



Since it was done several years ago, 1st Sgt. Aki Paylor's tattoo of the Warrior Ethos is "grandfathered in" under the Army's new tattoo guidelines, which took effect earlier this year. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Stephanie van Geete)

Army Releases Latest Policies on Female Hairstyles, Tattoos

By Lisa Ferdinando

Army News Service

The Army published revisions to Army Regulation 670-1, its policy for "Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia," which included changes to female hairstyles and tattoos standards. The revisions, dated Sept 15, were effective immediately.

The Army determined in a review that authorized hairstyles announced earlier this year limited female Soldiers' hair grooming options. The policy authorizes temporary, two-strand hair twists for women, and includes a number of updates to hairstyles for women. Dreadlocks or locks remain an unauthorized hairstyle.

As for tattoos, the new regulation allows enlisted Soldiers who have "grandfathered" tattoos to be considered for officer candidate school or warrant officer appointment without needing an exception to the policy.

"Wearing of the uniform as well as our overall military appearance should be a matter of personal pride for Soldiers," Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler said. "Our commitment to the uniform and appearance standards is vital to your professionalism."

"Every Soldier has the responsibility to know and follow these standards. Leaders at all levels also have

the responsibility to interpret and enforce these standards, which begins by setting the appropriate example," Chandler added. "Your actions help to ensure we continue to be trusted and revered by the American people we serve."

A training package for Army leaders and Soldiers is available online at <https://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/uniform/>.

The Army plans to continue its long-standing practice of conducting perpetual reviews of its policies. In fact, Soldiers are encouraged to submit a DA Form 2028 to recommend changes. Requests with significant wear or policy changes should be endorsed through the Soldier's senior level chain of command to the Army G-1.

Female hairstyles

The Army began reviewing its policies on female hairstyles soon after releasing the March 28, 2014, version of the regulation. In conjunction with the service's review, the Department of Defense also requested a review in light of concerns that the hairstyle policies were too restrictive for African-American women. This review included feedback

from a panel of Soldiers comprised of the various demographics represented in the U.S. Army. Subsequently, Army officials believe the updated policy gives female Soldiers more options while maintaining a professional appearance.

The new regulation allows female Soldiers to have temporary twists or two pieces of hair neatly twisted together. Twists, cornrows and braids can be up to 1/2 inch in diameter. The previous maximum was a diameter of approximately 1/4 inch.

The Army removed the requirement that no more than 1/8 of an inch of scalp could show between braids. The Army requires braids, twists and cornrows worn against the scalp be uniform in appearance and have the same general size of spacing between them.

Previously, the Army required that the ends of hair in braids be secured with inconspicuous rubber bands. The reference to rubber bands was removed, now the ends just have to be secured inconspicuously.

Braids and cornrows worn against the scalp previously had to be worn in a straight line from the front and go all the way to the back of the head. Now, the language has been changed to say the braids need to follow the natural direction of the hair when worn back or in the natural direction using one part in the hair.

Styles, such as braids, cornrows, or twists worn against the scalp may still stop at one consistent location of the head. When such styles are worn loosely or free-hanging, they must encompass the whole head.

While dreadlocks or locks are still not authorized, their definition has been changed to remove the words “matted and unkempt.”

Another change includes increasing the allowable size of a bun, measuring from the scalp out, from three inches to three-and-a-half inches.

The allowable amount of bulk of hair remains two inches.

The shortest hair a female Soldier can have is 1/4 inch from the scalp, which can be tapered to the scalp along the hairline. There is no maximum length a female Soldier’s hair can be, as long as it is within regulation and can be worn up to meet the guidance for bulk and bun size.

The new rules clarify that braids, cornrows and now twists can be worn in a ponytail during physical training; it also specifies that wigs, which were previously authorized, cannot be worn to cover up an unauthorized hairstyle.

No matter what the authorized hairstyle, it must allow for the Soldier to be able to properly wear all types of headgear and protective equipment.

Tattoos

As part of efforts to maintain the professional appearance of the force, the Army dialed back the number, size and placement of tattoos in the March regulation.

Previously authorized tattoos were “grandfathered” in, but Soldiers hoping to become an officer or warrant officer had to get an exception to the policy.

The updated regulation takes into account that previously authorized tattoos should not prevent a Soldier from becoming an officer, but that candidates are to be evaluated based on the whole Soldier concept, or all characteristics of a Soldier.

The rest of the regulation from March remains in place, including the restriction on sleeve tattoos and allowing no more than four tattoos below the elbows or knees. Tattoos below the knees or elbows must be smaller than the size of the Soldier’s palm with fingers extended.

Permanent ink or branding on the face, neck, and hands, as well as tattoos that can be deemed extremist, indecent, sexist or racist in nature remain banned.

Other changes

The regulation provides additional clarification that Soldiers who entered the Army with body mutilation prior to March 2014 may request an exception to Army G-1.

Another change of note is that Soldiers can wear a “Next of Kin” lapel pin on their Army service and dress uniforms. The pin is for the immediate family of military members who were killed on duty, outside of combat operations.

Soldiers are already authorized to wear the “Gold Star” lapel pin, which is for the immediate family of service members who were killed in combat. ■



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