or sale of real estate and instead require a special POA containing the legal description of the property and the actions authorized

- Special POA: Grants limited authority to accomplish specific transactions, such as buying/selling real estate or a car, usually for a limited time period
- Durable POA: Allows the agent to make decisions and manage the affairs for the incapacitated person for the duration of their incapacity
 - Remains effective, notwithstanding the principal's incapacity. A general or special POA may be made "durable" with appropriate language.
- Springing POA: Becomes effective only upon the occurrence of a specified event, such as the principal's incapacity. This will require proof that the specified event has occurred (e.g., doctor's opinion of incapacity) in order for the agent to be able to use the POA.
- Healthcare POA: Gives the agent the authority to make decisions for medical purposes, including a decision regarding terminating or limiting medical care in appropriate cases
 - The Healthcare POA is sometimes found in an Advance Healthcare (or Medical) Directive, which might also include a Living Will (in which the principal would express their end-of-life treatment preferences, should they become terminally ill)
- 10 U.S.C. §§ 1044b–d respectively, provide for the execution of military POAs, military advance medical directives, including "living wills," and military testamentary instruments or "wills." These documents, though executed by military legal assistance practitioners, will be given the same legal effect as documents prepared and executed in accordance with the laws of the state concerned.
 - Military living wills are not enforceable in states that do not recognize living wills

References

- Military Powers of Attorney, 10 U.S.C. § 1044b
- Advance Medical Directives of Members and Dependents, 10 U.S.C. § 1044c
- Military Testamentary Instruments, 10 U.S.C. § 1044d
- DoDI 1350.04, *Legal Assistance Matters*, 3 February 2022
- AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law, and Tax Programs* (22 August 2018)
- ANGI 51-504, *Air National Guard Legal Assistance Program* (20 November 2014), certified current 25 February 2019

TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Tax Assistance programs are command programs designed to provide free tax assistance and filing services to eligible beneficiaries. When resourced and managed properly, an active and well-publicized program can enhance morale and help beneficiaries address some of the unique income tax aspects associated with a military lifestyle. The size and scope of each program may vary from base to base, depending on mission requirements, geographical location, availability of resources, and the unique needs of the local community.

Key Takeaways

- » Installation commanders, in consultation with the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), have discretion to decide whether and what type of tax assistance program to host
- » Options for tax assistance programs include traditional full-service, self-service kiosks, or referrals to other programs
- » Commanders consider mission requirements, availability of resources, impact on morale, and other factors in determining what type of program to host

Tax Assistance Programs

- The installation commander, in consultation with the SJA, has the flexibility to decide, based on the needs of the installation and available resources, which of the following program(s) is best for eligible beneficiaries. If circumstances warrant, the commander may also elect to not have an installation tax program.
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Programs:
 - Full-service program is supervised by the SJA and staffed by legal office personnel, as well as volunteers, under the IRS VITA program
 - Tax assistance personnel are trained by and use the IRS' electronic filing resources
 - Guided Self-Assistance Program:
 - Virtual group session conducted by IRS representative(s) that assists members in completing returns via video teleconference
 - Sessions are facilitated by legal office personnel and/or VITA volunteers
 - Remote Self-Assistance Program:
 - This program allows clients to complete their returns from their own home via IRS provided hyperlink to free self-preparation software
 - Legal office personnel provide hyperlink, as needed

- VITA programs are separate and distinct from the legal assistance program; attorney-client privilege does not apply to the preparation of income tax returns
- Free Tax Preparation Services:
 - Without endorsing any non-federal service or entity, the base legal office will make available a listing of off-base and electronic tax assistance options, such as Military One Source's free MilTax online preparation and filing service and the IRS Free File Alliance, which is a group of private-sector tax preparation companies that provide free online tax preparation and electronic filing only through the IRS.gov website
 - Service members using these free tax services can still utilize base legal assistance services should they have any specific tax questions or issues. Additionally, Military One Source MilTax provides free tax consultation from tax professionals via their website (live chat) or telephone (1-800-342-9647) or for outside the continental United States (OCONUS) service members can live chat with a tax professional or call 800-342-9647.

Decisional Factors

- When deciding which program to establish, commanders and their SJAs should consider factors that may impact the availability and sustainability of the program such as:
 - Competing mission requirements;
 - Availability of local volunteer support;
 - Availability of IRS software and training support;
 - The negative impacts to program continuity (e.g., loss of future IRS support, loss of future volunteer support, loss of institutional knowledge) should the installation want to continue the program at a later date;
 - Budgetary constraints;
 - Impact on-base morale;
 - Demand for tax services;
 - Availability of free online filing services and other nearby VITA programs accessible for all beneficiaries; and
 - Availability of other professional filing services near the installation.
- Additionally, commanders and SJAs for commands serving in a host or supporting role on joint bases are advised to review support agreements for any provisions regarding the tax program

Eligible Beneficiaries

- Eligible beneficiaries include active duty service members, dependents, retirees and their dependents, and others who are entitled to legal assistance services under AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law, and Tax Programs*. SJAs can limit eligible beneficiaries for the tax program (e.g., personnel in the grade of E-6 and below).
- SJAs may also extend services, as resources allow, to federal civilian employees to the extent permitted by the IRS VITA program

References

- Legal Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 1044
- AFI 51-304, *Legal Assistance, Notary, Preventive Law, and Tax Programs* (22 August 2018)
- IRS Free File Alliance: <https://www.irs.gov/e-file-providers/about-the-free-file-alliance>
- Military One Source: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/taxes/>

Chapter 10

CIVIL LAW RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND TREATMENT

Department of War (DoW) and Department of the Air Force (DAF) anti-discriminatory policies protect military members and civilian employees through a bifurcated system. Military members can present complaints to executive department forums only, while civilian employees can file complaints in either an administrative forum or federal court after a formal investigation.

Key Takeaways

- » DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program*, sets out the DAF Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) program for processing informal and formal discrimination complaints made by military members
- » DAF policy is clear: “zero tolerance” for any kind of unlawful discrimination or harassment
- » Commanders are responsible for ensuring an environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment and ensuring all such allegations are appropriately investigated
- » MEO serves as focal point for discrimination complaints brought by military members, but the nature of the complaint determines which agency conducts the investigation
- » Equal Opportunity (EO) offices also intake civilian employee discrimination complaints which can be formally investigated and adjudicated in front of an administrative judge or federal court

Department of the Air Force Policy

- DAF policy is to conduct its affairs free from unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment, and to provide equal opportunity and treatment irrespective of one’s protected class (i.e., race, color, religion, sex (to include pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, genetic information, or prior equal employment opportunity (EEO) activity (reprisal))
- Commanders must refer formal complaints of sexual harassment to Security Forces within 72 hours of receiving the formal complaint to ensure an independent investigation into the allegations is initiated. (See [sexual harassment](#) section in this chapter for more information on the processing of DAF military and civilian sexual harassment complaints.)
- Alleged sexual harassment offenses under Article 134, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) committed by military members taking place after 1 January 2025, which are filed as a formal complaint and substantiated pursuant to the procedures in DAFI 36-2710 are “covered offenses” under Article 1(17), UCMJ, and under the exclusive authority of the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC)
 - For such covered offenses, commanders cannot take any action on, or dispose of, an offense unless/until the covered offense is deferred back to command by OSTC
- Commanders must, for offenses under their authority, take appropriate administrative or disciplinary action to eliminate unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment

Department of the Air Force Equal Opportunity Program

- Chapter 4 of DAFI 36-2710 sets out the DAF MEO program for processing informal and formal discrimination complaints made by military members
 - The DAF policy is clear: “zero tolerance” for any kind of unlawful discrimination or harassment. Discrimination in the MEO context is any unlawful action that denies equal opportunity to persons or groups based on their protected class.
- Such discrimination includes, but is not limited to:
 - Insults, printed materials, visual materials, signs, symbols, posters, or insignias that infer negative statements pertaining to protected class; sexual harassment; discrimination by an individual that bars or deprives a person of a right or benefit; and/or institutional practices that deprive a person or group of a right or benefit
- The MEO office is the office of primary responsibility for the DAF EO programs and handles most discrimination complaints brought by military members
- Chapter 3 of DAFI 36-2710 sets out the DAF civilian EO program. Generally, civilian employees, applicants, and former employees can make complaints.
 - Complaints must be made to the local EO office within 45 days of the discriminatory action. EO counselors will attempt to mediate the issue and, if unsuccessful, the individual may file a formal complaint to be investigated in 180 days. Following the investigation, the complaint may be adjudicated via a Final Agency Decision or litigated in front of an administrative judge or federal court.

Unit Commander’s Responsibilities

- Commanders are responsible for ensuring an environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment, and ensuring all such allegations are investigated

Complaint Processing Procedures

- MEO serves as the focal point for discrimination complaints brought by military members, but the nature of the complaint determines which agency conducts the investigation
 - MEO complaints against senior officials, consisting of officers in the grade of O-7 select and above, Air National Guard (ANG) colonels with a certificate of eligibility, and members of the senior executive service (SES), must be immediately referred to Secretary of the Air Force Official Inquiries Directorate (SAF/IGS)
 - EO must notify the installation commander and local Inspector General (IG) when there is an MEO complaint against an officer in the O-6 grade or who has been selected for O-6, or a civil service employee in the grade of GS-15, and the installation commander must notify the Complaints Resolution Directorate at both the major command (MAJCOM/IGQ) and Secretary of the Air Force levels (SAF/IGQ)

- Complaints involving criminal activity such as assault, rape, or child abuse must be referred to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) or the local Security Forces Squadron. The EO specialist will notify the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator in sexual assault cases.
- Complainants may use the informal complaint process, which includes alternate dispute resolution (ADR)
- When the MEO office investigates a complaint of discrimination, it is called a complaint clarification. Base-level MEO personnel conduct clarifications of formal complaints.
 - The purpose of clarifications is to determine whether a formal complaint is supported by a preponderance of credible evidence (the term “preponderance” requires the evidence to show the complaint is more likely true than not)
 - Credible evidence is believable, confirmed, and corroborated evidence. If a clarification results in a determination that an alleged violation occurred, the case must be forwarded through the offender’s servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) and the complainant’s commander for appropriate action.
- Both the complainant and the subject of a formal EO complaint may appeal the findings upon completion of the complaint clarification. All appeals must be in writing.
 - Commanders are not required to withhold command action pending an appeal. Findings rendered pursuant to command action under the UCMJ are not subject to appeal through MEO channels.
 - Installation commanders, MAJCOM/CVs, and Air Force Review Boards Agency (SAF/MRB) are authorized to decide appeals of formal complaints of discrimination in MEO cases

Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard Considerations

- See DAFI 36-2710, para. 4.2, for complaint processing guidance involving Air Force Reserve members while on Regular Air Force duty status (including while on Title 10 orders), Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) personnel, Air Reserve Technicians (ARTs) and AGRs under Title 32, and ANG personnel serving under Title 10 of the United States Code
- For Title 32 Air National Guard complaints, process complaints using CNGBM 9601.01, *National Guard Discrimination Complaint Process*

Suspected Criminal or Extremist Activity

- Commanders, EO personnel, and EO directors will refer any suspected criminal or extremist activities to OSI or Security Forces for investigation. Upon a credible report or suspicion of extremist activities, commanders will take action in accordance with DAFI 51-508, *Political Activities, Free Speech and Freedom of Assembly*, to include notifying the counter-insider threat liaison in the information protection office.

Reprisal/Whistleblower

- DAF members are protected from reprisal for making, preparing, or being perceived as making or preparing to make a protected communication, including a complaint of unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment, to certain personnel pursuant to DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution*. Reprisal complaints are referred by EO to the installation IG.

References

- Classification of Positions Available Above GS-15, 5 U.S.C. § 5108
- Complaints of Sexual Harassment: Independent Investigation, 10 U.S.C. § 1561
- 1978 Amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, 29 U.S.C. §§ 621 *et seq.*
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 U.S.C. §§ 701 *et seq.*
- Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, Pub. L. 92-261, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e *et seq.*
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e *et seq.*
- The Civil Rights Act of 1991, Pub. L. 102-166, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e
- The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, 42 U.S.C. § 2000ff
- The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000gg
- James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. 117-263, § 541, 136 Stat. 2395 (2022)
- Article 1(17), Uniform Code of Military Justice, 10 U.S.C. § 801(17)
- Article 134, Uniform Code of Military Justice, 10 U.S.C. § 934
- Manual for Courts-Martial (2024 Edition), Part IV, Para. 107a, Article 134 (Sexual Harassment)
- DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program* (23 May 2024)), incorporating Change 1, 23 July 2025, certified current 23 July 2025
- DAFI 51-508, *Political Activities, Free Speech and Freedom of Assembly* (24 March 2023)
- DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution* (4 January 2024)
- DAF Form 1587, *Military Equal Opportunity Formal Complaint* (23 August 2024)
- DAF Form 1587-1, *Military Equal Opportunity Informal Complaint* (23 August 2024)
- CNGBI 0402.01, *National Guard Alternative Dispute Resolution* (24 July 2015)

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

The Inspector General (IG) is the “eyes and ears” of the commander to be alert to issues affecting an organization’s productivity and morale. The IG Complaint Resolution Program (CRP) is a leadership tool to promptly and objectively resolve issues affecting the Air Force or Space Force missions. A successful CRP is designed to enhance the organization’s discipline, readiness, and warfighting capability. IGs use fact-finding methodologies to seek out systemic issues affecting the organization.

Key Takeaways

- » There are five resolution paths for complaints presented to IGs. Most do not result in IG investigations. Often, complaints are referred to command.
- » IG investigations focus primarily on allegations of reprisal and restriction
- » Only IGs can investigate allegations of reprisal and restriction
- » IGs will encourage complainants to resolve their issues at the lowest level first
- » Commanders must provide a copy of the completed report and all exhibits to their local IG, along with final copies of all disciplinary and administrative actions resulting from the investigation

The IG CRP

- An IG complaint analysis will result in one of **five resolutions paths**:
 - The five resolution paths are **referral** to appropriate agency, grievance channel or commander; **transfer** of the issue to another IG; an **assist** (an assist provides a quick resolution to a complaint, such as when an IG explains a process or regulation to the member, makes a phone call on the complainant’s behalf, connects the member to an appropriate outside agency or grievance channel, etc.); **dismissal** of the complaint; or **investigation** (usually only reprisal, restriction or IG misconduct)
 - In cases of referral, including referral to a commander, the commander will determine how best to address the issue and then will inform the complainant and the IG of the actions they took
- The IG CRP should not be used for:
 - Matters normally addressed through other channels unless there is evidence those channels mishandled the matter or process
 - IGs will advise complainants of the appropriate entity to address their complaint. (See DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution*, Table 3.7, for a list of agencies that have programs for redress of complaints. The table is not all-inclusive.)

IG Investigations

- IG investigations are distinct from other investigations, such as Commander Directed Investigations (CDIs) (see DAFMAN 1-101, *Commander Directed Investigations* for further guidance). An investigating officer (IO) investigates pursuant to DAFI 90-301 when appointed, in writing, by the appropriate appointing authority (usually a wing/delta commander).
- The Air Force Hand-Off Policy requires the IO to engage in a person-to-person hand-off with the commander/director or designee for all subjects and suspects in investigations at the conclusion of their interview

Reprisal Complaints (Military Whistleblower Protection Act, 10 U.S.C. § 1034)

- Reprisal occurs when a responsible management official (RMO) takes (or threatens to take) an unfavorable personnel action, or withholds (or threatens to withhold) a favorable personnel action on a military member, for making or preparing to make, or being perceived as making or preparing to make, a protected communication. The RMO may be military or civilian.
 - *Example:* A major files a complaint of sex discrimination by her squadron's Director of Operations with the Equal Opportunity (EO) Office. The major's commander finds out and reprises against her by issuing her a letter of reprimand for a minor offense.
- 10 U.S.C. § 1034 (The Military Whistleblower Protection Act) applies only to reprisal against a military member. Separate statutes and policy cover reprisal against Appropriated Fund Employees, Non-Appropriated Fund Employees, Intelligence Community Employees, and Contractors/Subcontractors.
- Reprisal is a violation of 10 U.S.C. § 1034 and may result in disciplinary action under Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), or applicable civilian directives or instructions
- Reprisal under 10 U.S.C. § 1034 is separate and distinct from Retaliation under 10 U.S.C. § 932 (Art 132, UCMJ), however, both statutes contain similar language, elements, and definitions. Only IGs may investigate allegations of reprisal under 10 U.S.C. § 1034. Retaliation under 10 U.S.C. § 932 is a "covered offense" and the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) maintains exclusive authority over covered offenses. Commanders should coordinate with JA, IG, and OSTC to resolve any questions on the appropriate complaint resolution process.
- Only DoW IG and the Office of Special Counsel investigate allegations of reprisal brought by civilian or contractor employees

Restriction Complaints

- Restriction is preventing or attempting to prevent members of the Armed Forces from making or preparing to make lawful communications to Members of Congress and/or an IG
 - *Example:* A commander tells their subordinates that all complaints must be brought to command before going to the IG or Congress
- Engaging in restriction is a violation of 10 U.S.C. § 1034 and may result in disciplinary action under Article 92, UCMJ

Miscellaneous Considerations

- The potential that an action a commander takes could result in an IG complaint should never dissuade a commander from taking timely and appropriate corrective and preventative actions, when done for legitimate mission-related reasons
- Commanders should coordinate with their Staff Judge Advocates for effective legal guidance on these issues
- Report all allegations of prohibited extremist or gang activity by service members under DoDI 1325.06, *Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces*, to Wing, Delta, or servicing IG office no later than 30 calendar days after receiving an allegation (60 calendar days for Air Reserve Component (ARC))
- Officers requiring Senate confirmation (majors and above) are centrally screened by SAF/IG to check for potential adverse/derogatory information as part of the promotion process. Commanders should refer to DAFI 90-301, Chapter 7, Collection, Documentation, and Notification Requirements.

References

- Articles 92 and 132, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Prohibited Personnel Practices, 5 U.S.C. 2302
- Protected Communications: Prohibition of Retaliatory Personnel Actions, 10 U.S.C.1034
- Employees of Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities: Reprisals, 10 U.S.C. 1587
- Contractor Employees: Protection From Reprisal for Disclosure of Certain Information, 10 U.S.C. 4701
- DoDD 7050.06, *Military Whistleblower Protection* (17 April 2015), incorporating Change 1, 12 October 2021
- DoDI 1325.06, *Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces* (27 November 2009), incorporating through Change 3, 9 June 2025
- DoDI 7050.09, *Uniform Standards for Evaluating and Investigating Military Reprisal or Restriction Complaints* (12 October 2021)
- DoD Inspector General, *Guide to Investigating Military Whistleblower Reprisal and Restriction Complaints* (28 March 2024)
- DAFI 38-101, *Manpower and Organization* (29 August 2019), incorporating Change 1, 17 September 2025
- DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution* (4 January 2024)
- DAFI 90-5001, *Integrated Resilience* (23 July 2024)
- DAFPD 90-3, *Inspector General* (3 February 2021)
- DAFMAN 1-101, *Commander Directed Investigations* (9 April 2021)
- AFI 71-101, Volume 1, *Criminal Investigations Program* (24 January 2025)

PROHIBITION ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) leadership (military and civilian) at every level must take steps to prevent SH from occurring and take immediate action to investigate and resolve all civilian employee and military member SH complaints.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders and supervisors are responsible for the climate and culture of their units and will be held accountable for any sexually harassing behavior that is condoned
- » Military member SH may constitute criminal misconduct under Article 134, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
- » SH under Article 134, UCMJ, alleged to have been committed by military members taking place after 1 January 2025 which is (1) filed as a **formal complaint** and (2) **substantiated** pursuant to procedures in DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program*, is a “covered offense” under the exclusive authority of the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC). Commanders are prohibited from taking action on these offenses unless/until they are deferred by OSTC to command.
- » Commanders will communicate to civilian employees and service members that SH is not tolerated, provide SH prevention training, ensure an effective complaint process, take immediate action to ensure formal SH complaints are referred to Security Forces independent investigators for investigation, and resolve and address all SH complaints under their authority (72 hour/14-20 day requirements)
- » Commanders have many disciplinary/administrative options to address SH misconduct falling under their authority

Overview

- DAFI 36-2710 defines SH for civilian members under Title VII and military members under DODI 1020.03. Generally, SH is an action involving unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or repeated offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature that negatively interferes with a members’ work environment, career or employment decision.
- SH can occur at any location, regardless of whether the victim or accused is on- or off-duty at the time of the act. Physical proximity is not required, and the acts may be committed through online or other electronic means.
- Article 134, UCMJ also criminalizes SH. The Manual for Courts-Martial (MCM) sets out the elements of SH under Article 134 as follows:
 - (1) That the accused knowingly made sexual advances, demands or requests for sexual favors, or knowingly engaged in other conduct of a sexual nature;
 - (2) That such conduct was unwelcome;
 - (3) That, under the circumstances, such conduct:

- (a) Would cause a reasonable person to believe, and a certain person did believe, that submission to such conduct would be made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of a person's job, pay, career, benefits, or entitlements;
- (b) Would cause a reasonable person to believe, and a certain person did believe, that submission to, or rejection of, such conduct would be used as a basis for decisions affecting that person's job, pay, career, benefits, or entitlements; or
- (c) Was so severe, repetitive, or pervasive that a reasonable person would perceive, and a certain person did perceive, an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; and
- (4) That, under the circumstances, the conduct of the accused was either: (i) to the prejudice of good order and discipline in the armed forces; (ii) of a nature to bring discredit upon the armed forces; or (iii) to the prejudice of good order and discipline in the armed forces and of a nature to bring discredit upon the armed forces.

Types of Sexual Harassment

- Quid Pro Quo (or Tangible Employment Act): SH occurs when an employee suffers or is threatened with some kind of employment injury for refusing to grant sexual favors, or is promised some sort of tangible job benefit in exchange for sexual favors
- Hostile Work Environment: Created when a supervisor, co-worker, or someone else with whom the victim encounters on the job engages in a series of acts or conduct of a sexual nature which are so severe or pervasive as to reasonably alter the terms and conditions of employment. SH need not occur in the work center to create a hostile work environment so long as the harassment alters the terms and conditions of employment.
- Command Attention to SH Must Include: Publishing DAF zero tolerance policies and complaint procedures for civilian and military members, providing training on SH prevention ensuring military members experiencing SH have access to and are referred to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) office for restricted/unrestricted reporting and/or victim advocacy support, and referring formal SH complaints under 10 U.S.C. § 1561 to Security Forces independent investigators for investigation within 72 hours of receiving the complaint

Commander's Responsibilities – Military Complainants under 10 U.S.C. § 1561

- Formal SH Complaints: 10 U.S.C. § 1561 requires that, within 72 hours of receipt, the commander forward the complaint or a detailed description of the allegation to the general court-martial convening authority (GCMCA) and that the commander refer the complaint to Security Forces independent investigators for investigation
- The alleged offender's commander must also work with the complainant's commander to ensure the complainant is advised of the investigation's start and given information about victim support resources

- The commander shall submit an investigation progress report to the GCMCA within 20 days of the investigation's initiation and every 14 days thereafter until complete
- The servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) will complete a legal sufficiency review of the Security Forces report of investigation upon completion of the independent investigation
- Following the legal sufficiency review, the first O-6 in the alleged offender's chain of command (or civilian equivalent where there is no O-6 in the alleged offender's chain of command), in consultation with the SJA, will make a substantiation determination (i.e., substantiated or not substantiated). A complaint is substantiated where a claim or allegation is supported by a preponderance of the evidence.
- The commander must also submit a final report on the investigation's results, and any outcome as a result of the findings, including any corrective, administrative, and/or disciplinary action taken, to the GCMCA
- The commander will notify the alleged offender whether the complaint was substantiated or not substantiated, although under DAFI 36-2710, para. 4.15.9.4, this notification may be delayed in certain circumstances. The alleged offender's commander must also work with the complainant's commander to notify the complainant of the investigation's completion, whether the complaint was substantiated or not substantiated, and the complainant's appeal rights.
- Informal SH Complaints: Military complainants have the option of filing an informal SH complaint. Commanders may resolve informal complaints of SH within their chain of command, in consultation with the SJA, and notify EO offices of outcomes, unless a commander believes an investigation resulting in a report is necessary to further the readiness of the unit.
 - Where a commander determines an investigation into an informal complaint is necessary, the commander will process the complaint as a formal complaint, including the GCMCA notifications and other processing requirements in 10 U.S.C. § 1561, and referring the complaint to Security Forces for independent investigation. Commander Directed Investigations (CDIs) or other inquiries into informal SH complaints are prohibited.
- Anonymous SH Complaints: Anonymous complaints of SH with sufficient information, such as the alleged offender's name or unit, witnesses to the incident(s), or detailed description of the incident will, IAW DAFI 36-2710, para. 4.16.3, be processed by the commander as a formal complaint of SH pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1561
- Third Party SH Reports: Commanders who receive third party reports of SH (i.e. from someone other than the individual experiencing the alleged behaviors) with sufficient information, such as the alleged offender's name or unit, witnesses to the incident(s), or detailed description of the incident, should, IAW DAFI 36-2710, para. 4.18.3.1, conduct an inquiry or investigation

- These reports may be referred to Security Forces for independent investigation or may be completed by other commander-initiated inquiries or investigations but must have an investigating officer that is outside both the alleged offender and affected person's immediate chain of command, who is specifically trained by a member of the installation legal office in the investigation of SH

Commander's Responsibilities – Civilian Complainants

- Civilian complainants can process their complaints of SH through the EO office where they can choose to resolve them informally through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) or counseling
- Following counseling and/or ADR, civilians can file a formal EO complaint which triggers an investigation that must be completed within 180 days of the formal complaint, and they can eventually have the claim heard by an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) administrative judge or in federal court
- In addition to an EEO complaint, civilian complainants may file formal SH complaints for investigation under 10 U.S.C. § 1561. These complaints are subject to the same investigative and processing requirements as formal military SH complaints. Any investigation of an EEO complaint does not take the place of an investigation of a SH complaint under 10 U.S.C. § 1561.

Complaint Processing – Military Complainant

- EO is the office of primary responsibility for the DAF EO programs and has primary responsibility for tracking and documenting SH complaints. Commanders must ensure that they regularly notify their EO office of the processing and final outcomes of formal and informal SH complaints.
- Alleged SH offenses under Article 134, UCMJ, committed by military members taking place after 1 January 2025, which are filed as a formal SH complaint and later substantiated pursuant to the procedures in DAFI 36-2710 are “covered offenses” under Article 1(17), UCMJ, and under the exclusive authority of the OSTC
- For such covered offenses, commanders cannot take any action on, or dispose of, an offense unless/until the covered offense is reviewed and deferred back to command by OSTC

Complaint Processing – Civilian Employee Complainant

- Pre-Complaint: The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor advises the complainant of their rights and obligations, places all allegations in the pre-complaint process regardless of merit or timeliness, and attempts to resolve the situation between the parties within 30 days. If no resolution, the complainant is advised that they may file a formal complaint.

- **Formal Complaint:** The complaint is evaluated by the EEO Director for full/partial acceptance or dismissal. If accepted, the installation EEO Director requests an investigator from the Department of War (DoW) Investigations and Resolutions Directorate (IRD) within 30 days of the formal complaint's filing.
 - IRD must investigate the complaint and issue its report within 180 days of the filing of the formal complaint. The complainant receives a redacted copy of the investigation and then may, within 30 days, request a hearing in front of an EEOC judge, a Final Agency Decision (FAD), or bring a civil action in federal court. For a FAD, the Air Force Civilian Appellate Review Office (AFCARO) determines whether DAF is liable. A complainant may appeal an EEOC judge's decision or a FAD to the EEOC's appellate body, the Office of Federal Operations, or bring a civil action against DAF in federal court.

Command Options to Address Substantiated Complaints of SH

- Commanders who find military members engaging in SH have numerous disciplinary and administrative options, including counseling, admonishment, reprimand, nonjudicial punishment, administrative discharge, and in limited cases, court-martial action
- As noted in detail above, OSTC has exclusive court-martial authority over certain Article 134 (SH), UCMJ, offenses committed after 1 January 2025 that meet the definition of a "covered offense" in Article 1(17) of the UCMJ
- Commanders who find civilian employees have engaged in SH should base any charges drafted for disciplinary action on the offensive acts themselves rather than charging "sexual harassment," since this is a term of art requiring various elements of proof. The conduct can be addressed using procedures described in DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Actions of Civilian Employees*.
- Failure to take adequate steps to prevent sexual harassment, including holding perpetrators accountable, can result in monetary damages against the DAF, which are usually paid out of local unit Operations and Maintenance funds

References

- Complaints of Sexual Harassment: Independent Investigation, 10 U.S.C. § 1561
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e *et seq.*
- Article 1(17), Uniform Code of Military Justice, 10 U.S.C. § 801(17)
- Article 134, Uniform Code of Military Justice, 10 U.S.C. § 934
- Federal Sector Equal Employment Opportunity, 29 C.F.R. Part 1614
- James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. 117-263, § 541, 136 Stat. 2395 (2022)
- Manual for Courts-Martial, United States, pt. IV (2024), para. 107a, Article 134
- DoDI 1020.03, *Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces* (8 February 2018), incorporating through Change 3, 17 January 2025
- DoDI 1020.04, *Harassment Prevention and Responses for DoD Civilian Employees* (30 June 2020), incorporating Change 1, 17 January 2025
- DoDI 1350.02, *Department of Defense Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Program* (4 September 2020), incorporating Change 1, 20 December 2022
- DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Actions of Civilian Employees* (27 September 2022), incorporating Change 1, 31 August 2023, certified current 31 August 2023
- DAFI 36-701, *Labor-Management Relations* (14 November 2019), incorporating Change 1, 10 November 2021, certified current 10 November 2021
- DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program* (23 May 2024), incorporating Change 1, 23 July 2025, certified current 23 July 2025
- DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution* (4 January 2024)

SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) provides a wide range of protections for service members whose duties might interfere with certain civil obligations and proceedings. Congress regularly amends the act with the goal of allowing service members to focus on the military mission first.

Key Takeaways

- » SCRA provides a wide range of protections for service members. Such protections include allowing a service member to terminate a lease due to permanent change of station or deployment and reducing pre-service interest rates to a maximum of 6%.
- » Other protections for service members include that civil procedures can be put on hold (or “stayed”) in certain circumstances, service members and their spouses can keep their state of residency for taxation and voting purposes, and evictions of service members are generally prohibited without a court order

Overview

- SCRA applies to civil matters, **NOT** criminal matters
- SCRA provides protections for active-duty members, reservists on federal active duty, and members of the National Guard on federal orders for a period of more than 30 days
- SCRA also provides certain benefits and protections to dependents of service members, and, in certain instances, to those who co-signed a loan for, or took out a loan with, a service member
- SCRA generally covers the time period on active duty. However, some provisions apply to pre-service obligations (e.g., vehicle leases entered prior to entry on active duty) or to the period following active service.
- Service members should contact a legal assistance attorney at the installation legal office for advice and assistance in these situations

Most Common and Relevant Provisions

- Eviction: SCRA prohibits eviction of a service member and dependents from rented housing without a court order. For this provision to apply, the rent cannot exceed a monthly cap set each year. This cap is generally set high (e.g., the monthly cap for 2025 is \$10,239.63).
- Liens (Storage and Towing Companies): A person holding a lien on a service member’s property or effects may not foreclose or enforce any lien on the property or effects without a court order during any period of military service and for 90 days thereafter

- Landlord-Tenant Lease Termination:

- A service member may unilaterally cancel a residential lease, without fees, upon entering service or if they receive permanent change of station orders, separation/retirement orders, or deployment orders for more than 90 days
- To terminate a residential lease, the service member must submit electronic or written notice and a copy of his/her military orders, or a letter from a commanding officer, to the landlord. If the service member pays rent on a monthly basis, once he/she gives proper notice, then the lease will terminate 30 days after the next rent payment is due.

- Vehicle Lease Termination:

- A service member may cancel a pre-service lease for a motor vehicle if they receive orders bringing them onto active duty
- A service member may cancel any motor vehicle lease (pre-service or signed during service) for deployment orders for 180 days or more, or permanent change of station (PCS) orders to a location outside the continental United States (OCONUS), or PCS orders from Alaska or Hawaii to any location outside of those states
- Early termination fees are prohibited

- Other Leases and Contracts: Subject to certain procedural requirements, service members are permitted to cancel telephone, internet/cable, gym and home security contracts upon receipt of military orders to relocate for a period of not less than 90 days to a location that does not support the contract. In limited situations, dependents can do the same.

- Maximum Rates of Interest: The interest rate on a service member's pre-service consumer debt or mortgage obligation must be capped at 6%, including most fees, unless the creditor shows the ability of the service member to pay interest above 6% is not materially affected by reason of their military service

- Professional License Portability: Subject to specific criteria, a service member or spouse with a covered professional license may retain the use of that license when military orders force them to move outside the jurisdiction covered by the license. Licenses to practice law are specifically excepted. A service member or spouse may be able to receive a temporary license if the licensing authority is unable to carry out requirements during the 30 days after receiving an application for portability of professional licenses. An application includes proof of military orders (which can also include notification from the service member's commanding officer), copy of marriage certificate (if applicant is a spouse of service member, and a notarized affidavit satisfying all criteria noted in 50 U.S.C. 4025a). A licensing authority that receives an application may also conduct a background check of the applicant before approving the application. A service member or spouse who has a covered license that operates in multiple States pursuant to an interstate compact shall be subject to the requirements of the compact or applicable state law. (See 50 U.S.C. 4025a: Portability of Professional Licenses of Servicemembers and their Spouses.) Contact your local legal assistance office for help with a license portability application (<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title50-section4025a&num=0&edition=prelim>).

- **Stay of Proceedings:** Courts have the discretion to delay a civil court proceeding (**NOT** criminal) when the requirements of military service prevent the service member from either asserting or protecting a legal right. The courts will look to whether military service materially affected the service member's ability to take or defend an action in court.
- **Taxation – Service Members and Dependents:** A service member's state of legal residence may tax military income. Service members and dependents do not lose legal residence solely because of a transfer pursuant to military orders. For example, if a member is a Virginia resident and is moved to a base in California, the service member does not lose Virginia residency, nor will he/she be subject to pay California state income tax on his/her military pay. Under SCRA, service members and spouses may elect to use one of three states for taxation purposes: the service member's state of residence or domicile, the spouse's state of residence or domicile, or the permanent duty station of the service member.
- **Child Custody:** A state court is prohibited from considering a service member's deployment as the sole factor in determining the best interests of the child, though this provision does not create a federal right of action

SCRA Application to ANG Service Members

- Certain provisions of SCRA apply to service members in Title 32 state status called to duty for more than 30 consecutive days or more in response to a national emergency declared by the President and supported by federal funds
- **Note:** Many states have statutes or regulations that provide benefits similar to those afforded by SCRA, even if SCRA itself does not apply

References

- Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3901–4043
- Department of Justice, Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative: <https://www.justice.gov/servicemembers>

UNIFORMED SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) encourages service in the uniformed services by entitling service members to return to their civilian employment upon completion of their military service with the seniority, status, and rate of pay they would have obtained had they remained continuously employed by their civilian employer. USERRA also prohibits discrimination based on present, past and future military service.

Key Takeaways

- » USERRA prohibits discrimination against military members by their civilian employers, prospective employers, or temporary employers
- » Service members are eligible for protection of the job, title, pay, and seniority by their pre-service employer for a period of up to 5 years if they comply with notice requirements
- » Members returning from an activation period must request reinstatement within a specified period of time depending on the length of their activation
- » Employers cannot take adverse action, deny promotions, retention, or deny any benefits against a person because they sought to enforce their rights under USERRA
- » Military members may benefit from contacting the U.S. Department of Labor (DoL) or the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) for questions or to help mitigate disputes

Overview

- USERRA covers nearly all service-member employees, including part-time and probationary employees, and it applies to virtually all U.S. employers, regardless of size. USERRA prohibits employment discrimination against a person on the basis of past military service, current military obligations, or intent to serve. An employer must not deny initial employment, reemployment, retention in employment, promotion, or any benefit of employment to a person on the basis of a past, present, or future service obligation. In addition, an employer must not retaliate against a person because of an action taken to enforce or exercise any USERRA right or for assisting in an USERRA investigation.
- It protects members in the Department of the Air Force (DAF), Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, Army National Guard, and the Air National Guard
- “Service” under the “uniformed services” includes the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis in a uniformed service under competent authority and includes active duty, active duty for training, initial active duty for training, inactive duty training, full-time National Guard duty, State active duty for a period of 14 days or more, and State active duty in response to a national emergency declared by the President under the National Emergencies Act (Termination of Existing Declared Emergencies, 50 U.S.C. § 1601 and Acts Prohibited, 50 U.S.C. § 4303)

Eligibility Criteria

- To have reemployment rights in a civilian job (including temporary jobs) following a period of uniformed service, a person must meet the following criteria:
 - Must have given advance notice to the employer that they were leaving the job for service in a uniformed service, unless such notice is impossible or unreasonable or otherwise prevented by military necessity
 - The cumulative period of service does not exceed five years absence not covered by exemption or exception, with the same employer. The federal government is considered the same employer.
 - Most periodic and special Reserve and National Guard training, most service in time of war or emergency, and involuntary extensions on active duty do not count toward the five-year limit, and other exempted periods of service as expressed in the statute and in the Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, *Civilian Reemployment Protections for Department of the Air Force Military Personnel* (27 January 2022)
 - Must have reported back to the civilian job in a timely manner or have submitted a timely application for reemployment
 - Not been separated from service with a disqualifying discharge or under other than honorable conditions

Table 10.1 USERRA Return to Work or Apply for Reemployment Timeline*

Period of Military Duty	1-30 Days of Service	31-180 Days of Service	181 Days or more of Service
Return to Work /Apply for Reemployment	By the beginning of the first regularly scheduled work period after the end of the calendar day of duty, plus time required to return home safely and an eight-hour rest period. If this is impossible or unreasonable, then as soon as possible.	Apply within 14 days following completion of Service. If this is impossible or unreasonable through no fault of the employee, then as soon as possible.	Apply within 90 days following completion of service

** Service-connected injury or illness: Reporting or application deadlines are extended for up to two years for persons who are hospitalized or convalescing.*

Entitlements

- People who meet the eligibility criteria under USERRA have seven basic entitlements:
 - Prompt reinstatement to employment position, meaning, as soon as is practicable under the circumstances of each individual
 - Accrued seniority and status, just as if the person had been continuously employed
 - This is the “escalator principle,” requiring each returning service member to be reemployed in the position the person would have occupied with the same seniority they would have enjoyed had the person remained continuously employed
 - The “status” the person would have attained if continuously employed includes location, opportunity to work during the day instead of at night, and the opportunity to work in a department or at such times when there are better opportunities to earn commissions or to be promoted
 - Immediate reinstatement of civilian health insurance coverage, even if the member did not elect to continue it during service
 - Employees are entitled to non-seniority rights and benefits at the time they left for military service, and to those rights and benefits that became effective during their service and are provided to similarly situated employees on furlough or leave of absence
 - Training or retraining and other accommodations necessary to update a returning employee’s skills so they have the ability to perform the essential tasks of the position
 - For employees who become disabled or have existing disabilities aggravated during services such that they are no longer “qualified employees,” the employee must be reemployed in: (a) a position equivalent in seniority, state, and pay to the escalator position, or (b) a position nearest in approximation consistent with the circumstances of the employee’s case
 - A reemployed employee shall not be discharged (or subject to RIF) without cause:
 - For one year after the date of reemployment if the person’s period of military service was for 181 days or more
 - For 180 days after the date of reemployment if the person’s period of military service was for 31 to 180 days
 - Persons who serve 30 or fewer days are not protected from discharge without cause. However, they are protected from discrimination because of military service/obligation.

- USERRA prohibits both discrimination and reprisal. This means an employer may not deny initial employment, reemployment, retention, promotion, or any benefit of employment because of a person's military service or application to serve. In addition, an employer may not take adverse employment action against a person because they either exercise a right, testify or assist in an investigation under USERRA.

Assistance and Enforcement

- The Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) within the United States DoL will assist persons claiming rights under USERRA, including persons claiming rights with respect to the federal government as a civilian employer. They can be reached at 1-866-237-0275 or at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/userra/fileclaim>.
- The Office of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) will also assist service members in enforcing USERRA. They can be reached at 1-800-336-4590 or through their website at <https://esgr.mil/USERRA/USERRA-Contact>.
- The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) (<https://osc.gov>) also enforces USERRA violations for federal employees at claimants' request once the claimant has exhausted the DoL process
- Key changes to USERRA by incorporating the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (Dole Act) signed 2 January 2025
- The Dole Act expands anti-retaliation protections by barring employers from taking any form of retaliatory action eliminating the need to determine whether a retaliatory act meets the criteria for "adverse employment action." The retaliation no longer needs to be employment-related.
- Liquidated damages are augmented providing financial recovery to successful litigants even in the absence of provable wages or benefits lost due to the violation. Courts may require an employer to pay the greater of \$50,000 or the total sum of lost wages, benefits, and prejudgment interest. Moreover, claimants must now demonstrate "the employer knowingly failed to comply with [USERRA]" instead of demonstrating the employer "willfully" failed to comply with USERRA.
- Claimants suing an employer may seek an early injunction to stop violations before a case is fully resolved if certain criteria are met
- Courts may require employers to pay 3% interest per year on lost wages or benefits
- Claimants are entitled to receive reasonable attorney's fees if they win a lawsuit under USERRA
- As stated above, USERRA now reads "to encourage service in the uniformed services" instead of "encourage noncareer service in the uniformed services." Essentially, regular military members are fully protected eliminating confusion on whether or not Reserves or National Guard components were considered to a "career service."

References

- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, 38 U.S.C. §§ 4301–4335
- Regulations Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, 20 C.F.R. Part 1002
- Civilian Employment and Reemployment Rights for Service Members, Former Service Members, and Applicants of the Uniformed Services, 32 C.F.R. Part 104
- DoDI 1205.12, *Civilian Employment and Reemployment Rights for Service Members, Former Service Members and Applicants of the Uniformed Services* (15 November 2024)
- Memorandum from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, *Civilian Reemployment Protections for Department of the Air Force Military Personnel* (27 January 2022)
- Department of Labor: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/userra>

UNIFORMED SERVICES FORMER SPOUSES' PROTECTION ACT

In 1982, Congress passed the Uniformed Services Former Spouses' Protection Act (USFSPA) to provide financial protections to certain former spouses of service members. Generally, USFSPA allows state courts to divide military disposable retired pay as marital property upon divorce and provides certain additional benefits to former spouses.

Key Takeaways

- » State courts can divide a service member's retired pay as part of a divorce
- » These court orders can be enforced by the Department of War (DoW) when specific requirements are met
- » Former spouses can apply for payments directly from the DoW through the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
- » A service member can elect to include a former spouse on their Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), or it can be part of the divorce settlement

Overview

- The USFSPA accomplishes several things:
 - It recognizes the right of state courts to distribute disposable military retired pay to a former spouse if a former spouse was awarded a portion of a member's military retired pay as property in their final court order
 - "Disposable retired pay" means the total monthly retired pay minus certain amounts pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1408
 - It provides the DoW a method of enforcing court orders such as final decrees of divorce, dissolution, annulment, and legal separation, and court-ordered property settlements incident to such decrees. The pertinent court order must provide for the payment of child support, alimony, or retired pay as property, to a former spouse.
 - To apply for payments under the USFSPA, a former spouse must submit a DD Form 2293, *Application for Former Spouse Payments from Retired Pay*, a copy of the applicable court order certified by the clerk of the court, and a few other documents, to DFAS. An application checklist and access to DD Form 2293 is available at <https://www.dfas.mil/Garnishment/usfspa/apply/>.
- An un-remarried former spouse may retain a military ID card and associated commissary, exchange, medical benefits if they meet the 20/20/20 rule. The 20/20/20 rule requires at least twenty years of marriage, at least twenty years of military service by the sponsor, and at least twenty years of overlap of the marriage and the military service. There are additional protections such as the 20/20/15 rule, which would allow medical benefits for one year after the termination of the marriage.

Division of Retired Pay as a Marital Asset or Community Property

- Retired pay as property awards must be expressed as a fixed dollar amount or a percentage of disposable retired pay. If the parties were divorced prior to the member's retirement, the court order can express the award as an acceptable formula or hypothetical retired pay award.
- An award of a percentage of a member's retired pay is automatically construed under the USFSPA as a percentage of disposable retired pay (gross retired pay less authorized deductions)
 - Final court orders, after 23 December 2016, issued to service member prior to retirement, limit disposable income to "the amount of the basic pay payable to the member for the member's pay grade and years of service at the time of the court order" and increased by the cost-of-living granted to military retirees from divorce to the date the member retires

Enforcement of Court Orders

- The 10/10 Rule: For a former spouse to receive their share of retired pay directly from DFAS, the member and former spouse must have been married to each other for 10 years or more during which the member performed at least 10 years of military service creditable towards retirement eligibility
- Court orders dividing disposable retired pay as property are only enforceable by DFAS if the state court had jurisdiction over the member by reason of (1) the member's domicile in the territorial jurisdiction of the court, (2) the member's residence in the territorial jurisdiction of the court (other than because of military assignment), or (3) the member's consent to the jurisdiction of the court (which some states may assume based on the member's participation in the proceedings)
- The 10/10 Rule and the jurisdictional requirement do not apply to enforcement of child support or alimony awards under the USFSPA Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)
- A member may elect to provide coverage under the SBP for a former spouse who was originally a "spouse" beneficiary under SBP, provided the parties were divorced after the member became eligible to receive retired pay
- A court can order a spouse to provide SBP coverage for a non-service spouse, but to be effective, it must be served on DFAS within one year after the divorce. A former spouse can submit his/her own request to DFAS—this is known as a "deemed election request".

Maximum Payment Amount

- The maximum that DFAS can be ordered to directly pay to a former spouse under the USFSPA is 50% of a member's disposable retired pay
- If a state court awards the former spouse more than 50% of the member's disposable pay, the former spouse must rely on the state court to enforce payment of the amount above 50%
- In cases where there are payments both under the USFSPA and pursuant to a garnishment for child support or alimony, the total amount payable cannot exceed 65% of the member's disposable earnings for garnishment purposes

References

- Definitions, 10 U.S.C. § 1072 and § 1408
- Uniformed Services Former Spouses' Protection Act, 10 U.S.C. ch. 71 § 1408
- Former Spouse Payments from Retired Pay, Procedures, 32 C.F.R. Part 161 § 161.19
- DoD Financial Management Regulation (FMR) 7000.14–R, Volume 7B, Chapter 29, *Former Spouse Payments from Retired Pay* (May 2025)
- DD Form 2293, *Application for Former Spouse Payments from Retired Pay* (April 2018), updated 7 April 2025
- Defense Finance and Accounting – Former Spouses' Protection Act: <https://www.dfas.mil/Garnishment/usfspa/apply/>

ENSURING THE FAIR HANDLING OF DEBT COMPLAINTS AGAINST SERVICE MEMBERS

Service members have the same legal rights under state and federal law as civilian consumers. It is important for commanders to understand that both law and Department of War (DoW) policy make a distinction between dealing with third party “creditors” with whom the debt originated, and “debt collectors” who are in the business of collecting debts for another person or business.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders should consult DAFI 36-2906, *Personal Financial Responsibility*, for procedures on how to respond to a creditor’s allegations that a service member has a delinquent debt
- » Debt collector communications and interactions are regulated by the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA)
- » Service members facing harassment from a debt collector or otherwise needing assistance should contact their local legal office for legal assistance

Overview

- The FDCPA is a federal law that regulates how debts may be collected. The FDCPA regulates debt collection agencies and attorneys and does not apply to original creditors.
 - A creditor is defined as a person or entity to whom or to which a debtor owes money. Most major creditors, particularly credit card companies, have adopted collection policies that do not violate federal law. Original creditors are also regulated by state laws which may closely follow the FDCPA.
 - Debt collectors are in the business of collecting debts that are owed to creditors. This includes individuals, collection agencies, lawyers who collect debts on a regular basis, and companies that buy delinquent debts and then try to collect them. Debt collectors are strictly limited in how they conduct their activities under both the FDCPA and state law.
- As opposed to the general prohibition on debt collectors contacting the chain of command (detailed further below), creditors can contact the chain of command about a service member’s debt. Specific procedures for commanders to address cases alleging a service member’s delinquent financial obligations are outlined in DAFI 36-2906. This instruction contains the process by which a creditor can request an involuntary allotment of pay.
 - Under DoW policy, the chain of command’s assistance in indebtedness matters shall not be extended to creditors who have not made a bona fide effort to collect the debt directly from the member, whose claims are patently false and misleading, or whose claims are obviously exorbitant

Debt Collector Communications with the Chain of Command

- Debt collectors are generally *prohibited* from contacting third parties—including commanders and first sergeants—without a court order or the debtor’s prior consent given directly to the debt collector. This is because the debt collector should be dealing directly with the service member/debtor. There are two limited exceptions to this rule:
 - First, a creditor, or debt collector can call and ask for the member’s contact information, but they are not permitted to identify themselves as someone calling regarding a debt
 - Second, if the member/debtor gave a creditor or debt collector written permission after the debt was created
- Under these exceptions, debt collectors may only contact the command section and may only do so once. Absent these circumstances, a debt collector should not be contacting the chain of command.

Debt Collector Communications with the Service Member/Debtor

- A debt collector is allowed to directly contact and communicate with a debtor, but the FDCPA limits where, when, and how these communications may occur. The FDCPA prevents debt collectors from several illegal actions. These include but are not limited to:
 - Harassing the alleged debtor or others, including threats of violence, use of obscene language, and repeated or continuous phone calls;
 - Debt collectors cannot contact the alleged debtor at unusual hours, such as before 0800 or after 2100;
 - Continuing to contact the debtor after receiving a notice from the debtor to cease all communication; and
 - Revealing the debt to third parties.

Remedies for Affected Service Members

- If a debt collector has violated the law, the debtor has the right to sue the collector in state or federal court within one year of the date the law was violated
- Any problems in dealing with debt collectors should be reported immediately to the base legal office. Additionally, service members may contact the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), the state Attorney General’s Office, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for further assistance.
- In accordance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), service members have the right to dispute a debt listed on their credit report, and to request a free copy of their credit report (the official federal website is: <https://www.AnnualCreditReport.com>)
- Service members should consult with a legal assistance attorney before making payments to a debt collector and to find out more about their rights under applicable law

Third Party Allotments

- Creditors whose bona fide efforts to collect a debt from a military member have failed can secure an involuntary allotment to satisfy a final judgment from a court. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) has no authority to resolve disputed claims or to require members to pay a private debt without a civil judgment.
- Complainants who attempt to serve DAF with documents should be referred to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). When a request for involuntary allotment is received, DFAS notifies the member and the member's commander.

References

- Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1681 *et seq.*
- Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 *et seq.*
- DoD 7000.14-R (“DoD FMR”) Volume 7A, Chapters 41–43, “Garnishments and Other Involuntary Allotments” (January 2025) “Discretionary Allotments” (May 2024), and “Nondiscretionary Allotments” (October 2023)
- DoDI 1344.09, *Indebtedness of Military Personnel* (1 February 2022)
- DAFI 36-2906, *Personal Financial Responsibility* (31 March 2025)
- AFMAN 65-116V1, *Defense Joint Military Pay System Active Component (DJMSAC) Financial Management Flight (FMF) Procedures*, Chapter 57, Allotments of Pay (8 August 2025)

Chapter 11

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COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

As a general rule, Department of War (DoW) installations are not routine forums for commercial activities by service members, their family members and others. Some commercial sales can be made during a scheduled interview between the Airman/Guardian and the vendor. There are also rules for commercial businesses operated out of base housing, but they can be authorized with oversight. Lastly, due to prohibitions on gambling, raffles, or other games of chance, are strictly controlled.

Key Takeaways

- » Commercial solicitations on the installation (e.g., investment counseling, insurance sales) have been subject to past abuse so specific appointments are required
- » Door-to-door commercial solicitations are not permitted in base housing
- » Home-based businesses can be operated out of base housing with Housing Office approval, but must comply with state, local, and host nation licensing requirements and tax laws
- » Games of chance are generally only allowed in approved Club gaming activities, except that recognized private organizations can utilize raffles as fundraising events

Permitted On-Base Commercial Solicitation

- On-base solicitation is a privilege, not a right, granted at the discretion of the installation commander. Personal commercial solicitation on an installation will be permitted only if the following requirements are met:
 - The solicitor is duly licensed under applicable laws;
 - The installation commander permits it; and
 - A specific appointment has been made with the individual concerned and conducted in family quarters or other areas designated by the installation commander.

Prohibited On-Base Commercial Solicitation

- Certain solicitation practices are prohibited on military bases including, but not limited to:
 - Soliciting personnel who are on-duty
 - Soliciting any kind of mass audience, e.g., commanders call or town hall
 - Soliciting in housing areas without an appointment
 - Soliciting door-to-door
 - Implying DoW sponsorship or sanction
 - Soliciting members junior in grade

- Procuring or supplying roster listings of DoW personnel
- Use of official ID cards by active duty members, retirees, or reservists to gain access for purposes of commercial solicitation

Operating Businesses from Base Housing

- Housing occupants may operate business enterprises while living in base housing limited to the sale of products and personal services, minor repair service on small items, limited manufacturing of items or tutoring
 - Members must request permission in writing to conduct the commercial activity from the housing office
 - Home-based businesses should not present unreasonable burdens on installation services (e.g., U.S. Post Office, commercial Wi-Fi, Pass & ID Office)
 - Home-based businesses should not compete with Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES)
 - Occupants must meet local government licensing requirements, agreements, and host country business practices before requesting approval to operate a private business

Games of Chance

- Bingo and Monte Carlo (Las Vegas) events are authorized in accordance with Enclosure 3 of DoDI 1015.10, *Military Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs*. However, games of chance must not otherwise violate local civilian laws. International agreements apply overseas.
- Cash prizes may be awarded for bingo. Play-in bingo programs should be limited to eligible patrons, their family members, and guests.
- Only non-monetary prizes may be awarded for Monte Carlo events. Play-in Monte Carlo events should be limited to Club members and their adult family members, members of other clubs exercising reciprocal privileges and their adult family members, and adult guests.
 - Once a participant purchases a money substitute for a Monte Carlo event, no reimbursement can be made for any unused portion, and money substitutes **MAY NOT** be used to buy resale items, including food and beverages

Raffles

- Installation-recognized private organizations may hold occasional and infrequent raffles, which must be approved in advance by the installation commander, with the Staff Judge Advocate's advice. Such raffles count towards the private organization's allowable limit of three on-base fundraisers per quarter. Raffles must not otherwise violate State or local civilian laws.
- Unit Unofficial Activities (e.g., social or holiday party committees) may not conduct raffles
 - Raffle prizes cannot be strictly monetary in nature

References

- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- DoDI 1000.15, *Procedures and Support for Non-Federal Entities Authorized to Operate on DoD Installations* (24 October 2008)
- DoDI 1015.10, *Military Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs* (July 6, 2009), incorporating Change 1, 6 May 2011
- DoDI 1344.07, *Personal Commercial Solicitation on DoD Installations* (30 March 2006)
- DAFI 34-101, *Air Force Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs and Use Eligibility* (7 March 2022)
- DAFI 36-3101, *Fundraising* (26 October 2022)
- AFI 32-6000, *Housing Management* (18 March 2020), including AFI32-6000_DAFGM2022-01, 8 March 2022
- AFI 34-223, *Private Organizations Program* (13 December 2018)

OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

The establishment of off-limits areas is a function of command. It may be used by installation commanders to help maintain good order and discipline, health, morale, safety, and welfare of service members. The establishment of off-limits areas is also intended to prevent service members from being exposed to or victimized by crime-conducive conditions. Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards (AFDCBs) advise and make recommendations to commanders on the establishment of off-limits areas.

Key Takeaways

- » Installation commanders may place a civilian establishment or area off-limits to military members after receiving a recommendation from the AFDCB
- » In emergency situations, commanders may declare establishments or areas temporarily off-limits
- » Military members who enter off-limits establishments or areas are subject to disciplinary action

Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards

- AFDCBs are established under the provisions of AFI 31-213, *Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards and Off-Installation Liaison and Operations*
 - AFDCBs must meet quarterly
 - AFDCBs may recommend the installation commander place a civilian establishment or area off-limits to military members
 - The AFDCB is usually composed of a president, voting and non-voting members, appointed by the commander, with representatives from various base functional areas, such as law enforcement, Staff Judge Advocate, equal opportunity, public affairs, chaplains, consumer affairs, health, and environmental protection
- Before initiating AFDCB action, the installation commander must attempt to correct the adverse condition or situation through the assistance of civic leaders or officials. Prior to recommending off-limits restrictions, the AFDCB will:
 - Notify the proprietor of the offending establishment, in writing (certified mail), of the alleged condition or situation requiring corrective action;
 - Specify in the notice a reasonable time for the condition or situation to be corrected; and
 - Provide the proprietor the opportunity to present any relevant information to the board.

