



Uniform Language

Basics of the U.S. Military

A reference guide for the American Copy Editors Society

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 5
GLOSSARY 7-17
NAVY ENLISTED RATINGS. 19-22
ENLISTED RANKS. 23-25
OFFICER RANKS 26-30
MAJOR MEDALS & DECORATIONS 31-32

Introduction

The military can be confusing to the uninitiated.

Much of the information in this guide will seem esoteric, even abstruse. Some of the distinctions can seem hair-splitting and irrelevant. But it's somewhat similar to the relationship between "news" and "editorial," etc. or between different types of editors.

It is important as hell to the people who wear, or once wore, their nation's uniforms, and we ought to try to get it right while we're writing about the military. We also owe it to our readers to be clear. Bear in mind that the services have a number of things in common and a number of things unique to each. Don't assume that a fact that applies to one will apply to all, or that a person from one service can speak authoritatively about another.

This booklet does not pretend to be comprehensive. It is only another tool for writers and editors.

A

aboard vs. on board

These two terms mean nearly the same thing and in some uses are interchangeable. "Aboard" is the preferred usage. "Aboard" means on board, on, in or into a ship. Use "on board" as two words, but hyphenate on board when used as an adjective.

The crew is "aboard" the ship.

The crew is "on board" the ship.

The crew is going "aboard" the ship.

An "on-board" medical team uses the "on-board" computer.

BUT NOT: The sailor is going "on board" the ship.

Also, a sailor is stationed "on," "is serving with" or "is assigned to" a ship. A sailor may also serve "in" a ship.

A ship is "based at" or "has a home port at" a specific place. A plane is "stationed on" or is "aboard" a ship; is "deployed with" or is "operating from" a ship. Squadrons are "stationed at" air stations. Air wings are "deployed with" ships.

academies

U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.

U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Conn.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point, N.Y.

U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

Retain capitalization without U.S., i.e., Air Force Academy, but lowercase "academy" by itself.

acronyms

Nobody loves acronyms and jawbreaker combo titles quite like the Pentagon, but readers don't know, or care, that AdComPhibsLant means the administrative office of the commander of amphibious forces in the Atlantic fleet, or that CinCPac is the absolute head honcho in the Pacific. Except for a handful that have become part of the language (PX, AWOL), translate them into English.

active duty

Full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. This includes members of the Reserve components serving on active duty or full-time training duty but does not include full-time National Guard duty. Hyphenate as an adjective: All active-duty personnel must attend.

AFB

The Air Force like the other services tends to follow Associated Press style when writing for civilians. AP says do not abbreviate "Air Force base" as "AFB," even in datelines: LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, Texas –

Note also that the Air Force uses Air Force base as part of the proper name for its bases in the United States and air base for its installations abroad.

aircraft

As a rule of thumb, the initial letter in an aircraft designation indicates the primary mission.

A — attack, as in AH-1W.

B — bomber, as in B-1, B-2, B -52.

C — cargo, as in CH-46, CH-53, C-5, C-17, C-141; likely to be relatively large and may be used to transport troops.

E — reconnaissance and surveillance, as in E-2C, E-3.

F — fighter, as in F-15, F-16, F-22.

FA — fighter/attack as in FA-18 (a Navy designator).

H — helicopter. Anytime the H is used, the aircraft is a helicopter and will almost always be used in conjunction with other letters, as shown under cargo.

M — mine-hunting helicopter, as in MH-53, MH-60.

S — seaborne; used with Navy helicopters, such as SH-60.

T — trainer.

U — utility, as in UH-1H, which is relatively small and carries only a few people.

Use a hyphen when changing from letters to figures; no hyphen when adding a letter after figures. The AP Stylebook says this hyphenation principle is the one used most frequently by manufacturers and users. Apply it in all cases for consistency. If in doubt, consult Jane's All the World's Aircraft.

Air Force

History

Aeronautical Division, U.S. Signal Corps, Aug. 1, 1907-June 18, 1914.

Aviation Section, U.S. Signal Corps, July 18, 1914-May 20, 1918.

Division of Military Aeronautics, Secretary of War, May 20, 1918-May 24, 1918.

Army Air Service May 24, 1918-July 2, 1926.

Army Air Corps, July 2, 1926-Sept. 18, 1947.

Army Air Forces (plural cq), June 20, 1941-Sept. 18, 1947.

U.S. Air Force, Sept. 18, 1947.

Just remember, we didn't have an Air Force, singular, in World War II.

NOTE: The Army Air Corps became a subordinate element of the Army Air Forces June 20, 1941. Since the Army Air Corps had been established by statute in 1926, its disestablishment required an act of Congress, which did not happen until 1947.

Structure (in order from largest to smallest):

- Major commands
- Numbered air forces.
- Wings.
- Groups.
- Squadrons.
- Flights.

airmen

Air Force members are generically known as "airmen" in the same way Army members are soldiers, Navy members are sailors and Marine Corps members are Marines. This gets tricky in the Air Force, which also has a rank of airman. The Navy also has an airman rank (see **ranks and titles**).

armed forces, armed services

Do not capitalize.

