



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences

UF | **IFAS Extension**
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Rural Health

1.2. Branches of the Military

Authors

Maria M. Rossi, PhD,

Jon Parker, MAMFT, NCC, LPC, LMHC

Heidi Radunovich, PhD, Licensed Psychologist

Michelle A. Parisi, PhD, RDN

Branches of the U.S. Military

The military has many missions. The primary mission is to defend the country and its interests (Military.Com, n.d.).

There are different types of military missions in which they participate:

- Rescue operations
- Medical assistance in impoverished areas
- Food and humanitarian relief
- Security at embassies and other locations
- Policing in volatile areas
- Natural disaster relief
- Law enforcement
- Piracy and drug interdiction (Military.Com, n.d.)

The Department of Defense (DoD) is the largest government agency in the United States. As such, its main objective is to coordinate and supervise all agencies and functions of the U.S. government directly related to national security. DoD's primary responsibility is to control the United States Armed Forces: the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard (Figure 1.2a). The National Guard and Air National Guard are reserved components of each service. The DoD has 11 combatant commands in a specific geographic location or functional mission, which provide command and control of military forces during peace and war times (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.a).



Figure 1.2a
The United States of America Armed Forces
Source
U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.

The Army

The Army is the land warfare branch of the United States Armed Forces. It's the oldest and largest military branch and has its roots in the Continental Army, which was formed in 1775 to fight the Revolutionary War from 1775 to 1783. It's primarily responsible for land-based operations. It comprises two equally essential components: an active and a reserve component. The reserve components are the United States Army Reserve and the Army National Guard (The Army.mil, n.d.).

[The Army](https://www.army.mil/organization)
<https://www.army.mil/organization>

The Navy

The Navy is the branch of the U.S. military for sea-based operations. The Navy defends freedom and preserves economic prosperity by keeping the seas open and free. It is the third-largest military branch in terms of personnel in active duty and reserve. Created by Congress in April 1798. The Department of the Navy has its roots in the Continental Navy, which was formed by General George Washington in 1775 to defend the American colonies from British attack (National Park Service, n.d.).

[The Navy](#)

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/8062>

<https://www.navy.mil/About/Mission>

The Air Force

The Air Force is the branch of the U.S. military force for aerial operations. The Air Force mission is broken down into Air and Space. It was created in 1907 as part of the U.S. Army Signal Corps and established as a separate branch in 1947 with the enactment of the National Security Act of 1947. This branch is organized within the Department of Air Force, one of the three departments of the Department of Defense (DoD) (Air Force Historical Research Agency, n.d.).

[History of the Air Force](#)

<https://www.afhra.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/433914/the-birth-of-the-united-states-air-force/>

The Space Force

The U.S. Space Force was established on December 20, 2019. It provides access to and freedom to operate in space by supporting the U.S. national security and economic prosperity. The Space Force's mission is to organize and train its personnel to protect the country and its allied interests in space and provide space capabilities to the joint forces. The Space Force is a separate and distinct branch of the Armed Services, organized under the Department of the Air Force (U.S. Space Force, n.d.).

[The Space Force](#)

<https://www.spaceforce.mil/About-Us/About-Space-Force/>

The Marine Corps

The Marine Corps combines ground, aviation, and amphibious operations. It was established on November 10, 1775, to expand naval forces in the Revolutionary War. The recruiting headquarters was founded in Philadelphia, which is considered to be the birthplace of the Marines. However, it was abolished at the end of the Revolutionary War for economic reasons. On July 11, 1798, Congress ordered the creation of the Corps and named it the United States Marine Corps. It is available for service under the Secretary of the Navy (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.b).

[History of the Marine Corps](#)

<https://afd.defense.gov/History/Marine-Corps-Day/>

The Coast Guard

Since 1790, the Coast Guard has promoted national security, border security, and prosperity in a multifaceted maritime environment. It is responsible for maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in all U.S. ports, inland waterways, coastlines, exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and high seas (U.S. Coast Guard, n.d.).

