



DoD/DoN Image Editing Policy

Reference: [Department of Defense Instruction 5040.02](#)

Alteration of Official DoD Imagery

Department of Defense imagery is used to make decisions and inform the public. Mission success depends on official DoD imagery being complete, timely and accurate. Anything that casts doubt on DoD imagery will not be tolerated.

Permitted Alterations

Photographic techniques common to digital imaging stations used to achieve the accurate recording of an event or object are considered corrective techniques and are permitted.

- Dodging
- Burning
- Color Balancing
- Cropping
- Spotting
- Contrast Adjustment
- Illustrations
- Masking



DoD/DoN Image Editing Policy

Dodging



Original image



Adjusted image

It is acceptable to adjust the brightness of a portion of the image (dodge) to render an accurate recording of an event or object.

Burning



Original image



Adjusted image

It is acceptable to adjust the brightness of a portion of the image (burn) to render an accurate recording of an event or object.



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Color Balancing



Original image



Corrected image

It is acceptable to perform minor color-corrections using the “Curves” or the “Levels” functions in Photoshop to achieve an accurate recording of an event or object. Any adjustment that alters the image in a way that misrepresents the original situation is not authorized.

Cropping



Original image



Cropped image

Cropping an image to isolate an area of interest or to fit the image to a layout is not considered an alteration. When a cropped image is submitted please send both images with unique VIRINs to increase marketability. We generally prefer to post an uncropped image to give editors more flexibility.



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Spotting



Original image



Corrected image

It is acceptable to remove spots caused by dust accumulating on the camera CCD sensor. This is the only time you should use the cloning stamp on DoD imagery.

Contrast/Brightness



Original image



Corrected image

It is acceptable to adjust the image brightness and contrast to achieve an accurate recording of an event or object.



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Masking



It is acceptable to mask portions of an image for specific criminal investigation, privacy, security, or legal requirements. You must, however, state in the caption that the image is intentionally masked. DoD requires that the original, unaltered image be sent for later inclusion in the Navy's permanent archive. Masking an image should be reserved as a last resort and the image might not be selected for Navy.mil.

Photo Illustration



Photo illustration

The intent of a photo illustration is to depict a concept that might not necessarily be rooted in reality or is an obvious attempt to create an image that depicts a theme or idea. Most photo illustrations are controlled during photography and/or by some manipulation during post production. These types of images are not live-action events and must be clearly identified as "U.S. Navy photo illustration by" in the byline and the release authority and contact information must be embedded in the metadata.



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Prohibited Alterations

- Removing or adding objects or people to the original scene
- Changing rank, awards, emblems, or other uniform items
- Excessive use of the Sharpen function to enhance an out-of-focus image
- Changing color balance in a way that alters the scene
- Removing facial blemishes or wrinkles
- Multiple exposures

U.S. Army



In 2008 the Army released an altered photo of Gen. Ann Dunwoody as part press release of Dunwoody becoming the first female four-star in the Army. Dunwoody was digitally removed from the photo on the left and inserted over an American flag. The image, right, was sent to the Associated Press. When the photo manipulation was discovered, Associated Press instituted an across-the-board embargo of all DoD imagery pending an investigation.



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Reuters



Reuters freelance photographer Adnan Hajj used the clone tool to add smoke to the image on the left for a more dramatic photo of an Israel air strike on a Beirut suburb. When the manipulation was discovered Reuters pulled all of Hajj's photos from their files and fired him. A decade later and the news agency's credibility still hasn't completely recovered.

Los Angeles Times



Los Angeles Times staff photographer Brian Walski combined two images, left, into one photograph during a British army evacuation in Basra. The photo was published on the newspaper's front page. Walski's editors discovered the manipulation and fired the photographer, then printed a retraction.



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Iran Missile Test



Original photo



Altered image

The Iranian government released an image of a medium-range missile test. One of the missiles did not launch successfully, so they altered the image to make the missile test appear to have been a complete success. This had the effect of eroding the Iranian government's credibility and casting doubt on imagery originating from military sources.

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For more information on NMCO programs and functions please visit:
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