



Military Service Records and Unit Histories: A Guide to Locating Sources

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December 16, 2009

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

RS21282

Summary

This guide provides information on locating military unit histories and individual service records of discharged, retired, and deceased military personnel. It includes contact information for military history centers, websites for additional sources of research, and a bibliography of other publications.

This report will be updated as needed.

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Personnel Files of Discharged, Deceased, or Retired Veterans

Military Service and Pension Records at the National Archives

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), Military Personnel Records, holds most military personnel, health, and medical records of discharged and deceased veterans of all services from World War I to the present. Personnel records may be requested online at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans> or by completing the Standard Form 180 (see **Appendix**) and sending it to the correct address listed on the back of the form.

Note that in 1973, a disastrous fire at NPRC destroyed approximately 16 million to 18 million Army and Air Force official military personnel files. In such cases where files were lost, NPRC uses alternate sources of information to respond to requests.

More information about obtaining military personnel files can be found on the NPRC website, <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/> or by contacting the center at

National Personnel Records Center
Military Personnel Records
9700 Page Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100
Tel: (314) 801-0816 congressional line
Tel: (314) 801-0800 public line
E-mail: MPR.center@nara.gov

Older military personnel records (generally prior to World War I, depending on the service branch) are located at

National Archives and Records Administration
Old Military and Civil Records Branch (NWCTB-Military)
Washington, DC 20408
<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records.html>

Finding Unit Histories

Unit records are preserved at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For unit records of World War I contact the Archives I Textual Reference Branch of NARA, Washington, DC 20408; telephone (202)-501-5430. For unit records of World War II, Korean, and Vietnam Conflicts contact the Archives II Textual Reference Branch at NARA, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001; telephone (301) 713-7250.

NPRC has morning reports for the Army (from November 1, 1912 to 1974) and the Air Force (from September 1947 to June 30, 1966). In addition, NPRC has Army unit rosters from 1912 to 1974, with certain exceptions. For more information on unit rosters and morning reports, see the NPRC website at <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/morning-reports-and-unit-rosters.html>.

Certain published unit histories can be found in the collections of the Library of Congress or military history centers of each branch (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Military History Centers and Museums

Center or Museum	Telephone Number
Air Force	
U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency 600 Chennault Circle Building 1405 Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6424 http://www.afhra.af.mil/index.asp	(334) 404-2264
Air Force Historical Studies Office AF/HOH Research and Analysis Division 3 Brookley Avenue, Box 94 Bolling AFB, DC 20032-5000 E-mail: afhso.research@pentagon.af.mil http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil	(202) 953-2395
National Museum of the U.S. Air Force 1100 Spatz Street Wright-Patterson AFB, OH 45433 http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/	(937) 255-3286
Army	
U.S. Army Center of Military History Collins Hall 103 Third Avenue Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, DC 20319-5058 http://www.history.army.mil/	(202) 685-4042
U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center 950 Soldiers Drive Carlisle, PA 17013-5021 E-mail: carl_usamhi@conus.army.mil (research inquiries) http://usahec.org	(717) 245-3949
Coast Guard	
U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office (CG-09224) U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters 2100 Second Street, SW Washington, DC 20593-0001 http://www.uscg.mil/history/	(202) 372-4651
Coast Guard Museum U.S. Coast Guard Academy 15 Mohegan Avenue New London, CT 06320-8511 http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg092/museum/	(860) 444-8511
Marine Corps	
Marine Corps History Division 3078 Upshur Avenue Quantico, VA 22134 http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/HD/Home_Page.htm	(703) 432-4874

Center or Museum	Telephone Number
Marine Corps Heritage Foundation 3800 Fettler Park Drive Suite 104 Dumfries, VA 22025 E-mail: info@marineheritage.org http://www.marineheritage.org/	(800) 397-7585 (703) 640-7965
Merchant Marine	
American Merchant Marine Museum 300 Steamboat Road Kings Point, NY 11024 http://www.usmma.edu/about/Museum/default.htm	(516) 773-5515
Navy	
Naval Historical Center 805 Kidder Breesse Street, SE Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060 http://www.history.navy.mil	(202) 433-4132

Source: Table compiled by the Congressional Research Service.

Additional Sources for Research

- **Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress**
The project collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans at <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>.
- **Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration**
The Nationwide Gravesite Locator is a searchable database of burial locations of veterans at http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1.
- **American Battle Monuments Commission**
The website contains databases of the names of those interred or memorialized at the overseas American military cemeteries and memorials.
<http://www.abmc.gov>
- **Philippine Army and Guerilla Records at the National Archives**
The collection includes records of the Philippine Commonwealth Army of the United States Armed Forces Far East (USAFFE), including recognized Philippine Guerrilla forces (*not* the Army of the United States or Philippine Scouts) during World War II.
<http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/philippine-army-records.html#reasons>

Select Bibliography

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U.S. Naval War Records Office. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*. Harrisburg, PA: National Historical Society, 1987. 30 v.

