



From the Edwards AFB Office of the Staff Judge Advocate

In the military, where the stakes are often high and the demands on personnel are rigorous, the importance of obeying the law cannot be overstated. Our military operates within a structured framework of rules and regulations, both national and international, to ensure discipline, to maintain order, and uphold the values that define who we are as an armed force.

One of the primary reasons for the emphasis on obeying the law is the preservation of discipline. Military operations demand precision, coordination, and swift decision-making. Obeying laws and regulations provide a set of guidelines that fosters a disciplined environment. Airmen who adhere to the established rules contribute to the overall effectiveness of the military, enabling us to function as a cohesive and powerful force, an attribute that helps set our armed forces apart from our adversaries.

Additionally, obeying the law in the military is crucial for maintaining order within our ranks. We rely on the chain of command and a hierarchical structure to ensure efficient communication and execution of orders. Laws and regulations serve as the foundation for this structure, defining the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each member. When personnel, whether active duty, reservist, civilian, or contractor, obey these laws, it creates a culture of respect and cooperation, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the armed forces.

Moreover, adherence to the law in the military is essential to upholding the values and principles that guide its operations. The military operates not only under national laws, but we often operation in accordance with international treaties and conventions. Respecting these legal frameworks ensures that military actions align with ethical standards and human rights principles. By obeying the law, the military not only protects its own integrity, but also upholds the broader values of justice and morality that the world looks up to America to uphold as the shining example atop the hill.

In summary, the importance of adhering to the rule of law within the military environment cannot be overstated. It is a cornerstone of good order, discipline and ethical conduct within the armed forces. By following laws and regulations, personnel contribute to the overall effectiveness and integrity of the institution, ensuring that our nation's armed forces operate within the bounds of legality and upholds the principles that define its honorable service to the nation.

NONJUDICIAL PUNISHMENT (NJP)

Nonjudicial punishment (also referred to as an Article 15, in reference to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) which authorizes the action) is a tool that provides commanders with an essential and swift means of maintaining good order and discipline. A member must accept NJP as a forum for allegations of misconduct or demand trial by court-martial once NJP is offered by a commander. NJP is designed to

promote behavioral changes in service members without the stigma that comes with a criminal conviction at trial. NJP lies between a Letter of Reprimand and a court-martial on the spectrum of the continuum of discipline, whose ultimate goal is to promote rehabilitation in service members to encourage them to adhere to standards.

The following NJPs were completed at Edwards AFB during the fourth quarter of 2023:

A Senior Airman (E-4) assigned to Air Force Security Forces Center (AFSFC) Detachment 2 failed to report confinee misconduct at the Naval Consolidated Brig, Miramar, lied to investigators about their knowledge of such misconduct, entered restricted confinee quarters without justification, and spoke with confinees about the investigation; in violations of Article 92, UCMJ (Dereliction of Duty), Article 107, UCMJ (False Official Statement), and Article 131b, UCMJ (Obstruction of Justice). The member received a reduction to the grade of Airman First Class (E-3), forfeiture of \$1,273.00 pay per month for one month, suspended, and a reprimand.

An Airman (E-2) assigned to 412 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron (412 AMXS) was absent without leave and derelict in the performance of their duties when they failed to go to their place of duty and when they, being under 21 years old, failed to refrain from consuming alcohol and leaving open containers of alcohol in their dormitory room, in violation of Article 86, UCMJ (Failure to Go) and Article 92, UCMJ (Dereliction of Duty). The member received a reduction to the grade of Airman Basic (E-1), forfeiture of \$958.00 pay per month for two months, suspended, and a reprimand.

A Senior Airman (E-4) assigned to 412 AMXS failed to go to their appointed place of duty on ten different occasions in violation of Article 86, UCMJ (Failure to Go). The member received 20 days extra duty and a reprimand.

A Staff Sergeant (E-5) assigned to 412 Maintenance Squadron (412 MXS) drove while under the influence of alcohol and attempted to flee an accident, in violation of Article 111, UCMJ (Leaving the Scene of an Accident), and Article 113, UCMJ (Driving Under the Influence). The member received a reduction to the grade of Senior Airman (E-4) and a reprimand.

ADMINISTRATIVE DISCHARGES

Involuntarily discharging a service member from the United States Air Force may be an appropriate action for a commander or civilian director to take when a member has demonstrated an inability to meet Air Force standards. Common bases for discharge include, but are not limited to: drug abuse, sexual assault, a civilian court conviction, or a series of minor misconduct. Discharges can result in one of three service characterizations: honorable, under honorable conditions (general), and under other than honorable conditions.

The following discharge action was completed during the fourth quarter of 2023:

An Airman Basic (E-1) assigned to 412 AMXS was involuntarily discharged for minor disciplinary infractions. The member received a **general** service characterization.

FEDERAL MAGISTRATE COURT

The federal magistrate court program is run in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office. Edwards Security Forces personnel are empowered to issue citations for traffic violations and criminal activities that occur on federal land. Those actions are then prosecuted in Federal Magistrate Court by judge advocates with the 412 Test Wing Office of the Staff Judge Advocate appointed as Special Assistant United States Attorneys. This tool is primarily useful to ensure enforcement of standards for civilians, including military dependents, DoD employees, contractor employees, and any other civilian present on Edwards AFB or Plant 42 who commits traffic violations or crimes on our federal reservations. By contrast, violations of traffic laws and the criminal code by service members are addressed under the UCMJ.

The following magistrate court citations were closed out during the fourth quarter of 2023:

2 **civilians** were cited for speeding in a school zone. They received an average fine of \$380.00.

33 **civilians** were cited for speeding. They received an average fine of \$250.00.

2 **civilians** were cited for failing to stop at a stop sign. They received an average fine of \$355.00.

2 **civilians** were cited for not having their drivers' licenses in possession. They received an average fine of \$242.50.

2 **civilians** were cited for not having insurance. They received an average fine of \$305.00.

4 **civilians** were cited for not having proper registrations. They received an average fine of \$305.00.

A **civilian** was cited for cellphone use while driving. They were fined \$238.00.

A **civilian** was cited for driving on a suspended license. They were fined \$210.00.

A **civilian** was cited for possession of a controlled substance. They received an average fine of \$430.00.

OTHER CONSEQUENCES FOR DRIVING OFFENSES

California law still applies on Edwards base housing; Kern County sheriff can and will enforce state law. Security Forces may suspend those who do not meet standards from driving on base, such as those who speed or commit other traffic infractions. Aggravated violations of standards, such as repeated offenses or speeding in a school zone, may result in a complete base driving ban by the Installation Commander.

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