VA Benefits 101
Military Language and Culture

Overview

• Importance of Military Culture and Experience
• Structure and Branches
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Importance of Military Culture and Experience

The Military has a rich and distinct culture, made up of unique values, symbols, and a shared history. Within this culture there are sub-cultures represented by the characteristics of each military branch.

While Servicemembers share a culture, their individual experiences can vary tremendously depending upon:

- Military Branch
- Time and Place of Service
- Military Occupation

Structure and Branches
Military Ranks

E  Enlisted  An enlisted member is one who has joined the military or “enlisted.”

W  Warrant Officer  A warrant officer is a highly trained specialist. One must be an enlisted member with several years of experience, be recommended by his or her commander, and pass a selection board to become a warrant officer.

O  Commissioned Officer  A commissioned officer’s primary function is to provide management and leadership in his or her area of responsibility.

Army Rank

- Enlisted: ranges from Private to Sergeant Major of the Army
- Warrant Officers: Warrant Officer to Chief Warrant Officer
- Officer: Second Lieutenant to General of the Army
Navy Rank

- Enlisted: ranges from Seaman Recruit to Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
- Warrant Officers: Warrant Officer to Chief Warrant Officer
- Officer: Ensign to Fleet Admiral

Marine Corps Rank

- Enlisted: ranges from Private to Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps
- Warrant Officers: Warrant Officer to Chief Warrant Officer
- Officer: Second Lieutenant to General
Air Force Rank

- Enlisted: ranges from Airman to Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force
- Warrant Officers: Warrant Officer to Chief Warrant Officer
- Officer: Second Lieutenant to General of the Air Force

Chain of Command and Authority

- The chain of command is the line of authority and responsibility along which orders are passed within a military unit and between different units.
- Within this hierarchy, military personnel expect those with authority to take charge and make decisions with confidence, and during times of war those decisions can be matters of life or death.
- Given the straightforward, direct style of most military leaders, military personnel and Veterans may have difficulty with or be frustrated with patronizing talk, uncertain leadership style, and approaching problems with hesitation or fear.
Expression of Values and Ideals by Service Branch

**ARMY**

Mission
To fight and win our Nation’s wars by providing prompt, sustained land dominance across the full range of military operations and spectrum of conflict in support of combatant commanders.

Motto: This We’ll Defend

Army Core Values:
- Loyalty
- Duty
- Respect
- Selfless Service
- Honor
- Integrity
- Personal Courage

**NAVY**

Mission
To maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas.

Motto: Semper Fortis, “Always Courageous”

Navy Core Values:
- Honor
- Courage
- Commitment
Expression of Values and Ideals by Service Branch

**AIR FORCE**

Mission
*Fly, fight and win* ... in air, space, and cyberspace.

Motto: Aim High...Fly-Fight-Win

Air Force Core Values:
- Integrity First
- Service Before Self
- Excellence in All We Do

Expression of Values and Ideals by Service Branch

**MARINE CORPS**

Mission
The seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and other land operations to support naval campaigns.

The development of tactics, techniques, and equipment used by amphibious landing forces.

Such other duties as the President may direct.

Motto: *Semper Fidelis, “Always Faithful”*

Marine Corps Core Values:
- Honor
- Courage
- Commitment
Expression of Values and Ideals by Service Branch

COAST GUARD

Mission
To protect important interests of the United States – the personal safety and security of our population; the marine transportation system and critical infrastructure; our natural and economic resources; and the territorial integrity of our nation – from both internal and external threats, natural and man-made. To protect these interests in U.S. ports and inland waterways, along the coasts, on international waters, and in any other maritime region where they may be at risk. The Coast Guard has three broad roles: maritime safety, maritime security, and maritime stewardship.

Motto: Semper Paratus, “Always Ready”

Coast Guard Values
Honor
Respect
Devotion to Duty

In Service of the Mission: Teamwork and Shared Goals

• Military personnel are nearly always aware of the mission with which they are tasked.

• Understanding this mission oriented approach may help you understand a Veteran. Even though the Veteran has left the service, the service may not have left the Veteran.
Common Terms and Lingo

MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY ARE REFERRED TO DIFFERENTLY DEPENDING UPON THEIR SPECIFIC SERVICE

• Soldiers: Members of the Army
• Sailors: Members of the Navy
• Airmen: Members of the Air Force
• Marines: Members of the Marine Corps
• Coast Guardsmen: Members of the Coast Guard
• Reservists: Members of the Reserve
• Guardsmen: Members of the National Guard

Acronyms

AWOL—Absent With Out Leave: not at one's place of duty and not authorized to be absent
CDR – Commander
CO – Commanding Officer
CONUS – CONtinental United States
COB – Close Of Business: the end of the day or duty shift
CoS – Chief of Staff
DD or DoD – Department of Defense
IAW – In accordance with
ICO – In case of, in care of
IED – Improvised Explosive Device
IRT – In reference to
GWOT – Global War On Terror
More Acronyms

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer: an enlisted person with command responsibility over soldiers of lesser rank

OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom: official name used for the War in Afghanistan

OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom: official name used for the War in Iraq

OND – Operation New Dawn: new name for the War in Iraq starting in September 2010 to reflect reduced role of US troops

Even More Acronyms!!!

MOS – Military occupation specialty: job or career specialty (e.g., infantryman, intelligence analyst, operating room specialist, military police, etc.)

OCONUS – Outside the CONtinental United States

POC – Point Of Contact: the person to liaise with on a given matter

ROTC – Reserve Officer Training Corps (often pronounced “ROT-SEE”)

SOP – Standard Operating Procedure: the routine manner of handling a set situation

TDY – Temporary Duty Yonder
Phrases

Battle assembly – new term used for Army Reserve weekend drills, unit training assemblies, or multiple unit training assemblies

Boots on the ground – to physically be in a location (some may use this to say that they want “boots on the ground” for a particular project, which means they want everyone physically in the office, rather than having people call in.)

Drill – preparation of military personnel for performance of their duties through the practice and rehearsal of prescribed movements; members of the National Guard and Reserve are required to attend one weekend drill a month (sometimes starting Friday night until Monday morning)

Liberty – authorized free time ashore or off station, not counted as leave, also known as a "pass"

Slang

Above my/your pay grade – expression denying responsibility or authority (indicating that the issue should be brought to higher-ranking officials)

Civvies – civilian clothing

Down Range – physically in a combat zone

In-Country – physically in a war zone

Quarters – (a) military family housing, or (b) doctor's direction to stay home from work (e.g., I'm confined to quarters.)

Say again (your last) – request to repeat a statement, question, or order, especially over a radio

Stay in Your Lane – stay within your boundaries; do your job as commanded and trust that you will know what you need to know when you need to know it
More Slang and Phrases

- 11 Bang Bang
- 40 Mike Mike
- Bird
- Bolo
- Cannibalize
- Doc
- Fast Mover
- Klicks
- Leg
- Ruck
- Shellback
- Snivel Gear
- Boot Camp/AIT/Basic/OSUT

Slang/Phrases common to VA claims processing

- RVN
- DMZ
- STRs/SMRs
- MOS/Rate/AFSC
- ROK
- Blue Water
- Brown Water
- Fire Base/FOB
- Evac
- Motor Pool
- Latrine
- Deck
- AAR
- Formation
- Corpsman
- Fall Out
- Hoo-ah
- Hoo-rah/Hooyah
- Gunny/Top
- “Sarge”
- AO
- Agent Orange
- Flight Deck
- Cover
- Sir/Ma’am
- Back on the block
- DI/DS