

of evidence or of misconduct which, either alone or in conjunction with all other available evidence, justifies confinement.

Discussion

See R.C.M. 304(b) concerning who may order confinement.

(m) *Exceptions.*

(1) *Operational necessity.* The Secretary of Defense may suspend application of subsections (e)(2) and (3), (f), (h)(2)(A) and (C), and (i) of this rule to specific units or in specified areas when operational requirements of such units or in such areas would make application of such provisions impracticable.

(2) *At sea.* Subsections (e)(2) and (3), (f), (h)(2)(C), and (i) of this rule shall not apply in the case of a person on board a vessel at sea. In such situations, confinement on board the vessel at sea may continue only until the person can be transferred to a confinement facility ashore. Such transfer shall be accomplished at the earliest opportunity permitted by the operational requirements and mission of the vessel. Upon such transfer the memorandum required by subsection (h)(2)(C) of this rule shall be transmitted to the reviewing officer under subsection (i) of this rule and shall include an explanation of any delay in the transfer.

Discussion

Under this subsection the standards for confinement remain the same (although the circumstances giving rise to the exception could bear on the application of those standards). Also, pretrial confinement remains subject to judicial review. The prisoner's commander still must determine whether confinement will continue under subsection (h)(2)(B) of this rule. The suspension of subsection (h)(2)(A) of this rule removes the 72-hour requirement since in a combat environment, the commander may not be available to comply with it. The commander must make the pretrial confinement decision as soon as reasonably possible, however. (This provision is not suspended under subsection (2) since the commander of a vessel is always available.)

Rule 306. Initial disposition

(a) *Who may dispose of offenses.* Each commander has discretion to dispose of offenses by members of that command. Ordinarily the immediate commander of a person accused or suspected of committing an offense triable by court-martial initially determines how to dispose of that offense. A superior commander

may withhold the authority to dispose of offenses in individual cases, types of cases, or generally. A superior commander may not limit the discretion of a subordinate commander to act on cases over which authority has not been withheld.

Discussion

Each commander in the chain of command has independent, yet overlapping discretion to dispose of offenses within the limits of that officer's authority. Normally, in keeping with the policy in subsection (b) of this rule, the initial disposition decision is made by the official at the lowest echelon with the power to make it. A decision by a commander ordinarily does not bar a different disposition by a superior authority. See R.C.M. 401(c); 601(f). Once charges are referred to a court-martial by a convening authority competent to do so, they may be withdrawn from that court-martial only in accordance with R.C.M. 604.

See Appendix 3 with respect to offenses for which coordination with the Department of Justice is required.

(b) *Policy.* Allegations of offenses should be disposed of in a timely manner at the lowest appropriate level of disposition listed in subsection (c) of this rule.

Discussion

The disposition decision is one of the most important and difficult decisions facing a commander. Many factors must be taken into consideration and balanced, including, to the extent practicable, the nature of the offenses, any mitigating or extenuating circumstances, the character and military service of the accused, any recommendations made by subordinate commanders, the interest of justice, military exigencies, and the effect of the decision on the accused and the command. The goal should be a disposition that is warranted, appropriate, and fair.

In deciding how an offense should be disposed of, factors the commander should consider, to the extent they are known, include:

- (A) the character and military service of the accused;
- (B) the nature of and circumstances surrounding the offense and the extent of the harm caused by the offense, including the offense's effect on morale, health, safety, welfare, and discipline;
- (C) appropriateness of the authorized punishment to the particular accused or offense;
- (D) possible improper motives of the accuser;
- (E) reluctance of the victim or others to testify;
- (F) cooperation of the accused in the apprehension or conviction of others;
- (G) availability and likelihood of prosecution of the same or similar and related charges against the accused by another jurisdiction;
- (H) availability and admissibility of evidence;
- (I) existence of jurisdiction over the accused and the offense; and

R.C.M. 306(b)

(J) likely issues.

