



OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER
CIVIL AIR PATROL
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY
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Wing and Region Commanders

We've all heard the stories concerning Civil Air Patrol (CAP) officers on military installations "demanding" that they receive the rendering of a military salute from junior ranking officers and enlisted military members. We make jokes concerning the intelligence or – lack of intelligence – of the offending member and we express how this type of behavior is an embarrassment to all – both CAP members and military members. We would like to believe that this is a rare occurrence. So why is there anecdotal evidence that these "encounters" continue? Are these occurrences caused by a lack of knowledge or are they deliberate acts designed to assuage personal "issues/motivations" of the offending member?

A recent occurrence is discussed in the 17 January 2011 issue of Air Force magazine Online Forums section - between an enlisted military member and a CAP senior member officer. To paraphrase the CAP officer said, "Do you see this oak leaf? I am a major with the Air Force Auxiliary. You need to salute me..." The Military member did not render a salute. Our concern is not the response of the military member, however. He was aware of CAP's relationship to the Air Force and declined to render the salute – which is a courtesy and is not a regulatory requirement. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 10-2701 Organization and Function of the Civil Air Patrol, "**CAP uses a military style grade structure for both its Senior Members and Cadet Members. CAP grades for both cadet and senior members have no military standing, carry no authority over members of the Armed Forces, nor warrant the customs and courtesies afforded military members.**" This should be common knowledge to all CAP members. However, as members of the Civil Air Patrol, we are deeply concerned about the behavior of one of our officers.

CAP is a federally chartered non-profit organization of civilian volunteers. Yes, we are the Air Force's Auxiliary but as civilian volunteers we are not members of the military. CAP Regulation 35-10, Ethics Policy states – "**Our nation expects and deserves a high standard of professional conduct. The American public entrusts CAP with their safety and welfare and with the character development of their children. Our official core values are: Integrity, Volunteerism, Excellence and Respect. These values represent a cultural commitment within CAP to practice basic honesty, to give of one's self for the betterment of humanity, to deliver top quality services, and to treat others fairly.**"

CAP promotes teamwork and high standards of personal conduct by granting cadets and senior members the privilege of wearing an Air Force-style uniform. It bears repeating – the privilege. The uniform and the related traditions of rendering military customs and courtesies distinguish our cadets from ordinary youth and identify our members with the United States Air Force. Our cadets are taught not only the proper wear of the uniform but also the proper rendering of the salute to our members, and as a courtesy, to military members in uniform. Have we "dropped" the ball with our senior members?

This brings us back to the actions of the CAP major who requested a salute from a military member. The rank of major implies that this individual is not “new” to the CAP program. Yes, you can receive a special or professional appointment to the grade of CAP major based on experience or unique skills, but normally when you see an individual in CAP wearing oak leaf clusters that implies this person has been “around” a while and should be very familiar with the CAP rank structure and the military rank structure. So was the “request” for a salute by the CAP member from a military member an honest mistake based on a lack of knowledge or a deliberate act of a personal nature? Only the individual involved can provide the answer to this question.

We can’t know the heart of the individual involved in this particular situation, nor can we totally control and insure individual compliance with governing directives that address professional and ethical behavior of our members and the customs and courtesies of the military hand salute. However, we can insure that this mistake is not repeated because of a lack of knowledge. CAP members must behave honestly and ethically at all times and with all people. **“Individuals will not take unfair advantage of anyone through manipulation, intimidation, concealment, abuse of privileged information, misrepresentation of material facts or any other unfair practice.”** (CAP’s Ethical Standards).

This article is not intended to be overly critical or harsh but to convey very clearly that the behavior of this senior member is not acceptable. The challenge is for all of us, cadets and senior members, to continue to exhibit the highest standards of professional and personal conduct at all times. CAP has a distinguished history of excellence. By nature, the public has a short memory. We cannot allow our hard-earned professional image to be tainted by the conduct of a few members behaving badly. Incorrect behavior must be addressed at all times by every member – with proper respect. We are the Civil Air Patrol! Let’s conduct ourselves accordingly!

Sincerely



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