



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

5720

PAO

05 Sep 2012

FORCE POLICY LETTER 08-12

From: Commander

To: Distribution List

Subj: GUIDANCE CONCERNING SOCIAL MEDIA - OFFICIAL INTERNET
POSTS

Ref: (a) DTM-08-037, "Policy for DoD Interactive Internet
Activities" June 8, 2007
(b) MARADMIN 365/10
(c) ALNAV 056/10
(d) SECNAVINST 5720.44C
(e) MARADMIN 181/10
(f) The Social Corps, Marine Corps Social Media Handbook

1. Purpose. This Policy Letter provides guidance for commanders when making official Internet posts, through their designated command Public Affairs or social networking representatives, on behalf of Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES) and Marine Forces North (MARFORNORTH), per the references.

2. Cancellation. Force Policy Letter 02-11

3. Information. Commanders are authorized to responsibly integrate social media into broader communication efforts in support of their local Public Affairs and command information programs in accordance with (IAW) reference (a). Commands are encouraged to proactively contribute to online content to further public information, discussion, and understanding of Marine Corps roles, mission, and issues. If commanders choose to utilize social media, strict oversight and quality control of unit-created social media sites is mandatory.

a. The term "official Internet posts" refers to any content that is posted on any Internet site by commands in an official capacity. Content includes, but is not limited to: comments, photographs, video, and graphics. Internet sites include social networking sites, blogs, forums, photo and video sharing sites, and other sites, to include sites not owned, operated, or

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controlled by the Marine Corps or Department of Defense (DoD). Reference (b) provides guidance for personnel who desire to make personal, unofficial posts on the Internet regarding Marine Corps-related topics.

b. Official Internet posts involve content that has been released in an official capacity by commanders designated as releasing authorities or designated personnel, such as Family Readiness Officers and Webmasters, and those personnel serving in Public Affairs or social networking billets.

c. Because of new and emerging communication technologies, today's information environment reflects a significant shift in the way people communicate and receive information. As people turn increasingly to the Internet for information and interaction, we must think differently about the way we communicate with internal and external publics. Specifically, commanders are encouraged to consider using social media as another tool to develop and solidify the indispensable bond between the Corps and the communities we rely upon to accomplish our mission.

4. Definitions

a. Internet-Based Capabilities (IBC) - publicly accessible information capabilities and applications available across the Internet in locations not owned, operated, or controlled by the DoD or the federal government. Internet-based capabilities include collaborative tools such as social networking services, social media, user-generated content, social software, web-based e-mail, instant messaging, and discussion forums (e.g., Youtube, Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Google Apps).

b. Official uses of IBC:

(1) External official presences - official Public Affairs activities conducted on non-DoD sites on the internet (e.g., the Marine Forces Reserve Facebook page, individual command Twitter accounts). These presences function as extensions, not in lieu, of official Marine Corps web sites.

(2) Official representation - activities such as authorized command representatives commenting in an official capacity on Facebook fan pages, military interest blogs (milblogs), and similar IBC.

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(3) Non-Public Affairs use of IBC - Official use of an IBC is permitted to support mission related functions (e.g. use of a wiki or other IBC for collaboration with partners external to the DoD).

5. Guidance

a. Commands who choose to utilize IBC and social media are responsible for designating social media administrators, such as the unit's webmaster, for official use of IBC. The administrator is responsible for near real-time oversight of command social media platforms, such as an unit's Facebook page, to ensure compliance with security requirements and guard against fraudulent or objectionable use. IBC and Social media appointment letters are available through MARFORRES Public Affairs Office (PAO).

b. To maintain strict oversight, IBC and social media-designated personnel must be given access and resources to monitor command social sites. This will empower the administrator the capability to take appropriate action such as deleting inappropriate or offensive comments by the public on their sites.

c. All units maintaining an official command presence on a social networking platform shall register their sites with the Headquarters, Marine Corps Social Media Office at <http://www.marines.mil/SocialMedia>, IAW reference (c).

d. Commanders shall follow existing Public Affairs guidelines IAW reference (d) for release of information to the public as well as policy regarding operations security, information assurance and personally identifiable information. Violations should be removed from public view, documented and reported to the local security manager.

e. Information posted in an official capacity to any internet-based capability shall not include:

(1) Classified information, pre-decisional information, proprietary information, business sensitive information, OPSEC indicators, information designated as for official use only (FOUO), or privileged information, under applicable law.

