

**NAVY SOCIAL
MEDIA HANDBOOK**
***FOR SAILORS
& FAMILIES***

2023



Updated:
February 10, 2023

For social media queries
please email:
NavySM@us.navy.mil

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ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1400

DEC 20 2021

Public Affairs

MEMORANDUM FOR MILITARY SERVICE CHIEFS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NATIONAL GUARD CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Core Operational Principles on the Use of Official Social Media Accounts within the Department of Defense

While the information and technological environment continue to evolve, our professional and ethical conduct must remain steadfastly aligned to the highest core principles of our service to the Nation.


The Department of Defense's (DoD) reputation for transparency rests in large part on the foundation of the Department's Principles of Information contained in DoD Directive 5122.05, "Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ATSD(PA))," and the Department's adherence to these standards. DoD's use of official social media plays an important role in ensuring a free flow of information to the public consistent with these principles. In accordance with DoD Directive 5122.05 and DoD Instruction 8170.01, "Online Information Management and Electronic Messaging," I am sharing these core principles to guide departmental use of official social media accounts and to set expectations of proper conduct for all official account holders.

The core operational social media principles are described below.

1. **Governance.** Public Affairs oversees and manages official DoD social media accounts. This ensures proper alignment with communication and information plans across all media and social media platforms.
2. **Professionalism.** All official social media content reflects upon the Department. Public Affairs Officers and social media administrators must exercise the same high standard of professional and ethical behavior on these accounts as with any other communication function or capability. Official social media accounts must not be used to promote or endorse non-Federal entities or personal financial interests.
3. **Propriety.** Information authorized and publicly released by DoD constitutes official DoD information; therefore, accuracy, appropriateness, timeliness, and proper tone are imperative.
4. **Acumen.** Official social media account administrators should have current knowledge of social media tactics, best practices, and trends, coupled with an understanding of public affairs objectives (e.g., DoD Communication Playbook) to act quickly and remain effective by properly employing social media to meet Departmental objectives in an appropriate manner.

5. **Establishment Appetite.** Establishing new official social media accounts should be carefully considered against existing accounts and platforms. More for the sake of more is not necessarily better.
6. **Transparency.** Content, including replies, will not be deleted from official accounts unless there is a factual or typographical error; violation of a law, policy, term of service, or user agreement; or a security concern. Removal of content will be publicly acknowledged and communicated to audiences to provide context and clarity of the action.
7. **Retention of Content:** DoD social media posts are agency records pursuant to the Federal Records Act (44 U.S.C Chapters 31 and 33). Public Affairs Officers and social media administrators are responsible for retaining information posted to their respective social media sites in accordance with the guidance provided by their DoD component records managers.

As leaders, public affairs practitioners, professional communicators, and public servants, we will continue to advance and improve the quality of information that we share with all DoD audiences, the news media, and the American public. These principles, coupled with a pending DoD instruction on social media usage, are necessary to sustain the trust and credibility of our message on a global information stage.



John F. Kirby

Cc:
Secretaries of the Military Departments
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Under Secretaries of Defense
Chiefs of the Military Services
Chief of the National Guard Bureau
Commanders of the Combatant Commands
General Counsel of the Department of Defense
Chief Information Officer of the Department of Defense
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict

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SOCIAL MEDIA HANDBOOK FOR SAILORS AND FAMILIES

Individual responsibility online is a SHARED responsibility – Sailors, Navy Civilians and their families. We all play a part in putting our best foot forward in representing our Navy as well as securing its operations and most importantly the safety and well-being of all. This handbook is intended to help you and your families understand the left and right limits of sharing your story safely in the social media space.

SOCIAL MEDIA DO'S

- DO tell your Navy story – while respecting operational security and the responsibility of representing the Navy and your Shipmates – you should share Navy life and experiences that help connect Americans with their Navy; help our fellow citizens understand what we do and why the work you and your Shipmates do is important to national defense.
- DO use #ShareMyNavy on your posts if you would like big Navy pages to share them.
- DO be authentic. Your own original take on your service, your voice, is unique to you and yours alone.
- DO share your rate, and how that rate contributes to the larger mission.
- DO share your experience as a Navy spouse, parent or family member. We want you to show what life is like on your installation, what kind of resources and support are available for you and your children; as well as challenges and joys of being a part of the Navy family.

While we absolutely want you to share your story, there are a few 'don'ts' to consider, per DoD Instruction 5400.17, Section 8. You may not speak officially on behalf of the Navy or your command on your personal page, or use your position for any financial or political gain. Similarly, you may not endorse or appear to endorse any product, service, or political campaign while in uniform. Bottom line: Steer clear of the above and share away!

ONLINE BEHAVIOR CONSIDERATIONS

Rule of thumb: If you wouldn't tag your boss or Sailor's boss in a post due to its content, you probably shouldn't post it. Keep in mind – rightly or wrongly – any time you post a photo of yourself in uniform, you immediately become a spokesperson for the entire Navy in the eyes of the external audience. Anything you post, no matter how small your intended audience can become viral in a matter of seconds.

It is also important to note that just as with physical misconduct offline, misconduct ONLINE is also subject to UCMJ. This does not mean you should not engage. On the contrary, engaging on social media in a positive way; representing yourself and the Navy well, carries the Navy story to Americans and others and gives you an opportunity to tell your own story. Talk with your immediate supervisors when you have questions.



Deputy Secretary of Defense Policy Memorandum, Hazing and Bullying Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces, Dec. 23, 2015:

Identifies **hazing** as so-called initiations or rites of passage in which individuals are subjected to physical or psychological harm. It identifies **bullying** as “acts of aggression intended to single out individuals from their teammates or coworkers, or to exclude them from a military element, unit or Department of Defense organization.” Additionally, the memo states that hazing and bullying are *unacceptable and prohibited* in all circumstances and environments, including off-duty or unofficial unit functions and settings, as well as on social media and other digital environments.

Also, **intimate images taken without consent**, or posted online without consent constitute *violations of the UCMJ and Navy Regulations*. As outlined in the CNO’s Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority core attributes, the Navy is a values-based organization where everyone is expected to conduct himself or herself in a manner that is “**always upright and honorable, both in public or when no one is looking.**”

THE UCMJ & NAVY REGULATIONS

When online, to include when using social media, Sailors are subject to the **UCMJ and Navy regulations, even when off duty**. Commenting, posting or linking to material that violates the UCMJ or Navy Regulations may result in administrative or disciplinary action, including administrative separation and may, subject civilians to appropriate disciplinary action. Punitive action may include Articles 88, 89, 91, 92, 120b, 120c, 133 or 134 (General Article provisions, Contempt, Disrespect, Insubordination, Indecent Language, Communicating a threat, Solicitation to commit another Offense, and Child Pornography offenses), as well as other articles, including Navy Regulations Article 1168, non-consensual distribution or broadcast of an image.

Behaviors with Legal Consequences

Electronic harassment

47 U.S.C. § 223 (a)(1)(C) makes it a crime to anonymously use a telecommunications device (i.e. telephone, computer, or other electronic devices used for communication) to harass a person; 47 U.S.C § 223 (a)(1)(E) prohibits initiating communication via a telecommunications device solely to harass the recipient.

Electronic threats

18 U.S.C § 875 prohibits transmitting communications containing threats to kidnap or physically injure someone. It also criminalizes the actions of someone who, with intent to export (receive anything of value), electronically threatens to injure the property or reputation of a person. Sextortion (being tricked into providing sexual images and then being asked for money to not have the images published online) may fall under provisions of this law.

Cyberstalking

18 U.S.C. § 2261A prohibits a person, with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate someone, from using a computer (or other digital communications system), to engage in actions (course of conduct) reasonably expected to cause a person (or immediate family member, spouse, or intimate partner) substantial emotional distress.



Obscenity

47 U.S.C. § 223(a)(1)(A) prohibits using a telecommunications device to make, create, or solicit and transmit any obscene comment, request, suggestion, proposal, image, or other communication.

Child exploitation / Child sexual exploitation

18 U.S.C. § 2251, 2252, and 2252A. Using a computer (a smartphone is a computer) to solicit, make, create, transmit, or receive child pornography is illegal. For these provisions, a child is anyone under the age of 18. 18 U.S.C. § 1462 makes it a crime to transmit obscene matters. 18 U.S.C. § 1470 criminalizes the transfer of obscene materials, including digital images, to persons under the age of 16. **Sending sexually explicit (graphic dirty talk) electronic messages to minors, or soliciting sexually explicit communications, also are criminal offenses.**

Computer misuse (hacking)

A person engaging in cyber misconduct may also commit violations of 18 U.S.C. § 1030, if, for example, he or she exceeds authorized access to the computer or accesses the computer without authorization (i.e. hacks into an account or network) to send harassing, intimidating, humiliating, or even threatening communication.

Extremism

NAVADMIN 044/21 covers the Navy's policy on Extremism in the ranks:

"Extremist behaviors and conduct, even if from only a small percentage of our force, violate our Core Values, are detrimental to good order and discipline, reduce warfighting readiness and degrade the toughness, trust and connectedness we are building in our Sailors and teams through our Culture of Excellence campaign.

Service members and civilian personnel must clearly understand the damaging effects of extremism and begin developing more effective, sustainable ways to eliminate the corrosive impacts extremist activity can have on our Force. As public servants, we took an oath to the Constitution and we will not tolerate those who participate in actions that go against the fundamental principles of the oath we share, particularly actions associated with extremist or dissident ideologies. Service members, Department of Defense civilians and all those who support our mission, are entitled to an environment free of discrimination, hate and harassment."

Speech in the workplace that interferes with the mission, espouses extremist or discriminatory doctrine, or is disrespectful and harmful to colleagues, will have consequences.

Extremism Training and resources: <https://go.usa.gov/xtsc8>

REPORTING INCIDENTS

Any member of the Navy community who experiences or witnesses incidents of improper online and/or extremist behavior should promptly report it to their chain of command via the Command Managed Equal Opportunity manager or Fleet and Family Support office.

