

A 10-MINUTE GUIDE TO AMERICA'S MILITARY

CREATED BY THE TRUMAN NATIONAL SECURITY PROJECT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

A very brief primer put together by recent military veterans to address some of the basic questions often asked by civilians about the United States Military

A cornerstone of the American democracy is civilian control of the military. It is the job of civilian leaders to set America's foreign policy: the military is intended to advise only on what is militarily possible. The chain of command runs from the President, to civilians in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, to the most senior military commanders of each service, the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The U.S. Military has **4 Services**: *Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps*, with the Marines (and at times, the *Coast Guard**) under the Navy. **Active Duty** refers to military members who serve full time and all four services are included under this division. The **Reserve Component** refers to military members who serve a minimum of 39 days of military duty every year (one weekend a month and two weeks a year) and augment the active duty military when necessary. Since Vietnam, military jobs have been divided so that the nation is not able to go to war without the Reserves. Only the Army and Air Force have **National Guard** components. They are under the command of state governors. However, the U.S. President has the power to federalize them for national needs. Before 2001, the distinction between the Active Duty, Reserve and the National Guard was much clearer, but due to the high volume of soldiers being sent overseas that is not true anymore. Today, Reserve and National Guard units spend a lot of time on full-time, active duty overseas.

UNOFFICIAL ROLES OF THE FOUR SERVICES

Army: Engage in large scale ground operations, "fight and win the nation's wars."

Navy: Ensure American dominance of the oceans, seas and rivers, and transport other assets across waters.

Air Force: Ensure American dominance of the skies; provide the ability to strike targets anywhere in the world (above the surface, on the surface or below the surface of the Earth); provide "close air support" to ground forces; and transports personnel, equipment and supplies worldwide.

Marine Corps: Serve as an expeditionary "force in readiness" prepared to deploy at a moment's notice and be on the ground within about five days, with at least a battalion, anywhere in the world. Marines are expected to hold their ground against most other militaries and be self-sustaining for about thirty days. Marines are generally the first force on the ground in any combat operation.

UNIT SIZES IN THE US MILITARY GROUND FORCES (ARMY AND MARINES)

There are many jobs within the military. Those in the **Infantry** are the backbone of the ground military—they carry rifles, and are the most likely to engage in combat of all units in the military. The infantry in the Army and Marine Corps are grouped in the following units (Marine units are larger than Army units):

| Unit | Approximate # of Troops | Major subordinate units | Led by |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------|
| Squad | 9-13 | 3 Fire teams | Sergeant |
| Platoon | 35-45 | 3 Squads | Lieutenant |
| Company | 130-180 | 3 Infantry Platoons 1 Heavy Weapons Platoon | Captain |
| Battalion | 665-1,000 | 3 Infantry Companies 1 Heavy Weapons Company | Lt Colonel |
| Army Brigade/ Marine Regiment | 2,500-4,000 | 3 Infantry Battalions | Colonel |
| Division | 15,000-18,000 | 3 Infantry Regiments Support Troops | Major General |

GUIDE TO MILITARY RANKS

OFFICERS: THE PEOPLE WHO GET CALLED “SIR” AND “MA’AM”

Officers come primarily from college ROTC programs as well as service academies, and Officer Candidate School (where enlisted can train to become officers). Officers are the decision-makers in the military, and have a say in creating strategy. They are responsible for leading units ranging from 20 to more than 20,000. Nearly all hold undergraduate degrees, with salaries ranging from \$30,000 (Lieutenants) to around \$150,000 (Generals). *Together, officers comprise only about 15% of the armed services.*

A LISTING OF OFFICER RANKS, WITH CIVILIAN BUSINESS EQUIVALENTS



General [Navy Admiral] (O-7 through O-10 = 1 to 4 Stars) *CEOs*: Generals are responsible for thousands of people and billions of dollars worth of equipment. Generals interface with politicians and make major policy decisions within their commands and on strategic military policy.



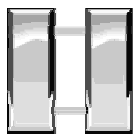
Colonel [Navy Captain] (O-6), *Vice Presidents*: Colonels effectively run the military outside of Washington. They can command thousands of troops and have a significant impact upon policy and warfighting, depending on their assignment.



