



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
COMMANDER, U.S. 7TH FLEET  
UNIT 200225 BOX 1  
FPO AP 96602

4600  
Ser N013/127J  
22 Aug 19

SECOND ENDORSEMENT on LCDR (b) (6) ltr of 23 Jul 19

From: Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet  
Via: Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
To: Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION TO SUPPLEMENT USS WASP INVESTIGATION  
INTO AIRCREW PATCHES WORN DURING POTUS VISIT ON 28 MAY 19

1. Forwarding the results of a command investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the wearing of the "Make Aircrew Great Again" patch worn by HSC-25 personnel during the President's visit to the USS WASP in May 2019.

2. Having reviewed the investigation, I concur with Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group SEVEN's endorsement with one exception. For the reasons stated below, I believe the patch, worn on an official Navy uniform, infers or implies Department of Defense (DoD) sponsorship, approval, or endorsement of a partisan candidate in violation of reference (a).

a. Reference (a) prohibits DoD members from engaging in partisan political activity on active duty. Specifically, DoD members may not participate in any activity that "may reasonably be viewed as directly or indirectly associating [the DoD] with a partisan political activity." The stated intent of the directive is to avoid the inference or implication of official DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement of a partisan candidate. Any activity contrary to the "spirit and intention" of the directive shall be avoided.

b. Partisan activity is defined as activity supporting or relating to candidates representing national political parties. In February 2017, President Trump declared himself a Republican candidate for the 2020 United States Presidential election. The most recognizable of President Trump's 2020 campaign slogans is "Make America Great Again." The slogan is typically printed in white lettering on a red background.

c. The HSC-25 aircrew's patches are a play on the well-known campaign slogan and include President Trump's likeness in the middle of the patch. Additionally, the patches are red with white lettering. From afar, it is reasonable to mistake the "Make Aircrew Great Again" for the campaign slogan, increasing the likelihood of implied endorsement.

d. The average military member, who understands Navy culture, may view the patches as worn "in fun." However, the average American civilian may reasonably view the wearing of the patches on official uniforms as DoD's association, whether direct or indirect, with President Trump's 2020 campaign, a partisan political activity. At the very least, the patches violated the "spirit and intent" of the directive, which is to ensure that active duty members' activities do not appear to imply official endorsement of a partisan candidate.

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3. Although the patches may be reasonably viewed as indirectly associating the DoD with the President's 2020 reelection campaign, thereby violating the reference, I recommend no further administrative or disciplinary action. The corrective action, counseling and training detailed in the investigation, particularly enclosure (4) to the investigation and Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group SEVEN's endorsement, are sufficient to address the violation of the DoD directive.

4. My point of contact regarding this matter is CDR (b) (6); DSN: (b) (6) or (b) (6)@lcc19.navy.mil.



P. G. SAWYER

Copy to:  
COMEXSTRKGRU SEVEN