



# Duckworth Commends Marine Corps for Banning Confederate Battle Flag and Navy for Following Suit

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WASHINGTON, DC – Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth today wrote to General David Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, commending his leadership on prohibiting the public display of the Confederate Battle Flag on United States Marine Corps (USMC) installations. Duckworth recently [penned](#) an op-ed in TIME about the need to stop honoring traitors to our country and the important role that renaming these bases and military assets could play in promoting unit cohesion. Duckworth also wrote to Admiral Michael Gilday, Chief of U.S. Naval Operations, supporting his initial steps to craft Navy policy prohibiting the public display of the Confederate Battle Flag on United States Navy (USN) installations, ships, aircraft and submarines.

“Your moral leadership honors the service, sacrifice and contributions of Black Americans who have served with the USMC dating back to the American Revolutionary War,” wrote Duckworth to General Berger. “As our Nation approaches Independence Day, we should honor and recognize that as early as 1776, just one year after the formation of the USMC, a dozen Black American Marines bravely fought for our independence and freedom from the Kingdom of Great Britain. While there is nothing to be proud of in recognizing that full integration of Black Americans in the USMC took another 183 years, your leadership in removing a toxic symbol of racism, hatred and bigotry in the present marks an important step in continuing to make the USMC lives up to its Core Values of Honor, Courage and Commitment.”

“Your leadership in ordering the removal of public displays of the flag of the Army of Northern Virginia, an enemy force that fought against the United States in the Civil War to preserve and expand the rights of States to sanction the owning, selling, raping and killing of enslaved Black Americans, will also honor Black American sailors whose contributions, service and sacrifice have too often been overlooked in USN history,”

wrote Duckworth to Admiral Gilday. “Few Americans realize that Black Americans naval service pre-dates the creation of the United States of America, with evidence indicating that Black sailors valiantly manned Continental Navy gunboats during the Revolutionary War. Furthermore, USN records indicate that approximately 16 percent of all enlisted sailors were Black Americans in the War of 1812, and during the Civil War, Black Americans served on nearly every USN vessel, with six Black sailors earning the Medal of Honor for gallantry in combat.”

In early June, Senator Duckworth [wrote](#) to the leaders of the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U. S. Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard and National Guard Bureau to call on each of them to prohibit the display of the Confederate Battle Flag. One day after receiving Duckworth’s letter, Admiral Gilday announced that he directed staff to draft an order similar to the policy implemented by USMC prohibiting the public display of the Confederate Battle Flag on all public spaces and work areas on USN installations, ships, aircraft and submarines. Duckworth joined U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and U.S. Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) in [re-introducing](#) a bicameral bill last week in the Senate and House to remove Confederate statues from the U.S. Capitol.

The full text of the letter to the USMC is available [here](#) and below.

General David Berger

Commandant of the Marine Corps

Department of the Navy

1300 Navy Pentagon

Washington, DC 20350-1300

Dear General Berger:

I write to thank you and offer my support for your leadership in ordering the United States Marine Corps (USMC) to remove public displays of the Confederate Battle Flag on USMC installations. Prohibiting the display of the flag of the Army of Northern Virginia, an enemy force that waged war against the United States of America to preserve and expand the rights of States to sanction the owning, selling, raping and killing of enslaved Black Americans was long overdue. However, the USMC deserves commendation for once again being the leader among all service branches in taking bold, decisive action to strengthen unit cohesion and bolster good order and discipline.

Your moral leadership honors the service, sacrifice and contributions of Black Americans who have served with the USMC dating back to the American Revolutionary War. As our Nation approaches Independence Day, we should honor and recognize that as early as 1776, just one year after the formation of the USMC, a dozen Black American Marines bravely fought for our independence and freedom from the Kingdom of Great Britain. While there is nothing to be proud of in recognizing that full integration of Black Americans in the USMC took another 183 years, your leadership in removing a toxic symbol of racism, hatred and bigotry in the present marks an important step in continuing to make the USMC live up to its Core Values of Honor, Courage and Commitment.

I commend you for your decisive leadership and being a catalyst for much needed change addressing systemic racial disparities and injustices throughout our military services. Your display of moral courage demonstrated true leadership. Most importantly, you led by example in offering a steadying force to Marines during this uncertain time. Your decision to remove and ban the Confederate Battle Flag has inspired your sister service to follow in your footsteps and I am confident that USMC will lead the way in demonstrating to the U.S. Department of Defense how this change strengthens unit cohesion and combat effectiveness.

Sincerely,

The full text of the letter to the USN is available [here](#) and below.

Admiral Michael Gilday

Chief of Naval Operations

Department of the Navy

1300 Navy Pentagon

Washington, DC 20350-1300

Dear Admiral Gilday:

I write to thank you and offer my support for your leadership in ordering the United States Navy (USN) to draft an order similar to the policy implemented by the United States Marine Corps (USMC) prohibiting the public display of the Confederate Battle Flag on all public spaces and work areas on USN installations, ships, aircraft and submarines. Ridding the USN of a toxic symbol of racism, hatred and bigotry which has

long divided our Nation will help to strengthen unit cohesion, while bolstering good order and discipline.

Your leadership in ordering the removal of public displays of the flag of the Army of Northern Virginia, an enemy force that fought against the United States in the Civil War to preserve and expand the rights of States to sanction the owning, selling, raping and killing of enslaved Black Americans, will also honor Black American sailors whose contributions, service and sacrifice have too often been overlooked in USN history.

Few Americans realize that Black Americans naval service pre-dates the creation of the United States of America, with evidence indicating that Black sailors valiantly manned Continental Navy gunboats during the Revolutionary War. Furthermore, USN records indicate that approximately 16 percent of all enlisted sailors were Black Americans in the War of 1812, and during the Civil War, Black Americans served on nearly every USN vessel, with six Black sailors earning the Medal of Honor for gallantry in combat.

I appreciate the swiftness of your action in announcing the development of a policy based on the USMC detailed guidance only one day after receiving my letter requesting such action. Once the order is drafted, I request that you provide my office with a copy of the USN policy banning public display of the Army of Northern Virginia's Confederate Battle Flag and its depiction across all installations, ships, aircraft and submarines. Finally, I encourage you to remain steadfast in your order, which represents the USN's Core Values of Honor, Courage and Commitment in action.

Sincerely,