U.S. War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Washington: GPO, 1880-1901. 70 v.

Appendix. Standard Form 180

INSTRUCTION AND INFORMATION SHEET FOR SF 180, REQUEST PERTAINING TO MILITARY RECORDS

1. General Information. The Standard Form 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records (SF180) is used to request information from military records. Certain identifying information is necessary to determine the location of an individual's record of military service. Please try to answer each item on the SF 180. If you do not have and cannot obtain the information for an item, show "NA," meaning the information is "not available." Include as much of the requested information as you can. To determine where to mail this request see Page 2 of the SF180 for record locations and facility addresses.

Online requests may be submitted to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) by a veteran or deceased veteran's next of kin using eVetRecs at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/>.

2. Personnel records and Service Treatment Records (STR). Personnel records of military members who were discharged, retired, or died in service less than 62 years ago and STR's are in the legal custody of the military service department and are administered in accordance with rules issued by the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS, Coast Guard). STR's of persons on active duty are generally kept at the local servicing clinic, and usually are available from the Department of Veterans Affairs approximately 40 days after the last day of active duty. (See item 3, Archival Records, if the military member was discharged, retired or died in service over 62 years ago.)

a. **Release of information:** Release of information is subject to restrictions imposed by the military services consistent with Department of Defense regulations and the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act of 1974. The service member (either past or present) or the member's legal guardian has access to almost any information contained in that member's own record. An authorization signature, of the service member or the member's legal guardian, is needed in Section III of the SF180. Others requesting information from military personnel records and/or STR's must have the release authorization in Section III of the SF 180 signed by the member or legal guardian. If the appropriate signature cannot be obtained, only limited types of information can be provided. If the former member is deceased, surviving next of kin may, under certain circumstances, be entitled to greater access to a deceased veteran's records than a member of the general public. The next of kin may be any of the following: unremarried surviving spouse, father, mother, son, daughter, sister, or brother. Requesters must provide proof of death, such as a copy of a death certificate, letter from funeral home or obituary.

b. **Fees for records:** There is no charge for most services provided to service members or next of kin of deceased veterans. A nominal fee is charged for certain types of service. In most instances service fees cannot be determined in advance. If your request involves a service fee, you will be notified as soon as that determination is made.

3. Archival Records. Personnel records of military members who were discharged, retired, or died in service 62 or more years ago have been transferred to the legal custody of NARA and are referred to as "archival" records.

a. **Release of Information:** Archival records are open to the public. The Privacy Act of 1974 does not apply to archival records, therefore, written authorization from the veteran or next of kin is not required. However, in order to protect the privacy of the veteran, his/her family, and third parties named in the records, the personal privacy exemption of the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552 (b) (6)) may still apply and preclude the release of some information.

b. **Fees for Archival Records:** Access to archival records is granted by offering copies of the records for a fee (44 U.S.C. 2116 (c)). You will be notified if there is a charge for photocopies of documents contained in the record you are requesting.

4. Where reply may be sent. The reply may be sent to the service member or any other address designated by the service member or other authorized requester.

5. Definitions and abbreviations. DISCHARGED -- the individual has no current military status; SERVICE TREATMENT RECORD (STR) -- The chronology of medical, mental health and dental care received by service members during the course of their military career (does not include records of treatment while hospitalized); TDRL -- Temporary Disability Retired List.

6. Service completed before World War I. National Archives Trust Fund (NATF) forms must be used to request these records. Obtain the forms by e-mail from inquire@nara.gov or write to the Code 6 address on page 2 of the SF 180.

PRIVACY ACT OF 1974 COMPLIANCE INFORMATION

The following information is provided in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(3) and applies to this form. Authority for collection of the information is 44 U.S.C. 2907, 3101, and 3103, and Public Law 104-134 (April 26, 1996), as amended in title 31, section 7701. Disclosure of the information is voluntary. If the requested information is not provided, it may delay servicing your inquiry because the facility servicing the service member's record may not have all of the information needed to locate it. The purpose of the information on this form is to assist the facility servicing the records (see the address list) in locating the correct military service record(s) or information to answer your inquiry. This form is then retained as a record of disclosure. The form may also be disclosed to Department of Defense components, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS, U.S. Coast Guard), or the National Archives and Records Administration when the original custodian of the military health and personnel records transfers all or part of those records to that agency. If the service member was a member of the National Guard, the form may also be disclosed to the Adjutant General of the appropriate state, District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico, where he or she served.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

Public burden reporting for this collection of information is estimated to be five minutes per request, including time for reviewing instructions and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of the collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to National Archives and Records Administration (NHP), 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001. DO NOT SEND COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND COMPLETED FORMS AS INDICATED IN THE ADDRESS LIST ON PAGE 2 OF THE SF 180.

