

OFFICIAL TRAVEL IN SUPPORT OF COMMISSIONING CEREMONIES AND RELATED VISITS BY SENIOR ARMY OFFICIALS INFORMATION PAPER

1. PURPOSE. To review common ethical issues that arise related to commissioning ceremonies, or similar events conducted by Army ROTC programs and their universities. This covers travel and use of government vehicles, spouse travel, participation in private organizations, and gifts. General guidance is provided here but remember to seek specific advice from travel and legal staff for any activities that do not fit squarely into either an official or unofficial category.

2. TRAVEL AND PARTICIPATION IN OFFICER COMMISSIONING CEREMONIES.

(a) The Army has determined that changes of command, promotions, retirements, and unit activations and deactivations are considered official business internal to the Army community. A commissioning ceremony is sufficiently similar in nature to a promotion or retirement ceremony to extend the same guidelines to those officiating or speaking at commissioning events. Therefore, when an individual is attending a commission ceremony in an official capacity the use of transportation resources may be permissible, particularly for the officer who is conducting the ceremony or presenting remarks. We are aware that many senior officers may be invited to speak as prominent ROTC alumni; this is consistent with Army recruiting and public affairs guidance. However, prudent use of resources and multiple missions (class discussions, faculty meetings, local community leader engagements) must always be considered.

(b) Care must be taken to distinguish between the official commissioning ceremony and subsequent or ancillary events related to the commissioning, such as receptions, dinners, or other social functions. These corresponding events have elements of an official nature, but they remain essentially private, social functions. Attendees often buy their own dinners and drinks, and the event is sometimes paid for with the contributions of attendees or other private entities. Ancillary events of this nature are typically sponsored by private invitation or non-federal organizations, whose sponsorship makes the event "unofficial," and attendance therefore is usually "personal" in nature.

3. OTHER CAMPUS PROGRAMS. Commissioning ceremonies are official Army events. In addition, senior Army officials may be invited to campuses to provide remarks on Army initiatives, Army recruiting presentations, or academic presentations related to Army STEM programs or international relations programs. These are also typically official events. On the other hand, senior Army leaders may also be invited to unofficial events, such as attendance at a Cadet social function, an alumni reunion or a university sporting event. Use of official travel resources for social events is generally not authorized. If official and unofficial events are occurring during the same itinerary, legal and travel official advice is critical.

4. TRAVEL AND USE OF GOVS.

(a) Commanders at all levels must prevent the misuse and the perception of misuse, of transportation resources.¹ Department of Defense (DoD) and Army policies restrict the use of GOVs to official purposes.² Official purposes are those that support authorized DoD functions, activities or operations. Official use of GOV s requires a finding that the transportation is essential to the successful completion of a DoD function, activity or operation.³ Where travel is

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authorized, the most cost efficient option is to be utilized to the maximum extent practicable.⁴ DoD requires strict interpretation of law and policy when official use of GOVs is in question.

(b) Authorized transportation by GOV to official, after-hours functions is treated as an exception to policy for which prior approval from the Installation Commander or his/her delegated authorizing official is required.⁵ When authorized in this circumstance, transportation to after-hours functions must begin and end at the individual's normal place of duty.⁶ Transportation in a GOV must be related to an official purpose, and may not be justified based solely on rank or position.

5. Authorized Spouse Travel. Spouses of Government employees may be transported in a GOV only when accompanying the military member on official business and when space is available in the GOV.⁷ A larger GOV is not authorized merely to accommodate accompanying spouses. Ticketed spouse travel requires HQDA approval and will NOT be authorized for attendance at commissioning ceremonies.

6. GIFTS.

(a) Accepting Gifts from Prohibited Sources. A DoD employee cannot accept a gift from a "prohibited source" valued in excess of \$20. A prohibited source is any person or organization that does, or seeks to do, business with the DoD, conducts activities regulated by the DoD, or has interests that may be affected by the performance of a DoD employee in their official duty. Examples of prohibited sources include colleges and universities, alumni groups, or non-federal entities like AUSA.

(b) Supervisor Acceptance of Gifts from Subordinates. A Soldier cannot accept a gift from a subordinate in excess of \$10.⁸ The only exceptions to this rule is where the gift is for a special infrequent occasion such as marriage, ETS, birth or illness, or retirement, and the value of the gift is appropriate to the occasion. ROTC programs should generally not present gifts to senior Army officials presiding over commissioning ceremonies.

(c) Appropriated funds cannot be used to purchase gifts or presentation items for guest speakers. Awards, prizes, or other recognitions are to be secured within the framework of AR 600-8-22, Military Awards.

¹ DoDD 4500.56

² DoD 4500.36-R, App. 4; AR 58-1, para. 2-3.

³ DoD 4500.36-R, para. C2.5.

⁴ DoDD 4500.9E

⁵ SECARMY Travel Policy, para. 14c.

⁶ AR 58-1, para 2-3c

⁷ SECARMY Travel Policy, para. 14f.

⁸ 5 C.F.R 2635.304 (a)(1)

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(d) Guest Speaker Acceptance of Presentation Items. Senior officials cannot accept items from subordinate personnel that exceed \$10 in value, nor are they permitted to accept recruiting PPIs as a "presentation item" for serving as a guest speaker at an official event. SJA processes gift "returns" every month from Army commands for items presented to senior officials by ROTC personnel. Please help us avoid these situations.