

KIA Bracelets Receive Corps Commandant's OK

By Greg T. Rinckey

The Marine Corps has backed away from a ban against bracelets honoring fallen comrades. Service members, nevertheless, need to beware that other slight modifications to their uniforms can still get them in trouble.

On Oct. 18, Commandant of the Marine Corps, Marine Gen. James F. Amos said

Marines are now authorized to wear memorial bracelets memorializing troop who were killed in action and wounded or injured in combat. Under a Sept. 19, 1972 SECNAV message, Marines and Navy sailors have been allowed to wear prisoners of war and missing in action bracelets. Amos' approval adds KIA and WIA bracelets to the Corps' short list of authorized jewelry. Under Marine Corps Order 1020.34G

, the KIA/WIA bracelets had been banned, though they were not specifically named in the uniform regulation.

While other branches have already authorized POW, MIA and KIA bracelets, the Marines' approval of WIA bracelets is unique. With ALARACT 140/2007, the Army changed its uniform and insignia rules (Army Regulation 670-1

) to authorize POW, MIA and KIA bracelets so long as they are black or silver in color. Under Air Force Instruction 36-2903

, Air Force airmen, too, are authorized to wear POW, MIA and KIA bracelets, though this regulation provides strict guidelines for such jewelry. Both the Air Force and Army limit service members to one bracelet per hand.

Service members need to remember that their failure to adhere to uniform regulations could result in their being charged with failure to obey a lawful general order or regulation in violation of Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. This offense carries a maximum punishment of dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances and two years of confinement. Service members must be careful about adopting "faddish" or "eccentric" styles that might be all the rave in the civilian realm but do not satisfy the military's conservative tastes.

Style is a very subjective matter, and the interpretation of uniform regulations can be much the same. MCO 1020.34G states that "good judgment will govern the application of this policy in the field environment." One commander's good judgment, however, can vary from the next commander's good judgment. It is also not uncommon for service members to forget to remove a piece of jewelry or other article. Therefore, it is imperative that service members charged with violating a uniform regulation to contact a military law

attorney who can point out ways in which their uniform did in fact comply with regulations or deviations stemmed from innocent oversights.

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