Army

Structure (in order from largest to smallest):

- Field army: 50,000+ soldiers, usually has a headquarters, two or more corps and auxiliary forces, commanded by a lieutenant general or higher.
- Corps: 20,000 to 45,000 soldiers, two to five divisions and auxiliary arms, under a lieutenant general.
- Division: 10,000-15,000 soldiers, usually consists of three brigade-size elements under a major general.
- Brigade: 3,000-5,000 soldiers, a headquarters plus infantry, artillery or armor and supporting units. It has two to five battalions under a colonel with a command sergeant major as senior noncommissioned officer (NCO). The comparable units in cavalry, rangers or special force units are categorized as regiments or groups.
- Battalion: 300 to 1,000 soldiers, a headquarters plus two or more companies, batteries or similar units, under a lieutenant colonel.
- Company: 62-130 soldiers, a headquarters platoon plus two but usually more platoons, under a captain. Equivalent is a battery in the artillery and a troop in the cavalry.
- Platoon: 16 to 44 soldiers, two but usually more squads, under a lieutenant and a platoon sergeant.
- Squad: 9 or 10 soldiers, a tactical unit that can be easily directed in the field. In infantry, it consists of two teams. It's usually 10 soldiers under a sergeant or staff sergeant.

Army Corps of Engineers

It is NOT and should not be called the Corps as a short form. It is quite proper to say "the Engineers" on second reference. "God deliver us from being confused with Marines," a high-ranking officer at the Engineers' headquarters at Fort Belvoir, Va., told one of the contributors.

AWACS

Airborne warning and control system. The acronym is singular; don't drop the S. It's OK to use the generic description "surveillance aircraft."

AWOL

Acceptable on second reference for absent without leave, according to the AP Stylebook. However, the Uniform Code of Military Justice in Article 86 defines it as absence without leave.

NOTE: The Navy and Marines don't use AWOL. They use UA, for unauthorized absence.

B

basic training

The jolting experience by which civilians learn to be members of the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps. The equivalent in the Navy is called recruit training.

battery

In Army parlance, battery is exclusively artillery. The plural is batteries.

BDU

Camouflage uniform is the preferred term. Avoid "cammies," "BDUs" (battle dress uniform) or "battle dress."

Black Hawk

The name of the Sikorsky UH-60 helicopter that appears in military Web sites and in various Jane's aircraft-identification books as both Blackhawk and Black Hawk. The manufacturer says it is Black Hawk, two words, although the manufacturer also uses an all-caps style.

boat

As defined in the Naval Terms Dictionary, a boat is a small craft usually capable of being hoisted aboard a ship. See **ship**.

boot camp

Slang for the Navy's recruit training.

branch

It is wrong to say "branch of service" when you want to specify Army or Navy. Those are services, not branches. Branches are aviation, artillery, JAG Corps, infantry, etc. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard are armed services.

C

camouflage uniform

Clear, and thus preferred to "cammies," "BDUs" or "battle dress."

chaff

Thin metallic strips fired from ships or released from airplanes to confuse missiles by suddenly offering additional "targets." Aircraft can also shoot flares to draw off heat-seeking missiles fired at them.

Coast Guard

"Coast Guardsman, Coast Guardsmen," regardless of sex. Not "Coasties."

commands

See the World Almanac under Armed Forces, U.S.

commissary

Grocery store for the military.

Corps, corps

"The Corps" can have only two meanings. It's generally considered to be a short form of the U.S. Marine Corps, but in proper context it also can mean the Corps of Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, or, in Texas, the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M.

A corps, not The Corps, is a large unit of Army troops (see **Army structure**). And Annapolis does not have a corps of midshipmen; it's a brigade.

court-martial, courts-martial

Court-martial takes a hyphen. Its plural is courts-martial. The people who sit in judgment at a court-martial are known collectively as "the court," though the Navy says it's proper to call them "jurors" or a "jury." They also are the court-martial board, though "panel" is permissible. Depending on the type of court-martial, it may be presided over by a military judge who has had legal training.

E

equipment

The "suffix" used to designate military equipment at least generally indicates a later version. Thus the CH-53E came after the CH-53D and M-16A2 came after the M-16A1. But earlier and later versions are often used at the same time.

ex

Former Marines hate to be called "ex."

F

facilities

The Army has posts; the other services are on bases or stations. Fort Sam Houston, Fort Belvoir, Camp Swampy are posts. It's Naval Base Norfolk, Naval Station San Diego, Naval Air Station Corpus Christi. However, civilians say Norfolk Naval Base, San Diego Naval Station, Corpus Christi Naval Air Station.

In the United States, they're Air Force bases. Overseas, because the land isn't owned by the United States, they are air bases. But they are RAF Mildenhall, RAF Brentwaters in England.

Flying Tigers

The American Volunteer Group (AVG) was a band of pilots formed to help defend China against the Japanese. Contrary to popular belief, they were not a U.S. Army Air Corps unit, but a civilian-contract organization made up of pilots recruited from the U.S. military. About 60 percent were from the Navy and Marine Corps. They got their nickname from Tiger jaws painted on the nose of each plane, the Curtiss P-40B.

G

GI

An adjective derived from government issue used in terms such as GI gravy, GI blues. Avoid using it as a noun to describe soldiers. Never use it to describe other members of the armed services. Marines especially are likely to argue with anyone who calls them soldiers and certainly with anyone who calls them GIs.

guns

For a long time in history, artillery people, among many others, did not regard small-bore weapons, whether side arms or rifles, as guns. They referred to those small arms as weapons. Some people may still be picky about this issue.

