



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
COMMANDER EXPEDITIONARY STRIKE GROUP SEVEN  
PSC 480 BOX 711  
FPO AP 96370-0001

5830  
Ser N00J/057J  
13 Aug 19

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on LCDR (b) (6), USN, ltr of 23 Jul 19

From: Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group SEVEN  
To: Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Via: (1) Commander, U.S. SEVENTH Fleet  
(2) Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

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

Ref: (a) DoD Directive 1344.10 of 19 February 2008

Encl: (1) LCDR (b) (6), USN, ltr 5830 of 23 Jul 19

1. I have reviewed the enclosure, and I concur with all findings of fact, opinions, and recommendation with the following exceptions and observations:

a. I do not concur with the investigating officer's characterization in Opinion Number 5 that once the Sailors wearing the patches personally engaged the President "any ambiguity regarding the intent behind the patch was replaced with a message that members of military supported President Trump by wearing campaign-like memorabilia on their uniforms." While the patches worn were not part of the promulgated uniform and should not have been worn given the mere potential of being perceived as a partisan political activity, it was well established the President was visiting the ship in his role as Commander in Chief, not as a political candidate, and I do not view the Sailors interacting with him as unambiguously partisan given that hundreds of other Sailors and Marines also met the President at the event.

b. I do not concur with the investigating officer's characterization in Opinion Number 6 that "when the public saw HSC-25 Sailors getting autographs and taking pictures with the President wearing patches that looked like campaign memorabilia, it had the appearance that the Sailors were taking part in partisan political activity." While the wearing of the patches was not in accordance with the promulgated uniform for the event and showed poor judgment given the mere risk of partisan appearance, the event, hosted on an aircraft carrier, overseas in concert with a presidential visit to Japan, and in front of an almost exclusively military audience made this different in character to what the public would normally infer as a political event or rally.

c. Items a and b notwithstanding, I agree with the Investigating Officer's overall conclusion that given the completed investigation and the context it provides, "in the view of a reasonable

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person, neither the patch nor the actions taken by the Sailors wearing the patches were supporting or relating to President Trump's 2020 campaign." The standard in the reference is that activities that may be reasonably viewed as associating the DoD with a partisan political activity shall be avoided. I assess that these patches and the behavior of the Sailors wearing them, while ill-advised and not part of the prescribed uniform during the President's visit, would not be reasonably viewed as associating the DoD with a partisan political activity. Rather, I assess a reasonable view would align with the Investigating Officer's observation that these patches were worn "in fun," and to gain attention by relatively junior enlisted air crew members rather than to engage in partisan political activity.

2. Although I do not find that these patches violated the reference, I still find that they fall short of the professional appearance we look for in items worn as part of a naval uniform and certainly run a risk of being perceived as political in nature. I have shared my perspectives and this investigation with the Commanding Officer, HSC-25 and confirmed he understands his responsibility to comply with and ensure his crew's compliance with the reference. I have also confirmed that he has carried out the second recommendation related to the disposition of the patches and the determination that they are no longer approved for wear on the flight suit within his command.

3. I am forwarding this investigation to Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet for his consideration with regard to further codifying or fine-tuning the aviation community's guidance related the wearing of patches and their content on flight suits and/or flight jackets, as related in the third recommendation from the Investigating Officer.

4. My point of contact for this matter is LCDR (b) (6), JAGC, USN, at DSN (b) (6), or via email at (b) (6)@fe.navy.mil.



F. W. KACHER