

Kerry and Bush's Vietnam Records Compared

How do John Kerry and George W. Bush's records of service during Vietnam stack up? Here's the full story. [Click here to return to the quick look.](#)

Time	John Kerry	George W. Bush
At Yale	Enlisted in the Navy	Received Student Deferment and Used Family Connections to Secure Spot in Guard Before Graduation
	Enlisted in the US Naval Reserves. Feb. 18, 1966	<p>Bush received student deferments until June 1968; that year marked the height of the Vietnam draft. [<i>Washington Post</i>, 7/28/99]</p> <p>Applied for spot in Texas Air National Guard in January of 1968, before graduation. Before he graduated, Bush personally visited Col. Walter "Buck" Staudt -- the commander of the Texas Air National Guard -- to talk about the Guard.</p> <p>After Bush met with Staudt, he applied and was quickly accepted -- despite a waiting list of over 150 applicants.</p> <p>Contrary to Bush's denials of special treatment, it was later disclosed that a personal friend of Bush's father had secured the spot in the Guard for Bush.</p> <p>Bush later acknowledges he entered Guard to avoid going to Vietnam: "I was not prepared to shoot my eardrum out with a shotgun</p>

<p>After Graduation</p>	<p>Enters and Completes Officer Training School</p>	<p>Joins Guard -- Receives Direct Appointment, Avoiding Officer Training School; Requests to NOT be Sent Overseas</p>
	<p>Kerry reports to Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI on August 16, 1966.</p> <p>Kerry is honorably discharged from OCS at the rank of Ensign on December 15, 1966.</p> <p>Kerry also completes coursework at Naval Schools Command at Treasure Island, California for Officer Damage Control Course and U.S. Fleet Anti-Air Warfare Training Center in San Francisco, California</p>	<p>in order to get a deferment. Nor was I willing to go to Canada. So I chose to better myself by learning how to fly airplanes." [<i>Houston Chronicle</i>, 5/8/94]</p> <p>Bush joined the Texas Air National Guard after his student deferment ran out when he graduated from Yale in 1968.</p> <p>"His score on the pilot aptitude section, one of five on the test, was in the 25th percentile, the lowest allowed for would-be fliers." [<i>Dallas Morning News</i>, 7/4/99]</p> <p>Bush received a direct appointment, allowing him to become a second lieutenant right out of basic training without having to go through officer candidate school. The direct appointment also cleared the way for a position in pilot training school. [<i>Houston Chronicle</i>, 10/10/92; <i>Los Angeles Times</i>, 7/4/99]</p> <p>On Bush's application to the 147th Fighter Group at Ellington Air Force Base in Texas, Bush was asked what his "Area Assignment Preferences" were. Bush checked the box beside "Do Not Volunteer" for overseas</p>

		duty. [Application for Extended Duty With The United States Air Force, 5/27/68]
First Assignment	Deployed to Western Pacific to Support Operations in Vietnam	Houston Texas - Where he Enjoyed "All-Day Water Volleyball Games"
	Kerry reports to USS Gridley. The Gridley departs in Feb. 1968 for a Western Pacific deployment, to engage in operations in support of the Vietnam War. Ship spends time in the Gulf of Tonkin off North Vietnam, at Subic Bay in the Philippines and in Wellington, New Zealand. The Gridley returns to the United States in June 1968.	In the summer of 1970, Bush moved into the Chateaux Dijon apartment complex, "a popular spot for singles, it offered fancy street lamps and striped awnings and six pools filled with ambitious secretaries, students and young businessmen. Bush relished his bachelor life there. He played hard, plunging into all-day water volleyball games, but left frequently for 24-hour flight duty in the alert shack at Ellington Field." [<i>Washington Post</i> , 7/28/99]
Request for Second Post	Requests Duty in Vietnam	Requests Duty at Postal Unit in Alabama
	On Feb. 10, 1968, Kerry requests duty in Vietnam. He lists his first billet preference as an Officer in Charge of a swift boat and his second as a patrol officer in a River Patrol Boat (PBR) squadron.	In May 1972, Bush gets a job on an Alabama Senate Campaign. He leaves Houston and requests transfer to the 9921st Air Reserve Squadron in Alabama. Although Bush notes his aeronautical rating as "flying status," his request is turned down because the 9921 was a postal unit. His transfer is later approved to a different Alabama unit. [AF 1288-Bush signature, 24 May 72; Approved: 26 May 72]
Second	Mekong Delta Where	Fails to Take Annual