J

Joint Chiefs of Staff

Six members, composed of chairman, vice chairman, the Army chief of staff, the Air Force chief of staff, the chief of naval operations and the commandant of the Marine Corps. Also called the Joint Chiefs. The Joint Chiefs by law are military advisers and have no executive authority to command combatant forces.

K

knot

A knot is one nautical mile (6,076.10 feet) per hour. Knots per hour is redundant. Always use figures: 8 knots, 10-knot wind.

M

Marine Corps

Structure (in order from largest to smallest):

In infantry, the descriptions are for typical units. As in the Army, unit size and leadership may vary depending on the mission.

— Division: three infantry regiments, along with artillery, armored vehicles and support units, under a two-star general.

— Regiment: four battalions, including a headquarters battalion, under a colonel.

- Battalion: typically five companies under a lieutenant colonel.
- Company: four platoons, including a weapons platoon, under a captain.
- Platoon: three squads under a platoon leader, typically a second lieutenant.
- Squad: three fire teams under an enlisted squad leader.
- Fire team: four-man basic unit.

In the air:

- Wing: two or more air groups under a two-star general.
- Group: several squadrons, depending on the mission, under a colonel.
- Squadron: usually consists of 12 to 20 aircraft, plus support and maintenance personnel.
- Composite squadron: composed of different aircraft types.

Expeditionary units (troops and equipment deployed on a special mission, often termed MEUs):

- Expeditionary force: an infantry division, an air wing and support units, under a three-star general
- Expeditionary brigade: an infantry regiment, an air group and support units, under a two-star general.
- Expeditionary unit: an infantry battalion, with artillery and armored vehicles, a helicopter squadron and Harriers, and support units, under a colonel.

masker air

Air bubbles emitted out of the sides of the ship and the edge of the propeller blades to "quiet" the ship and make it more difficult for submarines to detect it are called "masker air." Submarines eject noise decoys to confuse ships and torpedoes.

MCAS

If you follow AP's rule on "AFB," consistency dictates that Marine Corps Air Station be spelled out, not abbreviated as MCAS.

medals, decorations and badges

Medals and other awards for superior performance are earned, such as the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, etc. But combat decorations for valor such as the Medal of Honor or the Navy Cross are won. Say the Purple Heart is awarded, since it is given to anyone wounded by enemy fire and, therefore, is not something that anyone would be ambitious to receive; it really isn't won or earned.

Medals are always listed by their prestige ranking, just as they are worn. The Medal of Honor (not Congressional Medal of Honor) is first, of course. In an obit, it should be listed separately, probably in the lead paragraph. Then in descending order, the biggies are:

Army Distinguished Service Cross (Army), Navy Cross (Navy, Coast Guard, Marines), Air Force Cross Medal all No. 2

Department of Defense Distinguished Service Medal

Distinguished Service Medal (Army), Navy (Navy and Marine Corps), Air Force

Silver Star

Defense Superior Service Medal

Legion of Merit

Distinguished Flying Cross

Army Soldier's, the Navy and Marine Corps, or Airman's Medal for Heroism

Bronze Star

Purple Heart

Defense Meritorious Service Medal

Meritorious Service Medal

Air Medal

Air Force Aerial Achievement Medal

Joint Services Commendation Medal

Army, Navy and Marine Corps, or Air Force Commendation Medal.

These are followed by various individual and unit awards, theater medals and foreign decorations.

The word "medal" should not be used unless it is part of the name; for example, the Purple Heart. When it is part of the name (Distinguished Service Medal), it should be capitalized.

There are other decorations, sometimes more important than medals to the people who wear them: the Combat Infantryman's Badge; wings, such as command pilot or senior aircrew member; missile badge; parachutist's badge; submariner's dolphin, surface warfare badge. All of these, except the Combat Infantryman's Badge, may be referred to generically and in lower case. See Page 31 for pictures of the major medals and awards.

-men

Midshipmen are midshipMEN whether male or female. So are airmen and seamen. There are no female or neuter derivations. That holds true for "sideboys," who greet dignitaries arriving on the quarterdeck of a ship.

merchant marine

There is no organized entity known as the Merchant Marine. Military Sealift Command ship crews are made up of federally or civilian-employed mariners or merchant mariners. While a ship's captain, whose title is "master," might be a civilian mariner, he is always in charge irrespective of the affiliation of members of the crew, which may be a combination of mariners and Navy sailors.

midshipmen

Do not use "Middies" when referring to Navy midshipmen. It's considered demeaning. An exception can be made in the sports section for a Naval Academy team, but sparingly.

MOS

Army military occupation specialty (enlisted). Army officers do not have an MOS. They have a specialty and branch which may or may not be related.

MRE

Meals Ready to Eat. Also Military Reporters and Editors

N

NAS

Apply the AP Stylebook rule for "AFB." Consistency dictates that Naval air station be spelled out, not abbreviated as NAS.

National Guard

"National Guardsman, guardsmen," regardless of sex.

Navy

Structure (in order from largest to smallest):

— Fleet: a large collection of groups. The Navy has two fleet commanders, Pacific Fleet and Atlantic Fleet. It also has Naval Forces Europe and Naval Forces Central Command that perform functions similar to those of the two fleet commanders except that they have authority over operations in the European and Central (Middle East minus Israel and Lebanon, and Central Asia without India and Russia) theaters.

