



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

**UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JAN 22 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: 2018 Department of Defense National African American History Month Observance

The Department of Defense (DoD) joins the Nation in celebration of National African American History Month, February 1-28, 2018. Together we recognize the service and sacrifices of African Americans and celebrate their contributions to the defense of our Nation, supporting the DoD mission both in uniform and through civilian service.

Throughout our country's history, African Americans have made invaluable contributions to the Armed Forces and the security of the United States. Even in the face of prejudice and oppression, these patriotic Americans showed great resolve and continued to serve our country, support national defense, and champion equal treatment of all Americans. African Americans valiantly served on the front lines alongside their American brethren long before the issuance of Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948, which called for "equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense" and led to full integration of the Services.

African Americans have fought in every major military conflict, demonstrating great courage and resiliency under the most challenging of circumstances. It is a lesser known fact that during the American Civil War almost 200,000 African Americans served in the Armed Forces – approximately 179,000 in the Army and 19,000 in the Navy.

From the early days of the American Revolution to the trenches of World War I and II; from the jungles of Vietnam to the deserts and mountains of Iraq and Afghanistan, and present-day missions around the world, African Americans have honorably served to defend this great Nation. The Department salutes the service and sacrifice of these courageous Americans – from the Buffalo Soldiers, Harlem Hellfighters, Tuskegee Airmen, and Montford Point Marines, to the Golden Thirteen and beyond. The contributions of African Americans are deeply embedded in the history of the United States and continue to be reflected in the core of our Nation's identity.

DoD is committed to recognizing and honoring African Americans for their noble service to our Nation and advancement of the principles of equality and diversity throughout the United States. As we commemorate National African American History Month, DoD personnel are encouraged to celebrate the achievements and pay tribute to the sacrifices of African American members of the Total Force, past and present. Mr. Norvel Dillard is the DoD point of contact for this observance and can be reached by telephone at (703) 614-3397 or by email at [norvel.l.dillard.civ@mail.mil](mailto:norvel.l.dillard.civ@mail.mil).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert L. Wilkie".

Robert L. Wilkie

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