Additional avenues for reporting include Equal Employment Opportunity offices, the Inspector

General, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response offices, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

*** NCIS encourages anyone with knowledge of criminal activity to report it to their local NCIS field office directly or via a web or smartphone app. Specific instructions are available here: <https://www.ncis.navy.mil/Resources/NCIS-Tips>

Rules of the road for our Sailors, Families and Navy civilians online:

- When you are online, you are in public – so act like it.
- Do not do or say anything online you would not do or say in public.
- Keep relationships and personal life private; setting your page to private is a good practice.
- There is no such thing as complete anonymity online (even if your page is private).
- Before you post, STOP and THINK.
- Words matter and can be taken out of context.
- Images can be taken out of context.
- Cool off before responding to messages out of emotion.

Anyone anywhere can see what you post. The internet doesn't forget. All it takes is a screenshot or download of an image to make sure one moment online lasts an eternity. Anything shared online, although intended to be private and confidential, has the possibility to become public – if it is best left unsaid, do not say it. If you do not want it shared, do not post it.

Protect your privacy and your friends' privacy too by not sharing without their permission.

And unless you are prepared to attach that post, text, or photo to your next security clearance package, or resume – again, do not post it.

Anything posted on the internet is permanent. Through the use of publicly available online tools, data can be recovered and used against you.

OPSEC and Identity Management Concerns

We've all heard the phrase "practice good OPSEC" – but what does that mean in the social space? The same thing it has always meant. The same information that can be collected and pieced together by adversaries in person, can be done so more swiftly and easily via social media. Be careful not to post movements, deployment dates, ship dates (if you are a new recruit), when your spouse or parent is gone or coming home (if you are a Navy spouse or dependent). If you wouldn't share it with a complete stranger in person, do not disclose it to complete strangers online. Even if your page is "private" there are ways for bad actors to acquire information.

What is Identity Management?

Identity management (IdM), also known as identity and access management (IAM) aims to ensure that ONLY authorized people have access to the technology resources they need to perform their jobs. It includes policies and technologies that encompass an organization-wide process to properly identify, authenticate, and authorize employees based on their identities.

Identity management has gained importance over the past decade due to the growing number



of global regulatory, compliance, and governance mandates that seek to protect sensitive data from exposure of any kind.

Take your identity and your personal brand seriously. Report fake profiles of yourself, leadership, or others you may know to the platforms themselves and flag them for CHINFO staff if the page(s) are not taken down or taken to resolution. In the same way you protect your credit, CAC card, social security number and other personal information; be careful what you share about yourself online. Is your birthday, or other PII displayed on your profile? Make sure to check your page from another browser or account in order to see what your profile actually reveals to other and then fix your profile settings accordingly to ensure you are not revealing more about yourself than you'd want a stranger to know. A lot can often be gleaned from profiles even when they are set to "private".

(SOCIAL) MEDIA LITERACY

Media Literacy: the ability or skills to critically analyze for accuracy, credibility, or evidence of bias the content created and consumed in various media, including radio and television, the internet, and social media.

Social media literacy is the above applied to the social media space. What media do you consume? How are the messages conveyed on those platforms constructed? With what in mind? What is ground truth?

Let's start with a reason social media companies exist – to make money. Every platform wants you to spend as much time as possible on it with algorithms designed to populate your "feed" with content and information you will like and engage with most; and that will keep you on the platform the longest.

This is convenient, when it comes to innocuous content like entertaining videos or photos, but it becomes problematic where misinformation pops up in searches disguised as valid information.

So what do you do? Stop and THINK.

Look beyond initial searches with the understanding that the search terms you use may sway the information you receive. If you search a positive phrase for something and negative phrase for something, for example, you might return completely different results on the same topic; each supporting the narrative of the initial phrasing. The key is to search a few different ways with different keywords to get different perspectives. You should avoid limiting yourself to results that agree with your perspective. Additionally, beware of misinformation and disinformation campaigns that are active in the social media landscape. Often, adversaries are pushing out inaccurate or purposely misleading propaganda to steer public perception. Make sure to flag such instances to your organization or installation public affairs office when you see them.

Lastly, keep an open mind but do not believe – and certainly don't share – the first thing you read in a social media post at face value. Take the time to critically think about the information, consider its source, and any agenda of the source.



WHAT ARE BOTS ?!

Knowing whether an account is a bot or troll pretending to be an actual person is difficult. By some estimates, a quarter of all social media accounts may be bots and/or inauthentic accounts. Bots have been used by foreign governments, private companies, and terrorist organizations.

Some are controlled by an AI, others are controlled in what are often referred to as “troll farms”, places where real people are paid to use hundreds of fake accounts online to pose as real accounts, usually using stolen identities. These types of accounts are often referred to as “sock puppets”.

If you come across a tweet and are not sure if it is from a bot, here are the following steps you can take to assess whether it is a bot or a real person:

- Check for account verification. If there is a check mark next to the account name, then it has been verified to be a real person or organization by the site.

If there is no check mark:

- Check the handle of the account. Fake accounts often contain a lot of random numbers or letters in the handle (i.e., RealPatriot274hg6yt).
- Look at the age of the account. If an account is around or less than a year old, it could likely be a bot. If the account is years old, but only appears to have started tweeting, posting, sharing etc., within the past few months, it is also likely a bot. Many bad actors will create hundreds of accounts with the intent of keeping them quiet for a couple years to try and escape detection.

Some platforms have free, open-source tools to help identify inauthentic accounts. Bot Sentinel for example, analyzes Twitter accounts and grades them on the likelihood the account is a bot or troll.

DOD PERSONNEL AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY: THE HATCH ACT

DoD Personnel and Political Activity: The Hatch Act

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) routinely receives questions from federal employees and others about when the use of social media could violate the Hatch Act. Social media platforms are easily accessible to most employees while at work – on computers, smartphones, or other devices. OSC has created this guidance to help federal employees understand what the Hatch Act does and does not.

In general, all federal employees may use social media and comply with the Hatch Act if they remember the following three prohibitions:

1. On Duty or in the Workplace Prohibition – Employees may not engage in political activity while on duty or in the federal workplace.
2. 24/7 Prohibition – Employees may not knowingly solicit, accept, or receive a political contribution for a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.



3. 24/7 Prohibition – Employees may not use their official authority or influence to affect the outcome of an election.

Military Personnel: DoD has a longstanding policy of encouraging military personnel to carry out the obligations of citizenship. However, AD members will not engage in partisan political activities and all military personnel will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of a political candidate, campaign or cause.

Civilian Personnel: For DoD civilians, participation in political activity is regulated by a number of sources: the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 7321 - 7326), implementing regulations (5 C.F.R. § 733 and 5 C.F.R. § 734), as well as DoD policy. For purposes of the Hatch Act, political activity is defined as "an activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office or partisan political group". Because application of the rules may vary depending on an employee's position or office, it is extremely important that employees who are considering engaging in political activity know which rules apply.

With regard to civilian employees, there are two sets of restrictions for three groups of employees. The first and more restrictive set of restrictions applies to: (1) individuals appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate and individuals serving in non-career SES positions; and (2) career members of the SES, contract appeals board members, and all employees of the National Security Agency (NSA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the National Geo-Spatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). The second and more lenient set of restrictions applies to all other employees (including Schedule C political appointees).

Employees in Groups 1 and 2 are prohibited from taking an active part in partisan political management or political campaigns and are referred to as "further restricted" employees.

For further details on the above please see Appendix B.

CONCLUSION

Please continue to reference this handbook when you or your loved ones have questions. We encourage you to share your Navy story in a manner in keeping with your role as a Sailor or Navy family member.

The considerations above aren't meant to scare you; rather to make you aware of some of the pitfalls that exist and how best to avoid them.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to OI-2, CHINFO, at NavySM@us.navy.mil

GO NAVY!



GLOSSARY

Avatar: A static or moving image or other graphic representation that acts as a proxy for a person or is associated with a specific digital account or identity, as on the internet: Not the blue animated characters, an avatar is another word for profile picture or icon that visually represents and identifies your organization on the social media platform.

Bio: Biography, or short description in profile that easily describes who and what your organization is about. Recommend sharing website links, common hashtags, contact information, or disclaimers in this section.

Bots: A software program that can execute commands, reply to messages, or perform routine tasks, as online searches, either automatically or with minimal human intervention (often used in combination): *a social media bot retweeting certain posts; a customer service chatbot to answer product questions*. Especially prevalent on Twitter, a bot is an automated account run by software capable of posting content or interacting with other users. Some bots pretend to be humans.

Catfishing: When a person assumes a false identity or personality on the internet, especially on social media websites, as to deceive, manipulate, or swindle.

Command Presence: A profile on a social networking website which is considered distinct from an actual user personal or personal-professional profile in that it is created and managed by at least one other registered user, usually Public Affairs staff or Mass Communication Specialist as a representation of a non-personal online identity for that command. These pages are listed by command and/or ship name vice and individual and push out content to tell the story of that particular command/ship and its mission writ large.

Content: Something that is to be expressed through some medium, as speech, writing, or any of the various arts.

Cover Photo: A header image on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube that tells people what your organization is about at first glance upon coming to your page.

Disinformation: False information created intentionally and spread with the intent to deceive.

DM: Direct message, or not publicly posted communication between two accounts. Keep in mind, however, that this correspondence is only private to the extent that one user can screenshot and publish the conversation.

Engagements: Social media engagement measures the public shares, likes and comments for an online business' social media efforts. Engagement has historically been a common metric for evaluating social media performance. How people react to the content, including likes, comments, retweets, shares, reactions, and more.

Ephemeral Content: Sometimes called "disappearing content," these social media posts delete automatically after a set amount of time has lapsed. Instagram and Snapchat stories disappear after 24 hours. However, content is also susceptible to screen recording or other methods of indefinitely capturing the content.



Feed: A social media feed is an updated list of all the new content posted by the user follows on social media platforms. This stream of content published by other users, most often the “homepage” and most common way to see and engage with posts. Rather than being purely chronological, most social media feeds are controlled by an algorithm.

