



Commander’s Policy Statements

Vikings,

Our profession calls us to be Resilient, Lethal, and Ready to rapidly deploy to every clime and place in defense of our great nation. To achieve excellence in readiness, we must be a cohesive unit that upholds standards – both on and off duty. We enthusiastically confront and eliminate anything that detracts from our mission, degrades our character, or contrasts with our Core Values. The Marines we support depend on our efforts.

1. *Vikings support their teammates.*
2. *Vikings treat others with dignity and respect.*

By adhering to these two maxims, the Vikings will be an effective and professional warfighting unit that is resilient, lethal, and ready to answer the call.

Prohibited Activities and Conduct (PAC)

MCO 5354.1G explains the importance of treating others with dignity, care, and concern. All Vikings, especially those in positions of authority and leadership, will adhere to the PAC order. The Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF): bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, hazing, and discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, or sexual orientation degrades our readiness, unit cohesion (resilience), and combat effectiveness (lethality). Vikings actively promote a culture free from PAC, from the Commander to the small unit leaders.

Sexual Harassment: A safe environment – both on and off duty – should be an assumption that all Vikings enjoy. As your Commander, I am committed to fostering a culture which ensures every Marine, Sailor and civilian is treated fairly, and with dignity and respect. We do not and **will not tolerate harassment**, in any form. Sexual harassment is defined as unsolicited and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment includes:

- Unwelcomed sexual advances (verbal, written or physical).
- Requests or demands for sexual favors.
- Verbal abuse or jokes that are sexually oriented.

Vikings, we are a professional warfighting organization that does not stoop to the demeaning level of sexual harassment as it is extremely immature, it makes others uncomfortable, and it detracts from our work and social life. I expect you to stop it if you see others conducting themselves in that manner, and know that we will support you, investigate the instance, and prosecute the offender if you experience harassment. Treat others with dignity and respect – that is supporting your teammates, and allowing the Vikings to focus on the mission.

Hazing: Every Viking earned their Eagle, Globe, and Anchor either at Recruit Training or Officer Candidate School. No other rites-of-passage are required to become a Marine, Sailor, or Viking. As leaders, earn your respect from your junior Marines by treating them fairly, respectfully, and with genuine care for their well-being. If you feel the need to haze others in order to initiate, teach, or build cohesion, you are a poor leader. There is no place for hazing in the Vikings.

Hazing is any conduct whereby a Service member or DOD employee knowingly, recklessly, or intentionally and without proper authority causes a service member or members, regardless of Service or rank, to suffer physically or psychologically or be exposed to any activity which is cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning, harmful, or creates a risk of physical or psychological injury. Hazing need not involve physical contact among or between military members; it can be verbal or psychological in nature and may occur in person or through other forms of communication, including online and through social media. Hazing is prohibited and will not be tolerated.

No Marine or Sailor may engage in hazing or consent to acts of hazing being committed upon them. No one in a supervisory position may, by act, word, or omission, condone or ignore hazing if they know, or reasonably should have known that hazing may occur. A victim’s consent to hazing is not a defense for hazing. Any member of this command that witnesses any form of hazing is obligated to report the activity. This includes anyone who feels they have been hazed. Any Marine or Sailor who is “ordered” to undergo any form of hazing has the right to refuse the order as it is unlawful. Hazing does not build unit cohesion, it shatters it. We must prevent, stop, and report any form of hazing to ensure it does not degrade our focus on readiness, resilience, and lethality to accomplish the mission.

Equal Opportunity: Having a squadron of unique individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives makes the Vikings stronger, not weaker. Our diversity provides different points of view on methods to accomplish our mission and take care of our people. In Marine Corps’ terms, it speeds up our OODA loop and makes us more flexible and adaptable. We will embrace diversity and foster a community where everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of their race, religion, sex, age, national origin or sexual orientation. Discrimination is counterproductive to our mission, divides our unit, and undermines trust. Equal opportunity is every Viking’s responsibility and I charge each of you with taking immediate and appropriate action when any form of discrimination is witnessed. The Informal Resolution System (IRS) should be used as an immediate response to resolve complaints at the lowest level. The Squadron Equal Opportunity Coordinator (EOC) is qualified and trained to assist in any issues you may have - do not hesitate to use them. If more attention is necessary, come talk to the command deck - and I encourage anyone to request mast if you feel the issue has not been resolved or given the appropriate attention it deserves. Vikings will not allow discrimination to permeate and harm our culture.

