A Sailors Guide to
Public Affairs

NAVSO P-5728.18 | March 2017

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Why a Guide for Sailors?

Sailors have always been ambassadors of the Navy in their actions and words, both at home and overseas. With that role in mind, it is important that Sailors understand what it means to communicate in the 21st century—in person, in print, online and in other venues—to ensure they are responsibly representing the Navy.

It has never been simpler for a Sailor to reach a large, public audience intentionally or unintentionally through email, social media, blogs and other platforms. While most Sailors do not work in Public Affairs (PA) and do not officially speak on behalf of the Navy, all Sailors must recognize they still may be perceived as a spokesperson for the Navy simply because they wear a Navy uniform.

The individual Sailor—you—is often the best spokesperson the Navy has, sharing a direct, unfiltered perception of what it means to serve your country and providing personal insights into life in the Navy. You do not always have complete control to decide when you are and are not speaking for the Navy, so you must understand how to communicate responsibly as an individual, taking care not to do or say anything to cast yourself or your Navy in a negative or unintended light.

This guide is designed to help any Sailor, from the youngest Seaman to the most experienced officer, understand how to think before communicating, to be a responsible and effective representative for your Navy.

Respecting Regulations and Policy

This guide emphasizes a common sense approach to communicating to allow Sailors the greatest latitude for personal freedom and choice. Yet a number of official regulations and policy govern appropriate communications and actions by Sailors, which all Sailors must respect.

Before you ever communicate in a new manner, on a new topic or in a new venue, make sure you are not running afoul of any restrictions or regulations governing security or propriety.
For example, some actions—such as endorsing a political candidate while in uniform—are never allowed, while others—such as writing an unclassified account of your service—are specifically allowed by regulations provided you follow the rules explained later in this guide.

You are not expected to know all of the Navy's regulations governing communicating, but you do need to know enough to recognize when you need to learn more before taking an action. If you have doubts about whether something you want to do or say is allowed, communicate through your chain of command to a senior enlisted or officer—particularly a PA Professional—who will know the regulations or be able to find the appropriate regulation to answer your question.

A list of the existing regulations that are the most relevant to a Sailor's personal communications and actions are listed below; each document can be found online if you would like to learn more.

RESOURCES:

- DoD Directive 5230.09, Clearance of DoD Information for Public Release
- DoD Instruction 1334.1, Wearing of the Uniform
- DoN Regulations for Book Publishing by Active Duty/Reserve Personnel
- SECNAVINST 5720.44C, Department of the Navy Public Affairs Policy and Regulations Section 0306 / Section 0218
- SECNAVINST 5870.4A, Copyright
- www.navy.mil/socialmedia
- www.ncis.navy.mil/reportacrime
- www.copyright.gov

How to Communicate

Ultimately, you are the only person responsible for selecting the words and actions that represent your thoughts, opinions and beliefs. But it is important to understand who might be listening, and how they could perceive your comments as a Sailor in the Navy.

Communication can take many forms. It can be something you say, something you write, or something you do. If you post on Facebook, you are communicating. If you speak to a reporter, you are communicating. If you wear your uniform to a rally, you are communicating. To communicate effectively and intelligently, keep in mind four specific concepts before you ever act:

Think Before You Communicate

Before you ever communicate, you can save yourself future headaches if you get in the habit of asking yourself four questions first:

1. Do I need to communicate this?
2. Is it in my best interest to communicate this?
3. Do regulations allow me to communicate this?
4. If I communicate this, could it cast the Navy or myself in a negative light?

Separate the Personal from the Professional

When you are speaking as a private citizen, not as a Sailor, do not assume everyone else automatically understands the difference. Avoid all confusion by eliminating any doubt about your affiliation each time you communicate. It is better to take the time up front to clarify than to spend much more time later correcting a misunderstanding.

If you are communicating in a context where you can be linked with the Navy, be clear from the beginning and provide a disclaimer if you are speaking or writing on your own behalf that the thoughts and opinions expressed are your own and not necessarily those of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense or the U.S. Navy.

