



8A Inspector General Newsletter

“Strength through Standards and Discipline”

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Conduct Between Soldiers of Different Grades

Hot off the Press:

Effective January 18, 2024, the Army Regulation 600-32 is a new standalone regulation establishing relationship policies between Soldiers of different grades. Previously addressed by the Army Regulation 600-20 (Army Command Policy) chapter IV, the latter is also fixing to be updated, as the chapter IV is being removed from it.

What does the new regulation mean to Commanders?

As much as the buck stops with commanders, it also begins with them. Commanders are responsible for: (1) Establishing a positive leadership climate that is conducive to developing disciplined and cohesive units, setting the tone for social and duty relationships in their command. (2) Enforcing the Army’s culture of trust, developing disciplined and cohesive units that create professional organizations that are free of improper relationships between Soldiers of different grades.

Definition. Let us be clear-eyed about what it means to have proper conduct between Soldiers of different grades. Just because one did not mean harm by their action, does it mean they did not cause any harm? Soldiers of different grades must be cognizant that their interactions may create an actual or clearly predictable perception of undue familiarity between Soldier of different grades.

Guidance. DA PAM 600-35 nearly eliminates the guessing work out of what constitutes proper and improper relationships by providing many more scenarios such as Officer and Enlisted (gambling), Officer and Enlisted (business), and many more. The entire pamphlet is 17-page long cover to cover and is easily digestible. Unit commanders are highly encouraged to conduct LPD and counseling to bring about awareness of this regulation.

The following are a couple of common occurrences that might arise:

Enlisted Soldier and noncommissioned officer supervisor (social gathering) . SGT Williams invites all of her squad members over to her house on the weekend for an unofficial get-together and potluck dinner for team building purposes. Is this allowed under AR 600–32?
Yes, it is. AR 600–32 allows informal social.

gatherings between officers and enlisted Soldiers for the purposes of teambuilding as long as it involves the entire unit or team. As long as everyone in the squad is invited to the gathering, there is no violation in this scenario **Alternative Situation.** At the end of the potluck dinner, most of the squad members have left to go home, and SPC Jones is among one of the last team members there. As some of the team members are leaving, they overhear SGT Williams tell SPC Jones that he has had too much to drink, and that he should spend the night there so that he does not have to drive.

This situation would be cause for counseling of both Soldiers, as a minimum action. This situation causes the perception among the squad that there could be an improper relationship between SGT Williams and SPC Jones, even if nothing occurs. As the squad leader, SGT Williams is responsible for ensuring her team member gets home safely. She should either ask the other team leaders to take him home or call a taxi.

Platoon sergeant and enlisted Soldier

Sergeant first class (SFC) Reed, an unmarried platoon SGT of the 1st Platoon, A Company, is dating PFC Adams, an unmarried single Soldier in B Company. Both are in the same battalion. Their relationship is common knowledge in both companies, since they eat their lunches together and spend much of their time together. Although both characterize their relationship as serious, they have not discussed marriage. Both company CDRs are aware of the relationship and do not believe it adversely affects their units.

Explanation. The dating relationship is an explicit violation of AR 600–32. CDRs have a wide range of responses available including counseling, reprimand, order to cease, reassignment, or adverse action. CDRs must carefully consider all of the facts and circumstances in reaching a disposition that is warranted, appropriate, and fair. Generally, the CDR should take the minimum action necessary to ensure that the needs of good order and discipline are satisfied. SFC Reed and PFC Adams should be counseled, at a minimum, by their respective unit CDR s concerning their relationship. SFC Reed must be vigilant that she takes no action that could cause, be perceived as causing, or even remotely suggest special treatment for PFC Adams.

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References:

- AR 600-32 (Conduct Between Soldiers of Different Grades)
- DA PAM 600–35 (Scenarios for Conduct Between Soldiers of Different Grades)
- AR 690–752 (Disciplinary and Adverse Actions)
- DA Pam 25–403 Army Guide to Recordkeeping
- DoD 5500.07–R Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)