



AFRICAN AMERICANS in DEFENSE OF OUR NATION



Crispus Attucks, the first person to die for the cause of American independence in the Boston Massacre; Louisiana Native Guard, an African American regiment that fought in the Civil War



NCOs of the 10th Cavalry (Buffalo Soldiers) in 1902; the 369th Infantry Regiment which received the Croix de Guerre in WWI



African Americans have served with great honor and valor in defense of our nation since the 18th century. Beginning with the sacrifice of Crispus Attucks during the Boston Massacre through the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, African Americans fought to secure collective freedom. When the US entered World War I nearly half a million donned uniforms but discrimination ensured 90 percent served as laborers and non-combatants. During World War II more than a million African Americans fought, with three-fourths deploying overseas. Still, prejudice and inequality persisted, as African Americans were forced to attend separate boot camps and serve in segregated units. However, they overcame all challenges and proved themselves worthy as soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen. Then in 1948 President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 which established equal treatment and opportunity in the Armed Services for people of all races, religions, and national origins.

FAMOUS MILITARY UNITS

Buffalo Soldiers – originally the nickname of the 10th Cavalry Regiment (US Army) who fought the Cheyenne in 1867; over time, the term was used for all African American soldiers who served during the Indian wars

369th Infantry Regiment – first African American combat unit deployed overseas in World War I; nicknamed the “Harlem Hellfighters” because no soldier was captured and no ground was lost while they were on the frontline

Montford Point Marines – approximately 20,000 African Americans passed through Montford Point, a segregated Marine boot camp that operated in North Carolina between 1942 and 1949; Montford Point Marines endured more rigorous training than white recruits at Parris Island

761st “Black Panther” Tank Battalion – segregated Army cavalry unit in World War II that saw action during the Battle of the Bulge; the most famous member was baseball player Jackie Robinson

Tuskegee Airmen – first African American pilots trained at an air base in Alabama during World War II; over 400 deployed overseas and successfully completed missions as bomber escorts

The Golden Thirteen – the first African American commissioned and warrant officers to graduate from Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Illinois in 1944



Sailors serving in the Pacific near the Philippines during WWII; the Navy’s first African American female reserve officers in 1944



First African American members of the Women’s Army Corps in 1945; pilots of the 332nd Fighter Group at Tuskegee Airfield



Integrated combat unit serving during the Korean War; a sailor conducting “sick call” in Vietnam in 1967



Left to Right: James Armistead, a spy for the patriot cause during the American Revolution; Martin Robison Delany, the first African American field officer in the Army during the Civil War; Cathay Williams, the only documented African American female to serve in the Army before 1948; Benjamin O. Davis Sr., served from 1898 to 1948 and was the first African American general officer in the Army; Olivia Hooker, one of the first African Americans in the US Coast Guard Women's Reserve; Benjamin O. Davis Jr., leader of the Tuskegee Airmen and the first African American General in the Air Force; Alex P. Haley, first Coast Guard journalist and author of the novel *Roots*; Carl Maxie Brashear, the Navy’s first African American Master Diver; Irene Trowell-Harris, the first female African American general officer in the National Guard

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In the years that followed, African Americans continued to demonstrate their courage and bravery as they fought and died for their country. They have played an integral role, providing valuable contributions in all sectors of national defense. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell led our nation's successful efforts during the Gulf War. Other African Americans have helped fight piracy at sea and have delivered relief to disaster-stricken areas including Haiti. With the inauguration of Barack Obama as president in 2009, the US received its first African American Commander in Chief. We have all benefited from the patriotic service of African Americans and it is important to recognize those who broke down barriers and set precedents. African Americans have a rich military heritage based on the strength of their convictions and abundance of their abilities. As the composition of our society becomes more diverse -- and the mission of the Department of Defense more complex -- African Americans will continue to play an important role.



09/29/2011 Major General Marcia Anderson became the first African American woman to achieve the rank of two star general in the US Army Reserve; Anderson completed ROTC at Creighton University and earned a law degree from Rutgers University

"A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work."

"I was born in Harlem, raised in the South Bronx, went to public school, got out of public college, went into the Army, and then I just stuck with it."

- Colin Powell, retired four-star general (US Army) and first African American to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989-1993)



< Colonel Victor Folarin immigrated to the US from Nigeria when he was 20 years old; since then he has earned five college degrees and served as an Air Force doctor



< Sergeant Teddy Wade has been a combat cameraman in Iraq and Afghanistan

Major Shawna Kimbrell was the first female African American fighter pilot in the US Air Force



General William E. Ward, leader of US Africa Command (AFRICOM), visits the village of Nagad in Djibouti >



Senior Chief Michael Bowe-Rahming prepares for a dive from the USS Safeguard >



Sergeant Major Alford McMichael was the first African American to reach the highest enlisted post in the US Marine Corps



< Army Master Sergeant Fotini Nixon and her husband Sergeant Major Kenneth Nixon, Sr. have been deployed to Iraq six times (pictured with their son Xavier)



< Dr. Jonathan Woodson, Assistant Secretary of Defense Health Affairs & Director of TRICARE Management Activity

Rear Admiral Michelle Howard was the first female African American to command a US warship; she also led a multinational counter-piracy task force in the Gulf of Aden



Marine Staff Sergeant Christopher Thomas guides children to a humanitarian aid center in Haiti >



Airman 1st Class Michael Walters uses a magnetic particle machine on aircraft parts in order to detect defects >



Ensign DeCarol Davis was the Coast Guard Academy's first female African American valedictorian and she majored in electrical engineering (2008)



Rear Admiral Barry C. Black was the first African American Chief of Navy Chaplains



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