Hashtag: A word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on social media websites and applications, especially Twitter, to identify digital content on a specific topic.

Header: Your header photo is the **image that spans the top of your Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube profile page**. It’s quite a bit larger than your profile photo so make sure to save it at the highest resolution possible. Because you have more room to be creative with this picture and it will likely be the first thing your visitors see, make it something captivating.

Identity Management: IdM and IAM are terms often used interchangeably, however identity management is more focused on a user identity (or username), and the roles, permissions, and groups that user belongs to. IdM also focuses on protecting identities through a variety of technologies such as passwords, biometrics, multi-factor authentication, and other digital identities.

Impressions: How many people potentially saw the post; how many times the post was shown in users’ feeds, can be duplicated, and different social media networks define (and therefore calculate) this metric a little differently.

Influencer: One who exerts influence: a person who inspires or guides the actions of others; often, specifically: a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media.

Internet Sites: Any website or web page.

Malinformation: Information that is known to be true but is intentionally distorted and spread to do harm.

Mentions: Social mentions include any mention of your organization or personal brand on social media. It’s important to remember this doesn’t only include the mentions that tag your page. There are tons of conversations about your organization on social media that you aren’t receiving notifications for. Keeping an eye on mentions, following what your audience is saying; more passive approach than social listening.

Microinfluencer: A micro-influencer is someone who has between **1,000 to 100,000 followers**. Micro-influencers focus on a specific niche or area and are generally regarded as an industry expert or topic specialist. “[Micro-influencers] have stronger relationships than a typical influencer.

Misinformation: False information spread unintentionally.

Personal Page: Personal web pages are world wide web pages created by an individual to contain content of a personal nature rather than content pertaining to a company, organization or institution.

Personal-Professional Page: A page where you (or your team) represent(s) yourself as yourself; but in a professional capacity; tied to your official Navy title and in your official Navy capacity.

Platform: Also may be referred to as a social media “network” or social media “channel”.



Post: A post is a message, such as text or photos, published online by a user while referring to a message board, comment section, or social network.

Reach: **Post reach** is the number of people who saw a specific post in their news feed. **Page reach** is the number of people who saw any of your post content during a given period of time (daily, weekly or monthly).

Reels: **Reels** was created as a new way for users to create and discover short, entertaining videos on the platform. Unlike other short-form video platforms, **Reels** are 15 or 30-second multi-clip videos that you can record and edit them with audio, effects, and creative tools in a similar way to TikTok.

Social Listening: Tracking conversations around key topics and terms related to your brand, gathering mentions, comments, hashtags, and posts to provide insight on conversations surrounding your brand.

Social Monitoring: In basic terms, social media monitoring is the act of using a tool to listen to what is being said across the internet; monitoring media not just from traditional publishers, but on millions of social sites too.

Stories: See *Ephemeral Content*.

Target Audience: A particular group at which a film, book, advertising campaign, etc., is aimed.



APPENDIX A: CONTROLLED UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION TOOLKIT

What is CUI?

- Government created or owned UNCLASSIFIED information that must be safeguarded from unauthorized disclosure.
- An overarching term representing many difference categories, each authorized by one or more law, regulation, or Government-wide policy.
- Information requiring specific security measures indexed under one system across the Federal Government.

Why is CUI important?

- The establishment of CUI was a watershed moment in the Department's information security program, formally acknowledging that certain types of UNCLASSIFIED information are extremely sensitive, valuable to the United States, sought after by strategic competitors and adversaries, and often have legal safeguarding requirements.
- Unlike with classified national security information, DoD personnel at all levels of responsibility and across all mission areas receive, handle, create, and disseminate CUI.
- CUI policy provides a uniform marking system across the Federal Government that replaces a variety of agency-specific markings, such as FOUO, LES, SBU, etc.

Where did CUI come from?

- Executive Order 13556 established CUI on November 4, 2010.
<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2010-11-09/pdf/2010-28360.pdf>
- Part 2002 of 32 Code of Federal Regulations prescribed Government-wide implementation standards on September 14, 2016.
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2017-title32-vol6/pdf/CFR-2017-title32-vol6-part2002.pdf>
- DoD Instruction 5200.48, "Controlled Unclassified Information," established DoD CUI policy on March 6, 2020.
<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/520048p.pdf>

With the issuance of DoD Instruction 5200.48, the Department is proud to be an early adopter of CUI Program requirements.



APPENDIX B: POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Overarching Guidance

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) routinely receives questions from federal employees and others about when the use of social media could violate the Hatch Act. Social media platforms are easily accessible to most employees while at work – on computers, smartphones, or other devices. OSC has created this guidance to help federal employees understand what the Hatch Act does and does not allow when using social media.¹

In general, all federal employees may use social media and comply with the Hatch Act if they remember the following three prohibitions:

- (1) On Duty or in the Workplace Prohibition – Employees may not engage in political activity while on duty or in the federal workplace.
- (2) 24/7 Prohibition – Employees may not knowingly solicit, accept, or receive a political contribution for a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.
- (3) 24/7 Prohibition – Employees may not use their official authority or influence to affect the outcome of an election.

Some employees are considered “further restricted” under the Hatch Act.² In addition to the three prohibitions above, further restricted employees are subject to a fourth prohibition:

- (4) 24/7 Prohibition – Further restricted employees may not take an active part in partisan political management or campaigning.

As such, further restricted employees may not engage in political activity on behalf of or in concert with a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group. For instance, taking an “active part” would include: distributing material created by a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group; speaking at a political rally organized or sponsored by such entities; or serving as a campaign volunteer.

This guidance will discuss each of the above prohibitions in turn. The last prohibition discussed is applicable only to further restricted employees. There are some very limited exceptions to these prohibitions for certain employees in specific positions and, when in doubt, employees are encouraged to contact OSC at hatchact@osc.gov or (202) 804-7002 with any additional questions.

1 This Hatch Act Guidance supersedes OSC’s prior guidance on social media in 2012 and 2015.

2 You are a further restricted employee under the Hatch Act if you are a career member of the Senior Executive Service, an administrative law judge, a contract appeals board member, an administrative appeals judge, or if you work in one of the following agencies, or agency components: (1) Central Intelligence Agency; (2) Criminal Division of the Department of Justice; (3) Defense Intelligence Agency; (4) Election Assistance Commission; (5) Federal Bureau of Investigation; (6) Federal Election Commission; (7) Merit Systems Protection Board; (8) National Geospatial- Intelligence Agency; (9) National Security Agency; (10) National Security Council; (11) National Security Division of the Department of Justice; (12) Office of Criminal Investigation of the Internal Revenue Service; (13) Office of the Director of National Intelligence; (14) Office of Investigative Programs of the United States Customs Service; (15) Office of Law Enforcement of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; (16) Office of Special Counsel; or (17) Secret Service. See 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)(2)-(3).



(1) ON DUTY OR IN THE WORKPLACE PROHIBITION – Employees may not engage in political activity while on duty or in the workplace.³ Political activity is an activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.

(A) Posting, Liking,⁴ Sharing, or Retweeting Partisan Messages

Rule: Employees may not post, like, share, or retweet a message or comment in support of or opposition to a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group while on duty or in the workplace, even if their social media account is private.

Example 1: You are at home after work. You may like or tweet a message encouraging others to vote for your favored candidate in a partisan race.

Example 2: You are on duty and looking at Facebook on your personal cell phone. You see that a friend posted a message encouraging others to vote for members of a certain political party. You may not like or share that message while you are on duty.

Example 3: You stay at work during your lunch break and check Facebook on your personal cell phone. A Facebook friend posted a message about an upcoming event supporting a candidate in a partisan race. Even if you are not in a pay status during your lunch break, you may not like or share that post while you are in the workplace.

Example 4: You are teleworking from home and on your lunch break in which you are not in a pay status. You are looking at Facebook on your personal iPad and see that a friend posted a message about an upcoming event supporting a political party. Because you are on your lunch break and not in a federal building, you may like or share that post.

Example 5: You are teleworking from home and looking at Twitter on your personal computer. You see that the President tweeted an endorsement of a congressional candidate. You may not like or retweet that message while on duty.⁵

Example 6: You are teleworking and looking at Facebook on your personal cell phone. You see that a Senate candidate posted a message asking for votes on Election Day. You may not post a comment in support of that message while on duty.

(B) Liking, Following, or Friending Candidates or Partisan Groups

Rule: Employees may not like, follow, or friend the social media account of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group while on duty or in the workplace.

Example 1: You are at home after work and find the Instagram account of a partisan political group. You may follow them on Instagram and like their posts.

Example 2: You are at work and looking at your private Facebook account on your personal iPad. A Facebook friend shared the post of a candidate in a partisan race announcing that he or she received an endorsement. You may not like, follow, or friend the candidate's Facebook page while on duty or in the workplace.

(C) Liking, Following, or Friending the Official Social Media Accounts of Government Officials

³ Employees also may not engage in political activity while wearing a uniform or official insignia identifying the office or employee's position, or while using a government owned or leased vehicle.

⁴ Liking includes the use of other emojis or reactions, such as those in the "like" function of Facebook.

⁵ The President and Vice President are not covered under the Hatch Act and, as a result, are not subject to its social media restrictions.



Rule: Employees may continue to follow, be friends with, or like the official social media accounts of government officials after those officials become candidates for reelection.

Example 1: You follow the official government Twitter account of the President or a Member of Congress, who has just announced their candidacy for reelection. You may continue to follow these official accounts.

(D) Using an Alias on Social Media

Rule: Employees may not use an alias on social media to engage in any activity that is directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group while on duty or in the workplace.

Example 1: Your name is John Smith, but you create a Facebook profile as John Jones. You are at home after work and see that a Facebook friend posted a negative message about a candidate in a partisan race. You may share or like that post.

Example 2: Your name is Jane Smith, but you create a Twitter account as Jane Jones. You are at work, on duty, and looking at your alias Twitter account on your personal cell phone. An actor you follow on Twitter posted a negative message about a political party. You may not like or retweet that message either as Jane Smith or Jane Jones while on duty or in the workplace.

(E) Profile Pictures on Social Media Accounts

Rule: Employees may display a political party or current campaign logo or the photograph of a candidate in a partisan race as a profile picture on personal Facebook or Twitter accounts; however, they may not post, share, tweet, or retweet on those accounts while on duty or in the workplace.⁶

Example 1: You decide to use a current campaign logo as your profile picture on your personal Twitter account. Although you may use the logo as your profile picture, you may not tweet or retweet any messages on that account while on duty or in the workplace.

(F) Cover and Header Photographs on Social Media Accounts

Rule: Employees may display a political party or campaign logo or photograph of a candidate in a partisan race as a cover or header photograph on their personal Twitter or Facebook accounts.⁷

Example 1: You recently took a photograph with a candidate in a local partisan race. You may use the photograph as the header on your personal Facebook account.

(2) 24/7 PROHIBITION – Employees may not knowingly solicit, accept, or receive a political contribution for a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.

(A) Posting or Tweeting Solicitations

⁶ Because a profile picture accompanies most actions on social media, employees would not be permitted, while on duty or in the workplace, to post, share, tweet, or retweet any items on Facebook or Twitter, because each such action would show their support for a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group, even if the content of the post, share, tweet, or retweet is not about those entities.

⁷ Unlike profile pictures, cover and header photographs do not accompany most actions on social media. Therefore, the Hatch Act generally does not prohibit employees from using their social media accounts at work, even if they display a political party or campaign logo or photograph of a candidate in a partisan race as their cover or header photograph. But employees should always consult their agency's computer-use policies before using any social media at work.



Rule: Employees, even when not on duty or in the workplace, may not post or tweet a message that solicits political contributions or invites people to a fundraising event.

Example 1: You may not tweet a message asking your Twitter followers to contribute five dollars to help a candidate in a local partisan race.

Example 2: You are attending a political party's annual fundraising event. You may not post a message on Facebook inviting friends to join you at the event.

(B) Liking, Sharing, or Retweeting Solicitations

Rule: Employees, even when not on duty or in the workplace, may not like, share, or retweet a post that solicits political contributions, including invitations to fundraising events.

Example 1: Someone tweets a message offering to match the donation of the first five friends that donate to a certain candidate in a local partisan race. Although the Hatch Act does not prohibit you from donating to the campaign, you may not like, share, or retweet that post.

Example 2: A friend shares a post on Facebook that includes an invitation to a local fundraising event for a political party. You may not like or share that post.

Example 3: Someone tags you in a post, or posts a message to your Facebook page, that asks for donations for a partisan political group. You do not have an affirmative duty to remove that post from your Facebook page or un-tag your name from the post; however, you may not like or share the post.

(C) Accepting Invitations to Fundraising Events on Social Media

Rule: If not on duty or in the workplace, employees may accept invitations to, or mark themselves as "attending," a fundraising event on social media.

Example 1: A friend sends you an invitation on Facebook to a fundraising event for a candidate in a partisan race. You may accept the invitation or mark yourself as "attending" the fundraising event, provided you are not on duty or in the workplace.

(D) Using an Alias on Social Media

Rule: Employees, even when not on duty or in the workplace, may not use an alias on social media to solicit a political contribution for a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or a partisan political group.

Example 1: Your name is John Smith, but you create a Facebook profile as John Jones. You are at home after work and see that a Facebook friend posted a message that solicits campaign contributions for a candidate in a partisan race. You may not share that message either as John Smith or John Jones.

(3) 24/7 PROHIBITION – Employees may not use their official authority or influence to affect the outcome of an election.

(A) Using Official Title or Position in Social Media Profile

Rule: Employees may include their official titles or positions and where they work in their social media profiles, even if they also include their political affiliation or otherwise use their account to engage in political activity.

Example 1: Your Twitter profile includes your official title or position and where you work. You



may also list your political affiliation.

Example 2: Your Facebook profile includes your official title or position, where you work, and your political affiliation. You may post a message supporting a candidate in a partisan race, provided you are not on duty or in the workplace.

(B) Using Official Title or Position in Social Media Communications

Rule: Employees may not use their official titles or positions when posting messages directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.

Example 1: While at home after work, you decide to post a positive comment on the Twitter account of a candidate in a local partisan race. You may not mention your official title or position in that comment, even if your Twitter account is private.

Example 2: Your LinkedIn profile headline includes your official title or position. You may not use that LinkedIn account to post or share messages directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.⁸

(C) Using Official Social Media Accounts

Rule: Employees may not use a social media account designated for official purposes to post or share messages directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group. All such official social media accounts should remain politically neutral.

Example 1: While accessing the Twitter account you use for official purposes, you see that a political party tweeted its support for a candidate in a partisan race. You may not retweet or like that post from the account used for official purposes (or from your personal social media account if you are on duty or in the workplace).

(D) Misusing Personal Social Media Accounts

Rule: Employees may not engage in political activity on a personal social media account if they are using such accounts for official purposes or posting in their official capacities. Factors indicating that a personal social media account is being used in ways that suggest it is an official social media account include, for example: (1) the account contains little to no personal content; (2) the account identifies the individual as a federal employee; (3) the account extensively uses photographs of the employee's official activities; (4) the account often references, retweets, likes, comments, or otherwise shares material related to official activities; or (5) the account is linked to an agency website or other official page. No one factor is dispositive.

Example 1: You are a federal employee and maintain only a personal Twitter account. While you have some personal posts about family vacations and events with friends, most of your posts are retweets of your agency's initiatives and photographs of you at official events. You may not use this account to make posts directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.

⁸ A LinkedIn profile headline accompanies most actions on LinkedIn. Therefore, employees who include an official title or position in their LinkedIn profile headline would not be permitted to post or share any messages on LinkedIn that are directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.



(E) Targeting Subordinates and Certain Groups⁹ in Social Media Communications

Rule: Supervisors and subordinates may be friends or follow one another on social media platforms. However, supervisors may not send to subordinates, or to a subset of friends that includes subordinates, any message that is directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.

Example 1: You are a supervisor. You may tweet generally about your support of a candidate in a local partisan race even if one of your subordinates follows you on Twitter, provided you are not on duty or in the workplace.

Example 2: You are a supervisor. You may not mention, or use the Twitter handle of, a subordinate who follows you on Twitter when tweeting your support of a candidate in a partisan race.

Example 3: You are a supervisor. You want to send via Facebook Messenger your opinion about which candidate to support in an upcoming partisan election. You may not include a subordinate employee in the recipient group of that message.

(4) 24/7 PROHIBITION – *Further restricted employees* may not take an active part in partisan political management or campaigning.

(A) Sharing or Retweeting Partisan Messages

Rule: Further restricted employees may not share or retweet posts from, or the page of, a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group, even if they are not on duty or in the workplace.

Example 1: You are at home using your personal cell phone to look at Facebook. You see that a political party has posted a message about voting on Election Day. You may not share that post.

Example 2: You may like the campaign Facebook page of a candidate in a partisan race, but you may not share that page.

Example 3: A friend has shared a Facebook post from the campaign of a Presidential candidate. You may not share that post.

(B) Linking to Partisan Material or Websites

Rule: Further restricted employees may not link to campaign or other partisan material of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group, even if they are not on duty or in the workplace.

Example 1: You may not include in your Facebook profile the link to the website of a candidate in a partisan race.

Example 2: You may not tweet a message in support of a candidate in a partisan race that includes a link to that candidate's Twitter account.

(C) Posting to or Liking Partisan Social Media Accounts or Messages

Rule: Further restricted employees may post to or like the social media accounts or messages

⁹ The Hatch Act prohibits an employee from knowingly soliciting or discouraging the political activity of any person who, for example, has a grant application pending before, or is the subject of an investigation by, the employee's employing office.



of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group, provided they are not on duty or in the workplace.

Example 1: Your friend is running for Congress. You may like her campaign Facebook page or post a message of support on her page, provided you are not on duty or in the workplace.

(D) Posting Personal Political Opinions

Rule: While not on duty or in the workplace, further restricted employees may engage in political activity on social media, provided it is not done in concert with or on behalf of a political party, candidate in a partisan race, or partisan political group.

Example 1: You may tweet your own message advocating the defeat of a Presidential candidate, provided you are not on duty or in the workplace.

Guidance For Armed Forces

Q1. What is the DoD policy regarding political activities by members of the Armed Forces?

A1. DoD has a longstanding policy of encourage military personnel to carry out the obligations of citizenship. However, AD members will not engage in partisan political activities and all military personnel will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of a political candidate, campaign or cause.

Q2. Can political candidates visit a DoD installation or facility?

A2. A candidate for civil office may not be permitted to engage in campaign or election related activities (e.g., public assemblies, town hall meetings, speeches, fund-raisers, press conferences, post-election celebrations, and concession addresses) while on a DoD installation, which includes overseas installations and areas under the control of combat or peacekeeping forces of the United States military.

Q3. Can a seated politician visit a DoD installation or facility if they are campaigning for office?

A3. A candidate who holds a civil office may visit a DoD installation or facility for the purpose of conducting official business or to access entitlements or benefits the candidate is authorized to use; however, no candidate running for office is permitted access for campaign or election purposes.

Q4. How does DoD define when a political campaign begins and ends?

A4. According to DoD policy, a political campaign or election begins when a candidate, including an incumbent officeholder, makes a formal announcement to seek political office or when an individual files for candidacy with the Federal Election Commission or equivalent regulatory office. Once initiated, a political campaign or election does not end until one week after the conclusion of the relevant election.

Q5. What political activities can a service member participate in and which ones are prohibited?

A5. DoD has a longstanding policy of encouraging military personnel to carry out the obligations of citizenship, and certain political activities are permitted, such as voting and making a personal monetary donation. However, active duty members will not engage in partisan political activities, and all military personnel will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of a political



candidate, campaign or cause.

Examples of political activities that are prohibited include campaigning for a candidate, soliciting contributions, marching in a partisan parade and wearing the uniform to a partisan event. For a complete list of permissible and prohibited activities, please consult

DoD Directive 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces Guidance for Military Personnel.