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(2) Information protected by the Privacy Act of 1974 or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996.

(3) Information, other than authorized releases, about casualties prior to official confirmation that next of kin have been notified and a competent authority authorizes publication of specific casualty information. Commanders are reminded that casualty information is to be tightly controlled and heavily scrutinized.

(4) Information, other than authorized releases, regarding events or incidents currently under investigation.

(5) Information that is under copyright or trademark, without permission of the holder.

(6) Unit or other personnel lists/rosters, charts or directories, with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of unit members. This provision does not apply to the name, rank, or business contact information for a Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, Inspector-Instructor, or command staff that can be considered to have direct interaction with the public.

(7) Material that is political in nature or endorses political parties, candidates, campaigns, referendums, ballot initiatives, or other political causes.

f. Official IBC posts and comments that are deemed graphic, obscene, explicit or racially offensive as well as those that are abusive, hateful or intended to defame anyone or any organization shall be removed upon discovery. Violations should be removed from public view and documented. Actions that violate terms of service should be reported to the social media hosting platform as applicable.

g. Personnel should share content that will provide a public benefit. When posting comments or blogging, Public Affairs personnel are encouraged to comment in the first person and use professional but conversational language. Content should be written in a way that invites responses and encourages comments. To the extent resources allow, designated personnel should answer questions and respond appropriately to comments (avoid editorializing). When posting content on non-Marine

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Corps sites, personnel are encouraged to include a link back to their unit's official website.

h. In keeping with current Public Affairs practice, personnel should only discuss Marine Corps issues related to their professional expertise, personal experiences, or personal knowledge unless they can provide documentation to back up their comments, IAW reference (e).

i. Commands are encouraged to professionally and respectfully correct errors and misrepresentations made about the Marine Corps. Posts should focus on factual information and should not include defensive or argumentative wording. When possible, personnel should provide links to the source of information if the source is official Marine Corps or DoD information. Commands should refer to higher headquarters for guidance if uncertain about the need for or appropriateness of a response, IAW reference (f).

j. Personnel should immediately admit and correct mistakes made by social media administrators. If modifications to an earlier post are necessary, social media personnel will ensure changes are transparent to the audience (keeping the previous comments or discussion thread intact).

k. Personnel shall not post material that endorses or implies endorsement of products, opinions, or causes other than those already officially authorized by the Marine Corps. Personnel also should be mindful about linking to non-Marine Corps content since links may be implied as endorsement. Public Affairs personnel will not use copyrighted or trademarked material without permission of the owner or Counsel Office approval.

l. Commands should not take part in programs intended to provoke controversy; which endorse or selectively benefit; or show preferential treatment of any private individual, special interest group, business, religion, ideology, commercial venture, political candidate or organization; or which are intended to increase sales and business traffic for a specific business or merchant association.

m. When deemed necessary, commands should use a disclaimer when posting on non-Marine Corps sites to prevent the perception of endorsement. The disclaimer will state: "This is an official

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United States Marine Corps post for public information. Our posting does not endorse this site or anything on it, including links to other sites. The Marine Corps does not claim responsibility or liability for the site and its content."

n. Commands may use the eagle, globe, and anchor (EGA); Marine Corps Seal (EGA in center, encircled with the words "Department of the Navy - United States Marine Corps"); coat of arms (EGA in center, encircled with words "United States Marine Corps"); and other symbols, such as unit logo, in official posts as long as the symbols are used in a manner that does not bring discredit upon the Corps, does not result in financial gain, or does not give the impression of official or implied endorsement.

o. Commanders and social media personnel can remain abreast of changes or additions to social media policy and guidance from DoD and Marine Corps social media pages at: <http://socialmedia.defense.gov> or <http://marines.mil/socialmedia>. For issues related to social media access and appointment letters, contact MARFORRES PAO at (504) 697-8115/8189 DSN 94, MFRPAO@usmc.mil.

6. Certification. This Policy Letter is applicable to the Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces North.



S. A. HUMMER

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<http://www.marines.mil/unit/marforres/MFRHQ/G1/Adjutant/G-1%20Adjutant%20Directives/default.aspx>