Department of Defense

Visual Information Style Guide

January 28, 2020
(Supersedes version of July 16, 2018)
OATSD(PA)

SUBJECT: DoD Visual Information Style Guide

References: (a) Department of Defense Instruction 5040.02 (Change 2), Visual Information (VI), April 23, 2018
(b) The Associated Press Stylebook, Current Edition
(c) Department of Defense Manual 5200.01, Volume 4, Controlled Unclassified Information
(d) Freedom of Information Act

APPLICABILITY

The DoD Visual Information Style Guide (VISG) applies to:

(1) The Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities covered within the parameters of DoD Instruction 5040.02 (Reference (a)).

(2) All DoD military, civilian and contract personnel designated to create VI products as part of their official duties. This includes, but is not limited to, Public Affairs, Combat Camera and Information Operations functions throughout the Department of Defense, including reserve and National Guard components (in either Title 10 or Title 32 status). The VISG also applies to all U.S. Coast Guard VI products uploaded to DoD information systems, such as the Defense Visual Information Distribution System (DVIDS).

PURPOSE

VI products support multiple DoD and U.S. Government missions as strategic information resources and historic evidentiary records of the actions and activities of the Department. For this reason, VI products must comply with the attribution and metadata requirements established in Enclosures 5 through 8 of Reference (a) and the VISG. This edition of the VISG has been approved by the VI Editorial Board and contains the most current method of writing captions and recording metadata associated with VI products, and also applies to written products, including news articles and press releases.

The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook (Reference (b)) is the primary reference for writing effective captions. The VISG adheres to the tenets of spelling, grammar, punctuation and general style outlined by AP. This publication supplements AP and pertains to DoD-specific issues not addressed, such as military terms describing service members, equipment, places and entities. The VISG also provides instruction on providing metadata, submitting imagery for archiving, imagery ethics, and a host of other subjects.

DoD Instruction 5040.02, Visual Information:

DoD Manual 5200.01, Volume 4, Controlled Unclassified Information:


This interim edition of the DoD Visual Information Style Guide (VISG) incorporates several minor changes and clarifications to Visual Information written style and procedures since the edition of July 2018. There are no major changes to procedures, metadata, ethics standards or basic caption writing in this edition, however, changes to metadata and procedures are expected for the 2020 edition.

Changes to this Guide are made in close coordination between the Defense Media Activity, the Defense VI Steering Committee (DVISC) and the Visual Information Editorial Board (VIEB), comprising VI experts from all five branches of the armed forces.

The VI Style Guide is available for download at https://www.dimoc.mil/VI-Training/DoD-VI-Style-Guide/. It is cleared for public release and may be distributed without limit.

If you have a suggestion or input for future editions of this Guide, please submit your comments via our Customer Service form at http://www.dimoc.mil/Customer-Service/Contact-Us/.

Please see below for a summary of changes and additions to the VISG in this edition.

Chapter 1, Matters of style:
- Deletes abbreviations requirement in parentheses on first reference.
- Clarifies battalion landing team style.
- Adds U.S. Space Command to Functional commands.
- drone
- high speed vessel
- hometowns
- identification by placement
- Military unit names: Updates from smallest to largest, in accordance with written caption style on units.
- State names

Chapter 2, References:
- Table 4, adds unmanned aircraft
- Changes DIMOC to DMA

Chapter 3, Captioning Still and Motion Imagery:
- The ABCs
- The 5 Ws
- Constructing a caption
- Additional rules of construction
- Photographer’s credit
- Style Check: Sample captions

Chapter 4, Keywording Still and Motion Imagery:
- Standard format for keywords
- Guidelines for selecting keywords
- Sample Keywords

Chapter 5, Still and Motion Imagery Metadata:
- Visual Information Record Identification Number (VIRIN)
- Date Shot
- Operation/Exercise
- Headline (optional)
- Caption
- Keywords
- Command Shown
- Base/Location
- State/Province
- Country/Area

Chapter 6, Submitting Imagery:
- Changes DIMOC to DMA.
- Clarifies that FOUO, CUI and Classified DoD VI products will not be sent to DVIDS and shall be handled by the originating command in accordance with the DoD VI Records Schedule and DODD 8000.01, in coordination with the service or DoD records manager.

Chapter 7, Grammar Review:
- Sentence structure
- Punctuation
- Mechanics
- Capitalization

Chapter 8, DoD Visual Information Ethics:
- Photos
- Photo illustrations
- Prohibited alterations
- Examples of photo illustrations requiring disclosure

Chapter 9, Additional Resources:
- Updated to Webster’s New World College Dictionary, Fifth Edition.
Chapter 1
Matters of style

U.S. Sailors eat breakfast aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf (CG 72) in the Mediterranean Sea June 4, 2014.


Afghan cities See “Table 5, Afghan provinces” on page 25 for the proper spelling for several major cities in Afghanistan.

Air Force One Any U.S. Air Force aircraft carrying the president. The term is a call sign that applies only when the president is aboard the aircraft. The main aircraft serving in this capacity is the VC-25A.

Airmen, Airmen Capitalize when referring to members of the U.S. Air Force; not capitalized when referring to members of foreign air forces.

all hands/all hands Two words as a noun: The commanding officer called all hands to the meeting. Hyphenate as an adjective or a compound modifier: The Sailors attended the all-hands call.

alongside One word.

American flag, U.S. flag Note flag is lowercase.

amphibious assault ship Do not capitalize, even when referring to a specific ship. For example: U.S. Sailors and Marines man the rails of the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4).

Anzac Capitalize, but do not use all caps. Anzac stands for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps of World War I. Anzac Day is celebrated annually by both nations April 25; U.S. service members are often present at these celebrations.

aqueous film-forming foam AFFF is acceptable on second reference.

Arabian Gulf Primary style for the body of water also known as the Persian Gulf. Do not confuse with the nearby Arabian Sea. See Persian Gulf.

Arabic names Follow AP style for Arabic names.

assault amphibious vehicle The Marine Corps’ AAV7A1 tracked vehicle. Not amphibious assault vehicle. Do not confuse with amphibious assault ships.

assistant secretary Capitalize before a name as part of a title; use lowercase when the title appears after the name.

at sea Do not use “at sea” in place of the name of a body of water. If the specific location is undisclosed, say so, but reference a general body of water or U.S. fleet area of responsibility. See here.

back blast Two words.

Bambi bucket Do not use. See helicopter bucket.

battalion landing team In unit names, capitalize it, followed by the unit’s numeric designator and corresponding Marine Expeditionary Unit.

U.S. Marines with Battalion Landing Team 1/4, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, storm a beach Jan. 23, 2012, as part of an exercise in Thailand.

Blue Angels The Navy’s flight demonstration team. Simply refer to the group as the Blue Angels. The team currently flies the F/A-18 Hornet aircraft.

bounding overwatch Jargon. Do not hyphenate; use boundary overwatch.

breech/breach Breech refers to the part of an artillery piece where rounds are loaded. The verb breach means to penetrate an obstacle or defense; as a noun, breach is the hole in a defense.

caption credit See photographer’s credit.

casualty evacuation CASEVAC is acceptable on second reference.

cavalry Use lowercase unless it is part of a unit name. Do not confuse with Culvercy, which is a religious term.

capture When referring to a specific ship. For example: The team currently flies the F/A-18 Hornet aircraft.

change of command ceremony Do not hyphenate the compound adjective.

Civil Air Patrol The civilian volunteer auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, best known for search and rescue, disaster relief and cadet programs. Civil Air Patrol members work closely with the Air Force and they hold rank within the Civil Air Patrol, CAP is acceptable on second reference.

civilian titles Do not use courtesy titles such Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. unless requested by the named person. Other formal titles such as Dr., Sen. or Gov. should be used where applicable. Do not use such titles on second reference unless necessary to differentiate two people with the same last name.

close-in weapon system Do not capitalize. CIWS is acceptable on subsequent references.

Coast Guard Auxiliary The civilian volunteer auxiliary of the U.S. Coast Guard, best known for boating safety programs. Although auxiliaries work closely with the Coast Guard and they hold job titles within the Auxiliary, they are not Coast Guard members.

Coast Guard enlisted ranks Do not use ratings. See Coast Guard rank table on page 20.

Colombia/Columbia The South American country is spelled Colombia, and the adjective is Colombian. Columbia is the proper spelling for the university, the former space shuttle and several U.S. cities and private-sector organizations.

colors When referring to the flag of the United States, American flag or U.S. flag are the preferred styles. Do not use in reference to the flags of other nations. Acceptable when referring to unit flags and guidons. For example: The battalion colors were fired during a transfer of authority ceremony.

combat rubber raiding craft Do not use the commercial term “Zodiac boat.”

combined Per Joint Publication 1-02: A term identifying two or more forces or agencies of two or more allies operating together. See joint.

commandant A job title for the top four-star officer of the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Coast Guard; also used to describe the commanding personnel of academies and other military institutions. Only capitalize when used in the official job title before the person’s name.


U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy, left, the commandant of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, shakes hands with a recent graduate of the academy at Fort Bliss, Texas, Sept. 12, 2012.

commander in chief Do not hyphenate; use lowercase unless it appears before a name.

commanding officer A job title, not a rank. Do not capitalize unless before a name. Use the person’s service and rank along with the title and the unit he or she commands.

U.S. Air Force Col. Christopher Sugey, the commanding officer of the 4th Fighter Wing...

U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Patrick Murphy, the commanding officer of Coast Guard Base Cleveland, ...
contingency operating base Use lowercase unless it accompanies the name of a specific location. COB is acceptable on second reference.

U.S. Marines set up checkpoints outside the contingency operating base.

U.S. Marines set up checkpoints outside Contingency Operating Base Speicher.

Corporals Course No apostrophe.

counter improvised explosive device Do not hyphenate or capitalize. CounterIED is acceptable on second reference.

crew member Two words. For example: The crew members prepare for takeoff.

Daesh/Daesh Daesh is the preferred spelling for the alternate Arabic name of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). However, only use the term in context. See ISIS.

decommissioned ships Write as you would an active vessel, but make it clear the vessel is no longer in service. See museum ships.

The decommissioned aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) will remain in the Ready Reserve Fleet until 2015.

demining No hyphen.

Department of Defense On second reference, use the acronym DoD. (This differs from AP style)

dignified transfer Never a dignified transfer ceremony. Do not capitalize. For example: “...the dignified transfer of fallen service members...” or “...dignified transfer operations at Dover Air Force Base...” or “...during the dignified transfer of his/her remains at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan...”

distinguished transfer Do not use.

district Per AP, do not capitalize district when used in a geographic name, such as Sangin district.

drone Use the official name of the depicted unmanned vehicle. ‘Drone’ can be used on second reference. See page 24 for a list of unmanned aerial vehicles.

exercises Capitalize uniquely named exercises, but only capitalize the descriptve word exercise if it is part of the official title of the exercise. Do not capitalize generic descriptors for exercises (e.g., operational readiness exercise, joint task force exercise, composite training unit exercise).

fast-roping, fast rope Hyphenate when used as a compound verb or adjective. No hyphen when used as a noun.

U.S. Soldiers fast-roping from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

U.S. Soldiers improved their fast-roping skills during the exercise.

U.S. Soldiers prepare a fast rope before exiting a helicopter.

female engagement team Do not capitalize unless writing about a specific team.

U.S. Marines with a female engagement team assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force speak to Iraqi women during a cordon and search operation in Fallujah, Iraq, May 10, 2010.

U.S. Marines with Female Engagement Team 2, I Marine Expeditionary Force speak to Iraqi women during a cordon and search operation in Fallujah, Iraq, May 10, 2010.

firefighter One word.

fireman In the Navy and Coast Guard, this term refers to a member specifically trained in an engineering or hull repair rating. While damage control is among the fireman’s ratings, the term fireman is not to be confused with firefighter. If the term is used as a part of a named individual’s rank or rating, it is capitalized.

first lady Per AP, it’s not a formal title, therefore not capitalized.

flight deck Two words.

flight line Two words.

foreign object debris, foreign object damage Items that are picked up from a flight line or flight deck before flight operations are foreign object debris. Foreign object damage results from debris that has impaired an aircraft. FOD is acceptable on second reference as long as the distinction between debris and damage is clear.

U.S. Sailors conduct a foreign object debris (FOD) walkthrough on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) in the Pacific Ocean June 7, 2013. The Sailors collected about seven pounds of FOD.

Damage to the compressor blade of an engine on a U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress is seen at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, April 6, 2014. A piece of metal was sucked into the engine, causing foreign object damage.

foreign services Capitalize formal names of foreign services (e.g., Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, Afghan National Army, Russian Ground Forces).