Q6. Does that mean a service member can vote, but not actively support a particular candidate or cause?

A6. Unquestionably, service members can exercise their right to vote. However, AD members will not engage in partisan political activities and will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement. For a list of permissible and prohibited activities, please consult DoD Directive 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces (reference (c)).

Q7. Does DoD support and encourage its personnel to vote?

A7. DoD encourages all members of the Armed Forces and federal civilian employees to register and vote. The department actively supports the Federal Voting Assistance Program to ensure its personnel have the resources, time and ability to participate in their civic duty. Additionally, department leaders and military commanders appoint voting assistance officers at every level of command and ensure they are trained and equipped to provide voting assistance.

Q8. Can a DoD installation be used as a polling place in an election?

A8. As of December 31, 2000, if an installation facility is designated as an official polling place by an election official or has been used as a polling place since January 1, 1996, installation commanders will not deny the use of that facility as a polling place for any election. The Secretary of Defense or the secretary of the military department concerned may grant a waiver of the requirement to allow use of the facility if it is determined that security is a concern. All members of the Armed Forces on AD are instructed to remain clear of all polling places except when voting.

Q9. Does DoD provide any voting assistance?

A9. Yes, DoD provides voting assistance via the Federal Voting Assistance Program. FVAP works to ensure service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so – from anywhere in the world – via FVAP.gov. The services also provide voting assistance officers at the unit level to facilitate in-person assistance when required.

Guidance For Civilians

Before posting about politics on social media, Department of the Navy civilians need to consider the Hatch Act and DoD policy.

In general, as a federal employee, you may use social media and comply with the Hatch Act if you:

- Don't engage in political activity while on duty or in the workplace, even if you're using your



personal smartphone, tablet, or laptop to do so. Federal employees are “on duty” when they’re in a pay status (including during telework hours, but not including paid leave) or are representing the government in an official capacity.

- Don’t post political opinions, likes, shares, etc. while on government property, even if inside your vehicle on a lunch break, using your own device to post to your personal account.
- Don’t engage in political activity in an official capacity at any time. Political activity refers to any activity directed at the success or failure of a political party or partisan political group or candidate in a partisan race.
- Don’t solicit or receive political contributions at any time.

As a civilian, you may express your opinions about a partisan group or candidate in a partisan race by posting, liking, sharing, tweeting or retweeting, but there are a few limitations. The Hatch Act prohibits federal employees from:

- Referring to your official titles or positions while engaged in political activity at any time; it’s important to note that including your official title or position in your social media profile is not an improper use of official authority.
- Suggesting or asking anyone to make political contributions at any time, including providing links to the political contribution page of any partisan group or candidate in a partisan race or liking, sharing or retweeting a solicitation from one of those entities.
- Liking, sharing or retweeting an invitation to a political fundraising event; however, you may accept an invitation to a political fundraising event from such entities via social media.
- Posting political opinions/likes/shares while on government property, even if inside your vehicle on a lunch break, using your own device to post to your personal account.

Civilians who fall in the “further restricted employees” category may express opinions about a partisan group or candidate in a partisan race by posting or sharing content, but there are a few limitations. In addition to the limitations above, the Hatch Act prohibits further restricted employees from:

- Posting or linking to campaign or other partisan material of a partisan group or candidate in a partisan race. Sharing those entities’ social media sites or their content, including retweeting.

Civilians are allowed to identify their political party affiliation in their social media profiles, even if the profile also contains their official title or position, without more. As a civilian, you may display a political party or campaign logo or a candidate photograph in your profile picture, but it’s subject to the following limitations: Because a profile picture accompanies most actions on social media, while in the workplace you would not be permitted to post, share, tweet, or retweet any partisan social media content because each such action would show your support for a partisan group or candidate in a partisan race, even if the content of the action is not about those entities.

For the full policy and more details, see the U.S. Office of Special Counsel website at: <http://www.osc.gov>





DoD INSTRUCTION 5400.17

OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS PURPOSES

Originating Component:	Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
Effective:	August 12, 2022
Releasability:	Cleared for public release. Available on the Directives Division Website at https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/ .
Approved by:	Gordon Trowbridge, Acting Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Purpose: In accordance with the authority in DoD Directive (DoDD) 5122.05 and DoD Instruction (DoDI) 8170.01, this issuance:

- Establishes policies and provides procedures:
 - For initiating an external official presence (EOP) on social media platforms for public affairs (PA) purposes.
 - To maintain an EOP on social media platforms.
- Assigns responsibility to OSD and DoD Components for EOP on social media platforms.
- Provides:
 - Core principles regarding social media use within DoD.
 - Guidance regarding records management procedures for social media accounts.
 - Guidance on personal social media use by DoD personnel.



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SECTION 1: GENERAL ISSUANCE INFORMATION

1.1. APPLICABILITY.

a. This issuance:

(1) Applies to OSD, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD (referred to collectively in this issuance as the “DoD Components”).

(2) Does not apply to social media accounts established for marketing activities by Military Service recruiting commands, in accordance with DoDI 1304.35.

b. Nothing in this issuance should be construed as preventing the Inspector General of the Department of Defense from fulfilling their duties pursuant to Sections 7321-7326 of Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), Appendix, also known as the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.

1.2. POLICY.

a. It is DoD policy to use official DoD accounts on non-DoD controlled social media platforms to amplify timely and relevant information about the national security, defense strategy, and appropriate unclassified work of the Department.

b. It is DoD policy that:

(1) The ability to adapt to changing trends and technologies on dynamic social media platforms is needed to take full advantage of social media as a communication tool and in support of the National Defense Strategy in accordance with Section 113(g) of Title 10, U.S.C.

(2) The integration of social media is an integral element of DoD strategies to communicate official information publicly in accordance with DoDI 8170.01.

(3) Information communicated by OSD and DoD Components on official social media accounts constitutes a segment of PA activities, in accordance with DoDI 5400.13, DoDD 5122.05, and this issuance.

(4) Information disclosed will be in compliance with the DoD Principles of Information in accordance with DoDD 5122.05.

SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS (ATSD(PA)).

The ATSD(PA):

- a. Is the principal spokesperson for DoD and responsible for ensuring a free flow of information to the news media, general public, internal audiences of DoD, and other applicable forums through official DoD social media accounts managed by OSD and DoD Components, in accordance with DoDD 5122.05.
- b. Provides the final approval for all EOPs established by OSD and DoD Component heads in accordance with DoDI 8170.01 concerning the use of social media.
- c. May direct the removal of any official social media account that does not adhere to the policy, procedures, and instructions provided in this issuance.
- d. Oversees the implementation of integrated communication strategies that incorporate digital media content on official DoD social media accounts.
- e. Provides guidance and direction for OSD and DoD Components to use publicly available information (PAI) for PA activities through third-party social media management platforms, in accordance with DoDD 3115.18.
- f. Ensures the conduct of appropriate pre-publication security and policy reviews in accordance with DoDIs 5230.09 and 5230.29, as applicable.

2.2. DOD CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.

The DoD Chief Information Officer:

- a. In coordination with ATSD(PA), oversees implementation of policy and procedures for ensuring the quality of information the DoD disseminates to the public.
- b. On a limited, case-by-case basis, reviews requests by OSD and DoD Component heads to negotiate terms of service with a non-DoD controlled electronic messaging service. In coordination with the ATSD(PA), Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer, and DoD Office of General Counsel, the DoD Chief Information Officer reviews the request in accordance with DoDI 8170.01.

2.3. OSD AND DOD COMPONENT HEADS.

The OSD and DoD Component heads:

- a. May establish EOPs for their Components, in accordance with the provisions of Section 4.
- b. May establish Component-specific social media regulations to manage social media managers, accounts, and activities.
- c. For any EOP they establish, ensure proper management of records created or received through activity of the EOP throughout the lifecycle of the records in accordance with DoDI 5015.02.

SECTION 3: CORE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE WITHIN DoD

3.1. OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

a. Social media communication provides the opportunity and responsibility to communicate directly to the public. DoD uses official social media accounts for the sake of transparency and to disseminate information.

b. If social media is mismanaged or mishandled, the U.S. Government's reputation with the American public; relationships with interagency, international, State, local, and tribal entities; military operations; and reputation for a high ethical and professional standard may be compromised. DoD social media content can be consumed by any audience, intended or unintended, foreign or domestic. All DoD PA and social media managers should understand that even the smallest or newest official account will be interpreted as a representative of the whole of DoD.

c. DoD personnel may establish accounts for personal, non-official use in accordance with DoDI 8170.01. Personal accounts may not be used to conduct official DoD communications, unless by exception identified in Paragraph 3.26.a of DoDI 8170.01. DoD personnel must ensure that their personal social media accounts avoid use of DoD titles, insignia, uniforms, or symbols in a way that could imply DoD sanction or endorsement of the content. Where confusion or doubt is likely to arise regarding the personal nature of social media activities, personnel are encouraged to include a disclaimer clarifying that their social media communications reflect only their personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of their agency or the United States. See Section 8 of this instruction for additional guidance on the personal use of social media by DoD personnel.

3.2. DOD SOCIAL MEDIA PRINCIPLES.

The following principles will apply to official use of social media for PA purposes:

a. Governance.

OSD and DoD Component PA teams oversee and provide guidance on the use and management of official DoD social media accounts. Communications will align with and support PA objectives and efforts across all platforms.

b. Professionalism.

All official social media content is a reflection of the Department. When posting to official social media accounts, content should meet well-defined, appropriate objectives. Public Affairs Officers will remain respectful, responsive, and genuine, and exercise the same high standard of professional and ethical behavior on social media accounts as they do during any other function or on any other platform. Content should inspire and engage with audiences. At no time, however, should such content undermine the Department's efforts to remain a good steward of the public trust. No content will be released that could be reasonably construed as offensive, inappropriate, or unbecoming. Official social media accounts must not be used to promote or

endorse non-Federal entities or personal financial interests. Only designated DoD personnel may authorize release of information on social media accounts; contractor personnel may support EOP maintenance but cannot authorize the release of public information.

c. Propriety.