[History of the Coast Guard](#)

<https://www.uscg.mil/About/>

Guards and Reserves

The "National Guard" and "reserve" components supplement the active-duty military services by filling specific needs nationwide. Active-duty members work in the military full-time, but guard members and reservists serve part-time. They both can be on active-duty orders, known as Active Guard Reserve (AGR), or they can be deployed based on needs (Military.Com, 2012).

Most branches have reserve units which are organized at the state level. The National Guard is organized at the national level and includes the Army, National Guard, and the Air National Guard:

Army National Guard

Founded in 1636, the Army National Guard is a citizen force to protect families and towns from hostile attacks. Today, these soldiers have civilian jobs or attend college while maintaining their military training part-time. National Guard Soldiers serve both the community and the country. They can respond to local emergencies, overseas combat missions, counterdrug efforts, or humanitarian missions (U.S. Army National Guard, n.d.).



Air National Guard:

The Air National Guard provides nearly half of the Air Force's tactical support, combat communications functions, aeromedical evacuations and aerial refueling. The Air National Guard is responsible for the air defense of the entire United States. They also provide emergency relief support during natural disasters (floods, earthquakes and forest fires), conduct search and rescue operations, help support the maintenance of vital public services and counterdrug operations.



Basic Training/ Boot Camp



Figure 1.2b

Boot Camp by Service Branch

Source

Military.com, 2014

Basic training or boot camp is the initial entry point for the indoctrination of military lifestyle and culture. Basic training prepares recruits for military service and life's physical, mental, and emotional elements. It gives service members the essential tools necessary to perform the roles that could be assigned to them throughout their military service. Each military branch has its training program with a curriculum specialized to that branch's role in the military. It can last anywhere from 7.5 to 13 weeks, depending on the military branch. Everyone begins life in the military, whether they are on active duty, a guard member, or a reservist, with some initial training (Goldenberg et al., 2012) Each service has its training program tailored to the specialized nature of its role in the military (Figure 1.2b).

Army	Marines Corps	Navy	Air Force	Space Force	Coast Guard
Training Duration					
10 weeks	13 weeks	10 weeks	7.5 weeks	7.5 weeks	8 weeks
Training Location					
Fort Benning, GA Fort Jackson, SC Fort Leonard Wood, MO Fort Sill, OK Fort Knox, KY	Marine Corps, Recruit Depot, CA	Great Lakes Naval Training Center, IL	Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) at the Lackland, TX		Cape May Coast Guard Training Center, NJ
Physical Requirements					
Timed 2-mile run or provided alternative	Pull-ups or Push- ups	Timed 1.5-mile run	Timed 1.5-mile run	Timed 1.5-mile run	Timed 1.5-mile run
3 Repetitions of maximum deadlift	Timed Crunches or Plank	2 sets, 30 seconds of planks	2 minutes to complete as many correct repetitions as possible of pushups	2 minutes to complete as many correct repetitions as possible of pushups	1 minute of Pushups
2 minutes of hand-release pushups	Timed Three- mile Run	2 minutes of pushups			1 minute of Sit- ups
1 to 5 minutes of plank Standing Power Throw, 10lb ball			2 minutes to complete as many correct repetitions as possible of sit-ups	2 minutes to complete as many correct repetitions as possible of sit- ups	
Sprint-drag-carry, 5 repetitions of 50					

The ROTC (The Reserve Officers' Training Corps) is a college program offered at colleges and universities that prepares young people to become officers in the U.S. military and is another point of entry to the military service. Others enter the military after completing a program at one

of the service academies, such as West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy, the Army's Officer Candidate School, or the Air Force's Officer Training School. Direct Appointment/Commissioning is often used to appoint service members to specific job fields such as in the case of the Army Chaplain Corps, Law Corps, Healthcare, and Cyber fields.

