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

SUBJECT: 2021 Department of Defense Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

The Department of Defense celebrates May 1-31, 2021 as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. During this month, we honor the generations of Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians who continue to serve proudly and selflessly in the defense of our nation. The month of May is significant, as it commemorates both the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843, and the contributions from Chinese pioneers who helped complete the first Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869.

This year's theme, "Advancing Leaders Through Purpose-Driven Service," highlights AAPIs' advancement as leaders in our military and civilian ranks. We take this time in May to acknowledge and honor the military and civilian leaders of our AAPI community, such as Brigadier General Albert Lyman, the first Chinese Hawaiian American general officer who commanded the 32nd Army Division; Vice Admiral Raquel C. Bono, Medical Corps, who served as the command surgeon, U.S. Pacific Command; Brigadier General Coral W. Peitsch, the first female Asian American general officer in the U.S. Army; and the highest ranking AAPI in the military, Eric Shinseki, a four-star general who served as the Army Chief of Staff. We also honor U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, Pilot and Purple Heart recipient, who lost both legs and partial use of her right arm during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Each of these leaders have demonstrated what dedication to the security and safety of our nation looks like.

Today, AAPIs make up more than 5% of the enlisted corps, 7% of the officer corps, and 12% of the civilian workforce. Nearly three dozen AAPIs have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration for valor. Despite the racial injustices and inequalities they face in their communities, the AAPI leaders of today remain committed to the safeguarding of freedom and protection of all citizens in the United States.

Our strength as soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and guardians is rooted in our commitment to embrace and value the differences of our entire workforce. As we serve together as one force, let us stand together in solidarity to celebrate the rich history and culture of the AAPI community, and the contributions of their patriotism and courage. For more information, connect to: <https://www.defenseculture.mil/Human-Relations-Toolkit/Special-Observances>.

Clarence A. Johnson
Director