



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

DEC 23 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE  
DEPUTY CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER  
CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU  
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DIRECTOR, COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION  
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR LEGISLATIVE  
AFFAIRS  
ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS  
DIRECTOR, NET ASSESSMENT  
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES  
DIRECTORS OF THE DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Hazing and Bullying Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces

Hazing and bullying erode mission readiness and will not be tolerated in this Department. Treating each other with dignity and respect is an essential element of the morale of our Nation's Armed Forces and the welfare of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Department of Defense civilian employees.

There are many time-honored traditions in our Services, but hazing and bullying are not among them and have no place in our force. Hazing involves so-called initiations or rites of passage in which individuals are subjected to physical or psychological harm in order to achieve status or inclusion in a military or Department of Defense civilian organization. Bullying, on the other hand, involves acts of aggression intended to single out certain individuals from their teammates or co-workers, or to exclude them from a military element, unit, or other Department of Defense organization. Hazing and bullying are unacceptable and are prohibited in all circumstances and environments, including off-duty or in "unofficial" unit functions and settings. Ubiquitous social media and near real-time electronic communications have fundamentally changed how we interact with others, both individually and in groups. The prohibition on hazing and bullying extends to such misconduct committed via electronic communications, as well as in the context of in-person interactions and through other means.

This memorandum and its attachment replace the 1997 policy memorandum, "*Hazing*." Comprehensive definitions of hazing and bullying are provided in the attachment. Additionally, the attachment provides enterprise-wide guidance on prevention training and education, as well as requirements for tracking and reporting incidents of hazing and bullying. Incidents of hazing

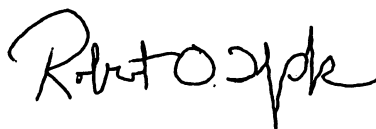


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or bullying that may involve allegations of sexual assault, sexual harassment, or discrimination must be addressed in accordance with the full panoply of laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to such allegations.

I direct the Secretaries of the Military Departments, with input from the Chiefs of the Military Services and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to develop instructions to comply with the procedures outlined in the attachment. The Military Departments and the National Guard Bureau shall promulgate appropriate punitive regulations prohibiting Service members from engaging in hazing or bullying. In addition, the heads of all Department of Defense Components shall review their policies and procedures regarding civilian employee service to ensure that employees who engage in hazing or bullying are subject to appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action.

Authority to amend or supplement Department of Defense policies on hazing and bullying prevention and response is delegated to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (including the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness); further delegation is not permitted. For more information, contact the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity at [osd.pentagon.ousd-p-r.mbx.osd-diversity@mail.mil](mailto:osd.pentagon.ousd-p-r.mbx.osd-diversity@mail.mil).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert O. Zylke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Zylke" being more legible than the middle initial "O".

Attachment:  
As stated

## Attachment

*Definition of Hazing:* Hazing is any conduct through which a military member or members, or a Department of Defense civilian employee or employees, without a proper military or other governmental purpose but with a nexus to military service or Department of Defense civilian employment, physically or psychologically injure or create a risk of physical or psychological injury to one or more military members, Department of Defense civilians, or any other persons for the purpose of: initiation into, admission into, affiliation with, change in status or position within, or as a condition for continued membership in any military or Department of Defense civilian organization.

Hazing includes, but is not limited to, the following when performed without a proper military or other governmental purpose: any form of initiation or congratulatory act that involves physically striking another in any manner or threatening to do the same; pressing any object into another person's skin, regardless of whether it pierces the skin, such as "pinning" or "tacking on" of rank insignia, aviator wings, jump wings, diver insignia, badges, medals, or any other object; oral or written berating of another for the purpose of belittling or humiliating; encouraging another to engage in illegal, harmful, demeaning or dangerous acts; playing abusive or malicious tricks; branding, handcuffing, duct taping, tattooing, shaving, greasing, or painting; subjecting to excessive or abusive use of water; and the forced consumption of food, alcohol, drugs, or any other substance. Hazing can be conducted through the use of electronic devices or communications, and by other means, as well as in person.

*Definition of Bullying:* Bullying is an act of aggression by a military member or members, or Department of Defense civilian employee or employees, with a nexus to military service or Department of Defense civilian employment, with the intent of harming a military member, Department of Defense civilian, or any other persons, either physically or psychologically, without a proper military or other governmental purpose. Bullying may involve the singling out of an individual from his or her co-workers, or unit, for ridicule because he or she is considered different or weak. It often involves an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim.

Bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following when performed without a proper military or other governmental purpose: physically striking another in any manner or threatening to do the same; intimidating; teasing; taunting; oral or written berating of another for the purpose of belittling or humiliating; encouraging another to engage in illegal, harmful, demeaning, or dangerous acts; playing abusive or malicious tricks; branding, handcuffing, duct taping, tattooing, shaving, greasing, or painting; subjecting to excessive or abusive use of water; the forced consumption of food, alcohol, drugs, or any other substance; and degrading or damaging the person or his or her property or reputation. Bullying can be conducted through the use of electronic devices or communications, and by other means, as well as in person.

*Issues and Concerns Common to Both Hazing and Bullying:* Soliciting, coercing, or knowingly permitting another person to solicit or coerce acts of hazing or bullying may be considered acts of hazing or bullying. A military member or Department of Defense civilian employee may still

be responsible for an act of hazing or bullying, even if there was actual or implied consent from the victim and regardless of the grade/rank, status, or Service of the victim.

Hazing or bullying does not include properly directed command activities that serve a legitimate purpose, or the requisite training activities required to prepare for such activities (e.g., administrative corrective measures, extra military instruction, or command-authorized physical training). Hazing and bullying are prohibited in all circumstances and environments, including off-duty or in “unofficial” unit functions and settings.

Incidents of hazing or bullying that may involve allegations of sexual assault, sexual harassment, or discrimination must be addressed in accordance with the full panoply of laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to such allegations. In all cases, appropriate reporting and investigative protocols shall be followed and support and care shall be provided to complainants and victims.

*Training and Education:* Incorporating training and education on preventing and responding to hazing and bullying is an important component of military culture. Therefore, training must occur at all levels, from the accession point to the assumption of senior leader rank and position. All such training and education will include descriptions of the Military Department’s hazing and bullying policies and the definitions of both hazing and bullying. In addition, training will differentiate between hazing and bullying and appropriate administrative corrective measures, extra military instruction, and command-authorized physical training. The training must emphasize that bullying and hazing are unacceptable and prohibited. Finally, training must include examples of hazing and bullying behaviors and illustrate how these behaviors negatively impact the mission, as well as information on how to report hazing and bullying incidents, and victim rights and resources.

*Tracking and Reporting:* The process for tracking and reporting hazing and bullying in the Military Departments and National Guard Bureau vary. Based on the requirement to track and report hazing and bullying, representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau will standardize the reporting process and its elements. At a minimum, and effective the date of this memorandum, each Department of Defense Component will track all allegations of hazing and bullying and annually report the following elements of information to the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity, with the first such report to be submitted 180 days after approval of this memorandum:

- Number of substantiated and number of unsubstantiated reports or allegations of hazing
- Number of substantiated and number of unsubstantiated reports or allegations of bullying
- As to each report or allegation of hazing or bullying:
  - Demographics regarding both the complainant and alleged offender (as to each, their gender, grade, and race)
  - Relationship between the complainant and alleged offender (superior, co-worker, subordinate, etc.)
  - General nature of the alleged hazing or bullying incident (physical, psychological, verbal, technological, a combination, individual or group, etc.)
  - Location of the hazing or bullying incident (on-duty, off-duty, etc.)

- Duty status of both the complainant and alleged offender at the time of the alleged hazing or bullying (training, temporary duty, present for duty, leave, etc.)
- Description of the act(s) of hazing or bullying complained of or alleged
- Description of the act(s) of hazing or bullying substantiated
- Adjudication and disposition of any substantiated allegation (by whom and at what level of the organization the allegation was investigated, by whom and at what level of the organization the allegation was adjudicated, and the disposition of the allegation, including: no action, non-judicial punishment, discharge in lieu of court-martial or other adverse action, adverse administrative action, court-martial, etc.)