— Subordinate fleet commanders who direct warfighting operations are: 2nd Fleet (Atlantic Region), 3rd Fleet (Western United States to International Dateline), 5th Fleet (Persian Gulf and Red and Arabian seas), 6th Fleet (Mediterranean), and 7th Fleet (International Dateline to Africa and Arabian Sea).

— Carrier Group: an aircraft carrier and accompanying cruisers, destroyers, frigates, submarines and supply ships commanded by an aviator admiral.

— Cruiser-Destroyer Group: Same as Carrier Group except it's commanded by a surface warfare admiral.

— Submarine Group: a large collection of submarines.

— Amphibious Group: a large collection of amphibious ships.

— Amphibious Ready Group: given to usually three amphibious ships preparing for and conducting overseas operations. The group usually comprises an amphibious assault ship (LHA or LHD) and two smaller amphibious ships (LPD and LSD). When deployed, a Marine Expeditionary Unit (see **Marine Corps**) is embarked in the three ships. The amphibious group is commanded by a captain who is referred to as "commodore."

— Destroyer Squadron: two or more ships of destroyer or frigate size overseen usually by a captain who is referred to as "commodore." This grouping is essentially for administrative, maintenance and training purposes.

— Submarine Squadron: a collection of submarines.

— Amphibious Squadron: two or more amphibious ships overseen by a captain who is referred to as "commodore." When the squadron's amphibious assault ship prepares for and conducts overseas operations, the commodore becomes the commander of an Amphibious Ready Group.

— Squadron: two or more ships; the number varies depending on the mission. Basic types are amphibious, destroyer and cruiser squadrons.

— Ship: the basic unit distinction for surface vessels and submarines.

— Naval air: the wing is comparable to a group; it consists of two or more squadrons. An air wing deploys with an aircraft carrier. A squadron is two or more aircraft. The individual aircraft is the basic unit.

NEC

Navy enlisted code. Same as Army MOS. Sometimes also called Navy Enlisted Occupational Code.

P

plebes

"Plebes" are fourth-class (freshman) cadets (Air Force, Army or Coast Guard academies) or midshipmen (Naval Academy), not just any members of the Cadet Corps or Midshipmen's Brigade. They're also called "Doolies" in the Air Force Academy.

PX

The familiar abbreviation for post exchange, the department stores on Army bases. In the Air Force, they are the BX (base exchange); in the Navy, the Navy exchange, lately taken to calling itself NEX. No user-friendly initials for such Marine facilities.

R

ranks and titles

See the AP Stylebook, under military titles, or the World Almanac, under Armed Forces, U.S.

The military structure comprises commissioned officers, who hold their commissions from the president; enlisted men and women, who enlist for a set period; and a few warrant officers, who are not commissioned but warranted. Warranted is an old Royal Navy way of saying that somebody wasn't quite gentry enough to be a king's officer.

The senior enlisted men and women are called noncommissioned officers in the Army, Air Force and Marines and are petty officers in the Navy and Coast Guard.

Officers range from second lieutenants and ensigns (pay grade O-1) up to four-star generals or admirals (pay grade O-10). Enlisted people start at private, airman basic or seaman recruit (E-1) and go up to the top-ranking sergeants and chief petty officers (E-9). Just to be clear, not all enlisted people start at E-1. Those with college education may start at E-2 or as high as E-4. Warrant officers (W-1 through W-5) are in between. There's a complete list of them, including abbreviations, in the AP Stylebook and page 26 in this booklet.

All services' ranks aren't the same. This is especially true in the case of captains, who are medium-small potatoes in the Army, Air Force and Marines but mucho pomposo big cheeses in the Navy and the Coast Guard.

Any kind of general and admiral may be called general or admiral after the first reference. One additional note: there is no rank of "full" anything.

Although they may be listed in out-of-date stylebooks, there are no generals of the Army or fleet admirals. The last surviving member of World War II's five-star club was Omar Bradley, who died in 1981. If you can name all nine of them you ought to go on "Jeopardy."

At a less lofty level, if we bury a sergeant, let's say what kind. A plain three-striper, familiarly called a buck sergeant, isn't very high in the Army or Marine hierarchy, and the Air Force did away with that rank years ago. These days there are chief and senior master sergeants, sergeants major, staff and technical sergeants, sergeants first class (not to be confused with first sergeants), gunnery sergeants, master sergeants and master gunnery sergeants. The Navy has master chief petty officers, senior chief petty officers and chief petty officers. This pecking order is strange to the outsider, but no less structured or strict than priests, vicars, Monsignors, bishops and cardinals, their worship, their grace, their eminence.

Military rank should always precede the name, and title or job description should follow the name. Gen. John Ryan, Air Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Russell C. Davis, chief of the National Guard Bureau. When quoting a source, it's ". . . according to Lt. Col. Conrad Coverup, a Pentagon spokesman," and not "Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Conrad Coverup," which sounds a bit like the Germans' "Herr Major Professor Doktor."

Even more confusing to people not in the Navy and Coast Guard is the rank/rating system for petty officers. They can be addressed by their rank or rating (job specialty): Petty Officer First Class John Smith or Yeoman First Class John Smith ("yeoman," designating his job). Newspapers can probably handle it best by saying Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Smith on first reference and later describe him as a yeoman (a yeoman does administrative work).

Remember the Air Force airman? The Navy has one, too (aircraft maintenance and air operations). But he has equivalents in the rest of the fleet: seaman (administrative and deck crew), fireman (ship engineering), hospitalman (corpsman), dentalman (dental technicians) and constructionman (Seabee). All are in pay grade E-3.

