

Veterans & Military Timeline

1775–1783

The American Revolutionary War

1812–1815

The War of 1812

1846–1848

The Mexican–American War

1861–1865

The American Civil War



1867

Emma Miller became the first woman employee in the VA's history, serving as the matron for the Central Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Dayton, Ohio.

1868

Originally known as Decoration Day, the first national celebration of Memorial Day took place May 30, 1868, at Arlington National Cemetery, where Confederate and Union soldiers were buried.

1877

Second Lt. Henry Flipper became the first Black person to graduate from a U.S. Military Academy.

1898

The Spanish–American War

1914–1918

World War I



1917

Loretta Walsh became the first woman to enlist in the Navy. She later became the first woman to become Chief Petty Officer.

1919

The history of Veterans Day began in 1919 when President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11 Armistice Day to remember “the heroism of those who died in the country’s service.”

1919

Lucy Minnigerode became the first Superintendent of Nursing and oversaw care for those afflicted by the 1918–1919 influenza pandemic and returning World War I Veterans.

1921

Congress established the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.



Native Americans became eligible for full veteran benefits, including medical care.

The Veterans Bureau was established by merging the War Risk Bureau and the Federal Board for Vocational Education Rehabilitation Division.

1923

The first Black veteran's hospital was dedicated in Tuskegee, Alabama.

1924

Lt. Col. Joseph Henry Ward, M.D., became the first Black hospital director.

1938

Congress made November 11, Armistice Day, a federal holiday.

1940

Benjamin O. Davis Sr. was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first Black general in the Army.

1939–1945

World War II



1941

The Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African-American military pilots, was founded.

1944

Signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 22, 1944, the G.I. Bill provided World War II veterans with funds for college education, unemployment insurance and housing.

1950–1953

Korean War



1954

President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first Veterans Day Proclamation.

1955-1975

Vietnam War

1970

Anna Mae Hays, chief of the Army Nurse Corps, was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first female general in U.S. military history.

1975

President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 94-97 (89 Stat. 479), which returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in 1978.

1976

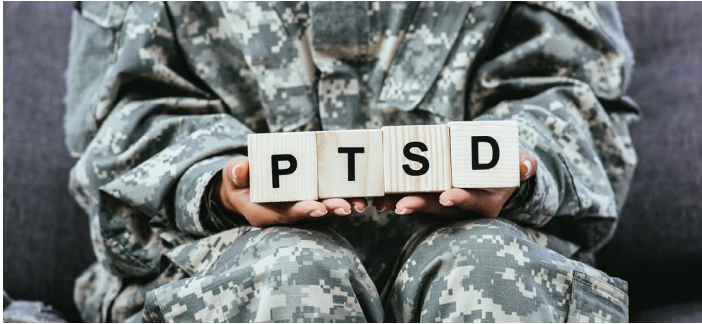
West Point admitted the first female cadets.

1979

The Army nominated Hazel Johnson to become the 16th chief of the Army Nurse Corps, along with a promotion to brigadier general. She was the first Black woman to achieve this rank.

1980

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association, validating the adverse effects combat soldiers had dealt with for years.



1990–91

Gulf War I
(Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm)

1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law. Title I of the act explicitly protects disabled veterans from discrimination.



1994

The military adopted the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy regarding service by LGBTQ people.

The Department of Defense prohibited women from serving in combat.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act required employers to put individuals back to work in their civilian jobs after returning from service.

2001

The September 11 attacks took place. President George W. Bush sent troops to Afghanistan and eventually Iraq in retaliation, although Al-Qaeda is not associated with either country.

2001–2021

War in Afghanistan

2003–2011

Gulf War II (Iraq War)



2010

Chelsea Manning, a transgender former U.S. Army intelligence analyst, released classified documents on the 9/11 attacks and Iraq War to WikiLeaks. She was charged with espionage and sentenced to prison from 2010 to 2017 but was touted by some people as an activist and whistle-blower.

2011

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” ends.



The VA launched the Million Veteran Program (MVP). The MVP was one of the world's largest health and genetic information databases for future research to prevent and treat illness among veterans and all Americans.

2013

President Barack Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2013, significantly reforming Department of Defense sexual assault and harassment policies.

2014

The U.S. intervened in the Syrian Civil War.

2015

The U.S. military announced it was opening all combat positions to women.



2016

Lt. Gen. Nadja West became the first Black female lieutenant general and the highest-ranking woman to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy.

The U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed Eric Fanning as Secretary of the Army, making him the highest-ranking openly gay official at the Pentagon and the first openly gay man to lead a branch of the U.S. military.

2017

A judge blocked President Donald Trump's ban on transgender troops in the military.



2019

President Donald Trump partially withdrew U.S. troops from the Syrian-Turkish border.

2021

The U.S. completed a drawdown of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

2022

President Biden signed the Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act into law, allotting \$816.7 billion to the Defense Department. The act included a 4.6% pay raise for military and civilian department members.

2023

President Biden signed into law the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2023. The law provides a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans' disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation beneficiaries equal to the Social Security COLA.

President Biden signed an executive order promising to expand caregiver services for veterans.