



COMMANDER'S CALL TOPICS

NOTE: This product has embedded hyperlinks and is best viewed online.

19—23 March 2018

Priority Topic of the Week: Women's History Month

Women's History Month

To help raise awareness in the public consciousness and in schools, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women, in California, initiated a "Women's History Week" celebration in 1978.

These early women's history commemorations spurred more and more interest in uncovering women's forgotten heritage and legacies and, by 1987, Congress expanded the celebration to the entire month of March.

Women "breaking barriers" in the Air Force

Our Air Force history is filled with bold female Airmen who challenged the status quo and dared to fly, fight and win.

Women have been and are in the fight. Women serve as pilots, security forces, drivers and gunners during battle convoy missions, medics on foot patrols and as cultural support and female engagement team members.

- In September 1942, the Army Air Forces Commanding General, Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, formed the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron and the Women's Flying Training Detachment. The two organizations merged to form the Women's Air Force Service Pilots, or WASP, Aug. 5, 1943. These were the first women to fly American military aircraft.
- Though 25,000 women applied to the WASP pilot training program, only 1,830 were accepted. The 1,074 graduates flew 60,000,000 miles during World War II.
- WASPs flew at 126 bases across the United States, where they also towed targets for gunnery training and served as instrument instructors for the Eastern Flying Training Command. Thirty-eight women died in service: 11 in training and 27 during missions.
- Jeanne M. Holm was the first female Airman promoted to brigadier general, 1971; first woman in the armed services to be promoted to major general, 1973; and first woman to attend Air Command & Staff College, 1952.
- Women first entered Air Force pilot training in 1976, navigator training in 1977, and fighter pilot training in 1993.
- The Air Force had the first female secretary of any armed service—Sheila E. Widnall, the 18th Secretary of the Air Force from 1993-1997.

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Commander's Call Topics is published weekly by SAF/PA to ensure leaders at all levels remain current on issues concerning Airmen and families. Requests for information to be included in future editions should be sent to SAF/PAX via [email](mailto:).

Submissions should include:

- 1) 1-2 sentence synopsis of the issue
- 2) hyperlink to further details
- 3) a POC name and contact information.

*Only submissions that pertaining to the majority of Airmen or specifically to command leadership teams will be considered. Local or limited-interest items will not be included.



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Air Force Women in the 21st Century

- The Thunderbirds' first female pilot flew in 2006—Major Nicole Malachowski.
- In 2012, General Janet C. Wolfenbarger became the first female four-star general in the U.S. Air Force. After receiving her fourth star, she became the commander of Air Force Material Command.
- Beginning Jan. 4, 2016, the Air Force began recruiting women into previously closed Battlefield Airmen career fields and positions.
- In 2016, General Lori J. Robinson became the first female four-star general in the U.S. Armed Forces to command a major Unified Combatant Command, Pacific Command.
- When Secretary Deborah Lee James was the Secretary of the Air Force and Ms. Lisa Disbrow was confirmed as Under Secretary in February 2016, the Air Force became the first service to have the top two civilian positions held by women.
- March 22, 2016; B-52 Aircrews, Airborne Launch Control System (ALCS) and missile officers at Malmstrom, Minot, and F.E. Warren AFB were the first all-female missile alert crews to serve on alert at three intercontinental ballistic missile wings simultaneously.
- As of Dec. 31, 2017, there are currently 63,198 women serving in the Air Force. This is the highest percentage among the military services.

Personnel Topics of Interest

- National Defense Strategy drives Air Force budget ([AF.MIL](#))
- Airmen feedback critical to future of Air Force ([AF.MIL](#))
- Officials approve HSM for recent disaster relief, specify eligibility req ([AF.MIL](#))
- Service Secretaries: People are most important part of DoDs success ([AF.MIL](#))

Monthly Observances

Brain Injury Awareness Month ([click link for additional information](#))
Women's History Month ([click link for additional information](#))

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