Posts released from official DoD social media accounts must be:

- (1) Accurate. The content is accurate.
- (2) Appropriate. The account is the proper vehicle for the message.
- (3) Timely. The message can be delivered at the proper time.
- (4) In the Appropriate Tone. The message is being delivered in the proper tone.
- (5) Approved for public release. The message has been reviewed for operations security and information security concerns and approved for public release, in accordance with DoDIs 5230.09 and 5230.29, as applicable.

d. Acumen.

PA officers and social media account managers should proactively maintain currency in the latest social media tactics, best practices, and trends, coupled with an understanding of and ability to apply PA objectives (e.g., as articulated in the DoD Communications Playbook). Social media account managers must complete operations security training Level 2 and be prepared to act quickly and implement evolving capabilities intelligently to remain effective in the use of the platform.

e. Establishment Need.

New official accounts should only be established if a specific communications outcome cannot be fulfilled by an existing account(s) or other means of communication. More for the sake of more is not necessarily better.

f. Transparency.

Social media account managers will not remove social media content from official DoD accounts unless there is a factual or typographical error; violation of a law, policy, term of service, or user agreement; or an operations or information security concern. Removal of content will be publicly acknowledged and communicated to audiences to provide context and appropriate clarification for the action; managers must persistently monitor, communicate, and, where appropriate, responsively engage with users regarding such removal. Removal of content can unintentionally discredit DoD information if the action appears to be taken to:

- (1) Avoid embarrassment;
- (2) Stifle or silence discussion about a controversial topic; or
- (3) Mislead users to believe an issue is inconsequential or of minor significance.

SECTION 4: DoD EOP

4.1. ESTABLISHING AN OFFICIAL PRESENCE.

a. Considerations Concerning Official Accounts.

(1) OSD and DoD Components must assess the communication value of establishing an official presence on approved social media platforms to provide timely and accurate information to the public and the news media in accordance with DoDD 5122.05 and Paragraph 3.24 of DoDI 8170.01.

(2) The creation of EOPs on social media platforms should be carefully considered and avoided, unless the proposed EOP meets a specific communications objective that is not being fulfilled by any existing EOP or other PA activities. Commands at all levels will consolidate and deactivate EOPs that detract or disrupt users searching for official DoD information. Content on any deactivated official accounts must be archived in accordance with DoDI 5015.02.

(3) Organizations that identify a communication need that can be satisfied through social media should evaluate available resources to establish and manage an account with the intent to build and engage audiences, and use analytics to elevate their digital impact.

(4) PA offices should be resourced with the industry standard equipment, training, and personnel to manage social media accounts, especially over multiple social media platforms, including public web activities pursuant to DoDD 5122.05.

(5) Pursuant to Paragraph 3.24.k. of DoDI 8170.01, mission-related contact information must be used to establish an EOP.

(6) DoD personnel managing or having access to an official social media account will coordinate with their local information technology offices and sign an acceptable use policy agreement for tracking purposes in accordance with Component cybersecurity regulations.

(7) Acceptable use policy agreements must include the statements in Figure 1. If the existing acceptable use policy agreement does not contain the language in Figure 1, it should be amended accordingly or a standalone acknowledgement containing the language in Figure 1 should be signed.

Figure 1. Mandatory Acceptable Use Policy Agreement Statements

I will use official DoD social media accounts on non-DoD-controlled social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram) only as authorized by my job or duty description and to conduct official business, including to release official agency information or other official communication. I will not use personal social media accounts to conduct official business except as authorized in accordance with DoDI 8170.01.

b. Registering an Account.

(1) All DoD owned and/or operated social media accounts must be registered at <https://www.defense.gov/Resources/Register-a-Site/> and must register with the U.S. Digital Registry at <https://www.digitalgov.gov/services/u-s-digital-registry/> in accordance with DoDI 8170.01.

(2) Registering accounts constitutes the official status for DoD social media accounts on authorized platforms.

c. Establishing EOPs for OSD and DoD Component Heads.

(1) In coordination with the ATSD(PA), OSD and DoD Component heads approve the creation of individual social media accounts for their positions. OSD and DoD Component heads will submit an action memo to the ATSD(PA) requesting the establishment of a new individual or institutional social media account.

(2) DoD personnel, including OSD and DoD Component heads and other military and civilian leaders, are prohibited from converting personal accounts to official DoD accounts associated with their DoD position, title, duty, component, or any other DoD organizational entity.

(3) OSD and DoD Component heads are authorized to close or archive any social media accounts deemed unnecessary and of no informational value to the public, media, or mission of the Component. The process to archive and close a social media account is provided in Paragraph 7.1.e.

d. EOPs Below the Component Level.

(1) OSD and DoD Component heads, in consultation with PA, will review and determine the criteria for establishing an EOP for elements within their responsibility to operate and execute their PA activities. PA representatives should assess establishing an EOP based on mission or operational needs and support of approved communication plans and campaigns.

(2) EOPs at all levels must follow the procedures, policies, and guidelines outlined in this issuance. Organizations that establish an EOP will provide guidance to social media managers to effectively direct activities and properly maintain the organization's public presence.

4.2. NEW AND EMERGING PLATFORMS.

a. PA and social media managers must consider the communication value of expanding their digital presence and conduct researched analysis of new platforms. Some of the elements that PA and social media managers should consider include, but are not limited to, audience analysis, content strategy for the platform, and available resources. Approving officials should obtain data-driven decisions from PA and social media managers and ensure compliance with Paragraph 3.24 of DoDI 8170.01 before accepting recommendations to expand their digital footprint.

b. The process to review platforms for official presence requires an application to be vetted through the Defense Information Systems Agency's DoD Application Vetting Environment. The application must be submitted after coordination with the Component Chief Information Officer to ensure all information provided is complete.

c. Once the DoD Application Vetting Environment review process is completed, the Defense Information Systems Agency will issue a decision. This decision is applicable for all OSD and DoD Components and is considered final.

d. PA and social media managers should **not** test, use, or otherwise engage on new platforms for official use (including on personal devices) prior to undertaking the steps in Paragraphs 4.2.a- c.

SECTION 5: BRANDING GUIDELINES

5.1. CLEAR IDENTIFICATION.

To maintain an EOP, all DoD Components will adhere to branding guidelines in accordance with DoDD 5535.09 and:

- a. Provide clear identification that they are supplying the content for the EOP.
- b. State their mission and provide the purpose of the EOP, as workable.
- c. Will not mislead users of the site as to the originator of the EOP.

5.2. OFFICIAL DOD AND MILITARY DEPARTMENT AND SERVICE SEALS VS. EMBLEMS AND LOGOS.

a. The use of the official DoD seal, official Military Department seals, and official Military Service seals on EOP accounts is reserved for official communication only, such as letterheads, and briefing documents. The use of DoD and Military Service emblems, logos, or coats of arms may be more appropriate for general use on EOPs to affiliate the account with DoD. Social media managers should reference Component guidance for the appropriate uses of Component marks for official social media use.

b. DoD and OSD Components should develop Component-specific guidance for the use of their emblems or logos on EOPs and social media content.

SECTION 6: AUTHORIZED ACCOUNTS

6.1. OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA CONDUCT.

a. All EOPs and their content represent DoD, reflect the values of the Department, and serve as official communication platforms to the general public, the news media, and internal audiences of DoD. Content posted on official accounts is subject to the same guidance, policy, regulations, and oversight for the release of official DoD information.

b. PA chiefs and social media managers must establish communication planning techniques to ensure the information published on a social media account is synchronized and approved for release. Social media content management software and tools may be used for PA activities.

c. PA chiefs, social media managers, and other DoD personnel operating official individual accounts must ensure all content is reviewed and approved for public release in accordance with DoDIs 5230.09 and 5230.29, as applicable.

d. While not exhaustive, the following restrictions apply to the official use of social media by DoD personnel. Restrictions pertaining to the personal use of social media by DoD personnel are addressed in Section 8 of this instruction and in the standards of conduct that apply to DoD personnel through DoD 5500.07-R and applicable Office of Government Ethics regulations.

(1) Misuse of Position.

DoD personnel will not:

(a) Use their official position or public office for private gain, for the endorsement of any product, service, or enterprise, or for the private gain of friends, relatives, or other acquaintances.

(b) Use or permit the use of their government position or title or any authority associated with their public office in a manner that is intended to coerce or induce another person to provide any benefit, financial or otherwise, to themselves or to friends, relatives, or persons with whom the employees are affiliated in a nongovernmental capacity.

(c) Use their government position or title in a manner that could reasonably be construed to imply that the government endorses or sanctions their personal activities or those of another. The use of one's official position or public office may include the use of any reference to one's status, name, image, or likeness as a DoD employee or member of the uniformed services.

(2) Use of Government Time and Property.

Section 2635 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations and DoD 5500.07-R require that DoD personnel use official time in an honest effort to perform official duties. These regulations and standards also require employees and Service members to protect and conserve government

property and to use government property only to perform official duties, unless they are authorized to use government property for other purposes.

(3) Use of Non-Public Information.

(a) DoD personnel may not disclose non-public information on official or personal social media accounts. They will not allow the improper use of non-public information to further their own private interest or that of another.

(b) PA offices, social media managers, and other DoD personnel operating EOP accounts will report known or suspected occurrences of information on the accounts that is not authorized for release to their Component's security office and insider threat hub, and respond based on applicable DoD policy.

(4) Misuse of Personal Accounts.

DoD personnel must only use official DoD social media accounts to disseminate official information. DoD personnel are prohibited from using personal social media accounts for official purposes, including for conveying DoD information or official DoD positions. This does not prohibit using personal social media accounts to forward, like, or link to official information, provided it is done in a manner that does not express or imply DoD sanction or endorsement of any personal content.

(5) Political Activity.

(a) Engaging in political activity on official DoD social media and EOP platforms is prohibited. Additionally, DoD personnel may not engage in political activity, on their personal social media, while in the Federal workplace or while on-duty including while teleworking. Political activity is defined as an activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office or partisan political group.

