



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

FEB 27 2023

**MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS**

SUBJECT: 2023 Department of Defense National Women's History Month Observance

The Department recognizes March 1-31, 2023, as National Women's History Month. This year's theme, "Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories," acknowledges the pioneering women, past and present, as important contributors to the achievements of our Military Services and civilian workforce.

Over 230,000 women serve in the active duty military, comprising 17 percent of all Service members, and women constitute 33 percent of DoD civilians. We recognize the accomplishments of women in the Department and their contributions to national security which helps maximize the Department's warfighting capabilities. Over time, new doors have opened to women in the Department in previously closed military specialties, combat positions, leadership roles, and command positions. With each new opportunity, women have emerged as military leaders in combat operations and assumed vital command positions. Captain Rosemary Mariner, the first woman to command an operational naval aviation squadron during Operation Desert Storm, had a story to share. In 2018, First Lieutenant Marina Hierl became the first woman in the Marine Corps to command an infantry platoon. On November 21, 2022, Air Force Captain Rhea McFarland became the first African American female C-17 pilot to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross for her leadership in Afghanistan.

These women and their stories represent the many untold stories in DoD of women who took on mission-critical assignments and advanced as leaders in the military, research, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The Department celebrates their collective victories which strengthen our workforce because we can leverage their unique experiences, perspectives, and expertise in support of our mission. In addition, they inspire future generations of young women from all backgrounds who desire to be a part of the Department and share in its mission.

We salute women who courageously challenge cultural barriers in the workplace for their tenacious spirit in telling their stories. The opportunity to share their knowledge through storytelling enriches the Total Force and expands the Department's capability to develop talent in future DoD leaders. For resources and help with leading and organizing observances, visit: <https://www.defenseculture.mil/Human-Relations-Toolkit/Special-Observances/#womens-history-month>.

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