According to Smith, a former Navy SEAL and fitness author certified as a strength and conditioning specialist, Boot Camp is a mind game where they teach people the military lifestyle and culture and where they “forget” their civilian life. They learn about the history of their service, military customs and courtesies, proper wear of the uniform, military bearing, military values, and ethics (Smith, 2012). They will also learn how to be part of a team, succeed together, and push themselves to become the best version they can be (U.S. Army, n.d.a).

At the end of the program, people will have the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed, such as physical and mental strength or mental endurance, to carry out the duties assigned, confidence and the ability to make informed decisions and knowledge of survival skills, including first aid, navigation, and hand-to-hand combat (U.S. Army, n.d.b).

Service members are expected to be disciplined in their actions and words while maintaining control of their emotions and physical selves. Discipline is not about rigidity or inflexibility. It is the practice of self-control and believing in themselves to know that they can accomplish their goals, even when they might not be seen as feasible. From this perspective, self-discipline is the ability to control thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Be Military Fit, 2022). Military discipline implies "doing the right thing for the right reason, at the right time, and with the right attitude." Following military discipline, people can set goals, prioritize tasks, and take responsibility for their actions (Be Military Fit, 2022).

Military life is not for everyone; however, there are some things that people can learn from this lifestyle to get closer to achieving their goals. They can learn to manage their time and stay focused on the task. They will also have a sense of responsibility and understanding of discipline and following orders (Be Military Fit, 2022).

Military Rank

Military rank is an emblem of leadership; responsibility for personnel, equipment and mission increases with each advancement (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.b).

There are three general categories of ranks: enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers, warrant officers, and commissioned officers (Figure 1.2c).



Figure 1.2c
U.S. Military Ranks

Source
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012

Enlisted personnel are members of the military who meet specific requirements and perform certain functions within their branch. Generally, enlisted personnel join the military at a younger age and are only required to have a high school diploma or GED. They receive intensive and specific training for a particular role that they are assigned. **Non-commissioned officers** (NCOs) are enlisted personnel with bachelor's degrees and meet other requirements from their military branch. Non-commissioned officers are the administrative backbone, with specific skills and duties such as training, recruiting, technology, or military policing. They hold leadership positions within their units but rank lower than others and are appointed by commissioned officers.

Warrant officers rank higher than other NCOs but below commissioned officers. They are considered neither commissioned nor non-commissioned officers. Instead, they've gained their leadership responsibilities *by warrant*. They tend to rise from enlisted personnel status by a specific skill, such as piloting aircraft, managing Human Resources, or overseeing cyber security.

A commissioned officer is a military member who already had a rank before beginning their current position. Typically, they enter the military at a command/management level. Due to their rank, these individuals have greater authority than non-commissioned officers. Commissioned officers are new recruits' central point of contact (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023).

The Chain of Command

The chain of command is a line of authority and responsibility. Orders are given within a unit and between different units. Orders are passed from higher-ranked military personnel to lower-ranked military personnel until the orders are received by those who will implement them. Requests move up the chain of command until they reach the individual with the authority to decide on a specific type of request (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012).

Every branch has its chain of command (Figure 1.2c). As individuals meet certain benchmarks, including time in service, time at the current rank, and military education requirements, they are promoted up the chain of command. With each promotion up through the ranks comes additional responsibilities and greater pay. However, service members and Veterans may have trouble or feel frustrated with patronizing talk, uncertain leadership style, and approaching problems with hesitation or fear (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012).