The commandant is the general in charge of the Marine Corps. Because this is a position instead of a rank, it should normally be written lowercase after the name (as in "Gen. John Doe, commandant of the Marine Corps").

Whenever rank is given immediately before a name, each word is uppercase.

Reserve, reserves, reservist

In the unit title, the word Reserve is singular and capitalized. The Army Reserve, ROTC and National Guard are all part of the (generic) Army reserves, plural and lowercase. The Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and AFROTC make up the Air Force reserves, while the Naval Reserve and NROTC are the Navy reserves.

retirees

Retired officers and noncommissioned officers should not be referred to as "former" or "ex-." They keep their ranks in retirement, as they are subject to recall if the balloon goes up, unless the officer resigns his commission, as Maj. Gen. Edwin Walker did in the 1960s to become a neo-Nazi in Mississippi. It should be "retired Air Force Col. Harvey Hasbeen," not former colonel or ex-colonel Hasbeen. Remember to specify which service. Also remember not to equate retired military personnel with those who had only prior military service.

S

SEALs

The Navy's sea, air and land teams.

secretaries

The secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force are civilians directly under the secretary of defense. There is no secretary of the Marine Corps.

services

The United States military services are the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps (not the Marines, though they may be referred to that way in direct quotes) and the Air Force. They are run by the Department of Defense. The U.S. Coast Guard, under the Department of Transportation (transferring to Department of Homeland Security March 1, 2003), and officers in the U.S. Public Health Service wear Navy uniforms. They also wear Navy uniforms in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

ship

A ship, according to the Naval Terms Dictionary, is "any large sea-going vessel." A ship is formally commissioned; a boat is not. For Navy purposes, if it has USS or USNS in front of it, it's a ship. Ships that have not been commissioned or have been decommissioned or were built before 1909 are not preceded by USS in the name. Per longstanding naval tradition, ships are referred to as "she" or "her." Per recent political-correctness tradition, civilian newspapers will assign no gender to ships.

side arms

Many writers seem hung up on calling side arms "semiautomatic pistols" (or, worse, "automatic" when they are not). Side arms are little different from a Colt revolver. Both require a trigger pull to fire the next shot.

soldier, soldiers

Confine the use of "soldier" and "soldiers" to people in the Army.

sortie

One mission by a single military aircraft.

special forces, Special Forces

Uppercase when clearly and exclusively applied to the U.S. Army. In that case, it is a proper noun, such as designating soldiers or units of the Army Special Forces Command. Generally in other uses, the phrase is lowercase because it is a description designating a type of force, not an organization.

special operations, Special Operations

Uppercase when clearly and exclusively applied to one or more units (or organizations) with "Special Operations" in the name, or personnel belonging to any of those units. At least generally in other uses, the phrase is lowercase because it is a description designating a type of operation, not an organization.

striker

A sailor in pay grades E-1 through E-3 training for a specific job. One who has been authorized to "strike" or train for a particular job.

spy plane

"Reconnaissance plane" or "surveillance plane" is more neutral, and thus preferred.

T

theater

The military will often apply this word to an area of operations, e.g., European theater, Pacific theater. Newspapers can reduce those to Europe and Pacific. But when there's a Central theater, such as the one listed under **Navy structure**, then that area must be defined for readers.

troops

A collective term used for uniformed military personnel (usually not applicable to naval personnel afloat). You can have a troop carrier or a Boy Scout troop, but you cannot have a solitary troop. Some argue that it is ungrammatical to say you have 75 or 100 troops. Webster's New World Dictionary cites a plural: soldiers (45 troops were killed). Webster's further says: troop is applied to a group of people organized as a unit (a cavalry *troop*), or working or acting together in close cooperation (*troops* of sightseers). Cavalry soldiers are historically referred to as "troopers." The Army says simply soldier for one of its own.

21-gun salute

Tattoo this on the palm of your hand: A squad of seven people firing three volleys over a grave is NOT, repeat, NOT, a 21-gun salute. A 21-gun salute is reserved for the president or other head of state, at the inaugural, or at a visit aboard a naval vessel or a military base – or at the White House. It is rendered by naval guns or Army artillery, never, never by rifles. The over-the-graveside salute is called Final Honors, or simply a three-volley salute.

U

UA

The term used by the Navy and Marine Corps for what is known as AWOL in the Army and Air Force. Unauthorized absence.

uniforms

Be careful when referring to specific uniforms. For those that are less known to the public, there is seldom a handy phrase that is both correct to the military and clear to civilians. Exceptions are the camouflage uniform and Marine Corps dress blues.

W

Wac, WAC

Wac is no longer used by the military but is an acceptable term in a reference to a woman who served in what used to be the Women's Army Corps.

WAC is acceptable on second reference to the corps.

Waf, WAF

Waf is no longer used by the military but is acceptable in a reference to a woman who served in the Air Force.

WAF is acceptable on second reference to Women in the Air Force, an unofficial organizational distinction made by the Air Force but never authorized by Congress.

watercraft and related matters

The following expressions are not synonymous:

amphibious ship and amphibious assault ship

amphibious vehicle, boat, ship, landing craft, watercraft

amphibious, Marine, marine, nautical (Nor are those synonymous with "naval" or "Naval." But any distinction between "naval" and "Naval" might be more a matter of style than fact.)

