Asian Pacific Americans have served with great honor and valor in defense of our nation since the 19th century. Many initially immigrated to the US because there were abundant opportunities for employment in mines and on railroads. They soon found opportunities to serve in uniform. After World War I soldiers of Asian ancestry were granted citizenship in recognition of their contributions in battle. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1942 Japanese Americans faced discrimination and internment. However, many joined the military during World War II to defend the nation they loved. In addition, Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, and over 20,000 Chinese Americans participated in the war effort. In the 1950s and 1960s changing laws allowed for greater immigration and naturalization of Asians. The Fall of Saigon and the rise of the oppressive Khmer Rouge also led to a significant increase in the number of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees to the US. Individuals from all of these groups integrated into the ranks of the US Armed Forces and served with distinction throughout the Cold War.

**FAMOUS MILITARY UNITS**

Fita-Fita Guard – native Samoans recruited into the US Naval Reserve to help maintain law and order in Samoan Islands from 1900 to 1952

Philippine Scouts – an integral part of the US Army made up of native Filipinos; first organized in 1901, they also fought on the Bataan Peninsula during WWII

442nd Infantry Regiment – later known as the 100th Battalion; an Army unit made of mostly Japanese Americans that fought in the Europe during WWII; one of the most highly decorated regiments with 21 Medal of Honor recipients; among the troops that liberated concentration camps near Dachau

14th Air Force Chinese American Composite Wing – the ‘Flying Tigers’: created during WWII as a bomber and fighter group; consisted of pilots from both the US and China; deployed to the Pacific Theater

Korean Augmentation to the US Army (KATUSA) – the severe shortage of front-line soldiers led to the formation of KATUSA during the Korean War; they were Korean stragglers who joined US Army units in the battlefield, primarily for rations; some also acted as interpreters and enhanced US combat readiness

Left to Right: Joseph L. Pierce enlisted in the 14th Connecticut Infantry (1862) and fought during the Civil War at Antietam and Gettysburg; Chiao-Shun Soong was a Coast Guardsman in 1879; Amenico Beang was a Filipino sailor in the 1920s on board the USS Rizal; Hazel Ying Lee was the first Chinese-American woman to receive her pilot's license (1932) and served as a pilot during WWII; Albert Lyman was the first Asian American general (1942); Ruth A. Tanaka joined the Army Nurse Corps in 1949 and retired as a lieutenant colonel; Masato Nakae, a private in the US Army, was awarded the Purple Heart and the Medal of Honor for his actions during WWII; Florence (Ebersole) Smith Finch worked for Army intelligence in the Philippines during WWII and was arrested by the Japanese for smuggling food and medicine to American POWs; Rodney J.T. Yano was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Army Air Cavalry during the Vietnam War (1969)

Today Asian Pacific Americans encompass over fifty ethnic and language groups. With each new opportunity, Asian Pacific Americans persistently demonstrate their immense capabilities and strong devotion to the US. Some, like Private Second Class Jonathan Ioakimo Falaniko and Sergeant Uday Singh serving in Iraq, pay the ultimate sacrifice for our sake. The traditions and values of Asian Pacific Americans -- importance of family, excellence in education, and community service -- continue to strengthen our nation. Furthermore Asian Pacific Americans have excelled in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics making valuable contributions to our nation's security. As countless Asian Pacific Americans have demonstrated, anyone who is motivated, hardworking, and has the commitment and honor to serve can achieve great things.

“Our military men and women are our greatest national treasure. They should be safeguarded as such upon their return. They have never asked to be thanked, but we can never thank them enough.”

- Tammy Duckworth, an Iraq War veteran and former US Army helicopter pilot whose severe combat injuries resulted in the loss of both her legs and damaged one of her arms; she also served as Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the US Department of Veterans Affairs from 2009-2011.