- If the AFDCB recommends an establishment be placed off-limits, the installation commander makes the final decision
 - A decision to place an establishment off-limits may be appealed to the next higher commander after exhausting any local appeal rights
 - The establishment remains off-limits until the commander overturns the decision or determines adequate corrective action has been taken

Emergency Situations

- In emergency situations, commanders may declare establishments or areas temporarily off-limits to personnel of their respective commands. Follow-up action must be taken by AFDCBs as a first priority.

Commander Disciplinary Options

- Members who enter off-limits areas or establishments may be subject to disciplinary action under applicable Service regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Family members of service members and others associated with the Service or installation should be made aware of off-limits restrictions.
- Do not post off-limits signs or notices on private property
- In areas outside of the continental United States, off-limits and other AFDCB procedures must be consistent with existing status of forces agreements

References

- Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards and Off-Installation Liaison and Operations, 32 C.F.R. §§ 631, *et seq.*
- AFI 31-213, *Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards and Off-Installation Liaison and Operations* (27 July 2006), certified current 5 July 2018

UNIT UNOFFICIAL ACTIVITIES/UNIT SOCIAL FUNDS

Unit social funds, coffee/flower funds, booster clubs, and similarly named unit-controlled unofficial activities are acceptable when determined to be an unofficial (but still federal) activity with limited assets. Activities that do not meet monetary thresholds to remain as unit unofficial activities must transition to become private organizations (i.e., non-federal entities recognized by the installation commander to operate on the base).

Key Takeaways

- » Unit unofficial activities are unofficial federal entities that commanders can form for various purposes (such as organize a holiday party or manage a conference “landing fee”)
- » If the monetary holdings of unit unofficial activities become too excessive, the entity must transition to an AFI 34-223, *Private Organizations Program*
- » Commanders can also decide for tactical reasons to transition unit unofficial activities to a private organization (e.g., to allow the entity to engage in off-base fundraising)
- » Since they are federal entities, unit unofficial activities can be supported by Airmen/Guardians on-duty time and their efforts supported with use of official communications

Overview

- Assets may not exceed a monthly average of \$1,000 over a three-month period. Unofficial activities may temporarily exceed these limits if the substantial majority (>75%) of their raised funds are to be expended within a six-month period on a unit social event (e.g., holiday party).
- The \$1,000 average monthly limit may be increased by \$100 for every 50-unit members over 300 members, to a maximum of a \$5,000 monthly average
- Inventory of unit memorabilia items for sale are not counted towards the \$1,000 limit
- When assets exceed the above figure, the unofficial activity must either become a private organization, discontinue its operations, or reduce its assets below the asset threshold
- Unofficial activities will:
 - Maintain a two-person accountability system for all cash transactions; and
 - Submit a basic annual financial report to the unit commander detailing income and expenditures throughout the year.
- Installation and unit commanders must carefully review the status of all such unofficial activities operating on their installation and ensure their compliance with all applicable rules and regulations

- Such unofficial activities are not meant to become permanent slush funds
 - Unofficial activities are intended to allow group monetary collections for social events (e.g., holiday parties and unit picnics not funded by the Installation MWR)
 - May also be used to collect landing fees (volunteer contribution of pro rata personal funds) to pay for refreshments and/or meals and unit-hosted conferences and symposia
 - Installation and unit commanders may maintain unofficial activity checking accounts year-round, but the permanent account balance should ideally be the minimum necessary to keep the account open per the financial institution's rules
- No such fund can duplicate or compete with an installation nonappropriated fund revenue-generating activity
- Unofficial activities may not engage in frequent or continuous resale activities
 - Unit commanders must make a tactical decision whether to transition their unofficial activities to installation-recognized private organizations (POs)
 - POs are subject to lawsuits and installation commanders may require private organizations to purchase liability insurance in an amount adequate to cover potential liability arising from their activities. In addition, individual members of the unit/squadron could incur personal liability if not insured. Furthermore, PO events, generally, may not advertise through official communication systems (like those unofficial activities may use). However, unlike unofficial activities, POs have much broader latitude to raise funds, both on and off-base.
 - Unofficial activities must comply with all federal, state, and local laws governing such activities, including federal tax laws
- Unofficial activities may not sell alcoholic beverages, solicit funds, operate amusement or slot machines, or conduct games of chance, lotteries, raffles, or other gambling-type activities

References

- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- DAFI 36-3101, *Fundraising* (26 October 2022)
- AFI 34-223, *Private Organizations Program* (13 December 2018)

COMMANDER DIRECTED INVESTIGATIONS

Commanders, Civilian Directors, and other authorized Senior Air Force & Space Force Officers/Officials of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) may conduct investigations of individuals, programs, and processes which fall under their authority. DAFMAN 1-101, *Commander Directed Investigations*, sets out the requirements when directing investigations.

Key Takeaways

- » Commander/Directors must always consult with their Staff Judge Advocates before directing any inquiry or investigation
- » Commanders/Directors are prohibited from investigating allegations of reprisal and restriction
- » Only SAF Senior Official Inquiries Directorate (SAF/IGS) will investigate non-criminal allegations against senior officials
- » Commanders/Directors must notify their local IG upon initiation and completion of all CDIs concerning an officer
- » Commanders/Directors will provide IG with copies of all CDIs and supporting documentation

Inherent Authority to Investigate

- Commanders who have assumed or were appointed to command in accordance with AFI 51-509, *Appointment to and Assumption of Command*, and DAFI 38-101, *Manpower and Organization*, have inherent authority to order CDIs to investigate people and matters under their command
- Others authorized to direct CDIs include Air and Space Staff directors, senior Air Force and Space Force officers assigned to non-units, and civilians leading organizations designated as a unit in accordance with DAFI 38-101
- Reasons a commander/director may want to conduct a CDI:
 - To investigate systemic or procedural problems
 - To investigate a matter related to an individual's conduct or responsibility
- Active Duty IGs may not be appointed as an IO for a CDI. Guard/Reserve IGs may be appointed as IO for CDI at installations other than their own.
- Commanders/Directors are prohibited from conducting investigations into allegations of reprisal and restriction under 10 U.S.C. § 1034. Commanders/Directors must immediately report all allegations of reprisal or restriction to the SAF, Officer of the Inspector General, Complaints Resolution Directorate (SAF/IGQ) through the local IG.

- Reprisal under 10 U.S.C. § 1034 is separate and distinct from Retaliation under 10 U.S.C. § 932 (Article 132, UCMJ), however, both statutes contain similar language, elements, and definitions. Retaliation under 10 U.S.C. § 932 is a “covered offense” and the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) maintains exclusive authority over covered offenses. Commanders/Directors should coordinate with JA, IG, and OSTC to resolve any questions on the appropriate resolution approach.
- Commanders/Directors shall refer allegations of criminal conduct involving persons affiliated with the Department of War (DoW), or property and programs under their control, to Security Forces, Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) or local law enforcement as soon as possible. A CDI may investigate allegations of criminal conduct in cases where military law enforcement declines to investigate or defers to the CDI process.

CDI Requirements

- Commanders/Directors **MUST** notify SAF/IGQ (through their local IG) at the opening and closing of all CDIs when any officer (or civil servant GS-15 or equivalent) is named as a subject, whether substantiated or not
- Commanders/Directors must notify the local IG **anytime they become aware of any complaint of misconduct** against a Colonel (O-6) which is not obviously without merit and which, if true, would constitute misconduct, improper, or inappropriate conduct
- Allegations should be framed with the assistance of a judge advocate. Allegations should identify a violation of law, policy or regulation—or alternatively a systemic concern within the unit, such as a broken process. The Air Force Hand-Off Policy requires the Investigating Officer (IO) to engage in a person-to-person hand-off with the commander for all uniformed subjects and suspects in investigations at the conclusion of their interview. The IO should do this for civilian subjects as well.
- Prior to providing the final CDI case file to the commander/director for action, the IO must obtain a comprehensive written “legal sufficiency” review
- If the IO substantiated any allegations and the Appointing Authority (AA) concurs with the findings, the AA provides the subject(s) an opportunity to address the substantiated allegations via a tentative conclusion letter (TCL) IAW DAFMAN 1-101
- Once the CDI is completed and the AA signs off on the Report of Investigation (ROI), the commander/director notifies the complainant and subjects of the results. The commander/director can use any of the information found during the investigation in any administrative action against an individual.
- Commanders/Directors will provide IGs all CDI ROIs, regardless of the subject’s grade/rank or findings
- The initiating commander/director is the release authority for CDIs

- Commanders/Directors provide a copy of all command action as the result of any substantiated investigation or inquiry to the local MPF for inclusion to the military personnel record. **Note:** If the commander elects to provide verbal counseling or no command action following the substantiated finding, it still must be documented in an MFR format and the subject will be provided an opportunity to provide rebuttal as well. (See the discussion of adverse information in DAFI 36-2907.)

References

- Article 132, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DAFI 38-101, *Manpower and Organization* (29 August 2019), incorporating Change 1, 17 September 2025
- DAFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution* (4 January 2024)
- DAFI 90-5001, *Integrated Resilience* (23 July 2024)
- DAFMAN 1-101, *Commander Directed Investigations* (9 April 2021)
- AFI 51-509, *Appointment to and Assumption of Command* (23 December 2023)
- AFI 71-101, Volume 1, *Criminal Investigations Program* (24 January 2025)

ACCEPTANCE OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Installation commanders and other officials of the Federal Government are permitted to accept voluntary (i.e., gratuitous) services, in support of certain quality of life programs. Volunteers are considered unpaid employees of the Federal Government in terms of many privileges and protections.

Key Takeaways

- » Volunteer services may be accepted in support of Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs and other quality of life programs
- » Volunteers may be provided training and other employee-type benefits and protections as part of their official duties
- » Volunteers must sign a DD Form 2793, *Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Activities or Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities*, which acknowledges that they will not seek compensation from the U.S. Government in return for their volunteer services
- » Certain functional programs have specific authority to accept volunteer services

General Considerations

- Acceptance of gratuitous services (when the provider agrees in writing and in advance to waive any right to compensation) is always permissible in emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property
- Acceptance of gratuitous services in other situations may pose other issues, such as conflicts of interest, liability for damages or injuries both to and by the service provider, or the illegal augmentation of another appropriation
- Government employees may not waive their rights to statutory entitlements. This issue may arise in connection with civilian employees and uncompensated overtime.
- Seek the counsel of a Staff Judge Advocate any time free services are offered, unless you know they are specifically authorized by law

Types of Permissible Volunteer Service

- Military services are also specifically authorized by law to accept certain voluntary services in support of certain Department of the Air Force (DAF) programs, including medical, dental, legal, religious, family support, library, and MWR programs
 - All volunteers must sign the DD Form 2793
- Volunteers providing services under authorized programs are considered federal employees only for purposes of compensation for work-related injuries, tort claims for damages or loss, maintenance of records, and conflicts of interest
 - The volunteer must have been acting within the scope of the accepted services

- The volunteer will most likely be entitled to Department of Justice representation should he/she be named in an action filed under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA)
- A volunteer may not hold policy-making positions, supervise paid employees or military personnel, or perform inherently governmental functions, such as determining entitlements to benefits, authorizing expenditures of government funds, or deciding rights and responsibilities of any party under government requirements
- Volunteers may be used to assist and augment the regularly funded workforce, but may not be used to displace paid employees or in lieu of filling authorized paid personnel positions

Employment of Department of War Volunteers

- Volunteers may be provided training related to their duties
- Volunteers may be provided official email access using the Volunteer Logical Access Credential (VOLAC) program
 - Volunteers may be provided access to Personally Protected Information (PII) if it is required for their duties and they are given proper training
- Properly licensed volunteers may use government motor vehicles (GMVs) if required for their duties (**note:** additional training by the installation Logistics Readiness Squadron (LRS) may be required)
- Volunteers may be reimbursed for minor miscellaneous expenses they incur in the course of their duties
- Volunteers may use childcare services in the installation Child Development Center (CDC), space permitting, during the period of their duties
- Volunteers accepted per 10 U.S.C. § 1588 are also generally considered government employees for purposes of the protections of the FTCA when acting in the scope of their official duties

Volunteers in Specialized DAF Programs

- Federal agencies are specifically authorized by law to accept voluntary services provided by student interns as part of an established educational program
- Volunteer legal assistance services may be accepted in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 1044
- Military services are statutorily authorized to accept services of Red Cross volunteers
 - Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of War (DoW) and the Red Cross, Red Cross volunteers are generally considered government employees for purposes of the protections of the FTCA when acting in the scope of the services accepted by the DoW

- The Commander's Key Support Program (CKSP) establishes Key Liaisons that maintain contact between the unit and unit families. CKSP Key Liaisons may have access to spouse contact information (i.e., unit recall rosters) after appropriate Privacy Act and Personally Identifiable Information training. After initial contact by the Unit Key Liaison, spouses must be afforded the opportunity to opt-out of routine contact from the unit CKSP staff. However, unit members may be compelled to keep accurate, updated contact information for their spouses on file with the unit.

References

- Legal Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 1044
- Authority to Accept Certain Voluntary Services, 10 U.S.C. § 1588
- Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1346(b)
- Limitation on Voluntary Services, 31 U.S.C. § 1342
- DoDD 1000.26E, *Support for Non-Federal Entities Authorized to Operate on DoD Installations* (2 February 2007), incorporating through Change 2, 30 November 2022
- DoDI 1100.21, *Voluntary Services in the Department of Defense* (27 March 2019)
- DD Form 2793, *Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities or Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities* (March 2018)
- DAFI 36-3009, *Military and Family Readiness Centers* (4 November 2022), incorporating through DAFGM 2025-01 (16 January 2025)
- DAFI 36-3026, Volume 2, *Common Access Card (CAC)*, Attachment 12 (24 January 2023)
- DAFMAN 17-1304, *Identity, Credentialing and Access Management* (18 August 2021), incorporating through DAFGM 2023-01 (28 December 2023)
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims For and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021
- Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Department of Defense and the American Red Cross (March 2009) located at https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/Interorganizational_Documents/mou_arc2009.pdf

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Human Subjects Research (HSR) is increasingly conducted and supported at installations around the Department of the Air Force (DAF) to accelerate innovation in support of service member health and human performance. It is a heavily regulated activity and is an area requiring due caution and consultation with experts. The primary DAF reference in this area is DoDI 3216.02_DAFI 40-402, *Protection of Human Subjects and Adherence to Ethical Standards in DAF-Conducted and -Supported Research*.

Key Takeaways

- » For HSR issues, contact the applicable Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) for assistance. For organizations that do not have an HRPP, contact the DAF Component Office of Human Research Protections (COHRP) at usaf.pentagon.af-sg.mbx.afmsa-sge-c@health.mil.
- » All organizations have the responsibility to actively identify activity conducted or supported by the organization that may involve HSR
- » Military and civilian supervisors, officers, and others in the chain of command are prohibited from influencing their subordinates to participate in HSR. They are also prohibited from being present at any HSR participant recruitment sessions or during the HSR consent process for Department of War (DoW)-affiliated personnel.
- » If HSR involves DoW-affiliated personnel, the investigator must receive command approval to execute the research and this approval must be in writing. Contact the applicable HRPP or the DAF COHRP for assistance in how this is accomplished.

Introduction to HSR

- DAF leaders are responsible for the protection of human subjects in research they either conduct or support. Support includes both financial and nonfinancial assistance to non-DoW conducted HSR, such as access to personnel or facilities and permitting researchers to post recruitment flyers on-base.
- HSR is conducted or supported under the authorization of a HRPP. There are just a few established HRPPs in the DAF. Commands without a HRPP that wish to conduct or support human research should work through the DAF COHRP. The COHRP acts on behalf of the Air Force Surgeon General and can be reached at usaf.pentagon.af-sg.mbx.afmsa-sge-c@health.mil.
- Within HRPPs, Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), Exemption Determination Officials (EDOs), and/or Human Research Protection Officials (HRPOs) review DoW-conducted or -supported activities which are (or may include) HSR to ensure compliance with applicable regulations. HSR generally requires the informed consent of subjects in advance.

- The Air Force Research Lab (AFRL) HRPP is often involved in HSR studies across the DAF. For those commands working with AFRL, the 711th Human Performance Wing, or AFWERX, the AFRL HRPP can be reached at: 711HPW.IR.Workflow@us.af.mil. Contact the DAF COHRP to inquire about POCs for other DAF institutions with HRPPs (currently at USAFA, Air University, Air Force Institute of Technology, Air Force Personnel Center/DSY, Air Force Medical Command, and AF/A1Z).

HSR Defined

- Determining whether an activity is or is not HSR can be complicated. Only designated human research officials within HRPPs or within the DAF COHRP are authorized to make this determination.
- Generally, HSR consists of activities that include both:
 - A systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; and
 - Involve a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains either:
 - Information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction with the individual; or
 - Identifiable private information or biospecimens.
- Certain activities are exempted from the definition of HSR, such as public health surveillance, scholarly journalistic activities, and collection by a criminal justice agency for a criminal investigative purpose

HSR Requirements

- There are numerous regulations and requirements regarding HSR. From the command perspective, some of the most important requirements to emphasize are included below.
 - Capability development often includes research. When it includes HSR, prior compliance review (by a DoW IRB, EDO, and/or HRPO) is required to ensure protection of human participants.
 - Military and civilian supervisors, officers, and others in the chain of command are prohibited from influencing their subordinates to participate in HSR. They are also prohibited from being present at any HSR participant recruitment sessions or during the HSR consent process for DoW-affiliated personnel.
 - If HSR involves DoW-affiliated personnel as subjects and if the HSR includes any risks to their fitness for duty (e.g. health, availability to perform job, data breach), the informed consent document must inform DoW-affiliated personnel about these risks and that they should seek command guidance before participating

- If HSR involves DoW-affiliated personnel, the investigator must receive command approval to execute the research and this approval must be in writing. Contact the applicable HRPP or the DAF COHRP for assistance in how this is accomplished.
- Solicitations that may receive proposals that involve HSR must contain reference to Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) clause 252.235-7004. Contract awards must contain this DFARS clause in its entirety, and grants or other non-FAR awards must contain similar language.

References

- Limitation on Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects, 10 U.S.C. 980
- Protection of Human Subjects, 32 C.F.R. Part 219
- Protection of Human Subjects, 45 C.F.R. Subtitle. A, Subch. A., Part 46
- DoDI 3216.02, *Protection of Human Subjects and Adherence to Ethical Standards in DOD-Conducted and -Supported Research* (29 June 2022), incorporating Change 2, 25 July 2025
- DoDI 3216.02_DAFI 40-402, *Protection of Human Subjects and Adherence to Ethical Standards in DAF-Conducted and -Supported Research* (17 January 2024)

Chapter 12

THE AIR FORCE CLAIMS PROGRAM

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PERSONAL PROPERTY CLAIMS

The Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act (PCA) is a gratuitous payment statute. It is not insurance coverage and is not designed to make the United States a total insurer. Payment does not depend on tort liability or government fault. Congress passed the PCA to lessen the hardships of military life, and, within approved guidelines, to compensate proper claimants for property loss or damage.

Key Takeaways

- » Claim must be incident to member's service
- » Notice of all loss and/or damage or complete claim must be submitted to the transportation service provider (TSP) within 180 days of delivery
- » Claim must be submitted within 9 months to be eligible for full replacement value (FRV). Claims submitted after 9 months but within two years are subject to depreciation.
- » The TSP's maximum liability for FRV is \$75,000 or \$6.00 times the net shipment weight

Requirements under the Statute

- The loss or damage must be incident to the member's service
- The loss or damage cannot be recoverable through private insurance (limited exceptions)
- The claim must be substantiated
- The Air Force must determine that the member's possession of the property was reasonable or useful under the circumstances
- The loss or damage must not have resulted from negligence of the claimant

FRV Program Processing Guidelines

- FRV applies to household goods (HHG) shipments picked up on or after 1 October 2007
- Members may first claim FRV for damaged or lost household goods directly with the carrier
- The claim must be substantiated
- If a member cannot reach an acceptable settlement with the carrier on certain items, the member can file a claim with the Claims Service Center (CSC) for the disputed items only
 - Standard depreciation rules will apply. The CSC will assert an FRV claim against the carrier, and, if recovery is successful, will pass it on to the member.
- If a member has a significant loss under FRV, they should be aware that the carrier's maximum liability is \$75,000 or \$6.00 times the net weight of the shipment

FRV Program Filing Deadlines

- Claimant must file the Notice of Loss/Damage After Delivery in the Defense Personal Property System (DPS) Claims Module, placing the carrier on notice that additional loss or damage has been found within 180 days after delivery. Notice can also be provided via email or U.S. Postal Service.
- The claimant must file a claim directly with the carrier within nine months. If the claimant fails to file during this time, they may file a claim with the carrier or the CSC within two years, but standard depreciation rules will then apply.

Defense Personal Property System

- A claimant files a Loss/Damage Report After Delivery within 180 days after delivery (DPS replaced DD Form 1840R and DD Form 1851)
 - If the member cannot file the Loss/Damage Report After Delivery due to computer or other technical issues, the member should contact the CSC for guidance
- The claimant must file a claim in DPS within nine months of delivery. If dissatisfied with the carrier's offer, the claimant can transfer the items/file a claim with the CSC.

Statute of Limitations and Other Important Time Periods

- A claim for a sum certain must be presented by the member (or authorized agent) within two years from the incident date or delivery date. FRV is only available if filed within nine months.
- The two-year statute may be extended, for good cause, during time of war. The CSC will determine whether good cause exists to extend the timeline.
- Damage for privately owned vehicles (POVs) is noted on DD Form 788, *Private Vehicle Shipping Document for Automobile*, at the port
 - If additional damage is discovered after leaving the Vehicle Processing Center (VPC), but within 48 hours of vehicle pickup, the member should contact the VPC and report the additional damage

Proper Claimants

- Active duty Air Force and Space Force military personnel
- Retired or separated Air Force and Space Force military personnel who suffer loss or damage resulting from the last entitled storage or movement of their personal property
- Air Force and Space Force civilian employees paid from appropriated and nonappropriated funds (NAF). Claims filed by NAF civilian employees are paid from NAF funds.
- Air Force Reserve (AFR) and Air National Guard (ANG) personnel when performing federally-funded active duty, full-time ANG duty, inactive duty for training, and ANG technicians serving under 32 U.S.C. § 709

Payable Claims

- Government-Sponsored Transportation or Storage Under Orders: Examples include household goods and unaccompanied baggage shipments, shipped vehicles, mobile homes and contents in shipment, and, in some circumstances, personally procured moves, luggage and hand-carried property
- At Quarters and Other Authorized Locations: Examples include fire, explosion, hurricane, theft, and vandalism in continental United States (CONUS) base housing or at overseas quarters either on or off-base
- Privately Owned Vehicles: Examples include damage in shipment, theft or vandalism to parked cars, damage or loss during TDY where POV is authorized, and paint over-spray

Non-Payable Claims

- Uniform Items: Uniform items damaged while performing normal duties are not payable
 - Uniform item claims must be investigated and any payment must be supported by facts. There should be no negligence or lack of due care on the claimant's part.
- Real Property: Real property includes land and whatever is permanently erected, growing upon or affixed to land (i.e., fixtures)
 - Real property damage can occur when origin or delivery agents are in your residence packing or delivering your household goods

References

- Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act (PCA), 31 U.S.C. §§ 3701, 3721, 32 U.S.C. § 709
- DoDD 5515.10, *Settlement and Payment of Claims Under 31 U.S.C. 3701 and 3721, "The Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act of 1964"* (24 September 2004), certified current 31 October 2006
- DD Form 788, *Private Vehicle Shipping Document for Automobile* (September 1998)
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims for and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021
- Air Force Claims Service Center, <https://claims.jag.af.mil/>

DISASTER CLAIMS

The Air Force Claims Service Center (CSC) and base legal offices work together when a disaster strikes to ensure Airmen, Guardians, and their families receive compensation for personal property that is lost or damaged incident to service.

Key Takeaways

- » Request for a disaster claims team must come from wing or installation commander
- » Emergency payments can be made within 96 hours
- » Claims must be filed with available insurance coverage before filing with CSC
- » Claims must be filed with CSC within 2 years of disaster date

Disaster Claims Team

- A team from AF/JA – Civil Law and Litigation Directorate, Medical, Tort and Personal Property Law Division, is available to assist base legal offices in large disasters. The disaster claims team will deploy to the disaster location at the request of the wing or installation commander.
- The CSC, with Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) support, can make emergency payments in 7 business days by electronic funds transfer (EFT)
 - Alternatively, the CSC can provide the wing accounting liaison officer an emergency funding document to make cash payments, if needed
- If deployed, the team, along with base legal personnel, will inspect and document damaged property, and assist members with filing claims
 - Claims must first be filed with any available insurance coverage. Claims filed against the Air Force and Space Force are secondary.
- Affected Airmen, Guardians, and their families have two years from the date of the disaster to file their claims

References

- Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act (PCA), 31 U.S.C. §§ 3701 & 3721 DoDD 5515.10, *Settlement and Payment of Claims Under 31 U.S.C. 3701 and 3721*, "The Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act of 1964" (24 September 2004), certified current 31 October 2006
- Air Force Claims Service Center, <https://claims.jag.af.mil/>

TORT CLAIMS

Dependents, retirees, and nonaffiliated civilians may file claims related to accidents or injuries they have suffered. Service members may file claims for property damage or for injuries arising from medical malpractice that occurs in military treatment facilities. Commanders should refer potential claimants to the installation legal office's and should not make any promises or implications that their claim will be approved.

Key Takeaways

- » Tort claims are claims arising from alleged negligent or wrongful acts or omissions of government personnel while acting within the scope of their office or employment
- » Generally, to receive compensation, an injured person or entity must present a signed written request for payment of a specific amount of money (claim) within two years of the accident or incident
- » Installation legal offices accept, investigate, and adjudicate most tort claims alleging \$25,000 or less in losses. Higher headquarters handles claims for more than \$25,000.
- » Tort claims payments do not come from local funds

Introduction

- Under certain circumstances, federal law subjects the United States to liability for property damage, personal injuries, and death that result(s) directly from the negligent or wrongful acts/omissions of government personnel acting within the scope of their employment
- Federal law authorizes the United States to pay for property damage, personal injuries, and death that directly result(s) from “noncombat activities” of United States armed forces
- Normally, to receive compensation, an injured person or entity must present a signed written request for payment of a specific amount of money (claim) within two years of the accident or incident to the agency that created the loss, personal injury, or death
- In some cases, denial of a claim or failure to resolve a claim within six months after it is presented creates a right to sue the United States in federal district court
- Installation legal offices work with AF/JA – Civil Law, Medical, Tort and Personal Property Law Division (JACC) to receive and process claims against the Air Force or Space Force and help defend the Air Force or Space Force when claims are litigated

Claims and Claimants

- Torts claims are claims arising from alleged negligent or wrongful acts or omissions of government personnel while acting within the scope of their office or employment
- Airmen and Guardians who cause damages or injuries while acting within the scope of their employment are protected from personal liability. “Scope of employment” generally means they are doing their assigned jobs, not performing personal errands.

- Common tort claims include car accidents involving government motor vehicles (GMV) or rental cars while on official business, slips and falls on-base, barrier or bollard accidents, medical malpractice, or aircraft accidents
- Claimants may be individuals, organizations, or companies that have suffered a loss

Payable Claims

- Claims must demand a specific amount of money, be signed by the claimant or authorized agent, and allege damage to real or personal property, personal injury, or death. Damage must be a direct result of a negligent or wrongful act or omission of government personnel acting within the scope of their employment.
 - Government personnel include Air Force and Space Force military and civilian employees, Civil Air Patrol members performing Air Force or Space Force assigned missions, and Air National Guard military members when in federal status
- A negligent act occurs when a person's failure to exercise the degree of care considered reasonable under the circumstances results in an unintended injury to another party, as determined by the state law where the incident occurred
- The installation legal office determines, preliminarily, whether an employee acted within the scope of employment and whether a negligent act or omission occurred
 - Liability is determined by the law of the state where the alleged negligent act or omission occurred or, for claims arising in foreign countries, by the legal standards controlled by United States military regulation or policy, or applicable international agreements
- In rare cases, the loss, injury, or death may be payable even if there is no negligence. This typically happens when the mishap involved conduct that is uniquely military in nature short of combat (noncombat activity). Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) operations and military training maneuvers (including training flights) fall under this category.
 - If the claim is from a service member or the service member's representative, alleging medical malpractice that occurred in a covered military medical treatment facility, the claim may be payable if the injury or death is the result of negligent care by a military, civilian Department of War (DoW) employee, or personal services contractor
- Some forms of claims are specifically excluded by statute and not payable. These include, but are not limited to, claims for intentional torts (acts the person intends to commit), such as assault, battery, false imprisonment, false arrest, malicious prosecution, abuse of process, libel, slander, misrepresentation, deceit, or interference with contractual rights.

Processing and Payment

- Payment for claims does not come from local funds. It comes from either a central Department of the Air Force (DAF) fund or the U.S. Treasury.
- Installation legal offices accept, investigate, and adjudicate most tort claims alleging \$25,000 or less in losses, except for personal injury and medical malpractice tort claims. Claims above \$25,000, for personal injury, at continental United States (CONUS) locations are forwarded immediately to JACC. All claims arising out of medical malpractice CONUS and in Alaska and Hawaii, are forwarded immediately to JACC.
- JACC investigates and takes final action on all medical malpractice claims arising within the United States. At USAFE and PACAF bases outside the 50 states, installation legal offices investigate medical malpractice claims under the Military Claims Act (MCA) and forward the claims files to JACC with the full investigation and recommendation for final adjudication.
- Final action is taken by mailing the denial of claim or, when applicable, denial of a reconsideration request. In certain cases, claimants may sue the DAF within six months after final action is taken on the claim. Six months of no action may be deemed a denial by the claimant and the claimant can file suit. Suits are filed in federal district court. The Department of Justice (DoJ) defends the DAF in litigation. JACC works with the installation legal office to help DoJ defend litigation.

References

- Military Claims Act, 10 U.S.C. § 2733
- Medical Malpractice Claims by Members of the Uniformed Services, 10 U.S.C. § 2733a
- Foreign Claims Act, 10 U.S.C. § 2734
- International Agreement Claims Act, 10 U.S.C. §§ 2734(a), 2734(b)
- Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2401, 2671–2680
- National Guard Claims Act, 32 U.S.C. § 715
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims For and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021

AVIATION CLAIMS

Aviation claims occur in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, claims arising from aircraft crashes, range operations, falling objects, jet blasts, low overflights, and sonic booms. These claims can involve the Regular Air Force, Regular Space Force, Air Force Reserve (AFR), Air National Guard (ANG), Aero Club, and Civil Air Patrol (CAP) personnel and aircraft.

Key Takeaways

- » Aviation Claims may be processed under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA), Military Claims Act (MCA), or National Guard Claims Act (NGCA)
- » Base settlement authority is limited to \$25,000 and can only be used for claims involving property damage, not personal injury
- » Adjudicating ANG and CAP claims depends on the aircrew's status

FTCA Claims

- Claims are most commonly resolved under the FTCA and are resolved in accordance with the state law where the mishap or negligence occurred. If the claim is not resolved, the claimant may bring a lawsuit in federal district court. The claimant will need to provide proof of negligence, causation, and damages.
- Base settlement authority is limited to \$25,000 and can only be used for claims involving property damage but not for claims involving personal injury

MCA and NGCA Claims

- If the mishap results from noncombat activities, claims may be adjudicated under the MCA, or possibly the NGCA. There is no requirement to show negligence by the United States.
- Base settlement authority is limited to \$25,000 and can only be used for claims involving property damage but not for claims involving personal injury
- Advanced payments may be possible for extraordinary circumstances where urgent need is demonstrated

Sonic Boom Damage

- The location of the claimant's property in relation to the sonic boom is critical to determining liability
- Broken window glass, cracked stucco and drywall, and fallen items in a house are generally the most common types of damage. A sonic boom is unlikely to cause significant structural damage, such as cracked foundations or sidewalks, without causing other damage.

Low Overflight Damage

- Noise alone generally does not cause damage to property
- Noise may damage a claimant's health and may startle animals
- Claims alleging loss of property value due to noise from repeated low overflights are not usually payable under any tort claims statute. The remedy is generally a "takings" claim under the Constitution's Fifth Amendment due process clause.

AFR and ANG Claims

- AFR crew members have the same status as Regular Air Force and Regular Space Force personnel
- When adjudicating ANG claims, it is important to determine the status of crew members of ANG personnel involved in the mishap
- The United States is only liable for the negligence of ANG crewmembers performing federal duties under Title 10 or certain duties under Title 32 at the time of the incident. The United States is not liable when an ANG member is performing duty for the state.
- ANG claims may also be settled pursuant to the NGCA (32 U.S.C. § 715) for death, personal injury, or property damage arising out of the authorized noncombat activities of the ANG

Aero Club Claims

- Aero Clubs are operated as nonappropriated fund instrumentalities (NAFIs) of the United States
- The Feres doctrine generally bars Regular Air Force, Regular Space Force, ANG, and AFR **military members** from receiving compensation under federal claims statutes for death or injuries arising out of their participation in Aero Club activities. Such participation is incident to their military service.
- The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) generally bars Department of the Air Force **civilian employees** from receiving compensation under federal claims statutes for death or injuries arising from their participation in Aero Club activities
- The FTCA recognizes third-party claims arising from the negligence of Aero Club employees or military members working in their official capacity
- Aero Club claims under the FTCA are investigated and adjudicated by the same settlement authorities as other FTCA claims. However, settlement of Aero Club claims are paid from nonappropriated funds and administered by the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center (AFIMSC) located at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

CAP Claims

- CAP is a federally-chartered, nonprofit civilian corporation under 36 U.S.C. § 40301. It is also a volunteer civilian auxiliary of the Air Force under 10 U.S.C. § 9492 when performing missions assigned by the Air Force. The United States is not liable for third party claims arising out of CAP activities when CAP is acting in its nonprofit status.
- The Air Force is authorized to use the services of the CAP for certain noncombat programs and missions of the Air Force that have been approved as Air Force Assigned Missions (AFAMs). AFAM approval authorities are laid out in DAFI 10-2701, *Organization and Function of the Civil Air Patrol*.
 - Typical AFAMs include support of homeland security, search and rescue, disaster relief, and counter-narcotics reconnaissance flights
 - The FTCA recognizes third-party claims arising out of activities of CAP while performing AFAMs

References

- Federal Employees' Compensation Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 8101 *et seq.*
- Military Claims Act, 10 U.S.C. § 2733
- Civil Air Patrol, 10 U.S.C. § 9492
- Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2671–2680
- National Guard Claims Act, 32 U.S.C. § 715
- Organization, 36 U.S.C. § 40301
- *Feres v. United States*, 340 U.S. 135 (1950)
- DoDI 1400.25-V810_DAFI36-150, *Injury Compensation* (9 December 2022)
- DAFI 10-2701, *Organization and Function of the Civil Air Patrol* (17 June 2021)
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims For and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021

INTERNATIONAL AND FOREIGN TORT CLAIMS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Congress enacted the International Agreement Claims Act (IACA), Foreign Claims Act (FCA), and Military Claims Act (MCA) for consideration of claims alleging wrongful death, personal injury and/or property damage by U.S. Armed Forces personnel in foreign countries. Claims are payable only if meritorious, that is, they are factually substantiated and payment is consistent with applicable law.

Key Takeaways

- » For tort claims arising in foreign countries, DoDI 5515.08, *Assignment of Claims Responsibility*, is the starting point for determining which military department has responsibility for the claim
- » Nominal solatia under 10 U.S.C. § 2242 is not authorized as compensation for payable or non-payable tort claims and is justified as a claim-investigation expense only with proof of custom
- » Geographic combatant command Staff Judge Advocates (CCMD SJAs) and their service component command SJAs provide guidance on international agreements and claims under such agreements arising in their respective areas of responsibility (AORs)
- » FCA (if IACA is inapplicable) may provide compensation to inhabitants of foreign countries incurring tort damages in their country or another foreign country; payment exclusions apply
- » MCA (applicable worldwide) may provide compensation to inhabitants of the United States incurring tort damages in foreign countries; payment exclusions apply

Single Service Claims Responsibility

- Responsibility for processing tort claims arising in foreign countries is vested with the Departments of the Air Force (DAF), Army, and Navy
 - In DoDI 5515.08, the Department of War General Counsel (DoW/GC) lists the countries for which these three military departments exercise exclusive claims responsibility for DoW tort claims
 - Some countries are not assigned. Claims arising in unassigned countries should be processed by the Army, Navy, or Air Force command whose activity or personnel allegedly caused the claim.

Solatia

- A solatium payment is a nominal payment made immediately to a victim or victim's family to express sympathy when local custom exists for such a payment
- Solatia under 10 U.S.C. § 2242 is not compensation for tort damages and, in countries for which the Air Force has claims responsibility, is limited to Japan, where U.S. military regulation governs the practice

IACA Claims

- The IACA is not available as a source of compensation unless the United States is party to an international agreement (IA) providing for “cost sharing of claims” against the United States
 - Article VIII, Paragraph 5(e) of the *Agreement Between the Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty Regarding the Status of their Forces* (NATO SOFA) exemplifies “cost-sharing of claims.” (Total claim payout is made by the United States and one or more other Parties to the NATO SOFA).
- The timeliness of such claims is determined by the receiving state (host nation) law, but no IACA claim, even if timely, may be paid for combat-related damages
- All conditions governing the adjudication and payment of the claim under the IA and IACA must be satisfied
- Geographic CCMD SJAs and their service component command SJAs provide guidance on IAs applicable to their respective areas of responsibility (AORs)

FCA Claims

- Congress disallows payment of FCA claims not presented within 2 years of accrual (incident occurrence) and claims arising from enemy or U.S. actions in combat
 - However, an FCA claim arising indirectly from combat and based on an aircraft accident or malfunction while preparing for, going to, or returning from a combat mission may be considered under 10 U.S.C. § 2734(b)(3)
- Proper claimants under the FCA include foreign nationals, foreign businesses, foreign governments, U.S. expatriates residing abroad (not connected with U.S. Government service), and U.S. corporations with a place of business inside the country where the claim arose
- For favorable FCA payment consideration, the investigation must show damages were caused, negligently or wrongfully, by U.S. Armed Forces personnel or caused by noncombat activities of the U.S. Armed Forces
 - Noncombat activity—A term of art which is defined as activity, other than combat, war, or armed conflict, that is particularly military in nature, has little parallel in civilian pursuits, and has been historically considered as furnishing the proper basis for payable claims. “Noncombat activity” does not mean “not combat.”
- The Secretary of the Air Force has promulgated AFI 51-306 and 32 C.F.R. Part 842, *Administrative Claims* (Subpart E), to implement DAF policy under the FCA
 - AFI 51-306, Attachment 2, identifies FCA Settlement Authorities
 - 32 C.F.R. § 842.55 lists extensive FCA payment exclusions

MCA Claims

- Congress disallows payment of MCA claims not presented within 2 years of accrual
- Proper claimants under the MCA are primarily citizens and inhabitants of the United States (present abroad as tourists or U.S. Government employees, dependents, or contract employees)
 - U.S. military and civilian personnel are not proper claimants for injury or death that occurred incident to their service
- MCA claims arising in foreign countries require a showing that damages were caused, negligently or wrongfully, by U.S. Armed Forces personnel acting in the scope of their employment or caused by noncombat activities (whether or not caused by negligent or wrongful acts or omissions) of the U.S. Armed Forces
- The Secretary of the Air Force has promulgated AFI 51-306 and 32 C.F.R. Part 842 (Subpart D) to implement DAF policy under the MCA
 - AFI 51-306, Attachment 2, identifies MCA Settlement Authorities
 - 32 C.F.R. § 842.40 lists extensive MCA payment exclusions

References

- Authority to Use Appropriated Funds for Certain Investigations and Security Services, 10 U.S.C. § 2242
- Military Claims Act, 10 U.S.C. § 2733
- Foreign Claims Act, 10 U.S.C. § 2734
- International Agreement Claims Act, 10 U.S.C. § 2734a
- Advance Payments Act, 10 U.S.C. § 2736
- Administrative Claims, 32 C.F.R. Part 842
- DoDD 5515.03, *Settlement of Claims Under Sections 2733, 2734, 2734a, and 2734b of Title 10, United States Code* (27 September 2004), certified current 31 October 2006
- DoDI 5515.08, *Assignment of Claims Responsibility* (30 August 2016)
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims For and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021

PROPERTY DAMAGE TORT CLAIMS IN FAVOR OF THE UNITED STATES

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) has the right under federal law to collect claims for damage to its property through someone's negligence or wrongful act. Claims on behalf of the United States for property damage by a tortfeasor require the base to be proactive and aggressively look for these claims, which are known as "G claims" or "government claims".

Key Takeaways

- » The DAF has a right and obligation to collect claims for damage in excess of \$100 to its property caused through someone's negligence or wrongful act
- » Installation Staff Judge Advocate personnel need the cooperation of installation units responsible for property to identify potential claims and to collect evidence of the damage done to DAF property
- » When it is more likely than not negligence occurred, Installation Staff Judge Advocates are responsible for transferring investigated G claims to JACC via CLCMS
- » Monies collected from G claims are not typically returned to the unit for use but instead are deposited in different accounts based on what property was damaged by the tort
- » The repair in kind collection method may be used to avoid spending unit funds on repairs to damaged property

Introduction

- Installation Staff Judge Advocates (SJA) (or their designees) and units should aggressively identify potential claims against a tortfeasor for loss or damage to government property. SJA cooperation with the installation unit responsible for the property is key to a successful program. This includes Civil Engineering, Transportation, and Security Forces.
- The SJA is responsible for transferring identified potential G claims to the Civil Law and Litigation Directorate, Medical, Tort and Personal Property Law Division (JACC) by using the Civil Law Case Management System (CLCMS) located on TJAG Home Webpage, Management Systems Tab
- To successfully identify and transfer a G claim, the SJA must collect evidence that shows more likely than not someone committed a tort (negligent or wrongful act) and damaged or destroyed DAF property. This evidence typically consists of police reports, witness statements, photographs of the incident site and damaged property, and detailed invoices generated by qualified repair technicians.
- After transfer and collection, due to fiscal laws, monies collected from G claims are not typically returned to the unit for use but instead are deposited in different accounts based on what property was damaged by the tort. If monies are received from a potential G claim before it is transferred in CLCMS, please contact JACC.

- However, the repair in kind collection method may be used to avoid spending unit funds on repairs. Under this process, instead of paying the DAF for damages, a tortfeasor can pay a repair technician directly for repairs made to the damaged DAF property. This collection method comports with federal spending laws and allows for the repair of property without the need to expending unit funds.

Identifying, Investigating, and Referring G Claims

- Identify: AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims for and Against the Air Force*, Chapter 9, directs all installation authorities to aggressively identify potential claims against tortfeasors or other responsible parties (such as an insurance company) for loss of or damage to government property, if the loss or damage is for \$100 or more
 - Personnel should report potential G claims to their unit and the SJA
 - SJAs should establish lines of communication with installation units that monitor and maintain DAF property, including but not limited to Civil Engineering, Transportation, Logistics Readiness (to include Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs), and Security Forces
 - The SJA should train personnel in these units to identify government claims and to collect and preserve the evidence needed to pursue the claim
- Investigate: SJAs gather evidence to determine whether someone negligently or wrongfully caused damage to government property
 - The SJA must work with the property custodian to gather or create evidence of the amount it would cost, or in the case of totaled property, to replace the property
 - Additional evidence typically consists of police reports, witness statements, photographs of the incident site and damaged property, and detailed invoices generated by qualified repair technicians
- Refer: If the SJA determines damage to government property more likely than not involved negligence or wrongdoing, the SJA: (1) creates a CLCMS G claim, located on TJAG Home Webpage, Management Systems Tab; (2) fills in the required text forms and uploads all investigatory materials; and, (3) transfers that G claim to HQ USAF/JACC
 - All potential G claims more than \$100,000 are referred directly to JACC or JAOA (maritime), regardless of whether there is a preponderance of evidence negligence or wrongdoing occurred
- Assertion: JACC or JAOA (maritime) reviews the installation G claim material provided and may forward the matter to the Treasury for collection, return the matter to the installation for further investigation, or close the matter without collection efforts

References

- Damage to Real Property: Disposition of Amounts Recovered, 10 U.S.C. § 2782 Military Family Housing Management Account, 10 U.S.C. § 2831
- Custodians of Money, 31 U.S.C. § 3302
- Money and Finance: Claims, 31 U.S.C. § 3701
- Federal Claims Collection Act, 31 U.S.C. §§ 3711–3719
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims For and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021
- Civil Law Case Management System (<https://afjagc-portal.cce.af.mil/clcms.tort/>)
[CAC-enabled site that must be accessed on a .mil computer]

ARTICLE 139 CLAIMS

Under Article 139, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), commanders may direct collection and pay a claim for property that military personnel willfully damage or wrongfully take, if the claim results from riotous, violent, or disorderly conduct.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders may direct collection and pay a claim for property that military personnel willfully damage or wrongfully take
- » Claims under this provision must be submitted within 90 days of the date of the incident, unless the commander determines good cause for a delay
- » Commanders appoint a board of officers to investigate Article 139 claims
- » After reviewing the Board's recommendations, commanders assess an amount against each offender and direct Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) to withhold the specified amount from each offender's pay

Scope of Article 139 Claims

- Assertable Claims:
 - Property claims only, not personal injury or wrongful death
 - Must involve willful misconduct, not performance of legally authorized duties; and must arise from riotous, violent, or disorderly conduct, not conduct involving simple negligence or, for example, bad checks or private indebtedness
- Article 139 claims are entirely separate and distinct from disciplinary action taken under any other article of the UCMJ, or any other administrative action that may be appropriate
- Proper Claimant:
 - Any individual, to include military and civilian, business entity, state, territory, local government, or nonprofit organization may file an Article 139 claim
 - An appropriated fund, nonappropriated fund instrumentality, or any other component of the United States government may not file an Article 139 claim

Procedures

- The claim must be submitted to an appropriate commander
- The appropriate commander is the officer exercising Special Court-Martial Convening Authority over the offender
- Claims must be submitted within 90 days of the date of the incident, unless the commander determines good cause for a delay

- Examples of good cause for delay may include deployment, a claimant who does not know the identity of the tortfeasor, or the claimant's reasonable lack of knowledge of the ability to file an Article 139 claim
- Initially, the claim may be presented orally, but it must be written and state a sum certain before final action may be taken
- The claim should be submitted to the commander of the military organization or unit of the alleged offending member or members. However, it may be presented to the commander of the nearest military installation to be forwarded to the appropriate commander for jurisdiction. Commanders who receive Article 139 claims that are not under their jurisdiction should forward it promptly to the appropriate command.
- If it appears the claim is cognizable, the appointing commander appoints a board of officers to investigate the claim. If it appears the claim is not cognizable, the commander refers the complaint to the Staff Judge Advocate for legal review.
- A board of officers may consist of one to three commissioned officers. After evaluating all available evidence, which may include interviewing the individual against whom the claim was asserted (in accordance with the rights afforded by Article 31, UCMJ, and the right to counsel), the board:
 - Determines if the claim falls under Article 139, UCMJ
 - Identifies the offender(s)
 - Determines liability and damages
- The board may recommend:
 - Assessing damages against the identified service member (deducting from the assessment any voluntary or partial payments already made)
 - Assessing damages against members who were present during the incident, if authorities cannot individually identify the offenders
 - Disapproving the claim
- After the board completes its review, it forwards the claim to the Staff Judge Advocate for a legal review prior to action by the appointing commander

Action by the Appointing Commander

- Determine if the claim falls under Article 139, UCMJ
- Assess an amount against each offender, but not more than the board's recommended amount
- Forward the board's report to the appropriate commander if it is determined that one or more offenders are in a different command, since only the commander of an offender may order payment of the claim under Article 139, UCMJ
- Direct the DFAS office to withhold the specified amount from each offender's pay to pay the claimant
- Notify the offender and claimant of the action taken

Appeals and Reconsideration

- The commander's action may not be appealed by the claimant or the offender
- The commander who originally ordered the assessment may reconsider and change the decision if the findings later prove to be wrong, even if the offender is no longer a member of that command
- A successor in command may change or cancel the assessment only based on newly discovered evidence, fraud, or obvious error of law or fact

References

- Articles 31 and 139, Uniform Code of Military Justice
- Claims Under Article 139, Uniform Code of Military Justice (10 U.S.C. 939), 32 C.F.R. Part 842, Subpart B
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims for and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021

LIABILITY FOR DAMAGE TO RENTAL VEHICLES

Vehicles rented on government orders are for official use only and use for other than official purposes place a member at risk of personal liability for damage to the rental car. Members avoid personal liability if they are authorized a rental vehicle, use it for an official purpose, and act within the scope of their employment. Damage to rentals made through channels other than Defense Travel System (DTS) will be paid through the fund cite used to pay for the TDY.

Key Takeaways

- » Damage to rental cars will be paid from unit TDY funds if proper procedures are not followed
- » When renting a vehicle pursuant to an authorization on orders, it is mandatory to obtain the rental vehicle through the DTS first and subsequently, the commercial travel office (CTO) if DTS is unavailable
- » Under the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) negotiated agreement, a rental car company assumes the entire risk of loss/damage to the rental vehicle up to the policy limits
- » For the rental company to assume risk under the DTMO negotiated agreement, travel orders must reflect that a rental vehicle is authorized
- » After an accident, call and report the accident to the rental car company and the government travel card (GTC) company

Introduction

- Generally, a member avoids personal liability for damages to, and caused by, a rental vehicle they were driving, if the member was authorized a rental vehicle and was using the vehicle for an official purpose while acting within the scope of employment
- “Official purposes” is a standard in *The Joint Travel Regulations* (JTR) and is used to determine whether a renter will be reimbursed for damage to a rental vehicle
 - Official purposes include transportation to and from duty locations, lodging, dining facilities, drugstores, barber shops, places of worship, cleaning establishments, and similar places required for the traveler’s subsistence, health, or comfort
 - Even with these official purposes, there are limits. For example, a member who drives a significant distance past numerous restaurants to have dinner with a family member or friend is no longer on official purpose and risks personal liability if they are involved in an accident.
- “Scope of employment” is based on the law of the state in which the accident occurs and is the legal standard under the claims statutes that will be used to determine whether the United States will defend a renter in a lawsuit

DTMO Rental Vehicle Agreement

- If a rental car is authorized on orders but not covered by the DTMO agreement, any damage to the rental car is likely going to be paid from the fund cite that paid for the travel. It is important that renters do all within their power to ensure the DTMO agreement applies to their rental agreement. They do this by renting vehicles through DTS and selecting the preferred vendors offered in their itinerary.
- When renting a vehicle pursuant to an authorization on orders, it is mandatory to reserve the vehicle through DTS. If unavailable, reserve the vehicle through the CTO. DTS and CTO will first attempt to reserve a vehicle from a company participating in the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) negotiated agreement.
- Major rental car companies subscribe to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DTMO. Under the agreement, the rental car company is responsible for the entire risk of loss of or damage to the rented vehicles with a few rare exceptions. The rental car company also provides the government and traveler with up to \$300,000 in liability coverage if the government driver causes damage or injury to another vehicle.
- In order for the rental company to assume risk under the DTMO agreement, travel orders must reflect a rental vehicle is authorized, the member must be using the rental vehicle for an official purpose and acting within the scope of the member's employment. The vehicle must not be misused or recklessly operated. Drag racing, off-roading, driving while intoxicated, or the vehicle being stolen due to misplacing the keys are examples of situations where the rental company is not responsible for the loss or damage.

Liability for Damages to the Rental Vehicle and to Others

- There are four different situations involving rental car liability: (1) rented on orders pursuant to DTMO agreement; (2) rented on orders not under the DTMO agreement; (3) personal rental vehicle on official temporary duty (TDY); and (4) rented pursuant to an umbrella contract
 - (1) When a vehicle is rented by a member who is on orders pursuant to the DTMO negotiated agreement, the rental company provides coverage as described above
 - (2) When a vehicle is rented by a member who is on orders but not under the DTMO agreement, the GTC carries limited coverage for damage to the rental car. Strict deadlines apply for reporting the damage. It is important that a renter report damage to the GTC as quickly as possible after the damage has been discovered.
 - While there are some exceptions, the GTC collision coverage generally covers collision or rollover, theft-related charges, vandalism, windshield damage due to road debris, and loss of use and towing charges due to covered damage

- If the GTC does not provide coverage, the loss or damage to the vehicle is a reimbursable expense under the JTR. The member claims reimbursement by submitting a claim through the AO to the claims office of the supporting Staff Judge Advocate for adjudication. For damage to another vehicle, property, or personal injury, the United States will defend the driver so long as the driver was acting within the scope of employment.
- (3) When a member rents a vehicle while TDY but that rental was not authorized on their orders, the member is personally responsible for damage to the rental vehicle. For damage to another vehicle, property, or personal injury, the United States will defend the driver if the driver was acting in the scope of employment.
- (4) When a vehicle is rented pursuant to an umbrella contract, the DTMO agreement is not applicable. Claims for damage to rental vehicles under contract are settled under contractual provisions as claims against the contract.
- Unlike vehicles rented on a GTC, a financial liability investigation may be required for damage to a vehicle rented under a government contract
- For damages to another vehicle or property, the United States will defend the driver if the driver was acting in the scope of employment

In Case of Accident

- Call the rental company and report. If rented on a GTC, call the travel card company and report immediately. Notify the police. If the police respond, get a copy of the accident report or find out how to get a copy later.
- If someone else is injured in the accident and the renter is TDY at or near a base, the renter should inform the base legal office of the accident. If renter is not near a base, he/she should contact their base legal office upon return.
- Inform the Staff Judge Advocate immediately if the renter becomes aware of a lawsuit filed regarding a vehicle rented by an Air Force or Space Force member/employee while on TDY orders, even if the United States is not a named party in the suit
- Never admit liability or make payment assurances at the site of an accident

References

- Exclusiveness of Remedy, 28 U.S.C. § 2679
- Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) §§ 28.312, 52.228-8
- The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), Uniformed Service Members and DoD Civilian Employees
- Defense Transportation Regulation (DTR) DoD Regulation 4500.9-R-Part I, *Passenger Movement* (June 2025), including changes through 11 September 2025
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims for and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021
- Defense Travel Management Office, <https://www.travel.dod.mil/Programs/Rental-Car/>

FINANCIAL LIABILITY INVESTIGATIONS: REPORTS OF SURVEY

Commanders at all levels are responsible for not only the personnel in their unit, but also for all assigned equipment and property under their control. Occasionally some of that equipment may be lost, damaged or destroyed. Depending on the type of item(s) that are lost or damaged, a financial liability investigation (formerly known as a report of survey (ROS)) might be required to investigate and document the circumstances and determine the appropriate corrective actions.

Key Takeaways

- » The primary purpose of the financial liability investigation is to determine financial liability for the loss, theft, damage, or destruction of government property
- » A financial liability investigation is mandatory for all loss, damage, destruction, or theft of government-owned equipment with initial unit acquisition cost (value) of \$5,000 or greater; all sensitive, classified, or leased (capital lease) property regardless of initial acquisition cost; and any real property
- » Procedures for conducting a financial liability investigation are found in DoD 7000.14-R, *Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation (DoD FMR)*, Volume 12, Chapter 7, *Financial Liability for Government Property Lost, Damaged, Destroyed, or Stolen*

Purpose

- Note the information discussed below does not apply to nonappropriated fund assets. Nonappropriated fund assets are governed by the procedures outlined in Chapter 8 of AFMAN 34-202, *Procedures for Protecting Nonappropriated Fund Assets*.
- The primary purpose of the financial liability investigation is to determine financial liability for the loss, theft, damage, or destruction of government property. This purpose is accomplished by:
 - Investigating the cause of loss, damage, or destruction of property and determining if it was attributable to an individual's negligence or abuse
 - Assessing monetary liability or relieving individuals from liability if there is no evidence of negligence, willful misconduct, or deliberate unauthorized use
 - Providing documentation to support adjustment of accountable records
 - Providing commanders with case histories to enable them to take corrective action to prevent recurrence of the incident

Mandatory Financial Liability Investigation

- A financial liability investigation is mandatory when the following have been lost, damaged, destroyed, or stolen:
 - Sensitive, classified, or leased (capital lease) property regardless of initial acquisition cost
 - Real property
 - Government-owned equipment where there is evidence of negligence or abuse, and the equipment has an initial cost (value) of \$5,000 or more

Non-Mandatory Financial Liability Investigation

- For all other losses, commanders have discretion to conduct a formal financial liability investigation when the circumstances warrant it (e.g., when the loss, damage, destruction or theft of small amounts of property occur frequently enough to suggest a pattern of wrongdoing)
- Additionally, commanders may use other investigations or inquiries such as a Commander Directed Investigation (CDI) to augment a financial liability investigation

Liability Thresholds

- Before moving into the process itself, it is important to be aware of the amount of financial liability Air Force and Space Force members may be expected to repay. These amounts vary depending on the nature of the items affected by the loss/damage. In most cases, the liability threshold is limited to the full amount of the loss, damage, or destruction, or up to one month of the member's basic pay, whichever is less.

The Financial Liability Investigation Process

- The first step to initiating a financial liability investigation is for the appointing authority to appoint an investigating officer (IO) to determine the facts. Some of the investigative processes are highlighted below.
 - At a minimum, the IO will answer the following six questions:
 - What happened?
 - How did it happen?
 - Where did it happen?
 - When did it happen?
 - Who was involved?
 - Was there any evidence of negligence, willful misconduct, or deliberate unauthorized use or disposition of the property?