Marines routinely deploy on Navy ships. Expressions such as "Marine ship" or "Marine fill-in-the-blank ship" are questionable at best.

Wave, WAVES

Wave no longer is used by the military but is acceptable in reference to a woman who served in the Navy.

WAVES is acceptable on second reference to the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, an organizational distinction made for women during World War II but subsequently discontinued. A link to the Naval Historical Center page about them: www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/females/wave-ww2.htm

Web sites

ACES has put the Web military index online. There are many useful sites to answer military questions. We invite you to examine the URL: www.copydesk.org/military.htm

WINS

A generally accepted term for Women in the Naval Service. It is always used with the S; although an individual woman sailor might be described as a WIN within the ranks.

WM

A loosely accepted abbreviation for Women Marines, although be sure you're very good friends with her before you call a Marine a WM.

Navy Enlisted Ratings

Enlisted sailors wear their jobs on their sleeves. If they have been designated for a specialty before they become petty officers, they wear their specialty symbol above their stripes. Petty officers wear their specialty symbols between an eagle (called a "crow") and the chevrons. While a petty officer may be referred to as Petty Officer 1st Class Paul John Jones or (using his rating) Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Paul John Jones, it probably is best to say Petty Officer 1st Class Paul John Jones on first reference and later in the story identify his Navy specialty, e.g. , Jones, a boatswain's mate.

The table below lists the current Navy (and most Coast Guard) ratings and their respective insignias.

AB - Aviation Boatswain's Mate



AC - Air Traffic Controller



AD - Aviation Machinist's Mate



AE - Aviation Electrician's Mate



AG - Aerographer's Mate



AK - Aviation Storekeeper



AM - Aviation Structural Mechanic



AS - Aviation Support Equipment Technician



AO - Aviation Ordnanceman



AT - Aviation Electronics Technician



AW - Aviation Warfare Systems Operator



AZ - Aviation Maintenance Administrationman



BM - Boatswain's Mate



BU - Builder



CE - Construction Electrician



CM - Construction Mechanic



CT - Cryptographic Technician



DC - Damage Controlman



DK - Disbursing Clerk



DM - Illustrator Draftsman



DS - Data Systems Technician



DT - Dental Technician



EA - Engineering Aide



EM - Electrician's Mate



EN - Engineman



EO - Equipment Operator



ET - Electronics Technician



EW - Electronic Warfare Technician



FC - Fire Controlman



FT - Fire Control Technician



GM - Gunner's Mate



GS - Gas Turbine System Technician



HM - Hospital Corpsman



IC - Interior Communications Electrician



IM - Instrumentman



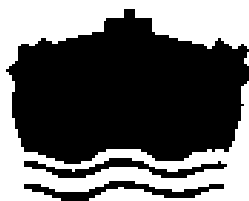
LI - Lithographer



MA - Master-at-Arms



MN - Mineman



HT - Hull Maintenance Technician



IS - Intelligence Specialist



JO - Journalist



LN - Legalman



MM - Machinist's Mate



MR - Machinery Repairman



MS - Mess Management Specialist



MT - Missile Technician



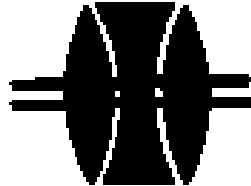
MU - Musician



NC - Navy Counselor



OM - Opticalman



OS - Operations Specialist



PC - Postal Clerk



PH - Photographer's Mate



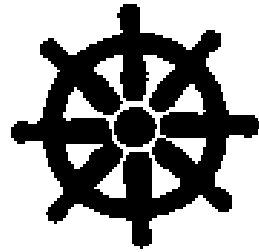
PN - Personnelman



PR - Aircraft Survival Equipmentman



QM - Quartermaster



IT - Information Systems Technician
Formerly known as



RM - Radioman

RP - Religious Program Specialist



SH - Ship's Serviceman



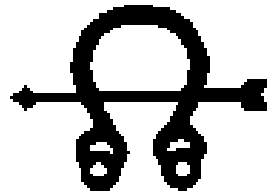
SK - Storekeeper



SM - Signalman



ST - Sonar Technician



SW - Steelworker



TM - Torpedoman's Mate



UT - Utilityman



YN - Yeoman



Enlisted Ranks (Pay grades at left)

Army

Navy
Coast Guard

Marines

Air Force

Seaman Recruit

Private

Private

Airman Basic

Pvt.



Pvt.

Airman

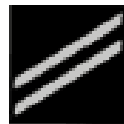
Private E-2
Pvt.

Seaman Apprentice

Private First Class
Pfc.

Airman
Airman

E2



**Private First Class
Pfc.**



Seaman



**Lance Corporal
Lance Cpl.**



**Airman First Class
Airman 1st Class**



E3

**Corporal
Cpl.**



**Specialist
Spc.**



Petty Officer

Petty Officer 3rd Class



**Corporal
Cpl.**



Senior Airman



E4

**Sergeant
Sgt.**



**Petty Officer
Petty Officer 2nd Class**



**Sergeant
Sgt.**



**Staff Sergeant
Staff Sgt.**



E5

Army

Navy

Marines

Air Force

Coast Guard

E6

Staff Sergeant
Staff Sgt.



Petty Officer
Petty Officer 1st Class



Staff Sergeant
Staff Sgt.



Technical Sergeant
Tech. Sgt.