Assignment	Kerry Sees Direct Combat, Is Wounded Three Times and is Awarded Silver and Bronze Stars.	Medical Exam Resulting in Suspension from Flight Status; Attends GOP Convention; Supervisors Unable to Rate Performance Because Bush "Has Not Been Observed"
	<p>Kerry leaves his post on the Gridley, and becomes a student at the Naval Amphibious Base, in Coronado, California in preparation for service on a swift boat in Vietnam. He is promoted from Ensign to Lt. JG and extends his active duty commitment by six months.</p> <p>While in Vietnam Kerry is involved in more than a dozen missions receiving hostile fire.</p> <p>He is wounded three times and decorated with three Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star and a Silver Star. Kerry is ordered by Naval regulations to return home after being wounded three times.</p>	<p>During Bush's service in Alabama: He is suspended from flight status for his failure to take required annual medical exam. [Washington Post, 2/15/02; Aeronautical Orders, Number 87, 29 Sept 72; AFM 35-13, Para 2-29m]</p> <p>He attends the Republican National Convention in Miami, Florida with his father. [Bill Minutaglio, First Son, p. 144].</p> <p>Pay records released by the White House show that he was paid for 2 days service during the six-month period covering the Blount campaign. [White House Release: Bush Pay Records]</p> <p>Bush's superior officers were unable to complete his annual evaluation for 1972 because, "<u>Lt. Bush has not been observed at this unit during the period of report.</u>" [AF-77, 2 May 73, emphasis added]</p>
Additional Service	Completes Full Active Duty Commitment	May Not Have Met Active Duty Requirements; Does Community Service at Urging of Father
	Kerry completes his three	According to records

year active duty obligation working as personal aide and flag Lieutenant to Rear Admiral Walter F. Schlech, Jr, the commander of the Military Sea Transportation Service, Atlantic. Kerry is promoted from LtJG to Lieutenant.

released by the White House itself, Bush may fallen short on minimum requirements expected for Guard members. Bush served 25 days of combined active and weekend Guard duty between May 27, 1972 and May 26, 1973, even though minimum requirements were one weekend a month-24 days a year-plus another 15 days of active duty.

Moreover, in 1973 Bush received 15 extra (called "gratuitous") points toward the 50 points needed each year toward his retirement. Guard members commonly received such extras if they had already met the minimum 50 points each year without the additional points. Bush only earned 41 points during the 1972-3 year. According to Wayne Rambo, who was chief administrative officer of the Alabama unit to which Bush was assigned, "that would have been a decided violation of the norm" because extra points were meant "only as a reward to reservists for meeting their bottom line." [*Boston Globe*, 2/11/04; *Memphis Flyer*, 2/16/04, emphasis added]

Lieutenant Colonel Albert C. Lloyd Jr., the specialist asked by the White House to review Bush's Guard record confirmed, "Should he have done more? Yes, he should have," Lloyd said of Bush, who was a fighter-

interceptor pilot. 'Did he have to? No.'" [*Boston Globe*, 2/11/04]

In the spring of 1973 Bush works with Project PULL, a Houston-area non-profit group that works with inner-city children. A Bush biography notes that Bush's father arranged the work for him because Bush Sr. wanted something "that would begin to flesh out his son's otherwise slender civic resume." [George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, p.58; Bill Minutaglio, *First Son*, p. 147-9, emphasis added]

Discharge

Remains in Naval Reserve

Receives Early Discharge to Attend Harvard Business School

After being released from active duty, Kerry remains in the Naval Reserve until he is honorably discharged in Feb. 1978.

Bush is officially and honorably discharged from the Texas Air National Guard October 1, 1973 to attend Harvard Business School. While he had a "six year service obligation," the discharging officer notes that Bush completed "5 years, 4 months, and 5 days toward obligation." Where Bush's signature should be, the report notes "Not available for signature." [Bush Discharge, 1 Oct 1973]