Social Media: Social media is a dominant part of everyday life that many of you have grown up with. Used correctly and with good judgement, social media can provide a means to communicate, promote the Vikings and their accomplishments, and interact with people outside the squadron. Social media is also dangerous and can be used as an avenue for bullying, harassment, hazing, OPSEC violations, or illegal activity. Be smart with your actions on social media. Recognize that anything you do on social media can be stored forever, and can come back to hurt you. If what you post on social media goes against the Vikings, the Marine Corps, our Country, or is in violation of the PAC order, it is punishable by the UCMJ. More importantly, it undermines our resilience as a cohesive unit and professional warfighting squadron.

Substance Abuse

Drugs and alcohol are frequently used improperly – such as a celebration that goes too far or as a coping mechanism in times of trouble or stress. Not only is substance abuse detrimental to your physical and mental well-being, but it is also an ineffective long-term solution. If you suffer from alcohol abuse or addiction, there are many avenues to get the help you need and get you back in the fight. Seeking help is NOT a sign of weakness, it is courageous. Vikings support teammates needing help.

Alcohol is often a contributing factor for sexual harassment and abuse, domestic violence, child neglect, and other serious offenses. Use alcohol in moderation and have a plan *before* you take your first drink.

MCO 5300.17A provides guidance on the Substance Abuse Program which includes methods and policies for prevention, deterrence, identification, early intervention, counseling services, and aftercare. The Vikings will use proactive measures such as the Force Preservation Council (FPC), Unit Marine Awareness Prevention Integrated Training (UMAPIT), and small unit leadership, as well as deterrent methods through the Substance Abuse Control Officer (SACO) via the urinalysis program to eradicate substance abuse in the unit. Illegal drugs and alcohol abuse cripples our ability to effectively train, fight, and accomplish the mission. Viking leaders, we must do our part to prevent, treat, discipline, and remove substance abuse from our ranks.

Safety

Fighter aviation is inherently demanding, unforgiving, and hazardous. We cannot add to these challenges with self-induced errors, unmitigated risk, or violations of our standards. Safety is not to be thought of as a “priority” - it is a value - integrated into everything we do as a byproduct of our discipline, planning, risk mitigation, and most importantly, effective leadership.

Standards: Vikings have the discipline and motivation to complete every task in accordance with published standards (NAMP, CNAF, JTD, FSD, SOP, LCP, etc.) regardless of the pressure or temptation to do otherwise. Leaders ensure the right people are assigned to the task and that they have the ample time, equipment, and *supervision* to complete the task correctly. Everyone is empowered to halt an evolution if it appears unsafe. If a Viking feels uncomfortable with using their chain of command to address an issue, use the ANYMOUSE to report unsafe or unhealthy working conditions. All personnel (military and civilian) are required to actively engage in the Marine Corps Safety Management System (MCSMS).

Risk: We cannot eliminate all risk in an aviation enterprise. Vikings make risk-informed decisions daily, including accepting no unnecessary risk and managing risk at the appropriate level. Consider the risk and reward associated with any action before doing it, both on and off duty. If likelihood of a positive outcome isn’t worth the risk associated, we will reassess, implement additional control measures, or cancel the evolution. In training, nothing is worth losing a Marine or Sailor, harming an individual, or damaging equipment. If there is any doubt, there is no doubt. Don’t take the chance—even if it worked out before.

Support your Teammates: Our people are the most important asset in the squadron. Take care of your Viking brothers and sisters. Help each other to make the right decisions, especially off-duty when peer-pressure can lead to regrettable choices. Have the courage to do the right thing when no one is looking, and the strength to call someone out or inform leadership if something doesn’t look right. Protect our people so we can get after the mission!

Suicide Prevention

Mental fitness is more important than anything we do on the flight line or airborne. Struggling is natural and human. Struggling in silence, however, may lead to depression, mental health issues, or thoughts of self-harm. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of maturity, strength, and resilience. “Pushing through” a difficult situation only works for a short time – we will get you the help you need to cope with any challenge that life may throw your way. There are tremendous support resources across the Marine Corps, DoD, and civilian network to help prevent suicide-but the most important resource we can provide as Vikings is an environment where all are supported, valued, and treated with dignity and respect. You never know what someone is going through. Help your teammates understand their importance to the team. Every Viking is needed for us to achieve the mission, support the Marines on the ground, and ultimately *share in our success*. People that contemplate suicide often feel they have nothing to live for or are not valued by anyone. Vikings should take comfort in the fact that each one of you is critical to our squadron. You are the 1% that everyone outside the front gate (and even some inside it) are jealous of—be proud to serve in the finest squadron in the Marine Corps!

