

Highlights of Women's Contributions to the United States Army

DATE	EVENT	SIGNIFICANCE
1776	After her husband was mortally wounded, Margaret Corbin, a camp follower, took up his artillery post at the Battle of Fort Mifflin in New York and carried on the fight. Acknowledging that she was wounded and disabled in the attack, the Continental Congress later awarded Corbin a pension of half the monthly pay drawn by a soldier in the service.	Margaret Corbin was the first woman pensioned by the government on July 6, 1779 for military service.
1863	Dr. Mary Walker was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor on November 11, 1865, for her services at the First Battle of Bull Run in Manassas. Dr. Walker served as a contracted surgeon with the Union Army and her "patriotic zeal" and "action involving actual conflict with the enemy" were noted in the justification for her award.	Dr. Mary Walker is the only American woman to have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.
1861-1865	<p>During the Civil War, women stepped into many non-traditional roles. Some became camp followers, others nurses, and some brave women disguised themselves as men in order to join the fight.</p> <p>Loreta Velazquez was the wife of an officer who decided to disguise herself as a man, raise a cavalry company, and join her husband in battle. Although her spouse was killed, Velazquez, known as Lieutenant Buford, continued to fight. After several arrests, Velazquez gave up soldiering and became a Confederate spy instead.</p>	The Civil War forced women to adapt to the vast social changes affecting the nation. Their ability and willingness to assume new roles helped shape the United States.
1866	After the Civil War, former slave Cathay Williams headed out west and joined the 38 th United States Colored Troops Infantry. To fit in as a member of the Buffalo Soldiers, Cathay changed her name to William Cathay and disguised herself as a man. She was able to conceal her identity for over two years, but once discovered, Williams was discharged from the Army.	Cathay Williams is the only documented woman to have served as a Buffalo Soldier.

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1898-1901	With the Spanish American War came an epidemic of typhoid fever and a need for highly qualified Army nurses. More than 1,500 nurses signed government contracts and by the end of the war, 15 of these women had died of typhoid. The outstanding work of these women led the Army to establish a permanent Nurse Corps in 1901.	The selfless service of Army nurses during the Spanish American War was acknowledged by the Army when they established the Army Nurse Corps in 1901. Nevertheless, Army nurses did not achieve a permanent commissioned status until 1947.
1917-1919	As the US entered WWI, the Army needed nurses, the Medical Corps needed Reconstruction Aides, the Signal Corps needed telephone operators, and the Quartermaster and Ordnance Corps needed clerks. The women that filled these positions were contracted, not enlisted, by the Army. Many were called to serve near the front lines and they did so bravely.	Thousands of women served patriotically during World War I, risking their well being and lives, without any benefits of being a regular Army soldier. This inequality led to the creation of the Women's Army Corps in the next world war. Footnote: These brave WWI women will not receive veteran's benefits until 1977.
1941	With war looming on the horizon, Congresswomen Edith Nourse Rogers proposed legislation for the Women's Army Corps.	Having been a witness to the status of women in WWI, Rogers vowed that if American women served in support of the Army, they would do so with all the rights and benefits afforded to soldiers.
1942	President Roosevelt signed into law a bill creating the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.	These women were to serve the duration of the War plus six months. WAACs were limited in how and where they were to be utilized.
1942	35,000 applicants applied for the first 1000 positions in the WAAC. In August, the first group of 440 Officer Candidates, 40 of whom were African-American, graduated from training. This ushered in a new era in United States Army.	At the urging of Mary McLeod Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt, black women are admitted into the first class of officer candidates. Civil rights proponents understood that the officer corps presents the biggest opportunity to test integration in the Army.
1943	The success of the Auxiliary and the work of WAACs, especially in North Africa under General Eisenhower, prompted the government to drop the Auxiliary status of these women and create a Women's Army Corps with all of the rank, privileges, and benefits of their male counterparts.	General Eisenhower informs the war department, "During the time I have had Wacs under my command they have met every test and task assigned them . . . their contributions in efficiency, skill, spirit, and determination are immeasurable." Recognition from the Army high command helps eliminate the Auxiliary – thus moving from WAAC to WAC.

