

THE LAWS OF LAUNDERING

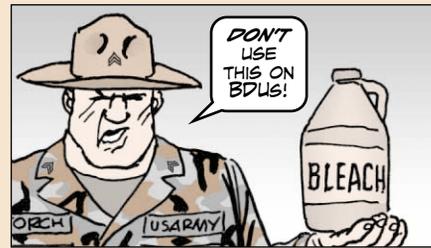
It's time to take a stark, full-length-mirror look at yourself. What do you see staring back? Be honest. Are your BDUs fading? Wearing thin at the elbows and knees? Have the pockets, collar and cuffs frayed? Has the stitching come so unraveled you're trailing nine yards of thread and stray cats think you're a play toy? Can you no longer tell where the camouflage ends and the coffee stains begin?

Don't blame your BDUs. Maybe the problem lies with the way you do your laundry. But some simple improvements in your washing routine can change you from raggedy to stylish. Here's how to make your uniform look better and last longer:

Machine Washing



Use warm water and a mild detergent. Never add chlorine bleach to the wash water. It fades the clothing, weakens the fabric and shortens its life.



Hand Washing

In a pinch you can hand wash BDUs. Again, use warm water and a mild detergent. Rinse thoroughly in clean, warm water. Don't wring or twist the uniform to get excess water out—that adds wrinkles. Instead, squeeze the water out. Wrap the uniform in dry towels, then gently squeeze the bundle, letting the towels draw out moisture from the BDUs.

Drying

It's OK to machine dry your cap, shirt and trousers. Set the dryer on permanent press cycle. As soon as the cycle is finished, remove the clothes right away and hang them up.

If you prefer to drip-dry your uniform, make sure to put it on a rust-proof hanger.



Ironing

If you press BDUs, set the iron on a permanent press or low setting. Never iron dirty clothing. That can set dirt and stains permanently into the fabric.

Starch

If you want your temperate or enhanced hot-weather BDUs to look crisp, starch them. AR 670-1 (3 Feb 05), *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*, Para 3-6.d, says it's OK. It also says commanders may not require soldiers to starch BDUs. Just remember, starch shortens the life of BDUs. Para 1-9.a.(5) says soldiers will not receive an increase in their clothing replacement allowance to make up for wear caused by starching.

Para 5-5.d. of AR 670-1 says soldiers are **not** authorized to starch the desert BDU.

AR 670-1 has the story on starching BDUs

Army Regulation 670-1 Uniforms and Insignia

Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia

UNCLASSIFIED

Never starch aircrew BDUs or any NOMEX clothing. They're made to be fire- and heat-resistant and starching defeats that protection. Starch leaves a flammable residue that fills the spaces in the clothing's weave. It'll burn and so will you.

THESE LAUNDRY TIPS DO MORE THAN SAFEGUARD YOUR BDUs FROM WEAR, FADING AND SHRINKING.

THEY ALSO PRESERVE THE INFRARED PROTECTION BUILT INTO YOUR CLOTHING.

LAUNDRING ANY OTHER WAY WEARS DOWN THAT PROTECTION.