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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
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Subject: Guidance on Transition and Archiving of Official Social Media Accounts

Pursuant to guidance issued by the White House on disposition of official social media accounts at the end of the current Administration (see White House Memo, Disposition of Official Social Media Accounts, October 31, 2016), this memo provides guidance regarding the transition and archiving of all official social media accounts across DoD, including accounts run by or for Presidential appointees confirmed by the Senate and other political appointees.

Official social media accounts include all accounts created and managed using federal government resources, including time, manpower, and funds, to communicate the work of the Department. Official accounts can be institutional (e.g., @SecDef) or individual (e.g., @DASDJohnson). This guidance applies to any official account maintained on a non-governmental platform, including, but not limited to, Twitter and Facebook.

Because official accounts have been created and maintained using federal resources, their content is considered to be the property of the federal government. Employees therefore may not retain official accounts or access to any official accounts in a personal capacity after departing the government or the government position associated with the account, as applicable.

Instead, official accounts must either be: 1) transferred to the next Administration or 2) closed. Retention and disposition of the records associated with the accounts should be managed in accordance with the appropriate DoD Component records schedule. Components should work with their records managers to ensure proper compliance.



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Given the options listed above, the following are examples of how the Office of the Secretary of Defense plans to transition official institutional and individual accounts:

- Official Institutional Account (accounts denominated only with an official position title): Within 30 days after the departure of the official associated with the institutional account, content posted to the account during the departing official's tenure must be managed and preserved in accordance with the proper records schedule. For example, content posted on the Secretary of Defense's Twitter account, @SecDef, will be managed in accordance with File Series 200 of DoD Administrative Instruction 15, Volume II. Components should follow the most pertinent records schedule, in consultation with their records manager, given that not every Component currently has a records schedule specific to social media records. This is to ensure that if the new Administration chooses not to use the previously established official presence, the records are nonetheless preserved appropriately. On the final day of activity for the account, @SecDef will post its final messages and the password and login information will be provided to the designated point of contact for use by the next Administration. If the new Administration makes clear BEFORE the account holder's final day of service that it does not want to use the official institutional account, the account should be closed no later than January 20, 2017, and the associated records managed in accordance with the proper records schedule.
- Official Individual Account (accounts including a personal name or identifier): Within 30 days after the departure of the official associated with the official individual account (e.g. Twitter account @DASDJohnson), all content posted to the account during the departing official's tenure must be managed and preserved in accordance with the proper records schedule. On the final day of activity for the account, @DASDJohnson issues its final tweets and the account is closed.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) outlines how social media records should be captured and managed in compliance with federal records management laws, regulations, and policies (see: NARA Bulletin 2014-02: Guidance on Managing Social Media Records, October 25, 2013, <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/bulletins/2014/2014-02.html>; NARA, Documenting Your Public Service, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/publications/documenting-your-public-service.html>; NARA White Paper on Best Practices for the Capture of Social Media Records, May 2013, <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/resources/socialmediacapture.pdf>; and DoD Instruction 5015.02, DoD Records Management Program, February 24, 2015, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/501502p.pdf>). Components should work with their records managers, and DoD will provide a point of contact in the Office of the Chief Information Officer to coordinate with the Components' records managers to ensure compliance.

