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5370

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From: Commanding Officer, Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center

Subj: FRATERNIZATION POLICY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5370.2D  
(b) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1990

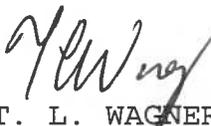
1. Fraternization Overview. References (a) and (b) govern fraternization policies within the U.S. Navy. Today's fraternization rules are intended to avoid actual or apparent partiality, preferential treatment, or undue familiarity between officer and enlisted members or between military senior and subordinate members. Personal relationships between officer and enlisted members which are unduly familiar and do not respect differences in rank and grade are prohibited and violate long-standing custom and tradition of the naval service. Fraternization is a gender-neutral concept. Its focus is on the detriment to good order and discipline resulting from the erosion of respect for authority inherent in an unduly familiar senior-subordinate relationship, not the sex of the members involved. In this sense, fraternization is a unique military concept, although abuse of a senior's position for personal gain and actual or perceived preferential treatment are leadership and management problems which also arise in civilian organizations. In the context of military life, the potential erosion of respect for the authority of the leadership position of a senior in grade or rank can have an enormously negative effect on good order and discipline and seriously undermine a unit's effectiveness. Therefore, prohibition of fraternization serves a valid, mission essential purpose.

2. Fraternization Defined. The term traditionally used to identify personal relationships which contravene the customary bounds of acceptable senior-subordinate relationships. Although it has most commonly been applied to officer-enlisted relationships, fraternization also includes improper relationships and social interaction between officer members as well as between enlisted members, regardless of the service affiliation of the other officer or enlisted member, including

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members of foreign military services. Similarly, recognition of the heightened status, obligations, and responsibilities of chief petty officers have led in recent years to the issuance of rules prohibiting unduly familiar relationships between a chief petty officer and junior enlisted members.

3. Fraternization Policy. All leaders throughout the chain of command, officer and enlisted, are responsible to address offending or questionable conduct, including fraternization by superiors, peers, and subordinates. Command leaders should exercise affirmative leadership to promptly eradicate problems, through oral or written counseling, or by issuance of orders to cease the offending conduct. If such conduct cannot be appropriately resolved by department or directorate intervention and action, disciplinary or administrative action may be required.

  
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