



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE
JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS – VIRGINIA
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RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23297

NGVA-ZA

11 March 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: TAG Command Policy 21-001, Online Standards of Conduct

1. Purpose. To establish Virginia National Guard (VNG) policy for professional conduct using electronic communications such as social media posts, email, or text messages.

2. References:

a. ALARACT 058/2018 - Professionalization Of Online Conduct:
https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/socialmedia/ALARACT_058_2018_PROFESSIONALIZATION_OF_ONLINE_CONDUCT.pdf

b. Army STAND TO: U.S. Army Online Conduct:
https://www.army.mil/standto/archive_2018-08-21/

c. The Army Values: <https://www.goarmy.com/soldier-life/being-a-soldier/living-the-army-values.html>

d. The Air Force Values: <https://www.airforce.com/mission/vision>

e. U.S. Army Social Media Policy and Resources: <https://www.army.mil/socialmedia/>

f. U.S. Air Force Social Media Guidelines: <https://www.publicaffairs.af.mil/Programs/Air-Force-Social-Media/>

g. DOD Web and Social Media Policies: <https://dodcio.defense.gov/DoD-Web-Policy/>

h. DOD Social Media Hub: <https://dodcio.defense.gov/Social-Media/>

i. NGB Social Media Resources: <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Resources/Social-Media/Directory/>

j. DoD 5500.7-R, "Joint Ethics Regulation":
www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/550007p.pdf

k. Office of Government Ethics: Standards of Conduct and Social Media:
<https://www.oge.gov/web/oge.nsf/Resources/LA-15-03:+The+Standards+of+Conduct+as+Applied+to+Personal+Social+Media+Use>

3. Applicability. This policy applies to all members of the VNG to include Soldiers, Airmen, and federal civilians. It is effective immediately and supersedes all previous policies related to online standards of conduct.

4. General Online Professional Conduct Policy.

a. The Army and Air Force values are the Virginia National Guard values, and they require everyone be treated with dignity and respect. Interactions in person and online reflect on our organization and its values through all aspects of life, including online conduct.

b. Commanders and leaders must reinforce a climate where current and future members of the VNG understand online misconduct where electronic communications are used to inflict harm is inconsistent with our values and where online-related incidents are prevented, reported, and when necessary addressed at the lowest possible level.

c. The VNG encourages service members to tell their personal and unit story and is not prohibiting or limiting the responsible use of electronic communications. When communicating via social media posts, text messages, email, online chats, instant messaging, or blogs, service members should always apply the Think, Type, Post rule:

Think about the message being communicated and who could potentially view it.

Type a communication that is consistent with Army and Air Force values.

Post only those messages that demonstrate dignity and respect for self and others.

d. Service members who make insensitive or inappropriate posts not in keeping with the Army and Air Force values on social media should be counseled at the lowest level of command possible.

e. Service members involved in more serious incidents of online misconduct such as harassment, bullying, stalking, discrimination, or retaliation undermining dignity and respect may be subject to criminal, disciplinary and/or other corrective action.

f. Service members who on their personal social media accounts identify themselves by rank, duty position, or military organization must at all times maintain respectful attitudes towards other participants, conduct themselves in a professional manner and should avoid expressing personal opinions that might be interpreted as official communication by the organization.

g. Personnel experiencing or witnessing online misconduct should promptly report matters to the chain of command/supervisor. If the unit chain of command is not known, report the details of the incident to the Virginia National Guard Office of the Inspector General at <https://va.ng.mil/JFHQ/Inspector-General/>.

h. VNG personnel should always be mindful of operations security and protect unclassified information and prevent potential adversaries from discovering critical operational information. Before posting information about planned, in progress or completed operations, personnel should be sure it will not compromise the success of the mission or the safety of their unit or their family.

5. Guidance on political activity.

a. Service members are encouraged to express their opinions of the political process, as long as they are consistent with the Army and Air Force values and are not expressed as part of an organized communication campaign and as a representative of the VNG. Such opinions must be expressed as an individual apart from the military.

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b. Service members should be aware of the limitations existing when it comes to participation in political activity as well as support to political campaigns, which include:

(1) Cannot participate in partisan political activity or in any interview as an advocate for or against a party, candidate, or cause while in uniform or on duty.


(2) Can generally express their personal views on public issues or political candidates as they would be permitted to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper.

(3) Can "follow," "friend," or "like" a political party or candidate running for office.

(4) Cannot post links to, "share" or "retweet" comments or tweets from a Facebook page or Twitter account of a political party or candidate running for partisan office. Such activity is deemed to constitute participation in political activities.

(5) Service members must also be careful not to comment, post, or link to material that violates the Uniform Code of Military Justice or service regulations. Examples include showing contempt for public officials, releasing sensitive information, or posting unprofessional material that is prejudicial to good order and discipline.

6. Point of contact is the Virginia National Guard Public Affairs Office at NGVA.PAO@mail.mil.



TIMOTHY P. WILLIAMS
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The Adjutant General

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