Informal or generic names (e.g., Japanese navy, Afghan army, Russian army) are lowercase. Do not use the foreign-language name for a service (in other words, don’t use Armada de Mexico for the Mexican navy).

foreign service members Do not capitalize the words soldier, sailor, airman, marine or coast guardsman when referring to foreign service members. If a foreign service member’s rank corresponds to a U.S. rank, use AP style. If not, spell out the rank (e.g., Commodore, Field Marshal).

forward operating base Use lowercase unless it accompanies the name of a specific location. FOB is acceptable on second reference.

U.S. Marines set up checkpoints outside the forward operating base.

female engagement team Do not capitalize unless writing about a specific team.

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first lady Per AP, it’s not a formal title, therefore not capitalized.

flight deck Two words.
the remaining letters, but not between the letters and the numbers. U.S. Army vessel (USAV) hull numbers are hyphenated.

**Humvee**

When referring to a high-mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV), Humvee is acceptable on first reference. When the word is capitalized, it is not necessary to spell out the entire term or use the abbreviation. However, the abbreviation can be used in keywords.

**identification by placement**

Use commas, not parentheses, to identify the placement of subjects within a photo. Also see page 29.

**insure/ensure**

To *insure* means to take out insurance on something; to *ensure* means to make certain or guarantee. For example: People should insure their vehicles to ensure they can get a replacement in case of an accident.

**ISIL**

See ISIS.

ISIS, Islamic State Spell out *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* on first reference. ISIS is acceptable on subsequent references. Only use the alternate term Daesh with an explanation (such as “Daesh, the common Arabic term for ISIS.”) See Daesh.

**jammer**

When describing a vehicle used to load ordnance into aircraft, use *weapons loader* or the actual nomenclature of the vehicle. If describing a device used in electronic warfare, use *electronic countermeasure* or similar wording. See jargon.

**jargon**

Don’t use a military term or slang expression that might require further explanation for the general public; if such a term is used, provide a short explanation of its meaning.

**joint**

Per Joint Publication 1-02: Connotes activities, operations, organizations, etc., in which elements of two or more military departments participate. See combined.

**juxtaposed**

One word.

KATUSA Write out *Korean Augmentation To the U.S. Army (KATUSA)* on first reference; KATUSA is acceptable on subsequent references.

Cpl. Dougun Kuon, a Korean Augmentation

**LCM**

To the United States Army (KATUSA) soldier, assigned to 210th Field Artillery Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division/ROK-U.S. Combined Division, performs one-legged push-ups at Camp Casey, South Korea, April 11, 2018.

**landing zone**

Use lower case unless it accompanies the name of a specific location. LZ is acceptable on second reference.

U.S. Soldiers gather their gear after parachuting onto Landing Zone Tombstone. The landing zone was not cleared, so the mission was aborted.

**LCAC**

The correct term is *landing craft, air cushion.* Use it for singular and plural. Use lowercase unless identifying a specific, numbered LCAC (e.g., *Landing Craft, Air Cushion 8*). The acronym is acceptable on second reference.

**LCM**

The correct term is *landing craft, mechanized.* Use it for singular and plural. Use lowercase unless identifying a specific, numbered LCM (e.g., *Landing Craft, Mechanized 8506*). The acronym is acceptable on second reference.

**LCU**

The correct term is *landing craft, utility.* Use it for singular and plural. Use lowercase unless identifying a specific numbered LCU (e.g., *Landing Craft, Utility 1627*). The acronym is acceptable on second reference.

**lectern**

Per AP, a *lectern* is a small desk a public speaker stands behind; a *podium* is the stage or raised floor the speaker stands upon.

**life jacket**

Use *life jacket,* not *liferaft* or *life-raft.*

**life raft**

Use *life raft,* not *liferaft* or *life-raft.*

**line**

*Line* is the stage or area where the drama occurs. *Line* can be singular or plural. Use lowercase unless identifying a specific, numbered LCU (e.g., *Landing Craft, Utility 1627*). The acronym is acceptable on second reference.

**loadmaster**

One word.

**live fire**

Two words as a noun: *The practice range was for shooting blanks only; it did not allow live fire.* Hyphenate as an adjective/compound modifier: *The live-fire exercise lasted all day.*

**loadmaster**

One word.

**local**

Use this word only when it is necessary to differentiate a local leader or organization from a foreign one. Most of the time it will be unnecessary. In the following example, the use of the word adds nothing to the meaning of the sentence, as is demonstrated:

U.S. Soldiers talk to local Iraqi citizens at a local market in Baghdad. U.S. Soldiers talk to Iraqi citizens at a market in Baghdad.

In the following sentence, however, the word adds context.

Local leaders and charitable organizations have joined the U.S. effort to provide disaster relief to affected areas.

**locations**

Follow AP style rules when listing geographic names, directions and regions. The names of airports, hospitals, etc., should not be listed like cities: Beaumont Municipal Airport, Beaumont, Texas. There is no such city in Texas, so the correct way to refer to this in a caption is Beaumont Municipal Airport in Beaumont, Texas. See *here,* *at sea.*

**loose/lose**

*Loose* means not tight, while *lose* means to misplace something or failing to win.

The lug nuts were loose, causing the Humvee to lose its wheels.

**man the rails**

Not capitalized.

**marine vessel**

*MV* is acceptable on second reference.

**Mark weapons**

Do not use the abbreviations MK or MK. Use the indefinite article *a* before the name of the weapon. No hyphens.


**Marines**

Capitalize when referring to members of the U.S. Marine Corps; not capitalized when referring to members of a foreign marine corps.

**Marine One**

Any Marine Corps helicopter carrying the President. The term is a call sign that applies only when the president is aboard the helicopter. The main helicopters serving in this capacity are the VH-60N White Hawk and the VH-3D Sea King.

**mass casualty/mass casualty exercise**

No hyphen.

**medical civic action program**

See MEDCAP.

**MEDCAP**

Acceptable on second reference.

**military decorations**

Military decorations and awards are never won. Use terms such as *earned,* *received* or *presented with.* A person who holds an award is a recipient, not a winner.

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta, a recipient of the Medal of Honor, smiles as he and his family meet with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, Nov. 17, 2010. Giunta received the nation’s highest military honor for rescuing two members of his squad during an ambush on his platoon in Afghanistan in October 2007.

**military operations on urban terrain**

*MOUT* is an out-of-favor term; the preferred term is *urban operations* (UO). The term is still in limited use, however, and may be used when referring to a specific MOUT city or MOUT site, but should not be used in the following senses: “… train for military operations on urban terrain …” or “… conducts military operations on urban terrain training.” See urban operations.

**Sealift Command**

Most MSC ships carry the designation USNS (United States Naval Ship) and do not require Military Sealift Command in the description, as USNS implies Military Sealift Command. However, some ships carry SS, MT or MV designators and do require clarification they belong to MSC. Furthermore, if an MSC helicopter is described in the caption, make it clear it belongs to MSC. Most MSC ships carry the prefix “T-” before their hull numbers.

See hull numbers, marine vessel and vessel.

The dry cargo/ammo shipment ship USNS Wally Schirra (T-AKE 8) transits alongside the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) in preparation for an underway replenishment in the Pacific Ocean August 7, 2014.

The Military Sealift Command aviation logistics support ship SS Wright (T-AVB 3) transits the Atlantic Ocean June 7, 2013.

A Military Sealift Command SA-330 Puma helicopter delivers supplies to the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) in the Pacific Ocean April 2, 2014.

**military titles**

Abbreviate all military titles in accordance with AP style. On second reference, drop the title and use just the last name. See “Table 1, Military rank abbreviations (per AP)” on page 2020-21, for the appropriate abbreviations for each rank.

**military unit names**

See the section on military units, pages 15-18.

**mission-oriented protective posture**

Out of favor term; the preferred term is *urban operations* (UO). The term is still in limited use, however, and may be used when referring to a specific MOUT city or MOUT site, but should not be used in the following senses: “… train for military operations on urban terrain …” or “… conducts military operations on urban terrain training.” See urban operations.

**MRAP**

The correct term is mine-resistant, ambush-
protected vehicle. The appropriate use, with acronym, is MRAP vehicle. On first use, spell it out, and do not capitalize. Also: mine-resistant, ambush-protected all-terrain vehicle, second reference M-ATV.

U.S. Airmen load mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles Aug. 27, 2011. The MRAP vehicles were to be transported to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

MRE The correct term is either meal, ready to eat (singular) or meals, ready to eat (plural). MRE or MRES is acceptable on second reference.

museum ships If a museum ship is mentioned in a caption, use the official name of the museum or write it as you would any other decommissioned ship.

caption, use the official name of the museum or write it as you would any other decommissioned ship.

nationality Refer to the CIA World Factbook to determine the proper adjective for a citizen of a specific nation. (For example, a citizen of Afghanistan is an Afghan.)

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO is acceptable on first reference, per AP.

NFTI Use thermal imager rather than the formal name Naval Firefighter’s Thermal Imager.

Nigerian/Nigerien The adjective Nigerian means a person from Nigeria, while Nigerien means a person from Niger.

noncommissioned officer Do not hyphenate; use lowercase unless it appears at the start of a sentence. NCO is acceptable on second reference.

officer in charge Do not hyphenate; use lowercase unless it appears before a name.

OIF/OEF Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Spell out on first reference. Do not add notation numbers to these titles.

onboard Refers to organs of a ship, such as engineering or weapons systems. When referring to people, cargo or activities in or on a ship or aircraft, use aboard.

U.S. Coast Guardsmen serve lunch in the galley onboard the maritime security cutter USCGC Bertholf (WMSL 750) at the cutter’s homeport in Alameda, California, June 1, 2017.

operations Capitalize uniquely named operations, but do not capitalize the word operation only if it is part of the official title of the operation (e.g., Operation Enduring Freedom). Do not capitalize generic descriptors for operations.

ordinance/ordnance An ordinance is a local law, while ordnance refers to weapons and ammunition. Ordinance is both singular and plural. Do not use ordnances.

PAO/PIO In captions, spell out public affairs officer or public information officer on first reference.

pass in review Not pass and review.

Pentagon Use Arlington, Va., to describe the location of the Pentagon, per AP.

Persian Gulf Arabian Gulf is the style used for this body of water; enter Persian Gulf in keywords. Note: the Arabian Sea is a separate body of water and should not be confused with references to the Arabian Gulf/Persian Gulf. See Arabian Gulf.

pierside One word.

photographer’s credit Must be included on all captions. Only use service, type of image, rank and name. Do not use unit names or release status in caption credits.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Jones

U.S. Navy photo illustration by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Megan Smith

(U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Mike Williams)

For more formatting examples, see the section on photographer’s credit under Chapter 3, Captioning Basics, page 29.

plankowner One word. A member of the crew of a new ship at the time of commissioning.

podium, lectern Per AP, a podium is the stage or raised floor a public speaker stands upon; a lectern is a small desk the speaker stands behind.

post-deployment Hyphenated per AP style.

post-flight Hyphenated per AP style.

POW/MIA Prisoner of war/missing in action. POW/ MIA is acceptable on first reference. This differs from the Associated Press Stylebook.

pre-commissioning unit (PCU) Capitalize when used before the name of a ship before it is commissioned. For example: Pre-Commissioning Unit Mississippi (SSN 782). PCU is acceptable on second reference.

predeployment No hyphen.

preflight Per AP.

president Capitalize before the name of the president. Do not use the acronym POTUS at any time in captions. On second reference, use the last name only. When listed without a name, use lowercase.

The preferred style for the current president is Donald J. Trump.


Prime BEEF Spell out the full name of the unit (e.g., 577th Expeditionary Prime Base Emergency Engineer Force). Expeditionary Prime BEEF is acceptable on second reference.

professional titles When identifying a service member with a professional title, such as chaplain or physician, add the professional title in lowercase after the rank and name of the subject.

U.S. Army Maj. Bill Smith, a chaplain, conducts a religious service.

U.S. Navy Cdr. Jane Jones, a physician, examines a patient.

provincial reconstruction team Spell out on first reference; PRT is appropriate on second reference. This term is lowercase unless it is a specific, named PRT, such as Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team.

RAF bases No need to spell out RAF.


Ranger Capitalize when referring to Army Ranger units or Soldiers wearing ranks. rank, rate When used with a person’s name, uppercase the rank and use AP rank style (see Table 1, Military rank abbreviations, on pages 20–21). When not used with a name or names, ranks appearing in captions are lowercase and are not abbreviated. For example: U.S. Marine Corps staff sergeants participate in a training exercise.