Assume Someone Is Listening or Watching

You reasonably can assume the comments you make to a fellow Sailor will not appear in the news. The moment you speak with a group, post on your Facebook page, or attend an event in uniform, your thoughts or actions may be communicated to others beyond those you originally communicated with. Sometimes this can be beneficial – your words may be shared because they were inspirational – but it can also be harmful if your words are misconstrued or taken out of context.

To avoid any harm, always communicate as if a large audience will hear or read your comments. Would you want your comment to be the lead of a news story online, on TV or in a newspaper? Considering in advance how others might view your statements and actions will help you communicate effectively.

Use Common Sense

You have a right to express your personal opinion. Use common sense and remember the Navy's Core Values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. Just because you can say or do something doesn't mean that you should.

Events and Other Public Activities

Whenever you wear your uniform in public, you are a visible representative of the Navy regardless of whether you are on duty. You should be aware of how your presence is perceived. Even if you are out of uniform, you should be aware of official regulations and exercise common sense regarding how your presence is perceived.

Wearing Uniforms and Insignia

As a general rule of thumb, the appropriate uniforms are safe to wear when performing your military duty or participating in events that celebrate or honor military service.

To avoid the appearance of military endorsement or sponsorship, you should never wear your uniform in connection with the following activities, except when expressly authorized by your command:

- Political activities, including public speeches, interviews, protests or other public demonstrations
- Private employment (when allowed)
- Commercial interests

When in doubt, ask first!

Of f Duty Participation in a Commercial Film or TV Productions

Off-duty Sailors may participate in commercial film or television production when all of the following are true:

- The Sailor wants to participate
- Participation is dignified and in keeping with the Navy standards
- Participation does not interfere with operational commitments
- Participation does not place the Sailor in competition with professional performers seeking employment.
- Participation does not provide a selective benefit to, or involve, or give the appearance of involving the promotion, endorsement, or sponsorship of, any individual, group, or organization, including any religious or sectarian organization, ideological movement, political campaign or organization or commercial enterprise.

Off-duty Sailors may attend live productions as a member of the audience, even though the Sailor may be selected as a participant during the broadcast.

Production companies may hire Sailors as extras or as actors, provided the Sailors are in an off-duty status and there is no conflict with existing Navy directives. A Sailor may wear his or her uniform only in those roles in which he or she portrays him or herself or a character in the Navy in the same pay grade and specialty, in keeping with Navy uniform regulations and with the approval of his or her chain of command. Sailors participating as extras in an off-duty status should notify their command public affairs officer.

Any contractual arrangements are solely between the Sailor and the production company and payment should be consistent with industry standards. The production company is responsible for resolving any disputes over hiring non-union actors or extras with the union. Employment outside a Sailor's Navy duties may require chain of command and be in accordance with ethics regulations for outside employment.

Fundraising

Sailors must not officially endorse or appear to endorse any non-Federal entity, event, product, service or enterprise, including membership drives for organizations and fundraising activities.

Sailors can never solicit gifts or prizes for command events in any capacity—on duty, off duty or in a personal capacity.

Sailors may not solicit gifts or prizes for command events.

Contact your command’s Judge Advocate General for advice on specific situations.

Social Media

The large number and common use of social media platforms allow you to speak directly and instantaneously to complete strangers every time you post anything, even those items you intended to share only with friends and family.

Your family and friends are interested in what you do for the Navy and watch for your posts, particularly while you're deployed or assigned far from home. This provides a great opportunity for you to reach many who might not otherwise be exposed to the Navy on a regular basis. We want you to share your story with them, but we need you to do so responsibly.

So how can you share your Navy experiences with others while protecting yourself and the Navy? Even if you do not have a presence on a social media platform, your family, friends and co-workers can still post photos of you or share information about you and without you even knowing. Let them know what they can and cannot share about you online, particularly while you are deployed or serving overseas.

