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Air HQ/C 23406/24/PS

24 Feb 03

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DISCIPLINE : GROWTH OF HAIR AND BEARD
AND WEARING OF TURBANS

1. The existing policy on the subject is laid down vide para 425 of Regulations for the Air Force, 1964 (RE) and Air HQ letter of even reference dated 06 Oct 99. This policy not only suffers from some anomalies but is also silent on certain aspects of growing of hair and beard. Against this background, the policy of growing hair, beard and wearing of turbans has been re-examined. It is decided to remove the existing anomalies and make the policy explicitly clear and implement common code of conduct and bearing by the Air Force personnel.

2. The revised policy on the subject is as under:-

(a) Sikh personnel who wear turban and keep beard at the time of commissioning/ enrolment would continue to do so. These personnel must maintain the beard neatly dressed/tied and rolled and not kept flowing. They are to wear the turban while in uniform/civil dress whether inside or outside the camp except during PT/Games and activities related to operations where wearing of turban is not feasible. At all such occasions, Sikh personnel are to wear turban/patka or handkerchief over the knot of hair as appropriate. Sikh personnel keeping short hair and beard are to wear turban as applicable to those maintaining long hair.

(b) Only those Muslim personnel who had kept beard alongwith moustache at the time of commissioning/ enrolment prior to 01 Jan 2002, would be allowed to keep beard and moustache. Such personnel are to maintain it in a manner that it is neat, trimmed and tidy and not more than the length which could be covered by one fist. Muslims who have grown beard after joining service should shave off the beard. Under no circumstances, a Muslim person who had beard at the time of joining service before 01 Jan 2002 shall be allowed to maintain beard without moustache. Moustache would be a part of the beard.

(c) Non Sikh personnel are not permitted to keep beard other than on medical grounds or for a short period towards fulfillment of specific religious rites and ceremonies after obtaining specific permission from the Commanding Officer. However, the period is not to exceed 30 days. The CO shall accord such permission after ascertaining the absolute necessity and compulsion. Such individuals who are allowed to grow beard will not be permitted to attend any formal service functions in uniform or in civil dress during the period when beard is grown.

(d) Personnel other than Sikh are to keep their hair neat and trim and shave the beard daily. Hair should not fall on the forehead when the cap is worn. The hair on the neck and around the ears should be well trimmed and not touch the ear lobe. The side locks should not extend below the upper half of the ear. Moustache, if worn, is to be of moderate length and well kept and trimmed in a manner that the mouth and lips are not covered.

(e) While in uniform, the personal appearance of an individual should not give any religious bias. Tilak/Vibhuti on the forehead, thread on the wrist/arm and trinket in the ear etc are not to be worn.

(f) Where ever change in the personal identity has taken place, documentation and issue of fresh identity papers is to be initiated at the earliest.

3. This policy comes into force with immediate effect.

4. This supercedes Air HQ letter of even reference dated 06 Oct 99.

sd/-

(S Krishnaswamy)
Air Chief Marshal
Chief of the Air Staff

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