National Guard For service members in an image are part of a state’s National Guard, indicate the state (with specific branch, if appropriate). Identify personnel as Soldiers or Airmen (or by their parent service branch) as appropriate. If the image depicts members of both branches on non-Federal duty, National Guardsmen is acceptable.

Style Check: National Guard

U.S. Airmen with the Colorado Air National Guard prepare a C-130 Hercules aircraft for a mission at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, June 1, 2012.

U.S. Army Sgt. John Smith, an infantryman assigned to the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, North Carolina Army National Guard, conducts marksmanship training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, Sept. 8, 2012.


nationality Refer to the CIA World Factbook to determine the proper adjective for a citizen of a specific nation. (For example, a citizen of Afghanistan is an Afghan.)

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national anthem Not capitalized, per AP.

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Note: Single names are appropriate for persons who only have one name).

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RAF bases No need to spell out RAF.


Ranger Capitalize when referring to Army Ranger units or Soldiers wearing ranks. rank, rate When used with a person’s name, uppercase the rank and use AP rank style (see Table 1, Military rank abbreviations, on pages 20–21). When not used with a name or names, ranks appearing in captions are lowercase and are not abbreviated. For example: U.S. Marine Corps staff sergeants participate in a training exercise.

(NOTE: When describing Navy personnel, use the rating before the name. For example: U.S. Navy Boatswain’s Mate 1st Class Pete Rodriguez instead of U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Pete Rodriguez, a boatswain’s mate. This differs from the Associated Press Stylebook. However, the Coast Guard uses AP-style rates without ratings.)

rappel, rappelling/repel, repelling To rappel is to use ropes to lower oneself from a high place, such as a cliff, building or helicopter. To repel is to fend something off.

redeployment No hyphen.

red horse Spell it out on first reference: Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers. RED HORSE is acceptable on second reference.

U.S. Airmen with the 820th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers (RED HORSE) maintain equipment at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, July 10, 2012. The 820th RED HORSE was preparing for an exercise.

replenishment-at-sea Hyphenate as shown.

reserve, reserves Capitalize Reserve when referring to specific military organizations. For example: U.S. Army Reserve, not Reserves. In the Navy, the correct term is Navy Reserve, not naval reserve. When referring to a reserve Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine or Coast Guardsman, or any other circumstance in which ‘reserve’ is used as an adjective, do not
capitalise reserve. Only use the term reserves when referring collectively to the reserve components. Retired Do not use (Ret.) when describing a retired service member. Use the word retired before his or her service, rank, and name.


U.S. Navy Cdr. John Jones, left, shakes hands with retired Chief Petty Officer Jane Williams.

rifle salute A salute to the deceased at military funerals, usually by seven riflemen each firing three shots in unison. Do not confuse this with a 21-gun salute.

rigid-hull inflatable boat Do not capitalise. RHIB is acceptable on second reference.

Roman numerals U.S. Army corps and U.S. Marine Corps expeditionary forces are designated with Roman numerals. For example: XVIII Airborne Corps, I Marine Expeditionary Force.

rope See line, rope.

ROTC, Junior ROTC Per AP, the acronym ROTC is acceptable in all references. However, spell out Junior when referring to the high school-level program. Indicate the branch associated with the ROTC organization in the image (e.g. Army ROTC, Air Force Junior ROTC, Naval ROTC, Navy Junior ROTC).

Sailor, Sailors Capitalise when referring to members of the U.S. Navy; not capitalised when referring to members of foreign navies.

same-sex marriage When referring to state-sanctioned same-sex marriages in which one or both partners are in the U.S. armed forces, use the term spouse rather than husband or wife, unless the subjects of the photo indicate otherwise. Use the term partner for unmarried couples.

Seabee When identifying an individual Sailor as a Seabees, list the Sailor’s rank or rating as usual and add the designation as you would a job description.

U.S. Navy Builder 1st Class Jane Smith, a Seabees with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 2, paints a door at a school in Kabul, Afghanistan, June 12, 2013.

SEAL Sea, Air, Land. SEAL is acceptable on first reference. If plural, use SEALS.

SAR, search and rescue Spell out on first reference. Do not hyphenate. Only capitalise if part of an official title, such as the name of a manual.

select/selectee Identify a service member by the rank they hold at the time the image was taken, not the rank they are selected for. However, it is permissible to indicate the service member is on the verge of promotion.

U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Joe Smith, selected for promotion to chief petty officer, salutes an officer at Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois, June 12, 2012.

U.S. Navy petty officers first class, selected for promotion to chief petty officer, clean a park as part of a community service project in Pensacola, Florida, July 14, 2012.

Sept. 11 When referring to the terrorist attacks of 2001, use Sept. 11 attack or Sept. 11 terrorist attack. Use 2001 only if needed for clarity. 9/11 is also acceptable in all references.

service academies On first reference, use the formal name of the service academy, followed by its location. The abbreviation is acceptable on second reference. See service academy ranks.

U.S. Military Academy (USMA), West Point, New York

U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), Annapolis, Maryland

U.S. Air Force Academy (USAF Academy), Colorado Springs, Colorado

U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), New London, Connecticut

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), Kings Point, New York

service academy ranks When identifying a service academy, use his/her proper cadet or midshipman rank if available, or just use the lowercase term cadet or midshipman as applicable (see below). Do not use informal terms such as “plebe” or “cow.”

Cadets: U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Midshipmen: U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

service member The term is two words; service is no longer capitalized.

U.S. service members help clean up in New York City after Hurricane Sandy.

ship names Use the definite article the before a ship name, or ship type preceding a ship name. Also use the full name of the ship (without the USS) on second reference. Do not use the personal pronouns she or her.

U.S. Sailors wash down the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) in the Atlantic Ocean May 15, 2012. The George H.W. Bush was underway on its first deployment.

sideboys One word.

sight/site A sight is something that is seen or is seeing, or a device that helps the eye to aim or find something. A site is a location.

simulation, simulated Indicate when injuries, explosions and other events are simulated for training purposes.


Soldier, Soldiers Capitalise when referring to members of the U.S. Army; not capitalised when referring to members of foreign armies.

South Korea Use this style when referring to the country, its people and military personnel in captions.

U.S. Soldiers and South Korean marines conduct marksmanship training at Camp Casey, South Korea, June 10, 2012.

Southwest Asia Both words are capitalised.

special operations forces Use this term to describe U.S. special warfare units or members of those units when their exact service or unit affiliation is not clear, or when special warfare units of multiple services are conducting joint operations. Do not use special operator or commando.

A U.S. special operations forces service member patrols in a field near Kandahar, Afghanistan, April 5, 2012.


state names Spell out in captions, per AP’s guidance for spelling out in the body of a story.

strongpoint One word. Use lower case unless it accompanies the name of a specific location.

U.S. Soldiers stationed at Strongpoint Tararak clean their weapons following a patrol.

U.S. Marines search for a position to use as a strongpoint in a planned ambush of Talibyan forces.

submarine Spell it out, do not abbreviate as sub.

task force Use lower case unless referring to a specific named or numbered task force.

taxi/taxis/taxing/taxed Used to describe the movement of aircraft on the ground other than taking off or landing. Don’t use the phrase taxis/taxing on a runway if the aircraft is not actually on the runway.

A U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft taxis before takeoff at Kunsan Air Base, South Korea, July 12, 2012.

3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) The proper name of the Army unit that handles ceremonial responsibilities at Arlington National Cemetery. See Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.


Thunderbirds The Air Force’s flight demonstration team. Simply refer to the group as the Thunderbirds.

The team currently flies the F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft.

titles In accordance with AP, formal job titles after a person’s name are not capitalised.

U.S. Navy Adm. Jonathan Greenert, the chief of naval operations, talks to Sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) in the Pacific Ocean Nov. 11, 2013.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Per Arlington National Cemetery. “Tomb of the Unknowns” is obsolete.

21-gun salute A 21-gun (or lesser odd number) salute is an artillery salute for rendering honors to the president, senior military leaders, foreign dignitaries and other notable persons. For the action performed at military funerals, see rifle salute.

UCMJ Spell out Uniform Code of Military Justice on first reference.

undersecretary One word, per AP.

underway One word, per AP.

urban operations (UO) Replaces military operations on urban terrain (MOOT) in most uses. See entry for military operations on urban terrain.

USCGC Use before the name of a Coast Guard cutter. See hull numbers.
The medium endurance cutter USCGC Diligence (WMEC 616) sailed into the port of Wilmington, North Carolina, Aug. 7, 2012.

USO United Service Organizations. USO is acceptable on first reference.

vehicle-borne The correct term is vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. VBIED is acceptable on second reference.

vessel When referring to a specific type of vessel, spell it out: fishing vessel, motor vessel. Do not use abbreviations such as F/V, M/V, MV and so forth on first reference. See hull number, marine vessel.

war on terrorism This is the acceptable term to use; it is all lowercase. Do not use global war on terrorism, GWOT or war on terror.

warfare qualifications (Navy) Do not use Navy warfare qualifications (SW, AW, etc.) when writing a Sailor’s rating in captions or keywords.

warfighter One word; use lowercase.

weapons Use the following formats for weapons and weapon systems; note the appropriate hyphenation, spacing and capitalization. See Table 3. Selected weapons, on page 23 for a more comprehensive list of weapons. Use AP style for caliber and metric measurements.

- .50-caliber, 9 mm
- M19 105 mm howitzer
- M4 carbine, M16 rifle, M9 pistol
- GBU-12 Paveway II laser-guided bomb
- AIM-9 Sidewinder missile

weapons cache The term, correctly used, is either weapons cache (singular) or weapons caches (plural). Do not use hidden weapons cache. Cache implies hidden.

West Point Use the proper name and location of the Army’s academic institution: the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

White House Use Washington to describe the location of the White House.

World War I, World War II Use Roman numerals. Spell it out on first reference, then use WWI or WWII as needed.

wounded warrior Only capitalize when used in the name of a specific event or organization (e.g., Wounded Warrior Project).

Military unit names
Use uppercase only when referring to the name of a specific unit. Use the full name of the unit on first reference, and the acronym on all subsequent references. (See “Table 2, Force structure” on page 22es 22 and 23 for the force structure of the services.)

It is the responsibility of the photographer in the field to confirm the correct name of a military unit depicted in imagery and caption.

When placing service members, ships, aircraft or units in a specific place, use the following terminology:

- A service member is stationed on or stationed at a base; with or assigned to a unit or ship. (Do not use from, as that implies hometown or place of birth.) The preferred term for a person physically located on a ship is aboard.
- A ship is based or homeported at a specific place.
- An aircraft belongs to or is assigned to a particular unit and is deployed with that unit to a certain location. It is stationed at a base or is stationed aboard a ship; it is deployed with or operating from a ship.
- A unit is stationed at a particular base and is deployed to a certain location or deployed with a larger unit. Squadrions are stationed at Air Force bases, air bases or air stations. Navy and Marine Corps air wings and other units may be deployed with ships.

Air Force
Abbreviate Air Force units using standard acronym rules; note if it is a National Guard unit. List units from smallest to largest. In most cases, simply naming the squadron or wing will suffice. Numbered Air Forces are spelled out: Ninth Air Force.

U.S. Airmen with the 375th Security Forces Squadron (SFS) man a checkpoint in Anbar province, Iraq, Oct. 24, 2010. The 375th SFS was operating in support of Operation New Dawn.

U.S. Airmen with the 142nd Fighter Wing, Oregon Air National Guard participate in an exercise at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, Nov. 14, 2011.

U.S. Airmen with the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing, Al Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates, prepare for a mission Jan. 26, 2011.

Army
Abbreviate Army units using standard acronym rules; note if it is a National Guard unit. List units from smallest to largest. Refer to Table 2, Force structure, on pages 22 and 23.

Army units can be tricky. It does not suffice to say that a Soldier simply belongs to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, as there are a multitude of Alpha Companies and 1st Battalions throughout the Army. Be sure to get the unit’s regimental, brigade or division affiliation; in other words, make sure a precise, unique unit name is listed.

Company/Troop/Battery: Companies starting with a letter always belong to a numbered battalion and regiment, which will be listed in the caption as well. Spell out such company names using the phonetic alphabet. (e.g., Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, North Carolina Army National Guard.) NOTE: Some company-level units use non-standard nicknames (e.g., “Killer Company”). Be sure to get the full, proper name of the unit.

Battalion/Squadron: Most combat arms (i.e., infantry, artillery, cavalry and armor) battalions and
The Marines are assigned to the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW). The 2nd MAW

Regiment: Do not use the shorthand for these units. For example, instead of writing 1/120 Infantry, write out the full name: 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment. Always list the subordinate unit (e.g., 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine) before the name of the regiment. The Army generally does not use the regimental command structure like it used to, the regimental heritage is kept to maintain the history and heraldry of many units.

