

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ASSOCIATIONS

While the Air Force cannot endorse or officially sanction any non-Federal entity or organization under the Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)(DoD 5500.7-R), commanders can provide other types of logistical support to non-Federal entities, to include activities conducted by Professional Military Associations (PMAs).

PMAs are non-profit, non-commercial organizations that exist to support, promote and develop the United States Armed Forces and military professionals.

PMAs include such organizations as the Air Force Association, Air Force Sergeants Association, The Non-Commissioned Officers Association, The Reserve Officer's Association, and other organizations that focus on the military services and personnel.

The following information highlights the support that can be provided to PMAs. This fact sheet is not inclusive in describing the support that can be provided. Commanders and supervisors should make decisions on requests for support on a case-by-case basis, with the assistance of the supporting legal office.

Dissemination of Information on PMAs

- Commanders can publish informational items concerning PMAs, including notices about activities and membership drives. Commanders cannot solicit, urge or pressure subordinates to join or make donations to particular PMAs. Note also that similar groups merit similar treatment -- a commander cannot selectively support certain PMAs over others when similar support is requested.
- Pursuant to DoD/GC guidance, when commanders refer to membership/fundraising activities, they need to remain neutral and detached, avoiding the use of certain words (including "endorse," "support," "encourage," "recommend," and "urge"). The point of valid communications is to convey basic factual information -- not to encourage support or to endorse the PMA.
- Commanders can issue official letters thanking PMAs for support of their organization or community. These letters may be disseminated through official channels.
- In accordance with Air Force E-mail policy (AFI 33-119, *Air Force Messaging*), commanders may authorize, on a limited basis, the use of Air Force E-mail in support of an event sponsored by PMA, except for fundraising and membership drives, when the commander determines the notice meets the following criteria:

(1) Serves a legitimate public interest; (2) Does not interfere with the performance of official duties and would not detract from readiness; (3) Conforms to theater combatant commander and MAJCOM policies; (4) Is of reasonable duration and frequency, (5) Whenever possible, is made during personal time; (6) Does not overburden the communications system with large broadcasts or group mailings; (7) Does not reflect adversely on the DOD or the Air Force (such as constitutes unofficial advertising, soliciting or selling, violations of statute or regulation, inappropriately handled classified information or other uses that are incompatible with public service); and (8) Does not create a significant additional cost to the DOD or to the Air Force.

- Commanders can permit PMAs to set out membership applications, leaflets or flyers in a common area of the base, as long as similar groups are given the same privilege.
- Commanders can encourage members to participate in PMAs, in general (without focusing on any particular PMA).
- When informing personnel about PMA membership drives, the commander can include the name of an Air Force member who has *volunteered* to be a point of contact for new members. The commander may not, however, appoint a member to do this, nor may the member act as a PMA representative in an official capacity.

Support for PMA Activities

- Commanders can appoint an official liaison to act as a representative to the local PMA chapter. The liaison performs official duties by representing AF interests to the PMA and transferring information back to Air Force officials. The liaison cannot engage in the management of the PMA or actively participate in PMA activities.
- Commanders can support PMA breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners by publicizing these events and providing speakers or panel members. They may also authorize AF members and employees to take excused absences for “reasonable periods of time” to voluntarily attend these types of activities.
- Commanders may permit members and employees to use government equipment and administrative support to prepare papers to be presented at a PMA event (i.e., conferences, seminars, or similar events) if: (1) The paper is related to the employee’s official duties, (2) The AF can derive some benefit from such participation, and (3) The support does not interfere with official duties.
- Commanders can provide logistical support of PMA-sponsored events, such as conferences and seminars (except for fundraising and membership drives) if: (1) The support does not interfere with official duties; (2) Legitimate AF interests are served; (3) It is appropriate to associate the AF with the event; (4) The event is of interest to the AF; (5) The AF is able and willing to provide the same support to similar events;

(6) The support is not prohibited by other statutes; and (7) No admission fee (beyond covering reasonable expenses) is charged.

- Commanders can provide limited logistical support for PMA-sponsored charitable fundraisers when items (1) through (6), above, are met and the fundraiser will take place away from the Federal workplace.
- Commanders can lead by example by joining one or several PMAs in their personal capacity.

Support to the Annual Conferences of Certain PMEs

- DOD Instruction 5410.19, *Public Affairs Community Relations Policy Implementation*, Enclosure 10, sets out special rules on providing assistance to certain designated PMAs for their annual conferences
- Attachment 1 to Enclosure 10 lists the PMAs that DOD has designated to be eligible for special logistical and administrative support
- All special (i.e., extraordinary) support provided under this provision must be: approved in advance by the Secretary of the Air Force (para. E10.3.2.), provided at no additional cost to the government, and incorporated into legitimate and scheduled training missions

Should PMAs be considered a “Prohibited Source” Under the JER?

- The JER imposes special rules on entities that meet the definition of a “prohibited source,” primarily in the section on permissible gifts (5 CFR 2635, Subpart B)
- A “prohibited source” includes any person or entity that:
 - Seeks official action by the agency;
 - Does or seeks business with the agency;
 - Conducts activities regulated by the agency;
 - Has interests that may be substantially affected by the agency; or
 - Has a majority of members that fall into one of the above categories
- Most PMAs have membership bases that do not trigger this definition. Thus, unless a gift is offered because of the employee’s official position, the JER gift restrictions should not ordinarily apply to gifts from PMAs.