(b) Certain DoD personnel have additional restrictions. Guidance on political activity restrictions is available from the DoD Standards of Conduct Office, <https://dodsoco.ogc.osd.mil/>.

(6) Discrimination, Harassment, and Extremism.

In accordance with DoDI 1020.03 and DoDI 1020.04, all DoD personnel must maintain an appropriate level of professional conduct and treat others in the workplace with dignity and respect. Military personnel are prohibited from actively participating in extremist activities in accordance with DoDI 1325.06, which can include activity on social media. At all times, DoD personnel must adhere to the terms of service and community guidelines dictated by the social media platform and to applicable DoD discrimination, harassment, and extremism policies. On official DoD social media and EOP platforms, engaging in activities that are illegal, inappropriate, or offensive to fellow users or to the public is prohibited. Such activities include, but are not limited to:

(a) Hate speech or material that ridicules others on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, gender-identity, or sexual orientation.

- (b) Speech or material promoting violent extremist or terrorist activities.
- (c) Speech or materials advocating the overthrow of the government.

(7) Children.

Agency social media accounts may not collect any personal information from children (i.e., individuals under the age of 13), consistent with the standards of the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (Section 6501-6506 of Title 15, U.S.C.) as applied to Federal agencies by Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-03-22.

(8) Professionalism.

DoD personnel will at all times adhere to applicable standards of professionalism, including as provided in this issuance.

(9) Possible Collection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

All DoD personnel must limit the collection, use, maintenance, and dissemination of PII in accordance with DoDI 5400.11.

6.2. PA OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

There are three types of official social media accounts for official use within DoD: organizational, institutional, and individual. These account types are used to release official DoD information and visual information materials. Any public disclosures must comply with DoDI 5230.09 and DoDI 5230.29, as applicable.

a. Official Organizational Accounts.

Official organizational accounts communicate on behalf of the DoD or OSD Component or program, and are representative of the DoD and Federal Government digital presence for public information (e.g., @USArmy or @DeptofDefense). Organizational accounts are communication platforms of an agency’s digital brand strategy and managed by a team that has access to the account to publish content that supports a communication plan.

b. Official Institutional Accounts.

(1) Official institutional accounts are denominated only with an official position title (e.g., @SecDef, @DepSecDef) and are not associated with a personal name. These accounts are managed by the individual in the position in coordination with a PA office.

(2) When the official vacates the position, social media managers will archive the content of their account. PA representatives will assess the communication value to transition the account to the incoming official or archive the account. The out-going official is prohibited from maintaining the account. If the account is archived, PA and social media managers will

inform audiences that the account is no longer maintained and redirect users to platforms or accounts that will provide information of similar interest.

c. Official Individual Accounts.

(1) Official individual accounts include a personal name or identifier (e.g., @DASDSmith). Individual accounts are the least preferred account type due to the custom name associated with a position title.

(2) Individuals may not merge, rename, or convert a personal account or prior non-DoD account into a DoD EOP.

(3) Individuals serving in DoD who assume a new position and title within DoD may not merge, rename, or convert a prior official individual account to a personal account. The prior individual account expires once the individual is no longer associated with the position or title.

(4) Individuals with an official DoD individual account who depart DoD may not merge, rename, or convert the official DoD individual account into another account, personal or otherwise. The prior DoD individual account expires once the individual is no longer associated with the DoD position or title.

(5) Individuals from one OSD or DoD Component who are assigned to another joint, interagency, intergovernmental, or multinational entity may establish an EOP for their position in this new entity in accordance with Paragraph 4.1. The social media account is non-transferrable and expires once the individual is no longer associated with that entity.

6.3. MILITARY MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT ACCOUNTS.

Although this issuance does not apply to military recruitment/marketing accounts, social media accounts for PA activities may support local or national recruitment efforts by amplifying appropriate content on their account. In accordance with DoDI 1304.35, recruiting personnel will coordinate with local PA chiefs when conducting marketing engagement or other community events, in accordance with Paragraph 3.3 of DoDI 1304.35.

SECTION 7: MAINTAINING AN EOP

7.1. RECORDS MANAGEMENT.

a. DoD Information Security

DoD personnel must ensure that only information authorized for release is released to the public via social media, in accordance with DoDIs 5230.09 and 5230.29, as applicable.

b. Managing Social Media Records.

(1) Any content posted by DoD to an EOP is an official communication, regardless of the format.

(2) The records associated with the EOP will be managed in accordance with the appropriate OSD or DoD Component records schedule pursuant to Part 1226 of Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations.

(3) A complete social media Federal record must have content, context, and structure, along with associated metadata. The complete record must be maintained pursuant to OSD or DoD Component records management policies and procedures to ensure reliability and authenticity.

(4) Derogatory, inappropriate, and offensive content posted on an EOP by a user on the platform must be addressed in accordance with the terms of service and acceptable online conduct guidelines. Social media and records managers should evaluate the content in context, including whether a DoD response was provided, to determine if the post is a Federal record.

c. Capturing Social Media.

(1) Social media managers and other DoD personnel responsible for retaining social media content on behalf of their component can use the following non-exhaustive list of questions to help determine the appropriate disposition authorities applicable to a social media post:

(a) Does it contain evidence of the department or agency's policies, business, or mission?

(b) Is the information only available on the social media site?

(c) Does the agency use the social media platform to convey official agency information?

(d) Is there a business need for the information?

(2) Methods to capture social media records include:

- (a) Using web crawling or other software to create local versions of sites.
- (b) Using web capture tools to capture social media.
- (c) Using platform-specific application programming interfaces to pull content.
- (d) Using Really Simple Syndication feeds, aggregators, or manual methods to capture content.
- (e) Using tools built into some social media platforms to export content.

(3) The options for successful social media capture will depend on the technical configuration of a social media platform. Component needs may also affect which social media capture method is used. Once the Component determines the capture method, they must provide training to applicable staff on how and when to use capture tools for social media. Components may need to work with third-party providers to implement social media capture.

d. Private or Direct Messages from DoD Social Media Accounts.

(1) Engaging in private or direct messaging to communicate official DoD information from DoD social media accounts should be conducted with care.

(2) Private or direct messaging is allowed if PA and social media managers identify a specific need to remain responsive to authentic public interest or questions.

(3) Due to potential preservation issues, DoD social media accounts may not send direct or private electronic messages that automatically expire.

(4) If public comments on or to a DoD social media account warrant a non-public response, the DoD social media account manager(s) should publicly comment on the post(s) and suggest the individual(s) email the specific question(s) to the official DoD email account displayed in the profile.

e. Account Transition and Archiving of Official Social Media Accounts.

Consistent with Paragraph 6.2 of this instruction, DoD personnel operating an EOP may not retain official accounts or access to any official accounts in a personal capacity after departing the government or the government position associated with the account, as applicable.

(1) Official Organizational and Institutional Accounts.

(a) Within 30 days after the departure of the official associated with the institutional account, content posted to the account during the departing official's tenure must be managed and preserved in accordance with the proper records schedule.

(b) OSD and DoD Components should follow the most pertinent records schedule, in consultation with their records manager, because not every Component has a records schedule

specific to social media records. This is to ensure the records are preserved appropriately if the new official chooses not to use the previously established official presence.

(c) On the final day of activity for the account, PA and social media managers will post a final message, and provide the password and login information to the designated point of contact for use by the next official.

(d) If the new official indicates he or she does not want to use the official institutional account before the account holder's final day of service, the account should be closed, and the associated records managed in accordance with the proper records schedule.

(2) Official Individual Account.

Within 30 business days after the departure of the official associated with the official individual account, all content posted to the account during the departing official's tenure must be managed and preserved in accordance with the proper records schedule. On the final day of activity for the account, the account will issue its final content and the account will be closed.

7.2. USE OF PAI FOR PA.

a. Public engagement on social media platforms requires situational awareness of the information environment. PAI enables PA to generate audience insights, provides social media trend analysis, and inform leaders of emerging communication crises. In accordance with DoDD 3115.18, and Appendix 3A of DoDI 8170.01, PA offices may access and use PAI for PA activities.

b. PA offices may use third-party social media management platforms or services to manage official social media accounts. OSD and DoD Component PA offices must follow acquisition processes and procedures to obtain authorization for software or services. PA offices may need to coordinate with relevant Component offices, including their Chief Information Officer, for additional instructions, guidance, and policy to access third-party or commercial off-the-shelf services to access PAI.

c. PA offices with authorization and authority to use third-party social media management platforms must maintain records management procedures in accordance with Paragraph 7.1.

d. PA offices will coordinate with their local records manager for specific guidance and recommendations to capture and schedule records through third-party content scheduling platforms, if the platform or service has the capability or function to capture social media records. PA offices default to capturing and scheduling records directly from the social media platform if the content scheduling platform is inadequate or incapable of providing content, context, and structure along with associated metadata for records management.

7.3. RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH OPERATING EOP.

a. Social Media Cyber-Vandalism.

(1) Responding to cyber-vandalism events involving official social media accounts is the responsibility of multiple officials including, but not limited to, PA officials, social media account manager(s), legal advisors, and information technology security personnel. These key personnel form the response team that must establish incident response procedures, consistent with DoDIs 8500.01 and 8170.01. The response team must exercise and rehearse various scenarios to quickly assess, recover, and respond to an incident. The response team manages the process to ensure all elements of the incident are reported and addressed. The response team will determine when the incident is closed.

(2) The response team should conduct an incident after-action report and assessment to review, update, or draft procedural tasks, regulations, or policy.

(3) A template response to cyber-vandalism is provided through the General Services Administration's Technology Transformation Services at <https://digital.gov/resources/readiness-recovery-response-social-media-cyber-vandalism-toolkit/>. The response team should amend and adapt the template as necessary to conform to its Component's guidance, regulations, and policies.

b. Fake or Imposter Social Media Accounts of DoD Employees and Service Members.

