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Personnel

**ANCILLARY TRAINING - FRATERNIZATION
AND UNPROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

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This pamphlet implements Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-22, *Military Training*. It provides general information about fraternization and unprofessional relationships. This pamphlet fulfills the annual ancillary requirement to conduct the Fraternization and Unprofessional Relationships briefing. It applies to all individuals assigned to the 446th Airlift Wing (446 AW).

1. Purpose. Fraternization and unprofessional relationships deserve special attention due to the confusion often associated with these topics. These two areas go directly to the heart of good order and discipline. Military members must be assured that their superiors are making decisions based upon sound military judgment rather than favoritism.

2. Prescribing Directive:

2.1. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2909, *Professional and Unprofessional Relationships*.

3. Fraternization :

3.1. Fraternization is an officer only offense. Fraternization requires that the officer knew that the person was enlisted, and that the officer fraternized with the enlisted member on terms of military equality. The conduct must violate the custom of the service and be prejudicial to good order and discipline.

3.2. The reason this area has been so confusing is that during the 1980s there were several court decisions that in effect stated that the Air Force did not have a custom of the service against fraternization and that there was no clear standard for gauging fraternization. During the late 1980s and 1990s the Air Force has worked to reestablish the custom against fraternization. In addition to paying particular attention to how military members interacted, the Air Force implemented a new instruction to address unprofessional relationships.

3.3. The key element of this offense is that the conduct violates the custom of the service and is prejudicial to good order and discipline. The question to ask is does the conduct in question undermine the confidence that subordinates have in decisions their superiors make. Recent court decisions have found that fraternization may exist even though the two individuals are not in a command relationship.

Although fraternization has recently been associated with improper sexual relationships, it may involve male-male, female-female, as well as female-male relationships. A sexual relationship is not required in order for a relationship to be considered fraternization.

4. Unprofessional Relationships:

4.1. Unprofessional relationships are defined in AFI 36-2909. The definition includes all relationships between military members that result in inappropriate familiarity or create the appearance of favoritism. This includes officer-officer, enlisted-enlisted, officer-enlisted and military-civilian relationships. Generally these relationships are in the same chain –of command or closely related units. If the unprofessional relationship is fraternization criminal charges may result.

4.2. The AFI is punitive and action may be taken based upon an unprofessional relationship. Typically a commander will inform the parties to stop the unprofessional relationship and resort to more severe action if they fail to do so. However, a commander can take more drastic action immediately if the situation warrants it.

4.3. The focus of this instruction is to prevent relationships, which may give the perception of favoritism. For most people their perceptions become reality very quickly. Even if the facts are not what they appear a perception of favoritism can undermine morale and discipline within a unit. Action should be taken to address the situation as soon as possible to minimize any adverse impact on the unit. In fact, commanders can be held accountable for failing to address such situations within their unit.

4.4. The AFI contains specific prohibitions that apply only to officers. Officers will not do the following with enlisted members and/or other officers in their direct chain-of-command:

- 4.4.1. Gamble,
- 4.4.2. Borrow from and/or loan money,
- 4.4.3. Have sex and/or,
- 4.4.4. Share living accommodations.

4.5. This handout is not meant to cover every aspect of unprofessional relationships. Military members should read AFI 36-2909 for a complete discussion as well as examples, which may clarify the meaning of the instruction.

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