Lieutenant Colonel [Navy Commander] (O-5), *Senior Management*: Lt. Colonels have made it to the ranks of the Officially Important, and can command hundreds of troops or hold important policy staff jobs in the offices of senior leaders. (Age Range: Generally in their 40s)



Major [Navy Lieutenant Commander] (O-4), *Middle Management*: Majors are in the middle of the officer ranks, and this is the plateau point for many officers. Majors can command larger groups and assist superiors with policy. They also run most staff operations, from logistics to combat plans. In the Navy, they may command ships. (Age Range: Generally in their 30s)



Captain [Navy Lieutenant] (O-3), *Junior Middle Management*: There are many O-3s, and they function as a middle-management level of the military, getting much done on the ground, especially in combat situations. They may command groups of up to 100 or 200 service members. (Age Range: Late 20s to early 30s)



1st Lieutenant [Navy Lieutenant Junior Grade] (O-2), *Junior Employees*:
1st Lieutenants know how things operate, but are still gaining the experience necessary to effectively lead larger groups. They have been in service 1 to 4 years, and may command platoons. (Age Range: Mid-20s)



2nd Lieutenant [Navy Ensign] (O-1), *Entry Level*: 2nd Lieutenants are young, energetic, and are in their first years of service. (Age: Early 20s)

ENLISTED: “DON’T CALL ME ‘SIR’ . . . I WORK FOR A LIVING.”

Enlisted soldiers are broken up into two broad categories: *junior enlisted and non-commissioned officers (NCOs)*.

Junior enlisted troops: (E-1 to E-3) Army privates and corporals, Navy seamen and petty officers, Marine privates, and Air Force airmen.

Junior enlisted troops serve in combat and are technicians and analysts. *Junior enlisted troops make up a plurality of the military, at about 45% of the armed forces.* They are the work horses of the armed forces. They comprise the majority of combat troops and therefore most of the casualties in war. Junior enlisted troops earn about \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year, and the vast majority are high school graduates, though more and more frequently they are earning bachelor’s degrees for specialty fields, such as languages and intelligence.

Non-Commissioned Officers: (E-4 to E-5; Staff Non-Commissioned Officers E-6 to E-9) NCOs train and supervise junior enlisted troops, and they enforce the officers’ policies. They make many decisions without officer input.

NCOs are commonly known as the backbone of the military, and comprise about 40% of the forces. Though all enlisted troops are technically subordinate to all officers, NCOs’ greater experience and proximity to junior enlisted give them great influence over the internal attitudes, behaviors, and induction of new troops. NCOs frequently earn 2- or 4-year degrees while serving, and earn roughly \$25,000 to \$60,000 per year.

Example insignias of the E-5 rank, worn on the upper sleeve:

Army Sergeant

Navy Petty Officer,
Second Class

Marine Sergeant

Air Force Staff Sergeant



**FORMS OF ADDRESS AND THE DIVISION BETWEEN OFFICERS AND ENLISTED ARE
IMPORTANT!**

In the Army an officer is “sir” to anyone but a higher-ranked officer (who will usually address a lower officer by rank and last name or, if an acquaintance, by their first name), while an enlisted individual is addressed by his or her rank and last name. A civilian who doesn’t distinguish between officers and enlisted, or doesn’t use the proper and polite form of address, is seen as being disrespectful to the military.

MILITARY CULTURE
THE SEVEN OFFICIAL U.S. ARMY VALUES

Loyalty

Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other soldiers.

Duty

Fulfill your obligations.

Respect

Treat people as they should be treated.

Selfless Service

Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.

Honor

Live up to all the Army values.

Integrity

Do what's right, legally and morally.

Personal Courage

Face fear, danger, and adversity (physical or moral).

THE WARRIOR ETHOS: UNOFFICIAL BUT DEEPLY FELT VALUES OF MOST TROOPS

Decisiveness

Military actions require innumerable split-second decisions under stressful conditions, waiting to act until one has all of the facts can cost lives.

Pride and Honor

Troops see the defense of our country as a calling and one of the greatest forms of service. Pride and honor are cultivated by the military to keep troops focused on their missions even if they are impacted by heavy losses or combat stress.

Moral Certainty and Faith

Moral certainty provides inner strength. It provides comfort and assists in the psychological need to justify taking or losing one's life for a cause.

Traditionalism

Testing new ways to solve problems can be dangerous and may undermine time-honored and battle tested routines that have worked. This reality in battle can make the military more naturally conservative in other spheres.

Commitment to Winning

The can-do attitude instilled in the military includes a commitment to getting the job done *no matter what*. It can lead to anger at what is seen as "defeatism" by those who declare a war to be un-winnable.

