



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

May 10, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Department of the Navy 2023 Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

The Department of the Navy (DON) celebrates Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month during the month of May, acknowledging the contributions of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in defending America's freedom. This year's theme, "Advancing Leaders through Opportunity," speaks to the responsibility, as a Nation, Navy, and Marine Corps to afford leadership and advancement opportunities for all individuals, including Asian American and Pacific Islanders, to further both individual professional goals and those of the DON in service to our Nation.

We commemorate those past and present leaders within the DON that owe their ancestry to the AAPI community, including but not limited to Major General William H. Seely III, USMC, and Captain Sunita L. Williams, USN (Ret.). Major General Seely, who graduated from The Basic School in 1989 and was born in Saigon, is the first Vietnamese-American general officer in the Marine Corps and currently our highest ranking general officer in service of AAPI descent. Likewise, Captain Sunita Williams served overseas deployments to the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Persian Gulf in support of Desert Shield and Operation Provide Comfort. Furthermore, after NASA accepted her as an Astronaut, she established a world record during International Space Station Expeditions 14-15 by completing 4 spacewalks totaling 50 hours and 40 minutes, placing her second on the all-time U.S. women's endurance list.

During last year's AAPI Month, I had the pleasure of naming a future Arleigh Burke-Class guided missile destroyer after Fireman 2nd Class Telesforo de la Cruz Trinidad, the only Filipino in the U.S. Navy to be awarded the Medal of Honor. This past January, we celebrated the future USS TELESFORO TRINIDAD (DDG 139) at the Capitol with the ship's sponsors, retired and active duty Service Members, senior executives, civilian employees and other leaders to recognize the growing accomplishments from the Filipino-American community and to honor the heroic actions of Fireman 2nd Class Trinidad.

As of December of last year, the Asian American and Pacific Islander community makes up more than 70,000 members of the DON's total force. Through empowering Sailors, Marines, and civilians everywhere, we reaffirm our culture of warfighting excellence as one founded upon strong leadership and treating each other with dignity and respect. I encourage you to learn more about the cultural heritage and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to our Nation at <https://asianpacificheritage.gov/>.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Carlos Del Toro".

Carlos Del Toro

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