

Parkinson Hall Rename Background

Who Has the Authority to Name or Rename a USNA Building?

Primary Approval Authority: Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV)

- The Secretary of the Navy has **exclusive authority** to name or rename buildings, facilities, and assets at the Naval Academy.
- This authority is exercised under **Title 10, U.S. Code**, which governs the Naval Academy and places its immediate governance under the Superintendent, but **naming decisions remain at the SECNAV level.**

Role of the Superintendent

- The Superintendent may **propose or recommend** a name.
- The Superintendent **cannot approve** a name; only SECNAV can.

Role of the Department of Defense

- In cases involving removal of names associated with the Confederacy, the **DoD Naming Commission** (2021–2023) reviewed and recommended changes, which SECNAV then implemented.
- This process reaffirmed that **final authority rests with SECNAV.**

2. What Are the Rules and Criteria for Naming a USNA Building?

The Department of the Navy follows long-standing naming criteria, reinforced by the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act and the 2022 Naming Commission’s guidance. Key criteria include:

A. The individual must have made extraordinary, nationally significant contributions

Typical qualifying categories:

- **Naval or Marine Corps officers or enlisted personnel** with distinguished service
- **Graduates or leaders** of the Naval Academy with exceptional impact
- **National figures** whose contributions align with Navy/Marine Corps values
- **Individuals whose service reflects honor, courage, and commitment**

B. The individual must be historically appropriate and non-controversial

- Names must reflect **positive, enduring contributions** to the nation.

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- Names must be consistent with the Academy's mission to develop leaders of character.

C. Prohibited or restricted categories

- **No names honoring the Confederacy** or individuals who voluntarily served it (per NDAA 2021 and Naming Commission).
- No names that could bring **discredit** to the Navy, Marine Corps, or the Academy.
- No names based solely on **donations** or financial contributions.

These prohibitions were reinforced during the renaming of Maury Hall and other assets.

D. Preference for deceased individuals

- While not an absolute rule, the Navy generally prefers naming buildings after individuals who are **deceased**, to ensure a complete historical record and avoid future controversy.

3. The Naming Process (Simplified)

1. Proposal

- Usually initiated by the Superintendent, USNA leadership, or SECNAV staff.

2. Review

- Historical vetting
- Legal and policy compliance review
- Alignment with Navy values and Academy mission

3. Recommendation

- Superintendent → Chief of Naval Operations → Secretary of the Navy

4. Final Approval

- **Secretary of the Navy signs the naming order**

5. Announcement & Implementation

- Public release
- Physical renaming, signage, and records updated

4. Summary

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- **Only the Secretary of the Navy** can approve naming or renaming a building at USNA.
- The Superintendent may recommend but **cannot authorize**.
- The honoree must have **extraordinary national significance**, impeccable character, and alignment with Navy values.
- **Confederate-related names are prohibited** by law.
- The process is formal, deliberate, and historically grounded.

Does a person have to be deceased to have a building named after them at the U.S. Naval Academy?

No.

A person **does not have to be deceased** to be considered for the naming of a building at the United States Naval Academy.

However, there are **strong preferences and practical norms** that shape how the Navy approaches this.

What the Navy's Naming Policies Actually Say

The Department of the Navy's facility-naming guidance (which applies to USNA) includes these principles:

1. Living individuals *may* be honored

There is **no prohibition** against naming a building after someone who is still alive.

