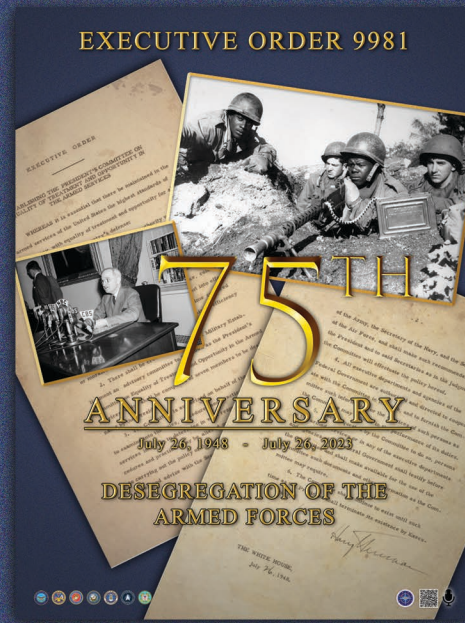


CULTURAL
AWARENESS



OBSERVANCE

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9981



FACTS

On July 26th, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, desegregating the Armed Forces.

Before this, many institutions in the United States were segregated along racial lines. Despite this, African Americans have bravely fought in every war waged by the United States.

In 1941, Executive Order 8802 was signed by Truman's predecessor, President Franklin Roosevelt. EO 8802 established job-training programs for African Americans and created the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to combat racial inequality in the workforce.

In February of 1948, Truman asked Congress to strengthen civil rights and integrate the military through legislation, but Southern senators threatened to filibuster.

In response, Truman created EO 9981 to integrate the military based off the FEPC's recommendations and with support from Black civil rights leaders like A. Philip Randolph.

General Colin Powell said, "*The military was the only institution in all of America—because of Harry Truman—where a young Black kid, now 21 years old, could dream the dream he dared not think about at age 11. It was the one place where the only thing that counted was courage, where color of your guts and the color of your blood was more important than the color of your skin.*"

The U.S. military is a major institution that leads the way in social changes for the rest of the Nation. Executive Order 9981, issued 75 years ago, was a major step in desegregation and expanding civil rights in the United States at large.

The Department of Defense continually strives for greater equality, equity, and freedom. On the anniversary of this landmark order, we celebrate the milestones crossed and reflect on the progress that must still be made..