(c) *How offenses may be disposed of.* Within the limits of the commander's authority, a commander may take the actions set forth in this subsection to initially dispose of a charge or suspected offense.

Discussion

Prompt disposition of charges is essential. *See* R.C.M. 707 (speedy trial requirements).

Before determining an appropriate disposition, a commander should ensure that a preliminary inquiry under R.C.M. 303 has been conducted. If charges have not already been preferred, the commander may, if appropriate, prefer them and dispose of them under this rule. *But see* R.C.M. 601 (c) regarding disqualification of an accuser.

If charges have been preferred, the commander should ensure that the accused has been notified in accordance with R.C.M. 308, and that charges are in proper form. *See* R.C.M. 307. Each commander who forwards or disposes of charges may make minor changes therein. *See* R.C.M. 603(a) and (b). If major changes are necessary, the affected charge should be preferred anew. *See* R.C.M. 603(d).

When charges are brought against two or more accused with a view to a joint or common trial, *see* R.C.M. 307(c)(5); 601(e)(3). If it appears that the accused may lack mental capacity to stand trial or may not have been mentally responsible at the times of the offenses, *see* R.C.M. 706; 909; 916(k).

(1) *No action.* A commander may decide to take no action on an offense. If charges have been preferred, they may be dismissed.

Discussion

A decision to take no action or dismissal of charges at this stage does not bar later disposition of the offenses under subsection (c)(2) through (5) of this rule.

See R.C.M. 401(a) concerning who may dismiss charges, and R.C.M. 401(c)(1) concerning dismissal of charges.

When a decision is made to take no action, the accused should be informed.

(2) *Administrative action.* A commander may take or initiate administrative action, in addition to or instead of other action taken under this rule, subject to regulations of the Secretary concerned. Administrative actions include corrective measures such as counseling, admonition, reprimand, exhortation, disapproval, criticism, censure, reproach, rebuke, extra military instruction, or the administrative withholding of privileges, or any combination of the above.

Discussion

Other administrative measures, which are subject to regulations of the Secretary concerned, include matters related to efficiency reports, academic reports, and other ratings; rehabilitation and reassignment; career field reclassification; administrative reduction for inefficiency; bar to reenlistment; personnel reliability program reclassification; security classification changes; pecuniary liability for negligence or misconduct; and administrative separation.

(3) *Nonjudicial punishment.* A commander may consider the matter pursuant to Article 15, nonjudicial punishment. *See* Part V.

(4) *Disposition of charges.* Charges may be disposed of in accordance with R.C.M. 401.

Discussion

If charges have not been preferred, they may be preferred. *See* R.C.M. 307 concerning preferal of charges. However, *see* R.C.M. 601(c) concerning disqualification of an accuser.

Charges may be disposed of by dismissing them, forwarding them to another commander for disposition, or referring them to a summary, special, or general court-martial. Before charges may be referred to a general court-martial, compliance with R.C.M. 405 and 406 is necessary. Therefore, if appropriate, an investigation under R.C.M. 405 may be directed. Additional guidance on these matters is found in R.C.M. 401-407.

(5) *Forwarding for disposition.* A commander may forward a matter concerning an offense, or charges, to a superior or subordinate authority for disposition.

Discussion

The immediate commander may lack authority to take action which that commander believes is an appropriate disposition. In such cases, the matter should be forwarded to a superior officer with a recommendation as to disposition. *See also* R.C.M. 401(c)(2) concerning forwarding charges. If allegations are forwarded to a higher authority for disposition, because of lack of authority or otherwise, the disposition decision becomes a matter within the discretion of the higher authority.

A matter may be forwarded for other reasons, such as for investigation of allegations and preferal of charges, if warranted (*see* R.C.M. 303; 307), or so that a subordinate can dispose of the matter.

(d) *National security matters.* If a commander not authorized to convene general courts-martial finds that an offense warrants trial by court-martial, but believes that trial would be detrimental to the prosecution of a war or harmful to national security, the

matter shall be forwarded to the general court-martial convening authority for action under R.C.M. 407(b).

