



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

FEB - 5 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Stand-Down to Address Extremism in the Ranks

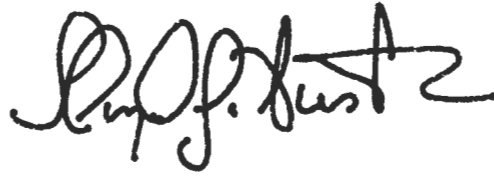
As Service members or Federal civil servants, we each take an Oath of Office on entering into public service. The framers of the Constitution included the requirement to take an Oath of Office in the Constitution itself. While the nature of that oath may vary depending on the individual role you serve, all oaths include the commitment to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic. Because we each took an oath to obey the law, support and defend the Constitution, and to do our jobs to the best of our ability, we expect public servants to be guided in their actions by a strong moral compass. And without question, the vast majority of the men and women of this Department serve with honor and uphold our core values.

Service in the DoD is a privilege that comes with added responsibilities and obligations by nature of holding a national security position or having access to the Nation's sensitive information. Those responsibilities are accentuated for Service members, who have accepted the jurisdiction of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the added responsibilities inherent to good order and discipline.

We will not tolerate actions that go against the fundamental principles of the oath we share, including actions associated with extremist or dissident ideologies. Service members, DoD civilian employees, and all those who support our mission, deserve an environment free of discrimination, hate, and harassment. It is incumbent upon each of us to ensure that actions associated with these corrosive behaviors are prevented. Commanders, supervisors, and all those who hold a leadership position within the Department have a special responsibility to guard against these behaviors and set the example for those they lead.

To that end, I am directing commanding officers and supervisors at all levels to select a date within the next 60 days to conduct a one-day "stand-down" on this issue with their personnel. The Secretaries of the Military Departments have discretion to authorize extensions beyond 60 days, if required by the operational nature of the unit, as well as for the National Guard and Reserve Forces units. Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1325.06, "Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces" provides the core tenets to support such discussions. Leaders have the discretion to tailor discussions with their personnel as appropriate, but such discussions should include the importance of our oath of office; a description of impermissible behaviors; and procedures for reporting suspected, or actual, extremist behaviors in accordance with the DoDI. You should use this opportunity to listen as well to the concerns, experiences, and possible solutions that the men and women of the workforce may proffer in these stand-down sessions.

This stand-down is just the first initiative of what I believe must be a concerted effort to better educate ourselves and our people about the scope of this problem and to develop sustainable ways to eliminate the corrosive effects that extremist ideology and conduct have on the workforce. We owe it to the oath we each took and the trust the American people have in our institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. Gust". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a stylized "Gust" followed by a long horizontal stroke.

cc:  
Director of Administration and Management