- Based on the facts gathered, the IO makes findings and recommendations on the issue of liability of the person(s) involved
- The financial liability investigation is forwarded for legal review
- Upon legal review, the investigation and IO's recommendations are reviewed by the appointing authority, who determines liability
- If liability is approved, the appointing authority informs the subject(s) of the determination and gives him/her an opportunity to provide a rebuttal
- The approving authority then reviews and considers the rebuttal and makes a second determination as to liability
- If the member is held liable, the approving authority sends the financial liability investigation to the financial manager to process for collection
- The final paperwork then goes to the equipment custodian to write off the property

Processing Times

- As lost, damaged, or destroyed property has an impact on the Air Force, Space Force, and the individual(s) liable, the Air Force and Space Force have established the following timelines for initiation and completion of a financial liability investigation:
 - Within 10 days from the date of the discovery of the loss, the unit's supervision will conduct the initial inquiry (not a formal investigation) and gather data to determine whether the situation warrants a more formal investigation
 - Within 11 days from the date of the discovery of the loss, the appointing authority will appoint an IO if a formal financial liability investigation is required or desired, and obtain a case number
 - The financial liability investigation should generally be completed within 90 days of the date of the discovery of the loss
 - Additional timelines for each step of the investigative process may be found in the *SAF/FMF Reports of Survey Program Policy Memorandum*, dated 9 November 2018

References

- DoD 7000.14-R, *Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation* (DoD FMR), Volume 12, Chapter 7, *Financial Liability for Government Property Lost, Damaged, Destroyed, or Stolen* (January 2021)
- AFI 23-101, *Materiel Management Property* (22 October 2020), including DAFI23-101_DAFGM2024-01, 3 September 2024
- AFMAN 23-122, *Materiel Management Procedures* (27 October 2020), including DAFMAN23-122_DAFGM2024-01, 28 August 2024
- AFMAN 34-202, *Procedures for Protecting Nonappropriated Fund Assets* (25 June 2019)
- SAF/FMF Memorandum, *Reports of Survey Program – Policy Memorandum* (9 November 2018)

Chapter 13

FISCAL AND CONTRACTING ISSUES

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FOUNDATIONS OF FISCAL LAW

In Fiscal Law, any expenditure of funds requires Congress to have authorized and appropriated funds. The commander must have affirmative authority to use funds for a particular purpose. The three pillars of affirmative authority are purpose, time, and amount.

Key Takeaways

- » Congress controls the expenditure of public funds through authorizations and appropriations
- » Expenditures that violate Congress' authorizations and appropriations can result in personal criminal and civil liability

Purpose

- Funds may be expended only for the purpose intended by Congress. However, not every expenditure is required to be specified in an appropriations act. There is a three-part test to determine whether an expenditure is a “necessary expense” and meets the purpose of a particular appropriation:
 - The expenditure must be necessary and incident to the purposes of the appropriation;
 - The expenditure must not be prohibited by law; and
 - The expenditure must not otherwise fall within the scope of another more specific appropriation or statutory funding scheme.
- Examples of common issues regarding questionable expenses (i.e., items that are generally for personal use/convenience):
 - Bottled Water: Typically, a personal expense with some exceptions for disasters and locations where no potable water exists
 - Clothing: Typically, a personal expense with limited exceptions
 - Payment of Fines and Penalties: Typically, a personal expense unless the individual was directed to incur the fine or penalty, or a fine or penalty was imposed on the agency itself
 - Food: Typically, a personal expense with some exceptions for certain situations involving training, conferences, and award ceremonies

Time

- An agency may obligate funds only within the time limits applicable to the appropriation
 - Bona Fide Needs Rule: Generally, government agencies may not purchase supplies or services unless there is a bona fide (good faith) need for the supply or service in the fiscal year in which the supplies or services are to be purchased

- For Supplies: Exceptions to the default rule are allowed if lead-time is required to either produce or deliver the supply, or to maintain normal/customary stock levels of a supply
- For Services: The bona fide need does not arise until the services are rendered and must be funded with funds current as of the date the services are performed. For severable services (such as lawn maintenance), Department of War (DoW) agencies may obligate funds current at the time of contract award to finance the contract so long as the period of performance does not exceed one year (which may cross fiscal years). For non-severable services (such as the results of a longitudinal healthcare study), the DoW must fund with dollars available for obligation at the time the contract is executed. Performance of such a contract may cross fiscal years.

Amount

- An agency must obligate funds within the amounts appropriated by Congress

The Antideficiency Act

- The Antideficiency Act (ADA) is a law enacted by Congress to prohibit the federal government from making expenditures in excess of the amounts that Congress appropriated and includes the possibility of criminal, civil, and administrative penalties. Given the complexities and potential legal consequences of the Antideficiency Act, legal counsel should be consulted whenever a potential violation is suspected. Under the ADA, unless authorized by law, an officer or employee of the U.S. Government may **NOT**:
 - Make or authorize an expenditure or obligation exceeding the amount available in an appropriation
 - Involve the government in a contract or obligation for the payment of money before an appropriation is made
 - Make or authorize an expenditure or obligation exceeding an apportionment, or the amount permitted by regulations
 - Accept voluntary services for the United States or employ personal services, except for emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property
- Officials can correct a potential ADA violation using the proper funds to pay the obligation if the following conditions are met:
 - Proper funds were available at the time of the erroneous obligation;
 - Proper funds were available at the time of correction for the agency to correct the erroneous obligation; and
 - Proper funds were available the whole time between the erroneous obligation and correction.

References

- Contracts for Periods Crossing Fiscal Years, 10 U.S.C. § 3133
- Appropriations, 31 U.S.C. § 1301(a)
- Antideficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341 *et seq.*
- Limitations on Expending and Obligating Amounts, 31 U.S.C. § 1341
- Limitations on Voluntary Services, 31 U.S.C. § 1342
- Reports on Violations, 31 U.S.C. § 1351
- Balances Available, 31 U.S.C. § 1502(a)
- Prohibited Obligations and Expenditures, 31 U.S.C. § 1517(a)
- *United States v. MacCollom*, 426 U.S. 317 (1976)
- DoD 7000.14-R, *Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation (DoD FMR)* (October 2024), <https://comptroller.defense.gov/FMR/>
- DAFI 65-601, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Procedures* (22 June 2022)
- DAFMAN 65-605, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Technical Procedures* (15 August 2025)
- AFI 65-601, Volume 2, *Budget Management for Operations* (29 January 2021)
- Principles of Federal Appropriations Law – U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), 3rd and 4th eds. (“The Red Book”), <https://www.gao.gov/legal/appropriations-law-decisions/red-book>

FOUNDATIONS OF CONTRACT LAW

The Department of War (DoW) relies heavily on contractors to deliver necessary supplies and services to the warfighter. Therefore, it is imperative that acquisition professionals, attorneys, and commanders work together to protect the integrity, precision, and reliability of the acquisition process.

Key Takeaways

- » Warranted contracting officers (COs) are the only individuals authorized to obligate government funds
- » When an unauthorized commitment cannot be ratified, the individual who inappropriately committed government funds is the one responsible for paying the bill

Contracting Authority

- Generally, commanders do not have contracting authority
- Commanders nonetheless have a duty to ensure personnel are informed of proper contracting authority
 - Normally, only COs who have been delegated authority by the head of an agency in the form of a “warrant” have the authority to enter into contracts on behalf of the U.S. Government
 - Government Purchase Card (GPC) holders (with limited monetary thresholds) have limited contract authority that has been delegated from senior contracting officials. GPC use and authority is *very* limited and subject to strict regulations.

Unauthorized Commitments

- An “unauthorized commitment” is when an individual without contract authority enters into a commitment to accept supplies or services. Once discovered, unauthorized commitments may be “ratified” by a person with contract authority, thereby allowing for government payment. Ratification is the formal approval of a previously made agreement or action, which makes it legally binding.
- To be eligible for ratification, an unauthorized commitment must meet the seven criteria set forth at Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 1.602-3(c). Additional Department of the Air Force ratification requirements include:
 - The individual’s supervisor must compile a report of the circumstances surrounding the unauthorized commitment, a statement on corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence of the event, and a description of disciplinary action taken or an explanation of why no action was taken; and
 - Additional coordination between the receiving authority, accounting and finance, the CO, and the relevant legal advisor is required prior to forwarding the ratification request to the relevant ratification approving authority.

- Any unauthorized commitments that are not ratified are the sole financial responsibility of the individual making the unauthorized commitment and are not the financial responsibility of the government

References

- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 1.6, *Career Development, Contracting Authority, and Responsibilities*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subsection 1.602-3, *Ratification of Unauthorized Commitments*
- Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Subpart 5301.6, *Career Development, Contracting Authority, and Responsibilities*
- Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Subsection 5301.602-3, *Ratification of Unauthorized Commitments*

ACQUISITION PLANNING AND MARKET RESEARCH

Acquisition planning and market research ensure that the Department of the Air Force (DAF) acquisitions are effective, economical, and timely. Commanders must ensure sufficient capability to manage and oversee the contracting process from start to finish. Acquisition planning should begin as soon as the agency identifies its needs and should avoid issuing requirements on an urgent basis, or with unrealistic delivery or performance schedules, as these generally restrict competition and increase prices.

Key Takeaways

- » Acquisition planning and market research play a critical role in the procurement process and should not be overlooked
- » Determining whether a function is inherently governmental is an important part of acquisition planning
- » Government employees must perform Inherently Governmental Functions (IGFs)

Acquisition Planning and Market Research

- The use of advanced planning and market research is required and is essential to promote and provide for:
 - Acquisition of commercial products or, alternatively, nondevelopment items;
 - Full and open competition when required or, alternatively, to maximize competition to the maximum extent practicable when full and open competition is not required;
 - Selection of appropriate contract type; and
 - Appropriate consideration of pre-existing contracts, such as inter and intra-agency vehicles.
- Acquisition planning and market research must integrate effort from all personnel involved in significant aspects of the acquisition and should ensure the DAF meets its needs in the most effective, economical, and timely manner possible

Inherently Governmental Functions

- Inherently Governmental Functions (IGFs) are functions so intimately related to the public interest as to mandate performance by government employees. IGFs include activities that require either the exercise of discretion in applying government authority or making value judgments on behalf of the government.
- Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 7.503(c) provides examples of IGFs, such as conducting criminal investigations, commanding military forces, determining agency policy, and selecting individuals for federal employment

- Contracting Officers, supported through the acquisition process by legal advisors, must avoid awarding contracts that involve IGFs. If after awarding a contract, monitoring reveals that contractors are performing IGFs, DAF personnel must reestablish control over these functions by strengthening oversight, in-sourcing the work to government employees, foregoing options under the contract, or terminating all or part of the contract.
- Determinations of IGFs are made by the manpower analysts following DoDI 1100.22, *Policy and Procedures for Determining Workforce Mix*

References

- Public-Private Competition Required Before Conversion to Contractor Performance, 10 U.S.C. § 2461
- Guidelines and Procedures for Use of Civilian Employees to Perform DoD Functions, 10 U.S.C. § 2463
- Planning and Solicitation Requirements, 10 U.S.C. § 3206
- Contractor Performance of Acquisition Functions Closely Associated with Inherently Governmental Functions, 10 U.S.C. § 4508
- Planning and Solicitation Requirements, 41 U.S.C. § 3306
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 7, *Acquisition Planning*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 10, *Market Research*
- Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Subpart 207.5, *Inherently Governmental Functions*
- Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement PGI Section 207.105, *Contents of Written Acquisition Plans*
- Office of Management and Budget, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Policy Letter 11-01, *Performance of Inherently Governmental and Critical Functions* (76 FR 56227-56242, 12 September 2011) (technical correction made by 77 FR 7609, 13 February 2012)
- Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76, *Performance of Commercial Activities* (29 May 2003)
- Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, *Suspension of DoD Public-Private Competitions and Related Policy Affecting Use of Contracts for Services* (10 July 2023)
- DoDI 1100.22, *Policy and Procedures for Determining Workforce Mix* (12 April 2010), incorporating Change 1, 1 December 2017
- DAFI 63-138, *Acquisition of Services* (2 January 2024)

COMPETITION IN CONTRACTING

The Competition in Contracting Act requires that, subject to limited exceptions, the government achieves full and open competition or use competitive procedures best suited to the circumstance when conducting procurements.

Key Takeaways

- » Full and open competition is required unless an express exception applies
- » When an exception to full and open competition is used to procure a requirement, the contracting officer must document their justification and approval in the contract file

The Competition in Contracting Act

- The Competition in Contracting Act (CICA), 10 U.S.C. § 3201, requires “full and open competition through the use of competitive procedures” unless an express exception applies. To fulfill competition requirements, the procuring office will advertise the requirement, request quotes, bids, or proposals, and select an awardee based on the solicitation’s evaluation criteria.
- CICA establishes two categories of exceptions, allowing limited competition and sole-source awards:
 - *Limited Competition*: “Full and open competition after exclusion of sources” allows the procuring office to limit the sources from which it seeks competition
 - *Sole Source Awards*: Made through “other than full and open competition” and will require a written justification and approval (J&A) identifying the specific exception
- Contract Modifications: A modification to an existing contract will violate CICA when the changes are beyond the scope of the original contract and a sole source award has not been justified
- Unsolicited Proposals: Commanders may receive an unsolicited proposal from a business. Unsolicited proposals often create a risk of unintended exposure of proprietary information and the Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement MP5315.606-90 sets forth procedures and standards for safeguarding and evaluating unsolicited proposals. CICA requirements are not waived for unsolicited proposals.

References

- The Competition in Contracting Act, 10 U.S.C. § 3201
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 2, *Definitions of Words and Terms*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 6, *Competition Requirements*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 15.6, *Unsolicited Proposals*
- Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Part 206, *Competition Requirements*
- Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Part 5306, *Competition Requirements*
- Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement MP5306.502, *Air Force Competition and Commercial Advocacy Program*
- Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement MP5315.606-90, *Receipt, Evaluation, and Disposition of Unsolicited Proposals*

ACQUISITION PROCESS

“Acquisition process” describes how the Department of the Air Force purchases supplies and services and is subject to the rules contained in various Federal, Department of War (DoW), and Department of the Air Force (DAF) regulations.

Key Takeaways

- » Simplified acquisition procedures can be used for purchases under the simplified acquisition threshold
- » Acquisitions above the simplified acquisition threshold generally use negotiated procurement procedures

Micro-Purchases

- A micro-purchase is a government purchase of supplies or services which in the aggregate, for the DoW, does not exceed a specific threshold, currently set at \$15,000, except for:
 - Construction, when the value is \$2,000
 - Nonprofessional Services, when the value is \$2,500
 - Support of contingency or chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear (CBRN) recovery/defense operations (excluding construction), the threshold is \$25,000 inside the United States and \$40,000 outside the United States
- The DoW is directed to use the government purchase card (GPC) to pay for purchases valued at or below the micro-purchase threshold. **Note:** Splitting a larger purchase into smaller segments to stay under the micro-purchase threshold is **NOT** allowed.

Simplified Acquisition Procedures

- Simplified acquisition procedures allow the contracting officer (CO) to reduce the amount of time required to procure supplies and services below the simplified acquisition threshold, and to create or utilize more efficient ordering methods. The current simplified acquisition threshold is \$350,000.
 - For support of contingency or CBRN recovery/defense operations (excluding construction), the threshold is \$1 million inside the United States and \$2 million outside the United States
 - Acquisitions under the simplified acquisition threshold are reserved exclusively for small businesses
 - The government’s policy is to procure commercial products and services when possible. Simplified acquisition procedures are authorized for acquisitions that will only include commercial products and services up to \$9 million.

Negotiated Procurement

- An agency can obtain the best value in negotiated acquisitions by using any one or a combination of source selection approaches
- Most Federal acquisitions over \$250,000 use negotiated procurement. Often, this is accomplished by using either the lowest-priced technically acceptable approach, where requirements are well defined and risks are low, or a best-value trade-off where the Department of the Air Force may select a higher priced offer because the offeror has superior past performance or technical skill.

References

- Micro-Purchase Threshold, 10 U.S.C. § 3573
- Simplified Acquisition Threshold, 41 U.S.C. § 134
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 2.1, Definitions
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 12, *Acquisition of Commercial Products and Commercial Services*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 13, *Simplified Acquisition Procedures*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 13.2, *Actions at or Below the Micro-Purchase Threshold*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 15, *Contracting by Negotiation*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation 15.101, *Best Value Continuum*
- Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Part 213, *Simplified Acquisition Procedures*
- Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Part 215, *Contracting by Negotiation*
- Department of Defense Source Selection Procedures (20 August 2022), (<https://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/policy/policyvault/USA000740-22-DPC.pdf>)
- DoDI 5000.02, *Operation of the Adaptive Acquisition Framework* (23 January 2020), incorporating Change 1 (8 June 2022)
- DAFI 64-117, *Government Purchase Card Program* (19 May 2022)

CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

Contract administration begins immediately following contract formation and extends through the entire lifecycle of the contract.

Key Takeaways

- » The government can make contract changes unilaterally and bilaterally
- » The contracting officer (CO) generally resolves disputes that arise during contract performance

Inspection, Rejection, and Warranties

- Standard contract clauses normally give the government the right to inspect supplies and services before acceptance, reject supplies and services that fail to conform to the contract, and demand the contractor provide supplies and services that comply with the contract
- Some supply contracts contain warranties, which allow the government, after acceptance, to demand the contractor repair or replace defective supplies or demand the contractor remit a portion of the paid price

Contract Changes (Modifications)

- Contract changes or modifications are any additions, subtractions, or modifications to the terms of the contract, such as the deliverable or performance time required by a contract. If a change is so significant that it fundamentally alters the scope of the contract, it may be considered a cardinal change and a breach of contract. Only a CO may modify a contract. Contract modifications are of two types:
 - Unilateral: The CO directs a change to the contract in accordance with certain contract clauses. The contractor must comply with the change but may be entitled to additional compensation or time.
 - Bilateral: Both the CO and the contractor agree to modify the contract

Terminating a Contract for the Convenience of the Government

- A termination for convenience (T4C) occurs when the government terminates, fully or partially, a contract because termination is in the government's best interest
 - The government is liable to the contractor for costs (including profit) of the work performed before the termination and reasonable terminations costs. The government and the contractor may mutually agree to the terms and conditions, including a term for the contractor to release all claims against the government.
 - If the government and the contractor cannot agree, or no negotiations occur, the contract and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) outline a process for the contractor to submit a settlement claim to the CO

- This process, and its resolution, vary depending on the type of contract involved and other circumstances. The CO may be required to consider a no-cost settlement or permitting the contractor to complete in lieu of termination.
- If the contractor disagrees with the CO's final decision on settlement, the contractor may appeal that decision to the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals (ASBCA) or the U.S. Court of Federal Claims (COFC)

Terminating a Contract because of a Contractor's Failure to Perform

- A termination for default (T4D), or termination for cause for commercial contracts, occurs when the government terminates a contract because the contractor has failed, without excuse, to perform the contract. The government pays for completed and accepted work before the termination, and the contractor is liable to the government for excess re-procurement costs and incidental or consequential damages.
- If the CO believes the contractor's action or inaction is endangering performance of the contract, the CO usually must provide the contractor written notice of the issue and give the contractor a reasonable amount of time (at least 10 days) to "cure" the issue. This is called a cure notice.
- The CO will issue a final decision, and the contractor may appeal to the ASBCA or COFC

Resolving Government and Contractor Disputes

- If a contractor believes they are entitled to additional money, time, or other relief, the contractor may demand, in writing, to the CO, that relief. That demand is called a claim.
- If the government believes that the contractor is entitled to additional money, time, or other relief, the CO will issue a final decision asserting a right to that relief
- After a claim is submitted, the CO has 60 days to issue a written final decision, or if the claim exceeds \$100,000, identify a firm date by which a final decision will be issued. If no final decision is issued, the contractor may treat the claim as denied and appeal.
- All COs' final decisions, including decisions regarding claims, must be sent to the U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General's Corps Acquisition, Fiscal Law and Litigation (AF/JACQ) for review, via the servicing legal office

References

- Federal Procurement Policy – Division C, 41 U.S.C. §§ 3101–4714
- Contract Disputes, 41 U.S.C. §§ 7101–7109
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 43, *Contract Modifications*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 49, *Terminations of Contracts*
- Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Subpart 5333.2, *Disputes and Appeals*
- Department of the Air Force Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Part 5349, *Termination of Contracts*
- *Torncello v. United States*, 681 F.2d 756 (Ct. Cl. 1982)
- Rules of the United States Court of Federal Claims (28 July 2025), <https://www.uscfc.uscourts.gov/rules>
- Rules of the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals (21 July 2014), <https://www.asbca.mil/Rules-and-Guidance/>

COMMUNICATIONS WITH INDUSTRY/INTERFACING WITH CONTRACTORS

Department of the Air Force (DAF) leaders are expected to engage with industry groups and commercial entities to help ensure we maintain our ability to rapidly innovate and stay ahead of our adversaries. However, such engagement efforts by DAF personnel must comply with federal laws and regulations on procurement and ethical conduct.

Key Takeaways

- » Avoid engagements that appear to give a particular company exclusive access
- » Only share publicly available information

Overview

- Meetings are generally permitted subject to the following guidelines:
 - The nature and types of information shared or obtained during these meetings must not provide the commercial entity with an unfair competitive advantage
 - Avoid the appearance you are providing exclusive access to a particular company or group. The government must allow equal access to industry.
 - Do not make any promises and avoid any unauthorized commitments
 - Avoid meeting with industry with less than two government employees
 - Always document the meeting, including who, when, where, what, and why
 - Consult with your designated Ethics Counselor and servicing legal office
 - Do invite the Contracting Officer (CO) to attend meetings with industry (when possible)
 - Allow industry to provide information on their capabilities that would be of interest to the DAF
 - Focus discussions on topics the DAF can discuss and share publicly with any interested party. Avoid discussing proprietary or procurement-sensitive information. If it arises, you are legally obligated to protect it from disclosure to third parties. Do not discuss ongoing procurements or litigation. Discussions regarding ongoing procurements are especially sensitive during the source selection process. Any communication that could be construed as influencing the evaluation or selection of a contractor should be strictly avoided.
 - Do not invite other contractor personnel into the meeting

- In partnering with industry representatives, government staff, including industry liaisons, should balance the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 9.5 requirements to limit conflicts of interest and to ensure that agencies do not inadvertently reduce the field of competition by precluding a potential offeror from participating in a future procurement
- Senior DAF leaders work with the Secretary of the Air Force's Office of Public Affairs (SAF/PA) to ensure your comments align with the DAF's strategic themes and messages
- DAF leaders should generally decline invitations to speak to a non-federal entity's internal audience

References

- Trade Secrets Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1905
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 9.5, *Organizational and Consultant Conflicts of Interest*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 15.201, *Exchanges with Industry Before Receipt of Proposals*
- DoDD 5500.07, *Ethics and Standard of Conduct* (15 May 2024)
- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Engaging with Industry* (2 March 2018)
- Office of Federal Procurement Policy Memorandum, "Myth-Busting #4" – *Strengthening Engagement with Industry Partners through Innovative Business Practices* (30 April 2019)

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL) IN CONTRACTING

Federal law requires government business to be conducted in a manner above reproach and, except as authorized/required by statute or regulation, with complete impartiality. Safeguarding against actual or perceived conflicts of interest is critical to maintaining the public's trust and confidence in the acquisition process.

Key Takeaways

- » Contracting officers are required to mitigate, neutralize, or eliminate possible conflicts of interest before award
- » Conflicts of interest can be personal or organizational

Personal Conflicts of Interest

- Department of the Air Force (DAF) employees (military and civilian) are prohibited from engaging in conduct which may compromise or appear to compromise the integrity of the procurement process. Examples of prohibited conduct include soliciting or accepting a gratuity or bribe and providing preferential treatment.
- DAF employees are also prohibited from participating personally and substantially (e.g., making a decision, giving advice, or making a recommendation) in any government matter that would have a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of any of the following:
 - The employee, employee's immediate family, or general partner
 - An organization for which the employee serves as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee
 - A company or organization with which the employee is negotiating for employment or has an arrangement for future employment
 - DAF employees also should not participate in a particular government matter if the employee believes a reasonable person with knowledge of the facts would question his/her impartiality unless the employee's supervisor and ethics counselor determine that the government's interest outweighs the appearance of a conflict
- Violations of relevant conflict of interest laws and/or regulations may subject DAF employees to criminal or civil penalties

Organizational Conflicts of Interest

- Organizational Conflicts of Interest (OCIs) are situations where, because of other activities or relationships, a contractor or potential contractor is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance to the government, in a situation of impaired or potentially impaired objectivity, or has an unfair competitive advantage
- The three types of OCIs are:
 - Unequal access to non-public information typically occurs when a contractor has access to non-public information, usually as part of their performance of a government contract, which could later provide a competitive advantage in a competition for another government contract
 - Biased ground rules may include instances when a contractor prepares or assists with the preparation of specifications or work statements for a given acquisition or when they have provided studies, data, or reports that contribute to the development of specifications or work statements
 - Impaired objectivity generally arises when a contractor works under a contract that requires the contractor to evaluate their own or an affiliate's work under another contract or solicitation
- While OCIs can be disqualifying, they can sometimes be mitigated through appropriate measures such as firewalls, disclosure agreements, or recusal. Contractors have a responsibility to proactively identify and disclose potential OCIs to the government.

References

- Bribery of Public Officials and Witnesses, 18 U.S.C. § 201
- Acts Affecting a Personal Financial Interest, 18 U.S.C. § 208
- Penalties and Injunctions, 18 U.S.C. § 216
- Personal and Business Relationships, 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 2.1, *Definitions*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 3.101, *Standards of Conduct*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 3.104, *Procurement Integrity*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 9.5, *Organizational and Consultant Conflicts of Interest*
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Section 9.508, *Examples of Organizational Conflicts of Interest*

CONTRACTORS AUTHORIZED TO ACCOMPANY THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

Contractors often support military forces overseas, including in contingency environments. There are two types of contractors who support these overseas contingency operations: those with “Contractors Authorized to Accompany the Force (CAAF)” status and those without this status (non-CAAF).

Key Takeaways

- » CAAF personnel have letters of authorization
- » CAAF cannot perform inherently governmental functions (e.g., direct or control combat operations)

Contractors Authorized to Accompany the Force

- CAAF are contractor personnel, including all tiers of subcontractor personnel, who are authorized to accompany the force in applicable contingency operations and have been afforded CAAF status through a letter of authorization (LOA)
- CAAF generally include U.S. citizens and third-country national contractor employees not normally residing within the operational area whose area of performance is in the direct vicinity of U.S. forces and who routinely are co-located with U.S. forces, especially in non-permissive environments. CAAF status does not apply to contractor personnel in support of contingencies within the boundaries and territories of the United States.
- Contractors are generally responsible for providing their own logistical support. However, in austere, uncertain, and/or hostile environments where the contractor cannot obtain adequate support at a reasonable cost, the Department of War (DoW) may provide limited support (force protection, emergency medical care and basic human needs) to CAAF to ensure continuation of essential contractor services.

International Law and Contractor Legal Status

- CAAF may support military operations if the force they accompany designates the contractors as CAAF and provides CAAF with an appropriate identification card pursuant to the Geneva Conventions
- If captured during armed conflict, CAAF are entitled to prisoner of war status
- CAAF must comply with applicable international law, including the law of war. Subject to the application of international agreements, CAAF must comply with applicable host nation and third country nation laws.
- CAAF remain subject to U.S. laws and regulations and may be subject to prosecution under the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act of 2000 (MEJA) and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)

- Basic law of war training is required for all contractor personnel supporting U.S. Armed Forces deployed outside the United States. Advanced law of war training is required for private security contractors, security guards in or near areas of military operations, and interrogators, linguists, interpreters, or guards who will come into contact with enemy prisoners of war, retained persons, detainees, terrorists, or detained criminals.
- Contractors who engage in activities governed by the law of war are required to implement effective programs to prevent violations of the law of war. CAAF are required to report violations of the law of war as well as gross human rights violations.
- CAAF may provide communications support, transport munitions and other supplies, perform maintenance functions for military equipment, and provide logistic services such as billeting and messing. Like all contractors, CAAF may not perform inherently governmental functions such as directing or controlling combat operations.

Medical Issues

- CAAF must provide medically and physically qualified personnel
- The Secretary of War may direct immunizations as mandatory for CAAF performing DoW essential contractor services
- Generally, CAAF must provide their employees with medical care at CAAF's expense, unless the contract requires government provided care or in emergency situations such as resuscitation, stabilization, prevention of loss of limb or eyesight

Individual Protective Equipment

- Generally, contractors shall be required to provide their employees with all life, mission, and administrative support necessary to perform the contract
- When necessary and directed by the geographic combatant commander (CCDR), the contracting officer (CO) will include language in the contract authorizing CAAF and selected non-CAAF to be issued military individual protective equipment (IPE)

Uniforms

- CAAF are responsible for providing their own personal clothing, including casual and work clothing required by a particular assignment
- Generally, commanders shall not issue military clothing to CAAF or allow the wearing of military or military look-alike uniforms. However, CCDRs (or a subordinate Joint Force Commander (JFC) deployed forward) may authorize certain CAAF personnel to wear standard uniform items for operational reasons. This authorization shall be in writing and always maintained by authorized CAAF personnel. Care must be taken to ensure, consistent with force protection measures, the CAAF personnel are distinguishable from military personnel using distinctive patches, arm bands, nametags, or headgear.

Force Protection and Weapons Issuance

- CCDRs must develop a security plan for protection of those CAAF personnel (and non-CAAF personnel) in locations where there is not sufficient or legitimate civil authority and the commander decides that it is in the interest of the government to provide security because of any of the following:
 - The contractor cannot obtain effective security services;
 - Such services are unavailable at a reasonable cost; or
 - Threat conditions necessitate security through military means.
- CAAF personnel may be armed for individual self-defense, on a case-by-case basis, **ONLY IF:**
 - It is determined that military force protection and legitimate civil authority are unavailable or insufficient;
 - It is authorized by the CCDR; and
 - It does not violate applicable U.S., host nation, and international law, relevant status of forces agreements (SOFAs) or international agreements, or other arrangements with local host nation authorities.
- Commanders should consult with their servicing Staff Judge Advocate prior to authorizing the arming of CAAF. If weapons are authorized:
 - The government shall ensure completion of weapons familiarization, qualifications, and briefings on the rules regarding the use of force;
 - Acceptance of weapons by CAAF personnel shall be voluntary and permitted by the defense contractor and the contract; and
 - These CAAF personnel must not be otherwise prohibited from possessing weapons under U.S. law.

Security Services

- If consistent with applicable U.S., host nation, and international law, and SOFAs or other international agreements, a defense contractor may be authorized to provide security services provided they are not performing an inherently governmental function, and are limited to providing a defensive response to hostile acts, or to demonstrated hostile intent
- Whether a particular use of contract security personnel to protect military assets is permissible is dependent on the facts and requires legal analysis
 - Requests shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate Staff Judge Advocate to the CCDR (or designee)

- Contractors shall be used cautiously in contingency operations where major combat operations are ongoing or imminent. In these situations, contract security services will not be authorized to guard U.S. or coalition military supply routes, military facilities, military personnel, or military property except as specifically authorized by the CCDR.

References

- Persons Subject to the UCMJ, 10 U.S.C. § 802
- Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act, 18 U.S.C. Chapter 212
- Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 7.5, *Inherently Governmental Functions*
- Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Subpart 225.3, *Contracts Performed Outside the United States*
- Private Security Contractors Operating in Contingency Operations, 32 C.F.R. Part 159
- DoDD 2311.01, *DoD Law of War Program* (2 July 2020)
- DoDI 1100.22, *Policy and Procedures for Determining Workforce Mix* (12 April 2010), incorporating Change 1, 1 December 2017
- DoDI 3020.41, *Operational Contract Support Outside the United States* (27 November 2024)
- DAFI 64-105, *Contingency Contracting Support* (30 June 2025)
- AFI 51-401, *Law of War* (3 August 2018)
- AFPD 51-4, *Operations and International Law* (24 July 2018)

HOSTING CONFERENCES AND OTHER LARGE GATHERINGS

When making conference approval decisions, approval officials must confirm that physical co-location of DoW personnel in a conference setting is beneficial and cost-effective. Proponents must consider alternative means of delivering the relevant information, including usage of remote collaboration tools (e.g., teleconferencing, videoconferencing, webinars, online sharing applications) and other real-time communication methods that would mitigate the need for physical co-location of DoW personnel.

Key Takeaways

- » Proponents must be able to articulate a clear mission purpose/justification for the proposed conference. Proponents should also consider whether the activity/meeting/gathering is exempt from formal conference approval process.
- » Proponents must consider whether alternatives to hosting an in-person conference would satisfy mission requirements and must be able to articulate why possible alternatives are not acceptable from a mission perspective
- » Careful consideration is required in determining the location for a proposed conference. Proponents must be able to articulate why a proposed location is preferred. If the proposed location is not owned/controlled by the government, the proponents must be able to articulate why government owned/controlled facilities are not preferable.
- » DAF organizations may offer to pay honoraria and travel expenses to facilitate the participation of a guest speaker (who is not a Federal employee or Service Member) at a DAF-hosted conference. An honorarium can be provided instead of or in addition to travel expenses.
- » DAF organizations may collect voluntary “landing fees” to cover the cost of refreshments, food and alcohol for receptions, snacks, and meals for attendees, as well as any logistical costs

Approval Authorities

- DoW has structured the approval authorities to eliminate undue delays and impediments to appropriate conference participation and address the concerns of communities of interest, including scientific, acquisition, and medical communities
- Section III of the DAF Supplement to DoD Conference Guidance, Version 4.0, 7 September 2017 defines the specific positions within the DAF responsible for conference approvals, as well as the approval limits (by dollar amount) for each tier of approving officials
- Attachment 3 to the DAF Supplement provides a template Conference Hosting Approval Package which must be completed by the event organizer and routed to the correct approval authority. This package captures all categories of attendees, their travel funding, and their TDY expenses.

Exemptions

- Certain types of activities/meetings/gatherings are not considered conferences (even if the event meets the general definition of a conference) and a formal conference approval is not required
- Activities/meetings/gatherings that are typically exempt include meetings necessary to carry out statutory command and staff oversight functions, meetings to consider internal agency business matters, international cooperation engagements, formal classroom training, official ceremonies, recruiting activities, and Defense Federal Advisory Committee meetings
- Section IV, para. 4 of the Air Force Supplement to DoD Conference Guidance defines the criteria for these exemptions

Honoraria for Guest Speakers

- Organizations hosting conferences may use appropriated (O&M) funds to pay an honorarium/guest speaker fee for individuals who are not charging the DAF for their speaking services
- Honoraria is not appropriate for a speaker who regularly earns compensation for speaking services; in such a case, it is more appropriate to follow normal contracting procedures
- Additionally, DAF organizations may not pay an honorarium/guest speaker fee to Federal employees or service members invited to serve as guest speakers
 - (See DoD Financial Management Regulation 7000.14-R Volume 10, Chapter 12, Section 8 and DAFMAN 65-605, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Technical Procedures*, Section 5C for further guidance)
- To avoid excessive payment of honoraria, DoW policy requires that honoraria amounts greater than \$2,000 must be approval by the next higher organizational echelon
 - Reference Table 5.2 in DAFMAN 65-605V1, for the honoraria approval thresholds for DAF leaders

Invitational Travel for Guest Speakers

- There is authority in the Joint Travel Regulation (JTR) for DAF organizations to issue an Invitational Travel Authorization (ITA) to cover travel related expenses to facilitate the participation of a guest speaker (who is not a Federal employee or Service Member) at a DAF-hosted conference held “in service of training efforts.” (See JTR Section 030501.)
- Participation as a guest speaker at a conference held “in service of training efforts” satisfies the requirement in the JTR that any traveler receiving invitational travel must be “legitimately performing a direct service for the Government”
- ITAs may not be used to facilitate travel for Federal employees or Service Members invited to serve as guest speakers. Travel for such personnel is accomplished via TDY orders or an Economy Act organizational cross-funding agreement.

Landing Fees

- Generally government-hosted conferences do not use appropriated funds to provide meals and refreshments to attendees
- In the alternative, DAF organizations hosting a conference may institute a “landing fee” for a conference to cover the cost of refreshments, food and alcohol for receptions, snacks, and meals for attendees, as well as any logistical costs (tips, delivery fees, service fees, etc.) associated with obtaining those items
 - A landing fee is separate from a registration fee, is completely voluntary, and is paid from personal funds of the attendees
 - Conference organizers must communicate to attendees that payment of the landing fee is strictly voluntary and attendees may opt out entirely
 - All attendees should be notified that they should not partake of the meals, refreshments, etc. if they have not paid the landing fee. (See DAFI 90-1201, *Protocol*, para. 12.3.2. and DAFMAN 65-605V1, para. 5.30.1.2 for further guidance.)
 - A landing fee may also be used, when appropriate, to purchase a modest memento for an external guest speaker

References

- Economy Act, 31 U.S.C. § 1535
- *The Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)*, 15 May 2024
- *The Joint Travel Regulation (JTR)*, 1 October 2024
- Department of Defense Conference Guidance, Version 4.0, 26 June 2016
- DoD 7000.14-R, *Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation (DoD FMR)*, vol. 10, ch. 12, § 8 (August 2023)
- DAF Supplement to DoD Conference Guidance, Version 4.0, 7 September 2017
- DAFMAN 65-605, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Technical Procedures*
- DAFI 90-1201, *Protocol*, 8 October 2024

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS AND CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

Government shutdowns occur when the federal government lacks a current budget or other appropriation needed to fund current operations and personnel. However, certain operations will nonetheless continue in the absence of appropriations. Department of the Air Force personnel will need to navigate between the presumption of shutting down activities versus determining which activities are continued “excepted” despite the absence of a budget. Before approving anything during a shutdown, officials should consider: (1) whether funding for the activity still exists; (2) whether the activity is considered “excepted” in spite of an absence of funding, and (3) who the approving official for the excepted activity is.

Key Takeaways

- » Unfunded expenditures must cease, civilian employees must be furloughed, and reservists may not be activated unless tied to a Department of War excepted activity
- » Common exceptions must be tied to imminent protection of life, property, or national security, or sustainment of ongoing named military operations
- » Travel costs are narrowly scrutinized and need to be reviewed independently of whether the activities they support are excepted
- » Consult current guidance for the proper authorities who can approve excepted activities and travel

Legal Sources

- U.S. Constitution: Article I, Section 8, sets Congress’ broad powers to manage the federal government, including the powers to “raise and support Armies,” and “provide and maintain a Navy.” However, Section 9 prohibits Congress from spending money unless “in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law.”
- The Antideficiency Act (ADA): A federal law that prevents the federal government from making expenditures in excess of the amounts appropriated and includes the possibility of criminal, civil, and administrative penalties
 - The ADA prohibits the government from accepting voluntary services for government work unless otherwise provided by law, or for imminent emergencies involving human safety or protection of property
- Policy Documents: The Executive Branch will issue policy documents at various levels in the event of an imminent federal shutdown. Anticipate that relevant policies will come from the White House, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Personnel Management, the Department of War, and the Department of the Air Force. The references listed below represent the most current policy documents as of October 2025, but anticipate new and revised guidance at future shutdowns.

Funded Activities Determination

- If a government activity is currently not funded by any source, it should presumptively cease unless otherwise excepted or exempted by law. Thus, the first question an activity should confront is whether its activities are funded.
- Activities funded by Congressional appropriations, to include salaried employees and single-year contracts, should shut down
- Activities funded by a source other than Congressional appropriations, or that still have ongoing funding from prior years or fixed appropriations, may continue. However, activities will separately need to determine if the salary and travel of personnel who run those activities are separately funded by a source other than lapsed appropriations. If the activity is funded by a source such as working capital funds, revolving funds, nonappropriated funds, or some other unobligated fund, it may continue.

Activities Excepted from Shutdown

- If an activity is not funded, the presumption is that it should be shut down in a rapid, safe, and orderly fashion so Executive agencies can avoid incurring unfunded obligations in violation of the ADA. Nonetheless, “excepted” activities may continue.
- Agencies should look to current senior guidance as to what activities are considered “excepted,” including guidance from the Department of War and the Secretary of the Air Force
 - Service-level guidance will likely have a delegation of authority as to who may determine which activities and personnel are excepted. Likely, the following activities will be considered excepted: those in support of safety of human life or protection of property (national security), activities to continue ongoing named military operations, and other activities necessary to comply with law or legal actions.

Impact to Contracts

- Contracts already in place may continue up to the limits of funds already obligated prior to the lapse in funding
- New contracts may not be funded, nor may increments of funding be placed on incrementally funded contracts or to cover cost overruns, unless the contract supports an excepted activity. Approving authorities should very carefully consider whether new or continued contracts are necessary to support safety of human life or protection of property and national security.
- Contracts are not required to be terminated or subjected to a stop work order unless (1) a new obligation of funds is required under the contract, and (2) the contract is not required to support an excepted activity

Impact to Personnel

- Regular Military: Uniformed members of the full-time active duty (Regular) forces will remain in a duty status, albeit unpaid. Members should anticipate that they will be retroactively paid when an appropriation covering military personnel is passed. Military members may continue to perform both excepted activities and non-excepted activities so long as the latter does not incur additional costs.
- Reserve/Guard: Members of the Air Reserve Components (ARC) will vary depending on their status at the time of any shutdown. ARC members should monitor communications from their individual units or servicing commands for specific guidance. Presumptively, ARC members should not be called into status unless in support of an excepted activity.
 - ARC members currently serving in a Title 10 status or on full-time Active Guard Reserve (AGR) orders will continue to serve
 - Ordinarily, annual tours and drill periods (IDTs) are prohibited pending appropriations. However, ARC members, particularly in Traditional Reserve and Air National Guard units, should monitor whether their duty periods have been determined to be excepted. Reserve pay for excepted periods will still be delayed pending an appropriation.
 - Reserve orders issued prior to the lapse in appropriations may continue if they were funded prior to a shutdown. Members should still monitor whether their orders are considered lapsed.
- Civilian: Civilian employees paid by appropriated funds but who are not performing excepted work are typically furloughed. Furloughed employees are normally given a brief (not more than 4 hours) period to come to work and bring an orderly pause to their duties. They are otherwise prohibited from carrying out any work for the government until the furlough period is over.
 - Per 31 U.S.C. § 1341, civilian employees, whether furloughed or performing excepted work, should be paid at the end of a shutdown for the shutdown period once an appropriation is made to compensate them
 - Organizations should carefully look to guidance and determine what excepted work needs to be completed and whether civilians (vice military) are needed to continue the work. If a civilian has completed any excepted work and is no longer needed, they should be subsequently furloughed.

Travel and TDY During Shutdowns

- TDY travel and duty also typically ceases during a period of lapsed appropriation unless the travel has already been fully funded or falls within an exception. Members who are TDY when a shutdown commences should return to their point of origin in a rapid, safe, orderly fashion.

- Excepted travel typically includes the following, but consult current guidance:
 - Moves to an excepted activity, including named military operations and activities already identified by the Department of War
 - Continuation or initiation of deployment or operational orders required for direct support of named military operations identified by DoW guidance
 - Moves from an excepted activity if determined to be essential to the mission
 - Accession and training moves associated with recruitment and initial entry training, along with subsequent movement to first station when required for an excepted activity
 - TDY travel directly associated with ongoing military operations, safety of human life and or protection of property, including national security, and foreign relations (e.g., negotiating international agreements)
 - Patient travel as defined by law and regulation. Medical personnel should consider if travel can be reasonably postponed without endangering life or exacerbating the condition.
 - Continuation of long-term TDY (179 days or longer) orders, but not the initiation of new orders
 - Travel for emergency leave when validated and approved
 - Travel for courts-martial, if approved by the appropriate authority (typically delegated to the Judge Advocate General)
- Travel and TDY activities that should be approached with caution and sent to the appropriate authority for approval include:
 - Conference participation
 - Visits by foreign dignitaries
 - Use of military air (MilAir). MilAir is not a workaround for TDY restrictions and should only be used for excepted activities.

References

- U.S. Const. Art. I, §§ 8, 9
- Antideficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341 *et seq.*
- OMB Special Instructions for Agencies Affected by a Possible Lapse in Appropriations Starting on October 1, 2025 (28 September 25)
- Deputy Secretary of War Memorandum, “Guidance for Continuation of Operations During a Lapse of Appropriations” (30 September 25)
- SECAF Memorandum, “Roles, Responsibilities, and Delegations of Authority – Operations in Absence of Appropriations” (26 September 25)
- DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Actions of Civilian Employees* (27 September 22), Chapter 9

Chapter 14

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STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Every employee must be aware of and comply with the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees and the *Joint Ethics Regulation* (JER). Department of War (DoW) employees shall not engage in any commercial or professional activity that places them in a position of conflict between their private interests and the public interest of the United States. To preserve the public confidence in the Air Force and Space Force, even the appearance of a conflict of interest must be avoided.

Key Takeaways

- » The primary authorities for ethical conduct in the DoW are the Standards of Conduct (which apply to the Executive Branch) and the JER
- » There are substantial restrictions on the acceptance of gifts from outside sources and gifts given between DoW employees (especially those from a subordinate employee to a senior employee)
- » DoW personnel may participate in non-Federal entities (including the management thereof) so long as those activities are completely separate and apart from their official duties
- » All DoW personnel should be sensitive to situations where a conflict of interest (financial or organizational) can arise between their official duties and their personal activities

Duty to Avoid Conflicts of Interest

- DoW personnel shall not use sensitive government information to further a private gain for themselves or others if that information was obtained by reason of their DoW position and is not generally available to the public
- Personnel may obtain further clarification of the standards of conduct and conflict of interest provisions by consulting with their servicing legal office or ethics counselor
- Commanders must emphasize that resolution of a conflict of interest must be accomplished as soon as practicable
- The JER imposes annual financial reporting requirements for officers in the grade of O-7 or above and other government officials, such as commanding officers and procurement officials, to assist in identifying potential conflicts of interest

Prohibited Activities under the Standards of Conduct and the *Joint Ethics Regulation*

- DoW Personnel may not knowingly solicit or make solicited sales to DoW Personnel who are junior in rank, grade, or position, or to the family members of such personnel (on or off-duty, in or out of uniform), particularly for insurance, stocks, mutual funds, real estate, or any other commodities, goods, or services. There are exceptions for selling/leasing real estate and other commercial sales made in a retail or online marketplace setting. DoW personnel may not engage in unauthorized gambling with subordinates, or while on-base or on-duty.

- DoW personnel may not solicit or accept any gift, including entertainment or anything of value, given by any person or company, which is engaged in procurement activities or does business with any agency of the DoW (including contractors), or that was given because of one's official position. There are numerous exceptions to this rule, so, if offered a gift, consult the ethics counselor—normally your organization's Staff Judge Advocate.
- DoW personnel may not solicit contributions for gifts to a superior, except voluntary gifts or contributions of nominal value (not to exceed \$10) on special occasions like marriage, birth/adoption of a child, transfer (permanent change of station or assignment), or retirement. Birthdays and promotions are not considered special occasions.

Restrictions on Activities Involving Non-Federal Entities

- Active duty military or civilian personnel may not use their grade, title, position, or organization name in connection with activities performed in their personal capacities
- DoW employees may not officially endorse or give preferential treatment (or appear to endorse or give preferential treatment) to any non-federal entity, except as otherwise authorized by statute or regulation (such as the Combined Federal Campaign and the Department of the Air Force Assistance Fund)
- Accepting employment outside of the DoW is prohibited if it interferes with or is not compatible with the performance of government duties, or if it might discredit the government
- DoW employees may not participate in their official DoW capacities in the management of non-federal entities unless pursuant to a federal statute and with authorization from the DoW General Counsel
- DoW employees may, however, serve as DoW liaisons to non-federal entities when appointed by the head of the DoW component command or organization who determines there is a significant and continuing DoW interest to be served by such representation. Liaisons serve as part of their official DoW duties, under DoW component memberships, attend meetings of the non-Federal entity on official time and using official travel, and represent only DoW interests to the non-federal entity in an advisory capacity.

References

-
- Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees, 5 C.F.R. Part 2635
 - DoDD 5500.07, *Standards of Conduct*, (15 May 2024)
 - Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
 - U.S. Department of Defense Standards of Conduct Office, <https://dodsoco.ogc.osd.mil/>

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE FORMS

The Department of War (DoW) currently uses three different financial disclosure forms—the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) Form 450 (Confidential Financial Disclosure Report), the OGE Form 278e (Public Financial Disclosure Report), and the OGE Form 278-T (Periodic Transaction Report). The Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) describes who must file, outlines the required contents in these reports, and specifies filing times.

Key Takeaways

- » General Officers and Senior Executive Service personnel are required to file a Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 278e) on an annual basis
- » Specified O-6/GS-15 and below personnel (including installation commanding officers and certain acquisition positions) are required to file a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 450) on an annual basis
- » OGE 278e filers are also required to file a monthly OGE 278-T transaction report on the purchase, sale or exchange of stocks and securities
- » Public Financial Disclosure Report filers are also required to file a Termination Report at the end of covered assignments

Financial Disclosure Report Systems

- The form an individual must use depends on the rank or grade and responsibilities of that individual. Most Department of the Air Force personnel are not required to file a financial disclosure report.
- OGE policy requires OGE 278e filers to use the [Integrity.gov](https://www.integrity.gov) electronic filing system, unless electronic filing is not practically possible, such as in certain deployed or remote locations. DoW policy requires OGE 450 filers to use the Financial Disclosure Management (FDM) online reporting system.
- Both systems use the most current OGE forms and build upon prior years' inputs to reduce duplication of effort. However, OGE 278e filers are also required to file monthly OGE 278-T periodic transaction reports within [Integrity.gov](https://www.integrity.gov) system. Contact your servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) to determine whether these online systems are available at your location.

Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 450)

- Persons required to file this form include:
 - Commanding officers, heads and deputy heads of all installations or activities, if the military member is O-6 and below, or if a civilian is GS-15 or below, are required to file an OGE 450. Commanders, heads, and deputy heads who are general officers or senior executive service employees file the OGE 278e report exclusively.

- All military members (O-6 and below) and all civilian employees (GS/GM-15 and below) when their duties require them to participate personally and substantially in taking an official action for contracting or procurement, or if their supervisor determines such a report is necessary to avoid an actual or apparent conflict of interest
- Specific requirements for this report are set forth in Chapter 6 of the *Joint Ethics Regulation* (JER), including:
 - The report must provide sufficient information about the individual, as well as the individual's spouse and dependent children, such that an informed judgment can be made regarding compliance with conflict-of-interest laws
 - No disclosure of amounts or values is required in this report
 - This report must be filed within 30 days after assuming a covered position and annually thereafter
- Annual reports are submitted to the servicing SJA no later than 15 February for the preceding calendar year

Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 278e)

- Persons required to file this form include:
 - Regular and Reserve officers whose grade is O-7 or above
 - Members of the Senior Executive Service
 - Civilian employees whose positions are classified above GS/GM-15 or whose rate of basic pay is fixed at or above 120% of the minimum rate of basic pay for a GS/GM-15
- Specific requirements for the content of this report are set forth in Chapter 6 of the JER
 - Generally, this report is far more detailed in content than the OGE 450
 - Although specific amounts are not required on the report, individuals must indicate the value of assets within both a given range and type of asset
 - General officers must report a mortgage on their personal residence
- This report must be filed within 30 days after assuming a covered position
- Annual reports must be filed between 1 January and 15 May and cover the preceding calendar year
- An individual must also file a termination report within 30 days after terminating a covered position unless, within 30 days, the individual assumes another covered position
 - Termination reports may be filed up to 15 days prior to the termination date, provided that the individual agrees to update the report with any changes
- Late reports are subject to a \$200 penalty, absent an approved extension

Periodic Transaction Report (OGE 278-T)

- An OGE 278-T must be filed by OGE 278e filers who conduct the sale, purchase, or exchange of stocks, bonds, and other securities held by the filer, the filer's spouse, or dependent children, with a transaction value exceeding \$1,000
 - The filer is later able to use the OGE 278-T reports when building their annual OGE 278e incumbent report, Schedule B (Transactions)
- OGE 278-Ts must be filed within 30 days of receiving notice of a reportable transaction, but not later than 45 days after the transaction (negative reports not required)
- Absent an approved request for an extension, late reports are subject to the \$200 penalty

References

- 5 C.F.R. §§ 2634.101–2634.909
- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- U.S. Department of Defense Standards of Conduct Office, <https://dodsoco.ogc.osd.mil/>
- Financial Disclosure Management System, <https://www.fdm.army.mil>
- Integrity.Gov Office of Government Ethics Electronic Filing System, <https://integrity.gov>
- OGE 278e, OGE 278-T and OGE 450 forms are available at <https://www.oge.gov/>

GIFTS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

Like most Federal agencies, the Department of War (DoW) has a General Gift Statute (10 U.S.C. § 2601) which allows for the acceptance of gifts of funds, personal property, and real property to the agency for support of DoW programs and operations. Acceptance levels depend on the value of the gift offered. The DoW gift statute does not allow for acceptance of gratuitous services in most situations. The DoW does have a volunteer statute (10 U.S.C. § 1588) for support of certain programs.

Key Takeaways

- » Unlike gifts to individual DoW employees which are governed by the *Standards of Conduct*, gifts to the Department of the Air Force (DAF) are accepted under the DoW General Gift Statute
- » Installations and higher headquarters may accept gifts of funds, personal property, and real property for support of programs and operations. Gifts for distribution to individual Airmen/Guardians may also be accepted by the DAF when appropriate.
- » The governing AFI provides certain factors to be considered when deciding whether to accept a gift. Certain situations may dictate that a gift (or the condition that a donor places upon its use) should be rejected.
- » The DoW also has a statute governing the acceptance of volunteer services for certain programs (such as family support and morale, welfare, and recreation activities)

Accepting or Rejecting Gifts

- The Secretary of the Air Force is the authority who may accept conditional gifts of personal property (tangible or intangible) and real property. The General Counsel may accept any gift of personal property. The Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy (SAF/IE) may accept any gift of real property. Gifts may not be solicited.
- Installation commanders may accept gifts of funds and personal property up to \$5,000 (regardless of other delegations). (See AFPD 51-5, *Administrative Law, Gifts, and Command Relationships*, and Chapter 2 of AFI 51-506, *Gifts to the Department of the Air Force from Domestic and Foreign Sources*, for a listing of all Air Force gift acceptance authorities.)
- Types of Gifts: Unconditional gifts have no conditions attached to them. Conditional gifts have specific conditions tied to their acceptance (e.g., “a gift of \$15 million to construct a new library wing at the United States Air Force Academy”).
- Gifts may be rejected for any of the following reasons:
 - Acceptance involves expending funds in excess of amounts appropriated by Congress;
 - The offered item is extremely dangerous or in poor taste;

- Acceptance of the gift would raise a serious question of impropriety in light of the donor's present or prospective business relationships with the Air Force or Space Force;
- The cost of acceptance and maintenance is disproportionate to any benefit; or
- Acceptance would not be in the best interest of the Air Force or Space Force.

Gifts for Distribution

- AFI 51-506, Chapter 7, governs gifts that are received for distribution to individual Airmen and Guardians
- These types of gifts must be used for health, comfort, convenience, or morale. Examples include playing cards or personal electronic devices for deployed Airmen and Guardians. Products containing tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, or nicotine are **NOT** acceptable gifts.

Recognition of Donors is Limited

- Receiving commanders may send an appropriate letter of thanks; do not grant special concessions to donors, and do not initiate publicity for donors
- If the gift itself is worthy of a press release (e.g., new United States Air Force Academy library wing) then the release may discuss the fact of the gift and the identity of the donor without emphasis
- At the discretion of the appropriate commander or gift acceptance authority, donors may be invited, present, and identified at a ribbon-cutting or similar ceremonial public event. However, such events shall not be planned or conducted solely to commemorate acceptance of a gift or acknowledge donors. Appropriated funds may not be used to fund travel, lodging, or donor expenses to be present at such events.

Gifts of Voluntary Service

- 10 U.S.C. § 1588 and DoDI 1100.21, *Voluntary Services in the Department of Defense*, permit the acceptance of limited gifts of volunteer services, such as: medical services, dental services, nursing services, or other health-care related services; services to be provided for a museum or a natural resources program; and programs administering services to members of the armed forces and their families, including family support, child development and youth services, library and education services, religious services, employment assistance to spouses of military members, and morale, welfare, and recreation services
- Volunteers must complete a DD Form 2793, *Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities & Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities*
- Voluntary legal services may be provided and/or accepted in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 1044 and AFI 51-110, *Professional Responsibility Program*

References

- Legal Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 1044
- Authority to Accept Certain Voluntary Services, 10 U.S.C. § 1588
- General Gift Funds, 10 U.S.C. § 2601
- DoDI 1100.21, *Voluntary Services in the Department of Defense* (27 March 2019)
- DD Form 2793, *Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities & Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities* (March 2018)
- DAFI 34-101, *Air Force Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR) Programs and Use Eligibility* (7 March 2022)
- DAFI 36-3009, *Military and Family Readiness Centers* (4 November 2022), DAFGM2025-01 (16 January 2025)
- AFI 51-110, *Professional Responsibility Program* (11 December 2018)
- AFI 51-506, *Gifts to the Department for the Air Force from Foreign and Domestic Sources* (16 April 2019)
- AFPD 51-5, *Administrative Law, Gifts and Command Relationships* (31 August 2018)

ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS OF TRAVEL

A non-federal entity (NFE) may gift the cost of an employee's travel to the Air Force or the Space Force, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 1353, to allow employees to attend a "meeting" (e.g., meetings, conferences, speaking engagements, and events where the employee receives a public service award from the NFE).