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Standard Form 180 (Rev. 09/08) (Page 2)
 Prescribed by NARA (36 CFR 1228.168(b))

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OMB No. 3095-0029 Expires 10/31/2011

LOCATION OF MILITARY RECORDS

The various categories of military service records are described in the chart below. For each category there is a code number which indicates the address at the bottom of the page to which this request should be sent. Please refer to the Instruction and Information Sheet accompanying this form as needed.

BRANCH	CURRENT STATUS OF SERVICE MEMBER	ADDRESS CODE	
		Personnel Record	Service Treatment Record
AIR FORCE	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 5/1/1994	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 5/1/1994 – 9/30/2004	14	11
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 10/1/2004	1	11
	Active (including National Guard on active duty in the Air Force), TDRL, or general officers retired with pay	1	
	Reserve, retired reserve in nonpay status, current National Guard officers not on active duty in the Air Force, or National Guard released from active duty in the Air Force	2	
	Current National Guard enlisted not on active duty in the Air Force	13	
COAST GUARD	Discharge, deceased, or retired before 1/1/1898	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1898 – 3/31/1998	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 4/1/1998	14	11
	Active, reserve, or TDRL	3	
MARINE CORPS	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 1/1/1905	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1905 – 4/30/1994	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 5/1/1994 – 12/31/1998	14	11
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 1/1/1999	4	11
	Individual Ready Reserve	5	
	Active, Selected Marine Corps Reserve, TDRL	4	
ARMY	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 11/1/1912 (enlisted) or before 7/1/1917 (officer)	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 11/1/1912 – 10/15/1992 (enlisted) or 7/1/1917 – 10/15/1992 (officer)	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired after 10/16/1992	14	11
	Reserve; or active duty records of current National Guard members who performed service in the U.S. Army before 7/1/1972	7	
	Active enlisted (including National Guard on active duty in the U.S. Army) or TDRL enlisted	9	
	Active officers (including National Guard on active duty in the U.S. Army) or TDRL officers	8	
	Current National Guard enlisted and officer not on active duty in Army (including records of Army active duty performed after 6/30/1972)	13	
NAVY	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 1/1/1886 (enlisted) or before 1/1/1903 (officer)	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1886 – 1/30/1994 (enlisted) or 1/1/1903 – 1/30/1994 (officer)	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/31/1994 – 12/31/1994	14	11
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 1/1/1995	10	11
	Active, reserve, or TDRL	10	
PHS	Public Health Service - Commissioned Corps officers only	12	

ADDRESS LIST OF CUSTODIANS (BY CODE NUMBERS SHOWN ABOVE) – Where to write/send this form

1	Air Force Personnel Center HQ AFPC/DPSSRP 550 C Street West, Suite 19 Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4721	6	National Archives & Records Administration Old Military and Civil Records (NWCTB-Military) Textual Services Division 700 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. Washington, DC 20408-0001	11	Department of Veterans Affairs Records Management Center P.O. Box 5020 St. Louis, MO 63115-5020
2	Air Reserve Personnel Center /DSMR HQ ARPC/DPSSA/B 6760 E. Irvington Place, Suite 4600 Denver, CO 80280-4600	7	U.S. Army Human Resources Command ATTN: AHRC-PAV-V 1 Reserve Way St. Louis, MO 63132-5200	12	Division of Commissioned Corps Officer Support ATTN: Records Officer 1101 Wootton Parkway, Plaza Level, Suite 100 Rockville, MD 20852
3	Commander, CGPC-adm-3 USCG Personnel Command 4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1100 Arlington, VA 22203-1804	8	U.S. Army Human Resources Command ATTN: AHRC-MSR 200 Stovall Street Alexandria, VA 22332-0444	13	The Adjutant General (of the appropriate state, DC, or Puerto Rico)
4	Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps Personnel Management Support Branch (MMSB-10) 2008 Elliot Road Quantico, VA 22134-5030	9	Commander USAEREC ATTN: PCRE-F 8899 E. 56th St. Indianapolis, IN 46249-5301	14	National Personnel Records Center (Military Personnel Records) 9700 Page Ave. St. Louis, MO 63132-5100 <i>http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/</i>
5	Marine Corps Mobilization Command 15303 Andrews Road Kansas City, MO 64147-1207	10	Navy Personnel Command (PERS-312E) 5720 Integrity Drive Millington, TN 38055-3120		

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