

Army Regulation 670-1

Uniform and Insignia

Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia

**Headquarters
Department of the Army
Washington, DC
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UNCLASSIFIED

3-3. Tattoo, Branding, and Body Mutilation Policy

Note: This paragraph is punitive with regard to Soldiers. Violation by Soldiers may result in adverse administrative action and/or charges under the provisions of the UCMJ.

a. Tattoos and brands are permanent markings that are difficult to reverse (in terms of financial cost, discomfort, and effectiveness of removal techniques). Before obtaining either a tattoo or a brand, Soldiers should consider talking to unit leaders to ensure that they understand the Army tattoo and brand policy. The words tattoo and brand are interchangeable in regards to this policy.

b. The following types of tattoos or brands are prejudicial to good order and discipline and are, therefore, prohibited anywhere on a Soldier's body:

(1) Extremist. Extremist tattoos or brands are those affiliated with, depicting, or symbolizing extremist philosophies, organizations, or activities. Extremist philosophies, organizations, and activities are those which advocate racial, gender, or ethnic hatred or intolerance; advocate, create, or engage in illegal discrimination based on race, color, gender, ethnicity, religion, or national origin; or advocate violence or other unlawful means of depriving individual rights under the U.S. Constitution, and Federal or State law (see AR 600-20).

(2) Indecent. Indecent tattoos or brands are those that are grossly offensive to modesty, decency, propriety, or professionalism.

(3) Sexist. Sexist tattoos or brands are those that advocate a philosophy that degrades or demeans a person based on gender.

(4) Racist. Racist tattoos or brands are those that advocate a philosophy that degrades or demeans a person based on race, ethnicity, or national origin.

c. Tattoos or brands, regardless of subject matter, are prohibited on certain areas of the body as follows:

(1) Soldiers are prohibited from having tattoos or brands on the head, face (except for permanent makeup, as provided in paragraph 3-2b(2)), neck (anything above the t-shirt neck line to include on/inside the eyelids, mouth, and ears), wrists, hands, or fingers. Accessing applicants must adhere to this same policy.

(2) Soldiers may have no more than four visible tattoos below the elbow (to the wrist bone) or below the knee. The tattoos in these areas must be smaller than the size of the wearer's hand with fingers extended and joined with the thumb touching the base of the index finger. The total count of all tattoos in these areas may not exceed a total of four.

(a) A single tattoo is defined as one or multiple tattoos spaced apart that can still be covered by a circle with a diameter of five inches. Tattoos spaced apart that cannot be covered by a circle with a diameter of five inches are considered separate tattoos.

(b) A band tattoo is a tattoo that fully encircles the circumference of the body part. Band tattoos may be no more than two inches in width. Each band tattoo counts as one authorized tattoo (see para 3-3c(2)). Soldiers may have a total of one visible band tattoo on the body. The band tattoo may either be below one elbow (above the wrist bone) or below one knee.

(c) A sleeve tattoo is a tattoo that is a very large tattoo or a collection of smaller tattoos that covers or almost covers a person's arm or leg. Sleeve tattoos are not authorized below the elbow or below the knee.

(3) Soldiers who have tattoos that were compliant with previous tattoo policies, but are no longer in compliance with paragraph 3-3c(1) through (2)(a) through (c) are grandfathered. Soldiers, who have unauthorized tattoos that were not in compliance with previous policies, are not grandfathered. Tattoos on the face or head (to include on/inside the eyelids, mouth, and ears) are not grandfathered because these locations were never authorized locations for tattoos. Soldiers with tattoos on the head or face must be processed in accordance with paragraph 3-3h, below, unless the Soldier received a written waiver upon entry into the Army.

d. Soldiers may not cover tattoos or brands with bandages or make up in order to comply with the tattoo policy.

