THE RECORD

Turban, beard and uniform. *One milestone at a time.*

Seven dated milestones in how Sikh Americans came to serve with their articles of faith, oldest first, each with its source. Quote the record with confidence; for anything not listed here, write to media@sava.org.

1948

JULY 26, 1948

Equal treatment, by order.

President Truman signs Executive Order 9981, ordering equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.

It is the promise SAVA holds the country to for Sikhs who serve.

Source: Executive Order 9981, July 26, 1948

2009

OCTOBER 2009

An Army physician serves with turban and beard.

The Army approves Dr. Kamal S. Kalsi, D.O., then a captain and an emergency medicine physician, to serve with his turban and beard: the first such accommodation since the appearance rules of the 1980s.

A second officer, a dentist, was approved soon after; the Army announced both in March 2010.

Source: Stars and Stripes, Oct 25, 2009 · stripes.com/news/2009-10-25/sikh-doctor-gets-army-ok-keep-turban-beard-1945996.html · U.S. Army, Mar 25, 2010 (“for the first time in 23 years”) · army.mil/article/36339

2017

JANUARY 2017

Articles of faith, for a whole career.

An Army directive allows Sikh soldiers to wear the turban, unshorn hair and beard for a whole career.

The change opened the door for other Americans who wear religious head coverings, such as turbans and yarmulkes.

Source: NBC News, Jan 2017 · nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/army-issues-new-rule-granting-religious-accommodations-turbans-beards-hijabs-n703556

2020

AIR FORCE · NAVY

The Air Force and the Navy follow.

The Air Force allows turbans and beards. The Navy allows turbans, with beards permitted ashore.

Source: Military Times, Mar 2020 · militarytimes.com/news/your-navy/2020/03/23/navy-regs-update-religious-headgear-in-uniform-provides-rules-for-beard-chits/

2022

DECEMBER 23, 2022

A court opens boot camp to three recruits.

A federal appeals court orders the Marine Corps to let three Sikh recruits begin boot camp with their turbans and beards while their case goes on.

SAVA joined a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the recruits.

Source: Singh v. Berger, No. 22-5234 (D.C. Cir. Dec. 23, 2022); SAVA is listed as amicus curiae on page 2 · media.cadc.uscourts.gov/opinions/docs/2022/12/22-5234-1978908.pdf

2023

AUGUST 11, 2023

A Sikh Marine graduates boot camp.

Pfc. Jaskirat Singh graduates from Marine Corps boot camp in San Diego, with his turban and beard.

Source: Military Times, Aug 2023 · militarytimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2023/08/15/in-1st-sikh-man-graduates-from-marine-boot-camp-with-turban-beard/

2026

MAY 19, 2026 · NOW

Accommodations under review.

Army Directive 2026-09 orders existing religious accommodations for grooming and appearance to be re-evaluated. They remain valid until a final decision is made on each one.

The work is not finished.

Source: Stars and Stripes, Jun 2026 · stripes.com/branches/army/2026-06-05/army-religious-test-appearance-waivers-trims-sideburns-21881853.html · Army Directive 2026-09

◇ Wording awaits Kamal’s approval

The same record, with live links, is at sava.org/record.html. This document was prepared in November 2026; the 2026 entry describes a review that is still under way.