

Obtaining military service records

I have been frequently asked by veterans for methods to obtain military service records and below are detailed steps in how to accomplish that task.

MilConnect, our government's national resource directory, provides a convenient self-service portal that allows DoD affiliates and beneficiaries to manage their benefits and records. MilConnect offers secure access to personal and personnel records held in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). As a veteran you must have a Premium MilConnect DS Logon account to use this method. If you do not have an account

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whatsoever, you must establish one and once having it upgrade to the premium account in order to entirely use DEERS. Once full access is achieved you will be able to obtain:

- A copy of your DD214 or DD215
- A report of separation
- Other release papers
- Orders and endorsements
- Performance Reports
- Awards and decorations (commandatory items)
- Qualifications, licenses and certificates
- Security clearance information

Once you have that Premium DS Logon go to <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/>, sign in to your

account and follow these steps:

Click on "Correspondence/Documentation"

On the drop-down menu, click on "Defense Personnel Records Information (DPRIS)"

Click on the "Personnel File" tab
Select "Request My Personnel File"
Complete the form and in the "Document Index Section," check the boxes next to the documents you'd like to request

Click on the "Create and Send Request" button

Once those items are completed, you'll receive an email confirming your request is being processed followed by a second email at completion informing you the files are ready to be reviewed and downloaded.

You can also check the status of your military records request by signing in to milConnect and going to the "Personnel File" menu tab within the "Defense Personnel Records Information (DPRIS) Section". This is also where you'll review and download your files once they're ready.

If you do not have or wish to have a Premium DS Logon, you can still obtain military records by contacting your local veterans service office or by:

Mailing or faxing a Standard Form SF 180 to the National Personnel, which can be downloaded at <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-sf180>, and sent to: NPRC, 1 Archives Drive, St Louis, MO 63138.

I am also constantly asked by family members of a veteran who has passed away how they can obtain copies of their loved one's military

records. You must be a surviving spouse who has not remarried, be a parent, a child, or a sibling. Here are methods that can be used:

■ Send a Standard Form SF 180 to NPRC as outlined above for our veterans

■ Write a letter to NPRC at the address indicated above

■ Contact your local veterans service office

If you are not the veteran's next of kin, you may be able to obtain limited information from their Military Personnel File. Go to this website to learn more about general public access to military records: <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/ompf-access-public>.

Finally, if you are a family member planning a veteran's burial at a VA national cemetery, please call their scheduling office at 800-535-1117 to get assistance in obtaining the veteran's discharge DD214 or other needed documents. More information can be found at <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/schedule-a-burial>.

I hope the information above will assist you during your time of need in obtaining important military documents.

John Stewart is a retired Air Force Chief Master Sergeant and disabled Vietnam War veteran. In 2016 he was inducted into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame. His columns are sourced from public, government and private information. Content is checked for accuracy; however, you have the responsibility to confirm validity before committing any related actions. Visit his website at www.veteransgrapevine.com.