Brigade/Brigade Combat Team: Most brigades/brigade combat teams numbered lower than 5 are part of a larger division. For example, each active-duty division has a 1st brigade combat team, so be sure to list the division affiliation (e.g., 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division). There are a number of active-duty and National Guard stand-alone brigade combat teams, and they generally can be listed without a division. However, if it’s a National Guard unit, be sure to list the state it’s affiliated with. (e.g., 30th Armor Brigade Combat Team, North Carolina Army National Guard.)

Division: Divisions (e.g., 1st Cavalry Division) can generally stand alone if the Soldiers depicted are assigned to various units within the division or it’s a wide shot of a division event.

Corps: Corps (e.g., XVIII Airborne Corps) can generally stand alone if the Soldiers depicted are assigned to various units within the corps or it’s a wide shot of a corps event.

Army: Numbered armies (e.g., First Army) can generally stand alone if the Soldiers depicted are assigned to various units within the numbered army or it’s a wide shot of a numbered army event.

U.S. Soldiers with the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 10th Mountain Division provide security during a humanitarian mission outside of Kabul, Afghanistan, March 4, 2010. The 1st BCT was supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. A U.S. Soldier with the 197th Special Troops Company, Utah Army National Guard gathers his parachute after a static line jump in Fairfield, Utah, March 15, 2012. U.S. Army Sgt. John Smith, an infantryman with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, shouts an order to fellow Soldiers during a training exercise at Fort Riley, Kansas, April 7, 2013.

Joint/combined

The following list shows the correct format of some common joint and/or combined organizations and how to abbreviate them. According to Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, joint is defined as, “Connotes activities, operations, organizations, etc., in which elements of two or more Military Departments participate;” combined is defined as, “A term identifying two or more forces or agencies of two or more allies operating together.”

- Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA)
- Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150)
- International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)
- Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)

Marine Corps

Formats for Marine Corps units and their acronyms appear below. List units from smallest to largest. Aircraft wing: The Marines are assigned to the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW). The 2nd MAW was deployed from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, in support of Operation New Dawn. Aircraft Group: U.S. Marines with Marine Aircraft Group 11 listen to a weekend safety briefing at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, June 6, 2014. Combat logistics battalion: The Marines are deployed with Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 6 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. CLB-6 is based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Marine expeditionary force: The Marines are assigned to II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). II MEF deployed from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in support of Operation New Dawn. Marine expeditionary unit: The Marines are assigned to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). The 31st MEU was participating in bilateral exercises while aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2).

Regiment: Do not use the shorthand for these units. Instead of writing 1/7 Marines, write the full name: 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

Regimental combat team: The Marines are assigned to Regimental Combat Team (RCT) 1. RCT-1 deployed from Camp Pendleton, California, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Squadron: Spell out the full name of the squadron on first reference. Since the full names and abbreviations of squadrons do not follow normal acronym rules of assignation, include squadron abbreviations even if used only once. The Marines are assigned to Marine Transport Squadron (VMM) 1. VMM-1 assisted in the search for a downed aircraft near Jacksonville, North Carolina. See page 16 for aviation squadron abbreviations.

Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Note hyphenation.

Navy

Formats for Navy units and their acronyms appear below. List units from smallest to largest, where applicable.

| Construction battalion center: CBC | Naval air facility: NAF |
| Naval air station: NAS | Naval amphibious base: NAB |
| Naval facility: NAVFAC | Naval station: NAVSTA |
| Naval weapons station: NWS | Commander fleet activities: CFA |

Activities: Spell out the full name of the naval activity on first reference and capitalize only when part of a proper name. For example: Naval Station Rota, Spain. On second reference, abbreviate as follows: NAVSTA Rota.

Detachment: Do not abbreviate. The Sailors are assigned to Detachment 5, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 2.

Fleet: When referring to a numbered fleet, always use numerals and precede with U.S. For example: U.S. 7th Fleet.

Naval Mobile construction battalion: On first reference, spell out and use a numeral. Use the acronym on second reference. U.S. Sailors with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 1 construct a school in Honduras. NMCB-1 is participating in exercise New Horizons.

Ship: List the type of ship (e.g., destroyer, aircraft carrier), full name of the ship and hull number (in parentheses) for each ship on first reference. On second reference, drop the ship type, USS and the hull number. Use the definite article the before the ship’s name. Do not use the personal pronouns she or her. All ship names appear in regular type, not in all caps. See hull numbers and ship names in Chapter 1.

U.S. Sailors man the rails as the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) departs Yokosuka, Japan, June 27, 2011. The George Washington was embarking on a six-month deployment.
Current ship types: aircraft carrier, guided-missile destroyer, guided-missile cruiser, littoral combat ship, mine countermeasures ship, submarine, amphibious assault ship, amphibious transport dock ship, dock landing ship, coastal patrol ship, amphibious command ship, afloat forward staging base, mobile landing platform.

Squadron: Spell out the full name of a squadron on first reference. Include the abbreviation whether or not the squadron appears again in the caption. See page 19 for aviation squadron abbreviations.

Coast Guard

Other than Coast Guard districts, most units are named geographically. If the location is not a major city, such as Boston or Los Angeles, use the state as well (refer to AP’s “datelines” entry). If the unit is named for something other than the location, then include the location, such as Station Cape Disappointment in Ilwaco, Washington, or Air Station Atlantic City in Egg Harbor, New Jersey.

Boats: Coast Guard vessels under 65 feet in length are considered boats. Boats are not given individual names or hull numbers. Identify type of boat pictured whenever possible. Do not capitalize the boat type.

Current boat types: motor life boat, response boat-medium, response boat-small, law enforcement special purpose craft, long range interceptor, aids to navigation boat, transportable port security boat, special purpose craft airboat.

Cutters: Coast Guard vessels longer than 65 feet are called cutters, and are given individual names and hull numbers. Identify cutters by their type, name, and hull number. Do not use cutter lengths.

The medium endurance cutter USCGC Diligence (WMEC 616) steams northward in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of South Carolina May 23, 2017.

Current cutter types: national security cutter, high endurance cutter, medium endurance cutter, fast response cutter, icebreaker, icebreaking tug, seagoing buoy tender, coastal buoy tender, inland buoy tender, river buoy tender, inland construction tender, patrol boat, coastal patrol boat, small harbor tug.

Unit names: Specialized units are given geographical names as well, such as Aids to Navigation Team New York or Marine Safety Unit Port Arthur. Only capitalize when used with a geographical name. Abbreviate only on second and subsequent reference, such as MSU Port Arthur or the MSU.

Station, air station: Stations and air stations are identified by a geographical location, such as Coast Guard Station Monterey or Coast Guard Air Station Cape Cod. Only capitalize when used with a geographical name.

Sector: A district is comprised of several geographical sectors, which are named for a region or city, such as Sector Hampton Roads or Sector Guam.

District: There are nine numbered districts in the Coast Guard. Spell out the district number when referring to a specific district, such as the Fifth Coast Guard District.

Area: The Coast Guard is divided into two areas:

The Atlantic Area includes the First, Fifth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Coast Guard Districts.

The Pacific Area includes the Eleventh, Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Seventeenth Coast Guard Districts.

Marine Corps aviation units *

HMH—Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron
HMLA—Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron
HMM—Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron
HMHT—Marine Heavy Helicopter Training Squadron
HMX—Marine Helicopter Squadron
MACS—Marine Air Control Squadron
MA ALS—Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron
MWS—Marine Wing Communications Squadron
MWSG—Marine Wing Support Group
MWSS—Marine Wing Support Squadron
VMTT—Marine Medium Tiltrotor Training Squadron
VMX—Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron

Navy aviation units *

HC—Helicopter Combat Support Squadron
HM—Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron
HS—Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron
HSC—Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron
HSM—Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron
HSL—Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light
HT—Helicopter Training Squadron
VA—Attack Squadron
VAQ—Electronic Attack Squadron
VT—Training Squadron
VX, HX—Air Test and Evaluation Squadron

* Capitalize the long form only when used as part of an actual unit name. Do not use unit nicknames. Examples of properly formatted squadron names:

U.S. Navy F/A-18F Super Hornet aircraft assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 11 flies in formation over Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia, July 5, 2013.

U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Bill Jones, an MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft pilot assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 165, listens to a preflight briefing at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, May 6, 2012.
## Chapter 2

### References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Army commissioned officers</th>
<th>Air Force commissioned officers</th>
<th>Marine Corps commissioned officers</th>
<th>Navy and Coast Guard commissioned officers</th>
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<td><strong>Usage before a name</strong></td>
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<td>Col.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>major</td>
<td>Maj.</td>
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<td>captain</td>
<td>Capt.</td>
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<td>first lieutenant</td>
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### Table 1 (Cont.), Military rank abbreviations

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### Warrant officers

**Grade** | **Rank** | **Usage before a name** |
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**Grade** | **Rank** | **Usage before a name** |
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**Grade** | **Rank** | **Usage before a name** |
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**Grade** | **Rank** | **Usage before a name** |
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**Grade** | **Rank** | **Usage before a name** |
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<td>Warrant Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Enlisted personnel

**Grade** | **Rank** | **Usage before a name** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-9</td>
<td>master sergeant</td>
<td>Master Sg.t.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

Table 1, Military rank abbreviations (per AP)

Use the person’s rating (e.g., Gunner’s Mate 1st Class; Chief Culinary Specialist) whenever possible. (Coast Guard: Adhere to AP style of rate only)

*Note on Navy enlisted personnel:*

Use the person’s rating (e.g., Gunner’s Mate 1st Class; Chief Culinary Specialist) whenever possible. (Coast Guard: Adhere to AP style of rate only)
The Navy does not list unit designations in the same way as the other services. While a Sailor may be assigned to a ship, which belongs to a squadron, task force or carrier strike group, and in turn falls under a fleet, not all of those levels need to be listed within a caption. If a Sailor is part of a ship-based aviation unit, be sure to list it.

Identify the ship or onshore unit to which a Sailor is assigned. Also identify lower-level unit demarcations, such as squadrons or detachments.

Identify the strike group to which a ship is assigned only if it is currently deployed with the group.

The Navy does not list unit designations in the same way as the other services. While a Sailor may be assigned to a ship, which belongs to a squadron, task force or carrier strike group, and in turn falls under a fleet, not all of those levels need to be listed within a caption. If a Sailor is part of a ship-based aviation unit, be sure to list it.

Identify the ship or onshore unit to which a Sailor is assigned. Also identify lower-level unit demarcations, such as squadrons or detachments.

Identify the strike group to which a ship is assigned only if it is currently deployed with the group.

U.S. Coast Guard

It's rarely necessary to identify a Coast Guard unit's higher echelons when listing a specific unit in a caption. Only identify larger or superior units if it's relevant to the caption being written.

U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 1st Class Joe Morgan, a pursuit coxswain assigned to Coast Guard Station Monterey, California, operates a response boat-small in Monterey Bay June 7, 2017.

U.S. Coast Guard Rear Adm. John Jones relieves Rear Adm. Sam Smith as commander of the Ninth Coast Guard District during a ceremony in Cleveland July 1, 2017. Vice Adm. Sally Simpson, the commander of Coast Guard Atlantic Area, under which the Ninth District falls, presided over the ceremony.