Think Before You Post

Before you share or post something, think before you post. Is this photo, video, information true? Accurate? Unclassified? Will it reflect well on you and the Navy? Remember, you are personally responsible for what you post online.

In General:

- Be yourself and share authentically about unclassified Navy and Navy-related topics related to your service.
- Use recommended privacy settings for your profile for each social media platform you're on.
- Don't "friend" or "connect" with strangers.
- Know that everything online is potentially available to everyone in the world, including your leaders, co-workers, as well as those who would wish you harm like criminals or adversaries.
- Know that once information is posted online it can remain there forever and be used in ways you never intended.
- Never discuss information online that could jeopardize operations security (OPSEC). Review training resources on OPSEC, safety and official guidance.
- Don't share personally identifiable information (PII) that can be used to impersonate you or steal your identity.
- Don't click on links that go to unfamiliar sites.
- Choose applications wisely. Many applications share information with marketers and others.
- Use anti-virus and anti-spyware at home.
- Use a different, strong password for each online account.

Don't share any passwords with third-party sites. For example, if you're asked if you want to use your Facebook user name and password to access another social media site, choose a new user name and password instead.

Think twice before sharing your location, because it indicates when you're not at home and vulnerable.

Don't share Navy information that hasn't been officially released. Err on the side of caution.

Maintain a clear separation at all times on social media between your Navy affiliation and your political views to avoid creating the appearance that the Navy is endorsing a specific policy, candidate or party.

When communicating on social media sites, do not post the following information:

Exact deployment dates or return dates. This applies to ships, subs, squadrons and individual augmentees.

Dates or location of a ship's upcoming ports of call.

Detailed information about a mission.

References to trends in crew's morale or an individual's personal problems.

Details concerning security procedures, response times or tactics.

Information about equipment readiness.

Speculation or actual information about future operations.

ONLINE CONDUCT – "Honor, Courage, Commitment Online All the Time."

The U.S. Navy defines online conduct as the use of electronic communications in an official or personal capacity that is consistent with Navy values and standards of conduct. It is important that all Sailors know that once they have logged on to a social media platform, they still represent the U.S. Navy, on or off duty.

Online misconduct is a term that describes unacceptable or improper behavior through the use of technology. While there is no Federal criminal statute called "online bullying," misuse of online communications, sending harassing or intimidating communications and images, or other online misconduct may violate existing Federal laws under the United States Code, and the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

Any member of the Navy community should report incidents of improper on-line behavior to their chain of command or family support services for resolution. Additional avenues for reporting and information include equal opportunity offices, DON Sexual Assault Prevention and Response offices, the Inspector General, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). NCIS encourages anyone with knowledge of criminal activity to report it to his or her local NCIS field office directly or via text, web or smartphone app.

Specific instructions are available at: www.ncis.navy.mil/reportacrime

For more information on the Navy's policies and recommendations to using social media, review the Navy Public Affairs Guide to Social Media.

News Media Interviews

Most Sailors will have limited exposure to the news media during their time in the Navy. Sailors who are not Mass Communication Specialists or Public Affairs Officers frequently are the Navy's most effective interviewees, because they speak earnestly about their specific roles and lives in the Navy. Reporters and news producers look for Sailors who have been affected by or are willing to provide unfiltered comments about controversial issues in the news. The news media may work through one or more Navy public affairs offices, may come up to you somewhere off-base or may approach you directly on social media.

On Duty or as Part of Your Job

A Navy public affairs professional may ask you to participate in an interview with a reporter and you may say no. If you would like to be interviewed by a reporter in your official capacity, contact your public affairs office rather than approach a reporter directly. Likewise, politely refer any reporter who approaches you directly while on duty or in your official capacity to your command's public affairs office.

When members of the news media are embarked or embedded with your unit, they are covering the lives of Sailors directly with the support of the Navy. If you would normally not speak with a reporter, you might want to take the time to help them understand your role in your unit. But just as in any other encounter, you don't have to answer every question and, if you are not comfortable with the questions being asked, contact your public affairs office for support.

