

School Bans National Guard T-Shirts Because of 2nd Amendment Image

A National Guard recruiter was instructed to stop handing out promotional T-shirts at a New York high school after teachers complained that the shirts featured a soldier holding a weapon.

"A pointed gun is just not appropriate for a high school," said Alan McCartney, interim superintendent of the Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk School District.

Last Friday, a recruiter for the New York Army National Guard was on campus handing out promotional items, including a shirt with the logo of a silhouetted soldier aiming a rifle. The silhouette was framed by an American flag and the words "National Guard."

"A couple of teachers realized it showed a silhouette of a rifleman on it," McCartney told me in a telephone interview. "I realize some students look at the T-shirt, and all they see is the National Guard. And that is a good thing. Others look at the shirt, and all they see is the rifle."

The recruiter had already given away as many as 20 shirts when the principal showed up and asked him to stop. The recruiter complied with the principal's request and left the campus.

McCartney told me the shirts violated the school's dress code.

"Our code of conduct says no T-shirts depicting violence or weapons," he said.

National Guard spokesman Richard Goldenberg told me this appears to be the first time a school has taken issue with their shirts. Nevertheless, he said the Guard was willing to

be accommodating.

"We were happy to oblige the superintendent and remove them from any further distribution," Goldenberg said. "We are always respectful of all different school policies."

And for what it's worth, he said the National Guard did not take offense at the T-shirt ban.

CBS 6 in Albany reports that students refused to take off the shirts—calling it disrespectful. The superintendent told me any student who shows up wearing the shirt again will be told to either turn it inside out or to change clothes.

"Where do you draw the line?" the superintendent asked. "Is it OK to wear this weapon because it's a National Guardsman wielding it? [But it's not OK] if you've got a T-shirt on from a video game that shows somebody aiming at gun at somebody's head?"

We try to be consistent, he said.

"We are here to educate students to be neutral," McCartney said. "To create an environment where there isn't a lot of controversy within the environment."

I'd say the school got a failing grade on that task.

Outraged moms, dads and students lashed out on social networking and called the school district's patriotism into question.

"As a mother, when I first saw the shirt, I saw the American flag, the silhouette of the soldier," parent Jennifer Delisle told CBS 6. "I didn't even notice the gun, and the children I've talked to said it had nothing to do with the gun being on it. It had to do with the honor and respect to the National Guard."

The superintendent said the National Guard is more than

welcome to return to campus—provided they come with school-compliant clothing.

“This has nothing to do with patriotism,” he said. “This has more to do with the world we live in. We live under the shadow of a lot of bad things that have happened.”

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