Key Takeaways

- » A NFE may fund an employee's travel where the employee is attending in their official capacity a meeting, conference, or similar event
- » The gift acceptance authority must carefully consider whether the circumstances of the offer, and the benefits offered, are appropriate
- » In certain circumstances, the employee might be able to accept travel benefits more expensive than what could be accepted through government-funded travel arrangements
- » In rare circumstances (usually involving awards ceremonies), an NFE can also fund the travel of a spouse to accompany the employee

Processing Gifts of Travel Benefits

- Use of 31 U.S.C. § 1353 travel benefits are only for official, non-local travel. This authority **CANNOT** be used for a "widely attended gathering" or for permissive TDYs.
- Allowable costs include transportation, lodging, meals, and conference registration fees
- Approval level for acceptance of travel benefits is at the "highest practical administrative level" (typically the first General Officer/Senior Executive in the chain of command) and such travel benefits should be approved in advance of employee travel
- A travel payment from a NFE shall not be accepted if the approval authority determines that acceptance would cause a reasonable person to question the integrity of Air Force or Space Force programs or operations
- Unit travel funds are used to pay any expenses not covered by the offer from the NFE
- Meetings can include musical and sporting competitions where the employee is a participant in the competition

Travel Payments

- In-kind provision of travel, lodging, and meals is preferred, as NFE funds should not pass directly through employee's hands
- In the continental United States (CONUS), the cost of lodging provided may exceed the authorized per diem rate if similar lodging is provided to all other attendees/speakers. Outside the continental United States (OCONUS), the cost of lodging provided may not exceed the Department of State area per diem rate.

- If the NFE offers travel on a commercial airline, the employee may accept travel in coach class. Travel in a premium class of seating (e.g., business class), that is not first class, may also be accepted if similar NFE-funded air travel is provided to all other attendees/speakers. Travel in first class is not permitted unless the conditions exist that would authorize the U.S. Government to purchase a first-class ticket for the employee.
- Accepted travel benefits must be reported to the Air Force Ethics Office (SAF/GCA) on the semi-annual OGE Form 1353, *Semiannual Report of Payments Accepted from a Non-Federal Source*. Work with your local Staff Judge Advocate when submitting this form.

Spouse Travel

- An NFE may also pay for travel for employee's spouse if: spouse attendance supports the Air Force or Space Force mission or will substantially assist the employee in carrying out their official duties; the spouse will attend a ceremony where the employee is to receive an award or honorary degree from an NFE related to their official duties; or the spouse participates in substantive programs related to Air Force or Space Force programs/operations

References

- Acceptance of Travel and Related Expenses from Non-Federal Sources, 31 U.S.C. § 1353
- Payment of Travel Expenses from a Non-Federal Source, 41 C.F.R. Part 304
- AFI 51-506, *Gifts to the Department of the Air Force from Domestic and Foreign Sources* (16 April 2019)
- OGE Form 1353, *Semiannual Report of Payments Accepted from a Non-Federal Source* (2013)

GIFTS TO SUPERIORS

To avoid the appearance that a supervisor is being improperly influenced, the *Standards of Conduct* include several guidelines concerning gifts to superiors.

Key Takeaways

- » As a rule, Department of War (DoW) employees should not accept gifts from subordinates or those receiving less pay
- » Gifts (appropriate in value) may be given from an employee, or group of employees, to a senior employee on occasions of personal significance
- » DoW has a special ethics rule that gifts given from a group of employees to a departing senior employee should not exceed \$480. This rule is usually used for permanent change of station (PCS) gifts and retirement gifts.
- » All gifts must be truly voluntary, and requests to contribute to a group gift should ask for not more than \$10. Employees are free to voluntarily donate more than that amount.

Gifts to Superiors

- Generally, Air Force and Space Force personnel **MAY NOT**:
 - Directly or indirectly give a gift to a superior
 - Solicit a contribution from other DoW personnel for a gift to a superior
 - Make a donation for a gift to a superior
 - Accept a gift from subordinate personnel
- Exceptions to the general rules prohibiting gifts to superiors or their solicitation:
 - On occasions where gifts are traditionally given or exchanged, items having an aggregate market value of \$10 or less, such as food items or minor mementos, may be given
 - On occasions of personal hospitality at a residence, appropriate gifts of a reasonable value (e.g., \$15 bottle of wine) may be given to superiors and accepted from subordinates
 - On occasions of personal significance (e.g., marriage, birth of child) or on occasions that terminate the superior-subordinate relationship (i.e., retirement, separation, or permanent change of station (PCS)):

- Employees may solicit a contribution for an appropriate group gift for a unique occasion, provided, however, that contributions must not exceed \$10 per person (the aggregate of individual voluntary contributions are subject to an overall cap of \$480). However, a voluntary contribution of a nominal amount for food, refreshments, and entertainment for the superior, the personal guests of the superior, and other attendees at an event to mark the occasion for which a group gift is given may be solicited as a separate, voluntary contribution not subject to the \$10 limit.
- The general rule is that a DoW employee **MAY NOT** accept a gift that exceeds \$480 in value from a group that consists of one or more subordinates to the honoree. Further, if an individual donates to more than one donating group, then the donating groups will be considered one donating group, and the combined value of their gifts must be \$480 or less.
- Donating groups should be defined by reasonable and rational parameters and are usually related to the structure of the overall organization and individual units within that organization. There is no limit on the number of donating groups.
- A superior employee receiving a gift valued at more than \$480 may not “buy down” the gift (i.e., pay back the money in excess of \$480)
- Under all circumstances, gifts must be truly **voluntary**

References

- Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 C.F.R. §§ 2635.301–2635.304, 3601
- Additional Limitations on Gifts Between Employees, 5 C.F.R. § 3601.104
- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER), para. 2-100 (15 May 2024)

GIFTS FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES

Subpart B of the *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees* establishes the general rule that gifts from prohibited sources, or gifts from outside sources given because of an employee's official position, should not be accepted. This prohibition stems from the core ethics principle that the federal government should not show preferential treatment toward any particular non-federal entity (NFE). Subpart B also creates an intricate system of exemptions and exceptions from the general no-gift rule.

Key Takeaways

- » The general rule of 5 C.F.R. 2635, Subpart B, is that Department of the Air Force employees should not accept items of value from prohibited sources (i.e., contractors) or items given because of an employees' official position
- » There are various exemptions from the definition of a gift that reflect business realities, such as the ability to accept mementos of appreciation and modest refreshments
- » Recognized gift exceptions may allow more substantive gifts to be accepted, such as gifts from family members or discounts offered to all military members
- » Even an otherwise acceptable gift should be declined if acceptance could lead to public concerns about the employee's integrity or impartiality

General Gift Rule

- Department of War (DoW) employees (military and civilian) are beholden to the same standards of ethical conduct as other employees of the executive branch, including restrictions on gifts from outside sources/NFEs. Because public service is a public trust, DoW employees must not abuse their official position for private gain—to include using public office to acquire gifts from NFEs which are improper/illegal (e.g., bribes/kick-backs) or create the appearance of impropriety.
- General Rule: The *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees* prohibit DoW employees from soliciting or accepting a gift from an NFE if it is offered **because** of the employee's official position. Similarly, DoW employees may not solicit or accept a gift from a "prohibited source" (e.g., an NFE engaged in or seeking to engage in business with the defense agency, seeking official agency action, is regulated by the agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the employee's duty performance or nonperformance).
- Values-Based Decision-Making: Every DoW employee has a responsibility to place loyalty to the Constitution, laws, and ethical principles above private gain. **For this reason, and in an abundance of caution, employees should decline otherwise permissible gifts if they believe that a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts would question the employee's integrity or impartiality as a result of accepting the gift.** Factors to consider are the value of the gift, the timing of the gift, the identity of the donor, and any potential access the gift may provide the donor.

- For example, a DoW official conducting a visit to a prospective contractor's production facility and home office should not accept a proffered free lunch (valued at \$15) even though this meal may otherwise be acceptable under the 5 C.F.R. 2635.204(a) \$20 gift exception because the optics of the situation dictate that the DoW official remain completely neutral and objective with regards to the contractor

Exemptions and Exceptions

- Definition of Gift: A gift is considered anything of value, regardless of whether the thing of value is tangible or intangible (such as discounts or memberships). Additionally, gifts to DoW employees' dependents will be considered gifts to the DoW employee.
 - Items not considered gifts include modest items of food and non-alcoholic refreshments, opportunities/benefits available to all military personnel, greeting cards, and other items with negligible intrinsic value and intended primarily for presentation
 - The acceptance of a meal as part of giving an official speech is not considered a gift, provided the meal is integral to the event itself (i.e., making a keynote speech during a dinner event, compared to providing opening remarks at a conference and sticking around solely for a free lunch)
 - Exceptions to the General Rule Against Accepting Gifts: There are numerous exceptions to the general prohibition against accepting gifts. Common exceptions include: prizes/discounts/incentives open to the public or all DoW employees without regard to official position; the \$20/\$50 rule (DoW employee may accept a non-cash gift valued at up to \$20 per occasion, per source, and no more than \$50 per year from the same source); gifts based on a family/personal relationship or an outside business relationship (including the spouse's employer); and the widely attended gathering rule.
- These and the many other gift exceptions require a fact-specific analysis and legal review to ensure that a gift may be accepted without creating the reasonable appearance of impropriety or possibly violating criminal statutes. As such, gift issues should be discussed as early as possible with the servicing Staff Judge Advocate or ethics counselor.

References

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- Additional Exceptions for Gifts from Outside Sources, 5 C.F.R. § 3601.103
 - Gifts from Outside Sources, 5 C.F.R. § 2635, Subpart B
 - Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)

FOREIGN GIFTS

The Constitution prohibits persons holding an “office of profit or trust” for the United States from accepting gifts from foreign “personages or governments” without consent of Congress. Congress has consented to accepting and retaining gifts under certain conditions and when following specified procedures.

Key Takeaways

- » The offering of gifts from foreign governments (and their officials) is a common scenario for Department of the Air Force officials who work with foreign counterparts or in overseas locations
- » Foreign gifts of less than “minimal value” may be accepted by the individual recipient as a personal gift
- » Recipients of foreign gifts of more than “minimal value” should be retained and the recipient should make a recommendation disposition to and/or request disposition instructions from the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Administration and Management (SAF/AM)
- » Recipients who desire to retain a foreign gift of more than “minimal value” (except firearms) may pay the U.S. Government the fair market retail value of the gifted item

Foreign Gifts Generally

- The general prohibition against accepting foreign gifts applies to military members, civilian employees, consultants, and their spouses or other dependents. This includes retired and reserve component members, regardless of duty status, Air National Guard members, when federally recognized, and their spouses and dependents.
- No Department of War (DoW) employee may request, or otherwise encourage, the offer of a gift from a foreign government or their agents and representatives
- Small table favors, mementos, remembrances, or other tokens bestowed at official functions, and other gifts of minimal value received as souvenirs or marks of courtesy from a foreign government (e.g., plaques or paper certificates), may be accepted and retained by the recipient
- “Minimal value” is currently defined as not exceeding \$480 in retail value. “Minimal value” is based on the Consumer Price Index and changes every three years. The value of the gift is the item/items’ retail or fair market value in the United States. If multiple gifts are offered on the same occasion, they will be aggregated when determining value.
- For all foreign gifts, the person receiving the gift should make a written record describing the circumstances of the gift, including the date and place of presentation, identity and position of the donor, description and value of gift, and means by which the value was determined
- For gifts equal to or less than “minimal value,” the recipient may retain the gift for their personal use including destruction or re-conveyance of the gift as desired

Foreign Gifts of more than Minimal Value

- DoW employees shall refuse the offer of a gift greater than “minimal value” unless refusal would cause offense, embarrassment, or otherwise adversely affect foreign relations. The donor should be advised that U.S. law prohibits persons in service of the United States or their dependents from accepting the gift.
 - However, refusal requires Department of State approval, coordinated through the SAF/AM
 - If the employee accepts a gift greater than “minimal value” because its refusal is likely to offend or embarrass the donor or adversely affect foreign relations, the gift becomes U.S. property and must be reported to the Air Force and Space Force
 - Further, the employee may purchase a foreign gift (from the U.S. Government) if the employee desires by paying full retail value (with the exception of firearms)
- For gifts of more than “minimal value,” consult the guidance in AFI 51-506, *Gifts to the Department of the Air Force from Domestic and Foreign Sources*, and make a recommendation as to the disposition of the gift (e.g., display in a unit’s common area). Gifts of more than “minimal value” (with the exception of firearms) may also be donated to charitable non-federal entities, including installation-recognized private organizations. Firearms may not be purchased from the U.S. Government by the recipient.

References

- Receipt and Disposition of Foreign Gifts and Decorations, 5 U.S.C. § 7342
- 41 C.F.R. § 102-42.10
- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- DoDD 1005.13, *Gifts and Decorations from Foreign Governments* (19 February 2002), incorporating Change 1, 6 December 2002, certified current 21 November 2003
- AFI 51-506, *Gifts to the Department of the Air Force from Domestic and Foreign Sources* (16 April 2019)

HONORARIA (OFFERED TO DAF EMPLOYEES)

Federal employees are often professional experts in their functional field and may be invited to give speeches, teach, or write articles within that general field of expertise. Department of the Air Force (DAF) employees may not be dually compensated for their official duties and may not receive any type of payment for such communications that are directly related to their official position. DAF employees may engage in “outside” speaking/teaching/writing and accept honoraria for doing so.

Key Takeaways

- » DAF employees may not accept any form of compensation for speaking, teaching, or writing for non-federal entities (NFE) if related to their official position or duties
- » DAF employees may accept compensation for outside speaking, teaching, and writing not directly related to their official duties, even if it relates generally to their unit’s area of responsibility
- » If a DAF employee negotiated specific compensation, such speaking, teaching, and writing would be off-duty employment. If the compensation is in the nature of a gift from the NFE, it is considered honoraria.
- » Military members may use their grade and service when speaking, teaching, or writing in a personal capacity, but the member must use a verbal or written Department of War (DoW)/DAF disclaimer

General Rules

- Federal employees may accept the payment of money or anything of value for a speech, teaching, or writing **unrelated** to their official duties, assuming there are no statutory or regulatory prohibitions
- An honorarium is generally defined as a payment given to someone, such as a consultant or a speaker, for which custom or propriety forbids any fixed payment or price be set
- In the context of the *Standards of Conduct*, honoraria are considered compensation for a lecture, speech, or writing, and involve the payment of money or anything of value
- Federal employees may accept compensation for a lecture, speech, or writing based on the employee’s field of individualized expertise (rather than official duties or agency operations), even if that field is generally within the agency’s area of responsibility
- Use of a military member’s grade and military service is acceptable (e.g., as part of an introduction), but requires a disclaimer (either written or verbal) that the views being expressed are those of the speaker/writer and do not necessarily represent the views of the DoW or DAF

- Although travel reimbursement for a speech related to official duties may be accepted by the agency under certain circumstances (see [Gifts of Travel](#) in this chapter for further guidance), a fee or other direct compensation for speaking for such an engagement **MAY NOT** be accepted
 - Even a gift to a charity to commemorate the speech would be considered a gift (i.e., direct compensation) to an employee if the selection of the charity is based on the designation or recommendation of the employee
- Although 18 U.S.C. § 209 generally prohibits an employee from receiving compensation from an outside source for an activity undertaken as part of the employee's official duties, compensation for speaking, teaching, and writing has been viewed as falling outside the scope of § 209 because payments are merely gratuitous and are not intended to compensate for government services

References

- Salary of Government Officials and Employees Payable Only by United States, 18 U.S.C. § 209
- Definition of Gift, 5 C.F.R. § 2635.203(f)
- Use of Public Office for Private Gain, 5 C.F.R. § 2635.702
- Teaching, Speaking, and Writing, 5 C.F.R. § 2635.807

USE OF GOVERNMENT MOTOR VEHICLES

Government Motor Vehicles (GMVs) are closely controlled because of their easy accessibility, high visibility, and potential for misuse. Whether owned or leased by the U.S. Government, GMVs should only be used for official purposes. Decisions regarding authorized GMV use/support must be resolved in favor of strict compliance with controlling guidance and with special consideration for avoiding negative public perception. For detailed guidance concerning GMV use for various situations, please consult Chapter 2 of AFMAN 24-306, *Operation of Air Force Government Motor Vehicles*.

Key Takeaways

- » Use of GMVs is subject to close scrutiny and substantiated misuse has severe consequences. GMVs should not be assigned based on grade, prestige, or personal convenience.
- » Use of domicile-to-duty (DTD) transportation must be specifically approved by Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) and Congressional notification is required
- » Commanders with permanently assigned GMVs to facilitate 24/7 communications should not take the GMV to a personal residence to avoid the perception of DTD utilization
- » Use of GMVs by permanent party personnel is limited to official purposes and does not include many morale and social events

GMVs assigned to MAJCOM/FLDCOM, NAF, and Wing/Delta Commanders

- Major or Field Command, Numbered Air Force, and Wing/Delta Commanders may be assigned telecommunication-equipped GMVs to facilitate overall responsibility for operations or installation security needing 24/7 emergency communication support. This approval authority is extended to Operations Group Commanders responsible for ongoing flight operations.
- Permanently assigned GMV authority is not the authority for DTD transportation. Such GMVs should not be taken to the employee's residence for routine stops or parked in locations that facilitate partial DTD transportation, or the appearance of such use.
- As a general rule, GMVs should not be assigned based on grade, prestige, or personal convenience

Domicile-to-Duty Transportation

- DTD transportation, per 31 U.S.C. § 1344, is only authorized for:
 - Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (CSAF), and Chief of Space Operations (CSO)
 - Field work (e.g., recruiters and medical officers performing outpatient service away from military treatment facility)
 - Intelligence, counterintelligence, protection services, or law enforcement duty
 - Exigent circumstances—namely, highly unusual circumstances that present a clear and present danger, emergency situations, or other compelling operational considerations
- SecAF is the approval authority for DTD transportation. Congress must be notified, in certain circumstances, when DTD transportation is authorized.

National Capital Region (NCR)

- Washington Headquarters Service has an Operating Instruction that governs GMV usage and reflects the ready availability of public transportation in the NCR
- GMV usage to Commercial and Military Air Transportation Terminals is **only permissible if the** terminal is in an area where other modes of travel will not meet mission requirements (e.g., taxi/rideshare not available or parking insufficient)

Permanent Party GMV Usage

- Travel to command picnics, holiday parties, or similar events is not authorized
- Travel to retirement and change-of-command ceremonies is authorized **only** for official participants (e.g., the retiree, the incoming/outgoing commanders, or the presiding official)
- Travel to off-base sustenance is limited to situations when traveling between different installations (or other Alternate Work Locations) for duty purposes

Temporary Party GMV Usage

- Transport to/from off-base lodging, restaurants & other sustenance is acceptable
- Only reputable non-adult themed restaurants are permitted
- Transport to/from entertainment/recreation locations is acceptable only when the locations are on-base
- Individually procured rental vehicles by TDY Party personnel, using their Government Travel Card, are subject to similar restrictions as GMVs but may be used to access off-base entertainment venues, in the local area of the TDY location, during the employee's off-duty time. Significant excursions away from the TDY location require the employee to negotiate personal payment and insurance coverage with the rental car company.

References

- Passenger Carrier Use, 31 U.S.C. § 1344
- Adverse Personnel Actions, 31 U.S.C. § 1349(b)
- DoDD 4500.09, *Transportation and Traffic Management* (27 December 2019), incorporating Change 1, 21 October 2022
- DoDI 4500.36, *Acquisition, Management, and Use of Non-Tactical Vehicles* (1 February 2023)
- DoDM 4500.36, *Acquisition, Management, and Use of Non-Tactical Vehicles* (7 July 2015), incorporating Change 1, 20 December 2018
- Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) – Serviced Components Administrative Instruction (AI) 109, *Use of Motor Transportation and Scheduled DoD Shuttle Service in the Pentagon Area* (31 March 2011), incorporating through Change 2, 22 February 2022
- DAFI 24-602 Vol 1, *Passenger Movement*, paragraph 3.13 (15 December 2020)
- AFI 24-301, *Ground Transportation* (22 October 2019)
- AFMAN 24-306, *Operation of Air Force Government Motor Vehicles* (30 July 2020)

USING GOVERNMENT FUNDS: MEMENTOS/GIFTS AND OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION FUNDS

Federal law requires that appropriated funds (APF) not be used to purchase gifts for military members, employees, or private citizens unless specifically authorized by law. The only authority to use Air Force or Space Force APF for gifts is through Official Representation Funds (ORF), in accordance with AFI 65-603, *Emergency and Extraordinary Expense Authority*. AFI 65-603 specifies the circumstances and the individuals to whom gifts (or “mementos”) may be presented.

Key Takeaways

- » Trophies, plaques, and other recognition items are not considered gifts to Department of War (DoW) employees if provided as part of an established awards program
- » Generally, APF are used to recognize APF employees, and nonappropriated funds (NAF) are used to recognize NAF employees, for meritorious performance
- » ORF can be used to purchase mementos and welcoming/ courtesy gifts for distinguished foreign and domestic visitors
- » ORF-supported events must meet specific ratios (based on the size of the event) of distinguished visitors versus DoW employee attendees

Impermissible Use of Funds

- APF: May not be used to purchase permanent change of station (PCS) or retirement mementos for either military or DoW civilian personnel. APF cannot be used to purchase trophies and other awards that are used to recognize NAF personnel.
- NAF: May not be used to purchase PCS mementos for either military or DoW civilian personnel. NAFs cannot be used to purchase trophies and other awards that are used to recognize APF personnel.

Permissible Use of Funds

- NAFs: Special Morale & Welfare Funds may be used in support of a **retirement ceremony** to purchase light refreshments (non-alcoholic) within specified limits for a unit celebration for retiring military and DoW civilian personnel. Likewise, NAFs may be used to purchase trophies and plaques that are used to recognize NAF employees for mission accomplishment, such as personnel of the quarter awards.
- APFs: May be used to purchase special trophies and plaques that are used to recognize APF personnel for mission accomplishment, such as quarterly awards. Additionally, a special type of appropriated funds, called ORF, may **potentially** be used to purchase mementos/gifts for distinguished citizens of foreign countries and prominent U.S. citizens who are not DoW employees under certain circumstances.

- **Note:** Recognition items having minimal cost (e.g., a unit recognition coin) purchased with APFs or NAFs may be used to recognize any employee (APF or NAF) in order for commanders and directors to avoid having to use a type of funds they would otherwise have no reason to utilize

Official Representation Funds

- ORF is one type of emergency and extraordinary expense fund allowed by 10 U.S.C. § 127. Its purpose is to extend official courtesies of the United States to foreign and domestic dignitaries. Gifts/mementos can be used either for visiting dignitaries or when Department of the Air Force (DAF) officials pay official visits to foreign (and domestic) dignitaries when TDY. It is normal for meals to be provided when visiting dignitaries visit DAF installations.
- Use of ORF requires certain ratios of invited attendees to be non-DoW authorized guests. In parties of less than 30 persons, at least 20% of the invitees reasonably expected to attend should be non-DoW. In parties of more than 30 persons, at least 50% of the invitees reasonably expected to attend should be non-DoW authorized guests.
- Only certain individuals will qualify for use of ORF. Examples include members of Congress and Cabinet members, prominent U.S. citizens (retired O-10s are automatically considered prominent U.S. citizens), foreign distinguished citizens, military personnel, and government officials, and the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), Undersecretary of the Air Force, Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), Chief of Space Operations (CSO), Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force (VCSAF), Vice Chief of Space Operations (VCSO), and certain other Office of the Secretary of War (OSW) members.
- AFI 65-603, *Emergency and Extraordinary Expense Authority*, governs the use of ORF. ORF may be used for meals, receptions and refreshments, reasonable gratuities for services rendered by non-government personnel, recreation events such as sporting activities, sightseeing tours, and concerts for authorized personnel, floral and candle centerpieces for receptions and meals, mementos, modest welcome baskets, and the cost of the gift wrapping, paper or bows, and alcohol at evening events.
 - The limit on the cost of gifts and mementos is \$50 for specified DoW officials and \$480 for foreign and domestic dignitaries
- Prohibited uses of ORF: Unless specifically approved by the Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF/AA), the following uses are **NOT** allowed:
 - Personal items such as toiletry articles, hair and beauty care, souvenirs, and personal clothing items (unless the article of clothing bears the command or unit logo and is given as a memento)
 - Personal phone calls or transportation when official duties are not involved
 - Expenses for support staff (e.g., aides, executive officers, official drivers, and protocol personnel). These individuals are not considered members of the official party.
 - Gifts, flowers, or wreaths for presentation by authorized guests

- Seasonal greeting and calling cards
- Cost of music/entertainment for social hours, receptions, and dinners
- DoW members' (and spouses') cost for recreational activities
- Membership fees or dues

References

- Emergency and Extraordinary Expenses, 10 U.S.C. § 127
- DoDI 7250.13, *Use of Appropriated Funds for Official Representation Purposes* (30 June 2009), incorporating Change 1, 22 March 2023
- DAFI 65-601, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Procedures* (22 June 2022)
- DAFMAN 65-605, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Technical Procedures* (31 March 2021)
- AFI 65-603, *Emergency and Extraordinary Expense Authority* (29 April 2020)
- AFMAN 34-201, *Use of Nonappropriated Funds* (28 September 2018)

OFF-DUTY EMPLOYMENT

Generally, Air Force and Space Force members may participate in off-duty employment, subject to the limitations and prohibitions stated in the *Joint Ethics Regulation* (JER). The Department of the Air Force (DAF) does not currently have an implementing regulation for off-duty employment. Some personnel are required to obtain supervisory permission prior to starting such employment; for all others, it is only necessary to avoid conflicts of interests with the member's official duties.

Key Takeaways

- » Financial disclosure filers must receive advance permission from their supervisor before commencing off-duty employment
- » Even when advance permission is not required, DAF personnel must avoid a conflict of interest between their official duties and their off-duty employment
- » Certain functional areas have additional requirements for advance notice to, or permission from, supervisors
- » DAF personnel generally cannot receive compensation for outside speaking, teaching, and writing on matters related to their official duties

Prior Notice and Approval

- Personnel should inform their supervisor prior to engaging in outside employment. Air Force and Space Force financial disclosure filers must request approval of outside activities using DAF Form 3902, *Application and Approval for Off-Duty Employment*.
- Although the Air Force and Space Force does not require civilian employees to seek prior supervisory approval to engage in off-duty employment, it may be required by a local or command policy. Additionally, all Air Force and Space Force civilian employees **MUST** report outside business activity or compensation to their supervisors per DAFI 36-147, *Civilian Conduct and Responsibility*.
- Financial disclosure filers shall obtain prior supervisory approval **BEFORE** working for a prohibited source using DAF Form 3902. Approval to participate in outside employment or business activity will be documented in the Supervisor's Employee Brief. For more information on who is required to file financial disclosures (see [Financial Disclosure Forms](#) in this chapter for further guidance).

General Concerns with Off-Duty Employment

- Personnel may not engage in outside employment that:
 - Interferes with or is incompatible with performing their government duties or is prohibited by statute or regulation

- May reasonably be expected to bring discredit upon the government or the Department of War (DoW)
- May tend to create a conflict of interest or create an appearance of impropriety
- Will detract from readiness or pose a security risk

Outside Speaking, Teaching and Writing

- Personnel are **encouraged** to engage in teaching, writing, or speaking. Such activities must not depend upon information gained from government service, unless available to the public or with approval from the Secretary of the Air Force.
- Generally, federal employees may not receive payment for articles or speeches related to their official duties (see [Honoraria](#) in this chapter for further guidance). Employees may be eligible to receive compensation or travel related to outside speaking/teaching/writing in an area of professional expertise not directly related to their official duties.

Functional-Specific Requirements

- Certain functional areas have specific requirements for advance notice to, or permission from, supervisors prior to commencing off-duty employment
- Medical providers must consult applicable guidance from the Surgeon General for the Department of the Air Force (AF/SG) (to include AFI 44-102, *Medical Care Management*) prior to engaging in off-duty employment
- Judge advocates desiring to perform off-duty employment should review AFI 51-110, *Professional Responsibility Program*

References

- Outside Activities, 5 C.F.R. § 2635, Subpart H
- Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Department of Defense, 5 C.F.R. Part 3601
- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- DAFI 36-147, *Civilian Conduct and Responsibility* (11 January 2023)
- DAF 3902, *Application and Approval for Off-Duty Employment* (11 January 2023)
- AFI 44-102, *Medical Care Management* (17 March 2015), certified current 22 April 2020
- AFI 51-110, *Professional Responsibility Program* (11 December 2018)

COMMANDER'S KEY SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Commander's Key Support Program (CKSP) is a commander's program to enhance unit family readiness. The role of the Key Liaison is designed to enhance mission readiness and resilience and establish a sense of community. The program is a commander's initiative that promotes partnerships with unit leadership, families, volunteer key spouses, centers, and other installation community agencies.

Key Takeaways

- » Key Spouses are important volunteers who serve as the commander's representative to unit military spouses and families
- » Key Spouses may use government resources in the performance of their assigned duties but must undergo necessary training
- » As accepted volunteers, Key Spouses receive many of the same protections and privileges (including recognition for superior performance) as Department of the Air Force civilian employees
- » Key Spouses may be able to host Special Morale and Welfare Funds-supported events on behalf of the commander

Commander's Program

- Department of War (DoW) components can accept certain volunteer services, including the Key Support Program falls under such voluntary services
- All Key Liaisons should be appointed in writing by the unit commander
- Once appointed, Key Liaisons should complete CKSP training and sign a DD Form 2793, *Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities & Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities*
- Military members and civilian employees married to an Airman or Guardian may volunteer to act as a Key Liaison in their spouse's unit during off-duty (from their own unit) time

Key Liaison Responsibilities

- Key Liaisons **MAY NOT** serve in a policy making position; supervise paid employees or military personnel; perform inherently governmental functions; obligate government funds; be accountable for the management, quality, financial solvency, and health/safety of an installation program or activity
- Key Liaisons are supervised the same way as compensated employees providing like services
- Key Liaisons receive Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) protections for injuries or damage they may cause when they perform official duties as volunteers

- Key Liaisons receive Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA) protections for injuries they may incur when they perform official duties as volunteers

Key Support Program Training

- Key Liaisons can use government resources and facilities (e.g., office space, computers, email, telephones, supplies, equipment, and vehicles) and may have access to Privacy Act protected information (e.g., unit recall rosters), as needed to perform their assigned duties
 - Key Liaisons may contact unit spouses using recall information. Unit spouses must be afforded the opportunity to opt-out of routine contact from the unit Key Support Program. However, unit members may be required to keep current spouse contact information on file with the unit.
- Key Liaisons should complete the same training required of any compensated employee or military member who accesses a particular government resource or facility
 - Key Liaisons should complete any necessary information security training if they will be given access to Air Force and Space Force information technology systems
 - Training for Key Liaisons shall be provided by the Military and Family Readiness Center at least on a quarterly basis, or as requested/needed

Key Support Program Events

- If Key Liaisons engage in fundraising (e.g., as a member of a spouses' club), either on or off-base, they must adhere to relevant guidance (see [Private Organizations](#) in Chapter 6 for further guidance) and ensure it is clear they are not acting in their official capacity as the CKSP representative
- Key Support Program leaders may host annual unit New Spouse Orientation Briefs and Key Support Program Volunteer Recognition (award) events and use Special Morale & Welfare funds to purchase modest refreshments (non-alcoholic) for these events, subject to typical limits
- Commanders may establish awards and recognition programs to recognize the superior performance and contributions of Key Liaisons and other volunteers. Key Support Program leaders may present, on the commander's behalf, recognition items to subordinate volunteers.

References

- Federal Employees' Compensation Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 8101 *et seq.*
- Authority to Accept Certain Voluntary Services, 10 U.S.C. § 1588
- Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2671–2680
- DoDI 1100.21, *Acceptance of Volunteer Services in the DoD* (27 March 2019)
- DoDI 1400.25, Volume 451, *DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Awards* (4 November 2013)
- DD Form 2793, *Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities & Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities* (March 2018)
- DAFI 36-3009, *Military and Family Readiness Centers* (4 November 2022), incorporating DAFGM 2025-01 (16 January 2025)
- DAFMAN 36-2806, *Military Awards: Criteria and Procedures* (27 October 2022)
- AFMAN 34-201, *Use of Nonappropriated Funds* (28 September 2018)
- AFPC Airman and Family Readiness Center Key Spouse Program Guide (4 December 2020)

UTILIZATION OF ENLISTED AIDES

An Enlisted Aide (EA) is assigned to support the assigned general officer (GO) and relieve them of routine duties so that the GO can focus on military duties. They are not assigned to assist the GO's spouse, family, or staff. However, they do generally perform duties from the General Officer's Quarters, so a balanced working relationship with the GO's spouse is important.

Key Takeaways

- » EAs are important members of a GO's personal staff who can save them time to focus on official duties
- » DoDI 1315.09, *Utilization of Enlisted Aides (EAs) on Personal Staffs of General and Flag Officers (GO/FOs)*, provides a comprehensive list of permissible and impermissible duties which may be assigned to EAs
- » EAs do not work for the GO's spouse or directly support the general's family, but they do work from the official quarters and must work closely with the spouse
- » An important aspect of an EA's duties is to prepare for and assist the GO in hosting qualifying representational events where food and beverages are served

Authorized EA Duties

- Cleaning of common areas in GO quarters (GOQ) and general lawn care
- Care of military uniforms and civilian attire worn for qualifying representational events (QREs)
- Receiving guests at QREs
- Planning, preparation, and conducting QREs, receptions, and parties
- Preparation of daily meals for the GO (and those immediate family members that eat with the GO)
- Packing of uniforms, professional items, and books for a permanent change of station move
- Assisting the GO with errands that have a substantive connection to the GO's official responsibilities (e.g., dry cleaning of uniforms)

Unauthorized EA Duties

- Any form of care for family, personal guests, or pets
- Operation or maintenance of the GO's privately owned vehicle or private recreational equipment; however, EAs may utilize their own privately owned vehicle to conduct official business (e.g., shopping for QREs) if no government owned vehicle is available and they are reimbursed for mileage

- Personal services or errands for the sole benefit of the GO's family or unofficial guests. The GO may hire an EA, on a truly voluntary basis, outside of normal duty hours, and reimburse the EA at Department of Labor wage rates, to work (e.g., prepare and serve food) at a private or family event.
- Landscaping or care of plants in areas not used for QREs
- Skilled maintenance of GOQ or cleaning of private family areas

Sharing of EAs between General Officers

- GOs can loan EAs to another GO who is authorized use of EAs to support a QRE
- A GO's spouse can be designated as an alternate host for the purpose of receiving EA support if the spouse hosts a QRE that has direct connection to the GO's official duties. This includes events when the spouse is hosting events attended by spouses of U.S. dignitaries, foreign dignitaries, or foreign military officers when the GO is separately meeting with those individuals. Such QREs normally occur in the GOQ, but this is not an absolute requirement.

Permissible and Impermissible EA Assignments

- DoDI 1315.09, *Utilization of Enlisted Aides (EAs) on Personal Staffs of General and Flag Officers (G/FOs)*, Enclosures 3 and 4, contains examples of permissible and impermissible EA assignments in support of QREs, as well as illustrative examples
- Permissible QREs Include:
 - Events to honor local government, congressional personnel, and foreign dignitaries
 - Customary unit morale events such as hail and farewell gatherings and holiday parties
 - Events to welcome peers and subordinates
 - Official events in support of family readiness programs
- Impermissible Non-QREs Include:
 - Purely social events for family, friends, and peers (EAs can voluntarily agree to off-duty employment arrangements with the GO for such events in return for just compensation)
 - Spouse-hosted social events for unit spouses

References

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- DoDI 1315.09, *Utilization of Enlisted Aides (EAs) on Personal Staffs of General and Flag Officers (GO/FOs)* (17 November 2023)
 - DAFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments*, Chapter 18 (9 August 2024)

UTILIZATION OF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS, AIDES DE CAMP, ETC.

Recent changes to the *Joint Ethics Regulation* (JER) provides broadly applicable Department of War (DoW) guidance regarding the scope of duties that administrative staff and military aides may perform in support of military leaders which is distinct from guidance on the utilization of Enlisted Aides. While prior versions of the JER incorporated limitations of the misuse of position and government resources, the recent JER guidance is tailored to address the unique issues that arise in military settings.

Key Takeaways

- » As a general matter, senior leaders must not task subordinates to perform personal errands
- » Examples of prohibited tasks include activities that are generally “personal” in nature
- » Subordinates must not be asked to use their personal time or resources for the senior leader’s personal benefit. For example, subordinates should not be tasked to use their personal vehicles (either during or outside duty hours) to transport a senior leader for official or personal purposes. Often troublesome are requests that subordinates babysit, housesit, or “pet sit”/walk the dog for the senior leader.
- » On occasion, and as part of taking care of their own personal business (e.g., maildrop), a subordinate/staff member may offer to take care of a minor errand for a senior leader. However, senior leaders should exercise great caution. While this may be permissible in some limited circumstances, we note utilizing a subordinate or staff member in this manner can create a risk of the appearance of misuse of staff.

Joint Ethics Regulations

- Guidance from the DoW Standards of Conduct Office has been added to the JER and provides significant clarity to a previously “gray area” under the ethics rules. Prior to the adoption of Paragraph 2-302 in the updated JER, there was no broadly applicable DoW guidance that defined or limited the scope of duties that administrative staff and military aides (other than enlisted aides) could perform in support of military leaders.
- Prior versions of the JER addressed misuse of position and government resources from regulations that apply across the Federal Government regarding misuse of position and broadly prohibit the use of public office for private gain and restrict members from inducing or coercing personal benefits from subordinates. However, the recent additions to the JER guidance are tailored to address many of the unique issues that arise in military settings.
- Misuse of subordinate staff by senior military leaders has been featured prominently in several high-profile DoW Inspector General (IG) investigations that resulted in costly, often career-ending penalties. DoW IG’s investigations typically chronicle the solicitation of subordinates by senior leaders to perform personal errands for the senior leader, or the expectation that subordinates will cater to the personal needs of the senior leaders’ family members.

- Relevant to all DoW members, the JER requires:
 - Work performed by DoW Personnel must have an obvious benefit to the DoW mission and operations and be in direct support of official responsibilities
 - Support that is entirely personal, such as drafting personal correspondence, planning unofficial travel, or running personal errands within the area of the permanent duty station is never permissible
 - In assigning tasks and duties to others, personnel senior in rank or otherwise in the chain of command or supervision must be careful to avoid even the appearance of personal entitlement
- Under Paragraph 2-302 of the JER, senior officials authorized military-aides-de camp or confidential assistants may request their assistance with tasks in direct support of official responsibilities. The following language is taken directly from the JER and states “(t)asks in direct support of official responsibilities may include:
 - Scheduling unofficial appointments, such as doctor appointments, only if reasonably necessary to ensure coordination with the official schedule;
 - Coordinating with family members to obtain information necessary to avoid conflicts between the personal and official travel of the senior official;
 - Assisting family members and friends to facilitate their attendance at official ceremonies honoring the senior official; or
 - Writing checks or facilitating electronic fund transfers, personally funded by the senior official, for expenses incurred by the senior official that arise from official duties”.

General Guidance

- Examples of prohibited personal errands (by members not designated as enlisted aides) include: personal shopping, posting personal mail, drafting personal correspondence, picking up/dropping off personal items, such as prescription medication, coffee or meals (other than for official working lunch-type meetings), watering plants in the workplace or in personal quarters, scheduling travel/lodging for unofficial travel, or other activities that are generally “personal” in nature
- On occasion, and as part of taking care of their own personal business (e.g., maildrop), a subordinate/staff member may offer to take care of a minor errand for a senior leader. However, senior leaders should exercise great caution. While this may be permissible in some limited circumstances, this may create a risk of the appearance of misuse of staff and has on some occasions been substantiated as misconduct by the DoW IG.

- Before accepting a subordinate/staff member offer to perform a given task, senior leaders should weigh the following:
 - The nature of the task;
 - Whether the idea to perform the task originated with the subordinate and whether they truly voluntarily offered to do so;
 - How much the task will cause the subordinate to alter his or her ordinary routine or plans;
 - Whether the senior leader ever has, or will, perform reciprocal minor errands for this or other subordinates; and
 - How are others likely to perceive the situation.

Arranging Spouse Travel

- Subordinates may not make travel arrangements for travel by higher ranking personnel and their spouses where the travel is not related to the official mission requirement (i.e., subordinates may not plan/arrange their supervisor's personal travel). This is a personal errand and prohibited by the JER and the associated CFR provisions applicable to all Federal employees.
- Subordinate staff personnel may arrange travel (via commercial air or MILAIR) and lodging for the spouses of DoW personnel who have been issued an Invitational Travel Authorization (ITA) to support Command Team engagements. This is because an ITA may only be issued for a spouse when the spouse is "legitimately performing a direct service for the Government" as required IAW Paragraph 030501 of *The Joint Travel Regulations* (JTR).

Enlisted Aides

- As discussed in Chapter 14.13 (Utilization of Enlisted Aides), enlisted aides serve a unique role within Federal service and the scope of their duties must not be confused or conflated with the permissible roles of any other subordinate staff members
- Enlisted aides are authorized for the purpose of relieving General Officers of those minor tasks and details that, if performed by the General Officers, would be at the expense of their primary military and official duties
- The duties of these enlisted personnel shall relate to the military and official responsibilities of the officers, to include assisting General Officers in discharging representational responsibilities of their assigned positions (e.g., preparing and serving food at Qualifying Representational Events)
- DoDI 1315.09, *Utilization of Enlisted Aides (EAs) on Personal Staffs of General and Flag Officers (G/FOs)*, provides a comprehensive list of permissible and impermissible duties (and supporting examples) which may be assigned to enlisted aides

References

- 5 C.F.R. §§ 2635.702, .705
- Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) (15 May 2024)
- The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), Uniformed Service Members and DoD Civilian Employees
- DoDI 1315.09, *Utilization of Enlisted Aides (EAs) on Personal Staffs of General and Flag Officers (GO/FOs)*, (6 March 2015), incorporating Change 1, 1 December 2017

SPOUSAL AIR TRAVEL

DoW-funded air travel for spouses to accompany their sponsors on official engagements is only authorized when the spouse will perform a function benefiting the Department of War (DoW) in accordance with governing legal authority. Approving commanders should carefully review requests to ensure they meet applicable requirements, with sensitivity to the appearance of using official resources for private benefit.

Key Takeaways

- » For detailed guidance on spousal air travel, please consult *The Joint Travel Regulations* (JTR) and Chapters 2 and 3 of DAFI 24-602V1, *Passenger Movement*
- » For reimbursable travel, an aircraft must already be scheduled for an official purpose, and the spouse's presence does not necessitate a larger aircraft or displace an official traveler. Non-reimbursable travel may be approved when a spouse is performing representation duties and the criteria for reimbursable travel are met.
- » A spouse may be authorized to accompany a DoW sponsor via MILAIR, but will have to reimburse the DoW unless certain criteria are met
- » The standard for a spouse to travel via DoW-funded commercial travel is generally higher than travel via MILAIR, and requires the spouse to be performing a "direct service for the Government" within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 5703

Standards for Spousal Military Air Travel

- Reimbursable Travel: The general rule is a spouse may only be authorized to accompany the DoW sponsor via MILAIR if the government is reimbursed and subject to the requirements outlined below
 - Approval Criteria:
 - (1) An aircraft is already scheduled for an official purpose;
 - (2) The spouse's presence does not necessitate a larger aircraft; and
 - (3) No official traveler is displaced.
 - Reimbursement Process: When completing his or her travel voucher, the DoW sponsor should include a check made out to the U.S. Treasury for the full coach fare equivalent of the MILAIR itinerary. The full coach fare is any publicly available coach class commercial air fare between the same stops as the MILAIR itinerary. Travelers may also use the City Pair Program (CPP) fare as the equivalent but are not required to.
- Non-Reimbursable Travel: Under certain circumstances, a spouse may be approved to accompany their DoW sponsor traveling on MILAIR without reimbursing the government. One such circumstance is when the criteria for reimbursable travel outlined above are met, and the spouse will perform representational duties on behalf of the DoW; however, other independent bases for spousal travel may also justify DoW-funded travel.

- Travel to Perform Representational Duties: When a spouse would otherwise be authorized to travel on a reimbursable basis as outlined above, and will perform representational duties, he/she may be authorized to travel at DoW expense. Qualifying representational duties must fall under the following three categories of activity:
 - Attending a function where the sponsor is officially participating, and the spouse will speak or otherwise play an active and visible part;
 - Attending (with or without the sponsor) a function with spouses of community leaders, government officials or foreign dignitaries/military officers; or
 - Attending (with or without the sponsor) a function where a substantial portion of those present are military families or the focus is on military families.

Standards for Spousal Commercial Air Travel

- Generally, the standard for a spouse to qualify for DoW-funded commercial air is significantly higher than for MILAIR travel. The spouse must be performing a “direct service for the Government” within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 5703. Examples include:
 - Attending formal classroom training to serve as a member of the command team;
 - Acquiring specialized knowledge to be used to provide advice and recommendations to the command funding the travel; and/or
 - Other direct service in the nature of an unpaid consultant to the government.

Approval Process and Authority for Spousal Air Travel

- The approval level for spouse MILAIR and commercial air travel depends on the grade and assignment of the sponsor. Major command/field command (MAJCOM/FLDCOM) commanders or their deputies will approve all such travel within their commands. Personnel assigned above the MAJCOM/FLDCOM level, or to DRUs or FOAs, will route approval requests to the authorities outlined in DAFI 24-602V1, para. 2.11.3.
- The documents required for travel approval and issuance of an invitational travel order are outlined in DAFI 24-602V1, para. 2.12. Generally, documentation should include a spouse’s itinerary and/or agenda, a determination from the DoW sponsor that the spouse’s presence would advance DoW or DAF interests, and a MILAIR request if applicable.
- Once approved, the requesting organization will issue an invitational travel authority in accordance with the JTR and AFI 65-103, *Temporary Duty/Special Orders*. The issuing organization should maintain supporting documentation, to include the spouse itinerary agenda when applicable, for two years. (See DAFI 24-602V1, para. 2.14 for further guidance.)
- Generally, only travel costs will be paid by the DoW. The JTR outlines circumstances where lodging and per diem may be covered. Such expenses must be approved in advance by the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), CSAF, or CSO, in accordance with para. 2.12.5 of DAFI 24-602V1.

- Generally, lodging is presumed to be shared between the principal and spouse, but lodging per diem may be covered when a spouse travels independently for a conference or training
- Similarly, if attending a conference or training where there is no opportunity for group meals, M&IE per diem may be authorized. When such expenses are not covered, specify the restriction on reimbursement in the invitational travel authorization as specified in DAFI 24-602V1, para. 2.12.6.

References

- Per diem, travel, and transportation expenses, experts and consultants, individuals serving without pay, 5 U.S.C. § 5703
- Passenger Carrier Use, 31 U.S.C. § 1344
- Adverse Personnel Actions, 31 U.S.C. § 1349(b)
- DoD 4515.13, *Air Transportation Eligibility* (22 January 2016), incorporating through Change 7, 11 January 2024
- DoDD 4500.56, *DoD Policy on the Use of Government Aircraft and Air Travel* (14 April 2009)
- The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR), Uniformed Service Members and DoD Civilian Employees
- DAFI 24-602V1_DAFGM2024-01, *Passenger Movement* (16 February 2024)
- AFI 65-103, *Temporary Duty/Special Orders* (15 August 2019)
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-126, Revised, “Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft” (22 May 1992)

COINS

Organizational coins (e.g., unit recognition coins, commander's coins, round metal objects (RMO's), or challenge coins) are commonly used throughout the Military Services to recognize personnel for superior performance. However, leaders should be aware of the fiscal and programmatic guidance that applies to the purchase and distribution of various categories of challenge coins to avoid fiscal missteps.

Key Takeaways

- » Organizational coins are used for “on the spot” recognition of uniformed and civilian DAF employees’ meritorious duty performance, and can be purchased with operations and maintenance (O&M) funds
- » Employees of nonappropriated fund instrumentalities (NAFIs) should be recognized with coins purchased through nonappropriated funds
- » Visiting officials or dignitaries can be presented coins purchased with official representation funds (ORF)
- » Coins should not be used to recognize contractors

Organizational Coins

- Appropriated funds (APF) may be used to purchase organizational coins. These purchases should come from a unit’s O&M funds. A GPC may be used for purchasing coins subject to micro-purchase limits.
- Organizational coins should be used to recognize meritorious duty performance by uniformed and civilian Department of the Air Force (DAF) employees in accordance with established award program guidance
 - A commander or civilian director may designate a principal subordinate to award coins. Such delegations, whether standing or for a one-time occasion, should be made in writing. Organizational coins are not “commemorative” coins and should not be used as personal gifts, mementos, or tokens of appreciation.
 - Organizational coins are intended for on-the-spot recognition and should not be used to merely augment other established forms of recognition (e.g., plaques and certificates at unit quarterly and annual awards program ceremonies)
- There is no strict limit on the number of such coins that may be purchased. Rather, the purchase and distribution of organizational coins should represent a prudent use of APF and they should not be overused in such a way that diminishes the importance of senior leader recognition.
 - As a general rule, senior leaders should not recognize more than 10% of the unit’s personnel per month based on an annual average

- Within the DAF, only SecAF, USecAF, CSAF, VCSAF, CMSAF, CSO, VCSO, and CMSSF may use APF to personalize organizational coins. Commanders and Senior Enlisted Leaders at lower echelons may not personalize organizational coins, although leaders may choose to use their own funds to obtain personalized coins for distribution (and such use does not constitute unauthorized augmentation of appropriated funds).

Other Categories of Coins

- Coins Purchased with Nonappropriated Funds: Employees of NAFIs should be recognized using coins purchased with nonappropriated funds, rather than appropriated funds. However, a commander or director need not purchase NAF-funded coins merely to occasionally recognize NAF employees.
- Coins Purchased with ORF: Coins purchased with ORF may be presented to visiting officials and dignitaries as a memento, in accordance with governing guidance for the use of ORF. As with other ORF expenditures, such coins should be inventoried and closely tracked to comply with reporting requirements.

Contractors

- Coins should **NOT** be used to recognize contractors, even on mixed teams of government employees and contractors when the team has performed meritoriously
 - Providing coins and other awards purchased with appropriated funds to contractors would be outside the scope of the purpose of the appropriation, because the funds were appropriated only to recognize government employees. As such, giving an appropriated fund coin to a contractor may violate the Anti-Deficiency Act.
 - Providing coins and other recognition items to contractors may constrain the DAF's ability to take action on poor contract performance, because such awards may be used by the contractor as evidence of positive performance
 - Even coins purchased with personal funds should not be given to contractors, or others with a profit-making relationship with the DAF, for the reasons listed above

References

- Agency Awards, 5 U.S.C. § 4503
- Emergency and extraordinary expenses, 10 U.S.C. § 127
- Recognition for accomplishments: award of trophies, 10 U.S.C. § 1125
- DoDI 1400.25V451_ DAFI 36-1004, *Department of the Air Force Civilian Recognition Program*, 18 December 2023
- DoDI 7250.13, *Use of Appropriated Funds for Official Representation Purposes* (22 May 2023)
- HOI 36-15, *Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff Recognition Program* (23 August 2010)
- HOI 65-3, *Headquarters Air Force Official Representation Funds* (12 October 2017)
- DAFPD 36-28, *Awards Program* (24 May 2021)
- DAFI 36-2803, *Military Decorations and Awards Program* (2 May 2022)
- DAFI 65-601, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Procedures* (22 June 2022)
- DAFMAN 36-2806, *Military Awards: Criteria and Procedures* (27 October 2022)
- DAFMAN 65-605, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Technical Procedures* (31 March 2021)
- AFI 65-603, *Emergency and Extraordinary Expense Authority* (29 April 2020)
- AFMAN 34-201, *Use of Nonappropriated Funds* (28 September 2018)

Chapter 15

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL AND FEDERAL LABOR LAW

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OVERVIEW OF THE CIVILIAN PERSONNEL SYSTEM

The area of labor and personnel relations is covered by an assortment of statutes, executive orders, and regulations. It is a complicated area of law which is administered by a myriad of administrative bodies located in a variety of federal departments and independent agencies. Failure to strictly follow these policies and procedures may result not only in damage to good order and discipline within the unit, but also money judgments against the DAF paid for from local operations and maintenance (“O&M”) funds.

Key Takeaway

- » When navigating the civilian personnel system, consult your servicing Civilian Personnel Office, your local legal office, and/or the Air Force Personnel Center due to the complex and diverse systems used

The Workforce Structure

- Seven categories offer varying degrees of protection from adverse personnel actions:
 - *Competitive Service*: Consists of all positions not specifically exempted; most employees enter federal service after passing a competitive exam
 - *Excepted Service*: Usually excepted from competition by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations
 - *Senior Executive Service (SES)*: Reserved for federal civilian employees above GS-15 who are considered general-officer equivalents
 - *Probationary Period Employees*: After 31 December 2022, civilian employees under a competitive or excepted service appointment in their first year of federal employment have limited protections. For employees whose probationary period ends on or after 23 July 2025, a certifying official must certify that finalizing the employee’s appointment is in the public’s interest 30 days before the end of their probationary period.
 - *Term Employees*: Employees hired to fill short-term requirements for a period between one and four years; subject to a one-year “trial period,” which is equivalent to a probationary period
 - *Hybrid Military/Civilian*: Includes National Guard technicians and Air Reserve Technicians (ARTs)
 - *Nonappropriated Fund (NAF) Employees*: Civilian employees typically employed in a morale, welfare, or recreation position and excluded from most laws administered by OPM

- *Acquisition Demonstration Project (AcqDemo)*: Civilian employees hired under a personnel management system that was designed to increase the ability to attract, retain, and motivate highly qualified individuals in the acquisition workforce. Utilizing a three-factor level classification system, the pay is set under a broadband pay scale; and performance is assessed under the contribution-based system.

Pay Systems

- Appropriated Fund Employees:
 - *General Schedule (GS)*: A nationwide statutory base pay scale divided into 15 grades (GS-1 to GS-15); plus varying levels of locality pay, and automatic pay increases for “acceptable” performance
 - *Executive Schedule*: Statutory basic pay nationwide; potential for merit pay increases
 - *AcqDemo Broadband Schedule*: A system that does not utilize grades but broadband levels arranged into three or four base pay levels within a career path (NK I – NK III / NJ I – NJ IV / NH I – NH IV), plus varying levels of locality pay
 - *Federal Wage Survey*: Wage Grade/Wage Leader/Wage Supervisor; pay reflects private sector pay rates in locality for the same type of work; manner of computing pay set by statute
- *NAF Employees*: Pay rates determined by management and may be negotiated with unions; compensated from a NAF instrumentality

Administrative and Adjudicative Bodies

- Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB):
 - Hears appeals from certain civilian employees opposing an agency’s adverse action
 - Those actions include removals, suspensions of more than 14 days, reductions in grade or pay, furloughs of 30 days or less, as well as performance-based removals or reductions in grade, denials of within-grade salary increases, reduction-in-force (RIF) actions, furloughs, OPM suitability determinations and employment practices, denials of restoration of reemployment rights, and certain terminations of probationary period employees
 - Possesses authority to mitigate or completely reverse agency adverse actions taken under 5 U.S.C., Chapter 75, *Adverse Actions*, but cannot mitigate performance-based actions taken under 5 U.S.C., Chapter 43, *Performance Appraisal*
 - Adjudicates cases brought by the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), such as whistleblower claims, allegations of mismanagement, requests by SES members for performance deficiencies, and for informal hearings and appeals concerning RIFs

- The MSPB also hears appeals based on protections in the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) brought either directly to the MSPB, or after an employee has filed a complaint with the Department of Labor (DoL) and the DoL opted to take no action
- The MSPB has authority to award compensatory or consequential damages plus attorney fees, back pay, and lost leave. Damages and attorney fees are paid by local O&M funds.
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):
 - Adjudicates claims by federal civilian employees and applicants for civilian employment of unlawful discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and sexual stereotyping), pregnancy, color, disability, or age; claims of unlawful retaliation; and claims of discriminatory hostile work environment
 - The EEOC also adjudicates claims filed under the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, which prohibits an agency from using genetic information to make decisions related to any terms, conditions, or privileges of employment (e.g., hiring, firing, and opportunities for advancement)
 - If discrimination is found, the EEOC may order retroactive personnel actions and monetary awards, including: correction of records, training, reinstatement, promotion, back pay, payment of attorney fees/costs, and up to \$300,000 in compensatory damages
 - The EEOC may also adjudicate discrimination claims against the Department of the Air Force (DAF) made by contractors who qualify as common law employees or where a joint-employer status is found
- Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA):
 - Administers the interaction between federal agencies, labor organizations, and employees
 - Decides unfair labor practice cases filed by either the agency or the union
 - Decides appeals of certain arbitration awards and negotiability appeals
 - Has authority to direct the DAF personnel to comply with its orders
- Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP): Resolves negotiation impasses between agencies and labor organizations
- Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service: Aids federal agencies and labor organizations in resolving negotiation impasses; provides parties with lists of arbitrators; provides mediators for alternative dispute resolution

- OPM: Manages civil service of the federal government such as recruitment, civil service retirement programs, health insurance, examinations, and grade classification appeals
- OSC: Investigates and prosecutes allegations of violations of merit principles; whistleblower complaints; prohibited personnel practices; fraud, waste, and abuse; and violations of the Hatch Act

References

- Merit Systems Protection Board and Office of Special Counsel 5 U.S.C. §§ 1201–1204 and 5 U.S.C. §§ 1211–1219
- Performance Appraisal, 5 U.S.C. §§ 4301–4315
- Employee Classification Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 5101–5115
- Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7101–7135
- Adverse Actions, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7501–7515
- Department of Defense Personnel Authorities, 5 U.S.C. § 9902
- Appointment of Members of the Merit Systems Protection Board, 5 C.F.R. Part 1201
- Federal Sector Equal Employment Opportunity, 29 C.F.R. Part 1614
- DoDI 1400.25, Volume 771, *DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Administrative Grievance System* (26 December 2013), incorporating Change 1, 13 June 2018
- DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Actions of Civilian Employees* (27 September 2022), incorporating Change 1, 31 August 2023
- DAFI 36-701, *Labor-Management Relations* (14 November 2019), incorporating Change 1, 10 November 2021
- DAFI 36-2710, *Equal Opportunity Program* (23 May 2024), incorporating Change 1, 23 July 2025, certified current 23 July 2025
- AFI 51-301, *Civil Litigation* (2 October 2018)
- Interim Department of the Air Force Implementation Guidance for Executive Order 14284, AF/A1C (22 July 2025)

OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

The Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (FSLMRS) prescribes the rights of employees along with the rights and duties of federal agencies and labor organizations.

