



Restoring the United States Department of War

Administration Policy:

President Trump issued an executive order (EO) titled [Restoring the United States Department of War](#), reviving the historic title of "Department of War" as a secondary designation for the Department of Defense.

The EO explains the historical purpose of the Department of War, established in 1789 to oversee military and naval affairs. It notes that the Department of War, later joined by the Department of the Navy, led the Nation to victory in major wars, including the War of 1812, World War I, and World War II. It goes on to note that the original name signaled U.S. strength and determination, projecting resolve to adversaries and sharpening focus on national interests, and that the Department should once again carry the title of Department of War, and its leader the Secretary of War, to reflect a posture of peace through strength.

The EO authorizes the Secretary of Defense to use the secondary title of Secretary of War in official correspondence, ceremonial settings, and executive branch communications. Similarly, the Department of Defense and the Office of the Secretary of Defense may also be referred to as the Department of War and the Office of the Secretary of War in those contexts. Subordinate officials may adopt corresponding secondary titles, such as Deputy Secretary of War.

The EO directs all executive departments and agencies to recognize these secondary titles in both internal and external communications, provided they do not cause legal or international confusion. Statutory references to the Department of Defense remain legally binding until changed by Congress.

Within 30 days, the Secretary of War must submit a notification for Congress listing any office or command using the secondary title. Within 60 days, the Secretary must provide the President with recommendations on permanently renaming the Department of Defense to the Department of War, including necessary legislative and executive actions.

Finally, the EO clarifies that it does not interfere with existing legal authorities, must be implemented consistent with applicable law and available funding, and creates no enforceable rights. It states that the costs of publishing the order should be paid by the Department of War.

Background:

- The Department of War, established in 1789, and was responsible for military operations , until the [National Security Act of 1947](#) renamed it the Department of the Army, and merged the Department of Army and Department of the Air Force into the unified National Military Establishment (NME).
- President Truman pushed Congress to pass the National Security Act of 1947 [in order to](#) merge the separate services under one unified command, the law also created the Department of the Air Force and kept the Marines as an independent organization within the Department of the Navy.
- In 1949, the National Military Establishment (NME) was renamed the Department of Defense (DoD) to avoid the negative connotation of its acronym, which sounded like "enemy."
- A fact sheet from the White House can be found [here](#).