

Enlisted and Officers Oath of Office

We will never stop defending!

The wordings of the current oath of enlistment and oath for commissioned officers are as follows:

"I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God." (Title 10, US Code; Act of 5 May 1960 replacing the wording first adopted in 1789, with amendment effective 5 October 1962).

"I, _____ (SSAN), having been appointed an officer in the Army of the United States, as indicated above in the grade of _____ do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; So help me God." (DA Form 71, 1 August 1959, for officers.)

During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress established different oaths for the enlisted men and officers of the Continental Army:

Enlisted: The first oath, voted on 14 June 1775 as part of the act creating the Continental Army, read: "I _____ have, this day, voluntarily enlisted myself, as a soldier, in the American continental army, for one year, unless sooner discharged: And I do bind myself to conform, in all instances, to such rules and regulations, as are, or shall be, established for the government of the said Army." The original wording was effectively replaced by Section 3, Article 1, of the Articles of War approved by Congress on 20 September 1776, which specified that the oath of enlistment read: "I _____ swear (or affirm as the case may be) to be true to the United States of America, and to serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies opposers whatsoever; and to observe and obey the orders of the Continental Congress, and the orders of the Generals and officers set over me by them."

Officers: Continental Congress passed two versions of this oath of office, applied to military and civilian national officers. The first, on 21 October 1776, read: "I _____, do acknowledge the Thirteen United States of America, namely, New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, to be free, independent, and sovereign states, and declare, that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obedience to George the third, king of Great Britain; and I renounce, refuse and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him; and I do swear that I will, to the utmost of my power, support, maintain, and defend the said United States against the said king, George the third, and his heirs and

successors, and his and their abettors, assistants and adherents; and will serve the said United States in the office of _____, which I now hold, and in any other office which I may hereafter hold by their appointment, or under their authority, with fidelity and honour, and according to the best of my skill and understanding. So help me God." The revised version, voted 3 February 1778, read "I, _____ do acknowledge the United States of America to be free, independent and sovereign states, and declare that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obedience, to George the third, king of Great Britain; and I renounce, refuse and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him: and I do swear (or affirm) that I will, to the utmost of my power, support, maintain and defend the said United States, against the said king George the third and his heirs and successors, and his and their abettors, assistants and adherents, and will serve the said United States in the office of _____ which I now hold, with fidelity, according to the best of my skill and understanding. So help me God."

The first oath under the Constitution was approved by Act of Congress 29 September 1789 (Sec. 3, Ch. 25, 1st Congress). It applied to all commissioned officers, noncommissioned officers and privates in the service of the United States. It came in two parts, the first of which read: "I, A.B., do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) that I will support the constitution of the United States." The second part read: "I, A.B., do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) to bear true allegiance to the United States of America, and to serve them honestly and faithfully, against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever, and to observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States of America, and the orders of the officers appointed over me." The next section of that chapter specified that "the said troops shall be governed by the rules and articles of war, which have been established by the United States in Congress assembled, or by such rules and articles of war as may hereafter by law be established."

Although the enlisted oath remained unchanged until 1950, the officer oath has undergone substantial minor modification since 1789. A change in about 1830 read: "I, _____, appointed a _____ in the Army of the United States, do solemnly swear, or affirm, that I will bear true allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever, and observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the rules and articles for the government of the Armies of the United States." Under an act of 2 July 1862 the oath became: "I, A.B., do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I have never borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen thereof; that I have voluntarily given no aid, countenance, counsel, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto; that I have neither sought nor accepted nor attempted to exercise the functions of any office whatsoever under any authority or pretended authority in hostility to the United States; that I have not yielded voluntary support to any pretended government, authority, power, or constitution within the United States, hostile or inimical thereto. And I do further swear (or affirm) that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God." An act of 13 May 1884 reverted to a simpler formulation: "I, A.B., do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God." This version remained in effect until the 1959 adoption of the present wording.