



Major Moments in Women's Military Service

1901

Army Nurse Corps is established

1908

Navy Nurse Corps is established.

1939-1945

Over 350,000 uniformed women served the United States during World War II. The Army established the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), which was later converted to the Women's Army Corps or (WAC), and Navy establishes the Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Services (WAVES).

1944

Sue Dauser, Director of the Navy Nurse Corps, becomes the first female Captain in the U.S. Navy.

1948

The Women's Armed Service Integration Act permitted women permanent positions in the Armed Forces yet barred them from serving aboard ships, combat aircraft and in ground combat.¹

1950-1953

540 women were stationed as Army nurses in Korea.

1951

The Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) is established.

1953

Barbara O. Barnwell becomes the first female U.S. Marine to be awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for heroism.

1965

Over 650 women were deployed to Vietnam, approximately 300 of them nurses. Rose Franco is the first woman to become a Chief Warrant Officer in the U.S. Marines.

1967

Barbara Dulinsky becomes the first woman Marine to serve in a combat zone. President Johnson lifts grade restrictions and strength limitations on women in the U.S. military.

1970

Anna Mae Hays and Elizabeth Hoisington (U.S. Army) are the first women promoted to the general officer ranks.

1974

Lieutenant Sally D. Murphy becomes the first woman U.S. Army aviator and U.S. Army helicopter pilot.

1975

The U.S. Military Academy, Air Force Academy, Coast Guard, and Navy Academy opened their doors to women. At this time, five-percent of the military or 109,133 servicemembers were women.

1978

The 1948 Integration Act is amended to allow women permanent positions on non-combatant ships, and temporary assignment to combatant ships. All women are integrated into their respective services—WAF, WAC, WAVES and Women Marines are disestablished. Margaret A. Brewer becomes the first woman to reach the rank of general in the U.S. Marine Corps.

1979

Hazel Johnson-Brown (U.S. Army) is the first African American female promoted to General.

1981

Exempting women from registering for the Military Selective Service Act is found to be constitutional—an argument used to support women's exclusion from combat. Michelle D. Johnson becomes the first woman to hold the senior-ranking positions at any of the U.S. military academies as Cadet Wing Commander at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

1983

The Direct Combat Probability Code ascribes to every Army position an assessment of the likelihood of participating in direct combat.

1988

A Department of Defense Task Force on Women in the Military developed the "Risk Rule" to determine proper criteria for closing positions to women.

1991

The ban on women serving aboard combat aircraft engaged in combat missions is lifted.

1992

The 1992 Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces called for the exclusion of women from direct land combat units and Special Forces yet allowed for women to be assigned to all naval vessel save amphibious craft and submarines.²

1992

The "Army Policy for the Assignment of Female Soldiers" (AR 600-13) bans women from being assigned to units who engage in direct combat.

1994

The 1988 "Risk Rule" is rescinded and replaced with the "Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule," which allows women to serve in combat support groups close to, but not on the front lines, while maintaining their exclusion from serving in infantry, armory, Special Forces, and field artillery positions. The first Air Force woman completes pilot training and the Navy assigns women to a combat ship for the first time.

1996

U.S. Marine Carol Mutter is the first woman promoted to three star officer in the military, Vice Admiral Patricia Tracey is the first woman promoted to 3-star officer in the Navy, and Army Sergeant Heather Johnson is the first woman assigned to guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

1997

Claudia Kennedy becomes the first woman in the U.S. Army to hold a three-star rank.

1998

U.S. Navy Commander Maureen A. Farren becomes the first woman to command a combatant ship.

1999

Colonel Eileen Collins of the U.S. Air Force is the first woman to command a Space Shuttle.

2000

The first woman pilot in the Air Force is promoted to Brigadier General and the first Coast Guard women are promoted to Admiral. The first woman is named a Major General in the National Guard.

2001

Coral Wong Pietch becomes the first woman Army Judge Advocates General (JAG) and the first Asian-American to reach the rank of General in the U.S. Army.

2002

Vernice Armour becomes the first African-American female combat pilot in the U.S. military.

2003

U.S. Air Force Major Kim Reed-Campbell is awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for the successful handling of her aircraft in a combat mission.

2004

U.S. Army pilot Captain Kimberley Hampton becomes the first woman military pilot in U.S. history to be shot down and killed by an enemy.

2005

U.S. Army Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester receives her Silver Star, making her the first woman to receive the award for exceptional valor since World War II and the first woman ever to receive it for close combat.

2006

Major Megan McClung becomes the first woman Marine officer to be killed in Iraq.

2007

U.S. Army Specialist Monica Brown is awarded a Silver Star for her for saving the lives of her fellow soldiers by running through gunfire and shielding their wounded bodies.

2008

U.S. Army General Ann E. Dunwoody becomes the first woman to be promoted to four-star general.

2009

DoD statistics show that one in 10 U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan are women.

2010

The Secretary of Defense lifts the ban disallowing female officers from serving on submarines. U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Nora W. Tyson becomes the first woman to command a carrier strike group.

2011

At the behest of congress, the Military Leadership and Diversity Commission issued a report unequivocally recommending that the Services and the DoD eliminate the combat exclusion policies.

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1

William B. Breuer H19971 *War and American Women: Heroism, Deeds, and Controversy*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997, p. 63.

2

Women in the Military Service for America Memorial, "Statistics on Women in the Military." Data current as of Sept. 30, 2010. (<http://www.womensmemorial.org/Press/stats.html>)