Off Duty

You do not have to receive prior authorization to participate in a media interview if you are acting in an unofficial capacity and not in uniform. However, the public must not perceive you as a "Navy spokesperson." If you are asked about the Navy, you must be clear that you are not a Navy spokesperson and that your opinions are your own.

You do not have to participate in an interview if a reporter approaches you while you are off-duty and not in uniform. If you choose to participate, you do not need prior authorization from your public affairs office. Before you participate, know whom you are speaking with. You don't have to answer every question. You can end the interview at any time. After the interview, let your public affairs office and chain of command know whom you interviewed with and on what topic, especially if it was related to the Navy and your service.

Media Interview Tips

Understand and follow these guidelines when speaking with the media:

You have the right to speak or not to speak to the media	You don't have to answer all the questions; you control the length of the interview. If in doubt, don't.
Maintain OPSEC	Exercise good judgment and professionalism at all times; You should inform the chain of command of media's presence and departure, the general nature of the interview and any violation of operations security or ground rules.
Think before answering	Think before answering; never lie or intentionally mislead the media. You should speak at your own level; discuss only things for which you have direct responsibility for or have personal knowledge about. Do not speculate. Do not use jargon, acronyms, slang and technical terms. Keep remarks brief and concise. Use "I" not "we" when stating opinions. If you don't know the answer to a question or cannot discuss it for a particular reason (e.g. OPSEC, personal privacy, etc.), you should indicate why. For example, "I can't talk about that for security reasons," or "That is outside the scope of my responsibilities." You should not say "no comment." Assume everything they say will be printed or broadcast.
Do not help those who might wish us harm	Always be mindful of what you say. Any negative comment toward a race, religion or culture can be a detriment to the Navy's image and mission or add to the propaganda machine of an adversary.
Know who you are speaking to	If approached while "out in town," or on liberty you should know to whom you are speaking. If approached by someone who claims to be a reporter, ask the individual, if it isn't patently obvious, to see their ID and press credentials. If they produce identification and press credentials, you can continue with the interview. If not, you should decline the interview and refer the individual to the command public affairs representative.

Content Creation and Sharing

The Navy is proud to have Sailors all over the world create, develop, and distribute novels, videos and other forms of education and entertainment in their personal time. In many cases, Navy approval must be obtained before publication, broadcast or public distribution of creative content featuring the Navy.

Writing Books and Articles for Publication

Sailors can write signed articles and books for commercial publication so long as they follow existing Federal and Navy regulations.

The Navy Office of Information East, based in New York, works with authors to navigate regulations governing the publication of books and other written materials. Contact NAVINFO EAST via their official Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pg/NAVINFOEast/about/ to request more information on "Regulations for Book Publishing by Active Duty/Reserve Personnel," which provides current Navy and Federal rules regarding active duty and Reserve Sailors writing material for publication and can serve as an initial guidance for any Sailor interested in writing for publication.

Sailors interested in publishing in a private capacity can work with NAVINFO East prior to publication through a Voluntary Review process. Submit a "Support for Book Request" form, also available on the NAVINFO East site.

You have the right to publish non-classified information if the piece:

- Does not violate any laws or regulations;
- Complies with the DoD Standards of Conduct and Joint Ethics Regulations;
- It is prepared while off-duty and on personally-owned equipment; and
- Does not use official DoD information generally not available to the public or not available through FOIA.

Additionally, ensure your chain of command and your command's public affairs office are aware of anything you will be publishing in either a personal or professional capacity.

Off-Duty Speaking Engagements

Sailors may accept fees for speeches produced and delivered entirely off duty in a personal capacity. Such speeches may concern topics related to the Sailor's military experiences or duties, but the public should not view the speaker as a "Navy spokesperson." Sailors may not use information obtained as a result of their official access to government information not generally available to the public.

Sailors must include a disclaimer that states the views presented are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of DoD or the Navy. This disclaimer may be given orally at the beginning of the speech or presentation.