Key Takeaways

- » FSLMRS provides employees, unions, and agencies with rights and responsibilities
- » Even when management acts under a right reserved to management, management will have to engage in impact and implementation (I&I) bargaining with bargaining unit employees
- » The union representative must be invited to a *formal discussion* with bargaining unit employees concerning an individual grievance, a personnel policy or practice, or general conditions of employment
- » A bargaining unit employee is entitled to have a union representative present during: (1) an **investigatory** interview, if (2) the employee **reasonably believes** that the examination may result in disciplinary action against the employee **AND** (3) the employee requests union representation
- » The union is entitled to information “normally maintained by the agency in the regular course of business” that is “reasonably available and necessary” for full and proper negotiation, and not prohibited from disclosure by law

Employee Rights

- Under the FSLMRS, employees have certain rights, including:
 - The right to form, join, or assist any union, or to refrain from such activity, freely, and without fear of penalty or reprisal
 - The right to serve as a representative of a union and present union views to management
 - The right to engage in collective bargaining about conditions of employment (COE) through their chosen representatives
- Typically, an employee has limited control over whether they are covered by a bargaining unit. However, it is the employee’s decision whether to be a dues-paying union member.

Management Rights and Duties

- The agency has exclusive control over certain decision-making as outlined in 5 U.S.C. § 7106. Those reserved rights include the right to:
 - Determine the mission, budget, organization, number of employees, and internal security practices;
 - Hire, assign, direct, layoff, and retain employees or suspend, remove, reduce in grade or pay, or take other disciplinary actions;
 - Assign work and make decisions on outsourcing;

- Promote employees from among properly ranked and certified candidates; and
- Take whatever actions may be necessary to carry out the mission during emergencies. However, any action during an emergency should not be taken without consulting the organization's Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).
- Impact and Implementation (I&I) Bargaining: When the agency exercises a right reserved to management, the agency is not required to bargain over the substance of that decision. However, the agency is required to bargain over any legitimate proposals that the union submits concerning the impact or implementation of the agency's decision.
- Formal Discussions: Management has an obligation to invite the union to attend any *formal discussion*. A formal discussion includes a meeting between one or more representatives of the Department of the Air Force (DAF), and one or more bargaining unit employees concerning an individual grievance, a personnel policy or practice, or general COE. Performance evaluation discussions or weekly staff meetings are normally not considered formal discussions.
- Weingarten Rights: In general, agency representatives may not question a bargaining unit employee without union representation present if:
 - One or more agency representatives are examining (questioning) a bargaining unit employee in connection with an investigation;
 - The employee reasonably believes that the examination may result in disciplinary action against the employee; **AND**
 - The employee requests union representation.

Union Rights and Duties

- A union is entitled to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) covering all employees in a bargaining unit. Both sides must negotiate in good faith; that is, both sides have a duty to approach negotiations with sincere resolve to reach an agreement.
- Requests for Information: The union has a statutory entitlement to information "normally maintained by the agency in the regular course of business" that is "reasonably available and necessary" for full and proper negotiation, and not prohibited from disclosure by law
 - A union is not required to file a request pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for this information. Undue delay, failing to explain a denial, or failing to advise the union that the information does not exist, may be grounds for an unfair labor practice (ULP) charge.
- Official Time: The FSLMRS provides that certain government employees, as designated by the union, may perform work on behalf of the union at government expense. This time is referred to as *official time*. Official time must be granted to employees representing the union when engaging in collective bargaining, but cannot be granted for internal union business, such as soliciting union membership or campaigning for internal union elections.

- Union Representative: Has the right to engage in robust debate when performing representational duties. However, in extreme cases, robust debate can rise to flagrant misconduct, or otherwise exceed the bounds of protected activity. If that happens, then the union representative may be disciplined. Please contact your local legal office prior to issuing any type of discipline related to flagrant misconduct.

Collective Bargaining

- Conditions of Employment (COE): The DAF **must bargain** with bargaining unit employees through their union over all COE, which are defined as personnel policies, practices, and matters affecting working conditions. Examples can include: job duties & responsibilities, work hours, how disputes will be resolved, etc.
- The FSLMRS **does not require bargaining** with appropriated fund employees over certain matters, including certain political activities, the classification of positions, matters provided for by federal statute (e.g., pay, vacations, health benefits, holidays, or retirement plans), or proposals that conflict with government-wide rules and regulations or that conflict with “reserved management rights”
- Mid-term Bargaining: Management is not required to bargain over matters already covered in the CBA. To the extent a matter arises concerning a COE that is not covered in the contract, the union can engage management in mid-term bargaining. The union may not engage management in mid-term bargaining if the CBA contains a “*zipper clause*” that bars such bargaining during the life of the agreement.
- Past Practice: A past practice is a common term used to describe a practice of which management is aware and that has been sanctioned by use and acceptance by either management or the union, and is not specifically included in the CBA. It must concern a condition of employment or working condition, and have been consistently practiced over an extended period of time.
 - Once established, past practices cannot be unilaterally terminated or modified by management; the union must be notified of management’s intent and afforded an opportunity to bargain. However, if the practice is illegal, management may terminate the practice immediately and provide the union an opportunity to bargain the impact and implementation of the change. Note that a union’s past practice of not exercising its right to bargain over some changes in conditions of employment does not constitute a clear and unmistakable waiver of its right to bargain over other changes.
 - A matter that is not otherwise a condition of employment does not become a condition of employment through past practice
- If commanders are presented with a demand from a union that a dispute or issue be dealt with through formal bargaining, reach out to your local civilian personnel section and local legal office

Unfair Labor Practice

- It is an unfair labor practice (ULP) for agency management to:
 - Interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in exercising their FSLMRS rights. Lack of illegal motivation or “anti-union animus” is not a defense to a ULP charge.
 - Encourage or discourage membership in any labor organization by discrimination in connection with hiring, tenure, promotion, or other COE
 - Sponsor, control, or assist a union
 - Discipline or otherwise discriminate against an employee for filing a ULP, grievance, compliant, affidavit, or petition or has given any information or is providing testimony under the FSLMRS proceeding
 - Refuse to bargain in good faith, to include failing or refusing to cooperate in impasse procedures or decisions
 - Enforce a rule or regulation which conflicts with a preexisting CBA
 - Otherwise fail or refuse to comply with any provision of FSLMRS
- It is a ULP for a union to:
 - Coerce, discipline, attempt to coerce, or fine a union member as punishment, reprisal, or to hinder or impede the member’s performance as an employee
 - Discriminate regarding union membership on basis of race, creed, color, sex, age, disability, marital status, national origin, preferential or non-preferential civil service status, or political affiliation
 - Call, participate in, or condone a strike, work stoppage, or slowdown. Non-disruptive informational picketing is permitted.
- Both the union and the DAF can file ULP charges with the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA). An investigation is then conducted by a regional FLRA attorney/agent. If command is notified by a regional FLRA attorney/agent of an investigation, please reach out to your local civilian personnel section and local legal office.
 - **NEVER** permit management officials to be interviewed without first making these notifications to your local civilian personnel section and local legal office

References

- The Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7701–7135
- NLRB v. *Weingarten, Inc.*, 420 U.S. 251 (1975)
- DoDI 1400.25, Volume 711, DoD *Civilian Personnel Management System: Labor-Management Relations* (26 February 2020), incorporating Change 1, 27 August 2021
- DAFI 36-701, *Labor-Management Relations* (14 November 2019), incorporating Change 1, 10 November 2021

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE DRUG TESTING

Department of the Air Force (DAF) employees must refrain from illegal drug use on and off-duty and may be subject to drug testing. The DAF drug testing program is based on federal statutes governing controlled substances and is not affected by any state laws that legalize the use of marijuana or other controlled substances. Failure to appear for a drug test may subject an employee to the full range of administrative and/or disciplinary actions, up to and including removal.

Key Takeaways

- » Federal criminal statutes, not state laws, govern the DAF drug testing program
- » A civilian employee can be required to provide a urine specimen based on reasonable suspicion of illegal drug use
- » Employees that may have contributed to or caused certain safety mishaps or accidents are subject to required drug testing
- » A safe haven provision allows an employee to self-identify illicit drug use and avoid disciplinary action if the employee meets certain conditions
- » Executive Order 12564 requires supervisors to propose disciplinary action if an employee has taken specific actions

Random Drug Testing

- Only employees in “sensitive positions,” also called testing designated positions (TDP), are subject to random drug testing. TDPs include positions that involve work, which impacts national security, public health and safety, protection of life and property, or otherwise require a high degree of trust and confidence.
- The testing requirement must be identified in the position description and vacancy announcement (if applicable)

Reasonable Suspicion Drug Testing

- A civilian employee can be tested based on reasonable suspicion—a specific and fact-based belief, drawn from specific and particularized facts, and reasonable inferences from those facts, that an employee has engaged in illegal drug use, and that evidence of illegal drug use is presently in the employee’s body
- Employees in TDPs may be tested based on a reasonable suspicion of drug use on or off-duty. Employees in non-TDPs may be tested based on a reasonable suspicion only when the supervisor suspects on-duty drug use or impairment.

- Examples of evidence that may justify reasonable suspicion include, but are not limited to:
 - Direct observation of illegal drug use or possession and/or physical symptoms of being under the influence of an illegal drug, including behavior, speech, appearance, and/or body odors of the employee;
 - A pattern of abnormal conduct or erratic behavior consistent with the use of illegal drugs where no other rational explanation or reason for the conduct is readily apparent;
 - Evidence of drug-related impairment supported by hearsay from identified or unidentified sources and supported by corroboration from a manager or supervisor with training and experience in evaluating drug-induced job impairment;
 - A recent arrest or conviction for a drug-related offense, or the identification of an employee as the focus of a criminal investigation into illegal drug possession, use, or trafficking;
 - Information of illicit drug use provided by a reliable and credible source or independently corroborated; and/or
 - Evidence that the employee has tampered with or avoided a recent or current drug test.
- A supervisor is responsible for gathering all the information supporting a determination of reasonable suspicion and documenting the information in accordance with AFMAN 44-198, *Air Force Civilian Drug Demand Reduction Program*
- The supervisor's determination must be coordinated with a higher-level supervisor, the civilian personnel section, or human resources office, and an attorney from the installation Staff Judge Advocate (SJA)
- The employee must be notified in writing of the requirement to provide a urine specimen. A sample notification letter is provided in AFMAN 44-198.

Consent Drug Testing

- After consultation with the SJA, a supervisor may ask any employee to consent to provide a urine specimen for testing. A sample consent form is provided in AFMAN 44-198.
- The employee's consent must be knowing and voluntary. A positive test result resulting from a consent-based test does not exempt the employee from disciplinary action.

Accident and Safety Mishap Testing

- Civilian employees are subject to testing for evidence of illegal drug use if the employee's supervisor reasonably concludes an employee's conduct may have caused or contributed to a mishap identified as Class A, B, or nuclear by DAFI 91-204, *Safety Investigations and Reports*
- Similarly, employees are subject to testing if their actions are reasonably suspected of having caused or contributed to an accident meeting the criteria outlined in DoDI 1010.09, *DoD Civilian Employee Drug-Free Workplace Testing Program*. This includes an accident that results in:
 - Death or personal injury requiring immediate hospitalization; or
 - Property damage in excess of \$10,000.
- Supervisors should consult with organizational personnel, medical, legal, and safety experts in making a determination regarding mishap testing

Rehabilitation Testing

- All employees referred for counseling or treatment for illicit drug use will be subject to unannounced testing for a minimum of one year from the time of initiated rehabilitation services
- An employee's treatment plan may include the involvement of the employee's immediate commander and supervisor with the employee's written consent as discussed in DoDI 1010.04, *Problematic Substance Use by Department of Defense Personnel*

Personnel Actions

- If an employee who occupies a TDP is found to have used illegal drugs, the employee must be initially removed from the position and, depending on circumstances, assigned other duties or placed in an alternative duty status like administrative leave pending a decision on the appropriate disciplinary action. Supervisors should also consider whether to suspend an employee's access to classified information (if applicable).
- Safe Haven Provision: An employee who self-identifies as a user of illegal drugs, prior to being notified of testing or being identified through other means, can avoid disciplinary action for previous drug use if they meet specific conditions, including: cooperating with appropriate counseling or rehabilitation; signing a last chance agreement; and refraining from illegal drug use

- Required Actions: Executive Order 12564 requires supervisors to propose appropriate disciplinary action for an employee who:
 - Refuses to obtain counseling and treatment after having been found to have used illegal drugs;
 - Alters or attempts to alter a urine specimen or substitutes or attempts to substitute a specimen; or
 - Fails to complete a medical approved drug rehabilitation program (if mandated or agreed upon).

References

- Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, Pub. L. 100–690, 102 Stat. 4181 (1988)
- Executive Order 12564, *Drug-Free Federal Workplace* (15 September 1986)
- DoDI 1010.04, *Problematic Substance Use by Department of Defense Personnel* (20 February 2014), incorporating Change 1, 6 May 2020
- DoDI 1010.09, *DoD Civilian Employee Drug-Free Workplace Testing Program* (22 June 2012), incorporating Change 1, 28 June 2018
- DAFI 91-204, *Safety Investigations and Reports* (10 March 2021)
- AFI 44-121, *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) Program* (18 July 2018), incorporating Change 1, 21 November 2019, Corrective Actions applied on 19 December 2019, including DAFI44-121_DAFGM2024-01, 3 January 2024
- AFMAN 44-198, *Air Force Civilian Drug Demand Reduction Program* (24 January 2019), certified current 5 October 2022

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE SEARCHES

The general rule is a government search of private property is unreasonable and unconstitutional under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, unless authorized by a valid search warrant or proper consent. However, the government employer can conduct a limited warrantless search of an employee's workplace for "work-related" purposes.

Key Takeaways

- » Employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in their work area, which will prevent searching their work area whenever the employer wishes
- » Reasonableness of a search is a case-by-case determination

Workplace Searches

- In the leading case on workplace searches, *O'Connor v. Ortega*, the Supreme Court recognized that government employees may have a reasonable expectation of privacy in their work areas, which may be protected from warrantless searches by a government employer and law enforcement
- However, government searches to retrieve work-related materials, investigate violations of workplace rules, or for a non-investigatory work-related purpose, do not violate the Fourth Amendment. Supervisors are generally not required to obtain a search warrant to enter an employee's desk, office, or file cabinet.
- Supervisors must be able to articulate a legitimate work-related rationale for a search and must tailor the scope of the search accordingly
- Personal items such as handbags, backpacks, and briefcases are **NOT** considered part of the workplace. Therefore, a search warrant or search authorization is generally required before searching such items.
- Consult with your advising Staff Judge Advocate before proceeding with any search and seizure action

References

- U.S. Const. Amend. IV
- *O'Connor v. Ortega*, 480 U.S. 709 (1987)
- *City of Ontario v. Quon*, 560 U.S. 746 (2010)

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE

Disciplinary action or adverse action must be taken without regard to marital status, political affiliation, race, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin, age, pregnancy, or prior engagement in protected equal employment opportunity (EEO) activity. Disciplinary action or adverse action must be taken to promote the efficiency of the service, and carried out promptly, equitably, and confidentially.

Key Takeaways

- » Adverse actions can be disciplinary or non-disciplinary for civilian misconduct or poor performance, and may only be taken for the “efficiency of the service”
- » Each employment action requires careful consideration of the facts, circumstances, context, and nuances
- » Proposing and deciding officials should consult with their Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) and servicing civilian personnel representative to determine the most appropriate charge and penalty
- » Some types of adverse actions are appealable to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). These include removals, suspensions for more than 14 days, furloughs for 30 days or less, and reductions in grade or pay.
- » Due process must be provided to the employee. Due process includes notice and ability to respond to the charge(s) and specification(s) and any factors that aggravate the penalty.

Authority and Requirements

- All Air Force and Space Force commanders and supervisors are authorized to take disciplinary and adverse action when necessary. DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Actions of Civilian Employees*, covers all competitive and excepted service employees paid from appropriated funds. AFI 34-301, *Nonappropriated Fund Personnel Management and Administration*, covers nonappropriated fund employees.
- Management may take a disciplinary or adverse action only for such cause as will promote the efficiency of the service, unless the action is being taken for unacceptable performance, in which case different standards apply
- Management may not take an action that would result in a prohibited personnel practice. A prohibited personnel practice is an adverse action taken against an employee for an illegal or inappropriate reason, such as reprisal or discrimination.

Procedures

- Management Procedures (absent a local collective bargaining agreement that contains other provisions):
 - Gather the facts and interview the employee if necessary. A bargaining unit employee has rights (called *Weingarten* rights) to have union representation if the employee believes disciplinary action could result from questioning from his/her employer **AND** he/she requests a union representative.
 - Consult with the civilian personnel section and the SJA to consider options and determine what action is appropriate
 - The civilian personnel section will prepare, and the SJA will review, the notice letter of proposed adverse and/or disciplinary action for signature by the “**proposing official**” (normally a first or second level supervisor). The Personnel and Information Law Division (JACL) will also review the notice letter if the disciplinary action is adverse and appealable to the MSPB.
 - The notice must include **ALL** aggravating factors and evidence considered by the proposing official (e.g., prior discipline, poor performance, seriousness of the alleged offense). There are limitations on what prior discipline may be considered. For instance, reprimands must have occurred within the last two years.
 - The **employee** gets a reasonable amount of time, but not less than seven calendar days, to answer orally and/or in writing, and to furnish affidavits and other documentary evidence in support of the answer
 - The “**deciding official**” makes the final decision. This is usually the supervisor one level up from the proposing official (but may be the same person). The final decision is effective no earlier than 30 days after the notice is given to the employee.
 - The deciding official must document his/her consideration of the *Douglas* Factors governing appropriate penalty selection and must be considered. They include, for example, the seriousness of the misconduct, the work record of the employee, and other similar considerations (see DAFI 36-148 for further guidance). Consult the civilian personnel section and SJA for assistance in preparing this document.
 - The deciding official **MUST NOT** consider any information outside of the documentation that was provided to him/her to make the final decision
 - Failure to follow these procedures may result in the MSPB reversing or mitigating the adverse actions and an award of damages to the employee paid from local operating funds

Air National Guard Technicians and National Guard Employees

- Title 32 Air National Guard Technician and Title 5 National Guard employee discipline is covered under CNGBI 1400.25 Vol. 752. The instruction discusses the procedures for non-disciplinary adverse administrative actions (e.g., letters of counseling, admonition, and reprimand) and disciplinary actions (removal, suspension, reduction in grade, and reduction in pay) for Title 32 Air National Guard Technicians and Title 5 National Guard employees.

Air Reserve Technicians

- Air Reserve Technicians (ARTs) are “dual status” federal civilian employees and members of the Selected Reserve. As a condition of federal civilian employment, ARTs must maintain membership in the Selected Reserve. ART positions within the Selected Reserve span a broad spectrum to include command billets.
- ARTs who are in the military status performing duty for pay/points are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
- ARTs who are in federal civilian employee status are not subject to the UCMJ. However, they are subject to all civilian employee disciplinary measures discussed in this section. Additionally, an ART in civilian employee status may be subject to military administrative actions such as letters of counseling (LOC), admonishment (LOA), or reprimand (LOR), demotion, and discharge.
 - Military administrative discharge of an ART will lead to the loss of a condition of employment of an ART’s civilian employee position and adverse action is then appropriate
- ART commanders must be in military status when taking certain actions such as preferral/referral of charges pursuant to the UCMJ, nonjudicial punishment actions pursuant to Article 15 of the UCMJ, ordering urinalysis testing, and for actions related to Commander Directed Investigations (CDIs). Consult with your local SJA for guidance regarding actions in which military status is relevant.

References

-
- Article 15, Uniform Code of Military Justice
 - *Douglas v. Veterans Admin.*, 5 M.S.P.R. 280 (1981)
 - DAFI 36-148, *Discipline and Adverse Actions of Civilian Employees* (27 September 2022), incorporating Change 1, 31 August 2023
 - DAFI 36-701, *Labor-Management Relations* (14 November 2019), incorporating Change 1, 10 November 2021
 - AFI 34-301, *Nonappropriated Fund Personnel Management and Administration* (24 July 2023)
 - AFRCI 36-114, *Procedures on Air Reserve Technicians (ARTS) Who Lose Active Membership in the Reserve* (29 January 2020), certified current 31 January 2024
 - CNGBI 1400.25, Vol. 752, *National Guard Technician and Civilian Personnel Discipline and Adverse Action Program* (8 November 2021)

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE INVESTIGATORY INTERVIEW

During an investigation, so as to obtain all of the relevant facts and explore all issues regarding a matter, an agency likely will seek to interview civilian employees. However, agency personnel must be mindful that civilian employees have a variety of rights during these investigatory interviews.

Key Takeaways

- » *Weingarten* rights provide bargaining unit employees the right to union representation during investigative interviews when discipline could result from the interview, **AND** the employee requests union representation. *Brookhaven* rights entitle a bargaining unit employee the right to union representation at formal discussions. Even if a meeting does not constitute a formal discussion, certain precautions must be taken to ensure an employee's rights are protected.
- » *Garrity* and *Kalkines* warnings provide agency personnel guidance on how to advise employees during interviews. Consult with your local Civilian Personnel Office and Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) for guidance.

Weingarten Rights

- The U.S. Supreme Court, in *NLRB v. Weingarten, Inc.*, detailed the right of a bargaining unit employee to have union representation present if the employee believes disciplinary action could result from questioning by their employer and if the employee requests the presence of a bargaining unit union representative. These rights are commonly known as *Weingarten* rights. *Weingarten* rights do not apply to non-bargaining unit employees.
 - 5 U.S.C. § 7103(b)(1) allows the President, by Executive Order, to exempt any agency, or part of an agency, from the Federal Service Labor Management Relations statute if they determine that the agency has a primary function of intelligence, counterintelligence, investigative, or national security work, and the provisions of the statute cannot be applied in a manner consistent with national security requirements and considerations
 - Executive Order 12171, *Exclusions from The Federal Labor-Management Relations Program* excluded the Air Force Office of Investigations (AFOSI) from coverage under Chapter 71 of Title 5 of the United States Code (see para. 1-206(k) which specifically excludes AFOSI). As a result, AFOSI employees are prohibited from being represented by any labor organization. This exclusion also has specific implications relating to *Weingarten* rights. Because AFOSI has been excluded from coverage under the FSLMRS, the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) concluded AFOSI cannot be considered a “representative of the agency” for purposes of triggering *Weingarten*.

- During an investigation, a *Weingarten* right is triggered when four conditions are present:
 - A meeting is held in which management (specifically, “a representative of the agency”) questions a bargaining unit employee;
 - The examination is in connection with an investigation (except those conducted by AFOSI, as the FLRA has concluded AFOSI is not “a representative of the agency”);
 - The employee reasonably believes that discipline could result from the investigatory interview; and
 - The employee requests union representation.
- The role of the union representative during the interview is to clarify the facts and the questions, help the employee express their views, suggest other avenues of inquiry or other employees who may have knowledge of the facts, and ensure the employer does not initiate or impose unjust punishment. This may include a right for the union representative and the employee to confer in private, but this depends on the nature of the case.
- Agencies must announce this right on an annual basis at all places where employees normally receive employment information
- Individuals being investigated may not serve as representatives for other employees being investigated until their own investigations are completed
- Management cannot tell a union representative to remain silent or not to offer advice. The employer may place reasonable limitations on a union representative’s role to prevent adversarial confrontation. However, aggressive or unreasonable management behavior may interfere with the right to union representation and may result in an unfair labor practice (ULP).
- Once an employee requests a union representative, management may grant the request, discontinue the interview, or give the employee the choice between having an interview without a union representative or having no interview

Brookhaven Rights

- A bargaining unit employee also has the right to be advised of the consequences of participating or not participating in an interview for a third-party proceeding (unfair labor practice hearing, arbitration, Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) hearing, etc.), and failure to do so can be an ULP by management. These rights are known as *Brookhaven* rights.
- The employee must be advised of:
 - The purpose of the interview;
 - That no reprisal will take place if the employee refuses to participate; and
 - Participation is voluntary.

- The interview cannot be coercive in nature. Questions must not exceed the scope of the legitimate purpose of the inquiry and cannot otherwise interfere with the employee's statutory rights.

Garrity and Kalkines Warnings

- Generally, federal civilian employees must participate in investigations, as noted in DAFI 36-147, *Civilian Conduct and Responsibility*. *Garrity* and *Kalkines* warnings apply to all civilian employees, regardless of union status.
 - Beyond the *Miranda* warning, agency personnel conducting an investigation may provide a *Garrity* warning to inform the employee that any statement made will be used against him/her in Court, the employee may invoke his/her privilege against self-incrimination and refuse to answer questions, and the fact the employee may refuse to answer questions will not result in adverse action against the employee
 - Should an employee refuse to answer questions, agency personnel may issue a *Kalkines* warning. In 1973, the U.S. Court of Claims held an employee cannot be disciplined for remaining silent unless he/she is informed that he/she is subject to discharge for not answering his/her agency personnel's questions and his/her responses cannot be used against him/her in a criminal matter. This is known as the *Kalkines* warning.
 - Any desire to offer immunity to an employee must be coordinated with the SJA who will consult with (and possibly get approval from) the Department of Justice

References

-
- Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7101-7135
 - Representation Rights and Duties, 5 U.S.C. § 7114(a)(2)(B)
 - Unfair Labor Practices, 5 U.S.C. § 7116(a)(1)
 - *Uniformed Sanitation Men Ass'n v. Commissioner of Sanitation*, 392 U.S. 280 (1968)
 - *NLRB v. Weingarten, Inc.*, 420 U.S. 251 (1975)
 - *Garrity v. New Jersey*, 385 U.S. 493 (1967)
 - *Kalkines v. United States*, 473 F.2d 1391 (Ct. Cl. 1973)
 - Executive Order 12171, *Exclusions from the Federal Labor-Management Relations Program* (19 November 1979)
 - Executive Order 13760, *Exclusions from the Federal Labor-Management Relations Program* (12 January 2017)
 - DAFI 36-147, *Civilian Conduct and Responsibility* (11 January 2023), incorporating Change 1, 30 July 2025
 - *Internal Revenue Service, Brookhaven Service Center and National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU)*, 9 FLRA 930 (1982)
 - *U.S. Department of the Air Force, Odgen Air Logistics Center, Hill Air Force Base, Utah and American Federation of Government Employees*, Local 1592, 68 FLRA 460 (2015)

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INTRODUCTION TO OPERATIONS LAW

The mission of the Air Force is to fly, fight, and win—airpower anytime, anywhere. The mission of the Space Force is to secure our Nation's interests in, from, and to space. To achieve their missions, the Air Force and Space Force are responsible for the preparation of forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war. Respect for the rule of law is fundamental to achieving these objectives.

Key Takeaways

- » Department of the Air Force (DAF) service members must conduct operations in accordance with the law of the United States and international law
- » Respect for the rule of law is a fundamental part of not only who we are as the world's greatest Air Force and Space Force but as a nation. Compliance with the law is a strategic and operational imperative.
- » Failure to comply with the law undermines the legitimacy of the United States military operations and can result in mission failure
- » Commanders must understand the relationship between adherence to the rule of law and the achievement of operational objectives
- » Judge advocates must be thoroughly integrated into unit planning and the execution of military operations in order to ensure mission accomplishment

Operations Law Defined

- Operations law is the domestic, foreign, and international law associated with the planning and execution of military operations across the spectrum of conflict, from peacetime to hostilities. The term “operations law” is also used to describe the application of law to a specific mission of the supported DAF unit. Operations law includes, but is not limited to:
 - The principles of the Law of War/Law of Armed Conflict; Rules of Engagement (ROE) and Rules for the Use of Force; laws relating to security assistance; training, mobilization, and pre-deployment preparation; targeting; overseas procurement; the conduct of military combat operations; counter-terrorism activities; aviation law; environmental laws relating to military operations; Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs); operations in the information environment; rule of law operations; air, space, cyber, and intelligence law; and international agreements
- Operations law often includes areas of the law that may affect a commander's ability to plan and successfully execute the unit's mission (e.g., environmental law, contract law, fiscal law, and military justice)

Role of Judge Advocates

- The DAF, like other military services, operates in an increasingly complex environment around the world, demanding the very best in legal capability. Judge advocates who advise on operations law matters are mission-focused and provide commanders with legally sustainable courses of action and recommendations to maximize the commander's options, reduce operational friction, and enable mission accomplishment.
- Legal support to DAF commanders is critical to mission success because proper legal counsel enhances commanders' decision-making ability, whereas the lack of sound legal advice can lead to unwelcome consequences that may have been avoided. Successful commanders are those who demand close coordination with their servicing Staff Judge Advocate, both personally and through their command staff. Judge advocates must be thoroughly integrated into unit planning and the execution of military operations to ensure mission accomplishment. Notably, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3121.01B, *Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for the Use of Force for US Forces*, specifically directs that judge advocates be involved in the planning of operations.

References

- DoDD 2311.01, *DoD Law of War Program* (2 July 2020)
- Department of Defense Law of War Manual, June 2015 (updated July 2023)
- CJCSI 3121.01B, *(U) Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for the Use of Force for US Forces* (13 June 2005), certified current 18 June 2008
- Joint Publication 3-84, *Legal Support* (2 August 2016)
- DAFI 51-101, *The Air Force Judge Advocate General's (AFJAG) Corps Operations, Accessions, and Professional Development* (20 June 2023), incorporating Change 1, 22 January 2025
- AFPD 51-4, *Operations and International Law* (24 July 2018)
- AFI 51-401, *The Law of War* (3 August 2018)
- *The Law of Air, Space and Cyber Operations*, 4th Ed. (2020)

THE LAW OF WAR

Department of the Air Force (DAF) commanders are responsible for ensuring they and their service members understand and comply with the requirements of the Law of War (LoW), also known as the Law of Armed Conflict or International Humanitarian Law. Commanders must, therefore, ensure DAF members are appropriately trained in the LoW and that they obtain proper legal counsel where appropriate, to enhance their decision-making ability and aid mission success.

Key Takeaways

- » It is the Department of War (DoW) and DAF policy to comply with the LoW during all armed conflicts, however characterized
- » In all other military operations, members of the DoW Components will continue to act consistent with the LoW's fundamental principles and rules, including those contained in Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the principles of military necessity, humanity, distinction, proportionality, and honor
- » The LoW is the part of international law that regulates the conduct of hostilities and the protection of war victims in both international and non-international armed conflict, belligerent occupation, and the relationships between belligerent, neutral, and non-belligerent states
- » One key to success for commanders is to ensure judge advocates are thoroughly integrated into unit planning and execution of military operations, so that commanders are aware of their options to enable mission accomplishment and compliance with the LoW

The Law of War

- The LoW includes the international law that regulates the conduct of hostilities and the protection of war victims in both international and non-international armed conflict, belligerent occupation, and the relationships between belligerent, neutral, and non-belligerent states (*jus in bello*). This section will not address the portion of the LoW that regulates the resort to armed force (*jus ad bellum*).
- The LoW has two main sources: (1) treaty law arising from formal written international agreements, which are binding only on states that are parties, and (2) customary international law developed from the practice of states, followed out of a sense of legal obligation. Customary international law is unwritten and, once formed, generally binding on all states.
- LoW treaty law is generally divided into two overlapping areas: (1) Geneva Law, named for treaty negotiations held in Geneva, Switzerland; and (2) Hague Law, named for treaty negotiations held in The Hague, The Netherlands

Geneva and Hague Provisions

- Geneva Law: Consists of four treaties known as the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which concern the protection of persons involved in conflict (wounded and sick; wounded, sick, and shipwrecked at sea; prisoners of war (POWs); and civilians)
 - The Geneva Conventions are supplemented by three additional protocols. The United States is not a party to Additional Protocol I (AP I) concerning international armed conflicts nor Additional Protocol II (AP II) regarding non-international armed conflicts; however it accepts certain aspects of AP I and AP II as reflecting customary international law. Advice should be sought from a judge advocate as to the applicable law.
 - The United States is a party to Additional Protocol III (AP III) which, in addition to the red cross and red crescent, further recognizes a red crystal as a distinctive protective emblem
- Hague Law: Is concerned mainly with the means and methods of warfare and the conduct of hostilities (e.g., lawful and unlawful weapons, targeting)
 - The Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 resulted in bans on certain types of war technology and established a court to settle international disputes. Conferences in 1922–1923 to create the Hague Rules of Air Warfare resulted in draft rules that never entered into force, but some draft rules may be viewed as reflecting customary international law today (see para. 19.11, DoD LoW Manual for further guidance).

DoW Weapons Review Process

- DoW and DAF policy requires a review of all weapons, weapon systems, and relevant cyber capabilities, which are being developed, bought, built, modified or otherwise being acquired by the DAF, to ensure compliance with domestic and international law, including the LoW. The review should be accomplished during the acquisition process but must be completed prior to any use in a conflict or other military operation (or for cyber capabilities, where the intended effects of the operation are outside the DoW Information Network).

Military Necessity

- Military necessity is the LoW principle that justifies the use of all measures needed to defeat the enemy as quickly and efficiently as possible that are not otherwise prohibited by the LoW
- The principle of military necessity permits attacks on military objectives, including both targetable persons and objects
- Certain classes of persons are military objectives and may be made the object of attack. These include combatants, and persons taking a direct part in hostilities.

- Military objectives, insofar as objects are concerned, include any objects, which by their nature, location, purpose, or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture, or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage
- Examples include an adversary's troops, bases, supplies, lines of communications, and headquarters

Humanity

- Humanity forbids the infliction of suffering, injury, or destruction unnecessary to defeat the adversary or to accomplish a legitimate military purpose. Once a military purpose is achieved, the infliction of further suffering is unnecessary and should be avoided.
- Humanity is the logical inverse of the principle of military necessity. If certain necessary actions are justified, then certain unnecessary actions are prohibited.

Distinction

- Distinction requires parties to a conflict to distinguish principally between the armed forces and the civilian population, and between unprotected and protected objects
- Military force may be directed only against military objectives, and not against civilians or civilian objects. Civilian objects include places of worship, schools, hospitals, and dwellings. However, it is important to note that civilians or civilian objects can lose protected status in certain circumstances.
- The principle of distinction also prohibits attacks against combatants that have been placed *hors de combat* ("out of the fight")
- Commanders and other officials responsible for the safety of the civilian population must take reasonable steps to separate the civilian population from military objectives and to protect the civilian population from the effects of combat

Proportionality

- Proportionality is the LoW principle that even where one is justified in acting, one must not act in a way that is unreasonable or excessive
- Commanders who plan military operations must take into consideration the extent of expected loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, and damage to civilian objects that will result and, to the extent consistent with the necessities of the military situation, take feasible precautions to avoid or minimize the risk of such casualties and destruction
 - The expected loss of civilian life and damage to civilian property incidental to attacks must not be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated to be gained

- This concept of avoiding or minimizing casualties and destruction does not apply to persons or objects that are considered military objectives. However, certain individual military personnel may claim a protected status and must not be made the object of attack (e.g., chaplains, medics, wounded, sick, shipwrecked at sea, surrendering, or aircrews parachuting from disabled aircraft).
- Commanders must take feasible precautions in planning and conducting attacks to reduce the risk of harm to civilians and other protected persons and objects. Feasible precautions are those that are practicable or practically possible, taking into account all circumstances ruling at the time, including humanitarian and military considerations. For example, if a commander determines that taking a precaution would result in a risk of failing to accomplish the mission or an increased risk of harm to his/her own forces, then the precaution would not be feasible and would not be required.

Honor

- Honor (also called chivalry) requires a degree of fairness in offense and defense and a certain mutual respect between opposing military forces. However, honor does allow for lawful ruses, such as camouflage, false radio signals, and mock troop movements.
- Honor forbids treacherous acts such as perfidy. These acts involve misuse of internationally recognized symbols or status to take unfair advantage of the enemy in its compliance with the LoW, such as false surrenders and misuse of the Red Cross, Red Crystal, or the Red Crescent.

References

- Geneva Convention for the Protection of War Victims (12 August 1949)
- DoDD 2311.01, *DoD Law of War Program* (2 July 2020)
- Department of Defense Law of War Manual (June 2015, updated July 2023)
- CJCSI 5810.01D, *Implementation of the DoD Law of War Program* (30 April 2010)
- DAFI 36-2670, *Total Force Development* (18 July 2025)
- AFPD 51-4, *Operations and International Law* (24 July 2018)
- AFI 51-401, *The Law of War* (3 August 2018)
- The Law of Air, Space, and Cyber Operations, 4th Edition (2020)

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AND RULES FOR THE USE OF FORCE

This section discusses the Rules of Engagement (ROE) and the Rules for the Use of Force (RUF) for Department of War (DoW) operations worldwide and will further consider the differences between both sets of rules, their purposes, and when they apply.

Key Takeaways

- » Mission-specific ROE and RUF are built upon the Standing Rules of Engagement (SROE) and Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF)
- » These standing rules are approved by the Secretary of War (SecWar), are promulgated by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and are contained in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3121.01B, *Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for the Use of Force for US Forces*
- » The current SROE provide implementation and guidance on two important issues: (1) the inherent right of self-defense; and (2) the application of force for mission accomplishment
- » Adherence to ROE does not by itself guarantee the lawfulness of any action; it remains the commander's responsibility to ensure that only the degree of force which is lawful in the circumstances is used

Rules of Engagement

- *DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, and JP 3-84, *Legal Support*, define ROE as “directives issued by competent military authority that delineate the circumstances and limitations under which United States forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces encountered”
- ROE govern the actions of forces to ensure they are consistent with national and international law, national policy, and military objectives. ROE reflect legal, policy and operational considerations, and must remain consistent with the legal obligations of the United States, including the law of war (LoW).
- ROE are tools for commanders (e.g., the President/Commander in Chief, SecWar, combatant commanders) to regulate the use of armed force in military operations and are implemented by those who execute the mission

Rules for the Use of Force

- CJCSI 3121.01B explains that the purpose of the SRUF is to establish fundamental policies and procedures governing the actions taken by U.S. commanders and their forces during all DoW civil support activity (e.g., military assistance to civil authorities) and routine Military Department functions (including antiterrorism (AT)/force protection (FP) duties) occurring within U.S. territory and U.S. territorial waters. SRUF also apply to homeland defense missions occurring within U.S. territory, including U.S. territorial waters, and to DoW forces, civilians and contractors performing law enforcement and security duties at all DoW installations (and off-installation, while conducting official DoW security functions), within or outside U.S. territory, unless otherwise directed by the SecWar.
- Subject to obtaining SecWar approval, geographic combatant commanders may augment the SRUF as necessary through theatre-specific ROE/RUF to reflect changing political and military policies, threats and missions specific to their respective areas of operation
- Commanders at all levels may restrict the SRUF when appropriate but must notify SecWar (through the CJCS) as soon as possible of any imposed restrictions
- SRUF are not permissive in nature and require SecWar approval to use any weapons or tactics not already approved within the SRUF

Purposes of Rules of Engagement

- ROE serve three main functions: (1) Provide direction from the President, SecWar, and subordinate commanders regulating the use of armed force in the context of applicable political and military policy, domestic and international law; (2) Provide a control mechanism for the transition from peacetime to armed conflict and a return to peacetime; and (3) Provide a mechanism to facilitate planning

Standing Rules of Engagement

- SROE apply to all military operations and contingencies outside U.S. territory (i.e., outside all 50 states, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and Northern Marianas, U.S. possessions, protectorates and territories) and outside U.S. territorial seas. Unless otherwise directed by SecWar, they also apply to air and maritime (but not land—see RUF) homeland defense missions conducted within U.S. territory, including territorial seas.
- The SROE includes direction on the use of force in self-defense, including implementation guidance distinguishing between the inherent right of self-defense and the application of force for mission accomplishment

Self-Defense in Standing Rules of Engagement

- Inherent Right of Self-Defense: Unit commanders always retain the inherent right and obligation to exercise unit self-defense in response to a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. Unless otherwise directed by their commander for purposes of unit self-defense, individual military members may exercise individual self-defense.
- Unit and individual self-defense can arise in two circumstances:
 - In response to a hostile act: A hostile act is an attack or other use of force against the United States, U.S. forces or other designated persons or property. It also includes force used directly to preclude or impede the mission and/or duties of U.S. forces (including recovery of U.S. personnel or vital U.S. Government (USG) property).
 - In response to demonstrated hostile intent: Hostile intent is the threat of imminent use of force against the United States, U.S. forces or other designated persons or property. It also includes the threat of force to preclude or impede the mission and/or duties of U.S. forces (including the recovery of U.S. personnel or vital USG property). Determining the imminence of a threat will be based on an assessment of all the facts and circumstances known to U.S. forces at the time and may be made at any level. Imminent does not necessarily mean immediate or instantaneous.
- National and Collective Self-Defense: National self-defense is the defense of the United States, U.S. forces, and in certain circumstances, U.S. persons and their property, and/or U.S. commercial assets from a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. Collective Self-Defense is the defense of designated non-U.S. military forces and/or designated foreign nationals and their property from a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. Only the President or SecWar may authorize collective self-defense.

Self-Defense Guidance

- All necessary means available and all appropriate actions may be used in self-defense. However, the following guidelines, which are articulated in CJCSI 3121.01B, apply:
 - *De-escalation*: When time and circumstances permit, the forces committing hostile acts or demonstrating hostile intent should be warned and given the opportunity to withdraw or cease threatening actions
 - *Necessity*: Exists when a hostile act occurs or when a force demonstrates hostile intent. When such conditions exist, use of force in self-defense is authorized while the force continues to commit hostile acts or exhibit hostile intent.
 - *Proportionality*: The nature, duration, and scope of force used should not exceed what is required to decisively respond to the hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. However, such use of force may exceed the means and intensity of the hostile act or hostile intent. This principle of proportionality should not be confused with attempts to minimize collateral damage during offensive operations.

- *Pursuit in Self-Defense*: Self-defense includes the authority to pursue and engage forces that have committed a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent if those forces continue to commit hostile acts or demonstrate hostile intent

Rules of Engagement for Mission Accomplishment

- Commanders may tailor ROE for mission accomplishment through supplemental measures established in Enclosure I of the SROE. (See CJCSI 3121.01B, *(U) Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for the Use of Force for US Forces*, Enclosure I.)
- **Declared Hostile Force**: SROE permit an appropriate U.S. authority to declare any recognized enemy as a declared hostile force. U.S. forces may engage declared hostile forces regardless of whether such forces have committed a hostile act or demonstrated a hostile intent, subject to the LoW and in accordance with prescribed targeting guidance or other ROE provisions.
- U.S. forces assigned under operational control (OPCON) or tactical control (TACON) of a Multinational Force (MNF) will follow the ROE of the MNF for mission accomplishment, if authorized by order of SecWar. U.S. forces retain the right of self-defense. Apparent inconsistencies between the right of self-defense contained in U.S. ROE and the ROE of the MNF will be submitted through the U.S. chain of command for resolution. While a final resolution is pending, U.S. forces will continue to operate under U.S. ROE for self-defense.
- When U.S. forces are under U.S. OPCON or TACON, operating in conjunction with a MNF, reasonable efforts will be made to develop common ROE. If common ROE cannot be developed, U.S. forces will operate under all applicable U.S. ROE and the MNF forces will be informed of this fact.

Supplemental Measures and Command Guidance

- Commanders at all echelons may issue or request approval of supplemental ROE. The SROE specify the required approval level for certain types of supplemental measures. Supplemental measures are primarily used to define limits or grant authority for the use of force for mission accomplishment.
- Subordinate commanders may issue tactical directives or other forms of command guidance to clarify the application of the governing ROE or RUF for members under their command. However, if a commander's guidance further restricts approved ROE, that commander is obligated to notify SecWar as soon as practicable of any imposed restriction.

Standing Rules for the Use of Force Self-Defense

- Outside of military operations, U.S. forces can only use lethal force if required in self-defense:
 - Inherent Right of Self-Defense: Unit commanders always retain an inherent right and obligation to exercise unit self-defense. Unless otherwise directed by their commander, individual military members may exercise individual self-defense in response to a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. When individuals are assigned and acting as part of a unit, individual self-defense is considered a subset of unit self-defense. As such, unit commanders may limit individual self-defense by members of their unit.
 - Unit and Individual Self-Defense: Arises in response to hostile acts or demonstrated hostile intent, and are treated the same in the SRUF as in the SROE

References

- Charter of the United Nations, Art. 51 (26 June 1945)
- Department of Defense Law of War Manual (June 2015), updated July 2023
- Executive Order 11850, *Enunciation of Certain Uses in War of Chemical Herbicides and Riot Control Agents* (8 April 1975)
- DoDD 2311.01, *DoD Law of War Program* (2 July 2020)
- CJCSI 3121.01B, *(U) Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for the Use of Force for US Forces* (13 June 2005), certified current 18 June 2008
- CJCSI 3370.01D, *(U) Target Development Standards* (8 April 2022)
- CJCSI 5810.01E, *Implementation of the DoD Law of War Program* (9 August 2023)
- Joint Publication 3-60, *Joint Targeting* (28 September 2018)
- Joint Publication 3-84, *Legal Support* (2 August 2016)
- Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (July 2024)

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

International Human Rights Law (IHRL) is the body of law focusing on a State's obligation to protect the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of human beings. It is the policy and practice of the U.S. Government (USG) to respect and implement its obligations under the international human rights treaties to which it is a party. The prevention of mass atrocities and genocide is a U.S. national security interest and moral responsibility.

Key Takeaways

- » IHRL imposes obligations on states to protect the life and dignity of individuals
- » It is USG policy and practice to act consistently with its obligations under international human rights treaties
- » Where provisions of the Law of War (LoW) and IHRL seem to conflict, the provisions of the LoW prevail over IHRL during armed conflict
- » Persons who fall under the power of the United States during armed conflict have fundamental guarantees for the protection of their human rights under the LoW
- » Commanders must prevent human rights violations and punish those who commit human rights violations

Law of War (or Law of Armed Conflict) and International Human Rights Law

- The United States position is that the LoW and IHRL are separate bodies of law. However, to the degree that both can be applied without conflict, the protections of both the LoW and IHRL should be applied during military operations (in peacetime and in conflict).
- In military operations where specific provisions of the LoW and IHRL seem to conflict, it is the Department of War (DoW) position that the provisions of the LoW will prevail over IHRL, including the conduct of hostilities and the protection of persons involved in armed conflict. This position is based on the principle that the LoW is the *lex specialis* governing armed conflict. Advice should be sought from judge advocates about the applicable law.
- Commanders should be aware that coalition partners may be subject to different IHRL obligations. Such differences may result from different treaty obligations or from different legal interpretations.
 - For example, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has ruled that aspects of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) apply to the military forces of State's party to this convention who are serving abroad and during armed conflict

IHRL Obligations

- The LoW directly incorporates many core human rights protections. DoDD 2311.01, *DoD Law of War Program*, dictates that members of the DoW Components shall comply with the LoW during all armed conflicts.
- IHRL obligations may arise out of U.S. treaty law or customary international law
- A non-exhaustive list of prohibited acts include: genocide; slavery; murder or forced disappearance; torture or other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment; prolonged arbitrary detention; systemic racial discrimination; hostage taking; punishment without fair trial

Additional Protocol I, Article 75 Prohibitions and Protections

- The United States has expressed support for certain Additional Protocol I (API) provisions. For example the United States has supported, and sought to promote as a matter of national policy, fundamental guarantees for the treatment of persons detained during international armed conflict that are reflected in Article 75 of API. As a result, the United States:
 - Prohibits violence to life, health, or physical or mental well-being (in particular, murder, torture of all kinds [whether physical or mental], corporal punishment, and mutilation)
 - Prohibits outrages upon personal dignity (in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment, enforced prostitution, and any form of indecent assault), the taking of hostages, collective punishments and threats to commit any of the above acts
 - Informs those arrested, detained, or interned for actions related to the conflict of the reason for the actions taken
 - Establishes provisions for fundamental fairness at any court, hearing or tribunal
 - Provides that detained women will be held separate from detained men (other than family members) and will be directly supervised by women
- Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions (to which the U.S. is party) applies to non-international armed conflicts; it provides similar protections for civilians and those persons no longer taking part in the conflict

Obligations to Prevent or Punish Human Rights Violations

- Commanders have a legal obligation to ensure that forces under their command do not commit human rights violations. Such violations may be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), the War Crimes Act, or under other federal law.
- U.S. forces should recognize that human rights violations may occur in an area of military operations resulting from adversaries', partner states', or other parties' conduct or actions. If U.S. forces become aware of human rights violations committed by U.S. forces, enemy forces or other parties (to include contractors), the unit commander must immediately report reportable incidents (as defined by DoDD 2311.01, *DoD Law of War Program*). This is done by operational incident reporting procedures or other expeditious means, through the chain of command to the combatant commander.
- Prior to any forceful intervention to stop IHRL violations, U.S. forces must ensure that their actions are consistent with the LoW and applicable Rules of Engagement (ROE) or Rules for the Use of Force (RUF) for the operation
 - Under the Standing Rules of Engagement (SROE), collective self-defense of non-DoW persons or the affirmative defense of others is only authorized for the protection of previously designated persons or groups. Commanders should understand their authorities prior to conducting operations and, as appropriate, seek prior authorization or modifications to ROE before acting.
 - Under the Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF), the use of deadly force would be authorized when reasonably necessary to prevent an imminent threat to life or serious bodily harm to civilians directly related to the assigned mission. However, the scope of application of the SRUF is narrow.

References

- War Crimes Act of 1996, 18 U.S.C. § 2441
- Department of Defense Law of War Manual (June 2015), updated July 2023
- Executive Order 13107, *Implementation of Human Rights Treaties* (10 December 1998)
- DoDD 2311.01, *DoD Law of War Program* (2 July 2020)
- CJCSI 3121.01B, *(U) Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for the Use of Forces for US Forces* (13 June 2005), certified current 18 June 2008
- Presidential Study Directive (PSD)-10, *Presidential Study Directive on Mass Atrocities* (4 August 2011)

INTERNATIONAL LAW AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

International law consists of rules and principles regulating the conduct of nations (referred to as “states”) and international organizations in their relations with individuals, other international organizations, or other states. States rely on international law in their diplomatic relations, negotiations, and policymaking, and often defend the actions, and challenge the conduct, of other states by invoking its authority. International law comes primarily from two sources: international agreements and customary international law.

Key Takeaways

- » International agreements signify the intent of the U.S. government to be bound under international law. In very limited and specific circumstances, Department of the Air Force (DAF) commanders may have authority to negotiate and conclude international agreements in accordance with Department of State (DoS), Department of War (DoW), and DAF policy and guidance.
- » DAF personnel seeking to negotiate and conclude international agreements must first secure approval from the appropriate authority, typically either the major command (MAJCOM) or field command (FLDCOM) commander, the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), or higher authority
- » Commanders should not do anything that might be construed as a negotiation, unless they have received advance authority, preferably in writing
- » DoDI 5530.03, *International Agreements*, and DAFI 51-403, *International Agreements*, prohibit DoW personnel from making any unilateral commitment to any foreign government or international organization (either orally or in writing), tendering to a prospective party thereto any draft of a proposed international agreement, or initialing or signing an international agreement before obtaining legal concurrence and the required approval to proceed

International Agreements

- The first main source of international law is international agreements, which are a broad category of mostly written, but sometimes oral, agreements entered into by authorized representatives of the parties to the agreement, with each party being either a state or a recognized international organization
- In very limited and specific circumstances, DAF commanders may have authority to negotiate and conclude international agreements in accordance with DoS, DoW and DAF policy and guidance
- International law does not distinguish between treaties and binding international agreements; any treaty or agreement is binding, but only on the parties who have agreed to be bound by it
 - Bilateral agreements involve two parties; multilateral agreements involve more than two parties

- Binding international agreements may be called many names, to include treaty, convention, covenant, pact, protocol, Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), executive agreement, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), etc. Whatever their designations, all binding agreements have the same status under international law.

DoDI 5530.03, International Agreements

- Under DoDI 5530.03, an international agreement is any agreement concluded with one or more foreign governments, including their agencies, instrumentalities, or political subdivisions, or with an international organization, that:
 - Is signed or agreed to by personnel of any DoW Component, or by representatives of the DoS, or from other department or agency of the U.S. Government
 - Signifies the intent of the parties to be bound under international law. An oral agreement that meets the criteria of this definition is an international agreement; DoW representatives who enter into an oral agreement will cause such agreement to be reduced to writing, subject to the requirements of DoDI 5530.03.
- A DoW Component's General Counsel or Staff Judge Advocate must be consulted when making a determination as to whether an international agreement or arrangement is binding under international law
- The following may constitute an international agreement: a memorandum of understanding, memorandum of agreement, memorandum of arrangement, exchange of notes, exchange of letters, technical arrangement, protocol, *note verbale*, *aide-mémoire*, agreed minute, arrangement, statement of intent, letter of intent, statement of understanding, or any other name connoting a similar legal consequence. This includes any implementing agreement or arrangement, annex, project agreement or arrangement, or other subsidiary arrangement to a master agreement or arrangement.

International Agreements in the Department of the Air Force

- DAFI 51-403 regulates this area for all DAF personnel, consistent with the obligations set forth in DoDI 5530.03 and delegations established in AFPD 51-4, *Operations and International Law*
- DAF personnel seeking to negotiate and conclude international agreements must first secure approval from the appropriate authority, typically either the MAJCOM/FLDCOM commander, SecAF, or higher authority
 - Authorized personnel may only negotiate and conclude international agreements on predominantly DAF matters within their authority and responsibility
 - Until such delegation has occurred in writing, commanders should take great care that their words or conduct do not lead their foreign counterparts to believe that they are authorized to engage in negotiations or to enter into a binding agreement

Reporting

- All international agreements must be promptly reported to the DoS and/or other relevant organizations (e.g., Office of the Secretary of War's General Counsel (OSW/GC), Office of the Under Secretary of War for Policy (OSW(P)), the Secretary of the Air Force's GC (SAF/GCI), Department of the Air Force – Operations and International Law Directorate (AF/JAO), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), or National Security Agency (NSA) for intelligence related agreements), as described in DAFI 51-403

Customary International Law

- The other main source of international law is customary international law, which results from a general and consistent practice of states arising out of a sense of legal obligation (also known as *opinio juris*). The U.S. Supreme Court has long held that customary international law is part of U.S. law, so long as it does not conflict with a treaty or controlling executive or legislative act or judicial decision.
- Customary international law may take centuries to evolve, or it may be formed very quickly. Examples include:
 - Outer Space Overflight: Prior to the 1957 Sputnik flight, states had to seek consent before overflying the territory of other states. No state objected to Sputnik's historic space overflight, which quickly evolved into the customary law that a state's space vehicles may pass over the territory of other states while in outer space without seeking prior consent. This custom was incorporated into the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.
 - Law of Aerial Warfare: Practices between warring states on land over years evolved into customary principles of the Law of War (e.g., necessity, distinction, and proportionality). States applied the principles to aerial warfare, creating customary rules relating to interception, diversion, search, and capture of enemy and neutral aircraft during armed conflict.
 - Law of the Sea: Although the United States is not a party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, it considers the Convention's provisions on freedom of navigation and overflight as reflecting customary international law and binding upon all nations

References

- Case-Zablocki Act of 1972, 1 U.S.C. § 112b
- Coordination, Reporting and Publication of International Agreements, 22 C.F.R. Part 181
- *The Paquete Habana*, 175 U.S. 677 (1900)
- DoDI 5530.03, *International Agreements* (4 December 2019), incorporating Change 1, 17 January 2025
- DAFI 51-403, *International Agreements* (8 February 2019), including DAFI 51-403_DAFGM2025-01, 24 April 2025
- AFPD 51-4, *Operations and International Law* (24 July 2018)
- The Law of Air, Space and Cyber Operations, 4th Ed. (2020)

FOREIGN CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

United States service members, dependents, Department of War (DoW) civilian employees and, in certain circumstances, DoW contractors (collectively “DoW personnel”) serving in or deployed to locations outside the United States may be subject to criminal proceedings by both the Host Nation (HN) and the United States for offenses allegedly committed in the HN.