Table 2, Force structure

The following table provides the basic force structure of the five services, listing units from smallest to largest groupings of service members. Other organizational groupings do occur within each service. This table is designed only to act as a guide to help the writer list unit designations within a caption. Only capitalize elements (e.g., brigade, platoon, wing, etc.) when used as part of a unit name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Consists of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Army</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Squad/section</td>
<td>9 to 10 Soldiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Platoon</td>
<td>16 to 44 Soldiers; 2 to 4 squads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company (or Battery/Troop)</td>
<td>62 to 190 Soldiers; 3 to 5 platoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Battalion (or Squadron)</td>
<td>300 to 1,000 Soldiers; 4 to 6 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brigade (or Group/Regiment)</td>
<td>3,000 to 5,000 Soldiers; 2 to 5 battalions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>10,000 to 15,000 Soldiers; 3 brigades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corps</td>
<td>20,000 to 45,000 Soldiers; 2 to 5 divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>50,000+ Soldiers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| U.S. Air Force | Airman | individual |
| | Section | several Airman |
| | Flight | 2 or more sections or a dozen or more Airmen |
| | Squadron | 3-4 flights |
| | Group | 2 or more squadrons |
| | Wing | 2 or more groups |
| | Numbered Air Force (NAF) | 2 or more wings |
| | Major Command (MAJCOM) | 1 or more NAFs |
| | Air Force | MAJCOMs report to Headquarters, Air Force |

| U.S. Marine Corps | Marine | individual |
| | Team | 4 Marines |
| | Squad | 3 teams |
| | Platoon | 3 squads |
| | Company/Battery | 3 platoons |
| | Battalion | 3 companies/batteries |
| | Regiment/Brigade | 3 battalions |
| | Division (MARDIV) | 3 regiments/brigades |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Consists of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)</td>
<td>Infantry battalion, aviation squadron, combat logistics battalion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)</td>
<td>Infantry regiment, Marine air group (MAG), combat logistics regiment (CLR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)</td>
<td>Marine division (MARDIV), Marine aircraft wing (MAW), Marine logistics group (MLG)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF)</td>
<td>Elements of MARDIV, MAW, MLG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USMC Aviation</td>
<td>Squadron</td>
<td>4-24 aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aircraft Group (MAG)</td>
<td>3 or more squadrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aircraft Wing (MAW)</td>
<td>3 or more groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3, Selected weapons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-armor</td>
<td>Javelin shoulder-fired anti-tank missile; TOW missile system; M136E1 AT4-CS confined space light anti-armor weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombs</td>
<td>GBU-12 Paveway II laser-guided bomb; GBU-31 joint direct attack munition; GBU-32 joint direct attack munition; GBU-15 guided weapon system; GBU-87 cluster bomb; GBU-43/B MOAB; BDU-33 practice bomb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect fire</td>
<td>M102/M119 105 mm howitzer; M109A6 Paladin howitzer; M120/M121 120 mm mortar system; M198 155 mm howitzer; M224 60 mm mortar system; M252 81 mm mortar system; M777 towed 155 mm howitzer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and crew-served</td>
<td>M2/M2HB/M2A1 machine gun; M4/M4A1 carbine; M9 pistol; M14 rifle; M14 Enhanced Battle Rifle; M16/M16A1/M16A2/M16A3/M16A4 rifle; M16 Claymore mine; XM25 grenade launcher; M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle; M107 .50-caliber Special Applications Scoped Rifle; M110 Semi-Automatic Sniper System; M240B machine gun; M249 light machine gun; M60 light machine gun; M1911/M1911A1 pistol; M4A1 pistol; GAU-8 Avenger 30 mm cannon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missiles</td>
<td>AGM-65 Maverick missile; AGM-86* air-launched cruise missile; AGM-88 high-speed anti-radiation missile (HARM); AGM-129A advanced cruise missile; AGM-130 air-to-surface missile; AGM-154 joint standoff weapon; AGM-158 joint air-to-surface standoff missile; AIM-7 Sparrow missile; AIM-9 Sidewinder missile; LGM-30G Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile; Tomahawk cruise missile; AGM-84 Harpoon; MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates that there is more than one version of this weapon; this is not the full designator.
Table 5. Afghan provinces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Provinical Center</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notable cities/towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badakhshan</td>
<td>Fayzabad</td>
<td>northeast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badghis</td>
<td>Qala-e-Naw</td>
<td>west</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghlan</td>
<td>Pul-e-Khomri</td>
<td>northeast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkh</td>
<td>Mazar-e-Sharif</td>
<td>northwest</td>
<td>Panjab, Waras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamian</td>
<td>Bamiyan</td>
<td>west</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daykundi</td>
<td>Nili</td>
<td>southwest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farah</td>
<td>Farah</td>
<td>northwest</td>
<td>Pashtun Kot, Qaysar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faryab</td>
<td>Meymaneh</td>
<td>southeast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazni</td>
<td>Ghazni</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghor</td>
<td>Chaghcharan</td>
<td>west</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helmand</td>
<td>Lashkar Gah</td>
<td>southwest</td>
<td>Garmirs, Gershik, Marjah, Musa Qala, Nawa-i-Barakzai, Sangin, Washir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>west</td>
<td>Gulran, Gzura, Injil, Kushk, Sabzawar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jowzjan</td>
<td>Sheberghan</td>
<td>northwest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>central</td>
<td>Paghm, Surobi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandahar</td>
<td>Kandahar</td>
<td>southwest</td>
<td>Daman, Shorabak, Spin Boldak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapisa</td>
<td>Mahmud-i-Raqi</td>
<td>central</td>
<td>Alasai, Mahmud-i-Raqi, Nijrab, Tagab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khost</td>
<td>Khost</td>
<td>southeast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunar</td>
<td>Asadabad</td>
<td>east</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunduz</td>
<td>Kunduz</td>
<td>northeast</td>
<td>Archi, Imam Sahib, Khan Abad, Qalay-i-Zal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laghman</td>
<td>Mehtar Lam</td>
<td>east</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logar</td>
<td>Pul-e-Alam</td>
<td>central</td>
<td>Padkh Shana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagarhar</td>
<td>Jalalabad</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>Bisud, Khogyani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimroz</td>
<td>Zaranj</td>
<td>southwest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuristan</td>
<td>Parun</td>
<td>east</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakta</td>
<td>Gardez</td>
<td>southeast</td>
<td>Jaji, Zurmat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paktika</td>
<td>Sharan</td>
<td>southeast</td>
<td>Margah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panjshir</td>
<td>Bazarak</td>
<td>central</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>Charikar</td>
<td>central</td>
<td>Bagram, Pul-e-Sayad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samangan</td>
<td>Aybak</td>
<td>northwest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sar-e Pul</td>
<td>Sar-e Pul</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takhar</td>
<td>Taloqan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruzgan</td>
<td>Tirin Kot</td>
<td>southeast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardak</td>
<td>Maydan Shahr</td>
<td>central</td>
<td>Saydabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zabul</td>
<td>Qalat</td>
<td>southeast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Afghan is the term for the people and culture of Afghanistan. Afghani is the Afghan unit of currency.
The ABCs
Captioning still and motion imagery

The ABCs

Well-written, informative and useful captions begin with the submitter and his/her unit. All DoD VI must have a caption. Captions are contained in the metadata of every VI asset. Accurate and complete DoD VI metadata increases the value and discoverability of DoD VI as strategic information assets.

NOTE: While most of this chapter deals with still captions, the basic rules of style and content apply to motion captions as well. The descriptive information in motion captions will necessarily be broader and less specific, since the caption must describe more than a single image. Provide a general description of the units and specific subjects, equipment used, the event taking place, location and date(s).

To write an effective caption, remember the ABCs of captioning: accuracy, brevity and clarity.

Accuracy. Ensure every piece of information within the caption is accurate and complete. This also includes ensuring the captions are grammatically and stylistically accurate and that they adhere to the guidance contained in this guide and the Associated Press Stylebook. An accurate caption helps ensure an image is newsworthy, is of historical value and can be more easily retrieved from databases.

Brevity. When writing a caption, be certain every word is necessary to tell the story of the image. The caption should describe precisely what is seen in the image. Captions must convey a great deal of information in a few short sentences, so they must be written concisely to maximize their effectiveness. Do not use 15 words where five will do.

Clarity. To be understood by the end user, a caption must be clear in both intent and expression. Select language to make certain the reader will understand what is happening in the image. Remember that the audience for DoD imagery is global. Construct captions that can be understood by a nonmilitary reader.

Do not use social media symbols, such as hashtags (#) or @-signs, in captions or keywords. Those should be relegated to social media postings; in most cases, hashtags lose relevance over time and add nothing to the archival record.

The 5 Ws

When gathering information to include in a caption, keep the following questions in mind: who, what, when, where and why. All questions must be answered to accurately communicate the story of a still image or video clip.

Who

Who or what is the subject of the image?
• If the subject of a sentence is a person or persons, provide the rank, first and last name, title and military unit for each person.
• List units from smallest to largest. (e.g., U.S. Marines assigned to Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division clean weapons at Camp Pendleton, California, June 7, 2012.)

or an unidentified person, use the appropriate singular or collective noun association with them with their particular branch of service (e.g., Soldier/Soldiers, Sailor/Sailors, Airman/Airmen, Marine/Marines, Coast Guardsman/ Guardsmen). NOTE: Do not use the name of the service in conjunction with the associated noun, such as “U.S. Army Soldier” or “U.S. Marine Corps Marine.”


U.S. Navy Gunner’s Mate 3rd Class Joe Smith cleans a .50-caliber machine gun.

A U.S. Marine with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit conducts physical training.

Where

Provide the geographic location as well as the name of the base, facility or organization, if applicable. Consult the Associated Press Stylebook entry on datelines to determine if a city stands alone in captions or is part of the full city name (e.g., Washington, D.C.; Dayton, Ohio).

When

Provide the date and, if pertinent, the time of day when the image was captured. Include the date within the caption. Do not use datelines, which are headers placed before the start of the caption, often containing the date and location of the image.

Use the following format: Aug. 21, 2011. Spell out months July through December and abbreviate months August through February.

When writing just a month and year with no day, do not abbreviate the month: Feb. 27, 2011, but February 2011.

Style Check: Dates
• Use month, day, year format.
• Do not include on before the date.
• Do not use the day of the week.
• Do not use datelines.

Active vs. Passive Voice

Active: U.S. Soldiers destroy confiscated ordnance.

Passive: Confiscated ordnance is destroyed by U.S. Soldiers.
**Constructing a caption**

The first sentence contains the who, what, when and where and is always written in the present tense using active voice. A caption describes the moment the image is captured, not what came before or after, so the first sentence will be written as if from that moment.

Subsequent sentences include the background information (the why?) and should almost always be written in past tense. It explains why the image is significant and provides context. This is where you provide information explaining the significance of the action in the image.

**Example:**

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Smith demonstrates proper CPR techniques during his unit’s safety day at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, July 5, 2011. Smith’s unit was training in advanced first aid techniques in preparation for a deployment.

**U.S. Marines with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit board Landing Craft Utility 1627 in the well deck of the forward-deployed amphibious dock landing ship USS Germantown (LSD 42) Feb. 10, 2012, off the coast of Thailand. The Germantown was underway in support of Cobra Gold 2012. Cobra Gold is a regularly scheduled joint/combined exercise designed to ensure regional peace and strengthen the ability of the Royal Thai armed forces to defend Thailand or respond to regional contingencies. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Johnnie Hickmon)**

Examine the following image and sample caption:

In the caption, the background sentences describe why the Germantown and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit were off the coast of Thailand (for exercise Cobra Gold). While this is important information, it does not give background information on the action in the image, which is Marines boarding a landing craft utility. A more appropriate second sentence would explain why the Marines were boarding the craft. Presuming we know why, the caption could read:

U.S. Marines with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit board Landing Craft Utility 1627 in the well deck of the forward-deployed amphibious dock landing ship USS Germantown (LSD 42) Feb. 10, 2012, off the coast of Thailand. The Marines were preparing to go ashore in Thailand as part of exercise Cobra Gold 2012. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Johnnie Hickmon)

**Additional rules of construction**

- Define all acronyms on first use within the caption. Spell out all terms on first reference. Use only abbreviations/acronyms on subsequent reference.
- Do not use acronyms for terms used only once within the caption.
- Do not use apostrophes when using a plural acronym. For example: *MREs*, not *MRE’s*; *F-15s*, not *F-15’s*.
- Refer to the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms for official definitions of abbreviations and acronyms (see “Chapter 9: Additional resources” on page 5). Acronyms need not appear in the DoD dictionary to be used in a caption.
- Avoid the use of jargon. Explain terms and practices that are not commonly known outside of military circles. Remember to write for a nonmilitary audience. For example, do not use shorthand references to military units unless they have been previously defined within the caption.
- Do not editorialize. Stick to the facts as presented by the image and gathered at the scene. In the following example, the first caption contains editorializing.

**Incorrect:** An Iraqi family enjoys a picnic in a park near the Baghdad Zoo in the Karkh district of Baghdad March 30, 2007. Scenes like this one are becoming more prevalent in the city as life slowly returns to normal.

**Correct:** An Iraqi family shares a picnic in a park near the Baghdad Zoo in the Karkh district of Baghdad March 30, 2007.

**ID by placement.** Use commas, not parentheses. When identifying people in an image, use the rule of three: provide the full name and rank and/or title of every person when there are three or fewer people in the image. It is not necessary to individually identify everyone if there are four or more people present, although there may be some cases (such as with high-level officials) in which that would be appropriate.


**Photographer’s credit**

Include the photographer’s credit at the end of the caption. See examples.

**NOTE:** This is where ‘photo’ or ‘photo illustration’ is indicated. See Chapter 8, DoD Visual Information Ethics, for more information.