Additionally, ensure your chain of command and your command's public affairs offices are aware of your off-duty speaking engagements.

Creating Your Own Videos

The Navy Office of Information West, based in Los Angeles, Calif., works with film, television and documentary producers to ensure authentic and accurate portrayals of the Navy.

Sailors interested in creating and disseminating videos for commercial, non-Navy purposes should contact NAVINFO West prior to release. The office's contact information is listed on its website at www.navy.mil/local/navinfowest/AboutUS.asp.

Additionally, ensure your chain of command and your command's public affairs office are aware before you publicly share or release videos featuring Navy-related content, themes or backgrounds.

Copyright for Off-Duty Creations

Work created in your capacity as a Navy Sailor or on government equipment including computers cannot be copyrighted. You may copyright works you create in your off-duty time on your own equipment, so long as you comply with all other regulations and restrictions governing content creation.

Every day, Sailors post new content to social media sites, both in their personal and professional roles. Unfortunately, more often than not, the Sailors who produced the content included imagery, video, music or other content that is copyrighted without the artist's permission to use it. Just because music, photos, video and other content is available on the Internet does not mean that it is not copyrighted and that everyone can use it as they please. Before using content created by others in your creations, make sure it is not copyrighted or take the time to get permission to use it in writing from the artist.

Requesting Permission to Use Copyrighted Material

Consent to use copyrighted material can be costly, depending on the value of the material. The original creator of the copyrighted work is often not the owner of the copyright. The copyright owner will often grant the military services permission to make limited use of the material without a charge. Unless you know there will be a fee, make your initial request for free permission.

If you decide to use copyrighted material, you will need to track down the owner of the copyright. The Copyright Society of the U.S.A. explains how to find the copyright owner for most types of copyrighted content athttp://www.copyrightkids.org/permissioninformation.htm. Once you've found the copyright owner, then you need to request permission to use the content directly from the copyright owner or the owner's agent in accordance with SECNAVINST 5870.4A. Include the following in your request:

- Complete identification of the material, including the title of the program, name of author or artist, exact copyright notice(s) appearing on the work, and when appropriate, date and time of airing
- Designation of the exact portion of the work to be used (e.g. amount, time, segments). Requests for blanket permission to use excerpts "as later determined" are not acceptable
- Statement of intended use(s) of the material including, when appropriate, number of copies to be made; intended distribution, whether material is to be sold and contemplated fees or charges in connection with use or distribution of the materials; length of time material will be used; and dates, media, and intended audience of public performances or displays
- Intended modifications of the work, if any

Do not request greater rights than are actually needed. Submit your request in duplicate so the recipient may retain one copy and return the other granting permission. Indicate on your request that the copyright owner may designate the copyright notice and credit line to be used. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope.

Volunteer to Communicate for the Navy

The Navy is always looking for fresh voices and points of view from Sailors who want to share their creativity by supporting Navy publications and communication products.

All Hands Magazine Online

All Hands Magazine Online (http://www.ah.mil) is designed for all Sailors and features stories, photos and videos appropriate for the Navy audience. Complete instructions for submitting features stories, photos and videos to All Hands are available at http://www.navy.mil/ah_online/submit.html.

Navy Live Blog

The Navy Live blog (http://navylive.dodlive.mil/) is designed for those outside the Navy with an interest in the Navy. Each post features a narrative supported by photos, videos and links to other information on the web and supports one of the CNO's three tenets – Warfighting First, Be Ready and Operate Forward. Contact Navy Media Content Services at 703-614-9154 or at navymedia@navy.mil before submitting a blog post for consideration.

Public Speaking

The Navy frequently receives requests for speakers on a variety of topics. To volunteer to be a speaker for events near your base or if you are asked to speak about the Navy or your experiences, contact your command, base or Navy Region public affairs office. Contact the Navy Office of Community Outreach Speakers Bureau at (901) 874-5882, if you would like to speak to the news media or local groups while you are home on leave. If you need materials to support your speech, visit http://outreach.navy.mil/Speakers/.