e. To protect Soldiers with previously authorized (now grandfathered) tattoos, Soldiers must self identify to their commander current tattoos or brands with locations and descriptions. This only includes tattoos above the neckline, below the elbows, or below the knees. The unit commander will document each tattoo/brand in an official memorandum (with a picture of each tattoo/brand appended as a separate enclosure to the memorandum) and ensure the memorandum and enclosures are uploaded to the Soldier's Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR). The memorandum and enclosures remain in the Soldier's record as long as the Soldier continues serving in an active or reserve status. The memorandum and enclosures will serve as an initial documentation of compliance with this policy and may be used by the Soldier or a commander to prove or disprove alleged violations of this policy. The memorandum and enclosures will not be reviewed by promotion boards. Commanders will perform an annual check for new tattoos or brands above the neckline, below the elbows, or below the knees. If any new unauthorized tattoos are found, the Soldier must be processed in accordance with paragraph 3-3h, below. See DA Pam 670-1 for further instructions regarding the memorandum and enclosures.

f. In addition to the tattoo and brand validation in paragraph 3-3e, above, commanders will also conduct a

simultaneous check for extremist, indecent, sexist, and racist tattoos. See DA Pam 670-1 for further instructions regarding this check. If such tattoos exist, the Soldier must be processed in accordance with paragraph 3-3h, below.

g. The tattoo restrictions enforced in 3-3c(1) through (3), above, apply equally to officers and warrant officers. Enlisted Soldiers with any tattoos on the body locations listed in paragraph 3-3c(1) or Soldiers exceeding the limit of four tattoos listed in paragraph 3-3c(2)(a) through (c) cannot request commissioning or appointment even if they are grandfathered in accordance with paragraph 3-3c(3).

h. Commanders will ensure that Soldiers understand the tattoo policy and comply with the requirement to document their tattoos. If a Soldier has any tattoo or brand that is prohibited under paragraph 3-3b, has any tattoo or brand that is not grandfathered because it was not previously authorized such as a tattoo or brand on the face or head, or acquires any new tattoo or brand in violation of paragraph 3-3c(1) through (2), his/her Commander will:

(1) Counsel the Soldier in writing. The DA Form 4856 (Developmental Counseling Form) will state that the Soldier is not in compliance with AR 670-1, paragraph 3-3, and will explain how the tattoo or brand violates the specific prohibition in the policy (for example, the tattoo is extremist because it is a known symbol for a specific hate group; or the new tattoo is in a prohibited location).

(2) Provide the Soldier with no less than a period of 15 calendar days to seek medical and/or legal advice, fully consider all available options, and respond to the counseling, in writing, by informing the commander that he/she will appeal the finding that the tattoo or brand is in violation of policy, pursue medical procedure(s) to have the tattoo or brand removed, or not have the tattoo or brand removed.

(a) If the Soldier elects to appeal the finding that the tattoo or brand is in violation of policy, the Commander will forward the matter to the first O-6 commander in the chain of command for a final determination.

(b) If the Soldier elects to have the tattoo or brand removed, the Commander will counsel the Soldier on a plan for scheduling the medical procedure(s). Soldiers will receive a reasonable amount of time to schedule the necessary medical procedure(s) and pay for such procedure(s) (if not available at a military treatment facility). Commanders must also determine if operational requirements will delay the medical procedure(s).

(c) If the Soldier declines to have the tattoo or brand removed, the Commander will counsel the Soldier in writing. The DA Form 4856 will state that the Soldier's refusal to remove extremist, indecent, sexist, or racist tattoos or brands anywhere on the body, or refusal to remove any unauthorized tattoo or brand that was not grandfathered in accordance with 3-3c(3) constitutes a violation of a lawful order and will result in adverse action. The Commander will then initiate administrative separation proceedings.

(d) Company-level commanders will make determinations for current Active and Reserve Component Soldiers. This authority will not be delegated further. If a tattoo or brand is discovered to violate this policy after a Soldier self identified his or her tattoos or brands (in accordance with paragraph 3-3e) or the Soldier wishes to appeal the determination, the commander must submit the Soldier's request to the first O-6 commander in the chain of command for decision.

i. Appropriate authorities for accession determinations are listed in paragraphs (1) through (6) below.

(1) Accessions recruiting battalion commanders (O-5 or above) will make initial entry determinations for new accessions that tattoos or brands comply with this policy for Active Army (AA) and USAR Soldiers. This authority will not be delegated further.

(2) Recruiting and retention managers (O-5 or above) will make initial entry determinations for National Guard Soldiers that tattoos or brands comply with this policy. This authority will not be delegated further.

(3) Commanders (O-5 or above) of Soldiers applying for officer accession programs including Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and state and federal officer candidate and warrant officer candidate programs will make initial determinations for their Soldiers that their tattoos and brands comply with this policy including the provision listed in paragraph 3-3g, above.