E7

Sergeant First Class
Sgt. 1st Class



Chief Petty Officer



Gunnery Sergeant
Gunnery Sgt.



Master Sergeant
Master Sgt.



First Sergeant
1st Sgt.



E8

Master Sergeant
Master Sgt.



First Sergeant
1st Sgt.



Senior Chief Petty Officer



Master Sergeant
Master Sgt.



First Sergeant
1st Sgt.



Senior Master Sergeant
Senior Master Sgt.



First Sergeant



Army

Navy

Marines

Air Force

Coast Guard

Sergeant Major
Sgt. Maj.

Command Sergeant

Major Command
Sgt. Maj.

Master Chief Petty Officer

Fleet/Command Master Chief Petty Officer

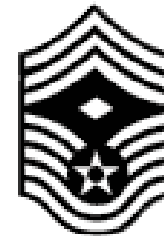
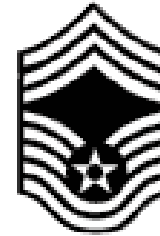
Sergeant Major
Sgt.

Master Gunnery Sergeant

Chief Master Sergeant
Chief Master Sgt.

First Sergeant
1st Sgt.

Command Chief Master Sergeant
Command Chief Master Sgt.



E9

Sergeant Major of the Army

Sgt. Maj. of the Army



Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy and Coast Guard



**

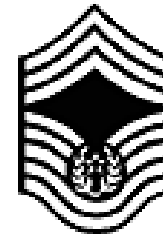
Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps

Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps





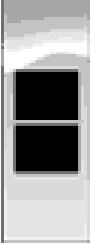
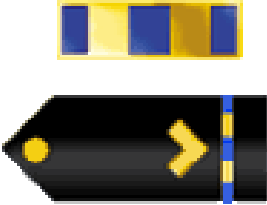

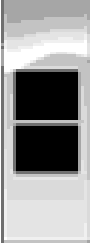
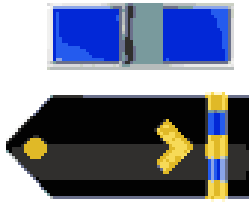

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force



E9

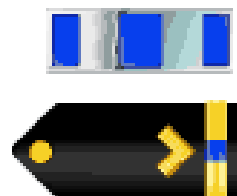
Warrant Officers (Pay Grades At Left)

<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u> <u>COAST GUARD</u>	<u>Marines</u>	<u>Air Force</u>
Warrant Officer 1 	Warrant Officer 1 * The grade of Warrant Officer W-1 is no longer in use.	Warrant Officer 1 	NO WARRANT
Chief Warrant Officer 2 	Chief Warrant Officer 2 	Chief Warrant Officer 2 	NO WARRANT
Chief Warrant Officer 3 	Chief Warrant Officer 3 	Chief Warrant Officer 3 	NO WARRANT

Chief Warrant Officer 4



Chief Warrant Officer 4

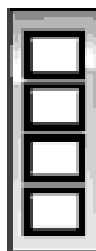


Chief Warrant Officer 4



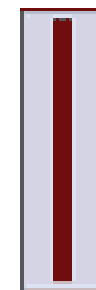
NO WARRANT

Chief Warrant Officer 5



NO
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER
CWO5

Chief Warrant Officer 5



NO WARRANT

Commissioned Officers

Army

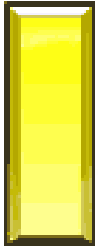
Navy
Coast Guard

Marines

Air Force

Second Lieutenant

2nd Lt.



Ensign



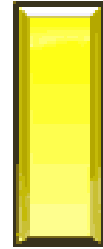
Second Lieutenant

2nd Lt.



Second Lieutenant

2nd Lt.



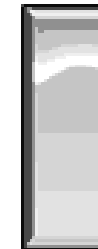
Lieutenant Junior Grade

Lt. j.g.



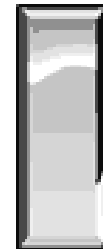
First Lieutenant

1st Lt.



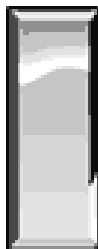
First Lieutenant

1st Lt.



First Lieutenant

1st Lt.



Lieutenant

Lt.

Captain

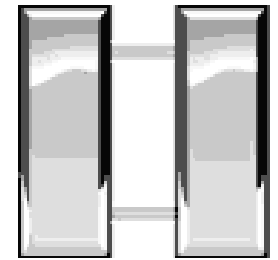
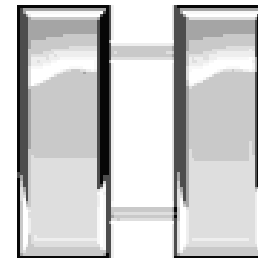
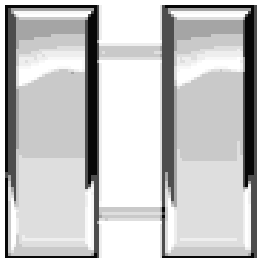
Capt.

Captain

Capt.

Captain

Capt.



Army

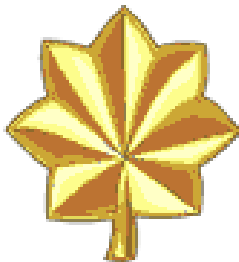
Navy
Coast Guard

Marines

Air Force

Lieutenant Commander
Lt. Cmdr.

Major
Maj.



