

**NATO UNCLASSIFIED**

**NATO STANDARD**

**ATP-79**

**ORDERS FOR THE CAMOUFLAGE  
OF PROTECTIVE MEDICAL EMBLEMS  
ON LAND IN TACTICAL OPERATIONS**

**Edition B, Version 2**

**JULY 2023**



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**ALLIED TACTICAL PUBLICATION**

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**NATO STANDARDIZATION OFFICE (NSO)**

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05 July 2023

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## RECORD OF RESERVATIONS

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## RECORD OF SPECIFIC RESERVATIONS

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Note: The reservations listed on this page include only those that were recorded at time of promulgation and may not be complete. Refer to the NATO Standardization Document Database for the complete list of existing reservations.

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<b>CHAPTER 1                      ORDERS FOR THE CAMOUFLAGE OF PROTECTIVE MEDICAL EMBLEMS ON LAND IN TACTICAL OPERATIONS</b>
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**1.1. AIM**

The aim of ATP-79 is to detail the authority for the camouflage of medical personnel and facilities on land where the lack of camouflage may compromise military operations in armed conflict.

**1.2. GENERAL**

The display of the protective medical emblems on medical personnel and facilities is governed by the Geneva Convention for the “Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of 1949” and the additional Protocols 1 and 2 to the Geneva Convention.

The Geneva Conventions invoke the protection and respect of medical staff and facilities, by the parties to the conflict, so that they may be free to pursue their duties and under no circumstances be attacked.<sup>1</sup>

The responsible authorities shall ensure that medical units and establishments are, as far as military considerations permit, situated in a manner that attacks against military objectives cannot imperil their safety, and their distinctive medical emblems are clearly visible.

**1.3. CAMOUFLAGE OF THE PROTECTIVE MEDICAL EMBLEMS**

1. Although the Conventions require medical emblems be highly visible and prominently displayed,<sup>2</sup> in so far as military considerations permit, circumstances may occur where, the normal colour scheme of these emblems could be detrimental to tactical operations, and/or medical personnel or facilities displaying these emblems could be subject to direct targeting. The risk of camouflaging medical personnel and facilities is that they cannot be identified as persons or facilities which are to be respected and protected and shall not be object to attack. Medical facilities and personnel on land will display or camouflage the protective medical emblems in accordance with national regulations and procedures.

2. When the use of highly visible and prominently displayed medical emblems could compromise military operations, camouflage of medical personnel and/or facilities may be ordered by a commander at a relevant level<sup>3</sup> with the necessary insight to balance

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<sup>1</sup> GC I, Art. 19, 24, 35.

<sup>2</sup> GC I, Art. 42

<sup>3</sup> Nations should individually define the relevant level of the commander and procedures to be complied with. In NATO operations, the relevant level and procedures should be clarified in bi- or multilateral agreements.

operational concerns with the protection of medical facilities and personnel<sup>4</sup>. In such circumstances, the camouflage of medical units will follow that of the supported units.<sup>5</sup> The order to camouflage is to be temporary in nature, and rescinded as soon as circumstances permit. Medical personnel must operate in the same manner regardless of whether or not their protective emblem is camouflaged (i.e. their intended use must be humanitarian or not combatant).

3. It is not envisaged that fixed, large, medical facilities would be camouflaged.

#### 1.4. DEFINITIONS

a. The following terms and definitions are used for the purpose of this standard only:

- (1) "Medical Facilities" means medical installations, medical vehicles, and medical aircrafts on the ground.
- (2) "Medical Personnel" means medical personnel and units.
- (3) "Protective Medical Emblem" is interchangeable with "distinctive emblem" in the Convention and means the emblems authorized for use by the medical services of an armed force in Article 38 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of 1949.
- (4) Authorized protective medical emblems on a white background include:
  - i. The Red Cross;
  - ii. The Red Crescent;
  - iii. The Red Crystal; and
  - iv. The Red Lion with Sun<sup>6</sup>.

b. Depictions of the symbols are contained in STANAG 2060/AMedP-1.5.

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<sup>4</sup> GC I, Art. 42: Parties to the conflict shall take the necessary steps, in so far as military considerations permit, to make the distinctive emblems indicating medical units and establishments clearly visible to the enemy land, air, or naval forces in order to obviate the possibility of any hostile action.

<sup>5</sup> Medical personnel are exempted. The commander may grant exemptions from the obligation to wear the distinctive personal emblem. However, medical personnel cannot be denied the right to display their insignia (Art. 40, I-GC).

<sup>6</sup> Le lion et soleil rouge est un emblème reconnu, mais n'est plus utilisé.

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