Rule 307. Preferral of charges

(a) *Who may prefer charges.* Any person subject to the code may prefer charges.

Discussion

No person may be ordered to prefer charges to which that person is unable to make truthfully the required oath. *See* Article 30(a) and subsection (b) of this rule. A person who has been the accuser or nominal accuser (*see* Article 1(9)) may not also serve as the convening authority of a general or special court-martial to which the charges are later referred. *See* Articles 22(b) and 23(b); R.C.M. 601; however, *see* R.C.M. 1302(b) (summary court-martial convening authority is not disqualified by being the accuser). A person authorized to dispose of offenses (*see* R.C.M. 306(a); 401–404 and 407) should not be ordered to prefer charges when this would disqualify that person from exercising that person's authority or would improperly restrict that person's discretion to act on the case. *See* R.C.M. 104 and 504(c).

Charges may be preferred against a person subject to trial by court-martial at any time but should be preferred without unnecessary delay. *See* the statute of limitations prescribed by Article 43. Preferral of charges should not be unnecessarily delayed. When a good reason exists—as when a person is permitted to continue a course of conduct so that a ringleader or other conspirators may also be discovered or when a suspected counterfeiter goes uncharged until guilty knowledge becomes apparent—a reasonable delay is permissible. However, *see* R.C.M. 707 concerning speedy trial requirements.

(b) *How charges are preferred; oath.* A person who prefers charges must:

(1) Sign the charges and specifications under oath before a commissioned officer of the armed forces authorized to administer oaths; and

(2) State that the signer has personal knowledge of or has investigated the matters set forth in the charges and specifications and that they are true in fact to the best of that person's knowledge and belief.

Discussion

See Article 136 for authority to administer oaths. The following form may be used to administer the oath:

“You (swear) (affirm) that you are a person subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, that you have personal knowledge of or have investigated the matters set forth in the foregoing

charge(s) and specification(s), and that the same are true in fact to the best of your knowledge and belief. (So help you God.)”

The accuser's belief may be based upon reports of others in whole or in part.

(c) *How to allege offenses.*

(1) *In general.* The format of charge and specification is used to allege violations of the code.

Discussion

See Appendix 4 for a sample of a Charge Sheet (DD Form 458).

(2) *Charge.* A charge states the article of the code, law of war, or local penal law of an occupied territory which the accused is alleged to have violated.

Discussion

The particular subdivision of an article of the code (for example, Article 118(1)) should not be included in the charge. When there are numerous infractions of the same article, there will be only one charge, but several specifications thereunder. There may also be several charges, but each must allege a violation of a different article of the code. For violations of the law of war, *see* (D) below.

(A) *Numbering charges.* If there is only one charge, it is not numbered. When there is more than one charge, each charge is numbered by a Roman numeral.

(B) *Additional charges.* Charges preferred after others have been preferred are labeled “additional charges” and are also numbered with Roman numerals, beginning with “I” if there is more than one additional charge. These ordinarily relate to offenses not known at the time or committed after the original charges were preferred. Additional charges do not require a separate trial if incorporated in the trial of the original charges before arraignment. *See* R.C.M. 601(e)(2).

(C) *Preemption.* An offense specifically defined by Articles 81 through 132 may not be alleged as a violation of Article 134. *See* paragraph 60c(5)(a) of Part IV. *But see* subsection (d) of this rule.

(D) *Charges under the law of war.* In the case of a person subject to trial by general court-martial for violations of the law of war (*see* Article 18), the charge should be: “Violation of the Law of War”; or “Violation of _____,” referring to the local penal law of the occupied territory. *See* R.C.M. 201(f)(1)(B). *But see* subsection (d) of this rule. Ordinarily persons subject to the code should be charged with a specific violation of the code rather than a violation of the law of war.

(3) *Specification.* A specification is a plain, concise, and definite statement of the essential facts constituting the offense charged. A specification is