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POLICY LETTER 17-16

From: Commanding General
To: All Hands

Subj: SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

Ref: (a) <http://www.marines.mil/News/Social-Media/>

Encl: (1) Social Media Best Practices

1. Purpose. Continued expansion and use of social media and web-based interactive technologies requires due diligence and oversight to ensure the operational security of MAGTFTC, MCAGCC. Service members and their families are our first line of defense when it comes to navigating the risks associated with social media. They require the training, understanding, and tools necessary to secure important information while using social media as a forum to share news and events.

a. Headquarters Marine Corps has created a website that provides information regarding social media and the Marine Corps. The link provided by the reference has useful information for Marines and their families concerning existing rules for public affairs and personal conduct while utilizing social media.

b. Social media includes collaborative tools such as social networking sites, user-generated content, social software, email, instant messaging, and discussion forums (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, Google apps etc.).

2. Information. The enclosure provides best practices for the use of social media and reduces the risk to Marines, their families, and operational security that may arise from its use.

3. Action. Commanders, Assistant Chiefs of Staff, Special Staff Officers, and Officers-in-Charge will ensure their Marines, civilians, and contracted personnel are informed of the best practices listed in the enclosure. Family Readiness Officers will also disseminate recommended best practices to Combat Center Family members. Marines are strongly encouraged to ensure their family members follow these best practices.

4. The points of contact are the Public Affairs Officer at (760) 830-6213; Mr. Mark D. Ziobro at (760) 830-4737 or mark.d.ziobro@usmc.mil; and Mr. Robert A. Cloutier at (760) 830-0099 or robert.cloutier@usmc.mil.


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Policy Letter 17-16

Social Media Best Practices

1. The Marine Corps respects the free speech rights of all Marines, but they must remember that civilians, fellow Marines, and supervisors often have access to online posted content. Marines must keep this in mind when publishing information online and know that information originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on. Online content can, and will be shared with thousands or more people and is nearly impossible to retract once it has entered the public arena.

a. Profile Information/Status Updates

- Keep sensitive, work-related information OFF your profile.
- Keep your plans, schedules, and location data to yourself.
- Protect the names and information of coworkers, friends, and family members (use first names).
- Adhere to the UCMJ and other applicable policies, to include Personally Identifiable Information.
- Exercise sound judgement and common sense. Marines are responsible for their actions. Anything a Marine or individual posts that can potentially tarnish the Marine Corps' image will ultimately be their responsibility.

b. Posted Data

- Check all photos for indicators in the background or reflective surfaces.
- Check (properties) filenames and file tags for sensitive data (your name, organization, or other details).
- Remove Geo tagging information from your posted photos.
- Tell friends to be careful when posting photos and information about you and your family.
- Be a "scout" for compliments and criticism. Even if a Marine is not an official online spokesperson, they are one of the most vital assets for monitoring the social media landscape. If positive remarks about the Marine Corps are discovered online they should consider sharing it with their local or command Public Affairs Office.
- Let subject matter experts respond to negative posts. You may come across negative or disparaging posts about the Marine Corps or see third parties initiating negative conversations. Unless you are a trained Marine Corps online spokesperson, avoid the temptation to react yourself. Pass the post(s) along to official spokespersons that are authorized to address such comments at the unit or command public affairs office.

c. Settings and Privacy

- Carefully look for and set all your privacy and security options on the web browser and social media site.
- Determine both your profile and search visibility.
- Sort "friends" into groups and networks, and set access permissions accordingly.
- Verify through other channels that a "friend" request was actually from your friend.
- Add "untrusted" people to the group with the lowest access permissions or don't add them at all.
- Refer suspicious friend requests or peculiar requests for information to the operations security manager or information management officer.

d. Security

- Keep your anti-virus software updated.
- Beware of links, downloads, and attachments just as you would in emails.

Policy Letter 17-16

- Beware of "apps" or plugins, which are often written by unknown third parties who might use them to access your data and friends.
- Look for HTTPS (within the address bar) and the lock icon that indicate active transmission security before logging in or entering sensitive data (especially when using Wi-Fi hotspots).

e. Passwords

- Use unique passwords for each online site you use.
- Ensure your passwords are sufficiently hard to guess.
- Do not share your passwords with anyone.

2. Official MAGTFTC, MCAGCC Social Media.

a. All Official MAGTFTC, MCAGCC Social Media will have the following information posted on their sites:

- It is our goal to provide information and news about the [Respective Unit] as well as an open forum of discussion about Marine Corps related topics. Your opinions and feedback are welcome so long as they are presented in an objective and respectful way that allows for a continued information relationship.
- While this site provides an open forum, participants are reminded to maintain respect for all users (i.e. family-friendly). Please keep your comments clean.
- Participants are asked to follow our posting guidelines below. Violation of the guidelines below may result in your post being removed.
 - We do not, under any circumstance, allow graphic, obscene, explicit, racial comments or submissions, nor do we allow comments that are abusive, hateful, or intended to defame anyone, or any organization.
 - We do not allow solicitations or advertisements. This includes promotion or endorsement of any financial, commercial, or non-governmental agency.
 - We do not allow comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity.
 - We do not allow posts that would affect the force protection or operational security of our service members and their loved ones.
 - You participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username, and any information provided.
- The appearance of external links on this site does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps or Department of Defense.

b. eMarine. The eMarine website is a secure site available only to Marines, service members, and their family members. This system will provide family members with a valuable tool to access documents, view photos/videos, participate in forums, and gain important information about their Marine's Unit from anywhere in the world, 24/7.

- Service members, spouses, and Family Readiness Officers should utilize eMarine to communicate with our MAGTFTC, MCAGCC family, in lieu of other Social Media, when relaying information regarding operations and exercises.

Enclosure (1)