



SECRETARY OF WAR
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

SEP 30 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEPARTMENT OF WAR AGENCY AND DOW FIELD ACTIVITY
DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Grooming Standards for Facial Hair Implementation

This memorandum provides implementing guidance pursuant to the August 20, 2025, directive, "Grooming Standards for Facial Hair," which established uniform grooming standards across the Force.

In an era of increasingly complex operational demands — including high-tempo deployments, multi-domain warfare, and expanded emergency response roles — strict grooming compliance ensures personnel can safely and effectively employ protective equipment. This is critical not only for defense against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats, but also for firefighting, disaster relief, and other hazardous mission sets where respiratory protection may be required, often on short notice. These standards are essential to maintaining equipment compatibility, operational readiness, and deployable force posture.

Accession Standards

- All applicants, including reentry candidates, must meet grooming standards prior to entry.
- Applicants unable to comply will be deferred from accession until standards are met.

In-Service Compliance

- All personnel must maintain a clean-shaven face.
 - Sideburns will be above the ear opening.
 - Beards, goatees, and other facial hair are prohibited unless specifically authorized.
 - Mustaches are authorized but will be neatly trimmed; not to extend past the mouth corners or into a respirator seal zone.
- Special Operations Forces units may request modified standards via validated mission-essential requirements. However, personnel will be clean-shaven when deployed to environments with a high threat of CBRN attack.



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Medical and Religious Accommodations

- Medical Accommodations
 - The Department will revert to pre-2020 standards; only temporary profiles for medical conditions such as pseudofolliculitis barbae will be considered.
 - All requests require individualized review for operational impact.
 - Approved profiles will be limited to 12 months and must include a treatment plan.
 - Permanent conditions will result in evaluation for administrative separation.
- Religious Accommodations
 - The Department will revert to pre-2010 standards; facial hair waivers are generally not authorized.
 - Individualized review required per Department of War Instruction 1300.17, “Religious Liberty in the Military Services,” of September 1, 2020.
 - Documentation demonstrating the sincerity of the religious or sincerely held belief will be a central factor in evaluating accommodation requests and must be sufficient to support a good faith determination by the approving authority.
 - Approvals will be limited to non-deployable roles with low risk of chemical attack or firefighting requirements.

Training and Certification

- All personnel will complete annual training to validate mask fit and reinforce grooming compliance. Masks may be a gas mask or firefighting equipment.
- Units will integrate training into annual training cycles and report completion rates.

Deployment and Personnel Tracking

- Noncompliant personnel — due to refusal, exemption denial, or failed tests — will be flagged as non-deployable in the appropriate Military Service personnel system.
- Repeated noncompliance may result in administrative separation.

Implementation Timeline

- The Secretaries of the Military Departments will provide an implementation plan to the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (USW(P&R)) within 60 days. The implementation plan will include:
 - An assessment of the ability to implement training and certification requirements, to include any barriers or proposed exemptions for certain Active Component, Reserve Component, and National Guard units.
- The USW(P&R) has the authority to establish policy, assign responsibilities, provide procedures, and grant exceptions, as necessary, to implement this guidance.
- The Secretaries of the Military Departments will publish implementing directives no later than 30 days following the submission of their implementation plans, incorporating any exceptions to policy granted by the USW(P&R).

Uniform grooming standards are not about appearance — they are about survivability, interoperability, and mission execution. Consistent enforcement ensures personnel can operate protective equipment, meet deployment requirements, and support combat and emergency operations. These guidelines underscore the Department's commitment to readiness and force protection.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PBW' followed by a stylized flourish.