If the photographer is a member of the Army National Guard or Air National Guard, indicate it in the credit line, but do not use the state or territory name. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. John Smith) (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jane Johnson) (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Betty Jones) (U.S. Marine Corps photo illustration by Lance Cpl. Juan Silva) (DoD photo by Ralph Williams) (DoD photo by Cpl. Mike Johnson, Canadian Army)

**Examples of photographers’ credit lines**

- (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. John Smith)
- (U.S. Army National Guard photo illustration by Spec. Bill Miller)
- (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jane Johnson)
- (U.S. Air National Guard photo illustration by Tech. Sgt. Bob McKenzie)
- (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Betty Jones)
- (U.S. Marine Corps photo illustration by Lance Cpl. Juan Silva)
- (DoD photo by Ralph Williams)
- (DoD photo by Cpl. Mike Johnson, Canadian Army)
Exercise (LPW/JOAX) 13-01 Oct. 11, 2012, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. LPW/Globemaster III aircraft during Large Package Week/Joint Operational Access. U.S. Soldiers with the 82nd Airborne Division jump from an Air Force C-17 than $43 million. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

A U.S. Army pilot flies a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter assigned to the Colorado Army National Guard during a water drop while fighting the Black Forest Fire near Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 12, 2013. The Black Forest Fire started June 11, 2013, burning scores of homes and forcing large-scale evacuations. The Colorado National Guard and U.S. Air Force Reserve assisted in firefighting efforts. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Capt. Darin Overstreet)


U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Brandon Mann scans an area through the scope of an M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle while providing security with his military working dog, Ty, around the villages of Sse Kala and Paygel in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 17, 2012. Mann, a military working dog handler, and Ty, an improvised explosive device detection dog, were assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez)

U.S. Coast Guardsmen assigned to the medium endurance cutter USCGC Northland (WMEC 904) maneuver during the interdiction of 3,532 pounds of cocaine from a 35-foot go-fast vessel in the Caribbean Sea March 3, 2012, as part of Operation Martillo. The cocaine’s wholesale value was estimated at more than $43 million. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

U.S. Soldiers with the 82nd Airborne Division jump from an Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft during Large Package Week/Joint Operational Access Exercise (LPW/JOAX) 13-01 Oct. 11, 2012, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. LPW/JOAX is a joint Army and Air Force training exercise held several times a year to practice large-scale airdrop missions for personnel and equipment. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Joanna Henesly)
Standard format for keywords

1. Treat the keyword field similarly to the caption field, proper spelling and capitalization is important.
   - For example: M1A1 Abrams tank, USAID, Secretary of Defense
2. Write all technical names as directed by the U.S. Military Services’ fact files and yearbooks.
3. Keywords are separated by commas (the final keyword does not require a comma).
   - For example: M1A1 Abrams tank, F/A-18E Super Hornet, Aircraft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F/A-18E Super Hornet, Aircraft</td>
<td>F/A-18E, Super, Hornet, Aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1A1 Abrams tank</td>
<td>M1A1, Abrams, Tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M14 Enhanced Battle Rifle</td>
<td>M14, Enhanced, Battle, Rifle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Keywords may be phrases or full names and in these instances should not be separated.
5. The Photographer's Service is a keyword, but only in its acronym/abbreviated form.
   - For example: USMC, USA, USN, USAF, USCG, RAF
6. Words that are NEVER keywords:
   - Photographer's name (in any variation), unit or VISION ID
   - Release status
   - Classification status
   - Use of the image (i.e., publication)

Guidelines for selecting keywords

1. Consider and select from the broad categories list first. See the sample categories in Sample Keywords on page 34.
2. What is the concept of the image?
   - Don't forget to add the theme/message of the image.
3. What is in the image?
   - Vehicles? Weapons?
   - Technical names for all types of vehicles (e.g., aircraft, ships, tanks, etc.) and all weaponry are keywords.
   - Ship names (including the hull number), classes and types are keywords.
     » For example: USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), Nimitz-class, Aircraft carrier
4. Who is in the image?
   - Titles and occupation fields (not ranks) are keywords. This applies only to U.S. personnel.
     » For example: Human intelligence collector, Drill instructor, Logistics Specialist, Ship's Boatswain, Platoon leader, Designated marksman, Infantryman, Rifleman
   - There are four individuals whose title and name will always be keywords. These four people are the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
5. Does the image represent an event?
   - Is the event an operation or an exercise?
   - If so, the name of either the Operation/Exercise is not a keyword. These names are to be entered in the Operation/Exercise metadata field.
   - If not, then the event's full name is a keyword.
     » For example: 11th Annual Air Force Marathon
6. Are there phrases, units, etc., that have acronyms/abbreviations that are not written in the caption? If so, the acronyms/abbreviations are keywords.
   » For example: International Security Assistance Force is written in the caption, but the acronym is not. ISAF is then a keyword.
   » For example: The image is from Operation Enduring Freedom. OEF is then a keyword.
   » For example: 6th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division is used in the caption once. Therefore, 6-1 CAV, 1st AD are keywords.
Sample Keywords

The following list contains numerous examples of keywords used in imagery metadata. By no means is this a comprehensive list, but many common concepts, activities, events, people, weapons, ships, vehicles and other equipment are listed here. If an item has words in parentheses next to it, those words are meant to describe what the keyword means, and are not part of the keyword itself.

Concepts
Security, Safety, Education, Communication, COMREL (community relations), Training, Exercise, HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief), Humanitarian assistance, Disaster Relief, Logistics, Maintenance, Navigation, Aviation, Agriculture, Religion, Health and wellness, MEDCAP (medical civic action project), ENCAP (engineering civic action project)

Activities
Recreation, Replenishment at sea, RAS (replenishment at sea), Vertical replenishment, VERTREP (vertical replenishment), Change of command, MWR (morale, welfare and recreation)

Events
Change of command, Retirement, Basic training, Recruit training, AIT, A-school, Commissioning, Decommissioning, Award, Funeral, Ceremony, Changing of the guard

Places
USNA, USAFA, USMA, FOB, COB, Bridge, Barracks: Galley, DFAC

People
(by service, certain positions and occupational specialties)
Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, Coast Guardsman, National Guardsman, POTUS (President of the United States), VPOTUS (Vice President of the United States), CJCJ (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), SECDEF (Secretary of Defense), SEAL, Seabee, Culinary Specialist, Infantryman, Riffleman, Intelligence Analyst, Cadet, Drill instructor, Student

Weapons, aircraft and vehicles
B-52H Stratofortress, Aircraft
MH-60 Black Hawk, Helicopter
MV-22 Osprey, Tiltrotor aircraft
M16 rifle, M4 carbine, M27 IAR (Infantry Automatic Rifle)
M110 SASS, HMMWV, MRAP, M-ATV, M1 Abrams, Tank, M2 Bradley, IFV, MAAVS (Modular airborne firefighting system), M9 pistol, M45 pistol

Units and other organizations
1-4 CAV, 82nd ABN DIV, 30th HBCT
NCARNG, USO, 3rd U.S. INF RGT, The Old Guard, 3rd MAR DIV

Ships — Include the type, class and hull number in parentheses with the ship name:
Aircraft carrier, USS Nimitz (CVN 68), Nimitz-class
Guided missile cruiser, USS Vicksburg (CG 69), Ticonderoga-class
Attack submarine, USS Mississippi (SSN 782), Virginia-class
Medium endurance cutter, USCGC Alert (WMEC 630), Reliance-class
Coastal tug, USAV MG Winfield Scott (LT-805), MG Nathaniel Greene-class

Chapter 5
Still and motion imagery metadata

The style guidelines contained in this publication also applies to other metadata associated with still and motion images. Complete and accurate DoD VI metadata increases the value and discoverability of DoD VI as strategic information assets. Descriptive DoD VI metadata fields provide a textual summary and operational context of each unique DoD VI product that often cannot be understood by simply viewing the product.

Excepting abbreviations, all entries should be in regular text, not in all capital letters. The tables on pages 39–41 list the metadata fields and their corresponding names and placement in common imagery management software programs. These guidelines apply if you are using a video editing program that allows for the modification of video metadata. In general, DoD VI attribution applies to the person or unit that created the DoD VI, the visually depicted persons, locations, units, or equipment/facilities, and a uniquely assigned record identification number.

Visual Information Record Identification Number (VIRIN)
(Reference: Department of Defense Instruction 5040.02, Enclosure 6, October 27, 2011)
Assign each image a unique VIRIN. A VIRIN consists of 16 alphanumeric characters separated by hyphens into four fields organized in the alpha (A) numeric (N) format YMMDD-A-XXXXX-NNNN. A fifth field of two characters can be added for imagery generated by photographers working for a foreign government.

Field one, the first six characters, is the date the imagery was taken, in YMMDD format.
Field two, the seventh character, represents the Service of the photographer.
A: Army
D: Department of Defense
F: Air Force
G: Coast Guard
M: Marine Corps
N: Navy
S: State Department
Z: National Guard (either branch), uniformed member or civilian/contract employee, in Title 5.
Title 10 or Title 32 status.

VISUAL INFORMATION IDENTIFIER (VISION ID)
Field three (LLNNN): The two-letter, three-digit vision ID of the image originator, which is assigned by DIMOC through https://vipro.defenseimagery.mil.
All DoD photographers and videographers must have a VISION ID. However, a person does not need to be formally qualified as a VI specialist to have a VISION ID.

If the VI specialist is a member of a foreign government, use an assigned DVIAN. U.S. service members, civilians or contract personnel shall NOT use ZZ999 or other false VISION IDs.

DEFENSE VISUAL INFORMATION ACTIVITY NUMBER (DVIAN)
Field three (LLNNN): The DVIAN which is a one-letter, four-digit unit-level identifier, may be used in a VIRIN of a motion or still image produced by a group of people, or images taken by U.S. personnel without a VISION ID. Derivative imagery, such as various integrated sensors, remotely piloted platforms, geospatial platforms, RDT&E, seized or captured imagery, and imagery acquired through DoD contract, donation or transfer, will use the unique DVIAN for the releasing activity. DVIANS are assigned by the Service VI manager and by the DMA.
Email: dvicustomerservice@defense.gov for assistance in obtaining a DVIAN for your unit.
Field three is either the individual photographer’s VISION ID, which provides official attribution to the individual who created the unique DoD VI or a unit’s DVIAN (see boxes above).

Field four, the first four digits, are used to create a unique VIRIN for each photo or video file uploaded. NOTE: The number of digits in field four was increased from three digits to four digits by Change 1 to DoD 5040.02, dated July 8, 2016. The purpose of the extra digit is to provide a content organizing function when VI professionals capture VI in multiple jobs, locations, or scenes on the same day.

The first digit is used to indicate separate projects or assignments on a single day, starting with 1 and continuing as necessary to 9. The second through fourth digits are used to organize specific scenes or projects resulting from the separate projects in their approximate order. No two scenes or projects from the same day will have the same final four digits. The number indicates the sequence number for each image thus all images must be numbered in order of shooting. If fewer than 1000 images were photographed during a day it is also permitted to use the first digit to denote the scene or location. Thus, if multiple locations were documented by the same photographer on the same day, the sequence numbers may be entered as 1001-1099, then 2001-2999, and so on, without explanation. No VIRINS will be duplicated.

Field five, to be used by photographers working for a foreign government, will use the two-letter ISO 3166 Alpha-2 code used to identify their respective government. For example, a Belgian government photographer who submits an image to a DoD organization will use a VIRIN such as 160323-O-(VISION ID)-1001-BE.

The ISO 3166 Alpha-2 codes can be found at https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/search/code.

Date Shot
Enter the date the image was captured (not the date it was submitted to DVIDS or DMA, if different from the date it was shot). The date must match what is reflected in the VIRIN and the caption. Note: Ensure all cameras are set to the correct local date and time before conducting a shoot.

Operation/Exercise
Enter the geographical combatant command where the photo was taken (USINDOPACOM, USNORTHCOM, USEUCOM, USEUCOM, USAFFCOM, USAFRICOM, USSOUTHCOM). For imagery from Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve or relating to anti-ISIS operations, use CJTF-OIR; for imagery under Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, use CJTF-HOA.

City/Base/Location/Ship
Enter the city, base, ship, installation or other specific location at which the image was captured, not the location to which the photographer is assigned and/or deployed. For example, if the photographer is assigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, but the image was taken in nearby Fayetteville, enter Fayetteville in this field. If there is no specific-named location, filling out the Country/Area field will suffice.

State/Province
Enter the U.S. state or foreign province (or other subdivision) in which the image was captured, if applicable.

