DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
3000 MARINE CORPS PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20350-3000

Canc: 3 Jun 2017

MCBul 1020
MPO
2 Jun 2016

MARINE CORPS BULLETIN 1020

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: Distribution List

Subj: MARINE CORPS TATTOO POLICY

Ref: (a) MCO P1020.34G W/CH 1-5
(b) 5 U.S.C. 552a
(c) SECNAVINST 5211.5E
(d) SECNAV M-5210.1
(e) UCMJ Article 92
(f) MCO 1900.16 W/CH 1

Encl: (1) Glossary

1. Situation. Marines have inherited a legacy that we must honor and preserve for future generations of men and women bearing the title United States Marine, and that means meeting and exceeding the standards the American people have come to expect from our Corps. The American people expect Marines to be disciplined, physically fit, and ready to accomplish any mission. They also expect Marines to possess esprit de corps and a squared away and sharp personal appearance. The tattoo policy over the years has attempted to balance the individual desires of Marines with the need to maintain the disciplined appearance expected of our profession.

2. Cancellation. MARADMIN 198/07, MARADMIN 494/08, and MARADMIN 029/10.

3. Mission. Commanders shall ensure that all Marines with tattoos adhere to the policy outlined in this Bulletin in order to maintain the disciplined appearance expected of our profession.

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

4. Execution

a. Commander's Intent and Concept of Operations

(1) Commander's Intent. All Marines may have unlimited tattoos on any area of the body that is covered by the properly fitting standard physical training (PT) uniform (e.g., tattoos on chest and back). Officers may have no more than four tattoos visible in the properly fitting PT uniform.

(2) Concept of Operations. All tattoos must be in compliance with this Bulletin as described below.

(a) Content of Tattoos. Tattoos located anywhere on the body that are prejudicial to good order and discipline, or are of a nature to bring discredit upon the naval service, are prohibited. Examples include, but are not limited to, tattoos that are drug-related, gang-related, extremist, obscene or indecent, sexist, or racist, as further defined below:

1. Extremist. Extremist tattoos are those affiliated with, depicting, or symbolizing extremist philosophies, organizations, or activities. Extremist philosophies, organizations, and activities are those which advocate racial, gender, or ethnic hatred or intolerance; advocate, create, or engage in illegal discrimination based on race, color, gender, ethnicity, religion, or national origin; or advocate violence or other unlawful means of depriving individual rights under the U.S. Constitution and federal or state law.

2. Obscene or Indecent. Indecent tattoos are those that are grossly offensive to modesty, decency, or propriety.

3. Sexist. Sexist tattoos are those that advocate a philosophy that degrades or demeans a person based on gender.

4. Racist. Racist tattoos are those that advocate a philosophy that degrades or demeans a person based on race, ethnicity, or national origin.

(b) Head or Neck Tattoos

1. Tattoos on the head or neck, including in or around the mouth area, are prohibited.

2. The head is defined as the portion of the body above the first cervical vertebrae (C1).

3. The neck is defined as the portion of the body above the collarbone in the front area, above the seventh cervical vertebrae (C7) in the back area.

(c) Chest or Back Tattoos

1. Tattoos on the chest or back must be below the collarbone and seventh cervical vertebrae (C7). Tattoos on the chest or back must be covered by wearing a properly fitting crew-neck t-shirt with no portion of the tattoo showing.

2. The crew-neck t-shirt is required to be worn if a tattoo is visible in the "V" area created by the open collar of the short sleeve khaki shirt or utility coat (below the collarbone).

(d) Band Tattoos. This policy direction is for tattoos visible outside the PT uniform, except as otherwise prohibited or limited above.

1. Officers and enlisted Marines may have band tattoos that do not exceed three inches or the width of the individual Marine's four fingers extended and joined, whichever is greater.

2. Measurement will be from the second knuckle of the index finger to the first knuckle of the pinky finger.

3. If a band tattoo is partially covered by the PT uniform and partially visible in the PT uniform, the covered part may be of any size and the visible part must not exceed the width as indicated above.

4. A band tattoo constitutes a single allowable tattoo.

(e) Upper Arm Tattoos. An upper arm tattoo that starts from the chest or shoulder and extends below the crew-

neck t-shirt sleeve is authorized. The visible portion may extend down the arm on all sides no further than a line around the circumference of the upper arm measured two inches above the elbow. The visible portion must not exceed the bounds of the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm.

(f) Elbow Tattoos Prohibited. There must be an area from at least two inches above to at least one inch below the elbow, measured from the center of the elbow, that is free of tattoos and separates any tattoos on the upper arm from any tattoos on the lower arm.

(g) Lower Arm Tattoos

1. Lower arm tattoos may extend down no further than a line around the circumference of the wrist measured at two inches above the wrist bone and may extend up no further than a line around the circumference of the lower arm measured at one inch below the elbow.