Community

The unparalleled sense of "family" within the military means that service members are often more comfortable with other service members – even when out of uniform.

VALUES PROGRESSIVES AND THE MILITARY STRONGLY SHARE:

Commitment to Service

- Progressives and the military agree that all Americans have a duty to make this country a better place. The military is more than a paycheck; most join to be part of something larger than themselves, and to serve Americans and humankind – their impulse to serve is the same desire that calls progressives to work in nonprofits, public service, and other good causes.

The Importance of Community and the Common Good

- Military leaders emphasize the importance of taking care of each other, especially those in lower ranks. Progressives and service members share a deep commitment to the common good and to a less individualistic, selfish society.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Not all military are “Soldiers”! Junior enlisted are Soldiers (Army), Sailors (Navy), Airmen (Air Force), and Marines. Although the Marines are technically a subset of the Navy, you take your life in your hands when calling a Marine “Sailor.”

The military is not just a “job”: The military see their role not as a “job” but more as a long-term commitment and a way of life.

For some, the military is a family tradition: Some families produce generation after generation of lawyers, or doctors, while some have generations in military service. For these families, service is not only a way to show patriotism but a proud family tradition.

Not all veterans have seen combat: Veterans who have been in war are “combat veterans”, but anyone who has served in war or peace is a “veteran” after active service.

Officers must be circumspect if they disagree with civilian leadership: The Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits “contemptuous words” against many political leaders while on duty. The rule is broadly interpreted in the military, and can keep many service members from expressing frank political or even policy opinions, even while giving congressional testimony.

The military is well educated: Military personnel *are not drawn mainly from the poor and uneducated*: 96% of officers have college degrees and 37% have advanced degrees. For enlisted service members, high school graduation rates average 10 points higher than the general population.

But elites and the most affluent in our society are under-represented: In 1968, 70% of Congressional members had served in the military; by 2004, only 25% had. In Princeton’s 1956 Class of 750 males, 400 served; in Princeton’s 2005 Class only 8 out of 1,100 served.

Political party leaders have comparable military experience: of the 104 House members with military experience, 56 are Republicans and 48 are Democrats; of the 29 Senate members with military experience, 16 are Republicans and 13 are Democrats.

SOME ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND TERMS

- **Joint Forces** – When personnel from more than one branch operate together.
- **Combined Forces** – When US personnel operate with troops from other countries.
- **Interagency** – When personnel from the military and other U.S. government agencies (such as the State Department or DHS) interact
- **Rules of Engagement (ROEs)** – Guidelines dictating when troops are authorized to shoot or not.
- **Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)** – The special laws that apply to all service members, but not to civilians, and for which court-martial can be applied. For instance, adultery is against the UCMJ’s interpretation of Article 134 (behavior which could undermine discipline or bring discredit on the armed forces).
- **Battle Space or Area of Operations** – the specific geographic area where military operations are taking place.
- **Information Operations (IO)** – Using information dissemination (through rumor, mass media, billboards, etc) to convince opposition forces or neutrals in the battle space to take certain actions. Sometimes referred to as “propaganda”, a major component of hearts-and-minds battle, as well as a way of letting individuals know how to surrender, for instance, or otherwise conveying information.
- **Civil Affairs** – Those personnel dedicated to Civil-Military Operations (CMO) whose job is to interact with all civilians in the battle space, be they local refugees, politicians, religious or economic leaders, international humanitarian aid workers, or US government personnel from civilian agencies. Most civil affairs officers are in the Reserves.
- **Counterinsurgency Warfare (COIN)** – Also called 4th Generation Warfare, Asymmetric Warfare, or Small Wars. Usually involves measures that gain the confidence of civilian populations, including local development projects.
- **Security and Stability Operations (SASO)** – Previously called Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW), Peace Operations, Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs): to impose or sustain the end of combat between warring countries or among parties to a civil and/or ethnic conflict. Also the post-conflict activities of rebuilding a country.
- **The Coast Guard** is attached to the Department of Homeland Security during peacetime, but is also one of the uniformed military services (although unfortunately, not always accorded the respect of a “full member” by other services)! During times of war or when the President commands, the Coast Guard operates under the Navy. Coast Guardsmen are on active and reserve service and are subject to the UCMJ just like other service members. Coast Guardsmen are serving in the Afghanistan War.