

Women in the United States Navy





Today nearly every naval community is open to women. They make vital contributions ashore and afloat in Iraq and Afghanistan and in overseas contingency operations.



Although women did not officially serve in the Navy until Congress created the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908, the Navy contracted their services during earlier periods. During the Civil War nuns from the Sisters of the Holy Cross treated patients aboard USS *Red Rover*, the Navy's first commissioned hospital ship.

Lenah S. Higbee was one of the Navy's first twenty nurses and in 1911 became Superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps. She further distinguished herself as the only woman to receive a Navy Cross while still living, and in 1944 was the first woman to have a warship, USS *Higbee* (DD 806), named in her honor.



Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels began enlisting women on 17 March 1918 to help alleviate a shortage of clerical workers. During World War I, most of the 11,000 female yeoman or Yeomanettes served in the Washington, D.C. area. Others filled billets overseas and across the United States as interpreters, draftsmen, and recruiters.



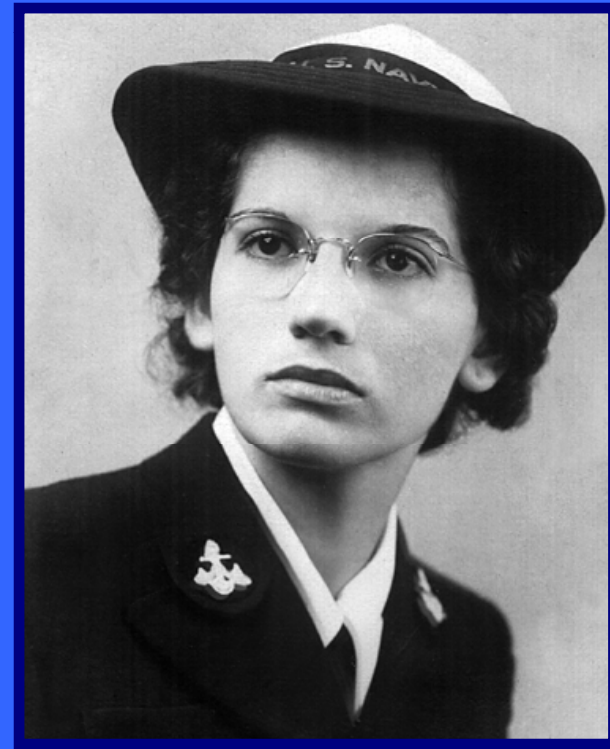
During World War II, 90,000 female officers and enlisted naval reservists, commonly known as WAVES, were stationed at U.S. shore commands as well as overseas. They served as air traffic controllers, artists, cryptologists, hospital corpsmen, linguists, and weather specialists. Most considered their service one of the most significant events in their lives.



Navy nurses treated patients ashore, afloat, and in the air during World War II. Flight nurses retrieved the injured from the battlefield and transferred them to planes for evacuation and further treatment. On the left is a group of flight nurses, and on the right, flight nurse Jane Kendeigh prepares to evacuate patients from the Iwo Jima battle area.



Navy nurse Beatrice Kissinger, left, and Navy WAVES Emma Hernandez numbered among the estimated 250,000-500,000 Latinos who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II.





Rear Admiral Grace M. Hopper, seen here as a captain, was one of the Navy's most accomplished women and a leading computer scientist. A graduate of Vassar, she earned a master's degree and a Ph.D. in math from Yale before joining the WAVES. She helped develop the Navy's first computer, the UNIVAC-1. She coined the term "bug" to describe a computer problem. USS *Hopper* (DDG 70) was named in her honor.



The contributions of the 350,000 women in the military during World War II convinced military and congressional leaders that women should be allowed to participate in peace time.

The Women's Armed Service Act of 1948 did just that with some restrictions.

Captain Joy Hancock played a critical role in getting the act passed.

**During the early 1970s
Chief of Naval Operations
Admiral Elmo Zumwalt Jr.
focused on quality of life
issues for Sailors, especially
ensuring equal opportunity
for women, blacks, and
other minorities. He issued
numerous mandates for
change, commonly known
as Z-Grams. On 7 August
1972 he issued Z-Gram116,
which expanded the role of
women in the Navy.**





Throughout the 1970s opportunities increased dramatically for women.

The Reserve Officer Training Corps, aviation training, ship commands, and Chaplain Corps were open to women.

Lts. j.g. Barbara Allen, left, and Judith Neuffer were among the first four female naval officers selected for flight training in 1973.

Captain Arlene Duerk, a World War II and Korean War veteran, served as Chief of Nursing Service, Naval Hospital Great Lakes until 1970, when she was promoted to Director, Navy Nurse Corps. Two years later she became the Navy's first female admiral.



In the summer of 1976 eighty-one women entered the Naval Academy's Class of 1980.