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1945	The 6888 th Central Postal Battalion, under the command of Major Charity Adams, was sent overseas. These 800 women were stationed in England then France, and were responsible for redirecting mail to millions of allies on the European continent.	During WWII, Army policy dictated that black WACs could not be sent abroad. The need superseded the policy, and thus the 6888 th Central Postal Battalion was the only unit of African-American WACs to be deployed overseas.
1945	By the end of the war, 140,000 WACs and 56,000 Army nurses served the nation.	These women answered the nation's call and proved they could accomplish all they were asked to do.
1948	Due to the exceptional service of Military Women during World War II, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was signed into law by President Harry Truman.	This bill enabled a permanent presence of women in the military; WAC, WAVE, women Marines, and Women in the Air Force and it also created for the first time an organized reserve for each of these branches.
1948	On July 26, 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order No. 9981, mandating an end to racial segregation in the armed forces.	Integration did not happen immediately, but in 1950 when the 10% racial quota was lifted from the Army, racial segregation was ended in the WAC. WAC records indicate, "We noted the change in the Army's system of segregation as we welcomed <i>the last</i> Company B into 405 School." Prior to this, B Company was always the segregated Black company.
1950-1953	During the Korean War, over 25,000 WACs and 5,000 nurses served in the Army.	Of the WACs serving, 20% were stationed in the Far East Command – but none of them on the Korean Peninsula. Between 1950 and 1952, 1,500 nurses served directly in Korea.
1966-1972	An advance cadre was sent to Saigon to establish a WAC Detachment for duty in Vietnam. A permanent unit was established to support the major headquarters and their adjunct commands. By the end of the war, over 800 WACs had served in theater. Thousands of Army nurses served in the combat theater very close to combat. Seven female Army nurses were killed in Vietnam.	Service in Vietnam signaled a turning point for women in the Army. They arrived in country wearing class "A"s but left in combat fatigues – signifying much of the work they accomplished there was challenging and that they endured the same hardships as their male counterparts.

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1968	Sergeant Major Yzetta L. Nelson was the first WAC appointed to the grade of Command Sergeant Major.	The rank of E9 had recently been established in 1966.
1970	Colonel Elizabeth P. Hoisington, Director, Women's Army Corps and Colonel Anna Mae Hays, Chief, Army Nurse Corps, were the first women promoted to Brigadier General.	These promotions were done simultaneously in recognition of their equal importance.
1972	The Army Chief of Staff authorized participation of women in ROTC programs at 10 colleges and universities. Shortly thereafter, women are authorized in all ROTC programs.	These first female ROTC cadets graduated in 1976. Prior to this, the primary source of commissioning was the Junior College Women's Program.
1972	The Army announced that all MOS would be opened to women except for 48 combat or hazardous duty MOSs.	This was a realization that women could be utilized in far greater capacity than ever before.
1975	The Army instituted mixed gender Basic Combat Training. This idea had been proposed by Colonel Mary Hallaren twenty-five years earlier in 1950.	The chief of staff approved the consolidation of basic training for men and women when test programs showed that "female graduates met the standards in every area except the Physical Readiness Training Program" which could be modified without compromising the value of the training.
1975-1978	During these years, many Army rules and regulations concerning women changed. The Secretary of Defense directed elimination of involuntary discharge of military women on pregnancy and parenthood. Mandatory defensive weapons training was initiated for enlisted women and they were authorized to serve the same length of overseas tours as men. Women were also given the opportunity to command men for the first time.	During these years, standards for men and women in the Army began to begin to equalize.
1976	President Ford signed PL94-106 that permitted women be admitted to all Service academies beginning in 1976.	Graduation from West Point ensured a Regular Army Commission and created women officers on equal par with males being able to serve 30 years.
1978	PL 95-584 disestablished the WAC as a separate Corps.	Women were now in the Army, serving directly in units next to their male counterparts.

