

# SALUTING BY ACTIVE DUTY AND VETERAN MARINES

UNCLASSIFIED//

ALMAR 052/08

MSGID/GENADMIN/CMC WASHINGTON DC CMC//

SUBJECT: CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS//

REF/A/DESC:DOC/CMC WASHINGTON DC/05MAY2003//

AMPN/REF A IS MCO P5060.20, MARINE CORPS DRILL AND CEREMONIES  
MANUAL.//

GENTEXT/REMARKS/

1. THIS ALMAR REINFORCES THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS AND AMPLIFIES THE PROVISIONS OF THE REFERENCE FOR RENDERING SALUTES AND HONORS TO THE NATIONAL FLAG; THE PROPER CONDUCT OF THE MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY CAKE CUTTING CEREMONY; AND THE PLAYING OF THE MARINES' HYMN.

2. CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS PROVIDE A LINK TO THE PAST; THEY BOND MARINES WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE WITH MARINES WHO WILL CARRY THE TORCH THROUGH THE FUTURE. ANY LOSS OF TRADITION OR IMPROPER OBSERVATION OF CUSTOM BLURS OUR IDENTITY AND WEAKENS US AS AN INSTITUTION. THROUGH THE FAITHFUL ADHERENCE BY COMMANDERS AND EACH INDIVIDUAL MARINE, WE PRESERVE OUR IDENTITY AND REPUTATION AS A UNIQUE AND ELITE FIGHTING ORGANIZATION.

3. SALUTING. A RECENT CHANGE TO THE LAW HAS AUTHORIZED ACTIVE DUTY AND RETIRED SERVICE MEMBERS TO SALUTE THE NATIONAL COLORS, WHETHER COVERED OR UNCOVERED, INDOORS OR OUT. BY CUSTOM AND TRADITION, MARINES DO NOT RENDER THE HAND SALUTE WHEN OUT OF UNIFORM OR WHEN UNCOVERED. LET THERE BE NO CONFUSION; THAT HAS NOT CHANGED. DURING THE PLAYING OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM, OR THE RAISING, LOWERING, OR PASSING OF THE NATIONAL FLAG, MARINES WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW NAVAL TRADITIONS AND THE POLICY / PROCEDURES CONTAINED IN REFERENCE (A). SPECIFICALLY, MARINES NOT IN UNIFORM WILL FACE THE FLAG, STAND AT ATTENTION, AND PLACE THE RIGHT HAND OVER THE HEART. IF COVERED, MARINES NOT IN UNIFORM WILL REMOVE THEIR HEADGEAR WITH THE RIGHT HAND AND PLACE THEIR RIGHT HAND OVER THEIR HEART. WHEN THE FLAG IS NOT PRESENT, MARINES WILL ACT IN THE SAME MANNER WHILE



FACING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE MUSIC. IN CASES SUCH AS INDOOR CEREMONIES, WHEN MARINES ARE IN UNIFORM AND UNCOVERED, THEY WILL FACE THE FLAG, OR THE DIRECTION OF THE MUSIC WHEN THE FLAG IS NOT PRESENT, AND STAND AT ATTENTION.

4. THE MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY CAKE CUTTING CEREMONY. THE MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY CAKE CUTTING CEREMONY IS ONE OF OUR TIME-HONORED TRADITIONS IN GARRISON, IN THE FIELD, AND IN COMBAT. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE CEREMONY IS THE TRADITIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE OLDEST AND YOUNGEST MARINES PRESENT. TO CLARIFY THE LANGUAGE IN REFERENCE (A), THE COMMANDER CUTS THE CAKE AND HANDS THE FIRST PIECE TO THE GUEST OF HONOR. THEN THE COMMANDER HANDS THE SECOND PIECE OF CAKE TO THE OLDEST MARINE PRESENT AS A SIGN OF HONOR AND RESPECT TO EXPERIENCE AND SENIORITY. AFTER TAKING A BITE, THE OLDEST MARINE PASSES THE SECOND PIECE OF CAKE, AND A CLEAN FORK, DIRECTLY TO THE YOUNGEST MARINE PRESENT; THIS ACTION SYMBOLIZES THE PASSING OF WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE, AS WELL AS TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN THOSE WHO WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY ON OUR MARINE CORPS TRADITIONS.

5. PLAYING OF THE MARINES' HYMN. THE MARINES' HYMN IS THE OFFICIAL HYMN OF THE MARINE CORPS. IT IS THE SONG OF PRAISE TO OUR INSTITUTION AND THE LYRICS ARE A DIRECT TRIBUTE TO OUR WARFIGHTING CULTURE. BY CUSTOM AND TRADITION, THE MARINES' HYMN IS THE LAST SONG PLAYED AT CEREMONIES AND GATHERINGS OF MARINES. ALTHOUGH THE REFERENCE ALLOWS FOR THE PLAYING OF SPECIAL MUSIC REQUESTS BEFORE THE MARINES' HYMN, SUCH AS "ANCHOR'S AWEIGH," THIS IS BY EXCEPTION AND AT THE DISCRETION OF THE LOCAL COMMANDER.

6. ONE OF OUR HALLMARKS AS MARINES IS THAT WE ARE AS GOOD ON PARADE AS WE ARE IN THE ATTACK. OUR SHARP APPEARANCE - IN AND OUT OF UNIFORM - AND OUR SUCCESS IN BATTLE ARE TWO IMPORTANT PARTS OF OUR IDENTITY. WE TAKE PRIDE IN OUR TRADITIONS, AND THEIR UNIFORM APPLICATION, WHEREVER MARINES ARE ASSIGNED.

SEMPER FIDELIS,

JAMES T. CONWAY,

GENERAL, U.S. MARINE CORPS, COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS.