

Asian American and Pacific Islander Fact Sheet

Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders have been serving honorably in the United States Military, since the War of 1812. The first Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) to reach general officer rank was Brigadier General Albert Lyman, part Chinese American and Native Hawaiian, was the commanding general of the 32nd Army Division that fought in the Leyte campaigns in the Philippines in World War II. The highest ranking AANHPI in the military was Eric K. Shinseki, who was the former Army Chief of Staff.

Medal of Honor

The first Medal of Honor recipient was to US Army Private Jose Nisperos, from the Philippine Scouts Unit for this action on September 24, 1911. The one and only Medal of Honor awarded during peacetime on January 21, 1915 was to Second Class Telesforo Trinidad. Twenty-one of the twenty-four Medal of Honor recipients during WWII were Japanese-Americans serving with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team or the 100th Infantry Battalion. In the Korean War, the first Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, Private First Class Anthony T. Kaho'ohanohano and Private First Class Herbert K. Pililaau were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions on Sept. 1, 1951 and September 17, 1951 respectively. Three Asian Americans were awarded in Vietnam War Corporal Terry Kawamura, Staff Sergeant Elmelindo Smith, and Sergeant First Class Rodney Yano. A total of 33 Asian American and Pacific Islanders have received this prestigious honor for their actions during war and in peacetime.



Congressional Gold Medal



On November 3, 2011, members of the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 442d Regimental Combat Team, and Military Intelligence Service also known as the "Go for Broke" regiment received the Congressional Gold Medal. The highest civilian award bestowed by United States Congress. The bill was co-sponsored by Senator Barbara Boxer and Representative Adam Schiff and signed October 5, 2010 by President Obama.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Military Units

Some notable AANHPI Military Units are: 442nd Infantry Regimental Combat Team (Go For Broke), 100th Infantry Battalion, Military Intelligence Service, 407th Air Service Squadron, 987th Signal Company, 14th Air Service Group (Flying Tigers), Philippine Scouts, 1st Filipino Battalion, United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE).



Women Veterans

Maggie Gee and Hazel Ying Lee were one of the first two Chinese Americans in the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP).

In November 1947, Florence (Ebersole) Smith Finch received the U.S. Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian medal awarded to American citizens living abroad who aided in the war effort.

Rear Admiral Eleanor Mariano, MC, USN became the first military woman in appointed White House Physician. In 1994, was named Director of the White House Medical Unit and served as President William Clinton's person physician. In 2000 she became the first female Filipino American Navy Admiral.

Captain Suni Williams was an American astronaut and a US Navy officer with Southern Indian descent. She had two spaceflights, December 9 2006 and April 2007. Captain Suni Williams holds several records, the longest spaceflight of 195 days by a woman, total space walks, and most spacewalk time for a woman.

For additional information on Asian American and Pacific Islander Veteran link to: <http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/>

Department of Veterans Affairs- Center for Minority Veterans v.3/17/2016

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Notables

Currently, the highest ranking Asian Americans in the military are General John F. Campbell and Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr. while the highest Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander is Upper Rear Admiral Peter A. Gumataotao. The highest ranking female Asian American is Air Force Maj. Gen. Sharon K. G. Dunbar.

Serving in Congress today, Tammy Duckworth (Lieutenant Colonel Retired from the Army National Guard) from Illinois and Tulsi Gabbard from Hawaii both are both combat veterans. Ted Lieu currently hold the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan served in the Army Reserves.

First and Notable Military and Veteran History

In 1815, General Andrew Jackson notes that Filipinos fought alongside his forces during the famed Battle of New Orleans near the end of the War of 1812.

Chinese American John Tomney joins New York Infantry, later dies of wounds at Battle of Gettysburg in 1863.

When America entered World War I, Bhagat Singh Thind joined the U.S. Army. He was honorably discharged on 16th of December, 1918 and in 1920 applied for U.S. citizenship from the state of Oregon. Since several applicants from India had thus far been granted U.S. citizenship, he too was approved by the district court. However a naturalization examiner appealed this court's decision, and the rest is history.

Samuel Amalu, Hawaii's renowned dean of lighthouse keepers, was the keeper of the Kilauea Light Station. Kilauea Light, the northernmost lighthouse in Hawaii, was built in 1913.

Shigeo Uchino, a native Hawaiian, began a 30-year career with the Military Intelligence Service in 1945. Uchino was assigned to Korea for one year beginning in October 1950. In addition to earning the Purple Heart, he was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor and the Combat Infantry Badge.

Chew-Een Lee, the son of Chinese immigrants, first enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1944 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1946. On Nov. 2-3, 1950, Lee's platoon came under heavy attack. Despite being outnumbered, Lee exposed himself to fire as he personally reconnoitered the area to better re-deploy his machine gun posts within the defensive perimeter. He reorganized his unit and moved up the enemy-held slope. Despite serious wounds, he pressed forward ultimately driving the hostile forces from the area.

The Fitafita uniform is a distinctive piece of U.S. Navy and Samoan history. Unlike those who served in the 1st Samoan Marine Battalion during the Second World War, the Fitafita uniform had features of both Samoan culture and common U.S. Navy enlisted personnel.

Currently serving our Country

According to the US Census, 264,695 Asian Americans have served our nation while another 27,469 are Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander military veterans. 1 in 3 Asian American military Veterans were 65 and older; and 1 in 5 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Veterans were 65 and older.

For Active Duty Military, 52,433 Asian Americans Active Duty including by 8,854 Officers and 43,579 Enlisted; There are 8793 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders Active Duty Members including 486 Officers and 8,307 Enlisted.

Where are Veterans Living

The top 10 areas where Asian American Veterans reside are: California, Hawaii, Virginia, Washington, Texas, Florida, Nevada, New York, Illinois, and New Jersey. The top 10 areas where Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander reside are: California, Hawaii, the Insular Areas, Texas, Washington, Florida, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Virginia.

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