

## VA Benefits 101 Military Language and Culture



VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

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U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## Overview

- Importance of Military Culture and Experience
- Structure and Branches
- Common Terms and Lingo
- Questions



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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

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## Structure and Branches



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## 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.



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## 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

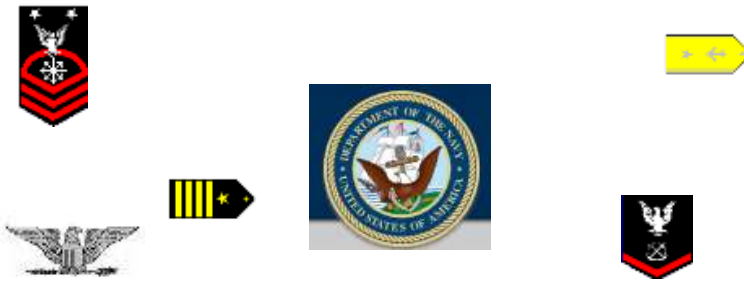


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## Navy Rank

- 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



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## 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



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## 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



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## 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.



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## 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



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## Expression of Values and Ideals by Service Branch

### 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



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## 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



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## 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



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## 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

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## 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.



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## 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”

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## 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



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## 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

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## Slang/Phrases common to VA claims processing

- |                 |                 |              |             |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| • RVN           | • ROK           | • Evac       | • AAR       |
| • DMZ           | • Blue Water    | • Motor Pool | • Formation |
| • STRs/SMRs     | • Brown Water   | • Latrine    | • Corpsman  |
| • MOS/Rate/AFSC | • Fire Base/FOB | • Deck       | • 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

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