2. Tattoos on a lower arm are limited to one of the following:

a. A single tattoo which can be covered by the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm.

b. A single collection of tattoos which can be covered by the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm.

c. A single band tattoo.

3. Tattoos of larger size or number on the lower arm are prohibited.

(h) Hand, Finger, and Wrist Tattoos. Tattoos on the hands, fingers, or within two inches of the wrist bone are prohibited, with the exception of a single band tattoo of no more than 3/8 of an inch in width on one finger.

(i) Upper Leg Tattoos. An upper leg tattoo that starts from the thigh or upper body and extends below the bottom of properly fitting PT shorts is authorized. The visible portion may extend down the leg on all sides no further than a line around the circumference of the upper leg measured at two inches above the center of the knee (i.e., the patella), when the leg is straight. The visible portion must not exceed the bounds of the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm.

(j) Knee Tattoos Prohibited. There must be an area from at least two inches above to at least two inches below the knee, measured from the center of the knee (i.e., the patella), when the leg is straight, that is free of tattoos and separates any tattoos on the upper leg from any tattoos on the lower leg.

(k) Lower Leg and Foot Tattoos

1. Lower leg tattoos may extend up the leg on all sides no further than a line around the circumference of the lower leg measured at two inches below the center of the knee (i.e., the patella), when the leg is straight.

2. Tattoos on a lower leg are limited to one of the following:

a. A single tattoo which can be covered by the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm.

b. A single collection of tattoos which can be covered by the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the

tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm.

c. A single band tattoo.

3. Tattoos of larger size or number on the lower leg are prohibited.

4. Slacks must be worn instead of a skirt if tattoos on the lower leg or foot are visible in the Service A, Dress Blue A/B, Blue-White Dress A/B, or Evening Dress uniforms.

(l) Ultra-Violet (UV) Tattoos. Any tattoo only visible or apparent with the use of ultra-violet light must still adhere to the guidance in this Bulletin.

(m) Group of Tattoos. A group of tattoos which are interconnected and exceed the definition of a single tattoo is prohibited. Individual tattoos must be separate and distinct from one another.

(n) Brands. Brands and other body art are subject to the same requirements, limitations and prohibitions applicable to tattoos.

b. Subordinate Element Missions

(1) Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC M&RA). DC M&RA is responsible for maintaining the Marine Corps official tattoo policy and is the final adjudicating authority for all tattoo issues.

(2) Director, Manpower Management Division (Dir MM)

(a) Dir MM is the adjudicating authority for all Active Component (AC) post-accession (i.e., upon completion of recruit training/officer candidate school) tattoo issues. These include but are not limited to retention, special duty assignments, return to active duty, tattoo content, etc.

(b) Dir MM is also responsible for adjudicating tattoo issues for officer retention boards.

(3) Director, Reserve Affairs (Dir RA). Dir RA serves the same role as Dir MM for Reserve Component (RC) post-accession adjudication.

(4) Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command (CG MCRC). CG MCRC is the adjudicating authority for any tattoo issue involving accessions (both officer and enlisted), to include enlisted Marines who apply for a commissioning or warrant officer program and prior service accessions.

(5) Marine Corps Uniform Policy Board (MCUPB). The MCUPB will incorporate all policy direction set forth in this Bulletin into the next update of reference (a).

(6) Commanders. All commanders will ensure:

(a) Immediate compliance with the tattoo standards set forth in this Bulletin.

(b) Each Marine with tattoos that are not in compliance with paragraphs 3 and 4a of this Bulletin shall have the tattoos documented on NAVMC 118(11), "Administrative Remarks (1070)," no later than 120 days after the date this Bulletin is signed. During the 120 day baseline period, complete documentation of non-compliance tattoos in accordance with paragraph 4.b(6)(e). Post 120 day baseline period, complete documentation of non-compliant tattoos in accordance with paragraph 4.b(6)(f).

NOTE: The sole purpose of the NAVMC 118(11) during the 120-day period is strictly for documentation purposes and shall not be construed to be punitive or disciplinary in nature. **Tattoos that are in compliance with this Bulletin do not need to be documented.**

(c) That requests for official determinations of compliance are forwarded to DC MRA (MM/RA) for all questionable tattoos.

(d) That this Bulletin is appropriately disseminated and that all Marines within their command are properly briefed on its contents as soon as practicable and routinely thereafter.