Key Takeaways

- » It is U.S. policy to maximize the exercise of U.S. jurisdiction over DoW personnel through applicable Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) or other jurisdictional arrangements
- » It is U.S. policy to protect, to the maximum extent possible, the rights of DoW personnel who may be subject to criminal trial by foreign courts and imprisonment in foreign prisons
- » It is U.S. policy to secure, where possible, the release of DoW personnel to the custody of U.S. authorities pending completion of all foreign judicial proceedings
- » This policy also applies to dependents of DoW personnel when those dependents are in a foreign country accompanying DoW personnel

Jurisdiction

- Unless an exception has been granted, the HN has criminal jurisdiction under most SOFAs and international law over any person, including another nation’s service members, physically within its borders based on territorial sovereignty
 - Simultaneously, the Uniform Code of Military Justice’s (UCMJ) extraterritorial application grants the United States jurisdiction over its service members for UCMJ offenses
 - In countries that have more recently concluded bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreements with the U.S., the HN often waives primary jurisdiction over military personnel, except for special cases to be determined by HN authorities
- Despite many SOFAs providing a scheme of shared criminal jurisdiction between a receiving and sending state, normally only one nation will exercise criminal jurisdiction against the service member; that nation is referred to as having primary criminal jurisdiction
 - Primary jurisdiction over an offense is often governed by the terms of any applicable SOFA or comparable agreement with the HN. In certain peacetime operations, especially those run by the United Nations, a Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA) may be used instead of a SOFA. In this discussion, SOFA will refer to both SOFAs and SOMAs.

DoW Civilian Employees and Dependent Family Members Accompanying the Force

- DoW civilian employees and dependent family members accompanying U.S. Armed Forces abroad are normally considered subject to the terms of the applicable SOFA
 - If a Defense Cooperation Agreement exists with the HN, it may further supplement applicable terms, including processes, rights, and privileges for DoW civilian employees and dependent family members
- The Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA) extends U.S. criminal jurisdiction to cover offenses committed by dependents and other civilians accompanying U.S. Armed Forces if the criminal act, had it been committed within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States, is punishable by at least one year of confinement
 - This act allows the Department of Justice, not the DoW or Department of the Air Force (DAF), to prosecute the offending civilian. MEJA can also extend criminal jurisdiction over military personnel and contractors' employees, so long as the individual is not a national of, or ordinarily resident in, the HN.
- Article 2(a)(10), UCMJ, provides criminal jurisdiction over civilians serving with or accompanying U.S. Armed Forces in the field during either declared war or a contingency operation

Violations of Host Nation Law

- Commanders will make consistent efforts with appropriate officials of the HN to maximize U.S. criminal jurisdiction to the extent practicable and consistent with both applicable agreements and U.S. policy. If jurisdiction is not waived by the HN, commanders generally have an obligation to place U.S. service members on "international hold" pending resolution of criminal cases within the HN.
- For civilians under the UCMJ's jurisdiction, the Designated Commanding Officer, as designated by the appropriate geographic combatant commander, may request the HN waive jurisdiction if he/she determines suitable action can be taken under existing U.S. laws or administrative regulations
- Generally, U.S. service members are made available to HN officials by commanders in consultation with the local Staff Judge Advocate (SJA). Specific timing of release varies by country. Consultation and cooperation with HN law enforcement agencies is always desirable; however, in some HNs local law enforcement have the right to enter the installation to arrest the member, regardless of the desire for prior consultation and cooperation.

Legal Counsel, Trial Observers, Crime Victims

- When facing HN criminal charges, personnel are entitled to request the DAF employ legal counsel and pay counsel fees, court costs, bail, and other expenses incident to the representation. They may also request a Military Legal Advisor (appointed by the SJA) to advise the member on U.S. related matters arising out of the criminal charges.
- A U.S. trial observer will monitor HN criminal proceedings to report whether the trial was fair under all the circumstances. A trial will not be deemed unfair because it was not conducted in the same manner as trials held in the United States. If convicted by a HN court, personnel will face HN sentencing, including the possibility of confinement in the HN.
- For personnel in the custody of foreign authorities, DoW seeks to ensure fair treatment at all times. DoW further seeks to assure that when confined in foreign penal institutions (pretrial, during trial, and post-trial), personnel are treated appropriately and are entitled to all the rights, privileges, and protections of personnel confined in U.S. military facilities.
- Personnel who are victims of a crime being adjudicated by the HN criminal justice system may request payment of related expenses in accordance with applicable laws

Status of Forces Agreements

- Many SOFAs contain criteria for determining which country exercises jurisdiction over U.S. personnel for criminal offenses. Within the NATO, Japan, and Korea SOFAs, the following provisions exist:
 - Exclusive jurisdiction belongs to the United States over persons subject to military law, including offenses relating to its security, punishable by U.S. law, but not by the law of the HN; it belongs to the HN for offenses, including offenses relating to the security of the State, punishable by its law but not by the law of the United States
 - Concurrent (shared) jurisdiction occurs when the offense committed is punishable by the law of both the U.S. and the HN. The HN has the primary right to exercise jurisdiction, except in relation to offenses solely against the property or security of the U.S. or offenses solely against the person or property of DoW personnel, and to offenses arising out of any act or omission done in the performance of official duty.
 - Defense Cooperation Agreements between the U.S. and individual NATO countries supplement the NATO SOFA and typically provide a HN waiver of primary concurrent jurisdiction that the HN may withdraw in special cases. Defense Cooperation Agreements usually cover other issues related to foreign criminal involvement for U.S. military members too. Commanders should work closely with the servicing SJA to determine applicable rules and ensure timely action in applicable cases.

Requests and Waivers of Jurisdiction

- DoW policy is to maximize U.S. criminal jurisdiction, subject to relevant international agreements, as follows:
 - With concurrent jurisdiction, when the HN has the primary right to try a case, the U.S. will normally request a waiver of jurisdiction from the HN
 - The procedures for, and the likely success of, a request for a waiver vary depending on the HN and, frequently, the individual circumstances and seriousness of the offense, with a waiver generally less likely for more serious offenses
 - When a waiver is granted, the U.S., pursuant to treaty or other appropriate legal authority, may be required to report to the HN the final result of the action, if any, taken against the U.S. service members, DoW civilian employees, and, in certain circumstances, DoW contractors
- In HNs not covered by major SOFAs, there may be relevant bilateral agreements or an exchange of diplomatic notes. In the absence of an agreement to the contrary, criminal jurisdiction rests primarily with the HN. Exercise of jurisdiction over U.S. service members in a HN without HN permission may be considered a breach of its territorial sovereignty.

References

- Counsel before foreign judicial tribunals and administrative agencies; court costs and bail, 10 U.S.C. § 1037
- Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, 18 U.S.C. Chapter 212
- Foreign Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction, 32 C.F.R. Part 151
- Article 2(a)(10), Uniform Code of Military Justice
- DoDI 5525.01, *Foreign Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction* (31 May 2019)
- DoDI 5525.09, *Compliance with Court Orders by Service Members and DoD Civilian Employees, and their Family Members Outside the United States* (23 April 2019)
- DoDI 5525.11, *Criminal Jurisdiction Over Civilians Employed by Or Accompanying the Armed Forces Outside the United States, Certain Service Members, and Former Service Members* (3 March 2005)
- DAFI 51-205, *Delivery of Personnel to U.S. Civilian Authorities for Trial and Criminal Jurisdiction over Civilians and Dependents Not in the United States* (19 January 2023)
- AFI 51-402_DAFGM2025-01, *International Law* (5 May 2025)
- AFJI 51-706 (AR 27-50), *Status of Force Policies, Procedures & Information* (15 December 1989)

DEPLOYED FISCAL LAW

Commanders must be aware of the rules regarding the spending of appropriated funds in their area of operations. In a deployed environment, the basic rules of fiscal law still apply. Since statutory authority, threshold amounts, and funding levels can fluctuate from year to year and may be constrained by theater-specific or local guidance, commanders should consult with financial management and legal personnel on fiscal law issues.

Key Takeaways

- » Commanders must have the proper mission authority, funding authority, and type of funds before engaging in security cooperation activities or providing humanitarian assistance
- » Before executing any training of foreign forces, ensure they have not had any human rights violations as necessitated by 10 U.S.C. § 362
- » Coordinate with the Department of State (DoS) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as required before providing any form of foreign humanitarian assistance

Overseas Contingency Operations Funds Discontinued

- While many commanders who deployed over the last decade have likely used a form of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds before, OCO is no longer a category of funding as of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022
- Instead of OCO funds, the costs of these operations are now incorporated into the base budget of the Department of War (DoW) and Department of the Air Force (i.e., Operation and Maintenance (O&M), Procurement, etc.)

Training and Equipping of Foreign Forces

- Generally, the duty to equip, train, or provide assistance to foreign countries rests with the DoS. There are two exceptions to the general rule:
 - Training or instruction for foreign forces for the primary purpose of promoting interoperability, safety, and familiarization training with U.S. forces, with the overall benefit being to U.S. military forces. This is sometimes called “little ‘t’ training”.
 - Specific authorization from Congress for DoW to obligate defense funding to engage in security cooperation
 - There is a myriad of permanent (10 U.S.C. §§ 127e, 321, 322, 331, 332, and 333) and temporary (Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Train and Equip Fund (CTEF), Training for Eastern European National Military Forces, and Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative) funding authorities, and this is by no means an exhaustive list

- *Example 1:* 10 U.S.C. § 333 allows the Secretary of War (SecWar), with Secretary of State (SecState) concurrence, to use Defense-wide O&M to provide equipment and training to foreign national security forces to build the capacity of such forces
- *Example 2:* Section 1236 of the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), as amended by Section 1234 of the FY2023 NDAA and Section 1263 of the FY2024 NDAA, authorizes SecWar, with SecState concurrence, to use CTEF to provide training and equipment to the Iraqi Government or Kurdish and tribal security forces to counter ISIS

Foreign Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

- The DoS and USAID are the primary agencies responsible for providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief abroad. The DoW must have specific statutory authority to provide this type of support.
- Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) Funds: A series of interrelated statutes, which include 10 U.S.C. § 402 (Relief Supplies Transportation), § 404 (Foreign Disaster Assistance), § 407 (Humanitarian Demining), § 2557 (Excess Non-Lethal Supplies), and § 2561 (Humanitarian Assistance), authorize the use of OHDACA funds. OHDACA supports SecWar and Combatant Commander (CCDR) national and theater strategies to build partner nation capacity and expand and strengthen alliances and partnerships while advancing DoW access, influence, and visibility.
- Humanitarian and Civic Assistance: 10 U.S.C. § 401 (Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) in Conjunction with Military Operations) is a distinct funding authority from 10 U.S.C. § 2561 (Humanitarian Assistance). Rather than using OHDACA funds, HCA uses O&M funds pursuant to Section 8011 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2025. Whereas humanitarian assistance under 10 U.S.C. § 2561 is provided in response to a foreign disaster, HCA allows a CCDR to provide HCA (such as medical care, rudimentary repair and construction of public facilities, etc.) to underserved areas of a country as long as these activities promote the security interests of both the U.S. and the country in which the activities are to be carried out and the specific operational readiness skills of the members of the armed forces who participate in the activities.

General Purpose Funds, Ex Gratia Payments, and Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreements (ACSA)

- Emergency and Extraordinary Expenses (10 U.S.C. § 127): This is funding provided to the Secretaries of the Military Departments for unanticipated emergencies or extraordinary expenses, including unanticipated, short-notice construction. These funds are controlled by the Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF/AA).
- Combatant Commander Initiative Funds (CCIF) (10 U.S.C. § 166a): Enables the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to act quickly to support the combatant commanders (CCDR) with: (1) force training, (2) contingencies, (3) selected operations, (4) command and control, (5) joint exercises, (6) humanitarian and civic assistance, (7) military education and training to military and related civilian personnel of foreign countries, (8) personnel expenses of defense personnel for bilateral or regional cooperation programs, (9) force protection, and (10) joint warfighting capabilities. Funds are controlled by the CCDR.
- Ex Gratia Payments: Section 1213 of the FY2020 NDAA, as amended by the FY2021 and FY2023 NDAAs, created a means by which authorized commanders may provide nominal monetary payments to friendly civilians as a means of expressing condolence or sympathy or as a goodwill gesture in the event of property damage, personal injury, or death that is incident to the use of force by the U.S. Armed Forces, a coalition that includes the U.S., or a military organization supporting the U.S. or such coalition. Such payments are made from Defense-wide O&M, and the DoW has placed further restrictions on the use of ex gratia payments, as detailed in DoDI 3000.17, *Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response*, dated 21 December 2023.
- Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA): ACSAs are not funding, but rather bilateral agreements that can be used for reimbursable exchange of Logistic Support, Supplies, and Services (LSSS), such as food, billeting, clothing, petroleum, ammunition, or medical services, with foreign military forces. Before using a pre-existing ACSA with a foreign country, the parties must agree on the reimbursement method to be used and an ACSA warranted officer must approve the transfer. There are three methods of reimbursement: (1) payment in kind, (2) replacement in kind, and (3) equal value exchange. However, this authority does not allow for the transfer of significant military equipment, such as ground combat vehicles or combat aircraft, that are listed on the U.S. Munitions List found at 22 C.F.R. 121.1.

Military Construction Funding Sources

- In addition to the two primary construction authorities, Specified Military Construction (MILCON via 10 U.S.C. § 2802) and Unspecified Minor Military Construction (UMMC via 10 U.S.C. § 2805), there are other important authorities impacting construction projects in the deployed environment
 - Emergency Construction (10 U.S.C. § 2803): These are unobligated MILCON funds for projects not otherwise authorized. These are for projects that are vital to national security or to the protection of health, safety, or the environment, and are so urgent that they cannot wait until the next MILCON authorization act.
 - Contingency Construction (10 U.S.C. § 2804): SecWar may authorize MILCON when waiting for the next MILCON authorization act would be “inconsistent with national security or national interest.” The expenditure must be within the amount appropriated for such purpose and is normally used on extraordinary projects that develop unexpectedly. In addition, these funds may not be used for projects denied authorization in previous Military Construction Appropriations Acts.

References

- Emergency and Extraordinary Expenses, 10 U.S.C. § 127
- Support of Special Operations to Combat Terrorism, 10 U.S.C. § 127e
- Combatant Commander Initiative Funds, 10 U.S.C. § 166a
- Training with Friendly Foreign Countries, 10 U.S.C. § 321
- Special Operations Forces: Training with Friendly Foreign Forces, 10 U.S.C. § 322
- Friendly Foreign Countries: Provide Support for Conduct of Operations, 10 U.S.C. § 331
- Friendly Foreign Countries: Defense Institution Capacity Building, 10 U.S.C. § 332
- Foreign Security Forces: Authority to Build Capacity, 10 U.S.C. § 333
- Humanitarian and Civic Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 401
- Transportation of Humanitarian Relief Supplies to Foreign Countries, 10 U.S.C. § 402
- Foreign Disaster Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 404
- Humanitarian Demining Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 407
- Cross-Servicing Agreements, 10 U.S.C. § 2342
- Definition of Logistic Support, Supplies, and Services, 10 U.S.C. § 2350
- Excess Non-Lethal Supplies, 10 U.S.C. § 2557
- Humanitarian Assistance, 10 U.S.C. § 2561
- Military Construction Projects, 10 U.S.C. § 2802
- Emergency Construction, 10 U.S.C. § 2803
- Contingency Construction, 10 U.S.C. § 2804
- Unspecified Minor Military Construction, 10 U.S.C. § 2805
- National Defense Authorization Acts and Appropriation Acts, (<https://whs-mil.libguides.com/dodappropriationslaws>)
- DoDD 2010.09, *Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreements* (28 April 2003), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018
- DoDI 3000.17, *Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response* (21 December 2023)
- DoD Justification Books, (<https://comptroller.defense.gov/Budget-Materials/>)
- CJCSI 2120.01E, *Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreements* (19 July 2024)
- AFI 65-603, *Emergency and Extraordinary Expense Authority* (29 April 2020)
- *The Honorable Bill Alexander*, B-213137, 63 Comp. Gen. 422 (1984) ACSA J4 Site, ([https://intellipedia.intelink.gov/wiki/Acquisition_and_Cross-Servicing_Agreements_\(ACSA\)](https://intellipedia.intelink.gov/wiki/Acquisition_and_Cross-Servicing_Agreements_(ACSA))), (CAC Required)
- Security Cooperation Programs Handbook, (<https://www.dscu.edu/resources#publications>)
- Security Assistance Management Manual, (<https://samm.dsca.mil/listing/chapters>)

INTELLIGENCE OVERSIGHT

U.S. intelligence activities are highly regulated in an effort to balance the need for intelligence with privacy and civil liberty concerns. In particular, there are numerous legal considerations associated with intelligence collection on U.S. Persons (USP). Commanders and their intelligence staffs must be fully cognizant of their intelligence oversight (IO) responsibilities.

Key Takeaways

- » IO programs require initial and annual training tailored for units who perform intelligence or intelligence-related activities to understand applicable laws, Department of War (DoW), Department of the Air Force (DAF), Air Force, and/or Space Force policy and regulations
- » U.S. Person information (USPI) must be properly collected, retained, and disseminated (DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities*, Procedures 2–4)
- » Air Force and Space Force intelligence professionals must know their responsibilities for reporting Questionable Intelligence Activities (QIAs) and Significant or Highly Sensitive Matters (S/HSMs)
- » Staff Judge Advocates (SJAs) and legal advisors, in coordination with Major Command and Field Command IGs, commanders, and intelligence oversight program managers, are responsible for providing legal advice in QIAs and S/HSMs pursuant to DAFI 14-404, *Intelligence Oversight*
- » Day-to-day command and control are essential, and IO should be incorporated into planning and execution

- At various points in our nation's history, Congress has expressed concerns that certain intelligence activities infringed upon the constitutional rights and privacy interests of USP. As a result, an oversight regime consisting of statutes, executive orders (EOs), and agency regulations was established to ensure the proper use of intelligence capabilities and the proper conduct of intelligence activities. Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of War (SecWar), the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) is responsible to SecWar for the effective supervision and control of the intelligence activities of the DAF.
- The U.S. Air Force Intelligence Community Element and the U.S. Space Force Intelligence Community Element conduct these activities and possess an array of intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities designed to provide commanders and national leaders with information on foreign nationals, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, and areas of actual or potential operations. Intelligence collection is a specialized mission with tactics, techniques, and procedures that require strict control and oversight.

Intelligence Oversight Governance

- IO is defined as the process of independently ensuring all DoW intelligence, counterintelligence, and intelligence-related activities are conducted in accordance with applicable U.S. law, EOs, Presidential directives, and DoW issuances designed to balance the requirement for acquisition of essential information by the intelligence community (IC), and the protection of constitutional and statutory rights of USP. IO also includes the identification, investigation, and reporting of Questionable Intelligence Activities (QIAs) and Significant or Highly Sensitive Matters(S/HSMs) involving intelligence activities.
- Although the term USP includes U.S. citizens, it is broader. It also includes permanent resident aliens, unincorporated associations substantially composed of U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens, and corporations incorporated in the United States and not directed and controlled by a foreign government (see DoDD 5240.01, *DoD Intelligence Activities and Intelligence-Related Activities and Defense Intelligence Component Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies and Other Civil Authorities*, which directs you to DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities*, for definition of “U.S. Person.”) A person or organization within the United States is presumed to be a USP, unless specific information to the contrary is obtained. A person outside the United States or whose location is unknown is presumed to not be a USP, unless specific information to the contrary is obtained.
- Per DoDD 5148.13, *Intelligence Oversight*, IO rules apply to the Office of the Secretary of War, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of War, DoW Agencies, the DoW Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within DoW (referred to collectively in DoDD 5148.13 as the “DoD Components”). The IO rules also apply to anyone acting on behalf of a DoD Component when conducting intelligence or intelligence-related activities. A list of DoW and national intelligence organizations is included in Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence*. A definition of “Defense Intelligence Components” is included in DoDD 5143.01, *Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S))*; DoDD 5148.11, *Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight (ATSD(IO))* and DoDM 5240.01. [**Note:** Publications have not all been updated with the 18th member of the IC, Space Force Intelligence or new Air Force intelligence organizations but are applicable (e.g., DoDM 5240.01 does not include SF/S2)].
- The duties and obligations placed on Defense Intelligence Components arise from the U.S. Constitution, Executive Order 12333 (as amended), *United States Intelligence Activities*; DoDD 5240.01, DoDD 5148.13, and DoDM 5240.01 and parts of DoD 5240.01-R and its classified annex. In addition, the DAF has its own governing instruction, DAFI 14-404, *Intelligence Oversight*. Careful reading of the rules and definitions is critical when operating and advising within this environment.

- Roles and Responsibilities:

- IO is a shared responsibility between all DAF members performing intelligence activities, the commander, the SJA, and the Inspector General (IG). Airmen and Guardians are the first line of defense and must know the IO standards, comply with them, and report any suspected QIAs or S/HSMs. Commanders should support an active IO program, designate appropriate oversight officials, provide appropriate training, provide reprisal protection for persons reporting QIAs or S/HSMs, and implement corrective action to address substantiated allegations. Guidance and further information are available at the DoW Senior Intelligence Oversight Office (SIOO) website: <https://dodsioo.defense.gov/>.
 - Servicing SJAs provide advice and counsel on proposed and on-going intelligence activities, interpretations of DoDM 5240.01, and assistance to Intelligence Monitors and IGs as each performs their missions. They also support unit training. Legal support should align to the chain of command of the intelligence unit rather than the location of the unit (i.e., regardless of location, intelligence units get IO support through their command organization). DAF personnel assigned to non-DAF organizations who report QIA or S/HSM to their duty organization are encouraged to also report to their relevant Intelligence Oversight Official or Element commander.
 - IGs conduct inspections to verify that: (1) intelligence personnel understand rules and responsibilities; (2) only Air Force or Space Force Intelligence Elements with assigned intelligence missions are conducting intelligence functions; (3) intelligence activities comply with laws and policies; and (4) reporting procedures are being followed. The IG is also responsible for reviewing every QIA and S/HSM and reporting up to the DoW Senior Intelligence Oversight Office.
- There are only two lawfully assigned intelligence mission sets for the DoW:
- Foreign Intelligence:
 - Title 50, U.S.C., § 3003(2), defines “foreign intelligence” as “information relating to the capabilities, intentions, or activities of foreign governments or elements thereof, foreign organizations, or foreign persons, or international terrorist activities”
 - Counterintelligence:
 - Title 50, U.S.C. § 3003(3), defines “counterintelligence” as “information gathered, and activities conducted, to protect against espionage, other intelligence activities, sabotage, or assassinations conducted by or on behalf of foreign governments or elements thereof, foreign organizations, or foreign persons, or international terrorist activities”

-- Authority Considerations:

- DoDD 5240.01 implements EO 12333, EO 13388, and Title 50, United States Code and establishes broad responsibilities for officials and offices across the DoW and establishes, as DoW policy, that all DoW intelligence and counterintelligence activities will be carried out pursuant to the authorities and restrictions of the U.S. Constitution, applicable law, EO 12333, and other relevant DoW policies
- DoDM 5240.01 provides the authority by which DoW intelligence components may collect, retain, and disseminate USPI and also contain the structure for reporting possible violations. DoDM 5240.01 serves as the regulatory foundation for Service, Combatant Command, and along with DoDD 5148.13 outlines intelligence agency IO programs.

Identifying, Investigating, and Reporting Questionable Intelligence Activities or Significant or Highly Sensitive Matters

- A QIA is any intelligence or intelligence-related activity when there is reason to believe such activity may be unlawful or contrary to an EO, Presidential Directive, Intelligence Community Directive, or applicable DoW and DAF policy governing that activity (DoDD 5148.13; DAFI 14-404)
 - DAF units within Defense Intelligence Components must submit a quarterly report of all QIAs through the Department of the Air Force Inspector General (SAF/IG) to DoW SIOO, which is presented to the Intelligence Oversight Board
- A S/HSM must be reported immediately and is an intelligence or intelligence-related activity (regardless of whether the intelligence or intelligence-related activity is unlawful or contrary to an EO, Presidential Directive, Intelligence Community Directive, or DoW policy), or serious criminal activity by intelligence personnel, that could impugn the reputation or integrity of the Intelligence Community, or otherwise call into question the propriety of intelligence activities. Such matters might involve actual or potential:
 - Congressional inquiries or investigations
 - Adverse media coverage
 - Impact on foreign relations or foreign partners
 - Systemic compromise, loss, or unauthorized disclosure of protected information
- Personnel shall report suspected QIAs or S/HSMs to their chain of command immediately

- If not practicable, personnel may report to their unit's servicing legal office, IG, Air Force Operations and International Law (AF/JAO), Secretary of the Air Force General Counsel (SAF/GCI), Secretary of the Air Force Inspector General (SAF/IG), DoW Office of General Counsel, or DoW Senior Intelligence Oversight Official. Personnel are highly encouraged to additionally report suspected QIAs to their chain of command and Intelligence Oversight Monitors. Generally, IGs investigate QIAs and legal offices advise those conducting the investigation. Specific procedures are found in Section 4 of DoDD 5148.13. Reprisal is prohibited for reporting or even intending to report.

Intelligence Oversight Analytical Framework

- Applicability: IO procedures govern the conduct of Defense Intelligence Components and non-intelligence components or elements, or anyone acting on behalf of those components or elements, when conducting intelligence activities under DoW authorities

References

- Combatant Commands: Assigned Forces; Chain of Command, 10 U.S.C. § 162
Commanders of Combatant Commands: Assignments; Powers and Duties, 10 U.S.C. § 164
- Secretary of the Air Force, 10 U.S.C. § 9013
- National Security Act of 1947, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3001 *et seq.*
- Responsibilities of Secretary of Defense Pertaining to National Intelligence Program, 50 U.S.C. § 3038
- Executive Order 12333, United States Intelligence Activities (4 December 1981), as amended by EO 13284 (2003), 13355 (2004) and 13470 (2008)
- Executive Order 13388, Further Strengthening the Sharing of Terrorism Information to Protect Americans (25 October 2005)
- DoDD 3115.18, *DoD Access to and Use of Publicly Available Information (PAI)* (11 May 2019), incorporating Change 1, 20 August 2020
- DoDD 5143.01, *Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S))* (24 October 2014), incorporating through Change 2, 6 April 2020
- DoDD 5148.11, *Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight (ATSD(IO))* (24 April 2013), incorporating Change 1, 2 March 2023
- DoDD 5148.13, *Intelligence Oversight* (26 April 2017)
- DoDD 5200.27, *Acquisition of Information Concerning Persons and Organizations Not Affiliated with the Department of Defense* (7 January 1980)
- DoDD 5240.01, *DoD Intelligence Activities and Intelligence-Related Activities and Defense Intelligence Component Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies and Other Civil Authorities* (27 September 2024)
- DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities* (8 August 2016)
- Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence* (26 May 2022), incorporating Change 1, 5 July 2024
- DAFI 14-404, *Intelligence Oversight* (23 January 2025)
- AFI 71-101, Volume 4, *Counterintelligence* (2 July 2019)
- Chief of the National Guard Bureau Instruction (CNGBI) 2000.01D, *National Guard Intelligence Activities* (18 January 2022)
- CNGBI 0700.00A, *National Guard Inspectors General* (29 July 2024)
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Office of General Counsel, Intelligence Community Legal Reference Book*

NATIONAL DEFENSE AREA

Commanders are responsible for the protection of Department of War (DoW) resources under their control. When a DoW resource is on non-federal property, commanders should seek landowner consent and work with local authorities to provide protection. If this is not possible, a commander may establish a National Defense Area (NDA) in an emergency situation to provide military protection of *covered property*. (Note: this section covers conventional implementation of NDAs; consult your operational legal advisor for guidance concerning the areas identified as NDAs at the U.S. southern border, as these are federal lands.)

Key Takeaways

- » Declaring an NDA should only be done as a last resort
- » NDAs are not authorized outside of the United States
- » NDAs can only be declared in *emergency situations* and for *covered property*
- » Consult the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) before declaring an NDA

NDA – Definitions

- Traditionally, an NDA is a defined area of non-federal land on which the DoW temporarily exerts exclusive control for the purpose of safeguarding DoW covered property in emergency situations
- The statutes providing authority for NDAs do not apply outside the United States, so DoW response to these emergency situations will be dictated by host-nation agreements
- Covered Property: “Aircraft, airports, airport facilities, vessels, harbors, ports, piers, water-front facilities, bases, forts, posts, laboratories, stations, vehicles, equipment, explosives, or other property or places” (50 U.S.C. § 797(a)(4)(c))
- Emergency Situations: As applied to NDAs, a situation that poses an immediate risk to life, property, operations, or the environment in which civilian support would be insufficient or inappropriate

Authority – DoW Policy to Protect People and Property

- Commanders at all levels have the responsibility and authority to enforce appropriate security measures to protect DoW property and personnel assigned or attached to their command or subject to their control
 - DoDI 5200.08, *Security of DoD Installations and Resources and the DoD Physical Security Review Board (PSRB)*, specifically extends this responsibility to NDAs

- The incident commander (IC) or senior on-scene commander (OSC) may establish an NDA involving any incident where the DoW does not have exclusive jurisdiction of the area containing a covered property, and the property is at an unacceptable risk in an emergency situation
- The DoW IC will typically be the installation commander responsible for the DoW property

Enforcement

- DoW is responsible for enforcing the boundaries of an NDA, as with a permanent installation; civilian law enforcement can assist with excluding non-DoW personnel from an NDA
- Military personnel may remove NDA trespassers from the NDA or detain them until they can be transferred to appropriate civil authorities
- Unless non-DoW persons pose an immediate threat to life or possess military property, the pursuit of a fleeing civilian by military authorities is limited to the area immediately surrounding the NDA

Establishing an NDA

- The IC will first determine whether existing support agreements can sufficiently address the emergency situation. If the support agreements are insufficient or inappropriate, the IC responsible for the covered property may declare an NDA.
- The IC does not need to be physically present to establish an NDA. For example, a subordinate commander to whom responsibility for protecting the property has been entrusted may establish the NDA. A written order memorializing creation of the NDA should follow.
- NDAs will be coordinated with other federal, state, local, and tribal governmental agencies especially when implementing existing support agreements

Consent as the Means of First Resort

- Landowner consent and military accommodation of the landowner's concerns are important to facilitate mission completion, reduce unnecessary claims, enhance public perception, and minimize media scrutiny
- Even absent landowner consent, military necessity and capacity to control the site ultimately drive the location, size, shape, and duration of an NDA

Marking and Public Notice

- The OSC or senior DoW official is responsible for adequately marking the NDA as required by DAFI 31-101, *Base Defense Operations*, to warn against inadvertent trespass on the NDA

- Use a temporary barrier, such as tape or rope, to mark the NDA. Post Air Force Visual Aid (AFVA) 31-102, *Restricted Area Sign-National Defense*, at all entry control points and as necessary, but further perimeter security may be appropriate.
- Evaluate whether it is necessary to request that higher headquarters publish notice in the local newspaper and/or Federal Register

Airspace Considerations

- Airspace restrictions may be necessary, including restrictions on small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS). Establishing an NDA does **NOT** automatically confer authority to employ counter-sUAS capabilities.
- Commanders may request the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) impose a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR)

Media and Public Relations

- Public Affairs should be briefed immediately following the establishment of an NDA; ICs and OSCs should be sensitive to interests of the media
- Limit photography as necessary to protect classified information
- Military authorities may use reasonable force to prevent all photography by anyone **WITHIN** the NDA and seize film or video equipment. If such film or video equipment is outside the NDA, civilian authorities should handle the matter.
- Media representatives should be briefed on appropriate releasable information during an incident and NDA access procedures as necessary or appropriate

References

- U.S. Const. Art. VI, cl. 2 (Supremacy) and Amend. V, cl. 4 (Takings)
- Use of Aircraft for Photographing Defense Installations, 18 U.S.C. § 796
- Entering Military, Naval, or Coast Guard property, 18 U.S.C. § 1382
- Penalty for Violation of Security Regulations and Orders, 50 U.S.C. § 797
- General Operating and Flight Rules, 14 C.F.R. Part 91
- Security Control of Air Traffic, 14 C.F.R. Part 99
- *U.S. v. Aarons*, 310 F.2d 341 (2d Cir. 1962)
- Executive Order 10104, *Defining Certain Vital Military and Naval Installations and Equipment as Requiring Protection Against the General Dissemination of Information Relative Thereto* (1 February 1950)
- DoDI 4000.19, *Support Agreements* (16 December 2020)
- DoDI 5200.08, *Security of DoD Installations and Resources and the DoD Physical Security Review Board (PSRB)* (10 December 2005), incorporating through Change 3, 20 November 2015
- DoDI 6055.17, *DoD Emergency Management (EM) Program* (13 February 2017)
- DoDM 3150.08, *Nuclear Weapon Accident Response Procedures (NARP)* (22 August 2013), incorporating through Change 2, 21 July 2020
- DoDM S-5210.41, Volume 1, (U) *Nuclear Weapon Security Manual: General Nuclear Weapon Security Procedures* (4 May 2022)
- DoDM S-5210.41, Volume 3, (U) *Nuclear Weapon Security Manual: DoD Nuclear Weapon Environment Specific Requirements* (4 May 2022)
- DoDS5210.41-M_AFMAN31-108V1-S, (U) *The Air Force Nuclear Weapon Security Manual* (2 May 2019)
- DoDS 5210.41-M_AFMAN31-108V2-S, (U) *General Nuclear Weapon Security Procedures* (20 May 2019)
- DoDS 5210.41-M_AFMAN31-108V3-S, (U) *Nuclear Weapon Security Manual: Nuclear Weapon Specific Requirements* (20 May 2019)
- DAFI 10-2501, *Emergency Management Program* (16 October 2023)
- DAFI 31-101, *Base Defense Operations* (10 September 2024)
- DAFI 31-117, *Arming and Use of Force by Air Force Personnel* (28 January 2025)
- DAFI 51-509, *Appointment to and Assumption of Command* (28 December 2023)
- AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Operations* (20 November 2020)
- AFI 51-306, *Administrative Claims For and Against the Air Force* (14 January 2019), incorporating through Change 3, 5 May 2021
- AFVA 31-102, *Restricted Area Sign-National Defense* (13 July 1995) certified current 13 June 2019
- FAA Advisory Circular (AC) No. 91-63D, *Temporary Flight Restrictions* (9 December 2015)

POSSE COMITATUS

Key Takeaways

- » With certain exceptions, federal law prevents the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and the Space Force from assisting local law enforcement in enforcing civilian laws
- » Violations of the Posse Comitatus Act (PCA) may be subject to criminal penalties

Posse Comitatus Prohibitions

- The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and the Space Force are precluded by law from enforcing or assisting local law enforcement officials in enforcing civilian laws, except as explicitly authorized by the Constitution or an Act of Congress
 - Actions that would subject civilians to the use of military power that is regulatory, prescriptive, proscriptive, or compulsory are prohibited
- PCA prohibitions apply to:
 - Active-duty members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Force
 - Members of the Reserve or National Guard performing duties in Title 10 status
- PCA prohibitions **DO NOT** apply to:
 - Members of the Reserve or National Guard performing duties in any duty status other than Title 10 (e.g., Title 32 status under the Governor's control or state active duty status under the Governor's control at the state's expense)
 - Members of the Coast Guard, unless serving in a Title 10 status
 - Off-duty conduct (i.e., good Samaritans), unless induced, required, or ordered by military officials
 - Title 10 personnel when they are acting in a private capacity, such as when he/she acts as a private citizen on his/her own volition, and not under the direction or command of a Title 10 or Department of War (DoW) official, even if in uniform and on-duty (see *People v. Blend*, 121 Cal App 3d 215, 224 (1981))
 - Civilian employees, unless acting under the direct command and control of a federal military officer
 - Other uniformed services, such as the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service
- The PCA statute does not apply abroad, however, DoW policy applies the prohibitions of direct assistance to civilian law enforcement to DoW personnel worldwide

Punishment for Violations

- Possible criminal sanctions for violating the PCA under 18 U.S.C. § 1385:
 - Fine and/or two years imprisonment
 - Suppression of evidence illegally obtained

Exceptions to Posse Comitatus

- The PCA **IS NOT** an absolute rule. There are exceptions to this general rule, but these exceptions must be “expressly authorized by the Constitution or an act of Congress”.

Constitutional Exception

- The Constitutional exception to the PCA is grounded in the President’s authority under Articles II and IV of the Constitution
- Section 886 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Title 6 U.S.C. § 466), states the President may exercise this Constitutional exception when he/she “determines that the use of the Armed Forces is required to fulfill the President’s obligations under the Constitution to respond promptly in time of war, insurrection, or other serious emergency” to maintain law and order
- The President can exercise this Constitutional exception in four ways: (1) National Emergency Declaration (*In re Debs*, 158 U.S. 564 (1895)); 50 U.S.C. §§ 1601 *et seq.*; or 6 U.S.C. § 466(a)(5); (2) Inherent Authority to protect Federal property/functions/personnel; (3) Declaration of Martial Law; and (4) designating missions/operations as Homeland Defense

Statutory Exceptions

- Several statutes also authorize the military to engage in actions that would otherwise violate the PCA

10 U.S.C. § 271

- Allows the military to provide to federal, state, and local civilian law enforcement officials any information collected “during the normal course of military training or operations that may be relevant to a violation of any federal or state law within the jurisdiction of such officials”
- Requires the military to consider the needs of local law enforcement for information when planning and executing military training missions and operations
- Mandates, to the extent consistent with national security, the prompt disclosure of intelligence information relevant to drug interdiction or other civilian law enforcement matters to civilian law enforcement officials

10 U.S.C. § 272

- Allows the Secretary of War (SecWar) to make any equipment, base facility, or research facility of the DoW available to local law enforcement for law enforcement purposes, although the military may charge for its use (see 10 U.S.C. § 277 for guidance on reimbursements). It must be in accordance with other applicable laws, and it must not interfere with the military mission.
- Loan of “arms, ammunition, tactical-automotive equipment, vessels and aircraft” requires SecWar approval

10 U.S.C. § 273

- Allows SecWar to make military personnel available to train federal, state, and local civilian law enforcement officials on the operation and maintenance of equipment, including equipment loaned under 10 U.S.C. § 272, and to provide expert advice related to these matters to such officials

10 U.S.C. § 274

- Allows SecWar to make military personnel available to operate and maintain equipment, including loaned equipment under 10 U.S.C. § 272

49 U.S.C. § 324

- Allows SecWar to detail military personnel to the Department of Transportation under a Memorandum of Agreement, and to perform law enforcement functions for the Secretary of Transportation

Enforcement of Civilian Law on DoW Property

- The military may enforce civilian laws on an installation for a military purpose
- On a military installation, the military can “detain” civilians before turning them over to civil authorities. Military members do not arrest or apprehend civilians. This is a **CRITICAL** distinction.
- Federal military commanders, heads of DoW components, and/or responsible DoW civilian officials have immediate response authority as described in DoDD 3025.18, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)*. Commanders may exercise this authority in response to a request from a civilian authority for assistance when time does not permit coordination or approval from a higher authority to save lives, prevent human suffering, or mitigate great property damage.

References

- The Homeland Security Act of 2002, 6 U.S.C. § 466
- Military Support for Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies, 10 U.S.C. §§ 271–277
- Duties: Officers on Active Duty; Performance of Civil Functions Restricted, 10 U.S.C. § 973
- The Posse Comitatus Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1385
- Section 1045 of the NDAA FY2022
- DoDD 3025.18, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)* (29 December 2010), incorporating through Change 2, 19 March 2018
- DoDI 3025.21, *Defense Support of Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies* (27 February 2013), incorporating Change 1, 8 February 2019
- DAFI 10-801, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (26 February 2025)
- DAFI 31-118, *Security Forces Standards and Procedures* (18 August 2020), including DAFI31-118_DAFGM2025-01, 10 January 2025

DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES

Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) is support provided by military forces to prepare, prevent, protect, respond, and recover from domestic incidents and other qualifying domestic events. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) supports the Federal DSCA mission in response to a submission of a Request for Assistance (RFA) to the Department of War (DoW) from civil authorities or qualifying entities, or as directed by the President of the United States (POTUS) or the Secretary of War (SecWar).

Key Takeaways

- » DSCA is support provided in response to a request for assistance from civil authorities or from other qualifying entities
- » Requests for DSCA generally are required in writing and must include a commitment to reimburse the DoW
- » Immediate Response Authority (IRA) can be exercised to temporarily engage in activities to save lives, prevent human suffering, or mitigate great property damage within the United States upon request
- » Emergency Authority can be exercised to temporarily engage in activities necessary to quell large-scale, unexpected civil disturbances, in extraordinary emergency circumstances
- » Title 10 personnel cannot engage in direct civilian law enforcement activities, unless expressly authorized by POTUS, the Constitution, or act of Congress

Defense Support of Civil Authorities Generally

- DSCA is initiated when civil authorities or qualifying entities request DoW assistance or when assistance is authorized by POTUS or SecWar
 - Unless approval authority is delegated by SecWar, all DSCA requests shall be submitted to the Office of the Executive Secretary of the DoW
 - DoW federal military forces, civilians, contract personnel, and National Guard (NG) personnel (federalized in Title 10 status, or as allowed by coordination with State Governors in Title 32 status) can be used to support an approved RFA
 - DAF personnel, equipment, and resources are sourced based on requested capabilities, with regard for impact on national security or readiness
 - Federal Government support to civil authorities is executed under the Stafford Act, Economy Act, and IRA

Scenarios Requiring DSCA

- Except for immediate response and emergency authority and situations in which SecWar has delegated authority to the commanders of U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) via the DSCA Standing Execution Order (EXORD), only SecWar may approve requests from civil authorities or qualifying entities for federal military support for:
 - Response to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosives (CBRNE) incidents
 - Requests for direct assistance in support of civilian law enforcement agencies, to include those responding with assets with the potential for lethality (acknowledging the limited exception provided under emergency authority IAW DoDD 3025.18, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities*; see [Emergency Authority](#) below)
 - A response with potentially lethal assets, which includes: the lending of arms, vessels, aircraft, or ammunition; assistance to the Department of Justice (DoJ) in emergency situations involving weapons of mass destruction; assistance to the DoJ concerning prohibited transactions involving nuclear material; support to counterterrorism operations; and support to civilian law enforcement authorities in situations where it is reasonable to anticipate a confrontation between civilian law enforcement and civilian individuals or groups

Coordination and Requests for DSCA

- There are three broad categories of DSCA operations: (1) domestic emergencies; (2) designated law enforcement support; and (3) other activities
- At the request of a state governor, POTUS may declare a major disaster or emergency under the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121 *et seq.*
 - The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is generally assigned as the lead federal agency; the DoW supports the lead federal agency through either a SecWar-approved RFA or a SecWar-approved mission assignment
- Federal military forces conducting DSCA remain under federal military command and control at all times
 - The Joint Staff, upon SecWar approval of DoW assistance, coordinates with the Services to source the assistance to be provided based on the asset or capability that can meet the RFA
- Per DoDD 3025.18, requests for DSCA must be submitted in writing, except requests for support under immediate response authority and mutual or automatic aid arrangements (such as reciprocal fire protection agreements under 42 U.S.C. §§ 1856–1856p and governed by DoDI 6055.06, *DoD Fire and Emergency Services (F&ES) Program*)

Evaluating DSCA Requests

- All DSCA requests for assistance must be evaluated using “CARRLL” criteria: **Cost** (including the source of funding and the effect on the DoW budget); **Appropriateness** (whether providing the requested support is in the interest of the DoW); **Risk** (safety of DoW Forces); **Readiness** (impact on the DoW’s ability to perform its other primary missions); **Legality** (compliance with laws, including the Posse Comitatus Act); and **Lethality** (potential use of lethal force by or against DoW Forces)
- Written requests shall include a commitment to reimburse the DoW in accordance with the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 5121 *et seq.*), the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. § 1535), or other statutory reimbursement authorities
 - Support may be provided on a non-reimbursable basis, only if required by law or if both authorized by law and approved by SecWar or appropriate designee
- Domestic use of small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) must be executed in accordance with DAFMAN 11-502, *Group(s) 1 and 2 Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems*, DoDD 3025.18, and the SecWar memorandum “Guidance for the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the U.S. National Airspace,” dated 31 October 2023
 - Any domestic use of UAS must also comply with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and other applicable laws, policies, and memoranda of agreement concerning UAS use in national air space

Matters Not Within Scope of DSCA

- Joint investigations of matters within their respective jurisdictions conducted by military criminal investigative organizations (e.g., Air Force Office of Special Investigations) and civilian law enforcement agencies, where each is using its own forces and equipment
- Assistance provided by DoW intelligence and counterintelligence components in accordance with Executive Orders 12333 and 13388; DoDD 5240.01, *DoD Intelligence and Intelligence-Related Activities and Defense Intelligence Component Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies and Other Civil Authorities*; DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities* (Procedures 1–10); and other applicable laws and regulations
- Support provided in response to foreign disasters (e.g., foreign consequence management or foreign humanitarian assistance/disaster response)

Immediate Response Authority (IRA)

- Upon request and without SecWar approval, DAF installation commanders may, subject to higher headquarters’ direction and/or limitation, temporarily employ resources under their control to save lives, prevent human suffering, or mitigate great property damage within the United States in response to an RFA from a civil authority, under imminently serious conditions. IRA does not permit actions that would subject civilians to the use of military power that is regulatory, prescriptive, proscriptive, or compulsory. (See DoDD 3025.18, and DAFI 10-801, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities*, para. 3.2.4.)

- For support under IRA, “imminently serious conditions” must be present, such that time does not permit seeking approval from SecWar. Commanders must consider the impact providing immediate response would have on military mission requirements; commanders must not jeopardize the mission to provide immediate response.
- Support provided under IRA is provided on a cost-reimbursable basis, unless non-reimbursement is authorized by law. However, commanders should not delay or deny IRA support if the requester is unable or unwilling to commit to reimbursing the DoW as cost is but one of the “CARRLL” factors.
- An immediate response ends when the urgent need giving rise to the response is no longer present (i.e., when there are sufficient non-DoW resources available to adequately respond, and that agency or department is responding) or when the initiating DoW official or a higher authority directs an end to the response
- DAF commanders acting under IRA must not use military force to quell civil disturbances, unless specifically authorized by POTUS in accordance with the Insurrection Act of 1807 or unless permitted under emergency authority

Emergency Authority

- DAF commanders have the authority to temporarily engage in activities necessary to quell large-scale, unexpected civil disturbances, in extraordinary emergency circumstances where prior POTUS authorization is not possible and where duly constituted local authorities are unable to control the situation. Emergency authority is only permissible when such activities are necessary to:
 - Prevent significant loss of life or wanton destruction of property and are necessary to restore governmental function and public order; or
 - Protect federal property/federal governmental functions when duly constituted civil authorities are unable/unwilling to provide adequate protection.

References

- Provision of Support for Certain Sporting Events, 10 U.S.C. § 2564
- Prohibited Transactions Involving Nuclear Materials, 18 U.S.C. § 831
- Posse Comitatus Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1385
- Agency Agreements, 31 U.S.C. § 1535
- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121 *et seq.*
- Executive Order 12333, *United States Intelligence Activities* (4 December 1981)
- Executive Order 13388, *Further Strengthening the Sharing of Terrorism Information to Protect Americans* (25 October 2005)
- DoDD 3025.18, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (29 December 2010), incorporating through Change 2, 19 March 2018
- DoDD 5240.01, *DoD Intelligence and Intelligence-Related Activities and Defense Intelligence Component Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies and Other Civil Authorities* (27 September 2024)
- DoDI 3020.52, *DoD Installation Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive (CBRNE) Preparedness Standards* (18 May 2012), incorporating Change 1, 22 May 2017
- DoDI 3025.21, *Defense Support of Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies* (27 February 2013), incorporating Change 1, 8 February 2019
- DoDI 6055.06, *DoD Fire and Emergency Services (F&ES) Program* (3 October 2019)
- DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities* (8 August 2016)
- Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Memorandum, *Guidance for the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the U.S. National Airspace* (31 October 2023)
- Joint Publication 3-27, *Joint Homeland Defense* (12 December 2023)
- Joint Publication 3-28, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (23 September 2024)
- DAFI 10-801, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities* (26 February 2025)
- DAFMAN 11-502, *Group(s) 1 and 2 Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems* (10 January 2025)

SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

As the use of small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) by hobbyist/recreational, commercial/civil, and public (i.e., non-government) users increases, so do questions regarding their use on or near military installations.

Key Takeaways

- » 10 U.S.C. § 130i authorizes the Secretary of War (SecWar) to take certain actions necessary to mitigate the threat of an unmanned aircraft or unmanned aircraft systems that pose an imminent threat to the safety or security of certain assets or facilities of national security significance
- » Coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is critical to deconflicting airspace and ensuring successful counter-sUAS (C-sUAS) programs
- » At international locations, the host nation generally regulates the use of the airspace above U.S. military bases; Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) or other host nation agreements may give installations some rights with respect to airspace control
- » Section 848 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020 places restrictions on the operation and procurement of UAS manufactured in, or containing critical components made in, a covered foreign country

Definitions

- The Department of War (DoW) categorizes UAS into five groups based on the weight, altitude, and speed of the system
 - sUAS generally fall within Groups 1–3 (rotor and fixed wing), while larger, more traditional platforms, such as the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper, are Groups 4–5
- The FAA considers sUAS to be any aircraft less than 55 pounds and requires registration for all sUASs between 0.55 and 55 pounds. The FAA has also issued operating rules for sUASs that vary depending on whether the sUAS is flown for commercial or noncommercial uses.

Operation of Non-Governmental sUAS on or over Military Installations

- Airspace within the United States, including airspace above DoW installations, is regulated by the FAA; sUAS operations are subject to FAA regulations and guidance
- Installation commanders generally do not have the authority to further restrict the use of airspace above an installation. They do, however, have authority over the installation and its activities and may, therefore, prohibit or limit the operation of sUAS on the installation, to include a sUAS taking off from the installation, a sUAS landing on the installation, and controlling a sUAS from the installation.
- sUAS airspace violations are subject to administrative, civil, or criminal penalties. FAA Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) contain exceptions for certain sUAS operations, including government or military sUAS operations or other pre-approved flights.

FAA Guidance and Regulations

- In 2017, at the request of the DoW, the FAA promulgated Special Security Instructions (SSIs) under 14 C.F.R. § 99.7. The SSIs prohibit any UAS flight within the airspace above most continental United States (CONUS) military installations. The prohibitions extend from the ground to 400 feet above ground level (AGL) and encompass installation perimeters.
- In June 2016, the FAA promulgated the “Small Unmanned Aircraft Rule” (14 C.F.R. Part 107 of the Federal Aviation Regulations), which imposes pilot and aircraft certification requirements and operational restrictions on commercial sUAS
- When flying sUAS for hobby or recreational purposes under the Special Rule for Certain Unmanned Aircraft Systems, sUAS are required to operate in a manner as to not endanger the safety of the U.S. National Airspace (NAS). For example, operators are expected to contact the airport operator and airport air traffic control (ATC) tower (when applicable) if they are planning to operate a sUAS within five nautical miles of an airport.
- Flying a sUAS near or above an installation may be permissible under current FAA regulations, if the sUAS is being used to conduct another lawful activity, though additional restrictions may apply

Other Laws Implicated by sUAS Activities

- Installation judge advocates should familiarize themselves with state and local laws relating to sUAS that may be applicable to operations near, on, or over the installation
- Federal laws may also prohibit certain activities; for example, 18 U.S.C. §§ 795 and 796 criminalize photographing “vital military and naval installations or equipment without first obtaining permission of the commanding officer”

C-sUAS Authorities

- Commanders retain the inherent right of self-defense against sUAS that pose a threat to DoW installations, assets, and personnel consistent with the provisions of CJCSI 3121.01B, *Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for Use of Force for US Forces*
- 10 U.S.C. § 130i authorizes SecWar to take certain actions necessary to mitigate the threat of sUAS that pose an imminent threat to the safety or security of certain covered facilities or assets. Commanders of such covered facilities and assets should consult their Staff Judge Advocate and the relevant DoW approved installation concept of employment (CONEMP) when exercising this authority.
 - 10 U.S.C. § 130i only applies within the United States and U.S. territories
 - DoW has issued classified guidance on a commander’s authority to counter sUAS. Commanders and judge advocates should consult this guidance before engaging in any C-sUAS operations. This guidance is available on the “130i SIPR Sharepoint”.

- sUAS and C-sUAS capabilities that qualify as a “weapon” are subject to legal review IAW DoDD 5000.01, *The Defense Acquisition System*, and AFI 51-401, *The Law of War*, prior to acquisition and use in military operations. When encountering a C-sUAS issue, practitioners should check for updates to relevant statutes and DoW guidance, as proposed legislative changes and policy updates are expected before or near the publishing of this writing.

Operation of sUAS within the United States by DoW Organizations (“Blue sUAS”)

- The 31 October 2023 SecDef memorandum, *Guidance for the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the U.S. National Airspace*, delegated Military Services the authority to approve domestic use of UASs (also referred to as “Blue sUAS” operations)
- Air Force Special Operations Command is the designated lead command for Blue sUAS operations and coordinates with major commands to develop guidance for the conduct and execution of sUAS operations and training
 - Units operating sUAS must have a unit-specific installation commander approved CONEMP when operating on or off military installations
 - Operation of sUAS must also comply with DoDD 5240.01, *DoD Intelligence and Intelligence-Related Activities and Defense Intelligence Component Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies and Other Civil Authorities*; DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities*; DAFI 14-404, *Intelligence Oversight*; and applicable Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) issuances
- Section 848 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 places additional restrictions on the operation and procurement of sUAS manufactured in, or containing critical components made in, a covered foreign country

International Operation of sUAS by DoW Organizations

- At international locations, the host nation generally regulates the use of the airspace above U.S. military bases. SOFAs or other host nation agreements may give installations some rights with respect to airspace control.
- If no specific rights have been granted in a SOFA, basing agreement, or other host nation agreement, assume that specific permission will likely be needed to operate a sUAS

Conclusion

- The threats posed to the safety and security of DAF facilities and assets are constantly being evaluated. sUAS pose an emerging and unique threat and implicate numerous privacy and communications laws.
- Commanders and judge advocates should check for updates to relevant laws and policies and coordinate with their major commands and field commands when sUAS issues arise

References

- Protection of Certain Facilities and Assets from Unmanned Aircraft, 10 U.S.C. § 130i
- Photographing and Sketching Defense Installations, 18 U.S.C. § 795
- Use of Aircraft for Photographing Defense Installations, 18 U.S.C. § 796
- National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, Pub. L. 116-92, § 848 (2019)
- Special Security Instructions, 14 C.F.R. § 99.7
- Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems, 14 C.F.R. Part 107
- CJCSI 3121.01B, *(U) Standing Rules of Engagement/Standing Rules for Use of Force for US Forces* (13 June 2005), certified current 18 June 2008
- DoDD 3800.01E, *DoD Executive Agent for Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems for Unmanned Aircraft Groups 1, 2, and 3* (21 February 2020)
- DoDD 5000.01, *The Defense Acquisition System* (9 September 2020), incorporating Change 1, 28 July 2022
- DoDD 52401.01, *DoD Intelligence and Intelligence-Related Activities and Defense Intelligence Component Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies and Other Civil Authorities*, 27 September 2024
- DoDD 5240.01, *DoD Intelligence and Intelligence-Related Activities and Defense Intelligence Component Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies and Other Civil Authorities* (27 September 2024)
- Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Memorandum, *Guidance for the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the U.S. National Airspace* (31 October 2023)
- Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Memorandum, *Unleashing U.S. Military Drone Dominance* (10 July 2025)
- Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum 17-00X, *Supplemental Guidance for Countering Unmanned Aircraft* (5 July 2017)
- Deputy Secretary of Defense Policy Memorandum 16-003, *Interim Guidance for Countering Unmanned Aircraft* (18 August 2016)
- Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Sustainment) Memorandum, REVISION 1: *Procedures for the Operation or Procurement of Unmanned Aircraft Systems to Implement Section 848 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020* (22 December 2021)
- DoDM 5240.01, *Procedures Governing the Conduct of DoD Intelligence Activities* (8 August 2016)
- DAFI 14-404, *Intelligence Oversight* (19 February 2025)
- DAFMAN 11-502, *Group(s) 1 and 2 Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems* (10 January 2025), including DAFMAN11-502_DAFGM2025-01, 14 August 2025
- AFI 51-401, *The Law of War* (3 August 2018)
- ArcGIS FAA UAS Data on a Map, <https://udds-faa.opendata.arcgis.com/>

SAFETY AND ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARDS

Safety investigations determine cause(s) and provide recommendations to prevent future mishaps. Their findings, deliberations, and recommendations (and evidence obtained under a promise of confidentiality) are privileged. Accident investigations provide publicly releasable reports and preserve evidence for litigation, claims, disciplinary action, and other administrative action.