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1981	The Army initiated the Direct Combat Probability Coding System to identify spaces on manning documents to deployable units with high to low probability of soldiers being engaged in direct ground combat with enemy.	Women were gender integrated but this policy was designed to ensure that women did not end up on the wrong part of the battlefield.
1983	Over 100 women participated in <i>Operation Urgent Fury</i> . Four female military police officers were in Grenada just after the US invasion, but were promptly sent back to their base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. A day and a half later they were returned to Grenada by the XVIII Corps Commander.	Grenada proved to be the first test of the new assignment policy since the disestablishment of the WAC. There was confusion during the deployment, but once the women were allowed to serve, they proved their worth.
1988	The Secretary of Defense issued the Standard Risk Rule dictating that services evaluate the chances of direct exposure to hostile fire or capture when deciding if an assignment, by job qualification, should be open to women.	The Risk Rule is a continued effort to work through the challenges of a gender integrated Army.
1989	Over 600 Army women participated in <i>Operation Just Cause</i> . Women in the Military Police Corps played a large role, and Capitan Linda Bray became the first woman to formally command men in battle.	In Panama, the Risk Rule faced its first test. Women were stationed in the country prior to hostilities breaking out. Suddenly, their roles proved critical in the middle of this combat zone and the Army found itself with a female military police commander leading men in battle.
1990	In the largest call up of women since WWII, over 24,000 women served in <i>Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm</i> . Fourteen women die and two are taken prisoner during this conflict.	During Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the focus is on the mission more than the gender of the troops. With the call up of the Reserves, which was filled with women, the Army utilized women to their fullest potential. After the conflict, military leaders acknowledged that excluding women from the mission would have impacted combat readiness.
1994	The Secretary of Defense rescinds the 1988 Risk Rule and issues a new policy directing that women cannot be assigned to units below brigade level whose primary mission is to engage the enemy in direct combat.	Coming on the heels of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, this policy is a continuation of the Department of Defense's effort to respond to the challenges they face with changing kinds of missions and the use of women.

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1992-1995	The US was called upon to respond to regional conflicts, natural disasters, and humanitarian crisis all over the world. In Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, women were trained to cope with food riots, terrorist attacks, ethnic and clan conflicts, and peacekeeping.	Women's roles continued to be tested during these operations although there seemed to be few questions about what women could or could not do and the value they added to the Army's mission.
2001	With the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the roles of women in the Army were impacted once again.	The Global War on Terror resulted in the rapid expansion of jobs and a change in roles for Army women.
2005	Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester was awarded the Silver Star for her actions during a firefight that took place outside Baghdad on March 20, 2005.	This was the first Silver Star to be awarded to a woman since World War II and the first Silver Star in American history to recognize a female soldier for combat action.
2007	The RAND Corporation issued a report entitled <i>Assessing the Assignment Polity for Army Women</i> which highlighted the conflict between the Army's organizational transformation and the assignment policies for women in the ranks.	The report found that 1,763 Combat Action Badges were awarded to women. These awards give special recognition to soldiers who personally engage the enemy.
2008	General Ann E. Dunwoody was promoted for four-star general on November 4, 2008.	General Dunwoody received a direct commission in the Women's Army Corps in 1975 and was the first woman to become a four star general. She is also the first woman to lead a major Army command (Army Materiel Command).
2010	Female Engagement Teams and Combat Support Teams are utilized by the Army in Afghanistan.	The primary task of these teams is to engage female populations where such contact is not possible by male service members. The FET and CST teams perform a number of duties which can range from intelligence gathering, to relationship building, to humanitarian efforts.
2011	As of January 1 st , 2012, 107 Army women have been killed in <i>Operation Iraqi Freedom</i> and <i>Operation Enduring Freedom</i> .	This number constitutes the largest number of American women to die in service to their country since 215 nurses were killed in World War II.