(e) During the 120 day baseline period, non-compliant tattoo documentation will be completed on NAVMC 118(11) as described below in Figure 1-1, "120 Day Baseline Period NAVMC 118(11) Documentation." If in a private area of the body, tattoos will be visually reviewed by a medical professional. Commands will provide measurements of the size (in inches) of the tattoo(s), location(s) of the tattoo(s),

description, and the date the tattoo(s) were verified on the NAVMC 118(11) entry. The Marine will sign the entry verifying the information is correct. The appropriate command representative (e.g., CO, XO, SgtMaj, 1stSgt) will also attest to and sign the entry. The NAVMC 118(11) shall be forwarded to the respective Installation Personnel Administrative Center (IPAC) for entry into the Marine's Official Military Personnel File (OMPF).

NOTE: Do not include photographs with the NAVMC 118(11) documentation.

YYYYMMDD: Counseled this date concerning MCBul 1020 dated 2 Jun 2016 and paragraph 1004.1c of MCO P1020.34G W/CH 1-5 concerning the Marine Corps Tattoo Policy. You currently have a tattoo located on your xxxxxxx which is not in compliance with current tattoo policy.

Tattoo Description:

Location:

Measurement: in. x in.

I certify that the above information is correct.

SNM signature CO/XO/SgtMaj/1stSgt signature

Figure 1-1.--120 Day Baseline Period NAVMC 118(11) Documentation.

(f) Those Marines that do not have their non-compliant tattoo(s) documented during the 120 day baseline period, or fall out of compliance with this tattoo policy after the baseline period shall receive a NAVMC 118(11) entry documenting their tattoo(s) as described below in Figure 1-2, "Post 120 Day Baseline Period NAVMC 118(11) Documentation." If in a private area of the body, tattoos will be visually reviewed by a medical professional. Commands will provide measurements of the size (in inches) of the tattoo(s), location(s) of the tattoo(s), description, and the date the tattoo(s) were verified on the NAVMC 118(11) entry. The Marine will sign the entry verifying the information is correct. The Commanding Officer will sign the entry. The NAVMC 118(11) shall be forwarded to the respective Installation Personnel Administrative Center (IPAC) for entry into the Marine's Official Military Personnel File (OMPF).

NOTE: Do not include photographs with the NAVMC 118(11) documentation.

YYYYMMDD: Counseled this date IAW paragraph 6105 of MCO 1900.16 W/CH 1 (MARCORSEPMAN) concerning the following deficiency: You are in violation of Article 92 of the UCMJ, specifically the Marine Corps Tattoo Policy per MCBul 1020 dated 2 Jun 2016 and MCO P1020.34G W/CH 1-5 in that your tattoo is visible when wearing a properly fitting standard physical training (PT) uniform and is not in compliance with said policy. This counseling identifies your deficiencies and serves as the documentation of your tattoos. Specific recommendations for corrective action are not to modify or add to your current tattoo(s), nor to receive any additional tattoo(s) that are in violation of current policies, adhere to all orders and regulations, and to seek assistance, which is available through your chain of command. Any further violations of the UCMJ will result in judicial or adverse administrative action including but not limited to administrative separation. I was advised that within five working days after acknowledgement of this entry, a written rebuttal can be submitted and this rebuttal will be filed in my Official Military Personnel File. I choose (to) (not to) make a statement. Tattoo Description: Location: Measurement: in. x in. SNM signature CO signature

Figure 1-2.--Post 120 Day Baseline Period NAVMC 118(11) Documentation.

(g) Continuing Review - Post 120 Day Baseline. As part of the ongoing endeavor to ensure compliance with the tattoo policy, the following actions shall occur.

1. Enlisted Marines will be reviewed for tattoos each time they submit a retention package to the Commanding Officer. Any tattoos that are not in compliance with this Bulletin will be reviewed against the Marine's OMPF to ensure a NAVMC 118(11) has been completed to document the tattoo(s). Retention interviews will also be used as a periodic informal counseling and instruction period to reinforce the regulations relating to tattoos.

2. Officers will be reviewed for tattoos as part of the Commanding Officer's height/weight screening

certification each time an official promotion or selection board photograph is taken. Any tattoo(s) that are not in compliance with this Bulletin will be reviewed against the Marine's OMPF to ensure a NAVMC 118(11) has been completed to document the tattoo(s).

3. For both officer and enlisted Marines, commanders shall also monitor compliance by reviewing tattoos during semi-annual height/weight verifications. This requirement will be added to the Commanding General's Inspection Program (CGIP) checklist.

5. Administration and Logistics

a. This Bulletin supersedes all previous Marine Corps tattoo policy guidance published in reference (a) or published via MARADMIN.

b. Special Duty Assignment (SDA). Marines are advised there are future career implications regarding the application of tattoos. A tattoo may not be specifically prohibited, but could prevent future commissioning or duty assignments. Assignment to special duty has historically put Marines at a more competitive advantage for retention and promotion. The following amplifying guidance is issued:

(1) Enlisted Marines may continue to be assigned or allowed to serve on Special Duty Assignment (SDA) if grandfathered by past policy. Otherwise, enlisted Marines will not be assigned or allowed to serve on SDA, specifically Recruiting duty, Marine Security Guard duty, Drill Instructor duty, Marine Corps Security Force duty, and Marine Combat Instructor duty, if they have any tattoos visible outside the standard PT uniform that do not comply with this Bulletin.