Country/Area
Enter the country, area or major body of water in which the image was captured. Areas will usually be bodies of water such as the Persian Gulf or regions such as the Arctic Circle. Should it be an undisclosed location, enter that information here as well. See the online controlled vocabulary for an acceptable list of countries and bodies of water. If the location of the image is withheld, enter undisclosed location here.

Release Instructions/Information
The VI release status will either be Released or Not For Release. Only released imagery may be submitted to DVIDS.

If you cannot access or transmit DoD VI for release to DVIDS, please contact and coordinate via DVIDS and/or DMA Customer Services at: https://www.dmic.mil/Consumer-Service/Contact-Us. If required, staff will issue specific instructions for transmitting the images via regular email or AMRDEC SAFE.

FOUO: If an image is FOUO, or CUI, with no established public release clearance, it will not be sent to DVIDS. DoD VI not forwarded to DMA, such as imagery not for release, FOUO, or CUI, with no established public release clearance, shall be handled by the originating command in accordance with the DoD VI Records Schedule and DODD 8000.01 in coordination with the service or DoD Records Manager.

Classified: Classified DoD VI products will not be sent to DVIDS and shall not be handled by the originating command in accordance with the DoD VI Records Schedule and DODD 8000.01 in coordination with the service or DoD Records Manager.

Release Authority: Enter the name, duty position, phone number and/or email address of a person authorized in writing by his or her command to release DoD imagery.

Examples of proper Release Instructions
Do not send FOUO or classified VI to DVIDS. DoD VI not forwarded to DMA shall be handled by the originating command.

Release Status: Released
Release Authority: Maj John Jones, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs Office, jjones@emailaddress.mil DSN 315-123-4567

FOUO: Release Authority: Maj John Jones, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs Office, jjones@emailaddress.mil DSN 315-123-4567

FOUO: Release Authority: Maj John Jones, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs Office, jjones@emailaddress.mil DSN 315-123-4567

Examples of proper Release Instructions
Do not send FOUO or classified VI to DVIDS. DoD VI not forwarded to DMA shall be handled by the originating command.

Release Status: Released
Release Authority: Maj John Jones, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs Office, jjones@emailaddress.mil DSN 315-123-4567

Classified: Classified DoD VI products will not be sent to DVIDS and shall not be handled by the originating command in accordance with the DoD VI Records Schedule and DODD 8000.01 in coordination with the service or DoD Records Manager.

Release Status: SECRET
Release Authority: Maj John Jones, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs Office, jjones@emailaddress.mil DSN 315-123-4567

Photographer (VI Professional) Rank/Name
Include the rank/rate and name of the photographer.

Photographer (VI Professional) Home Unit
Include the home unit of the photographer (e.g., 3rd Marine Division or 1st Combat Camera Squadron). Do not enter the name of the shooter’s service (e.g., U.S. Marine Corps).

Photographer (VI Professional) contact information
Include the photographer’s email (preferably an official .mil or .gov account) and a phone number.
FOA exemptions for FOUO and classified imagery

- **Exemption 1 (Only for imagery labeled SECRET):** Information that is classified to protect national security.
- **Exemption 4:** Trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is confidential or privileged.
- **Exemption 5:** Privileged communications within or between agencies, including:
  - Deliberative Process Privilege
  - Attorney-Work Product Privilege
  - Attorney-Client Privilege
- **Exemption 6:** Information that, if disclosed, would invade another individual’s personal privacy. (NOTE: This includes HIPAA considerations)
- **Exemption 7:** Information compiled for law enforcement purposes that:
  1. Could reasonably be expected to interfere with law enforcement proceedings
  2. Would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication
  3. Could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
  4. Could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source
  5. Would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions
  6. Could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual
- **Exemption 9:** Geological information on wells.

Sources: [www.foia.gov](http://www.foia.gov); DoD Manual 5200.01, Volume 4

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**Metadata cross references**

The following provides a cross reference for the field names in four commonly used captioning software programs. Captioning for video, which provides instructions on what to include in each field, uses the MediaGrid field names as subchapter titles. If you have no captioning software, include this information in a Word file.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCC/MediaGrid</th>
<th>Photoshop</th>
<th>Photo Mechanic</th>
<th>Nikon View</th>
<th>Field Contents for DoD Imagery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PH Rank &amp; Name</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Contact/Creator</td>
<td>PH Rank/Name</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>The photographer's rank and full name. (32 character limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PH Home Unit</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Contact/Creator's Job Title</td>
<td>PH Home Unit</td>
<td>Author's Position</td>
<td>The photographer’s home unit. (32 character limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Shot</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Image/Date Created</td>
<td>Not Used</td>
<td>Date Created</td>
<td>The date the image was taken. This date must match the date in the VIRIN. (8 character limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base/Locale</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Image/City</td>
<td>Base/Locale</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>The base or city of the shoot. (32 character limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Province</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Image/State/Province</td>
<td>State/Province</td>
<td>State/Province</td>
<td>The state or province of the shoot. (32 character limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country/Area</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Image/Country/Area</td>
<td>Country/Area</td>
<td>Country/Area</td>
<td>The country or area of the shoot. For aerials, use either the country or the ocean area being flown over. (64 character limit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation/Exercise Name</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Content/Headline</td>
<td>Operation/Exercise Name</td>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>The name of the operation or exercise. If not part of an official operation or exercise, leave blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Content/Caption</td>
<td>Caption</td>
<td>Caption</td>
<td>The caption block should contain a caption and photographer's credit written in accordance with this guide (Chapter 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Content/Keywords</td>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>Insert appropriate keywords as instructed in Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption Editor</td>
<td>CS2/CS3/CS4/CS5 - IPTC/IPTC Content/Description Writer</td>
<td>Caption Editor</td>
<td>Caption Writer</td>
<td>The name of the individual editing the caption, if different than the photographer. (42 character limit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Caption Editor**

Include the rank and name of the person who wrote the caption. This can be the photographer or another person who reviewed the caption and metadata before it was submitted.

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Sources: [www.foia.gov](http://www.foia.gov); DoD Manual 5200.01, Volume 4
Chapter 6
Submitting imagery to DMA for the DoD VI Archive (DVIA)

DMA is the official records manager for DoD Visual Information (VI) Program, ensuring DoD visual history is preserved through regular transfers of VI to the National Archives and Records Administration.

Before selected images are submitted to DMA, photographers, videographers and their respective units have the primary responsibility for ensuring each submitted image meets the captioning and metadata standards described earlier in this guide.

Per DoD Instruction 5040.02, unclassified imagery, with associated captions and metadata, must be submitted to DMA via DVIDS. This includes images posted to DoD and non-DoD web pages and social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and Instagram, as these are all public releases of DoD VI.

While many military commands post selected imagery on social media sites such as the ones described above, posting imagery on social media is not a substitute for sending imagery to DMA/DVIDS.

Submit only high-resolution images using the methods below; low-resolution imagery is of little historical value.

Imagery used in social media

DoD imagery used in social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, etc.) is considered a permanent, released DoD record. The original, hi-res version of the images and video used on social media must also be sent to DVIDS for archiving.

DVIDS (Released only)

Submitting to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) is by far the most common and most expedient way of submitting unclassified, released imagery. DVIDS forwards a copy of all received images directly to the Defense VI Archive (DVIA) 180 days after receiving it; the original version remains in DVIDS.

DVIDS accepts only officially released, public domain imagery. Do not send unreleased, copyrighted or For Official Use Only (FOUO) files.

In order to submit imagery to DVIDS, you must have an account with DVIDS. This can be accomplished by visiting https://www.dvidshub.net and clicking on Register. Be sure to choose your organization or unit and choose a Priority of Effort, which can be tailored for your organization’s marketing needs. Once you are registered, find the DVIDS Direct tab at the top of the DVIDS page to begin the submissions process.

• Up to 2GB of imagery can be submitted through the web interface in a single session.
  • Ensure each imagery file is populated with a caption and the appropriate metadata.
  • Also complete the DVIDS metadata screen for each asset.
  • DVIDS also offers FileZilla to facilitate FTP/SFTP submissions. Information can be found at the DVIDS Direct page.
  • DMA Customer Services can be reached at (877) 384-3724 or http://www.dimoc.mil/Customer-Service/Contact-Us.

DVIDS website: https://www.dvidshub.net (Registration required for submission)

Note: The Service Shown (category) has been rescinded. Email/phone (supplemental category) now goes in Release Instructions.
Email or AMRDEC SAFE direct to DMA (Released)
If you cannot access or transmit to DVIDS, please call and coordinate with DMA Customer Services. If required, staff will issue specific instructions for transmitting the images via regular email or AMRDEC SAFE, which allows for the secure transmission of up 25 items or 2GB of data.

FOUO/CUI imagery to DMA
DoD VI products designated as "For Official Use Only" or "Controlled Unclassified Information" with no established public release clearance will not be sent to DVIDS.

DoD VI not forwarded to DMA shall be handled by the originating command in accordance with the DoD VI Records Schedule and DODD 8000.01 in coordination with the service or DoD Records Manager.

Classified VI imagery
Classified DoD VI products will not be sent to DVIDS and shall be handled by the originating command in accordance with the DoD VI Records Schedule and DODD 8000.01 in coordination with the service or DoD Records Manager.

Physical and non-current visual information
The Defense VI Records Center regularly receives physical (or ‘legacy’) visual information records or media, to be digitized, preserved and included in the DoD’s permanent VI collection, the DVA and transfer to NARA. Legacy VI includes all forms of media, such as film, slides, prints, tapes, negatives and audio, as well as unsubmitted digital VI stored on hard drives and other electronic media.

In many instances, when units or commands relocate or are inactivated, or when facilities are closed, large amounts of legacy VI are discovered in storage areas. These media items or records are both official DoD records and DoD property, and must be handled appropriately in accordance with Federal law and DoD regulations. If your unit or command is in possession of such content, please contact the DMA Archivist via emails for instructions on the handling and disposition of those records by following the link in the box above.

Physical assets must be shipped to DMA Defense VI Records Center (DVIRC) for further processing and archiving. Please do not ship physical assets without contacting DVIRC first. Do not scan physical media on your own or send it to DVIDS or DMA.

For more information:
www.dimoc.mil/Submit-DoD-VI/Preparing-Physical-legacy-VI/
DMA-Archivists@mail.mil

Chapter 7
Grammar review
Good captions are difficult to write without a solid foundation in the principles that govern sentence construction. The following review of basic grammar rules will help writers and editors produce clear, effective captions.

Sentence structure
A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate. It is a complete thought that can stand alone. The subject is a noun or noun phrase, and is what the sentence is about. In captioning parlance, it is the “who.” The predicate is what is being written about the subject. This includes the verb, or action, of the sentence as well as other people or objects that the subject acts upon. When writing any sentence, begin with these building blocks: subject-verb-object. Place all supplementary information around this fundamental structure.

Fragment: The aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) during a training exercise in the Pacific Ocean June 22, 2011.
Sentence: The aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) participates in a training exercise in the Pacific Ocean June 22, 2011.

In the above sentence, the subject is “U.S. Soldiers” and the predicate contains both the action of the sentence, “patrol,” and the object of the action, “a neighborhood.”

Avoid sentence fragments. A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence; it is usually either missing a subject or a verb or is not a complete thought. Fragments usually occur when captioning images that at first glance appear to show no action (e.g., images of equipment, geographic locations or local color). Assign an action, the “what,” to the image to ensure a complete sentence.

Avoid run-on sentences. A run-on sentence contains two or more independent clauses (word groups that can stand alone as a sentence) that are joined without either a semicolon or a comma and a linking word.

Run-on: The Sailors returned home from a six-month deployment and they celebrated when their ship moored pierside.
Fix the sentence with a comma: The Sailors returned home from a six-month deployment, and they celebrated when their ship moored pierside.

Do not start a sentence with a numeral. The only exception to this rule is when starting a sentence with a year; however, avoid this when possible. Usually it can be fixed by adding a word at the start of the sentence.

Incorrect: 1st Marine Division is engaged in operations in the Anbar province of Iraq.
Correct: The 1st Marine Division is engaged in operations in the Anbar province of Iraq.

Punctuation
Apostrophes Use apostrophes to indicate possession or in contractions; do not use to indicate a noun is plural.
With acronyms, use an apostrophe only to indicate a possessive. Add a lowercase s to make an acronym plural. Remember that its indicates possession, while it’s is a contraction of it is.

**Plural:** The COs met to discuss the mission.

**Possessive:** At the CO’s request, they discussed the mission.

### Commas in a series
The appropriate use of commas makes it easier to read a sentence. Commas placement is determined partially by grammar rules and partially through judgment.