(4) Professors of military science (O-5 or above) will make determinations for ROTC cadets, prior to contracting and prior to commissioning, that tattoos or brands comply with this policy. This authority will not be delegated further.

(5) Superintendent, U.S. Military Academy (USMA) will make initial determinations for U.S. Military Academy cadets, prior to enrollment and prior to commissioning, that tattoos or brands comply with this policy. This authority may be delegated further.

(6) The commandants of state and federal officer candidate and warrant officer candidate programs will make determinations for candidates, prior to starting the course and prior to commissioning or appointment, that tattoos or brands comply with this policy. This authority will not be delegated further.

j. Determinations for accessions will be fully documented, in writing. The appropriate accessions determination authority, as identified in paragraphs 3-3 i(1) through (6), above, will document existing tattoos and brands above the neckline, below the elbows, and below the knees in accordance with paragraph 3-3e, above, and ensure the required memorandum and enclosures are uploaded to the Soldier's AMHRR. A copy of the determination, memorandum and enclosures will be provided to the Soldier or applicant.

k. Exceptions to policy for accessing applicants not meeting the criteria outlined in paragraphs 3-3c(1) through (2)(a) through (c) and 3-3g must be approved by the Director of Military Personnel Management, DCS, G-1. Such exceptions must be documented and uploaded into the Soldier's AMHRR as described in paragraph 3-3e, above.

l. Soldiers are prohibited from willful mutilation of the body or any body parts in any manner. Examples include, but are not limited to, tongue bifurcation (splitting of the tongue) or ear gauging (enlarged holes in the lobe of the ear, which are greater than 1.6mm).

3-4. Jewelry

Note: This paragraph is punitive with regard to Soldiers. Violation by Soldiers may result in adverse administrative action and/or charges under the provisions of the UCMJ.

a. Soldiers may wear a wristwatch, a wrist identification bracelet, and a total of two rings (a wedding set is considered one ring) with Army uniforms, unless prohibited by the commander for safety or health reasons. Any jewelry worn by Soldiers while in uniform, or in civilian clothes on duty, must be conservative. Identification bracelets are limited to the following: medical alert bracelets, missing in action, prisoner of war, or killed in action (black or silver in color only) bracelets. Soldiers are only authorized to wear one item on each wrist while in uniform, or in civilian clothes on duty.

b. No jewelry, other than that described in paragraph 3-4a or 3-4d, below, can appear exposed while in uniform, or in civilian clothes on duty. Pens and/or pencils worn in the pen/pencil slots on the combat uniform coat may be exposed. There are no stipulations on the colors of pens and/or pencils worn in the slots on the combat uniform coat while wearing the uniform. Watch chains or similar items cannot appear exposed. The only other authorized exceptions are religious items described in DA Pam 670-1 and AR 600-20; a conservative tie tack or tie clasp that male Soldiers may wear with necktie; and a pen or pencil that may appear exposed on the hospital duty, food service, combat vehicle crewman, or flight uniforms.

c. Attaching, affixing or displaying objects, articles, jewelry, or ornamentation to, through, or under their skin, tongue, or any other body part is prohibited (this includes earrings for male Soldiers). This applies to all Soldiers on or off duty. The only exception is for female Soldiers, who may wear earrings consistent with paragraph 3-4d. (The term "skin" is not confined to external skin but includes the tongue, lips, inside the mouth, and other surfaces of the body not readily visible.)

d. Females are authorized to wear earrings with the service, dress, and mess uniforms.

(1) Earrings may be screw-on, clip-on, or post-type earrings in gold, silver, white pearl, or diamond. The earrings will not exceed 6 mm or ¼ inch in diameter, and they must be unadorned and spherical. When worn, the earrings will fit snugly against the ear. Females may wear earrings only as a matched pair, with only one earring per ear lobe.

(2) Females are not authorized to wear earrings with any Class C uniform (combat, utility, hospital duty, food service, physical fitness, field, or organizational).

(3) When in civilian clothes on duty, female Soldiers must comply with the specifications listed in paragraph (1), above, when wearing earrings, unless otherwise authorized by the commander. When females are off duty, there are no restrictions on wearing earrings so long as the earrings do not create or support ear gauging (enlarged holes in the lobe of the ear, greater than 1.6mm).

e. Ankle bracelets, toe rings, necklaces (other than those described in AR 600-20), faddish (trendy) devices, medallions, amulets, and personal talismans or icons are not authorized for wear while in uniform or in civilian clothes on duty.

f. The use of gold caps, platinum caps, or caps of any unnatural color or texture (permanent or removable) for purposes of dental ornamentation is prohibited. Teeth, whether natural, capped, or veneered, will not be decorated with designs, jewels, initials, or similar ornamentation. Unnatural shaping of teeth for nonmedical reasons is prohibited. Commanders may consider waivers for permanent caps that were applied prior to the effective date of this regulation. Such waivers must be approved by the first O-5 commander in the chain of command and documented in an official memorandum, which must be uploaded to the Soldier's AMHRR. A picture of the permanent caps must be appended as an enclosure to the memorandum.

3-5. Wear of Army uniform at national, regional, and local events

Note: This paragraph is punitive with regard to Soldiers. Violation by Soldiers may result in adverse administrative action and/or charges under the provisions of the UCMJ.

a. When Army participation in a public event has been approved in accordance with AR 360-1, commanders are responsible for determining the appropriate uniform for the event. Generally, protocol standards dictate standards of dress. For instance, when an invitation calls for business attire, the appropriate Army uniform is the service or dress uniform. However, in some instances, the Class C uniform may be appropriate. Commanders should make use of their protocol or other appropriate supporting staff for a decision regarding the appropriate uniform.

b. Commanders should use their discretion and consider the following when determining the appropriate uniform for the event:

(1) The nature and location of the event (for example, on or off-post).

(2) Whether the event is open to the public or not.

(3) The solemnity of the event.

(4) Who is being recognized at or by the event (is the event recognizing current Soldiers or veterans).

Decoration

An award given to an individual as a distinctively designed mark of honor denoting heroism, or meritorious or outstanding service or achievement.

Dress uniforms

Uniforms worn as formal duty attire, or that are worn at formal or informal social functions, before or after retreat. They include the enlisted Army green dress uniform, and the Army blue and white uniforms.

Eccentric

Departing from the established or traditional norm.

Exaggerated

To make greater or more noticeable.

Extreme

Exceeding the ordinary, usual, or expected; not moderate.

Fad(dish)

A transitory fashion adopted with wide enthusiasm.

Field uniforms

Utility and organizational uniforms, excluding the hospital duty and food service uniforms, that are worn in field, training, or combat environments.

Gold color/gold-colored

Includes gold plated, gold bullion, and synthetic metallic gold.

Lapel button

A miniature enameled replica of an award, which is worn only on civilian clothing.

Local commander

The commander of an installation or equivalent in CONUS, the ACOM commander overseas, and the State Adjutant General for the ARNG, as the individual who may prescribe policy on discretionary wear policies in this regulation. The local commander may delegate this authority to subordinate commanders.

Medal

An award issued to an individual for the performance of certain duties, acts, or services, consisting of a suspension ribbon made in distinctive colors and from which hangs a medallion.

Mess uniforms

Uniforms worn for formal social occasions, when prescribed by the host. They include the blue and white mess and evening mess uniforms for males. For females, they include the blue and white mess and evening mess uniforms, the all-white evening mess, and the black mess and evening mess uniforms.

Miniature medal

A replica of a regular size medal, made to a scale half of the original. The Medal of Honor is not worn in miniature.

Neck

For clarity in regards to grandfathered tattoos, the neck is defined as anything above a crew T-shirt neckline (in a standard uniform T-shirt) and also below the jaw line (in the front of the head) and below a parallel line from the lowest point of where one ear connects to the head to the lowest point of where the other ear connects to the head (in the back of the head).

Optional clothing

A uniform or clothing item which the individual is not required to own or wear but may be worn at the individual's option, as prescribed in this regulation.

Organizational uniforms, clothing, and equipment

The uniforms, clothing, and equipment listed in the CTA, which are issued to an individual on a loan basis and remain the property of the organization. Commanders issue organizational clothing and equipment in accordance with the allowances and directives published in the appropriate CTA. When issued, organizational clothing is worn when