(2) Enlisted Marines will not be allowed to serve as commissioned or warrant officers if their tattoos fail to comply with the tattoo guidelines prescribed for officers above.

(3) Tattoo Removal. Marines that elect to have tattoos removed at their own expense may be reconsidered for SDA or officer programs on a case-by-case basis.

c. Grandfathering and Existing Waivers

(1) Any Marine who has already been grandfathered by previous tattoo policy guidance will remain grandfathered (i.e., for previous tattoos) for retention, promotion, and worldwide assignment.

(2) Marines currently assigned to, or presently slated for Recruiting duty, Marine Security Guard duty, Drill Instructor duty, Marine Corps Security Force duty, and Marine Combat Instructor duty who have tattoos visible outside the standard PT uniform that are non-compliant with this Bulletin will execute their current assignment until the end of their SDA tour (i.e., no short tour, removal from class slate or early PCS move required), but will not be assigned to these special duty assignments on subsequent tours.

d. Questionable Tattoos

(1) Marines with questionable tattoo(s) must request official determinations of compliance to DC M&RA (MM/RA) via the chain of command using NAVMC 10274, "Administrative Action (5216)," endorsed to at least the battalion/squadron-level.

(2) At a minimum, the package must include a photograph(s) of the questionable tattoo(s) or description if in a private area, a copy of any existing documentation relating to the tattoo(s), measurement(s) of the size in inches, description and location(s) of the tattoo(s), and an explanation as to why the tattoo(s) was deemed questionable by the commander.

(3) If the official determination reveals non-compliance, the commander will ensure the results are annotated in the Marine's record NAVMC 118(11) using the documentation parameters in this Bulletin.

(4) Commanders will determine any additional appropriate administrative or disciplinary actions when Marines obtain tattoos that are not in compliance with this Bulletin.

e. Forms Management. Navy Forms Online (NFOL) is the official online resource for Marine Corps forms located at https://navalforms.documentservices.dla.mil.

f. Privacy Act. Any misuse or unauthorized disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) may result in both civil and criminal penalties. The Department of Navy (DON) recognizes that the privacy of an individual is a personal and fundamental right that shall be respected and protected. The DON's need to collect, use, maintain, or disseminate PII about individuals for purposes of discharging its statutory responsibilities will be balanced against the individuals' right to be protected against unwarranted invasion of privacy. All collection, use, maintenance, or dissemination of PII will be in accordance with the Privacy of 1974, as amended (reference (b) and implemented per reference (c)).

g. Records Management. Records created as a result of this Bulletin shall be managed according to National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approved dispositions per reference (d) to ensure proper maintenance, use, accessibility and preservation, regardless of format or medium.

6. Command and Signal

a. Command

(1) Paragraphs 3 and 4a of this Bulletin are punitive. Violation of the specific prohibitions and requirements in these paragraphs by Marine Corps or Marine Corps Reserve personnel is punishable under Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

(2) This Bulletin is applicable to the Marine Corps Total Force.

(3) Navy personnel must be in compliance with this Bulletin in order to wear the Marine Corps Uniform.

b. Signal. This Bulletin is effective the date signed.

Robert B. Neller

Distribution: PCN 10200148900

Glossary

Band Tattoo. A tattoo which partially or fully encircles the circumference of the body part.

Elbow. The invisible line around the circumference of the extended arm which intersects the most prominent point of the olecranon (elbow bone).

Knee. The invisible band around the circumference of the extended leg which intersects and contains the entirety of the patella (knee cap).

PT Uniform. For the purposes of this Bulletin the PT uniform is a set of properly fitting green t-shirt and green shorts.

Single Tattoo. A tattoo which can be covered by the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm. Tattoos spaced apart that cannot be covered by this measurement are considered separate tattoos.

Single Collection of Tattoos. A group of two or more tattoos that can be covered by the individual Marine's hand with their fingers extended and joined with the thumb flush against the side of the hand. The measurement will be from the base of the palm to the tip of the fingers and from the outside of the thumb to the outside of the palm. Tattoos spaced apart that cannot be covered by this measurement are considered separate tattoos.

Wrist Bone. The prominent head of the ulna as it meets the wrist below the little finger. Distance from the wrist bone shall be measured from the invisible line around the circumference of the wrist which intersects the most prominent point of the wrist bone.

"V" area. The space created by the open collar of the short sleeve khaki shirt or utility coat.