Users, malign actors, and adversaries on social media platforms may attempt to impersonate DoD employees and Service members to disrupt online activity, distract audiences from official accounts, discredit DoD information, or manipulate audiences through disinformation campaigns. PA offices managing an EOP must address fake or imposter accounts.

(1) Reporting Fake or Imposter Social Media Accounts.

(a) PA chiefs and social media managers must report fake or imposter accounts through the social media platform's reporting system. Social media platforms and applications establish the information requirements to report such accounts. PA offices must establish local procedures to identify, review, and report fake or imposter accounts. PA and social media managers must notify operations security officials of fake or imposter accounts, as well as cyber operations, counterintelligence elements, and Military Department Counterintelligence Organization in accordance with DoDD 5240.06

(b) PA chiefs and social media managers must record the reporting of fake or imposter accounts.

(c) PA chiefs or social media managers may need to provide additional information as evidence that the identified account is fake or impersonating a DoD official.

(2) Indications or Common Identifiers Associated with Imposter Accounts.

Indications or common identifiers associated with imposter accounts include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) The account is not registered as an official DoD account.
- (b) The account has very few photos that were recently uploaded and reflect the same date range.
- (c) The account has very few followers and comments.
- (d) The account sends friend requests to individual users on the platform.
- (e) The account name and photos do not match.
- (f) There are obvious grammatical or spelling errors.
- (g) Key information is missing.

7.4. LINKING AND SHARING FROM OFFICIAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS.

a. In accordance with DoDI 8170.01, OSD and DoD Components may establish hyperlinks only to information or services related to the performance of the DoD Component's function or mission and the purpose of the electronic messaging service. Any links from an official social media account must comply with DoDI 8170.01, section 3.20.

b. DoD cannot endorse, sponsor or advertise on behalf of another non-government service, facility, event, or product. The use of external links on official accounts may convey a misrepresentation of government endorsement or provide an incorrect interpretation of DoD policy, position, or message. DoD officials, PA chiefs, and social media managers of EOP must assess the information value of the source before sharing an external link by considering factors including, but not limited to, the author and publisher's credibility, the validity of the information at the source, the references or subject matter experts cited within the source, and whether the information is true and factual. When external links to non-U.S. Government websites are posted on official social media accounts, content managers will include the following disclaimer: "The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the United States Department of Defense of the linked websites, or the information, products or services contained therein. Other than for authorized activities, such as military exchanges and Morale, Welfare and Recreation sites, the United States Department of Defense does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations." Content managers will not direct users to paid sites or subscription services.

c. OSD and DoD Component EOPs may link and share content found on DoD-registered, public-facing websites, and social media platforms without formal coordination.

d. PA and social media managers will establish local guidelines to share external links from non-DoD sources that support PA activities, including a specific, mission-essential reason or a Commander's information objective(s) in accordance with DoDI 8170.01.

7.5. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM VERIFIED ACCOUNTS.

a. EOPs registered with DoD do not need to display a "verified" status with the social media platform to be recognized by DoD as an official account. While PA chiefs and social media managers should attempt to have an EOP recognized as a verified account by the social media platform for all account types, they are not required to do so. All registered EOPs in the DoD registry or the U.S. Digital Registry are official accounts, in accordance with Paragraph 4.1.b.

b. A "verified" personal account on a social media platform does not constitute an official DoD account. Personal accounts that are "verified" as a government account by a social media platform may be misconstrued as an official DoD account.

SECTION 8: PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY DOD PERSONNEL

DoD personnel may use unofficial personal social media. In doing so, DoD personnel must adhere to the rules discussed in this instruction, including preventing the unauthorized disclosure of non-public information (or unclassified information that aggregates to reveal classified information) and refraining from any appearance of DoD endorsement or sanction. The following guidance applies to DoD personnel who maintain a personal social media presence.

a. Maintain a Clear Distinction Between Personal and Official Accounts.

(1) DoD personnel must ensure that all personal social media accounts are clearly identifiable as personal accounts. DoD personnel must ensure that their personal social media accounts avoid use of DoD titles, insignia, uniforms, or symbols in a way that could imply DoD sanction or endorsement of the content. DoD personnel should use personal, non-official contact information, such as personal telephone numbers or postal and e-mail addresses, to establish personal, nonofficial accounts.

(2) Where confusion or doubt is likely to arise regarding the personal nature of social media activities, personnel are encouraged to include a disclaimer clarifying that their social media communications reflect only their personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of their agency or the United States. (See sample disclaimer Figure 2.) The use of a disclaimer does not otherwise allow DoD personnel to accept compensation that is prohibited by this instruction or other applicable regulations.

Figure 2 Sample Disclaimer for Personal Social Media Accounts

The views and opinions presented herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of DoD or its Components. Appearance of, or reference to, any commercial products or services does not constitute DoD endorsement of those products or services. The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute DoD endorsement of the linked websites, or the information, products or services therein.

(3) DoD personnel are not prohibited from using personal social media accounts to forward, like, or link to official information, provided it is done in a manner that does not express or imply DoD sanction or endorsement of any personal content.

b. Do Not Disclose Non-Public Information.

DoD personnel are prohibited from disclosing non-public information to further their private interests or the private interests of others. Additionally, DoD personnel must adhere to operations security and unit-level directives, including while in forward-operating environments. Release of unauthorized content through any means, including social media, may unnecessarily hazard individuals, units, and the mission.

c. Do Not Conduct Official Business on Personal Social Media Accounts.

(1) Personal accounts may not be used to conduct official DoD communications, in accordance with Paragraph 3.26.a of DoDI 8170.01 and Section 2911 of Title 44, U.S.C.

(2) A personal social media account must not be an avenue for friends, followers, or private contacts to gain access to DoD programs or seek action from DoD officials in a manner not available to the general public.

d. Do Not Accept Compensation for any Activity Relating to One's Status as a DoD Civilian Employee or Military Service Member.

DoD personnel are prohibited from using their official position or public office for personal financial gain, for the endorsement of any product, service, or enterprise, or for the private gain of friends, relatives, or persons with whom the employee is affiliated in a nongovernmental capacity. (Section 2635.702 of Title 5, CFR). DoD personnel are also prohibited from using government resources for non-official, personal activities.

(1) Use of Official Position or Public Office.

The use of one's official position or public office includes the use of any reference to one's status, name, image, or likeness as a DoD civilian employee or Service member. This includes the use of official titles, photographs that display a connection to one's status as a DoD civilian employee or Service member (e.g., a photograph while in uniform or while wearing an identifying device such as a lanyard or lapel pin); and the personal use of DoD protected symbols or other imagery.

(2) Endorsement.

DoD personnel are prohibited from using their official position to either affirmatively endorse a non-federal entity, product, service, or enterprise, or by taking action that implies DoD endorsement through the unauthorized use of one's official position or public office.

(3) Private Gain.

Private gain includes the receipt of compensation from a third party, to include revenue from advertising, sponsorships or sponsorship agreements, affiliate marketing agreements, or promotion of commercial ventures on personal social media accounts. This does not preclude DoD personnel from engaging in compensated outside employment when permitted by applicable ethics and other regulations.

e. Do Not Engage in Prohibited Political Activity, as Defined in Applicable Law and Regulation.

See Paragraph 6.1.d.(5) of this instruction.

GLOSSARY

G.1. ACRONYMS.

ACRONYM	MEANING
ATSD(PA)	Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
DoDD	DoD directive
DoDI	DoD instruction
EOP	external official presence
PA	public affairs
PAI	publicly available information
U.S.C.	United States Code

G.2. DEFINITIONS.

Unless otherwise noted, these terms and their definitions are for the purpose of this issuance.

TERM	DEFINITION
counterintelligence	Defined in DoDD 5240.02.
DoD personnel	DoD civilian employees and military service members. For purposes of this issuance, “DoD personnel” does not include employees of DoD contractors.
electronic messaging services	Defined in DoDI 8170.01.
EOP	Defined in DoDI 8170.01.
Federal record	A “record” as defined in Section 3301 of Title 44, U.S.C.
manager	DoD employee or Service member responsible for managing DoD social media EOPs.
marketing	Defined in DoDI 1304.35.
Military Department Counterintelligence Organization	Defined in DoDD 5240.02.

TERM	DEFINITION
non-public information	Defined in DoD 5500.07-R.
PAI	Defined in DoDD 3115.18.
personal account	Non-DoD-controlled electronic messaging services account intended for personal use and not associated with official DoD functions.
social media platform	Non-DoD-controlled electronic messaging service with publicly accessible information capabilities and applications available across the internet that facilitates the sharing of user-generated content through virtual connections, networks, and communities through a computer or mobile device.
social media cyber-vandalism	An intrusion of social media accounts when an outside party takes control of an agency communication channel, establishes an impostor DoD social media account, or impersonates a DoD official using a social media account in an attempt to mislead the public or threaten the agency or the individual account.
terms of service	Defined in DoDI 8170.01.
third-party social media management platforms	Free or paid social media management tools that can schedule content and generate social media reports to improve audience engagement and manage social media platform capabilities.
verified account	A moniker or symbol which notifies users on the social media platform that the account of public interest is authentic and helps reassure users to trust the information on the account.

REFERENCES

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- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 1226
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- DoD Directive 5535.09, “DoD Branding and Trademark Licensing Program,” December 19, 2007
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- DoD Instruction 8170.01, “Online Information Management and Electronic Messaging,” January 2, 2019, as amended
- DoD Instruction 8500.01, “Cybersecurity,” March 14, 2014, as amended
- Office of Government Ethics’ (OGE) Legal Advisory, LA-14-08, “Reference to Official Title and Position by Employees Affiliated with Outside Organizations in Their Personal Capacity,” November 19, 2014
- Office of Government Ethics’ (OGE) Legal Advisory, LA-15-03, “The Standards of Conduct as Applied to Personal Social Media Use,” April 9, 2015
- Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-03-22, “OMB Guidance for Implementing the Privacy Provisions of the E-Government Act of 2002,” September 26, 2003
- United States Code, Title 5
- United States Code, Title 15
- United States Code, Title 44

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For social media queries
please email:
NavySM@us.navy.mil