

Maryland National Guard commissioned Harriet Tubman as One-Star General for her military service

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By Capt. Dylan Bradford

CHURCH CREEK, Md. – Maryland Governor Wes Moore and the Maryland National Guard honored Harriet Tubman’s military contributions to the United States and Maryland by posthumously commissioning her as a Brigadier General during a ceremony at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park & Visitor Center in Dorchester County, November 11, 2024.

Maj. Gen. Janeen L. Birkhead, the adjutant general of Maryland, hosted the ceremony, which officially recognized Tubman’s wartime service as a spy, scout, nurse, and cook, granting her a one-star general rank in the Maryland Army National Guard. Ernestine “Tina” Martin Wyatt, the great-great-great-grandniece of Harriet Tubman, represented Tubman’s family and received the commissioning proclamation on her behalf.

Delegate Edith J. Patterson, who introduced the legislation that allowed Gov. Moore to commission Tubman posthumously, delivered remarks and Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates Adrienne A. Jones presented proclamations to Wyatt.

“Each daring mission behind enemy territory was worthy of a medal,” said Birkhead. “With courage and selflessness, Harriet Tubman nobly advanced the survival of the Union and the proposition that all people are created equal.”

Attached to the Union Army during the Civil War, Tubman was the first African American woman to serve the U.S. military in a combat role. Her intelligence-gathering missions provided crucial information about Confederate troop movements, ammunition depots, and supply lines, which led to strategic Union victories. Notably, Tubman led armed raids which resulted in freedom for over 750 enslaved people and disrupted Confederate resources.

The ceremony featured music from the Maryland Army National Guard’s 229th Army Band and a flyover by the Maryland Air National Guard’s 104th Fighter Squadron.

This recognition came following Maryland General Assembly legislation passed earlier in the year, allowing for posthumous military appointments under SB0707/HB1026.

“I could not think of a more appropriate day to lift up one of the greatest Marylanders and patriots we have ever seen,” said Gov. Moore. “Today we honor her legacy by putting on paper what we’ve always known in our hearts.”