Key Takeaways

- » Safety Investigation Boards (SIBs) conduct safety investigations
- » The SIB's deliberations, opinions, recommendations, and evidence they receive under promises of confidentiality are privileged and cannot be released outside of Department of War (DoW) safety channels
- » Accident Investigation Boards (AIBs) for aerospace mishaps and Ground Accident Investigation Boards (GAIBs) for non-aerospace asset mishaps are legal investigations conducted to provide a publicly releasable report of the mishap
- » AIBs/GAIBs must **NOT** receive any safety privileged evidence or information from the SIB, but they receive all other non-privileged information gathered by the SIB
- » SIBs have priority of evidence over AIBs/GAIBs, so the legal investigations typically start after the SIB

Safety Investigations

- A SIB may be composed of a board of members or a single investigating officer
 - Conducted solely for DoW mishap prevention purposes; has limited use, even within the DoW and the Department of the Air Force (DAF)
 - **NOT** used for disciplinary actions, line-of-duty determinations, flying evaluation boards, litigation, claims, or assessing pecuniary liability
- SIBs may offer a promise of confidentiality to witnesses or contractors if necessary and authorized, but witness statements are not under oath
- Privileged information in a safety report is barred from use in claims and litigation for or against the United States, even if it favors the DAF. The United States Supreme Court has upheld the military safety privilege.

Potential Challenges with Safety Investigations

- Interface with Accident Investigators: The safety investigation has priority over the accident investigation to wreckage, witnesses, and documents. Part 1 of the safety report consists of non-privileged factual information and is released to the accident investigators, along with all other non-privileged information.
- Queries from Next of Kin (NoK) of Mishap Victims: NoK usually speak with the family assistance representative (FAR) appointed by the commander. SIB personnel do not discuss their investigation with anyone, except the convening authority (CA) or the Air Force Safety Center (AFSEC). At an appropriate time, once the report is approved, the AIB/GAIB President briefs the report to the NoK and answers questions about the mishap.
- Requests for Information: Requests for SIB reports and information concerning the safety investigation are directed to AFSEC/JA. For AIB/GAIB reports, direct all requests to the CA's major command/field command (MAJCOM/FLDCOM) level Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).
- Appearance of Improper Use: Avoid creating the appearance of improper use of privileged safety information (e.g., for public disclosure, disciplinary actions, flying evaluation boards). Commanders must have clean hands and document the source of information being used to take action.
- Criminal Misconduct: Prosecution may be complicated by a safety investigation preceding a court-martial. The defense may request privileged information, resulting in litigation over its release. Where evidence of criminal misconduct relating to the cause of the mishap is present, the convening authority may delay the SIB and proceed with a legal/law enforcement investigation.

Accident Investigations

- Accident investigations pursuant to AFI 51-307, *Aerospace and Ground Accident Investigations*, are required for all on-duty Class A accidents involving DAF assets, except for (1) Class A accidents in which remotely piloted subscale aircraft and aerial targets are destroyed, (2) when there is only damage to federal government property and no safety investigation is done, and (3) for accidents involving an aerospace asset when the asset is not destroyed, and the damage is to federal government property only

Class A Accidents

- Mishaps where an injury or occupational illness results in a fatality or permanent total disability
- Mishaps where a DAF aerospace asset is destroyed
- Mishaps where the total cost of damages to the government or other property is \$2,500,000 or more

Other DAF Mishaps with Mandatory Accident Investigations

- Mishaps with a probability of high public interest, including from Congress or the media
- Mishaps when claims and litigation are anticipated for or against the government or a government contractor because of the mishap
- Mishaps causing significant civilian property damage
- Also, accident investigations not otherwise required may be convened at the CA's discretion for any DAF "accident/mishap"

Convening Authority Responsibilities in AIB/GAIBs

- The CA is the MAJCOM/FLDCOM commander who convened, or would have convened, the safety investigation under DAFI 91-204, *Safety Investigations and Reports*. This authority is delegable to the MAJCOM/FLDCOM deputy commander.
- The CA informs the NoK of deceased and seriously injured personnel, through the FAR, of the process and status of ongoing investigations and schedules any planned NoK briefings. The CA also ensures appropriate condolence letters are sent to NoK.
 - The CA funds costs associated with the accident investigation, determines what information may be released to the public prior to the completion of the AIB/GAIB report, and approves the final report and related public affairs guidance
 - High-interest AIB/GAIB reports are coordinated and staffed by the CA's SJA through the Aviation & Admiralty Torts Division (AF/JAOA), Operations & International Law Directorate (AF/JAO), and AF/JA for review by the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force or Chief of Space Operations

Host Installation Commander's Responsibilities in AIB/GAIBs

- Appoint a host installation liaison officer to assist the AIB/GAIB in obtaining accommodations and administrative support, as well as facilitating witness interviews
- Provide in-house facility, communications, supply, photography, and billeting support for the AIB/GAIB
- Remove and store wreckage from the mishap site at the direction of the CA until AF/JAOA or the MAJCOM/FLDCOM SJA releases it from legal hold
- Assist the CA with initial cleanup of the mishap site
- The installation SJA may need to temporarily assume custody of the SIB's non-privileged evidence until the arrival of the AIB/GAIB

GAIB Reports

- Usually do not contain a statement of opinion, unless specifically authorized in advance. Unlike AIBs, the GAIB president's opinion is not statutorily protected and may affect the United States in litigation.
- A thorough GAIB report will allow the facts to speak for themselves

Air National Guard Considerations

- For aircraft accidents involving Air National Guard members, the gaining MAJCOM convenes the AIB/GAIB
- The AIB/GAIB will need to obtain a copy of the orders of any member involved in the mishap

References

- Treatment of Reports of Aircraft Accident Investigations, 10 U.S.C. § 2254
- Aircraft accident investigation boards: composition requirements, 10 U.S.C. § 2255
- *United States v. Weber Aircraft Corp.*, 465 U.S. 792 (1984)
- DoDI 6055.07, *Mishap Notification, Investigation, Reporting and Record Keeping* (6 June 2011) incorporating Change 1, 31 August 2018
- DAFI 91-204, *Safety Investigations and Reports* (10 March 2021)
- AFI 51-307, *Aerospace and Ground Accident Investigations* (18 March 2019)

FLYING EVALUATION BOARDS

When performance of rated duty becomes questionable, a flying evaluation board (FEB) may be convened. This applies to rated officers, career enlisted aviators, non-rated officers, and non-career enlisted aviator enlisted aircrew members. FEBs are administrative, fact-finding proceedings that are closed to the public.

Key Takeaways

- » An FEB is convened by a flying wing commander/equivalent or higher
- » The member must be notified in writing and has a right to counsel
- » FEBs are not a substitute for disciplinary or other administrative action and may occur in conjunction with disciplinary or other administrative action(s)
- » MAJCOM/A3T is the final approval authority for boards convened at major command (MAJCOM)-level or below
- » Ensure to follow each MAJCOM's supplement to DAFMAN 11-402, *Aviation, Missile, and Parachutist Service*, for FEBs

Reasons to Convene a Flying Evaluation Board

- Seven bases exist to conduct an FEB: (1) Non-permanent Disqualification; (2) Lack of Proficiency; (3) Failure to Meet Training Standards; (4) Lack of Judgment; (5) Aircrew Requirements; (6) Violations of other Aviation Instructions and Procedures; and (7) Habits, Traits, Characteristics
- Specifics of each basis may vary by MAJCOM supplemental instruction to DAFMAN 11-402

Composition of a Flying Evaluation Board

- An FEB is convened by an officer designated as convening authority by MAJCOM/A3T who is the commander of a flying unit at wing level (or comparable-level), or higher
- Three rated voting members, qualified for aviation service in an active aviation service code (ASC), and senior in rank to the respondent, will be appointed and will constitute a quorum
 - Voting members should be in the same aircrew specialty (e.g., pilot, navigator, or flight engineer) as the respondent. The senior board member is a voting member and final authority regarding conduct at the board.
 - To the greatest extent possible, at least one voting member should have the same primary duty Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) as the respondent
 - Enlisted members will not be appointed to an FEB convened for an officer and officers will not be appointed to an FEB convened for an enlisted member (including the recorder position)

- A flight surgeon may be appointed as a non-voting member when a medical problem may be a significant contributing factor in the case
- One additional aircrew member is appointed to act as a non-voting recorder. The recorder prepares the case by presenting the evidence and examining the witnesses in a non-adversarial manner.
 - A judge advocate may advise the recorder but may not be appointed as an assistant recorder or voting member and may not be present during closed sessions
 - A judge advocate, however, may be appointed as a non-voting legal advisor to advise on procedural matters and to ensure the respondent receives a fair, impartial, and non-adversarial hearing

Flying Evaluation Board Procedures and Guidelines

- Notify the respondent in writing and include the basis for convening the FEB and all allegations, when and where the board will meet, witnesses to be called, and rights of the respondent
- The respondent must acknowledge the notification within 48 hours (two duty days) and provide a response within five calendar days
 - Respondent may waive an FEB to return to a previously qualified aircraft if enrolled in flying training
 - Respondent may submit a request for voluntary disqualification from aviation service in lieu of the FEB (also known as a VILO) within five calendar days of receiving the FEB notification letter. Should such request be submitted, FEB action is suspended until the MAJCOM acts on the VILO request.
- If an Air Reserve Component aircrew member requires an FEB during a formal flying training course with a Regular Air Force unit, the Regular Air Force MAJCOM/A3T will appoint a convening authority for an FEB at the base of training
 - In these situations, one of the board members must be a rated officer (as appropriate) in the Air Force Reserve or a member of the Air National Guard, preferably from the individual's home unit

Rights of the Respondent at a Flying Evaluation Board

- Assigned military counsel of his/her own choosing (if available) or civilian counsel (at respondent's expense)
- Informed in writing of the specific reasons for convening the board
- Challenge voting members for cause
- Review all evidence and documents to be submitted to the board by the recorder (if practical, this opportunity to review should be accomplished with sufficient time for the respondent to adequately review), and cross-examine witnesses called by the board, call witnesses, and present evidence. The recorder arranges for military witnesses.

- Although civilian witnesses may appear, an FEB cannot compel their attendance. Consult with the servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) concerning the procedures for requesting the presence of civilian Department of War employees.
- Testify personally and submit a written response. Respondent may not be compelled to testify.

Rules of Evidence

- An FEB does not have to follow the same rules of evidence as courts-martial under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)
 - General observance of the same evidentiary rules as those under the UCMJ, however, promotes orderly procedures and a thorough investigation
- The decision about the authenticity of documents rests with the senior board member

Findings and Recommendations

- Findings are made in closed session by voting members only, and each finding must be supported by a preponderance of the evidence
- Findings must specifically include comment on each allegation or point in question
- Recommendations must be consistent with the findings and generally only address qualification for aviation service, not qualifications to remain in the Air Force
 - If the officer holds more than one aviation qualification, the FEB must make a recommendation as to all qualifications
 - If the FEB recommends disqualification, it may also recommend whether the officer should be prohibited from wearing the associated aviation badge
- A minority report is appropriate if there is a disagreement among the voting members

Review Process

- The convening authority's SJA reviews for legal sufficiency. This review is limited to sufficiency of the evidence and compliance with procedural requirements.
- The convening authority adds comments and recommendations, but must explain any recommendations that are contrary to those of the FEB
- The convening authority or higher reviewer may reconvene the FEB or order a new board
- The MAJCOM/A3T makes the final determination in all FEB cases convened at the MAJCOM-level or below

Reference

-
- DAFMAN 11-402, *Aviation, Missile, and Parachutist Service* (8 January 2026)

AIR FORCE OPEN HOUSES

Department of the Air Force (DAF) Open Houses are conducted, pursuant to AFMAN 10-1004, *Conducting Air Force Open Houses*, to enhance public awareness of the Air Force and Space Force missions, to demonstrate modern weapons systems and capabilities, to promote a sense of aviation and spaceflight heritage, to promote positive community and international relations, and to showcase our Airmen and Guardians as well as to support DAF recruiting missions.

Key Takeaways

- » Planning for a properly-executed DAF Open House takes a full two years between most installation air shows, and requires a well-led team encompassing most functional offices
- » AFMAN 10-1004, provides guidance on most aspects of conducting a DAF Open House. Attachment 4 breaks down which expenses are funded with appropriated funds and which with nonappropriated funds (including Commercial Sponsorship).
- » Installations may not directly charge the general public a fee for installation admission or parking as part of an Open House
- » The physical layout of the flightline and viewing areas should allow for viewing military and civilian aerial acts, partaking of offered concessions, access to comfort stations, and visiting interesting and informative static displays; all the while moving the attendees efficiently from ingress point to egress point

General Guidance

- Open Houses involve opening the installation to the public, most often so they can view aerial demonstration acts from the context of the installation. There are also ample opportunities for the public to tour aviation and non-aviation static information displays and visit the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) area. In addition to a STEM learning area, most installations include a children's play area and concessions.

Planning Considerations

- DAF flying installations generally hold an Open House every two years. Planning for the next Open House should begin as soon as the last Open House is concluded and lessons learned captured. Although the Open House is primarily for a public relations mission, the installation commander will usually appoint an officer (most often a rated aviator in the grade of O-4 or O-5) to act as the Open House Coordinator (OHC).
- The OHC should assemble a planning and execution working group including, but not limited to, the following functional areas: operations, explosive ordnance storage, safety, security forces and parking office, public affairs, contracting, community partnership, medical, and the installation Staff Judge Advocate's office. Layout of the ramp, including viewing areas, static displays and concessions, should be designed to move the crowd efficiently.

- Open Houses are conducted from late spring through early fall and should last not more than three days; most often two days preceded by a practice day. The agenda should factor in ingress and egress times, public endurance, and an appreciation that the performance team (i.e., Thunderbirds) and the demonstration teams (e.g., ACC F-22 demo team) are key attractions.
 - Performance teams and USAF aircraft demonstration teams are scheduled through the SAF/PAY Aerial Events office and such schedules are also made two years in advance
 - Civilian air acts and warbird (military heritage) acts are independently contracted for by the installation. Installations most often contract for the services of a professional Air Boss and Open House Announcer with experience running the air show portion of the Open House. Prudent OHCs attend the DAF Open House Workshop in early December which coincides with a trade show organized by the air show industry.
- Static displays may be aircraft opened for public visitation and photography, booths and hands-on displays of functional expertise, ground equipment, and equipment from other nearby Sister Service (as well as possibly other Federal and State agencies) installations. Appropriate uniformed personnel should be stationed at each static display to present the display to the public and answer questions.
- Installations may not charge the public an admission or parking fee or charge them to enter or photograph static displays. Installation-recognized Private Organizations may obtain a concessionaire's license to sell unit memorabilia items.

Support Services

- Opening the installation to a large number of visitors puts a strain on ordinary support services. Additional trash receptacles and temporary portable restrooms must usually be contracted for. The installation commander must ensure there are available restrooms, fresh water, and an Open House schedule of events (print or electronic copy) available free of charge.
- The Force Support Squadron (FSS) will establish a concessions area where food and beverage service may be purchased; alcohol sales are permitted as well, subject to DAFI 34-107, *Alcoholic Beverage Program*. Concessions may be centrally managed through a master concessionaire contract. The FSS may also let contracts for premium parking, premium seating for viewing, premium food/beverage service and premium restrooms.
- Security may prevent the introduction of privately-owned coolers on Force Protection grounds but may not merely do so to enhance FSS sales. Although concession sales are not the primary mission of an Open House, the proceeds from a well-run Open House can sometimes fund MWR operations for the remainder of the year.
- Large crowds also place a heavy toll on available cell phone towers and Wi-Fi service. Installations can arrange and/or contract for additional cell and Wi-Fi coverage during the Open House.

Safety and Security

- The safety and security of visitors is the primary focus of the installation commander and OHC-run planning team. Opening portions of an installation to the public does not relieve commanders of their responsibility to safeguard the safety and security of the installation.
- Many visitors are not familiar with aviation equipment and adequate monitors must be stationed throughout the air show. First aid stations and lost/found centers (items and children) must be established.
- Opening portions of an installation to the public does not, in and of itself, cause the installation to lose its “closed” status for purposes of regulating First Amendment activities

Funding and Fiscal Considerations

- Attachment 4 to AFMAN 10-1004 is a funding matrix delineating expenses payable with appropriated funds from those payable with nonappropriated funds
- Installations may accept conditional gifts in support of the open house per AFI 51-506, *Gifts to the Air Force from Domestic and Foreign Sources*. The FSS may enter into commercial sponsorship agreements, per DAFI 34-108, *Commercial Sponsorship and Sale of Advertising*, for the acceptance of commercial sponsorship of civilian air acts and the MWR elements.
- Partnering agreements may be possible with the State and local community as Intergovernmental Support Agreements (per 10 U.S.C. § 2679) or with nonprofit entities by means of a Community Relations Memorandum of Understanding, a real property out-grant (e.g., lease or license) to allow their use of DAF property, or other possible arrangements. Our community partners or lessee/licensees may have more discretion in blending traditional appropriated fund expenses with nonappropriated fund streams of income than we can do under the Federal Acquisition Regulations.

References

- Installation-support Services: Intergovernmental Support Agreements, 10 U.S.C. § 2679
- DAFPD 90-22, *Air Force Community Partnership Program* (21 April 2021)
- DAFI 32-9003, *Granting Temporary Use of Air Force Real Property* (24 August 2018)
- DAFI 34-107, *Alcoholic Beverage Program* (5 July 2023)
- DAFI 34-108, *Commercial Sponsorship and Sale of Advertising* (31 January 2023)
- AFI 34-223, *Private Organizations Program* (13 December 2018)
- AFI 51-506, *Gifts to the Air Force from Domestic and Foreign Sources* (16 April 2019)
- AFMAN 10-1004, *Conducting Air Force Open Houses* (23 August 2018)

Chapter 17

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

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ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS – OVERVIEW

Failure to comply with environmental laws and regulations may inhibit full mission accomplishment and impact installation resources. Additionally, commanders can be held criminally liable for violations of environmental laws and regulations. Familiarization with this chapter will help a commander minimize negative impacts to the mission and the environment.

Key Takeaways

- » The Air Force and Space Force are subject to state and local fines and penalties for violations of environmental requirements related to, but not limited to, hazardous waste, underground storage tanks, drinking water, or lead-based paint
- » Most statutes subject Air Force and Space Force personnel to criminal liability for violations of environmental laws and regulations
- » There are three levels of enforcement authority: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state or local enforcement agencies, and private citizens
- » The base has a number of offices with expertise in environmental matters, such as civil engineering, office of the Staff Judge Advocate, bioenvironmental engineering, medical, or safety

Environmental Statutes

- Federal statutes now cover virtually all major environmental issues:
 - Exemptions from federal statutes and rules are rare because they usually require personal action by the President or the Secretary of War
 - Most statutes subject Air Force and Space Force personnel to criminal liability for violations of environmental laws and regulations

Enforcement Authority

- Three levels of enforcement authority typically apply:
 - EPA: Retains authority to enforce federal requirements when it has not delegated that authority to the relevant state or when it learns of violations not being prosecuted or otherwise dealt with by a delegated state
 - State or Local Enforcement Agencies: Have primary responsibility for taking administrative or judicial action for most violations
 - Private Citizens: When federal, state, or local enforcement authorities have failed to abate violations, most environmental statutes allow private citizens to initiate civil enforcement proceedings in a federal district court

Assistance

- The base has a number of offices with expertise in environmental matters. These offices typically include civil engineering, office of the Staff Judge Advocate, bioenvironmental engineering, medical, safety, and others.
- To assist commanders in addressing environmental issues, there are required meetings with the installation Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Council (ESOHC), which is normally chaired by the deputy wing commander

Overseas

- Environmental requirements for U.S. forces outside the states, territories, and possessions that comprise the U.S. are determined primarily by treaties and international agreements, Department of War (DoW) and geographic combatant command policies, and service and subordinate command directives. Few U.S. environmental laws apply outside the United States, and those that do apply extraterritorially are incorporated into DoW policy for overseas installations and operations.

References

- Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Department of Defense Actions, 32 C.F.R. Part 187
- DoDI 4715.05, *Environmental Compliance at Installations Outside the United States* (1 November 2013), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018
- DoDI 4715.08, *Remediation of Environmental Contamination Outside the United States* (1 November 2013), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018
- DoDI 4715.19, *Use of Open-Air Burn Pits in Contingency Operations* (13 November 2018)
- DoDI 4715.22, *Environmental Management Policy for Contingency Locations* (18 February 2016), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018
- DAFI 32-7001, *Environmental Management* (8 January 2025)
- DAFI 32-7091, *Environmental Management Outside the United States* (19 September 2024)
- DAFI 90-801, *Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Councils* (9 May 2024)
- DAFMAN 32-7002, *Environmental Compliance and Pollution Prevention* (13 June 2025)
- DAFMAN 32-7003, *Environmental Conservation* (26 June 2024)
- AFI 32-7020, *Environmental Restoration Program* (12 March 2020), including DAFI32-7020_DAFGM2024-01, 16 May 2024

CONTROLS ON AIR FORCE AND SPACE FORCE DECISION-MAKING: NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to evaluate environmental impacts as part of their planning and decision-making process. It also requires public notice of, and involvement in, the process. Failure to follow NEPA planning could result in a court halting the project until the NEPA process is complete. This section is limited to NEPA procedural requirements within the United States and its territories.

Key Takeaways

- » Failure to follow NEPA's mandate through the Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) can result in the action being delayed by litigation challenging the adequacy of the NEPA documentation
- » EIAP is required for any "major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." This includes projects proposed by the Air Force or Space Force and private actions essentially under Air Force or Space Force "control."

Implementation

- Within the Air Force or Space Force, NEPA review is required for any "major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." This includes both projects proposed by the DAF and private actions essentially under Air Force or Space Force "control" (e.g., actions requiring Air Force or Space Force permission).
 - "Major" refers to impact on the environment, not to the size of the project; thus, even a small project can qualify as major
 - Impacts may be significant, based on context and intensity
 - The term "human environment" includes the natural and physical environment, as well as the relationship of people with that environment
- Generally, the Air Force and Space Force may not irretrievably commit money or resources for any proposed action until the EIAP is completed
- Failure to follow EIAP can result in the action being delayed by litigation challenging the adequacy of the NEPA documentation
- A reviewing court's focus will be whether the Air Force or Space Force has taken a hard look and made a good faith assessment of potential impacts to the environment and whether reasonable alternatives were considered

Additional Implementing Considerations

- Presence of wetlands or floodplains may require additional documentation and higher headquarters level approval
- Presence of classified information does not exempt the Air Force or Space Force from its NEPA responsibilities, but it may modify the public's right to participate in the NEPA process. Unclassified portions of the required analysis are shared with the public.
- The Air Force and Space Force are prohibited from supporting or taking any action affecting air quality in a nonattainment or maintenance area (e.g., construction, weapon system bed down, mission realignment, training exercise, etc.) which does not conform to a State Implementation Plan (SIP)
 - The requirement to conform to a SIP is called "general conformity" and requires the Air Force and Space Force to demonstrate the proposed action will not hinder attainment or maintenance of air quality standards
- Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act consultation, if required, must be completed prior to completing the environmental review

Level of Environmental Review

- Categorical Exclusion (CATEX): Used for actions that do not individually or cumulatively have potential for significant effect on the environment and require no further environmental analysis (see DOD NEPA Implementing Procedures, Part 1.4)
 - When application of a CATEX must be documented, an AF Form 813, *Request for Environmental Impact Analysis*, is used
 - If the proposed action does not lead to a CATEX, the Air Force and Space Force must determine whether to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS)
- EA: Used for actions that are not expected to have a significant environmental impact
 - An EA is similar to an EIS in that both consider alternatives and impacts, but an EA is limited to 75 pages and has fewer opportunities for public comment or participation
 - Every EA concludes with either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or the decision to prepare an EIS

- EIS: Required for actions expected to have a significant impact
 - The heart of an EIS is the identification and analysis of alternatives. A range of reasonable alternatives satisfying the purpose and need of the proposed action must be analyzed, and must include a “No Action” alternative.
 - An EIS is limited to 150 pages and concludes with the signing of a Record of Decision (ROD)

NEPA is a Procedural Law

- The Air Force and Space Force must ensure environmental concerns are given appropriate consideration, but NEPA does not require the Air Force or Space Force to rank environmental concerns above mission goals
- The Air Force and Space Force must ensure all reasonable measures are considered to mitigate adverse environmental impacts associated with an action it has chosen to implement
 - An EIS or EA/FONSI should clearly identify mitigation measures
 - If mitigation measures are proposed, proponents must prepare a mitigation plan and submit it to HQ USAF/A4CI for each FONSI or ROD containing mitigation measures

References

- National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. § 4321 *et seq.*
- Department of Defense National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures (30 June 2025)
- Initial Department of the Air Force (DAF) Policy for Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (7 July 2025)
- DAF Form 813, *Request for Environmental Impact Analysis* (3 September 2025)

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM; ENVIRONMENTAL INSPECTIONS; AND THE ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY, AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL

The Department of the Air Force Environmental Management System (EMS) is a framework for program and process improvement through clearly defined environmental roles and responsibilities, planning requirements, budgeting, effective implementation and operation, and management review. The Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Council (ESOHC) is a steering group that establishes goals, monitors progress, and advises installation senior leadership.

Key Takeaways

- » Environmental inspections are an essential aspect of maintaining compliance with environmental legal requirements
- » EMS management is important to identifying needs for funding to ensure mission requirements are supported by compliance with mandatory environmental requirements
- » Commanders must ensure implementation of inspection findings to ensure installation compliance with environmental legal requirements
- » Inspection documents must be released, if required, but are otherwise internal documents

Environmental Management System

- EMS incorporates business processes and business rules for managing and reducing environmental risk. All personnel have a role in their installation's EMS.
 - EMS drives continuous improvement for all Air Force and Space Force environmental programs
 - The inspection system uses eDASH, an internet-based document control system maintained by the Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC), who implements EMS across the Air Force and Space Force

Environmental Inspections

- Installations will conduct EMS compliance and conformance self-assessments and track preventative and corrective actions

Release of Environmental Inspection Documents and Information

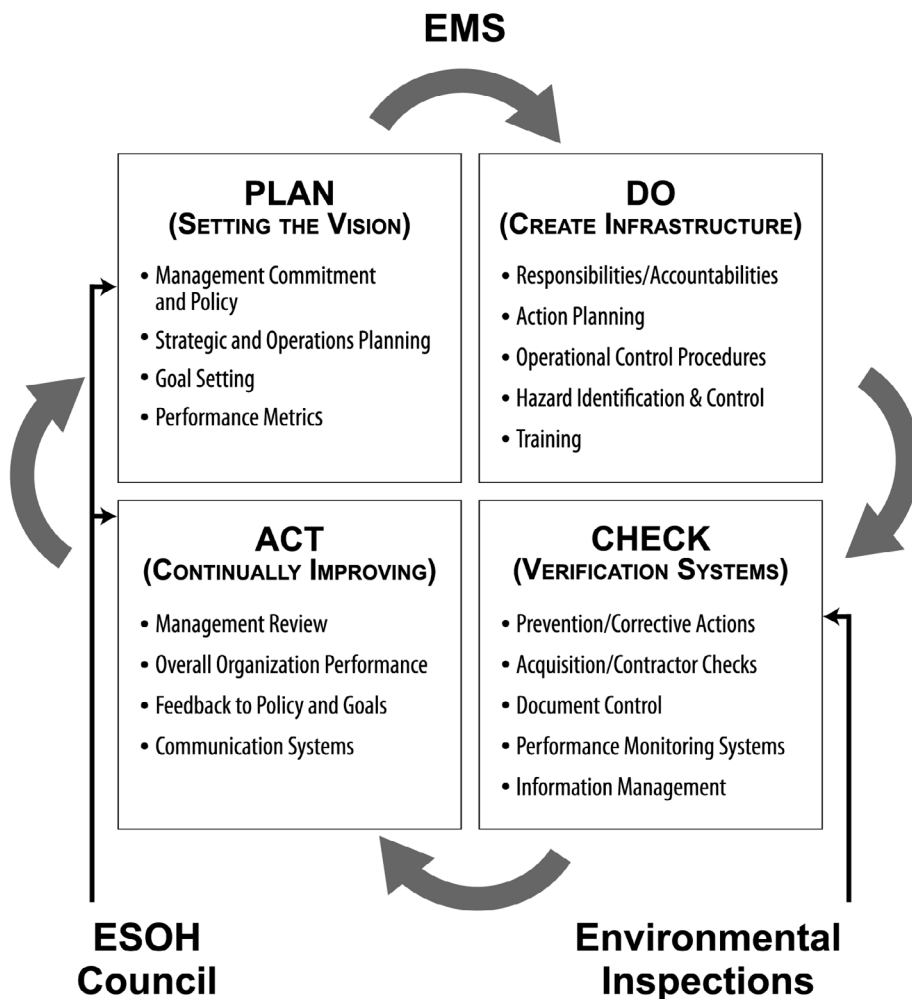
- Inspection documents and information must be managed and protected in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies
- The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), DoDM 5400.07, AFMAN 33-302, and DAFI 90-302, govern the release of inspection records

Environmental, Safety, and Occupational Health Council

- The ESOHC is the cornerstone of the Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health (ESOH) program. It provides senior leadership involvement and direction at all levels of command, and develops, approves, and monitors ESOH risk-based performance goals and objectives.
- The ESOHC reports annually on the progress of ESOH goals, as defined by next higher-level ESOHC, and any issues requiring higher-level assistance or direction until closure
- The ESOHC reports annually to the next higher-level ESOHC on the effectiveness of the management systems, evaluates high risk and/or problematic open findings, and tracks progress to correct validated deficiencies

Figure 17.1. Interaction of EMS, Environmental Inspections, and ESOH Council

[Detailed description of chart provided at end of section](#)



References

- Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552
- DoDI 4715.17, *Environmental Management Systems* (15 April 2009), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018
- DoDM 5400.07, *DoD Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Program* (25 January 2017)
- DoDM 5400.07_AFMAN 33-302, *Freedom of Information Act Program* (27 April 2018)
- DAFI 32-7001, *Environmental Management* (8 January 2025)
- DAFI 90-302, *The Inspection System of the Department of the Air Force* (15 March 2023)
- DAFI 90-801, *Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Councils* (9 May 2024)

Chart Detailed Description

Figure 17.1 Interaction of EMS, Environmental Inspections, and ESOHC:

The interaction of the EMS, Environmental Inspections, and ESOHC is a continuous cycle of 4 stages: Plan, Do, Check, and Act. The Plan stage sets the vision addressing: management commitment and policy, strategic and operations planning, goal setting, and performance metrics. The Do stage creates infrastructure addressing responsibilities/accountabilities, action planning, operational control procedures, hazard identification & control, and training. The Check phase involves verification systems that address prevention/corrective actions, acquisition/contractor checks, document control, performance monitoring systems, and information management. Environmental inspections come into play during the Check phase. The Act phase deals with continual improvement addressing management review, overall organization performance, feedback to policy and goals, and communication systems. The ESOHC is involved in the Plan and Act phases.

INTERACTION WITH THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) establishes occupational safety and health (OSH) standards to ensure safe and healthy conditions in workplaces throughout the United States. OSHA enforces its standards through inquiries, inspections, investigations, and issuing citations for violation of OSHA standards.

Key Takeaways

- » Federal agencies must comply with OSHA standards
- » OSHA standards do not apply to military-unique workplaces
- » Air Force installations must respond to OSHA investigations, inquiries, and citations

Applicability of OSHA Standards

- Federal agencies must provide safe and healthy working conditions for its employees
- Federal agencies must establish and maintain OSH programs that obey OSHA standards or approved alternate standards
 - Does not apply to workplaces that use or handle Department of War (DoW) equipment, systems, and operations that are unique to the national defense mission
 - “Military unique” workplaces and places where only military members work do not have to obey OSHA standards
- DAFI 48-145, *Occupational and Environmental Health Program*, specifies Air Force occupational and environmental health standards that apply to all military and civilian personnel
- DAFI 91-202, *The US Air Force Mishap Prevention Program*, provides Air Force industrial and ground safety policy that implements OSHA standards

Reporting Requirements

- In accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 1904.39, prompt reporting to OSHA regarding specific employee incidents that are the result of a work-related incident is required. Typically, this is accomplished through the installation safety office. The type of incident includes:
 - Any employee death, which must be reported within 8 hours; or
 - Any in-patient hospitalization of one or more employees, any amputation, or the loss of an eye, which must be reported within 24 hours.
- This reporting requirement may extend to certain contractors under the day-to-day supervision of the government. Contact your installation safety office to determine applicability.

Contact from OSHA

- There are three typical contacts an installation may have with OSHA:
 - Inquiry: Process that occurs in response to a complaint from a non-employee or when a complaint alleges a violation occurred, but there is no present danger to workers
 - Inspection: On-site evaluation of workplace(s), which can be scheduled ahead of time, or under some circumstances, conducted unannounced
 - Investigation: In-depth look into a fatality or catastrophe caused by a workplace hazard. A catastrophe is defined as an incident resulting in hospitalization of three or more employees.
 - The Air Force and Space Force must investigate the incident and, upon request, provide OSHA with a report of the investigation's findings
 - The OSHA Area Director decides whether OSHA conducts an investigation of the incident and whether to participate in the Air Force or Space Force's investigation
- Citation: Issued using an OSHA-2H Form, *Notice of Unsafe or Unhealthful Working Conditions* (also known as an OSHA Notice)
 - A copy of the citation must be posted at or near the location of each violation addressed in the citation, and a copy of the citation must remain posted until the violation is abated or three working days, whichever date is later

Responses to OSHA

- Inquiry and Citation: The Air Force and Space Force reply should be responsive, respectful, timely, and sincere, answer OSHA's questions, and address OSHA's concerns
 - If a violation occurred, specify which actions have been taken or which actions will be taken to fix the violation and prevent a repeat occurrence
- Inspection and Investigation: During inspections and investigations, Air Force and Space Force representatives should be cooperative, respectful, and interested
 - Be open and facilitate site visits, interviews, and document reviews
 - Provide escorts for inspectors and investigators, take pictures of whatever inspectors or investigators take pictures of, and take samples of anything OSHA samples
- Ensure the servicing legal office knows about, and provides support regarding, all OSHA contacts and responses
- Respond to citations after consulting the servicing legal office

State OSH Regulations and Regulators

- Generally speaking, State OSH laws and regulations do not apply to Air Force and Space Force workplaces, except for contractors
 - Air Force and Space Force contractors are subject to federal and state OSH requirements

References

- Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 U.S.C. §§ 651–678
- Reporting Fatalities, Hospitalizations, Amputations, and Losses of an Eye as a Result of Work-Related Incidents to OSHA, 29 C.F.R. Part 1904.39
- Basic Program Elements for Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health Programs and Related Matters, 29 C.F.R. Part 1960
- DoDI 6055.01, *DoD Safety and Occupational Health (SOH) Program* (14 October 2014), incorporating through Change 3, 21 April 2021
- DoDI 6055.05, *Occupational and Environmental Health (OEH)* (11 November 2008), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018
- DAFPD 91-2, *Safety Programs* (25 June 2024)
- DAFI 48-145, *Occupational and Environmental Health Program* (22 September 2022)
- DAFI 90-801, *Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Councils* (9 May 2024)
- DAFI 91-202, *The US Air Force Mishap Prevention Program* (10 April 2024)
- DAFMAN 48-145, *Occupational Health Program Management* (1 December 2022)
- DAFVA 91-209, *Air Force Occupational Safety and Health Program* (17 September 2024)

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

Environmental regulators issue enforcement actions (EAs) to notify bases of which environmental requirements were violated, actions necessary to become compliant, and whether the base faces fines and/or penalties for the violation. EAs can be serious, costly, and trigger various immediate reporting requirements.

Key Takeaways

- » EAs can cost an installation a significant amount of Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funds
- » Each EA must be quickly coordinated with the base Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) and the Regional Counsel Office (RCO)
- » To prevent noncompliance, certain steps can (and should) be taken, such as self-inspections and thorough record-keeping practices

Receiving an EA

- EAs may be issued by various regulatory bodies at all levels, including federal, state, and local agencies
- EAs may also be called notices of violation (NOV), notices of non-compliance (NON), notices of deficiency (NOD), compliance agreements (CA), or consent orders (CO)
- EAs are commonly issued after an inspection or as the result of a report of noncompliance filed by a regulator. In certain cases, a failure to report (e.g., an effluent limit exceedance, spills, etc.) can also result in enforcement.
- Depending on the nature of the violation, fines and penalties may be assessed and are ultimately paid using installation O&M funds. Additionally, regulators may seek injunctions to shut down operations or pursue criminal charges.
- Installations may face EAs for the actions of non-Air Force and non-Space Force personnel, such as the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) employees, contractor employees, property lessees, and other agency personnel

Reporting and Tracking EAs

- Organizations shall report all written notices, emails, field citations, and other correspondence from regulatory agencies pertaining to non-compliance with applicable environmental requirements, to include spills and releases of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) and Fluorine-Free Fire Fighting Foam (F3) usage, within one business day through the EA Spills and Inspections Environmental Reporting (EASIER) database
- The installation SJA or representative shall notify the RCO and installation CEI within one business day of receiving any notice of a non-compliance or obtaining knowledge of any potential non-compliance

- Bioenvironmental Engineers (BEs) or other installation authorities must notify the BEs at the major command (MAJCOM) level of any violation of potable water quality sampling within one business day and immediately implement public notification procedures required by the regulator

Responding to an EA

- Coordinate with the installation SJA and the RCO prior to responding to any EA
- Pay careful attention to response deadlines contained in enforcement documentation. Some regulators direct a required response date or timeframe. Continue good communication with the regulator throughout the process.
- Do not assume the base is subject to the rule or law allegedly violated, or that actions laid out by the regulator are required to be taken, such as a penalty or paying a fine. Legal advice must be sought from the installation SJA and RCO to determine the validity of the EA.
- Encourage frequent communication within the unit and the applicable regulator throughout the process
- Preserve evidence and document site conditions for potential EA litigation

EA Process

- The RCO is the lead negotiator for all NOV's and coordinates settlement agreements with regulators. The Environmental Law and Litigation Division (AF/JAOE) Chief must approve settlement agreements, including the payment of fines or penalties, prior to receiving the commander's signature.
- Federal regulatory agencies, like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, may attempt to resolve EAs through settlement or by filing a "complaint," which triggers a formal administrative process. In that formal process, the installation must generally file an "answer" within 20 days. Failing to respond to the complaint could be considered an admission.
- State and local agencies often have their own distinct rules an installation should follow when responding to EAs
- Paying civil fines or penalties assessed as part of an EA are normally the responsibility of the installation

Avoiding EAs in the Future

- Stress the importance to unit personnel of complying with all environmental and safety instructions (e.g., Air Force Instructions, Department of War (DoW) regulations, permits, material safety data sheets (MSDS), etc.)

- Be prepared for regulator-led inspections by conducting regular self-inspections, promoting thorough record-keeping practices, and fixing deficiencies on the spot
 - Select and prepare a knowledgeable and professional team to escort regulators during inspections. Escorts should mirror the inspectors by duplicating any information collected, such as taking pictures of what the inspectors photograph, and creating a copy of the documents they collect. Oftentimes regulators will issue EAs, but refuse to provide accompanying evidence, which makes it difficult to defend the installation.
 - Know the areas most likely to produce violations, such as hazardous waste label practices, personnel training records, and documentation pertaining to hazardous waste management and shipments

Bottom Line

- Preparation is the key to avoiding EAs
- Prompt and cooperative responses are the key to resolving EAs
- Consult with the installation SJA, CEI, and BE immediately upon receiving an EA, especially before signing or paying anything

References

- DAFI 32-7001, *Environmental Management* (8 January 2025)
- DAFMAN 32-7002, *Environmental Compliance and Pollution Prevention* (13 June 2025)
- DAFMAN 65-605, Volume 1, *Budget Guidance and Technical Procedures* (31 March 2021)
- AFI 51-301, *Civil Litigation* (2 October 2018)

MEDIA RELATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The Air Force and Space Force develop public engagement programs to build public understanding, trust, and support for Air Force and Space Force missions and people. Public Affairs (PA) activities are to inform and include audiences during critical decision-making windows, and to communicate the Air Force and Space Force's commitment to environmental excellence.

Key Takeaway

- » The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the public be informed of, and involved in, the decision-making process; therefore, PA's role is to prepare, coordinate, and distribute timely news releases and other public information materials related to, and aligned with, the proposal and associated Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) documents, which is critical to meeting NEPA's mandate

EIAP PA Responsibilities

- Ensure all PA aspects of EIAP actions are conducted in accordance with NEPA and AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Operations*, Chapter 6
 - Review and clear environmental documents in accordance with AFI 35-101 prior to public release
 - Ensure security and policy review requirements are met for all information proposed for public release, as noted in Chapter 9 of AFI 35-101 and Chapter 8 of AFMAN 35-101, *Public Affairs Procedures*
- Assist Department of the Air Force judge advocates in planning and conducting public meetings and hearings
 - Attend and assist in preparation of scoping meetings and other public meetings or media sessions on environmental issues
- Advise the Environmental Planning Function (EPF) and the action proponent on PA activities on proposed actions and reviewing environmental documents for public involvement issues
 - Advise the EPF of issues and competing general-public and stakeholder interests that should be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Prepare, coordinate, and distribute timely news releases and other public information materials related to, and aligned with, the proposal and associated EIAP documents
- Notify the media (television, radio, newspaper) of actions as necessary, and purchase advertisements when newspapers will not run notices free of charge. The project proponent will fund the required advertisements.

Installation Restoration Program (IRP) PA Responsibilities

- Serve as the focal point for PA aspects of proposed IRP actions, as noted in AFI 35-101, para. 6.2.3.9
- Advise on, and support, the PA aspects of the base's development and participation in the Restoration Advisory Board, a community based advisory board, plus other public information activities
- Ensure all concerned stakeholders, community groups, and governmental entities are in the communication channel
- Prepare an IRP community relations plan and announce the availability and location of information repositories (often called the Administrative Record)

Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) Program PA Involvement

- The Base Community Planner (BCP) generally manages the AICUZ program. PA assists the BCP in preparing for public meetings and releasing and distributing relevant information.
- PA handles noise complaints directly, and provides timely, responsive, and factual answers to maintain good media and community relations. PA also presents the complaints to the appropriate installation meetings or boards. PA will refer all claims for damages to the base legal office.

References

- Environmental Impact Analysis Process, 32 C.F.R. Part 989
- AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Operations* (20 November 2020)
- AFMAN 35-101, *Public Affairs Procedures* (7 December 2020)

MISSION SUSTAINMENT

Mission sustainment hazards have the potential to directly affect both the ability of Department of the Air Force (DAF) installations to accomplish the mission and the quality of life in surrounding communities. AFI 90-2001, *Mission Sustainment*, aligns installation mission sustainment programs with the Air Force risk management model described in DAFPM 90-803, *Risk Management (RM) Guidelines and Tools*. The Air Force Mission Sustainment Risk Management Program should identify common issues affecting installations while integrating existing foundational programs, such as the Air Force Noise Program and the Air Installation Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) Program.

Key Takeaways

- » If a mission sustainment hazard includes topics sensitive in the local community, critical mission impacts, or is likely to garner negative media attention, elevate the issue to the major command or field command (MAJCOM/FLDCOM) level and notify the installation Staff Judge Advocate (SJA)
- » Inform the installation SJA when a noise complaint is received
- » Installations may show support to state and/or local zoning decisions, but may not imply that if that particular decision does not occur, it would directly affect a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision

Installation Mission Sustainment Team (IMST)

- The installation commander establishes an IMST to assist in implementing the Mission Sustainment Program at an installation
- The team is a cross-functional team with representatives from various organizations
- Goals of the IMST:
 - Address mission sustainment across the Installation Complex/Mission Footprint
 - Brief the installation commander and MAJCOM/FLDCOM Mission Sustainment Team, at least annually, on emerging threats, the status of the program (including information on emerging hazards), the status of control implementation, and recommended focus areas for the coming year
- Installation Complex Encroachment Management Action Plan (ICEMAP): A three-volume document (Action Plan, Reference Book, and Community Brochure) addressing current and future encroachment and sustainment challenges facing Air Force and Space Force installations and their surrounding communities

Air Force Noise Program

- While the installation Community Planner generally manages the installation noise program, the installation commander may assign noise program management tasks to another office
- Aircraft overflights, weapon system operations, or munitions use have the potential to produce sound levels that may cause annoyance, speech interference, sleep disturbance, or structural damage
- The Federal Noise Control Act (FNCA) exempts aircraft, military weapons, and equipment designed for combat use from noise regulation
 - Courts have determined state and local regulation of aircraft noise is preempted by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations
- The DAF considers the FNCA in its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses and complies with the substance of FNCA for stationary noise
 - The FNCA does not allow the federal government to be sued because it does not contain a federal facility enforcement provision or private right of action against federal agencies
- Inform the installation SJA when a noise complaint is received and retain the complaint, with geospatial data, for a minimum of five years

AICUZ Program

- Local governments ordinarily establish land use regulations. The Air Force and Space Force support and encourage local zoning and other land use controls that ensure land areas surrounding bases, especially private lands adjacent to runways, remain compatible with continued Air Force and Space Force operations.
- DoW established the AICUZ program to assist local governments in establishing suitable land use regulations in the vicinity of installations
- The DAF develops and provides local land use planning authorities recommendations designed to ensure continued compatibility between installations and neighboring civilian communities
 - The DAF has no authority to implement the land use recommendations set forth in the AICUZ study or to control or regulate off-base land use. An installation simply presents its recommendations to the local zoning authority, which may approve or reject them.
 - Close coordination between the commander, the base comprehensive planner, and local zoning officials is essential. This coordination serves to educate local land use planners regarding noise and safety impacts on private lands.

- Air Force and Space Force representatives may not threaten the local community with reprisals if the Air Force and Space Force proposal is not accepted. Air Force and Space Force representatives may not appear to coerce or otherwise unduly influence local zoning officials. For example, reprisal or coercion could include linking acceptance of a proposal to potential BRAC decisions.
- Constant consultation with the installation SJA minimizes the potential for lawsuits and impacts to the mission
- Congress provided authority to acquire property interests, including restrictive use or conservation easements where necessary to sustain the mission and prevent encroachment (10 U.S.C. § 2684a)

The Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse

- The Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) works with energy production developers (e.g., a wind or solar farm development) to mitigate and sometimes avoid mission sustainment hazards
- When a project is determined to have a potential adverse impact to military readiness, the Clearinghouse establishes a Mitigation Response Team, who collaborates with the developer, base, and agency to identify reasonable and affordable mitigation options
- General adverse impacts from energy projects include radar and military training route interference. These impacts can be mitigated by reducing or removing the proposed turbines and/or panels in an area or lowering the height of the turbines.

References

- Agreements to Limit Encroachments and Other Constraints on Military Training, Testing, and Operations, 10 U.S.C. § 2684a
- Noise Control Act of 1972, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4901–4918
- DoDI 4165.57, *Air Installations Compatible Use Zones* (13 December 2021)
- DAFI 32-1015, *Integrated Installation Planning* (11 April 2025)
- DAFH 32-7084, *AICUZ Program Management* (27 June 2025)
- DAFPAM 90-803, *Risk Management Guidelines and Tools* (22 March 2022)
- AFI 90-2001, *Mission Sustainment* (31 July 2019)

CONTROL OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES

The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) (15 U.S.C. §§ 2601–2692) regulates the manufacturing, processing, and distributing of chemicals that pose an unreasonable risk of injury to human health or the environment. The TSCA authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to screen existing and new chemicals to identify potentially dangerous products or uses and to take action.

Key Takeaways

- » The TSCA requires special handling and use of the materials located on Air Force and Space Force installations
- » Regulated materials are polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos, radon, and lead-based paint (LBP)

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

- The TSCA prohibits the manufacture and distribution of PCBs
 - Sources of PCBs on installations may include old transformers and capacitors, PCB-contaminated soil from past insecticide spraying, ceiling tile coatings, and certain painted surfaces
 - Installation personnel should be trained to avoid mixing normal used oil and oil containing PCBs. Managing PCB imbued oil under TSCA is far more expensive than managing used oil under the Resource and Conservation and Recovery Act.

Asbestos

- Asbestos was widely used in thousands of products (e.g., floor tiles, insulation, or sealants) because it is strong, flexible, will not burn, insulates effectively, and resists corrosion
 - Regulatory requirements cover, among many things, remediation of asbestos hazards, implementation of proper work practices, and training in proper handling methods
 - Installations are most likely to encounter asbestos when maintaining, repairing, renovating, or demolishing buildings or utilities

Radon

- The TSCA requires studies of federal buildings to determine the extent of indoor radon contamination, but does not require monitoring or abatement of radon
 - Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that may be found in drinking water and indoor air, and which presents serious health risks, including cancer
 - Radon in soil under homes is the biggest radon source for indoor air

Lead-Based Paint (LBP)

- The TSCA addresses lead hazards, including requirements for the identification, reduction, disclosure, and management of LBP
 - Lead, especially LBP, is a major concern on installations; it was commonly used in military family housing and other buildings prior to 1950
 - Bases must address lead hazards during maintenance, repair, renovation, and demolition of buildings. Additionally, Department of War (DoW) policy requires military installations to comply with disclosure regulations related to LBP in military family housing.
- The TSCA also authorizes some state programs (e.g., California) to establish LBP standards for the reduction of lead in buildings not otherwise covered by the child-occupied target buildings referenced above. Check with the installation Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) to determine if an applicable state program is in effect that could potentially impact the installation.

References

- Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), 15 U.S.C. §§ 2601–2692
- National Emissions Standard for Asbestos, 40 C.F.R. Part 61, Subpart M
- DoDI 4715.05, *Environmental Compliance at Installations Outside the United States* (1 November 2013), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018
- DoDI 4715.06, *Environmental Compliance in the United States* (4 May 2015), incorporating through Change 2, 31 August 2018

UTILITY LAW

The Utility Law Field Support Center (ULFSC), embedded within the Air Force Civil Engineer Center's (AFCEC) Energy Directorate at Tyndall Air Force Base, assists continental U.S. commanders in minimizing utility costs. The ULFSC assists installations by supporting contracting actions with utility providers, representing the Air Force and Space Force in utility rate litigation, and advising on energy resilience projects.

Key Takeaways

- » Legal offices should contact the ULFSC when they become aware of any type of utility projects on-base, such as installing new generators or privatization of base utilities. Regardless of who owns the project (the installation, a tenant, or other), these projects can often have effects on the installation's utility contracts, utility bills, and contractual liability to others.
- » Prior to representing the Department of War (DoW) in utility rate litigation, the ULFSC notifies all senior mission commanders at any impacted installation, in accordance with 40 U.S.C. § 501(c), through the appropriate legal office

Methods of Purchasing Utilities

- The contracting methods used by installations to purchase utilities are set forth in 48 C.F.R. Part 41, Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR); DAFMAN 32-1061, *Providing Utilities to U.S. Air Force Installations* (18 August 2023); and AFPAM 32-10144, *Implementing Utilities at U.S. Air Force Installations* (8 March 2016)
- The General Services Administration (GSA) administers area-wide contracts for energy acquisition
 - Area-wide contracts are convenient, and are modifiable to address specific base issues
 - GSA area-wide contracts are found online at <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/facilities-management/utility-services/areawide-public-utility-contracts>
- FAR Part 41 individual installation contracts are the most common method for purchasing utility services
- Installation legal offices are responsible for reviewing utility services solicitations and proposed contracts, including modifications to area-wide contracts, to determine whether they are legally sufficient. The ULFSC is available as reach-back support for all utility contract questions.
- Installation legal offices ensure utility service contracts comply with federal, state, and local laws, including ordinances, public utility commission rulings, court decisions, and opinions of the Comptroller General

Utility Litigation Challenging Rate Increases

- The ULFSC represents the interests of the Air Force and Space Force, as well as all other impacted DoW installations and Federal Executive Agencies, in utility rate cases
- Utility rate cases are triggered by utility companies filing a request for a change in rates with a public utility commission
- In accordance with AFPAM 32-10144, Chapter 10, the base civil engineer should provide all known details regarding an actual or potential rate case to the installation legal office, installation contracting office, and AFCEC Energy Directorate Rates and Renewables (AFCEC/CNR) within 24 hours of rate change notification, which usually comes from the utility company as part of a notice with the monthly bill
- Pursuant to AFPAM 32-10144, Chapter 10, within one week of the date the installation informs AFCEC/CNR of a proposed rate increase, the base civil engineer should provide AFCEC/CNR, the installation contracting office, and the ULFSC all required information related to the rate change notification via the installation legal office

Energy Resilience Projects

- An Energy Savings Performance Contract (ESPC) is a collaboration between a federal agency and a third-party contractor to improve base-owned infrastructure and equipment in order to produce energy savings
- A Utility Energy Service Contract is similar to an ESPC, but is performed by a local utility service provider
- Under a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), an installation leases land to an energy generation developer (local utility company or third-party contractor) and contracts to purchase energy produced by the project
- An Enhanced Use Lease involves a land lease to a developer who builds an energy project on the leased land on the installation but, unlike a PPA, the project does not provide the energy to the installation directly
- Utilities Privatization permits the sale of DoW utility systems to private contractors for fair market value. An ability to meet the installation's energy resilience requirements must be considered.

Assistance

- Utility acquisition matters can be very complex. Installations should notify AFCEC/CNR and the ULFSC of utility rate increases and seek assistance on utility matters.
- The ULFSC is available at (850) 283-6175/DSN 523-6175 or ulfsc.tyndall@us.af.mil
- The 24-hour AFCEC reach-back support center is available at (850) 283-6995, DSN 523-6995 or AFCEC.RBC@us.af.mil

References

- Services for Executive Agencies, 40 U.S.C. § 501(c)
- Acquisition of Utility Services, 48 C.F.R. Part 41
- DAFMAN 32-1061, *Providing Utilities to U.S. Air Force Installations* (18 August 2023)
- AFPAM 32-10144, *Implementing Utilities at U.S. Air Force Installations* (8 March 2016)

Chapter 18

CYBER LAW

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CYBER LAW OVERVIEW

This chapter addresses the legal issues in cyberspace operations, and some operations through cyberspace, that Department of the Air Force (DAF) commanders are most likely to encounter. Among these are (1) criminal law matters, such as searching and seizing computers, accessing electronically stored information (ESI), and computer misuse; (2) law of war and international law matters, to include defending DAF networks and attacking adversary networks; and (3) the application of privacy law, notably the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act. Most of these discrete areas of the law have their own chapter or section throughout this publication, so this chapter will focus on the cyber-specific aspects of these areas.

