



With Pride & Distinction

Junior Officer Advisory Group

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Reflection on Wearing the Uniform

I had just ended a grueling day of protecting, promoting and advancing the public health. It was one of those days where the work seemed never ending and everything was a priority. On my way home, my wife had called and asked if I could stop by the store and buy some groceries to hold us over. Normally this request wouldn't bother me, but a "Snowpocalypse" was forecasted and I knew the store would be overrun by people stocking up on milk as well as bread; needless to say, it was the last place I wanted to be.... especially in uniform. It had been a year since my commissioning and the novelty of wearing the uniform had begun to fade, I really was in no mood to interact with anyone beyond pleasant formalities. I was able to pick up everything and go unnoticed, I made my way to the cashier and was faced with multiple lines that seemed to go on endlessly.

I waited patiently on the line and tried my best to keep to myself, but then it happened. I heard an elderly man say, "Excuse me young man, are you in the Navy?" I cannot lie, in that moment I was tempted to just reply "yes sir" and save myself the long list of questions that usually follow when I respond properly. I suddenly had a flash back of the admiral who spoke at my OBC graduation (OBC 95 "WE ARE READY") about how he was having one of those days and was rushing to go see his child partake in a sporting event. He emphasized how he stood proudly in uniform and conducted himself in the way that is expected of a commissioned officer. Out of my mouth came "No sir, I am a Health Services Officer in the United

States Public Health Service." I began to go into detail about disasters that we responded to, the roles we are involved in on a day to day basis, and our history. The man expressed how he was extremely impressed, and he began to go into how he served in the Marine Corps. Others within ear shot of the conversation also chimed in on how thankful they were to have the Commissioned Corps deal with these issues. I must admit my mood began to change and a sense of pride began to replace the defeated feeling I originally had. As I was paying and getting ready to leave, the man approached me one last time to let me know that he did not mean to put me on the spot or draw attention to me. He noted, as a prior service member himself, he was drawn to how well kept my uniform was, and how I conducted myself.

On my way home, I couldn't help but reflect on what happened, and I was grateful for the reminder of what wearing this uniform means. I encourage you all to take some time to look over your uniform to ensure that you don't have any loose threads and your ribbons are clean and in the right place. Continue your efforts in making sure your uniform is clean and presentable. Go over our current uniform policies and check to see if your use of certain items is still authorized. Do not settle for mediocracy when it comes to representing our service. Our uniform is not merely a blend of polyester and cotton of khaki. It is a symbol of our rich history as well as a tribute to the others who served and sacrificed before us. I am sure we all have had moments like this one, and I encourage you to take time and reflect what our uniform represents. Hopefully you will be able to attain some inspiration that will help you to continue to serve with pride and distinction.

Do you know which ODU command ball cap is authorized?



The Commissioned Corps Instruction [CC431.01](#), issued 29 April 2014, updates the authorized rank devices, including the ODU command ball cap sewn on ranks. The authorized size of each rank varies, but be aware of the correct size when accepting uniform components from other officers. The complete table can be found in Appendix C of CC431.01.

Ensign and LTJG	W 0.28" x H 0.75"
LT	W 0.75" x H 0.75"
LCDR and CDR	W 0.78" x H 0.73"
CAPT	W 1.92" x H 1.01"

The ODU command ball cap B is the authorized cover.