

SPC Moody

Military and Professional Bearing

A Sentinel stands guard over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Immaculate appearance, confidence, and discipline, the Sentinel stands above all else as an example of military bearing. Military bearing is an essential part of an efficient Army. The difficult in this trait stems from the inability to acquire it as you only have the ability to learn it.

Merriam-Webster defines bearing as “the manner in which one behaves or comports oneself.” This can be in a positive or negative way depending on the person’s actions, behavior, and demeanor. Soldiers display their bearing in their work ethic, upholding the Army Values, character, confidence, as well as the many other traits that make up their individuality. Bearing forms based on individuals’ ideals and traits. Confidence, appearance, hygiene, physical fitness, and lifestyle are all major components of what defines bearing.

Bearing is verbal and non-verbal. It encompasses the individual as a whole. First-impressions compose bearing and develop on the building blocks of trust, gaining or losing. Instilled into every Soldier in basic training are the standards of service are and how each Soldier is supposed to carry themselves on and off duty. Education on the Army Values, customs and courtesies, and the standards of service instill on every Soldier who serve. Many Soldiers chose to embody only certain aspects of these standards, but many chose to live according to each of these values. The Army refers to this as military bearing.

Military bearing describes the “true Soldier package.” Defined as a Soldier who will “conduct oneself in a professional manner to bring credit upon oneself and the Army at all times” (armyupress.army.mil). Military bearing is an essential part of success in the Army as it influences the Soldier, unit, and force as a whole. Military bearing is the demonstration of confidence, discipline, and attitude in everyday life while on or off duty. Soldiers should never lose their military bearing just because they are off duty.

Soldiers serve as ambassadors to the world and United States Citizens as they represent the very best of the United States. Poor representation can lead to adverse effects within the Army itself and the country as a whole. Soldiers present who they are in what they post on social media, what they say and how they act in public, and by their everyday lives. Simple questions can begin to determine the measure of a Soldier. Are they punctual, are uniforms serviceable, is the Soldier hardworking or do they complain? Analyses of all aspects of life determine what they represent for themselves and for their organization.

Unit readiness plays hand in hand with military bearing when considering upholding the standards of appearance. Soldiers who fall out of compliance with AR 600-9 poorly represent their unit and the Army as a whole. The first part of a Soldier noticed first is their appearance. While that Soldier may be confident, proud, and conduct himself appropriately, ultimately appearance can be the deciding factor.

An example of a lack of military bearing is the action of putting “hands in pockets.” While the act, in and of itself, is harmless, Army Regulation 670-1 states uniformed personnel “... will not place their hands in their pockets, expect momentarily to place or retrieve objects.” The act of placing hands in pockets disrupts military

bearing as the act itself is not professional or illegal, but it is in conflict with Army regulations. This breaches military bearing as the Soldier is not conducting himself accordingly.

With everything military bearing encompasses, why is it important to the Army? Why is it important for leaders to maintain a military bearing? Military bearing is important because it sets disciplined Soldiers apart from those who may not fully embrace and embody the Army. Military bearing is taking pride in oneself and in the Army. A Soldier, who puts in time on their appearance, embodies the Army Values on and off duty, and projects confidence in their work and everyday lives creates an environment where presentation demonstrates the reliability of that Soldier.

It is a leader's responsibility to represent their organization and act as the standard for all members of that organization. If a leader's appearance is not within Army standards, the leader disrespects what they represent. Junior Soldiers model themselves after the leader's they work with. Leaders who conduct themselves outside of the Army Standards can create a toxic environment for their unit. Soldiers will develop based off the traits of those leaders and the unit becomes inefficient.

The Sentinel represents the respect of the Army, honoring those who went before. The responsibility of the future rests on the shoulders of all Soldiers. Military bearing is the difference between efficiency and inefficiency. Leaders must set the example for Soldiers in order to maintain a disciplined and efficient fighting force.