In 1978 the Navy started its “women on ships” program, assigning women to auxiliary ships such as USS *Vulcan* (AR 5), above. A year later the Navy established OP-01W, Special Assistant to the Chief of Naval Personnel for Women’s Policy. These changes coincided with the end of the draft, as well as with the civil rights and women’s rights movements.



Commander Darlene Iskra distinguished herself as the first woman to command a noncombatant ship, the salvage ship *USS Opportune* (ARS 41) in 1990. She retired in the rank of commander, earned her doctorate degree in 2008 and published her first book about leadership a year later.

Progress made in the 1970s provided the basis for women to reach previously unimaginable heights in the years that followed. Women commanded ships, recruitment districts, training stations, and shipyards, and constituted 15 percent of the naval personnel during the 1990-1991 Gulf War.





When she was 10 years old, Wendy Lawrence watched Neil Armstrong take the first steps on the moon and decided to become an astronaut. This 1981 Naval Academy graduate began astronaut training in 1992, the first woman from the academy to do so, and went on to log more than 1,200 hours in space. She made four space flights between 1990 and 2005, including two trips to the Russian space station *Mir*.

Rear Admiral Deborah Loewer distinguished herself throughout a 31-year naval career, becoming the Navy's first warfare-qualified woman promoted to flag rank . She established a successful mentoring program for female surface warfare officers that continues today. She is shown here as deputy to Vice Adm. David Brewer, left, Commander, Military Sealift Command, in 2003.



Captain Margaret G. Kibben, a Navy chaplain, leads the ceremonial guard carrying Admiral William J. Crowe's casket into the U.S. Naval Academy Chapel. In 2010 Kibben was promoted to rear admiral and named the 18th Chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps as well as Navy Deputy Chief of Chaplains for the Navy.



Rear Admiral Michelle J. Howard, a 1982 Naval Academy graduate, became the first African American woman to command a combatant ship, USS *Rushmore* (LSD 37), in 1999. By the end of 2010 she had achieved two-star rank . Here, in May 2009, as Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 2, she addresses Sailors and Marines on board the amphibious assault ship USS *Boxer* (LHD 4).





**Quartermaster
2nd Class
Carolina
Castanon, a
Sailor in Naval
Support Activity
Bahrain's
Harbor Patrol
Unit, makes her
rounds,
September 2003.**

Evelyn Banks, Command Master Chief, Naval Sea Systems Command, graduated from the Air Force Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy and the Navy Senior Enlisted Academy. She was the first African American woman to reach the rank of Command Master Chief. She is shown here in Kuwait during a 2006 visit to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command.





Captain Kathlene Contres was Commandant of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute and the highest ranking female Hispanic active duty line officer in 2009. She received a leadership award from *Latina Style* magazine presented by Congresswoman Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.) in 2005.

Lieutenant Amy Tomlinson became the first female Naval Flight Officer selected for the Blue Angels in October 2009. She is the organization's event coordinator.



Vice Admiral Ann E. Rondeau was the senior ranking woman in the Navy and president of National Defense University in 2010. Here she is running with recruits during battle stations in May 2003 when she was a two-star flag officer and Commander, Naval Service Training Command Great Lakes.





Builder 3rd Class Amy Higgins, a member of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11 Air Detachment in Afghanistan, builds a hut a Kandahar Airfield, 2009.

There are no restrictions on women in aviation; all aviation enlisted ratings are open to women.





Commander Sara Joyner, commanding officer of Strike Fighter Squadron 105, dresses out in flight gear on board USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) in March 2007. She was the first woman to command a strike fighter squadron. Selected for promotion to captain in 2010, she is expected to become the first woman to command a carrier air wing.

Rear Admiral Nora Tyson speaks to the media after she assumed command of Carrier Strike Group 2 in July 2010 on board the aircraft carrier USS *George H.W. Bush* (CVN 77) , becoming the first woman to command a strike group.



The first group of female officers selected for submarine duty entered qualifications training in 2010 for integration into the crews of two ballistic missile and two guided missile submarines. Some will be assigned to the *Ohio*-class guided missile submarine USS *Georgia* (SSGN 729) , below.



President Barak Obama addressed the graduating class at the U.S. Naval Academy on 22 May 2009. Of the 1,036 graduates, 203 were women.



According to the Navy Diversity Directorate (N134), by late 2010 there were two three-star admirals among the 31 female flag officers, 52 command master chiefs, and 13 command senior chiefs.



“Opportunities have never been better for those willing to take advantage of them. It makes no difference if you are a man or a woman. If you are willing to give it your full effort, then success will be yours. The question is, are you willing?”

—Master Chief Jacqueline L. DiRosa, the Navy’s senior ranking enlisted woman in 2009.