Commanders and judge advocates should seek the most current guidance from subject matter experts at the Air Force's Operations and International Law Directorate (AF/JAO), located at the Pentagon, and the 16th Air Force (Air Forces Cyber) (16 AF (AFCYBER)) and 67th Cyberspace Wing (CW) legal offices, both located at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

Key Takeaways

- » There are different roles and responsibilities for cyber operations and cybersecurity that fall under Service authorities, combatant command authorities and statutory authorities. Activities and operations must be properly conducted under the appropriate command and control and legal authority to conduct the operation or activity.
- » Department of War (DoW) Cyberspace Operations Forces (COF) are particular units organized, trained, and equipped to conduct offensive cyberspace operations (OCO), defensive cyberspace operations (DCO), and DoD Information Network (DODIN) operations (see DoD COF memo, July 24, 2025)
- » The DAF Chief Information Officer (SAF/CN) has responsibility for information technology, cybersecurity, enterprise data management, artificial intelligence, information management, and information resources management for the DAF, to include the role as Chief Information Officer (DAF/CIO)

Key Roles and Responsibilities

- U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM):
 - In May 2018, USCYBERCOM was elevated to a unified combatant command (UCC). Its responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - Directing operations and defense of the DODIN
 - Planning and executing global cyberspace operations
 - Fulfilling the general responsibilities of a UCC

- USCYBERCOM is the joint force trainer and joint force provider of cyber operations forces
- USCYBERCOM accomplishes its missions within three primary lines of operation: secure, operate, and defend the DODIN; defend the nation from malicious cyber activities in cyberspace; and provide cyberspace support as required to combatant commanders
- Department of Defense Cyber Defense Command (DCDC):
 - DCDC is a subunified command under USCYBERCOM. It was previously known as Joint Force Headquarters-Department of Defense Information Network (JFHQ-DODIN).
 - DCDC leads DoW's unified force approach to network operations, security, and defense across the DODIN. DCDC's mission covers a broad range of activities on behalf of USCYBERCOM including proactive, threat-informed steps to reduce cyber risk across the DODIN, and leading response to attacks against the DODIN to ensure network operations remain agile and resilient.
- U.S. Space Force:
 - Serves as the lead service for DAF enterprise satellite communications operations
 - Directs United States Space Force (USSF)-assigned mission defense teams (MDT), when agreed between Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) and Chief of Space Operations (CSO), to manage the service-level organizing, training, and equipping (OT&E) of mission defense teams in support of USSF space mission systems
 - The USSF does not yet have a service subordinate command to USCYBERCOM, similar to AFCYBER
- Joint Force Headquarter-Cyberspace (Air Force) (JFHQ-C (AF)):
 - A functional component of USCYBERCOM, with Air Force, Army, and Navy forces assigned
 - It is one of four JFHQ-Cs established to provide general support to combatant commands for the offensive cyberspace operations mission
 - It is currently aligned to support the U.S. European (USEUCOM), Strategic (USSTRATCOM), and Space (USSPACECOM) Commands

- Service Cyber Component (AFCYBER):
 - AFCYBER is the Air Force service component to USCYBERCOM
 - AFCYBER authority is a separate operational control (OPCON) authority under USCYBERCOM
 - AFCYBER executes the DODIN operations and defensive cyberspace operations internal defense measures (DCO-IDM) missions on the Air Force portion of the DODIN with assigned forces
 - USCYBERCOM exercises combatant command (command authority) of the service cyber components, including AFCYBER. USCYBERCOM commander exercises directive authority for cyberspace operations (DACO) to issue orders and directives to all DoW components to execute global DODIN operations and DCO-IDM.
 - The USCYBERCOM commander delegated DACO over all Air Force components to the AFCYBER commander (CDRAFCYBER) to effectively implement orders from USCYBERCOM/DCDC and to ensure the timely and efficient security, operation, and defense of the Air Force portion of the DODIN. Delegation of this authority allows CDRAFCYBER to issue orders and directives to non-assigned units (i.e., major commands, field commands, wings, deltas, and communications squadrons) as required to compel unity of action to secure, operate, and defend the Air Force portion of the DODIN.
- The 16 AF Commander also performs the following functions:
 - 16 AF is the traditional OT&E function in the administrative control (ADCON) chain through Air Combat Command (ACC), including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) activities by service-retained intelligence forces
 - Integrates multisource ISR, cyber warfare, electronic warfare, and information operations capabilities across the conflict continuum
 - Oversees signals intelligence (SIGNIT) forces as the Service Cryptologic Component Commander
 - Oversees intelligence forces as one of the Air Force Defense Intelligence Component Heads
 - Under separate hats and combatant command authority and OPCON, commands cyber operations forces as the Commander, AFCYBER, and Commander, JFHQ-C (AF)

- 616th Operations Center (OC):

- The 616 OC serves two primary and distinct functions: (1) command and control (C2) of cyberspace operations forces assigned to AFCYBER and JFHQ-C (AF) under USCYBERCOM, and (2) coordination of ISR activities and information warfare (IW) capabilities by service-retained forces
- The 616 OC also issues orders of the AFCYBER commander to Air Force units operating on the Air Force Information Network (AFIN), many of which are derived from USCYBERCOM and DCDC orders or operations addressing DODIN-wide issues. These orders may flow through Major Command (MAJCOM) Cyber Coordination Centers to subordinate units, or may be issued directly by the 616 OC.

- DAF Principal Cyber Advisor:

- In accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 392a(c), the DAF Principal Cyber Advisor is responsible for advising the Secretary of the Air Force, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and the Chief of Space Operations. This advisor also implements the DoW Cyber Strategy within the service by coordinating and overseeing the execution of the service's policies and programs. This is accomplished through: recruitment, resourcing, and training military cyberspace operations forces; assessment and maintenance of force readiness; acquisition of offensive, defensive, and DODIN cyber capabilities for military cyberspace operations; cybersecurity management and operations; supply chain risk management of the industrial base; and cybersecurity of DoW information systems, information technology services, and weapon systems.

- DAF Chief Information Officer (SAF/CN):

- Provides policy and guidance to foster an operationally resilient, reliable, and secure AFIN which meets DoW and DAF requirements; key DAF CIO authorities are pursuant to statutes to include but not limited to 10 U.S.C. § 2223, 40 U.S.C. § 11315, and 44 U.S.C. §§ 3506 and 3554

- Chief Information Security Officer (CISO):

- Enables the DAF core missions by ensuring the cybersecurity and resiliency of systems, information, and staff; reviews and reports IT investment compliance with law, directives and guidance
- Defines policy and guides DAF Information programs, such as the Freedom of Information Act, Privacy Act, Records Management, Section 508 and Civil Liberties, and Federal Register

- Air Combat Command Commander (ACC/CC):
 - Serves as lead command for the cyber warfare operations mission area. The duties and responsibilities of the ACC/CC are outlined in para. 3.7 of DAFPD 17-2, *Cyber Warfare Operations*.
 - Responsible for the OT&E of Air Force cyberspace operations forces and is the parent MAJCOM of 16 AF

References

- Joint Publication 3-12, *Joint Cyberspace Operations* (19 December 2022)
- DAFPD 17-2, *Cyber Warfare Operations* (27 October 2020)
- Air Force Doctrine Publication 3-12, *Cyberspace Operations* (1 February 2023)
- SecDef Memo, *Department of Defense Cyberspace Operations Forces* (July 24, 2025)

LEGAL ISSUES IN AIR FORCE INFORMATION NETWORK OPERATIONS

The Air Force is responsible for securing, operating, and defending the Air Force Information Network (AFIN), a portion of the Department of Defense Information Network (DODIN).

Key Takeaways

- » 16 AF/CC serves as the Commander of Air Force Cyber command (AFCYBER) and the Commander of Joint Force Headquarters-Cyber (Air Force), and has been delegated authority from United States Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) to secure, operate, and defend the AFIN, and from the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Office of the Chief Information Officer (SAF/CN) to ensure cybersecurity and interoperability of the AFIN
- » The Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution and a number of federal laws protect a person's reasonable expectation of privacy (REP) in cyberspace; however, a number of exceptions apply
- » Generally, members do not have a REP on government computers, the AFIN, or the DODIN, due to the DoW Notice and Consent banners that all users must acknowledge and agree to when using a government computer
- » Electronically stored information (ESI) held on government computers, the AFIN, and the DODIN generally do not require a search authorization and may be obtained for any official purpose via an ESI request
- » In addition to harming individuals, breaches of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) create AFIN vulnerabilities

AFIN Operations Authority

- The operational chain of command, through the Secretary of War (SecWar) and United States Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM), delegated the authority to secure, operate, and defend the Air Force portion of the DODIN to the Commander of Air Forces Cyber (AFCYBER) as the Air Force component to USCYBERCOM. This authority includes Directive Authority to Conduct Cyberspace Operations (DACO) for the Air Force portion of the DODIN in order to effectively implement orders from USCYBERCOM and Department of Defense Cyber Defense Command (DCDC), a subunified command to USCYBERCOM and to ensure the timely and efficient security, operation, and defense of the Air Force portion of the DODIN. This authority allows the AFCYBER commander to issue orders and directives to compel unity of action to secure, operate, and defend the Air Force portion of the DODIN.
- Orders issued by the Commander of AFCYBER via the 616th Operations Center (616 OC) are mandatory military orders leveraging SecWar and SecAF derived authority. It is important to note that the Commander of AFCYBER serves in multiple different roles with different authorities, such as the Commander of Sixteenth Air Force (Air Forces Cyber) (16 AF (AFCYBER)/CC) and the Commander of Joint Force Headquarters-Cyber (Air Force) (JFHQ-C (AF)).

- 16 AF (AFCYBER)/CC, acting in his/her role as Commander of AFCYBER or Commander of JFHQ-C (AF), directs the DAF cyberspace forces in executing missions and tasks assigned by USCYBERCOM and exercises OPCON over forces assigned/attached to JFHQ-C (AF) in support of joint objectives
- There are significant overlaps between the DAF's service responsibility to ensure cybersecurity and interoperability of the Air Force portion of the DODIN, largely vested in DAF Chief Information Officer (SAF/CN), DAF Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) and the USCYBERCOM authority to secure, operate, and defend the Air Force portion of the DODIN which has been delegated to the AFCYBER Commander. Additionally, SAF/CN has designated 16 AF (AFCYBER) as the Component Cybersecurity Service Provider for the AFIN, thus providing 16 AF (AFCYBER) authority to ensure the AFIN is secure, assured, and interoperable, and that all personnel are appropriately trained.

Computer Monitoring and Stored Communications

- Commanders may have to deal with questions concerning monitoring network user activity (active duty military members, civilian employees, and contractors) or obtaining electronic data stored somewhere on the AFIN. These requests typically come from law enforcement, but they also may be requested by unit commanders, investigative officers, judge advocates, DAF civilian attorneys, safety investigation boards, and similar requestors. The following discussion examines the law in this area, some exceptions, and the process for obtaining these items in the DAF.
 - Fourth Amendment: The Fourth Amendment establishes the right to be free from unreasonable government searches and seizures. This applies to electronic systems and communications. What constitutes an unreasonable search is dependent upon whether an individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy (REP).
 - Determination of a REP on any given piece of information on a computer or computer system (including servers) depends upon a number of factors, such as the owner of the computer (i.e., personal or business), the relationship of the information to the computer system (i.e., in transit or stored), the nature of the data communicated (i.e., metadata or content), the location of the information, and the information owner's citizenship
 - The DoW and DAF do not recognize a REP on government computers or computer systems. All users are expected to understand and acknowledge the DoW notice and consent banner and sign a user agreement before accessing a government computer or the Air Force portion of the DODIN. The banner and user agreement both make it clear that communications and data stored on the Air Force portion of the DODIN are not private and any security measures (such as passwords) are included to protect the U.S. Government, and not for personal benefit or privacy.

- Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) (18 U.S.C. § 1030): Prohibits unauthorized access (or exceeding authorized access) to any “protected computer.” A “protected computer” includes any computer involved in interstate or foreign commerce or communications, including a computer located outside the United States that is used in a manner that affects interstate or foreign commerce or communication of the United States. This statute is sometimes referred to as the anti-hacking statute. Article 123, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), prohibits the unauthorized access of government computers under a variety of circumstances, similar to the prohibitions found in the CFAA.
- The Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) (18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 *et seq.*): The ECPA covers various forms of wire and electronic communications. It includes email, telephone conversations, and data stored electronically. The ECPA is broken up into three sections: (1) Title I is commonly referred to as the Federal Wiretap Act; (2) Title II is the Stored Communications Act; (3) Title III addresses pen register and trap and trace devices.
- The Wiretap Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 *et seq.*): Prohibits a third party to a communication from wiretapping, monitoring, or intercepting that communication in transit. The Wiretap Act covers both telephone conversations and electronic communications, and it grants protection to individuals above what is protected by the Fourth Amendment. However, there are numerous exceptions to the Wiretap Act prohibitions that permit most AFIN monitoring and provide options for law enforcement:
 - *The Service Provider Exception* (18 U.S.C. § 2511(2)(a)(i)): Permits service providers to “intercept, disclose, or use” a communication while engaged in activity necessary to the provision of service or the protection of the provider’s rights or property. This authority is broad, but there must be a substantial nexus between the monitoring and the system administrator’s duties to maintain and protect the system.
 - *Consent* (18 U.S.C. § 2511(2)(c)–(d)): Just as in other applications, consent to a “search” eliminates a privacy interest in the subject to be searched. The DoW banner, as mandated by the DoW Chief Information Officer, obtains consent to monitoring from any potential user prior to authorized use of DoW computer networks. The consent banner and user agreement are now used universally in the DAF and are a reliable exception to the Federal Wiretap Act.
 - Federal courts have found that users who clicked on consent banners have no reasonable expectation of privacy, similar to one found on, the DoW Consent Banner. *United States v. Larson*, 66 M.J. 212 (C.A.A.F. 2008). Nonetheless, there are policy limitations on the release of certain data and information to balance civil liberties. For example, information obtained from an Electronic System Security Assessment (ESSA) mission will not be used as evidence in a criminal prosecution without approval IAW AFI 10-701, *Operations Security (OPSEC)*, para. 6.5.1.

- Authority to monitor communications for ESSA missions is derived from the Federal Information Security Modernization Act, 44 U.S.C. § 3554, and implemented in AFI 10-701. The ESSA mission is an OPSEC program and one of the few areas in which privileged information or PII may be accessed, and thus, additional safeguards are established to preserve civil liberties. AFI 10-701, para. 6.3.1.
- The DoW notice and consent banner still protects some uses of the content of privileged communications or work product related to personal representation or services by attorneys, psychotherapists, or clergy, to include their assistants. Generally, release of privileged information communications, PII, or disclosure of information identifying a specific individual is not releasable outside of an explicit exception under AFI 10-701 (e.g., threat of death or serious bodily injury) or under another program (e.g., ESI request). However, the reason for restricted release is based on policy reasons and updates to AFIs, or other regulations may permit further dissemination.
- *Pursuant to Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act* (18 U.S.C. § 2511(2)(e)): This exception will most likely only be used by an intelligence-gathering agency
- *Communication Readily Accessible to the General Public* (18 U.S.C. § 2511(2)(g)(i)): An intercepted or accessed electronic communication which is readily accessible by the general public (e.g., social media post, status update) is excepted (see DoDD 3115.18, *DoD Access to and Use of Publicly Available Information (PAI)*)
- *Trespasser Exception* (18 U.S.C. § 2511(2)(i)): An individual acting lawfully is authorized to intercept the communications of a trespasser into a computer system (i.e., hackers). The Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) frequently relies on this exception when conducting counterintelligence investigations.
- *Pursuant to a Court Order* (18 U.S.C. § 2518): Applications for orders authorizing or approving the interception of electronic communications are made in writing to a judge of competent jurisdiction
- Information obtained through some methods may not be considered “content.” Radio frequency monitoring systems are increasingly being employed to detect Wi-Fi devices and ensure COMSEC on installations (see DoDI 8560.01, *Communications Security (COMSEC) Monitoring*, 22 August 2018). 18 U.S.C. § 2510(8) defines “contents” as “any information concerning the substance, purport, or meaning of that communication.” Data transmitted over Wi-Fi, such as email content, webpage content, URLs that disclose content of the page, and text messages, would constitute communication subject to the restrictions of the Wiretap Act.

- Basic identifying information about Wi-Fi networks themselves “including the network’s name (SSID), the unique number assigned to the router transmitting the wireless signal (MAC address), the signal strength, and whether the network was encrypted” is not considered contents. *Joffe v. Google, Inc.*, 729 F.3d 1262 (9th Cir. 2013). In contrast, the contents of an email or text conversation would be considered “contents.” Commanders should consult with their judge advocates when instituting COMSEC monitoring programs involving Wi-Fi devices.
- Stored Communications Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 2701–2712): The protection in this statute applies to stored communications, rather than in-transit communications covered by the Wiretap Act
 - 18 U.S.C. § 2702(a) limits voluntary disclosure of communications or records by those providing electronic communication services “to the public.” The AFIN does not provide electronic communications services to the public. *Bohach v. City of Reno*, 932 F. Supp. 1232 (D. Nev. 1996). Accordingly, the Stored Communications Act does not limit the Department of the Air Force’s use of stored communications on the AFIN.
- Pen Register and Trap and Trace Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 3121 *et seq.*): The protection in this statute applies to information about communications, such as a log of telephone numbers called. In cyberspace, this statute is most often applied to proxy logs and network routing data. Like other portions of the ECPA, this statute contains exceptions for service providers.
- Search authorizations for electronically stored information should not be used in most cases. However, if the totality of the facts and circumstances indicate that the subject has a reasonable expectation of privacy, usually because the government property was issued for exclusive personal use, obtaining a search authorization is warranted (see DAFI 51-201, *Administration of Military Justice*).
- Routine use of search authorizations to collect information from government computer systems would contravene the language in the consent banner and could create a reasonable expectation of privacy in government computer systems

Electronically Stored Information Request Process

- ESI may be requested for any official purpose. Common purposes include: court-martial proceedings, criminal investigations, administrative investigations, commander-directed investigations, civil litigation involving the DAF, or retrieving emails of an absent member in support of some military mission or duty.
 - The DoW notice and consent banner eliminates the need for search authorization from a search authority in almost all cases. The DoW banner is evidence of implied and explicit consent from all users to monitor their activities and retrieve data under the relevant exceptions of ECPA.

- As the Service Cyber Component commander, the AFCYBER Commander is directed and authorized by the SecWar, SecAF, and the USCYBERCOM Commander to conduct DODIN Operations on the AFIN. This mission includes actions taken to operate the AFIN, to include ensuring the confidentiality, availability, and integrity of AFIN data. The AFCYBER Commander has the authority and technical ability to provide authorized personnel with AFIN data as required for official purposes.
- While AFCYBER has the technical ability to access AFIN ESI, AFCYBER is not the record custodian or record holder for such ESI. Whether to search, how to search, and proper handling and processing of search results is the responsibility of the requestor. Additional information on ESI search responsibilities can be found in AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, DAFI 51-201, and AFI 51-301, *Civil Litigation*.
- Additionally, the Air Combat Command Headquarters Cyberspace Capabilities Center is available to help coordinate network searches in response to litigation

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or Privacy Act (PA) Requests vs. ESI Requests

- ESI requests must be differentiated from requests pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act (PA), but, at times, may follow similar procedures. The servicing legal office should be the first line of defense in determining whether the request requires processing under FOIA.
- Generally, requests for ESI are those which are not of a personal nature and have an inherent military mission or function for its use. For example, requesting emails pursuant to a commander directed investigation would be an ESI request. Requesting emails of a recently deceased member to continue a military duty is also an ESI request. A request by an individual not selected for an advertised position for all emails between two other individuals concerning the selection decision would need to be made as a FOIA or PA request through proper FOIA and/or PA channels.
- As part of the FOIA and PA process, FOIA and PA Managers will make the request for the release of ESI using the ESI process. Identified ESI is released back to the FOIA and/or PA managers for continued processing.
 - Approval of the request to retrieve emails or data for FOIA and/or PA requests does not constitute a FOIA and/or PA approval or disapproval. Only FOIA and PA managers and the servicing legal office will ascertain whether information contained in the emails should be released to the third party.

ESI Request Format

- A request for ESI must contain key information for the system and exchange administrators to process it. The ESI request should be sent to the 616 OC Senior Duty Officer (SDO) at 616oc.sdo@us.af.mil. Investigating Officers should include a copy of their appointment letter.
- An ESI request should include the proper authority of the requesting individual (a valid basis to request information) and a sufficiently detailed description of the data requested in light of the basis
- Contact 616 OC for most current suggested format for email message requests for access to ESI

ESI Request Reviews

- The 616 OC process for administering ESI requests is outlined in Tasking Order (TASKORD) 2021-299-001
- Email requests typically provide **ALL** emails for the period requested. These will require the requestor to perform a content review prior to certain uses of the data. The requestor is responsible for ensuring proper uses of all retrieved data and should seek legal advice from the servicing legal office as appropriate.
 - Specifically, the requestor's local Staff Judge Advocate's office should be contacted for support for requests likely to contain proprietary information of DoW contractors, or privileged communications between the individual and clergy, health care practitioners, or attorneys

Computer Misuse

- Seemingly small incidents of computer misconduct may have large impacts for the AFIN. For example, installing unauthorized software on a single computer may expose the entire network to malware infection and disruption.
- DAFMAN 17-1301, *Computer Security (COMPUSEC)*, includes user responsibilities on the AFIN. Often, violations of these standards are reported to commanders by System Administrators.
- When a commander becomes aware of computer misuse, they should consider disciplinary action when appropriate. Most computer misuse is punishable under the UCMJ. Consult your servicing legal office for more information.
- Common inappropriate uses include: (1) unauthorized personal use, including use for personal gain; (2) uses that would adversely reflect on the DoW or the DAF; (3) storing, processing, displaying, sending, or otherwise transmitting prohibited content (i.e., pornography, sexually explicit or sexually oriented material); and (4) knowingly downloading or installing unauthorized software

Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

- Breaches involving PII are a high-level interest issue. PII breaches create not only personal vulnerabilities for individuals, but can also create AFIN vulnerabilities. (See AFI 33-322, Chapter 3, regarding Breach Reporting this includes reporting to DAF CISO through the Air Force Privacy Office.)
- PII refers to “Information about an individual that identifies, links, relates, or is unique to, or describes him/her (e.g., SSN; age; military rank; civilian grade; marital status; race; salary; home or office phone numbers; other demographic, biometric, or personnel information). All information that describes, locates or indexes anything about an individual including his/her education, financial transaction, medical history, criminal or employment record, or that affords a basis for inferring personal characteristics, such as biometric data including finger and voice prints, photographs, or things done by or to such individual; and the record of his/her presence, registration, or membership in an organization or activity, or admission to an institution” (see AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program*).
- Emails containing PII (e.g., alpha rosters, recall rosters, investigative reports, etc.) must be digitally signed and encrypted and attachments with PII must be password protected (see AFI 33-332, para. 7.1.4 for further guidance)
 - Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), Emails, and Marking: A banner marking must appear at the top of the email. In addition, an indicator (“Contains CUI”) can be included in the subject line to notify recipients that the email contains CUI. When forwarding or responding to an email containing CUI, be sure to carry forward all applicable markings to the email (see DoDI 5200.48_DAFI 16-1403, *Controlled Unclassified Information*; see also CUI Websites: <https://www.archives.gov/cui>; <https://www.dodcui.mil/>).
- Misuse of the AFIN or failure to follow directives such as those requiring encryption of PII may result in a suspension of access to the AFIN

References

- Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552
- Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552a
- Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA), 18 U.S.C. § 1030
- The Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA), 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 *et seq.*
- The Wiretap Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510–2520
- The Stored Communications Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2701–2712
- Pen Register and Trap and Trace Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 3121–3127
- Joint Federal Information Security Modernization Act, 44 U.S.C. § 3554
- *United States v. Larson*, 66 M.J. 212 (C.A.A.F. 2008)
- *Joffe v. Google, Inc.*, 729 F.3d 1262 (9th Cir. 2013)
- DoDD 3115.18, *DoD Access to and Use of Publicly Available Information (PAI)* (11 June 2019), incorporating Change 1, 20 August 2020
- DoDI 5200.48_DAFI 16-1403, *Controlled Unclassified Information*, (5 October 2021)
- DoDI 8560.01, *Communications Security (COMSEC) Monitoring*, (22 August 2018)
- Joint Publication 3-12, *Cyberspace Operations* (19 December 2022)
- DAFMAN 17-1301, *Computer Security (COMPUSEC)* (9 December 2024)
- DAFMAN 17-1302-O, *Communications Security (COMSEC) Operations* (13 December 2024)
- AFI 10-701, *Operations Security (OPSEC)*, (23 July 2019), incorporating Change 1, 9 June 2020
- AFI 17-101, *Risk Management Framework (RMF) for Air Force Information Technology (IT)* (6 February 2020), including AFI17-101_DAFGM2024-01, 5 September 2024
- AFI 17-130, *Cybersecurity Program Management* (13 February 2020)
- AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program* (23 March 2020), incorporating Change 1, 28 July 2021
- AFI 33-332, *Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program* (10 March 2020), Corrective Actions applied on 12 May 2020
- AFI 51-301, *Civil Litigation* (2 October 2018)
- 616 OC TASKORD 2021-299-001 (2021)
- Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-12, *Preparing for and Responding to a Breach of Personally Identifiable Information* (3 January 2017)
- Air Force Cyber Law Primer, Lt Col Royal A. Davis III, Jeffrey T. Biller, and Air Force Cyber Primer Team, November 2022, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Papers/CPP_009_Davis_Air_Force_Cyber_Law_Primer.pdf

LEGAL ISSUES IN CYBERSPACE OPERATIONS

Cyberspace Operations must be conducted under specific lines of authority, with different laws, rules, and policies applicable depending on the specific mission.

Key Takeaways

- » The authorities required to conduct different cyberspace operations are nuanced, and there is significant potential for confusion between missions conducted under service authorities and missions conducted under combatant command authorities. Operators must ensure they understand their lines of authority to conduct cyber activities.
- » As with other military operations and activities, International Law, the Law of War (LoW), and Rules of Engagement (ROEs) factor into the conduct of cyberspace operations

Terminology

- Cyberspace terminology used for cyberspace operations often changes and is not always used consistently. Terminology may also be inconsistent with traditional uses (e.g., the doctrinal definition of “cyberspace attack” is inconsistent with the definition of an attack under the law of war). Consultation and verification of source documents is imperative when drafting documents related to cyberspace operations.

Mission Sets

- There are three basic mission sets for cyberspace operations:
 - Department of Defense Information Network (DODIN) Operations: Operations to secure, configure, operate, extend, maintain, and sustain DoW cyberspace to create and preserve the confidentiality, availability, and integrity of the DODIN. DODIN Operations include the cyberspace security action.
 - Forces and personnel in DAF not assigned to USCYBERCOM: Forces, units, and personnel, not part of the Cyber Mission Force (CMF), whose primary mission is to take actions to secure, configure, operate, extend, design, acquire, build, maintain, and sustain cyberspace terrain under DAF authority. This may include actions such as monitoring cyberspace terrain and detecting, analyzing, and responding to anomalous network activities and may include Cyber Security Service Providers (CSSPs), Network Operations Centers (NOCs), Security Operations Centers (SOCs), and Network Operations and Security Centers (NOSCs).
 - Air Forces Cyber (AFCYBER), the Air Force service component of United States Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM), has standing authority to conduct DODIN Operations on the Air Force Information Network (AFIN), the Air Force’s portion of the DODIN

- Using the Directive Authority to Conduct Cyberspace Operations (DACO), the AFCYBER Commander may order any Department of the Air Force (DAF) unit to conduct specific DODIN Operations missions on the AFIN
- Defensive Cyberspace Operations (DCO): Missions to preserve the ability to utilize blue cyberspace capabilities and data by defeating on-going or imminent malicious cyberspace activity. DCO has three components:
 - *DCO-Internal Defense Measures (DCO-IDM)*: A defensive cyberspace operations mission in which defense actions occur within the defended portion of cyberspace
 - AFCYBER has standing authority to conduct DCO-IDM on the AFIN, and may be tasked by USCYBERCOM to conduct DCO-IDM on other DoW networks
 - Using DACO, AFCYBER may order any Air Force unit to conduct specific DCO-IDM missions on the AFIN
 - *DCO-Response Actions (DCO-RA)*: A defensive cyberspace operations mission executed external to the defended network or portion of cyberspace without the permission of the owner of the affected system
 - DCO-RA missions require authority flowing from the Secretary of War (SecWar) via military order, and further requires consideration of the LoW and ROEs
 - *Defense of Non-DoW Cyberspace*: When required under a specific authorizing order, and in full coordination with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other U.S. Government (USG) departments and agencies, DoW cyberspace forces undertake DCO-RA and DCO-IDM missions to defend non-DoW cyberspace segments, like other USG networks, national critical infrastructure networks, defense industrial base networks, or mission partner networks
 - DCO-IDM missions defending non-DoW cyberspace may be ordered as part of Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations. These operations generally require consent of the network owner.
 - DCO-RA missions defending non-DoW cyberspace require authority flowing from SecWar via military order, and further requires consideration of the LoW and ROEs

- Forces and personnel in DAF not assigned to USCYBERCOM: All cyberspace forces, units, and personnel in any military Service, in any component (Active, National Guard, Reserve) in any status (Active or Ready Reserve) and not assigned to USCYBERCOM, may perform actions in support of military departments' core functions IAW DoDD 5100.01, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, or any of the three CO missions. This includes DAF defensive cyberspace operations forces which are forces, units, and personnel, not part of the CME, whose primary purpose is to preserve the ability to utilize blue cyberspace capabilities and to protect data, networks, cyberspace-enabled devices, and other designated systems by defeating ongoing or imminent malicious cyberspace activity within the bounds of the DAF's authorities. This may include cyber defense of operational and/or tactical C2 systems, weapon systems, and critical infrastructure through maneuver to gain or retain an advantageous position, including fires when authorized, against cyberspace threats.
- **Offensive Cyberspace Operations (OCO):** Missions intended to project power in and through cyberspace. All cyberspace operations missions conducted outside of blue cyberspace with a commander's intent, other than to defend blue cyberspace from an ongoing or imminent cyberspace threat, are OCO missions.
 - OCO missions include cyberspace exploitation and/or cyberspace attack actions
 - OCO missions require authority flowing from SecWar via military order, and further require consideration of the LoW and ROEs

Cyberspace Actions

- Execution of any OCO, DCO, or DODIN Operations mission requires completion of specific tactical-level actions or tasks that employ cyberspace capabilities to create effects in cyberspace. To plan for, authorize, and assess these actions, it is important that the commander and staff clearly understand their authorities and which actions have been authorized under their current mission order.

National Guard Cyberspace Capabilities

- State assets serve as a first responder for Governors and Adjutant Generals (TAGs) for cyber emergencies. The assets provide surge capacity to national capabilities, but the elements employing the cyberspace capabilities are not deployable units for Title 10 missions.

Domestic Law

- Activities and operations must comply with the U.S. Constitution and with U.S. law
- Domestic laws place considerable restraints on cyberspace operations, particularly within the United States, but also in foreign countries
- Legal analysis is key to determining whether and how domestic laws impact military operations

Policy

- National Security Presidential Memorandum 13 (NSPM-13), U.S. Cyber Operations Policy, as amended by NSPM-21: All DoW offensive cyber operations must comply with NSPM-13, as amended. The document itself is classified.
- USCYBERCOM policy applicable to cyberspace operations is largely classified, although Joint Publication 3-12 outlines the doctrinal mission in cyberspace
- DoW Policy applicable to cyberspace is contained in 8000-series DoW instructions, directives, and manuals, mostly promulgated by the DoW Chief Information Officer and implementing statutory requirements
- The Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) policies applicable to cyberspace is contained in 6000-series instructions, manuals, and other directives
- DAF Policy applicable to cyberspace is generally contained in 17-series instructions, manuals, and other directives
- DAF Policy Regarding Legal Review of Cyber Capabilities:
 - Section 16.6 of DoD LoW Manual states that “DoD policy requires the legal review of the acquisition of weapons or weapons systems. This policy would include the review of weapons that employ cyber capabilities to ensure that they are not per se prohibited by the LoW. Not all cyber capabilities, however, constitute a weapon or weapons system.” The manual provides that military department regulations address what cyber capabilities require legal review.
 - DAF policy currently requires that cyber capabilities “being developed, bought, built, modified (more than minor modification) or otherwise acquired by the Air Force that are not within a special access program [be] reviewed for legality under the LoW, domestic law and international law” (see AFI 51-401, *The Law of War*, para. 2.1.2.2)
 - Air Force software development units may develop cyber capabilities for non-DAF organizations. The requirement for a legal review may not exist if a capability is being developed for a non-Air Force organization (e.g., USCYBERCOM). The legal review requirements are determined by the receiving organization.
 - Note that this requirement applies to all cyber capabilities, not just to weapons. However, this requirement is directed for DAF cyber capabilities, and it is not automatically extended to joint operations and capabilities.
 - Air Force cyber capabilities do not include capabilities internal to DoW use or training, or capabilities solely intended to provide access to adversarial and targeted computers, information systems, or networks. Such capabilities, therefore, do not require a legal review (AFI 51-401).

International Law and Law of War (LoW) Considerations

- *Jus ad bellum*:

- The United States has generally treated the terms “use of force” and “armed attack” from the United Nations (UN) Charter synonymously. The issue of whether a cyber operation rises to the level of an armed attack is an important one for ensuring the United States complies with the UN Charter, and because of the potential application of the nation’s inherent right of self-defense.
- Currently, there is not international consensus regarding what constitutes a use of force or armed attack in cyberspace
 - However, there is a growing body of state practice supporting the position that disruptive actions resulting in annoyance or harassment, even if for an extended period of time against many websites, do not amount to an armed attack
- If OCO rises to the level of an “armed attack,” then the state where the action occurs would be justified under Article 51 of the UN Charter to use force in response. Actions taken in self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter are not restricted to cyberspace (or any specific domain), though they are constrained by the *jus ad bellum* principles of necessity and proportionality.

- *Jus in bello*:

- It is also longstanding DoW policy that U.S. forces will comply with the LoW “during all armed conflicts however characterized. In all other military operations members of the DoD Components will continue to act consistent with the LoW’s fundamental principles and rules, which include those in Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the principles of military necessity, humanity, distinction, proportionality, and honor.” Further, “[e]ven if the LoW does not technically apply because the proposed military cyber operation would not take place in the context of armed conflict, DoW nonetheless applies LoW principles. This means that the *jus in bello* principles continue to guide the planning and execution of military cyber operations, even outside the context of armed conflict” (Honorable Paul C. Ney, Jr., DoD General Counsel Remarks at U.S. Cyber Command Legal Conference). Thus, *jus in bello* analysis is done, at times, for policy reasons even when not strictly required under international law.

- *Military Necessity*:

- Just as for kinetic targets, a legal review will address employment of cyberspace capabilities in both a targeting review (whether it is a valid target) and an operational legal review (whether the method to prosecute that target advances a legitimate military objective)

- Unnecessary Suffering:

- The use of arms which are calculated to cause unnecessary suffering is prohibited. Generally, cyber capabilities will not cause such effects, but if such effects are likely, they will be addressed in the operational legal review.

- Proportionality:

- Just as with physical operations, cyber operations must take into account potential collateral damage caused to the civilian population, and it must not be excessive in relation to the military advantage anticipated
- The commander must assess whether the expected damage to civilians and civilian property is excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage expected to be gained by the cyber operation

- Distinction:

- Due to the overlapping nature of military and civilian uses of cyberspace, distinction can play a very important role in cyber operations. Depending on the language of the code, cyber capabilities can be developed with specific or generic targets.
 - For example, a cyber capability designed to only create effects on certain industrial control systems known to be used in an adversary's nuclear enrichment facility would likely be considered a discriminate weapon
- The DoD LoW Manual provides that "dual-use" is a term sometimes used to describe objects that are used by both the armed forces and the civilian population. However, from a legal perspective, such objects are either military objectives or they are not.

- Honor:

- The principle of honor (or chivalry) permits lawful ruses such as camouflage, false signals, and mock troop movements, but forbids perfidious acts
- Because the infrastructure allowing for the delivery of cyber effects crosses multiple countries, and cyber effects can be created by non-state actors (e.g., independent hackers), attributing a cyber effect to a particular source can be challenging. Unlike physical attacks, the ability to mislead an adversary as to the source of cyber operations is much greater.
- Disguising cyber effects as normal web traffic or concealing the source of such operations is similar to a permissible lawful ruse and does not violate the principle of honor

- The Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations: The Tallinn Manual 2.0, published in 2017, expands on the scope of, and replaces, the original Tallinn Manual. Where the original manual (Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare) focused on cyber operations that constitute a use of force and trigger the right of self-defense, Tallinn 2.0 also examines more common cyber operations and incidents at the sub-use of force threshold. **It is important to note that Tallinn 2.0 is not binding international law, but rather represents only opinions as to how the law of armed conflict applies to actions in cyberspace.** The DoD LoW Manual represents the legal views of the DoW and is a resource for its personnel—including commanders, legal practitioners, and other military and civilian personnel—on the LoW.
- The DoD LoW Manual, published by the DoW Office of General Counsel and updated in July 2023, includes a chapter on how international law applies to Cyber Operations

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Chapter 19

SPACE LAW

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SPACE LAW OVERVIEW

Space is recognized by the United States and the DoW as a warfighting domain. The United States is becoming increasingly dependent on space-based systems to support military operations and our way of life in the United States and around the world. While space law and policy have existed for decades, their application to military operations has little historical precedent in comparison to other domains. The interpretation of how to apply the legal principles from international space law will be shaped by State practice. Also, the physical environment of space is unique and requires special considerations. Therefore, it is important for commanders to be acquainted with space law and policy and to remain actively engaged with their judge advocates during operational planning to ensure mission success in compliance with international law and domestic law and policy.

Key Takeaways

- » The USSF is a military service under the DAF that organizes, trains, equips, and provides forces to CCMDs
- » USSPACECOM is the CCMD that primarily conducts operations in the space domain
- » The main principles applicable to military activities in space stem from four United Nations (UN) developed space treaties, the UN Charter, the law of war, and national law and policy
- » There is no defined boundary between airspace and outer space under international or U.S. law
- » There is no broad prohibition of weapons in space, but there are specific prohibitions including placement of nuclear weapons in space and testing of weapons on celestial bodies
- » States are responsible and liable for the activities of their private actors in space
- » There is a trend towards developing non-binding norms of responsible behavior in space, at both the international and U.S. national levels, to improve transparency and reduce miscommunication in the domain

Space Organization Command Relationships

- The USSF was established by Congress in 2019 as a military service under DAF. Its organization is prescribed in 10 U.S.C. Chapter 908. With its establishment, there are now two distinct Military Services within the DAF, the USAF and the USSF.
- As a Military Service, the USSF is responsible for organizing, training, and equipping Guardians and providing Guardians and their equipment to the CCMDs as directed by SecWar through the Global Force Management (GFM) process. SecAF always exercises ADCON over USSF forces through the USSF chain of command.
- As a lean and agile force, the infrastructure and support functions at USSF installations are provided by USAF personnel under the command and control of the USSF installation commander. Commissioned officers of the USAF and USSF can command organizations and personnel in either Military Service.

- U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) is the warfighting CCMD that conducts global space operations and has an area of responsibility (AOR) that begins 100 km above mean sea level (MSL), as set out in the President's Unified Command Plan
- The vast majority of USSF operational forces are assigned to USSPACECOM and under CDRUSSPACECOM's operational COCOM authority. However, the USSF also has certain operational forces that may be assigned to other CCMDs or may be service-retained and allocated to other CCMDs by SecWar when needed, with operational command relationships (OPCON/TACON) specified by SecWar.
- The National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) is a Defense Agency controlled by SecWar that is also an Intelligence Community (IC) element subject to the oversight of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). The NRO is responsible for research and development, acquisition, launch, deployment, and operation of overhead reconnaissance systems, and related data-processing facilities to collect intelligence and information to support national and DoW missions. The USSF provides personnel to the NRO through an NRO Element, with an Element Commander exercising ADCON.

International Law Applicable to Military Space Operations

- The main principles applicable to the use and exploration of outer space stem from four United Nations (UN)-developed space treaties, to which the United States is a party. These include: (1) The Outer Space Treaty (OST) (1967), (2) the Rescue and Return Agreement (1968), (3) The Liability Convention (1972), and (4) the Registration Convention (1976). There is a fifth UN-developed Space Treaty, the Moon Agreement, to which neither the United States, China, nor Russia are parties. Further, via Executive Order 13914, the United States specifically rejects the Moon Agreement and formally objects to its contents reflecting or otherwise expressing customary international law.
- With some exceptions, this international body of law provides the DoW wide-ranging freedom and flexibility in the conduct of space activities—from force enhancement to force application

Where Does Airspace End and Outer Space Begin?

- There is no defined boundary between airspace and outer space under international law. This is significant because a nation's sovereignty over its airspace does not extend into outer space, and different laws apply in outer space.
- While States generally accept that there is a limit to the sovereign airspace above their territory, the international community has been unable to reach a common consensus over where this boundary is. The most widely recognized boundary is the Karman line, which is at an altitude of approximately 100 kilometers above sea level.
 - Historically, the United States has taken the view that defining such a boundary under international law is unnecessary. Such a clear delimitation could limit freedom of action and impact the ability of States to exploit new technologies, such as hypersonic flight capabilities.

- The space domain is defined broadly by the DoW as the “area above the altitude where atmospheric effects on airborne objects becomes negligible” (*DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*). **Note:** The establishment of USSPACECOM’s AOR, as beginning at 100 kilometers above MSL, is not intended to define outer space under U.S. law; rather, it is intended to define an operational area of responsibility.

The OST and Other UN Space Treaties

- The OST is the foundational space law treaty and contains broad principles regarding the use and exploration of outer space. All of the major space-faring States, as well as many non-space-faring States, are party to this treaty.
- Although the OST is over 55 years old and space operations have changed dramatically since the Cold War era, the key principles of the OST are still relevant today. Some of the principles may be considered customary international law, meaning they are binding on non-party States to the treaty.

Use of Space for Peaceful Purposes

- The preamble of the OST recognizes that it is in the common interest of mankind to use and explore space for peaceful purposes. Notably, nothing in the binding provisions of the OST declares that outer space generally must be used for peaceful purposes; rather, it only requires that the Moon and other celestial bodies be used *exclusively* for peaceful purposes and prohibits military bases, weapons testing of any kind, and military maneuvers on the Moon and other celestial bodies.
- The OST does not define what the term “peaceful purposes” means. The majority view, influenced by the United States, is that peaceful purposes equate to non-aggressive exploration and use of outer space. Therefore, military activities such as intelligence collection, missile early-warning, and the transmission of military communications and navigation signals to, from, and through space all constitute non-aggressive, peaceful purposes.
- Even though there is no overarching requirement that outer space generally be used for peaceful purposes, most countries, including the United States, recognize this principle as a matter of national policy. For example, this concept is incorporated throughout the current U.S. National Space Policy (2020).

Militarization and Weaponization of Space

- There is an important policy distinction between the militarization of space and the weaponization of space. As mentioned above, nothing in the OST prevents the militarization of space, although there are significant limitations on the military use of the Moon and other celestial bodies. Space has otherwise been militarized since the beginning of the space age and that development represents nothing new.

- The weaponization of space has become a threat to our national security and space interests, particularly the development of anti-satellite (ASAT) and space-based weapons by U.S. competitors. The OST does not contain a general prohibition on weapons in space, but there are a few specific prohibitions and arms-control provisions.
- Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are prohibited from being placed in orbit around the Earth, installed on celestial bodies, or stationed in space in any other manner. Further, no weapons testing of any kind may be conducted on the Moon or other celestial bodies. Aside from this, there is no prohibition on other types of weapons, whether kinetic, directed energy, electronic warfare, or otherwise. There is also no express prohibition on launching intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) which transit through space, because ICBMs are not placed in orbit around the Earth or stationed in space.
 - Although provisions of the OST prohibit harmful interference without appropriate consultations, political sensitivities, rather than law, appear to be responsible for the cautious approach of the U.S. and other countries towards ASATs and other space-based weapons
- Other arms-control treaties may further limit the use or placement of weapons in space. For example, the Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963) prohibits nuclear weapons testing or any other nuclear explosion under water, in the air, or in outer space.

Freedom of Use and Non-Appropriation Principles

- The OST requires that space be free for the exploration and use by all States, and States should, therefore, make an effort to avoid interfering with the exploration and use of space by other States. In other words, unless authorized under international law, no State may prohibit another State from accessing space or any areas on celestial bodies.
- Unlike airspace, States have no right to claim territorial sovereignty in space, the Moon, or other celestial bodies. This, with the free exploration and use right, noted above, cements the right to navigate, in space, over another State's territory—a legal principle known as the “Freedom Principle.” However, there is no broad right of space objects to pass through foreign airspace during launch or recovery, so this requires pre-authorization.
- If States have reason to believe their military space activities would cause potentially harmful interference with the space activities of other States, “appropriate” international consultations are required by the OST before proceeding. In practice, no such consultations are known to have occurred pursuant to this obligation.
- Outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, cannot be owned or appropriated by a State or other entity. One debated issue is whether this provision allows for the appropriation of extracted resources in space, such as from the Moon, asteroids, or on Mars. This issue has become more prominent with the increasing number of commercial actors in space. U.S. law specifically permits the commercial exploitation of resources in outer space by citizens and private entities.

- The OST requires States to exercise their free exploration and use of outer space with “due regard” for the interests of other States. While due regard is a standard found in other domains, there is no fixed or settled meaning of due regard obligations for space operations.

International Law Applies to Space Activities

- The OST recognizes that international law is applicable in space. Therefore, international law should be considered when planning military space operations, including principles of customary international law (e.g., the inherent right to self-defense), the UN Charter’s prohibition against the threat and use of force, and other international agreements. In addition, the applicable law of war principles must be considered during operational planning and targeting processes.
- While it is clear the law of war applies to military space operations, the practical application of the law can be challenging, given the lack of historical state practice in this area and the unique characteristics of the physical space environment

States are Responsible and Liable for the Space Activities of State and Non-State Actors

- A unique aspect of the space domain is that States bear international responsibility and liability for the space activities of both State and non-State actors. For example, if a commercial entity launches an object into space from U.S. territory, the U.S. will be internationally responsible for any wrongful act(s) committed by the commercial entity. As a corresponding obligation, States must authorize and continually supervise all space activities by State and non-State actors, which is usually accomplished through a national licensing process.
- Space object registration provides one means of determining which State is responsible for a particular space object, by requiring States to establish a national registry to record every object the State launches into space, including military objects. Each State that launches or procures the launch of an object into space and each State from whose territory or facility an object is launched is internationally liable for any damage the launched object causes on the Earth, in airspace, and in outer space.
- Two UN space treaties expand upon these OST principles and are further explained below:
 - Liability Convention (1972): This convention elaborates upon the OST regarding the liability of launching States for any damage on Earth or in orbit caused by launched space objects. Launching States are “absolutely liable” for damage caused by space objects on the surface of the Earth or to aircraft in flight; that is, whether there is fault is irrelevant—if damage is caused, the State is liable. For damage caused to objects in space, launching States are liable only if they (or the non-State actor for which they bear responsibility) are at fault. The convention describes the circumstances under which States may be held liable for such damage and sets out procedures to follow in pursuing a claim for damages. The convention is likely inapplicable between Parties engaged in an armed conflict, but it may be applicable to harmed third parties.

- Registration Convention (1976): This convention expands upon the OST and assists States in identifying responsibility over space objects. It requires a launching State to maintain a registry of objects launched into space and provide certain data to the UN as soon as practicable for every object launched, including military objects. The UN publishes the data in a register available to the public via the Internet at <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/spaceobjectregister/index.html>.

Astronauts are the Envoys of Mankind

- The OST provides that astronauts shall be regarded as “envoys of mankind in outer space” and requires State Parties to render them all assistance possible in the event of accident, distress, or emergency landing on the territory of another State or on the high seas. The Rescue and Return Agreement (1968) expands upon this principle. The agreement also provides for the retrieval of space objects found outside the territory of a launching State and the return to the launching State, upon request.
- Given that astronauts are often military personnel, it remains unclear whether military personnel would be protected by this agreement and the OST during an armed conflict. Applicability may depend on the mission and the circumstances, to include the developing interpretation of the inter-relation of privileges and obligations of States under the law of war and international space law.

Satellite Communications and the Role of the ITU

- The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is a specialized UN agency that provides the international framework for the management of international telecommunications (including satellite communications) and administers relevant international treaties, including the ITU Constitution, the ITU Convention, and the Radio Regulations
- The United States is a member of the ITU and is, therefore, bound by the provisions of the three governing instruments, which declare the radio-frequency spectrum and the geostationary orbit are limited, natural resources to which all States are authorized equitable access. The overarching goal of the ITU is to prevent harmful radio-frequency interference through the development of international standards and the de-confliction of radio frequencies.
- The ITU allocates satellite orbits and bands of radio-frequency spectrum to different categories of services, allots radio frequencies to countries or regions, and registers radio-frequency assignments at the international level
 - The assignment of radio frequencies to satellite operators occurs at the State level. For example, in the U.S., the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) assigns radio frequencies to commercial satellite operators, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration assigns radio frequencies to federal government operators. Once satellite operators are assigned frequencies, they are entitled to operate without harmful interference.

- For the geostationary orbit, the ITU also allocates physical orbital slots, and satellites must remain within + or – 0.1 degrees of an allocated physical slot. The geostationary orbit is a circular orbit above the equator, which has an orbital period equal to that of the earth. A satellite stationed in this orbit, therefore, appears stationary above the earth, making the orbit ideal for satellite communication purposes.
- For non-geostationary orbits, the ITU authorizes satellites on a system-wide basis, as many smaller satellites are utilized to comprise a single system (these multi-satellite non-geostationary orbit systems are frequently referred to as “constellations”). Non-geostationary orbits are closer to earth and have a shorter orbital period than geostationary orbit. There are three primary types of non-geostationary orbits: (i) low earth orbit, (ii) medium earth orbit, and (iii) highly elliptical orbits. Because of their closer proximity to earth, non-geostationary orbit satellite systems are poised to provide swifter services than traditional geostationary orbit satellites. These non-geostationary orbit systems provide a diverse range of functionalities, such as communications, earth imaging, internet-of-things, and more.
- The ITU procedures and rules generally do not apply to military activities, with some exceptions. It is important to consult a judge advocate in any situation where military operations may interfere with the rights of other spectrum users.

U.S. Law and Policy Applicable to Military Space Operations

- Given the permissive nature of international space law for military operations, U.S. military activities and operations in space are largely regulated by national and DoW policy. Military space operations are also guided by joint doctrine, such as Joint Publication 3-14, *Space Operations*. As a matter of national policy, the U.S. acknowledges the use of space is for peaceful purposes, in accordance with international law, while also safeguarding U.S. interests in space.
- There are several national laws and policies that may impact or shape how the DoW conducts space activities and operations

U.S. Satellite Interference

- 18 U.S.C. § 1367 makes it a felony to intentionally or maliciously interfere with authorized satellite operations or transmissions without the permission of the satellite operator. While 18 U.S.C. § 1367 specifically exempts authorized law enforcement and intelligence activities, it does not specifically exempt other military and national security activities.
- The law does not apply extraterritorially, and there is arguably an implied national security exception for defense activities. Given these sensitivities, consultation with a judge advocate is essential whenever the provisions of 18 U.S.C. § 1367 may be implicated by military space activities and operations.

U.S. Space Domain Awareness

- Space Domain Awareness (SDA) is defined by the DoW as the timely, relevant, and actionable understanding of the operational environment that allows military forces to plan, integrate, execute, and assess space operations. SDA includes a subset of information and services called space situational awareness (SSA), which is the foundational, current, and predictive knowledge and characterization of space orbital objects and the space domain. SSA is essential to avoiding collisions in space and minimizing environmental damage and orbital debris.
- SSA is enabled by the U.S. Space Surveillance Network, which is a network of sensors and radars positioned around the world. As a result of SSA services and information, the U.S. has established one of the world's most robust and complete catalog of space objects.
 - Pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2274, SecWar is authorized to provide SSA services and information to, and obtain SSA data and information from, non-U.S. government entities, if determined to be necessary for national security. This law authorizes SSA sharing agreements with entities, such as the governments of foreign States, political subdivisions of States, and U.S. and foreign commercial entities. SecWar has delegated this authority to CDRUSSPACECOM, who executes DoW's SSA sharing program.

U.S. Global Positioning System

- The U.S.-owned Global Positioning System (GPS) and space-based position, navigation, and timing (PNT) have become essential to both military and civil activities worldwide. In accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 2281, the DoW is responsible for sustaining and operating GPS for both military and civilian purposes. Additionally, under 51 U.S.C. § 50112, Congress encouraged the President to promote GPS as the international standard.
- 10 U.S.C. § 2281, the 2020 National Space Policy, and Space Policy Directive 7 further assert that the U.S. should provide uninterrupted access to GPS for U.S. and allied national security systems; provide access to GPS on a continuous, worldwide basis free of direct user fees for civil, commercial, scientific uses, and homeland security purposes; and improve capabilities to deny hostile use of any PNT services, without unduly disrupting civil and commercial access

U.S. Orbital Debris Guidelines and Launch Licensing

- Space is becoming more and more crowded, with an increasing number of actors and objects. The number of defunct satellites and other man-made objects orbiting the Earth is continuously on the rise, increasing the odds of potentially devastating space collisions.
- Although there is no express requirement under international law to minimize orbital debris in space, the U.S. government has enacted its own U.S. Orbital Debris Mitigation Standard Practices (ODMSP), which were updated and strengthened in 2019. These guidelines are intended to minimize new and mitigate existing space debris and encourage the implementation of similar standards by other States. All U.S. military launches must follow these guidelines or seek an exception to policy.

- The U.S. meets its obligations under the OST and other UN space treaties to authorize and continually supervise all space activities and objects through its licensing process. Various U.S. agencies are involved in the licensing process, depending on the function and operations of a satellite. These agencies include, but are not limited to, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for commercial launches, the Federal Communications Commission for satellite communication links, and the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for remote-sensing satellites. The DoW launch mission transitioned to USSF's Space Systems Command (SSC) in 2021. Commercial and civilian launch (including contracted DoW) is a rapidly growing and changing area of law, regulation, and policy; therefore, consultation with a judge advocate is essential to ensure compliance with the latest guidance in this area.

DoW Guidelines and Standing Rules of Engagement

- The 2020 U.S. National Space Policy directed the heads of U.S. agencies, in collaboration with the Secretary of State, to: "[l]ead the enhancement of safety, stability, security, and long-term sustainability in space by promoting a framework for responsible behavior in outer space" Pursuant to this effort, on 7 July 2021, the then-SecWar directed the Department to conduct its space operations consistent with the following five tenets of responsible behavior: (1) Operate in, from, to, and through space with due regard for others and in a professional manner; (2) Limit the generation of long-lived debris; (3) Avoid the creation of harmful interference; (4) Maintain safe separation and safe trajectory; and (5) Communicate and make notification to enhance the safety and stability of the domain. On 9 February 2023, SecDef directed the Department to conduct space operations consistent with eight CDRUSSPACECOM-recommended responsible behaviors derived from these five tenets. Both memos are available at <https://www.spacecom.mil/Newsroom/Publications/>.
- The U.S. Standing Rules of Engagement (SROE) in CJCSI 3121.01B contains a classified annex, Enclosure E, concerning space operations

Major U.S. Policy Efforts

- In April 2022, then-Vice President Kamala Harris announced the U.S. committed not to conduct destructive direct-ascent antisatellite (DA ASAT) missile testing and that the U.S. sought to establish this as a new international norm for responsible behavior in space. Since that time, more than 35 countries have made similar unilateral commitments, including Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and others. Further, UN General Assembly Resolution 77/41 was adopted in December 2022 with the support of 154 countries, calling upon all States to commit to not conducting destructive DA ASAT missile tests. These activities represent a recent significant shift in State practice.

- The U.S.'s Artemis Program is designed to return humankind to the Moon, demonstrate new technologies, conduct lunar research, and eventually send the first astronauts to Mars. A NASA-led civil space project, the Artemis Program seeks broad international cooperation and partnership. In furtherance of this cooperation, NASA and the Department of State established the Artemis Accords, which 59 countries have since signed onto (as of October 2025). While not binding on military space activities, these Accords reinforce the commitments of the signatories to some of the foundational principles of the primary international space treaties, as well as best practices and norms of responsible behavior, such as the public release of scientific data or the deconfliction of space activities. Notably, the signatories affirm that the extraction of space resources does not inherently constitute national appropriation under Article II of the OST.

Non-Binding Standards of Responsible Behavior in Space

- The binding international legal regime in space is unlikely to change in the near future, due to a lack of international consensus amongst the space powers, which has driven efforts to develop non-binding standards at both the international and U.S. national levels. One of the stated primary goals of developing non-binding standards is to reach a common understanding of responsible versus irresponsible behaviors in space to increase transparency among States and reduce the chance of miscommunication or miscalculation, which can lead to an escalation of tensions and hostilities.
- In December 2021, UN General Assembly Resolution 75/36 sought the views of UN Member States on the further development and implementation of norms, rules, and principles of responsible behaviors. The U.S. Department of State led and coordinated with other U.S. agencies (including the DoW) regarding the U.S. national submission to the UN Resolution.

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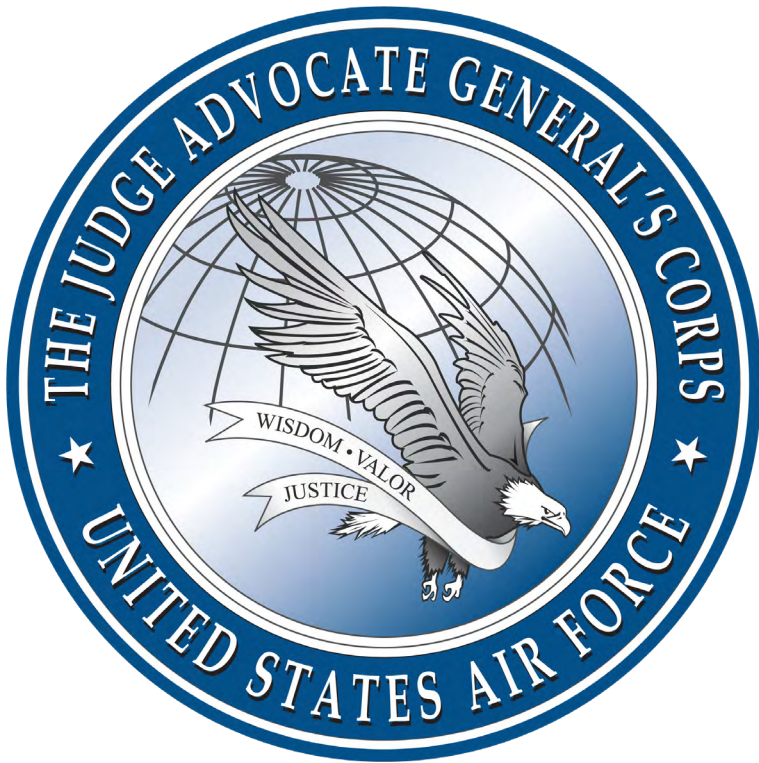
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