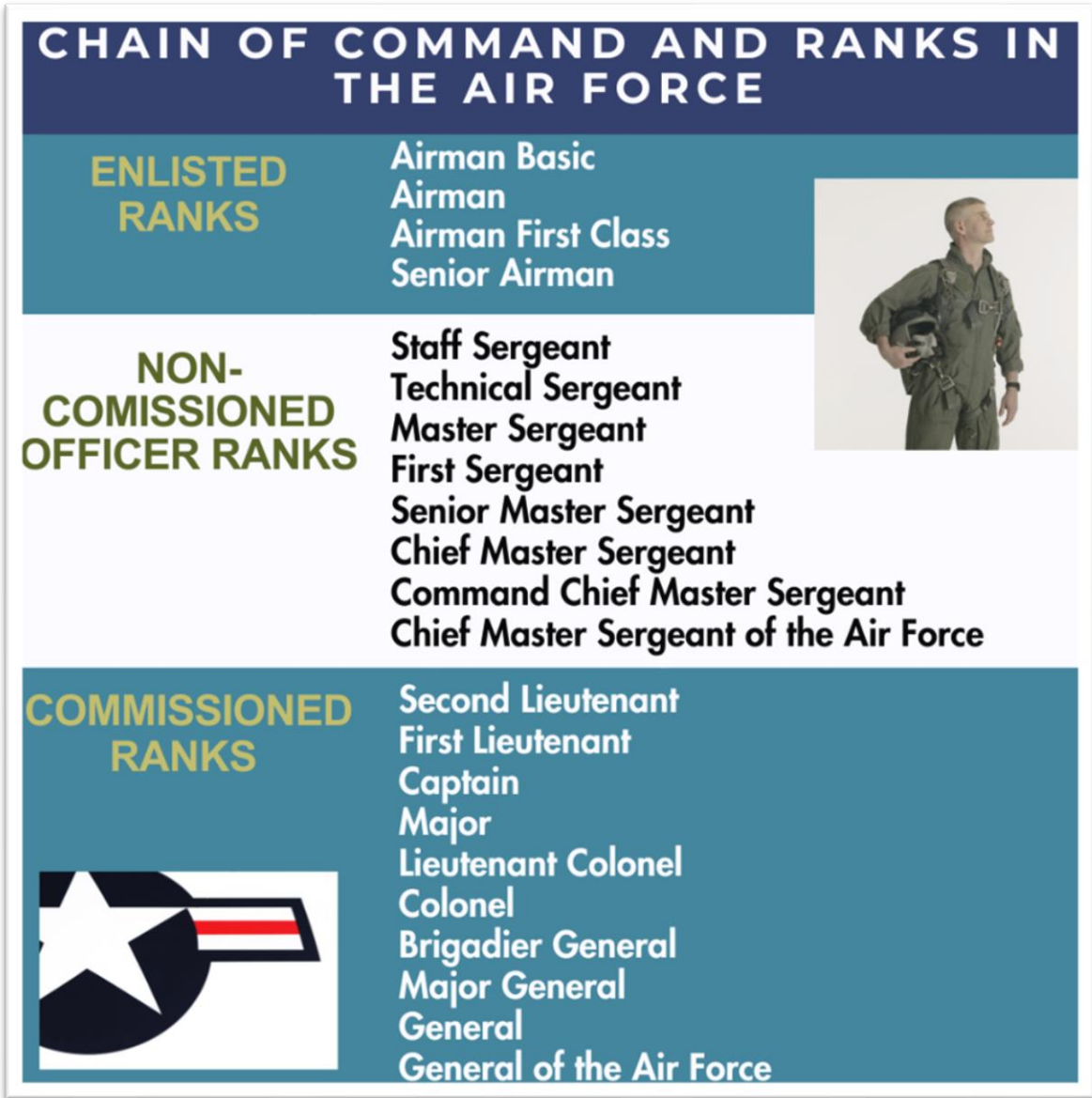


Figure: 1.2d
Chain of Command and Ranks in the Air Force
Source
 Veteran. com Community, 2023

When interacting with Veterans, take into consideration the characteristics of the military structure (Figure 1.2e)

