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Exclusive: Navajo Code Talkers disappear from military websites after Trump DEI order



A two-man team of Navajo code talkers attached to a Marine regiment in the Pacific relay orders over the field radio using their native language. Photo: Corbis via Getty Images

Articles about the renowned Native American Code Talkers have disappeared from some military websites, with several broken URLs now labeled "[DEI](#)."

Why it matters: From 1942 to 1945, the [Navajo Code Talkers](#) were instrumental in every major Marine Corps operation in the Pacific Theater of World War II.

Driving the news: Axios identified at least 10 articles [mentioning](#) the [Code Talkers](#) that had [disappeared](#) from the U.S. [Army](#) and Department of Defense websites as of Monday.

How it works: The Defense department's URLs were amended with the letters DEI, suggesting they were [removed](#) following President Trump's [executive order](#) ending federal diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

The Internet Archive shows the deleted Army pages were live as recently as November, with many visible until February or March. None are shown with error messages until Trump took office.

The other side: Asked about the missing pages, Pentagon Press Secretary John Ulyot replied in a statement: "As Secretary [Pete]

by the rapid compliance across the Department with the [directive](#) removing DEI content from all platforms."

"In the rare cases that content is removed that is out of the clearly outlined scope of the directive, we instruct components accordingly."

The statement did not address whether the Code Talkers are considered divisive DEI figures that "erode camaraderie and threaten mission execution."

Catch up quick: In [both](#) World Wars, the military deployed units that used Indigenous American languages to secretly transmit information in pivotal battles.

Choctaw soldiers [flummoxed](#) German troops during World War I's deadly [Meuse-Argonne Offensive](#).

language: Bombers were "pregnant airplanes," tanks were "turtles" and Adolf Hitler was "[Po'sa taiboo](#)" — "Crazy White Man."

[Meskwaki Code Talkers](#) were sent to North Africa after [16%](#) of the tribe's Iowa population enlisted during World War II. As of Monday, the word "Meskwaki" [no longer appeared](#) on the DOD's website.

Zoom in: The Navajo Code Talkers rapidly and meticulously shared hundreds of messages in the complex Diné language — often during intense battles, making them exemplars of courage under fire.

At Iwo Jima, six Code Talkers sent more than 800 messages without any errors.

They likely saved countless American and Allied lives by using languages the

Meanwhile, the Code Talkers' function was predicated on diversity in the military; languages with more widespread use couldn't have provided effective encryption.

Stunning stat: Indigenous Americans have enlisted in the U.S. military at a rate five times the national average, per [Trump's own proclamation](#) in 2018.

That proclamation [has also been removed](#).

Zoom out: Axios found other removed pages about Indigenous Americans' contributions, including:

Profiles of Iraq combat veterans from [Arizona](#), [Louisiana](#) and [Nevada](#); a paratrooper with the [173rd Sky Soldiers](#); and a [Cherokee Brigadier General](#) from Oklahoma.

medic who [died while fighting](#) Colorado's Storm Mountain Fire in 1994.

A [news alert](#) that an Oglala Sioux South Dakota National Guardsman had obtained an exemption to wear his hair long in accordance with his religion.

Caveat: As of Monday, the U.S. Marines — the branch that deployed the Navajo Code Talkers — had not removed its pages about them.

A few mentions also remained on the DOD site, on photo captions and speech transcripts.

The Army's deleted pages were generally posted during the past two years; older references remained on the site.

The latest: Axios in recent days found the DOD had given similar "DEI" labels

Civil war [nurses](#).

Prominent [Black veterans and units](#), including the Harlem Hellfighters, the 761st Tank Battalion and 555th Parachute Infantry.

A Latino airman who coordinated mental health support for military personnel. The [deleted story](#) is titled, "Embraced in America, airman pays it forward."

Meanwhile, the Army removed pages honoring:

The [54th Massachusetts Regiment](#), depicted in the film "Glory."

The [Women Airforce Service Pilots](#) (WASPs) of World War II.

The big picture: The military has faced recent [complaints](#) over removed pages.

Utahn Seraph Young — the first woman to vote in America — to Arlington National Cemetery's website after the removal of a list of notable women buried there.

The Army [restored a page](#) Saturday about the celebrated Japanese-American 442nd Infantry Regiment after outcry over its disappearance.

Case in point: A [profile](#) of Army Major Gen. Charles Rogers, a Black recipient of the Medal of Honor, vanished when the word "medal" was changed to "[deimedal](#)" in the URL.

The implication that his was a "DEI medal" [drew ire](#) as details from Rogers' [citation](#) circulated online.

He was wounded three times during a massive assault on a support base in Vietnam when he refused medical care and repeatedly ran into enemy fire to lead counterattacks.



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