Sexual Assault and Prevention Response (SAPR)

Sexual Assault is a criminal act and completely violates our ethos and Core Values.

Sexual assault is defined as intentional sexual contact, characterized by the use of force, physical threat of force, or abuse of authority; or when the victim does not or cannot consent. “Consent” does not mean the failure by the victim to offer physical resistance. Consent is not given when a person uses force, threat of force, coercion or when the victim is asleep, unconscious or incompetent. No means No! We have an effective and open SAPR program to prevent and eliminate sexual assault and to ensure our Marines and Sailors are empowered to report sexual assault. Vikings, if you are sexually assaulted, I will take appropriate action according to the UCMJ and the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) - and the Viking team will ensure the victim has all the time, resources, and support needed. All victims are empowered to report SAs:

- 1) Restricted reporting allows the victim to receive medical, informational, advocacy, and emotional/psychological counseling support services without notification of law enforcement or the command. A restricted report can be made to a Victim Advocate (VA), Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), Healthcare Provider (HCP), DoD Safe Helpline 24/7 (877-995-5247), or MCAS Yuma’s Sexual Assault 24/7 Support Line (928-941-3601). In a restricted report, the victim’s identity remains confidential, and it is not forwarded to law enforcement or command authorities.
- 2) Unrestricted reporting allows a victim to receive medical, informational, advocacy, and emotional/psychological counseling support services and an official investigation ensues. An unrestricted report can be made to law enforcement authorities or the command, as well as to a SARC, SAPR VA, HCP, Chaplain, DoD Safe Helpline, and the Sexual Assault Help Line. Although the victim’s identity will not remain confidential, care will be given to ensure that it is released only to those with an actual need-to-know.
- 3) Expanded Eligibility to File Restricted Reports allows a victim to file a Restricted Report by DoDI 6495.02, volume 1 even if they (a) disclosed the sexual assault to their chain of command, or (b) there is an ongoing MCIO investigation by a 3rd party and not due to the victim’s disclosure, or (c) the MCIO investigation has been closed.

Sexual assault can be physically, mentally, and emotionally traumatizing. We will treat victims with empathy, dignity, sensitivity, and respect, providing all appropriate medical, emotional, and psychological support available. The victim’s name will remain confidential according to the reporting type and only released to those with a need-to-know. Victims who report must feel confident that their personal safety will be protected and that they will not be re-victimized by the organization. VMFA-225 will do everything possible to help the victim cope, recuperate, and ultimately thrive as a valued member of the Vikings.

Fraternization

The Vikings are made up of Marines and Sailors of many ranks and levels of authority. This should not dissuade us from interacting in a social manner, both on and off duty. Breaking bread, sharing a toast, or talking about our hobbies over a cup of coffee are encouraged and necessary to foster strong relationships. However, we should not blur the lines between leader and subordinate. Fraternization is a personal relationship between dissimilar rank that is unduly familiar and does not respect differences in grade or rank.

Examples of such personal relationships include intimate/sexual relations, favoritism, dating, or close personal friendships. These relationships detract from good order and discipline and bring discredit to the Marine Corps. Perception is often reality in fraternization cases, so if it appears as though fraternization occurred, then it likely has - and the relationship must be reevaluated, as fraternization is punishable under the UCMJ. Fraternization shows undue favoritism, bias, and hurts the trust and resilience built in our squadron. It undermines the sacred relationship between leader and follower, or mentor and pupil, and cannot exist in a strong unit. If you suspect an instance of fraternization, then inform your chain of command directly, or file a ANYMOUSE so that the Commander is aware and can take appropriate action.

Vikings, thank you for reviewing and adhering to these policies and standards. They play an important role in our readiness, morale, culture, resilience, and ultimately - combat lethality and mission accomplishment.

Victory or Valhalla,

J.M. Braudt

James M. Braudt
Lieutenant Colonel
Commanding Officer

