

# Americans

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return flight at the Nashville airport, a married couple came over and felt compelled to thank me for my service. The man told me he was a truck driver. He and his wife traveled the country together as a team.

He began to tell me of his prior service as a Soldier and how proud they were of our contributions and sacrifices to our nation. As we finished our breakfast, the man returned to my table, scooped up the bill, and told me I would not be paying for breakfast. This meal was purchased by an American for an American. I was extremely humbled and grateful for the support of the American people throughout my trip.

Upon my return, I asked myself what actually ties us together in this hateful war? What keeps the support of the American people for the Soldiers even though the daily news seems to tell a different story of our floundering support at home? What binds us together? The answer was located on my right shoulder the whole time, staring at me in full living color.

The American flag is the symbol of our nation, the tie that binds us together. In respect for our American public and their unwavering support, I think it's appropriate I revisit how this symbol came to reside on our shoulders and what obligations come with the honor of wearing it.

The authorization to wear the symbol of the United States of America's flag was given to us by the people of the United States, through Congress and approved by the president. You can find the laws relating to the flag of the United States in detail in the United States Code (Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 8) which is supplemented by Executive Orders and Presidential Proclamations.

Here are a few of the articles under Respect of the Flag:

- No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America; the flag should not be dipped to any person or thing.
- The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always be allowed to fall free.
- The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown."
- No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations. The flag

represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing. Therefore, the lapel flag pin being a replica should be worn on the left lapel near the heart."

People seem to wonder why the flag patch on the Army uniform is reversed. The reason has to do with proper display of the flag. The blue field of stars should always be in the highest position of honor. When viewing the flag on a wall, the highest position of honor is the upper left when displayed horizontally, and at the top (upper right) when displayed vertically.

When displayed on a "moving object" like a person or vehicle, the highest position of honor is the front, not the rear. So, the field of blue should be displayed to the front. For flag patches worn on uniforms, the same principle applies.

The blue star field always faces towards the front with the red and white stripes behind. Think of the flag not as a patch, but as a loose flag attached to the Soldier's arm like a flagpole. As the Soldier moves forward, the red and white stripes will flow to the back.

Everything we do, everything we say, every combat action and decision we make is represents the people of the United States. The enemy challenges our ethics, values, morals and courage more today on an asymmetrical battlefield than ever before. We have to be strong, never wavering. We must always do what's right individually.

Each Soldier's actions, as the flagpole of America, represents all of us. Fighting to our front is no longer an option. We are surrounded by challenges and our flag is being attacked from all sides. It is each Soldier's obligation is defend it with honor.

Another question we are often asked is, "doesn't a red, white and blue flag on a camouflaged uniform defeat the purpose of camouflage?" Yes it does. Noncommissioned officers are charged with upholding and safeguarding the traditions of the Army.

Since the beginning of our nation's history, Soldiers have fought behind the colors of our nation. Being the color bearer waving our nations symbol in full view and color in the face of the enemy, and charging and rallying Soldiers into fierce battle was a place of honor. Most color bearers paid the ultimate price for this honor. In today's Army each one of us is a color bearer charged with honoring our nation's symbol. We fly this flag and serve as the flagpole of our nation, defending it, respecting it, honoring it, and willingly dying for it if necessary.

The Army has issued the infrared olive flag for tactical reasons. Soldiers may wear this flag when on operational missions. Some Soldiers forget to change it, or wear a plastic color flag thinking maybe it's cool.

I choose not to hide my cloth living colors ever, no matter what the cost. The American people honored me and gave me the right to wear these colors. I wear them proudly. I wear them in respect for all the American people who choose not to hide their support of our nation and Soldiers during this trying war.

I am proud to wear my nation's colors for everyone across America who stands rigidly behind us no matter what obstacles we face, how we may stumble, or the mistakes we may make, knowing in their hearts our fight is for freedom. I dedicate this article to all those who have sacrificed their lives for my freedom and I display my colors in their honor.

I am extremely proud to serve in Iraq defending freedom and democracy, teaching Soldiers, guiding America's sons and daughters during this war. You can tell because I am a flagpole for America and my pride is displayed in cloth on my right shoulder in full living color everyday. True Americans do not hide their colors.

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