

1954
Men's AG-44 wool serge winter uniform is introduced.

1958
Army launches first U.S. space satellite, Explorer I.

1959
Women's AG-44 wool serge winter uniform is introduced.

1960
OD-33 wool serge winter uniform is phased out.

1961
Communist East Germany builds Berlin Wall.

1964
Year-round AG-334 tropical poly-wool uniform is introduced.

1965
U.S. ground-combat units arrive in South Vietnam.

1967
Washington, D.C., is site of largest anti-war demonstration.

1973
The draft ends: All-Volunteer Army is introduced.

1979
AG-415 poly-cotton shirt with shoulder marks enters service.



“THE American Soldier requires and deserves a uniform he can wear with pride. We must offer a uniform that is military, distinctive and dignified,” GEN Matthew B. Ridgway said in 1955.

With many Soldiers deployed to Southwest Asia — and wearing desert tan uniforms, because they provide the best camouflage for the environment — one might wonder why the Army’s traditional Class A, or “Army Green,” uniform has survived for 50 years.

New Uniform

When World War II ended in 1945, there was no Army green. America’s eight million Soldiers returned home in olive-drab, or OD, uniforms. Wartime dress soon became peacetime work clothing and, because of that, there was no uniform that expressly represented the Army.

Postwar Soldiers wanted — and recruiters needed — a new uniform. The waist-length OD wool jacket became an interim solution when the 1946 Doolittle Board made officer and enlisted uniforms similar.

A decade would pass before the Army green uniform made its debut.



▲ Army Green-44 wool serge coat showing its service. It was made in 1955, issued in 1970 and worn until the wearer’s promotion in 1980.
— Courtesy SFC Alan T. Bogan (Ret.)



▲ Even “The King” wore Army green. SGT Elvis A. Presley was discharged from the Army at Fort Dix, N.J., on March 5, 1960.

Historical Transition

Changing to Army green proved difficult, but rapid. While the Army had to procure new uniforms, it had to get as much wear as possible out of the old uniforms. At the same time, Soldiers in the ranks had to project a uniform appearance.

The transition from OD was completed in three phases. After authorizing an Army green purchase in 1956, the following year the Army began issuing recruits one AG and one OD uniform, the former for off-duty wear only. The next year, recruits received only AGs, then the duty uniform. The ODs were retained for off-duty wear.

By 1960, olive drab was gone. The only uniform was Army green.

Women's Uniform

Women in the Army weren’t initially issued Army green. The Uniform Board of 1949 had provided different uniforms for women, recommending a more fashionable ensemble that would attract new female recruits.

In 1951 Hattie Carnegie designed new winter Taupe-121 wool serge uniforms in the up-to-date style of calf-length skirts, accented waists and brimmed hats. But in 1959 female Soldiers also began wearing Army green.



▲ Female Soldiers began wearing the Army green uniform in 1959.

Little Change

Army green is one of the longest-surviving uniforms in Army history. The winter AG-44 wool serge became all-season AG-344 poly-wool tropical in 1964 and AG-489 poly-wool serge by 1990, with the tan-46 cotton shirt now the AG-415 poly-cotton with shoulder marks.

The men’s service cap left by 1978, along with the 1962 women’s service hat and the 1972 black beret. Even when the new black beret replaced the old garrison cap, the uniform remained Army green.

Army green is a tradition for generations of Soldiers. For 51 years, it’s been the uniform image of the U.S. Army. 

1980
Women's AG-434 maternity uniform is introduced.

1985
Army tan-445 (khaki) uniform is phased out.

1989
Berlin Wall falls, marking the end of the Cold War.

1990
AG-489 poly-wool serge uniform is introduced.

1991
Operation Desert Storm begins in Southwest Asia.

1995
Operation Joint Endeavor begins in Bosnia.

1998
Same-size male and female chevrons are introduced.

2000
The black beret is introduced.

2001
Pentagon and World Trade Center are attacked.

2003
Operation Iraqi Freedom begins.

Tracing Army Green

Story by Walter H. Bradford

New Color

In their search for a new uniform color, Army officials requested that it be attractive, distinct to the service and relate to the Army’s past. The old Army blue would be too similar to the Navy’s and the Air Force’s new uniforms. Scientists and fashion experts alike recommended gray-green, and green had been the distinctive color for rifle units back to Revolutionary times, so the development of a new green uniform began.

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Classic Design

A timeless design would ensure that Army green became a tradition. To better represent the modern postwar Army, a beltless semi-fitted coat became the adopted style, similar in cut to the officer’s tropical worsted semi-dress uniform, first introduced in 1942.

The breast and skirt pockets of the old service coat remained, but the defined waist and flared skirts of the belted officer’s blouse were gone.

► Combat veterans reclaim their green. Vietnam returnees exchange khaki uniforms for Army green uniforms in December 1967.