MILITARY UNITS SECTION	COMMANDED BY	CHARACTERISTIC
FLIGHTS		Two or more airmen conform a section or, an "element" in basic training
SQUADRON	MAJOR or LIEUTENANT COLONEL	Broken into three types, flights can be numbered, alpha or functional. A flight comprises individual airmen or sections Squadrons are composed of two or more flights. They are the lowest level of command with a headquarters element. Generally identified by number and function. The 1st Reconnaissance Squadron is an example.
GROUP	COLONEL	A group consists of two or more squadrons whose functions are similar to the group is name. To illustrate, two or more squadrons supporting medical functions are part of a medical group. Groups mostly take on the number of the wing to which they're assigned. For instance, the 9th Medical Group is part of the 9th Reconnaissance Wing.
WING	COLONEL or BRIGADIER GENERAL	Wings are formed by two or more groups. There are two types of wings: composite and objective. Composite wings operate more than one kind of aircraft and may be configured as self-contained units designated for quick air intervention anywhere in the world
NUMBER AIR FORCE	MAJOR GENERAL or LIEUTENANT GENERAL	Wings, squadrons, and groups can all be assigned to a numbered air force, which usually has a geographical assignment. First Air Force, for example, ensures the air sovereignty and air defense of the continental United States, U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.
MAJOR COMMAND	GENERAL	Major commands, or MAJCOMs, can be organized two ways: by mission (such as Global Strike Command or Mobility Command) or by region outside the continental United States (such as Pacific Air Forces). Major commands report directly to Air Force Headquarters.

Figure: 1.2e: Military Units Characterization and Chain of Command
Source: U.S. Department of Defense, 2023

[Military Structure](https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/mil_structure.asp)

https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/mil_structure.asp

References

- Be Military Fit. (2022, Apr 5). *How to instill military discipline in everyday life and achieve your goals*. Be Military Fit. <https://www.bemilitaryfit.com/blog/how-to-instil-military-discipline-in-everyday-life-and-achieve-your-goals>
- Goldenberg, M., Hamaoka, D., Santiago, P., & Mccarroll, J. (2012). *Basic Training: A Primer on Military Life and Culture for Health Care Providers*. F Edward Herbert School of Medicine, from <https://www.admsep.org/subpages/csi/modules/basictraining/story.html>
- Military.Com. (2012, May 8). *National Guard and Military Reserves explained*. Military.Com Network. Retrieved Mar 28, 2024, from <https://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/guard-reserve-explained.html>
- National Park Service. (n.d.). *U.S. Navy*. The National Park Service. Retrieved Mar 28, 2024, from <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/maritime/navy.htm>
- Smith, S. (2012, May 8). *Military boot camp at a glance*. Military.Com Network. <https://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/military-basic-training-boot-camp.html>
- The Army.mil. (n.d., n.d.). *Organization: Understanding the Army structure*. The Army.mil. Retrieved Mar 28, 2024, from <https://www.army.mil/organization/>
- U.S. Army. (n.d.a). *Basic Training: Achieve more than you thought possible*. U.S. Army. <https://www.goarmy.com/army-life/basic-training.html#>
- U.S. Army. (n.d.b). *Completing basic training*. U.S. Army. Retrieved Mar 29, 2024, from <https://www.goarmy.com/army-life/basic->

[training.html#:~:text=By%20the%20time%20you%20finish,and%20hand%2Dto%2Dhand%20combat](#)

U.S. Army National Guard. (n.d.). *Army National Guard: our history*. U.S. Army National Guard. Retrieved Mar 28, 2024, from <https://nationalguard.com/guard-history>

U.S. Coast Guard. (n.d.). *United States Coast Guard*. U.S. Coast Guard. Retrieved Mar 28, 2024, from <https://www.uscg.mil/About/>

U.S. Department of Defense. (n.d.a). *About: We are your defense*. U.S. Department of Defense. Retrieved Mar 27, 2024, from <https://www.defense.gov/About/>

U.S. Department of Defense. (n.d.b). *U.S. Military rank insignia*. U.S. Department of Defense. Retrieved Mar 29, 2024, from <https://www.defense.gov/Resources/Insignia/#>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2012, Apr 6). *Chain of command and authority*. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Retrieved Mar 29, 2024, from https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/docs/em_authority.html

Veteran. com Community. (2023, Apr 4). *U.S. Air Force ranks and insignia*. Veteran.com. Retrieved Mar 29, 2023, from <https://veteran.com/air-force-ranks/>