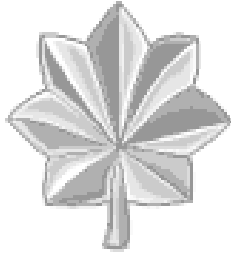
Major
Maj.



Major
Maj.



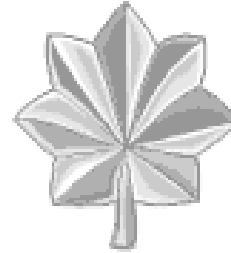
Lieutenant Colonel
Lt. Col.



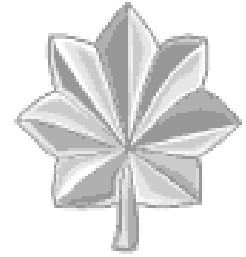
Commander
Cmdr.



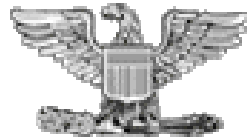
Lieutenant Colonel
Lt. Col.



Lieutenant Colonel
Lt. Col.



Captain
Capt.



Colonel
Col.



Colonel
Col.



Colonel
Col.

Army

Navy
Coast Guard

Marines

Air Force

**Rear Admiral
Lower Half
Rear Adm.**



**Brigadier General
Brig. Gen.**



**Brigadier General
Brig. Gen.**



**Brigadier General
Brig. Gen.**



**Rear Admiral
Upper Half
Rear Adm.**



**Major General
Maj. Gen.**

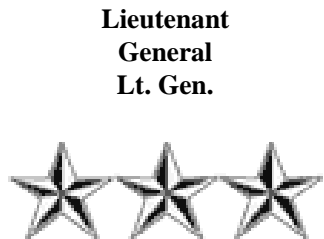


**Major General
Maj. Gen.**

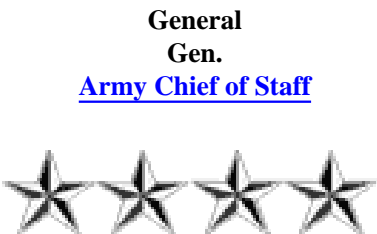


**Major General
Maj. Gen.**

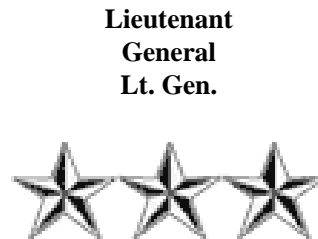




Army

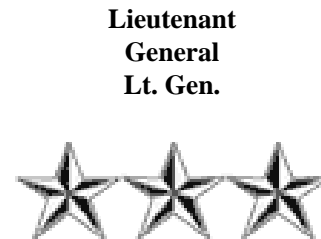


Navy
Coast Guard
**Admiral
Adm.
Chief of Naval Operations
and
Commandant of the
Coast Guard**



Marines

**General
Gen.
Commandant of the
Marine Corps**



Air Force

**General
Gen.
Air Force Chief of Staff**



General of the Army
(Reserved for wartime only)

Fleet Admiral
(Reserved for wartime only)

General of the Air Force
(Reserved for wartime only)



Major Medals and Decorations

1. Medal of Honor

Army

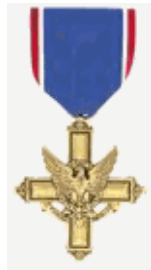
Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps

Air Force



2. Distinguished Service Cross (Army), Navy Cross (Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps), Air Force Cross (Air Force)

Army Distinguished Service Cross



Navy Cross



Air Force Cross

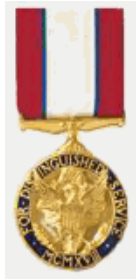


3. Department of Defense Distinguished Service Medal

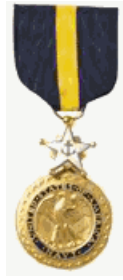


4. Distinguished Service Medal

Army



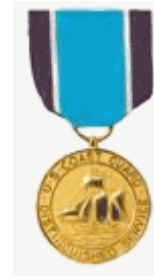
Navy and Marine Corps



Air Force



Coast Guard

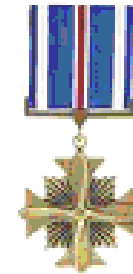


6. Defense Superior Service Medal

7. Legion of Merit

8. Distinguished Flying Cross

5. Silver Star



9. Army Soldier's, the Navy and Marine Corps, Airman's, or Coast Guard Medal for Heroism

Army Soldier's Medal

Navy and Marine Corps Medal

Airman's Medal

Coast Guard



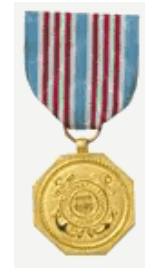
10. Bronze Star Medal



11. Purple Heart Medal



12. Defense Meritorious Service Medal



13. Meritorious Service Medal



14. Air Medal



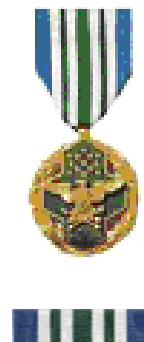
15. Air Force Aerial Achievement Medal



16. Joint Service Commendation Medal



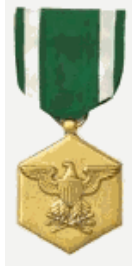
17. Army, Navy and Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard Commendation Medal



Army



Navy and Marine Corps



Air Force



Coast Guard

