

MILITARY INTEGRATION TIMELINE

The following information has been condensed and quoted from Morris J. MacGregor, Jr.'s book, *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965*.

1945

The United States declares victory over Japan on Aug. 15, effectively ending World War II in which more than 900,000 African-Americans served. In October, Army Lt. Gen. Alvan C. Gillem Jr. is appointed to study the Army's race policies and prepare a directive for the post-war black soldiers. In November, the Gillem Board makes 18 recommendations to improve the Army's employment and treatment of black soldiers.

1946

The Army and Navy adopt policies of integration and equal rights for black servicemembers, though the policies were not widely implemented or enforced. War Secretary Robert P. Patterson directs military-wide acceptance of the new policies in April. But as services continue to challenge integration, Patterson suspends black enlistments in the regular Army in July. Meanwhile, racial turmoil across the United States prompts President Harry S. Truman in September to establish a civil rights committee to investigate racial violence – a decision that becomes the catalyst for widespread military integration over the next decade.

1947

Policies and practices within the services lead to a significant decline in black enlistment and retention. Meanwhile, there is progress in targeted areas. Lt. Gen. Clarence Huebner develops a program that trains thousands of black soldiers serving in Europe. The Army Air Force closes its last segregated officer training program at Tuskegee Airfield, Ala., to begin integrated classes. And civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph forms the Committee Against Jim Crow in the Military. In October, the President's Committee on Civil Rights recommends sweeping reforms that include using the military "as an instrument of social change" by ending segregation of the services.

1948

In February, Truman refers the recommendations of the civil rights committee to Congress. In April, Defense Secretary James V. Forrestal tells black leaders that while he agrees with their quick goals for integration, his gradual approach is best. In May, Lt. John E. Rudder becomes the first African-American to receive a regular commission in the Marine Corps. In June, Congress passes the Selective Service Act, but refuses to act on segregation. Truman signs the bill and, following a racially-charged Democratic National Convention that nominated him for a second term as president, signed Executive Order 9981 to provide for equal treatment of black servicemembers. The order is largely ignored by the services for months.

1949

In February, the Department of Defense's new Personnel Policy Board drafts policies – which are not approved -- to abolish all racial quotas, establish uniform draft standards and fully integrate the services by July 1, 1950. In March, the Fahy Committee, which Truman appointed to implement integration, states its goal is to convince service leaders

of the merits of integration, rather than to impose it on them. In April, newly-appointed Defense Secretary Louis Johnson issues a policy affirming Truman's integration order. Under increasing pressure from Johnson, the Air Force issues a "bill of rights" for black airmen, and the Navy proposes a recruiting program to enlist black sailors. By September, postwar downsizing leads the Marine Corps to eliminate its segregated training platoons and various on-post facilities.

1950

In January, the Army drops its longstanding defense of discriminatory practices by publishing a list of job vacancies that, for the first time, were to be filled without regard to race. Still, the Air Force leads in implementing integration by changing from 106 black units and 167 integrated units to 89 black units and 350 integrated units in a month. Forced by the necessities of war, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade is assigned several African-Americans during the fighting on the Pusan Perimeter, marking the first time black servicemen are integrated as individuals in significant numbers in combat.

1951

Although support for segregation was still widespread in the Army, the service's nine training divisions were integrated by March and black recruitment and retention is as much as 60 percent over authorization. Fort Ord in Monterey, Calif., was the Army's first integrated training division; Fort Dix, N.J., and Fort Knox, Ky., were the last. Unlike in World War II, blacks are serving in combat at equal rates as whites in the Marine Corps where at least half of black Marines in combat served in integrated units, earning much respect and commendation for fighting in Korea.

1952

In February, African-Americans for the first time become a minority in the Navy's Stewards' Branch, which was created after World War II to segregate black sailors. In April, the Army European Command's integration program begins quietly, without publicity or incidents. By September, the Air Force has left only one segregated unit.

1953

Because of the Korean War, the number of black Marines grows from 1,525 in May 1949 to 17,000. The high competence of black Marines fighting in Korea and the general absence of racial tension during their integration destroyed long-accepted beliefs against integration.

1954

The Army completes integration in November with the deactivation of the last black unit in the command, the 94th Engineer Battalion. The Secretary of Defense announces that the last racially segregated unit in the armed forces of the United States had been abolished.