

FACT SHEET - #19

SUBJECT: Distasteful or Offensive Language

1. PURPOSE. To provide information on ensuring courteous, inoffensive behavior with respect to language, signs, bumper stickers, clothing, other media, and noise.

2. FACTS.

a. Fort Knox Regulation 210-2 (26 Mar 01) prohibits excessive noise and offensive language.

b. Offensive language is defined broadly to include both verbal and written language, and language generated either personally (i.e., homemade) or commercially (i.e., signs, bumper stickers, etc.).

c. The policy prohibits "vulgar" and "obscene" language, as well as excessive noise of any type that annoys another. It does not address "distasteful" language.

d. The intent of the regulation is to permit military and civilian leaders at all levels to immediately do "on the spot" corrections for use of vulgar or obscene language that is blatantly offensive. Law enforcement personnel should be involved only when annoying people disturb the peace or otherwise violate the policy by refusing to comply after being directed to do so.

e. Distasteful language, as contrasted to vulgar or obscene language, is not susceptible to regulation because of the constitutional protections regarding freedom of speech; it is simply too subjective a concept.

3. POC is the Administrative Law Division, 4-7414/4668.

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