Use commas to separate each element in a series. For example: The flag is red, white and blue. Use a comma before the conjunction (known as the serial comma) only when necessary to avoid confusion, such as in the following example: The vessel performs utility boat functions such as submarine support, moving barges and floats, and personnel transfers.

If any of the elements in a series contain commas, use semicolons instead. For example: Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel; U.S. Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Secretary of State John Kerry met to discuss defense policy.

### Commas and clauses
When joining two word groups that can stand alone as separate sentences, use a comma before a coordinating conjunction or use a semicolon with no conjunction. Do not use a comma if one clause is dependent (does not stand alone as a complete sentence).

Use a comma after introductory clauses or phrases. Such clauses usually tell when, where, why or how the main action of the clauses is dependent (does not stand alone as a complete sentence).

Not every clause that appears to be independent requires a comma. For example: After sharing a meal, the Airmen will resume training.

Note that a ship’s name is not a clause; do not separate it from the sentence with commas.

### Commas and adjectives
**Separate coordinate adjectives** with commas (coordinate adjectives modify the noun in the same way). For example: She was a strong, loyal, well-trained Marine. Each adjective describes the Marine.

Do not separate cumulative adjectives (cumulative adjectives must stay in order to make sense). For example: Three large brown camels moved toward the convoy.

How to tell the difference? Put the word “and” between each adjective and reverse the order of the adjectives. If the sentence still makes sense, use commas.

**That/which** Use that for essential information; do not separate with a comma. Use which for nonessential elements; use commas to set off the clause. For example:

The Airmen needed a uniform that was wash and wear.

The Airmen needed a uniform which was wash and wear.

How to tell the difference? If you were to remove a restrictive element from a sentence, it would significantly change its meaning. Use this rule to know which to use. In the first example above, the fact that the uniform must be wash and wear is essential to understanding the sentence. In the second, the fact that the boots are expensive is additional information; the essence of the sentence is that the Airmen need new boots.

### Commas and titles
Titles and other identifying adjectives listed after a name should be separated with commas; those listed before the name are adjectives and do not require commas.

**Examples of compound adjectives**
- Forward-deployed location
- Nuclear-powered aircraft carrier
- Fixed-wing aircraft

**Common words with prefixes that do not take hyphens**
- resupply
- deworming
- noncommissioned
- multinational
- prefight
- counterterrorism

**Periods** Use a period when abbreviating military titles. For example: Tech. Sgt. James Cooper.

**Mechanics**
**Prefixes** Refer to The Associated Press Stylebook or Webster’s New World College Dictionary for guidance on whether or not to hyphenate a word with a prefix. This section provides guidance for terms that commonly appear in DoD captions.

In most cases, prefixes join with the root word without a hyphen (see box to the right).

Hyphenate words with the prefix self. For example: self-controlled, self-taught, self-defense.

In most cases, hyphenate if the prefix ends in a vowel and the root word begins with a vowel (de-ice, pre-existing, re-enlist).

There are a few exceptions to these rules, such as: cooperate, coordinate, pre-dawn, pre-position (meaning to position personnel and equipment before acting), pre-deployment, counter improvised explosive device and multi-Service.
**Suffixed** Refer to *The Associated Press Stylebook* or *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* for guidance on whether or not to hyphenate a word with a suffix.

In general, adjectives with the suffix -wide are one word. For example: base-wide, not base-wide or base wide. When attaching the suffix to an acronym, use a hyphen, as in DoD-wide.

**Compound words** Several terms can be either one or two words, depending on the use. In most cases, when used as a verb, they are two words, and when used as a noun or an adjective, they are one word. These rules apply to several common terms, such as stand down/standdown; line up/lineup; take out/takeout.

The terms onload and offload are one word in all cases. However, the words are jargon, so use load or unload instead whenever possible.

The terms check-in and checkout are treated differently. Use check-in as a noun and adjective, check in as a verb. Use checkout as a noun and adjective, but check out as a verb.

**Capitalization**

**U.S. and foreign military** Capitalize service branch names when referring to U.S. forces; do not capitalize when referring to foreign military. For instance, it is U.S. Army, but British army, Iraqi police, not Iraqi Police.

Capitalize the proper names of foreign military branches: British Royal Air Force, not British Royal air force. However, in accordance with the rule above, the common noun would be British air force. In the same vein, it is Afghan National Army, or Afghan army.

Capitalize Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine and Coast Guardsman when referring to U.S. forces (U.S. Soldiers, but Dutch soldiers). However, cadet and midshipman are ranks, so capitalize them only when they’re used before a name.

Do not capitalize airman or airmen when referring to unnamed Navy personnel; in that case, the term is part of a generic rank/rate. (e.g., U.S. Navy airmen stand in formation.) However, when it’s used as part of a Sailor’s rating, it is capitalized. (e.g., U.S. Navy Aviation Ordnanceman Airman John Smith salutes an officer.)

Capitalize a rank or title (such as commanding officer) when it precedes a name; use lowercase when it follows a name, is set off by commas or stands alone.

**Proper nouns** A proper noun names a particular person, place or thing. Capitalize all proper nouns, to include names of people, organizations, operations and exercises (e.g., Sgt. Sharon Anderson, Department of Defense, New Dawn, Cobra Gold).

**Common nouns** A common noun names categories of persons, places or things.

Capitalize common nouns only if they are part of a proper noun, such as a title or an organization (e.g., U.S. Embassy, Operation New Dawn).

**Incorrect:** They were overrun by Security Forces during an Operational Readiness Exercise.

**Correct:** They were overrun by security forces during an operational readiness exercise.

**Incorrect:** The Female Engagement Team leaders met with the new members of the Provincial Reconstruction Team.

**Correct:** The female engagement team leaders met with the new members of the provincial reconstruction team.

A general rule is if there is more than one of something, do not capitalize.

**All caps** Do not use all capital letters for anything but acronyms. Ship names, release status and other terms should all be regular text. For example:

*The hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) moors off the coast of El Salvador Nov. 5, 2011. The ship was on a four-month humanitarian mission. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class John Smith)*

**Acronyms** Acronyms are capitalized, but the terms to which they refer are only capitalized if they are proper nouns. Do not capitalize a term solely because it is assigned an acronym.

**Incorrect:** Forward Operating Base (FOB)

**Correct:** forward operating base (FOB)

**Correct:** Forward Operating Base (FOB) Walton
Chapter 8
DoD Visual Information Ethics

The Department of Defense (DoD), primarily DoD military, civilian and contractor personnel who produce, edit or release visual information (VI), must maintain complete credibility when presenting DoD VI as fact. All personnel involved in the creation of DoD VI shall ensure it meets or exceeds the highest ethical standards followed by the DoD and the news industry.

As visual information technology continues to advance, it is imperative that DoD photographers maintain integrity by presenting VI accurately depicting a scene and subject as originally recorded by the camera. Photographers must acknowledge any manipulations beyond standard preparation of visual information for publication (e.g., other than basic correction of color, brightness and contrast, and judicious cropping that does not alter the context or meaning of the camera original).

DoD Instruction 5040.02 states in part, "The undisclosed modifications or enhancements of official DoD imagery by persons acting for or on behalf of the DoD is prohibited. Any and all image modification of enhancement for any purposes must be disclosed in the caption data so that the image does not mislead or deceive.”

In this chapter, the differences between photos, photo illustrations and prohibited alterations will be outlined. Note the only two permissible categories for still photography in caption credits are ‘photo’ and ‘photo illustration.’ See Chapter 3, Photographer’s credit, page 29.

Photos

Department of Defense VI documentation is defined in DoD Instruction 5040.02 as “Imagery depicting actual events, activities, phenomena, places, or people, recorded primarily to create a record of the subject matter.”

In most cases, this refers to visual documentation of uncontrolled action, such as military training and operations in progress, in which the photographer has no bearing on the events around him/her. However, it can also refer to certain instances of controlled action, such as official portraits, or personnel posing for a photograph during a formal event, such as a change of command or military ball. In those instances, the photographer may offer basic direction to the subjects of the image, such as where to stand.

For a given image to be labeled as a photo, only the most minimal and basic corrections as described above are permitted. Standard color and contrast adjustments for publication purposes do not need to be disclosed.

EXCEPTION: Occasionally, a photo or video will show Personally Identifiable Information (PII), such as identification tags or access badges, or other sensitive items. It is permissible to obscure such information using digital means, as long as it is made clear within the photo or video caption that portions of the image were blurred for security or privacy concerns. (See example at right)

Photo illustrations

Photo illustrations are images that have been manipulated beyond minimal corrections as described above, or were entirely staged by a photographer. Such visual information can be used with proper disclosure – for aesthetic, creative, artistic or other purposes such as highlighting a theme or illustrating a feature story. Photo illustrations also include images that have been retouched, filtered or are manipulated in any other way. Images that are stitched together or contain cutouts, collages, panoramas, vignetting, multiple exposures (including High Dynamic Range techniques) or any added text or graphics are considered photo illustrations. The digital movement, addition or subtraction of any content or elements within an image used for illustrative purposes must be fully disclosed. Computer-generated artwork is always considered a photo illustration.

The conversion of an original color photograph or video to black-and-white, or to isolate one color, before submission to DVIDS or DIMOC, requires disclosure as an illustration. Similarly, cropping a photo in such a way as to alter the original context of what was captured should be disclosed. Standard, judicious cropping to remove irrelevant background space is permitted without disclosure.

Using a filter in any type of electronic editing application to make an image appear blurred, solarized, embossed, or resemble, for example, sepia-tone, a painting, or having been taken on film likewise makes it a photo illustration requiring disclosure.

Photos or video that was staged or made use of props for illustrative purposes would also be considered a photo illustration.

The responsibility lies with the photographer — and anyone else involved in the processing of an image — to disclose manipulations above and beyond standard color adjustments.

Rule of thumb: If you think you need to disclose manipulation techniques used on an image, do so.

In short, if an image has been manipulated above and beyond basic color corrections, it must be labeled as such in the caption block, after the caption credit, using plain language, as shown in the examples at right.

The original photo must also be sent to DVIDS for archiving.

NOTE: The disclosure also should appear in the Release Instructions field of the metadata (see page 37). This demonstrates the releasing authority is aware of the modifications to the image being sent to DIMOC.

Prohibited alterations

Any DoD photo or video that is altered to deliberately mislead or deceive the U.S. Government, DoD personnel, the media or the American people is strictly prohibited.

DoD Instruction 5040.02, Enclosure 10, Section 1 states, “The alteration of official DoD imagery by persons acting for or on behalf of the DoD is prohibited. Prohibited alterations include the addition, removal, or changing of photographic details. Examples of prohibited alteration include the addition, changing, or removing of individuals, equipment, scenery, or the unrealistic changing of color or light.”

This includes alterations, including the addition, changing or removal of uniform or background items, to official photos or command photos, such as those posted in public spaces or displayed on a Department of Defense website or social media platform.

There have been several notable cases of altered DoD photos being submitted to public-facing websites and media outlets and presented as fact, resulting in one major news outlet temporarily banning all DoD-produced visual information from their wire services. Such prohibited alterations included changes to the background behind the subject, rank insignia, and uniform name tags, as well as copying and pasting one person’s head on another person’s body, and removing people from an image.

In short, alterations intended to present or portray something different than the reality and context of the original image constitutes a visual lie, and is a serious threat to the credibility and trustworthiness of the DoD, the military services and the DoD Visual Information community.

Reference: DoDI 5040.02, Enclosure 10

Further reading: National Press Photographers Association (http://www.nppa.org/ethics)
Chapter 9
Additional resources

The following publications are useful tools when writing captions for still or motion imagery. Use these sources for items not listed in this guide.

The Associated Press Stylebook, Associated Press, New York

Jane’s All the World’s Aircraft; Jane’s Yearbooks, London, and Franklin Watts Inc., New York


How to submit VI to DMA:
Physical: http://www.dimoc.mil/Submit-DoD-VI/Preparing-Physical-legacy-VI/

Policies:
http://www.dimoc.mil/References/DoD-VI-References/
https://vipro.defenseimagery.mil/

Grammar and Writing
AP Stylebook (login required): http://www.apstylebook.com/
Poynter’s News University: http://www.newsu.org/

Service-specific fact sheets and style guides:

Army

Navy

Air Force
(Air Force uses the DoD Visual Information Style Guide)

Marine Corps
http://www.marines.com/operating-forces/equipment

Coast Guard
http://www.overview.uscg.mil/Assets/
(online at a future date)

References to non-DoD websites are provided as a service and do not constitute or imply endorsement of these organizations or their programs by the U.S. Department of Defense. DoD is not responsible for the content of pages found at these sites.

URLs listed in this reference are current as of the date of publication.