

R 171623 JUL 20
FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC//CCG//
TO ALCOAST
UNCLAS //N05350//
ALCOAST 277/20
COMDTNOTE 5350

SUBJ: PROHIBITION OF PUBLIC DISPLAY OR DEPICTION OF DIVISIVE SYMBOLS IN THE COAST GUARD

A. Civil Rights Manual, COMDTINST M5350.4

B. Discipline and Conduct Manual, COMDTINST M1600.2

1. The Secretary of Defense announced today that flags flown in the Department of Defense (DoD) must accord with the military imperatives of good order and discipline, treating all members of DoD with dignity and respect, and rejecting divisive symbols. The Coast Guard is no different.

2. As an Armed Service, we are physically and mentally stronger together. The foundation of our strength and character is training and operating as one unified team. We are all members of the Mission Ready Total Workforce - and together we cultivate an environment that promotes Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. Public displays of divisive symbols erode our Service. The Coast Guard is a unique Armed Service. Our afloat and shore units are typically small and our members are often stationed and live in smaller or remote communities. Our minority service members serve alone or in small numbers in these units and communities. Coast Guard members and their families interact with the communities in which we serve and our relationships with them are critical to mission accomplishment. The display of divisive symbols at a small command in a remote location is pernicious, obstructs command unity, and can destroy teams and be corrosive to community relationships.

3. In May 2019 updated Coast Guard policy provided that the display or depiction of a symbol widely identified with oppression or hatred is a potential hate incident, including but not limited to the display of a noose, a swastika, supremacist symbols, Confederate symbols or flags, and anti-Semitic symbols. It directed commanding officers to investigate these displays and authorized them to remove divisive symbols when warranted, even if the display does not amount to a hate incident. There is no benefit from a display of divisive symbols in our disaggregated and geographically widely dispersed workforce, and I have determined that the Confederate battle flag is uniquely divisive.

4. While the Confederate battle flag may be symbolic of different beliefs, it divides Americans and threatens our Black shipmates. In our military environment, such division clearly endangers loyalty, discipline, and morale; undermines unit cohesion and mission effectiveness; and marginalizes segments of our workforce. Effective immediately, display or depiction of the Confederate battle flag is prohibited in all Coast Guard work places, common access areas, public areas, and operating facilities. This includes barracks and other quarters where the flag is readily visible, and the exterior of Coast Guard family housing. It includes, but is not limited to, automobile bumper stickers and other vehicle adornments, clothing and other apparel, and when the flag is displayed inside a vehicle but is in plain view and readily visible to the public. Prohibited display does not include private spaces, such as inside family housing, within personal property, or, except as described above, private automobiles. The Confederate battle flag has a red or blue field with two blue or red diagonal lines and white stars - see <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/confederate-flag>. This direction will be incorporated in REF (A).

5. Commanders will order the removal of the Confederate battle flag from the locations to which the prohibition applies. The prohibition does not apply to state flags or to state-issued license plates. It also does not apply to displays or depictions where the flag is only an incidental or minor component, such as in works of art, or in educational, or historical displays.

6. Commanders will order the removal of other Confederate symbols or flags, or other divisive symbols, when they determine, in consultation with the servicing legal office, that the display or depiction of these symbols adversely affect loyalty, discipline and morale, in consultation with the servicing legal office.

7. Commanders will investigate the display of divisive symbols as a potential hate incident pursuant to REF (A). REF (B) describes prohibited conduct punishable under the UCMJ that includes intentional acts motivated by bias and targets a person who is placed in reasonable apprehension of bodily harm, or reasonably interferes with performance of military duties or good order and discipline.

8. Commands shall ensure widest dissemination of this ALCOAST.

9. Points of Contact:

a. For Civil Rights questions please contact your local Civil Rights Service Provider, a list of which can be found at: www.uscg.mil/hq/civilrights.

b. Military personnel policy questions contact COMDT (CG-133) at hqs-policyandstandards@uscg.mil.

c. Civilian personnel policy questions contact COMDT (CG-12) at USCGofficeofCivilianHR@uscg.mil

10. Admiral Karl L. Schultz, Commandant, sends.

11. Internet release is authorized.