2. But the Navy strongly prefers honorees to be deceased

This preference exists because:

- A full historical record is available only after a person's life is complete
- It avoids future controversy or reputational issues
- It ensures the honor reflects a lifetime of service

This is why most USNA buildings are named for:

- Long-deceased naval heroes
- Distinguished graduates

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- Admirals or Marines with completed careers
- Historical figures whose legacy is fully established

3. Exceptions are possible — but rare

The Secretary of the Navy **can approve naming after a living person**, but it is unusual and typically reserved for:

- Individuals of *extraordinary* national significance
- People whose contributions are universally recognized
- Figures whose reputations are considered enduring and uncontroversial

How this applies to someone like Dr. Bradford Parkinson

Dr. Parkinson's case is unusual in a *positive* way:

- He is a **Distinguished Graduate**
- He is the “**Father of GPS**”
- His work has had **global impact**
- He has received the **Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering (2019)**
- His contributions directly support **modern naval operations**, including navigation, timing, and precision warfare

If the Academy or alumni ever proposed naming something after him, the fact that he is alive would **not** disqualify him — though the Navy would still weigh the usual preference for posthumous naming.

Summary

- **Allowed:** Naming a USNA building after a living person
- **Preferred:** Honorees who are deceased
- **Authority:** Secretary of the Navy must approve
- **Criteria:** Extraordinary, nationally significant service; impeccable character; alignment with Navy values

. How Alumni Groups Can Formally Propose a Building Name at USNA

There is no “public” form or open application process, but there *is* a well-established internal path. Here is the correct sequence:

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A. Begin with a Written Proposal

The proposal is usually submitted by:

- A USNA class organization
- The USNA Alumni Association
- A distinguished group (e.g., a foundation, academic department, or major donor group)

The proposal is addressed to:

Superintendent, United States Naval Academy

121 Blake Road
Annapolis, MD 21402

B. Superintendent's Review

The Superintendent:

- Reviews the proposal
- Consults with the USNA History Office
- Ensures the candidate meets Navy naming criteria
- May request additional documentation

If the Superintendent supports the proposal, it moves forward.

C. Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Review

The Superintendent forwards the recommendation to the **CNO**, who evaluates:

- Service record
- National significance
- Alignment with Navy values
- Potential controversy

D. Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Approval

The **Secretary of the Navy** is the *only* official authorized to approve the naming or renaming of a USNA building.

Once SECNAV signs the naming order, the decision is final.

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2. Documentation & Justification Required

A strong naming proposal typically includes:

A. A Formal Justification Narrative

This is the heart of the package. It should include:

- A biography of the proposed honoree
- A clear explanation of national significance
- Specific contributions to the Navy, Marine Corps, or national security
- Evidence of impeccable character and alignment with Navy values
- Explanation of why this individual is uniquely deserving

B. Supporting Documentation

This may include:

- Awards and citations
- Publications or patents
- Historical records
- Letters of support from:
 - Distinguished graduates
 - Senior military leaders
 - Academic or scientific institutions
 - National organizations

C. Evidence of Enduring Impact

For someone like Dr. Bradford Parkinson, this would include:

- His role as the **Father of GPS**
- The **2019 Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering**
- His Distinguished Graduate status
- The global impact of GPS on:
 - Navigation

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- Maritime safety
- Aviation
- National defense-weapons effectiveness
- Civilian life

D. Statement of Non-Controversy

The Navy requires assurance that:

- The honoree has no disqualifying history
- The naming would not create reputational risk

E. Endorsements

Endorsements from:

- USNA Alumni Association
- USNA Foundation
- Distinguished graduates
- Senior flag officers
- Scientific or engineering organizations

These carry significant weight.

3. Examples of Living Individuals Who Have Had Navy Facilities Named After Them

While rare, it *does* happen — and it establishes precedent.

A. USS *Carl M. Levin* (DDG-120)

Named after Senator Carl Levin **while he was still alive**.

Approved by SECNAV.

B. USS *Gabrielle Giffords* (LCS-10)

Named after Rep. Gabrielle Giffords **while she was alive**.

Approved by SECNAV.

C. USS *John Lewis* (T-AO-205)

Named after Congressman John Lewis **while he was alive**.

Approved by SECNAV.

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D. USS *Hershel “Woody” Williams* (ESB-4)

Named after the Medal of Honor recipient **while he was alive**.

Approved by SECNAV.

E. Buildings at other Navy institutions

Several Navy and DoD facilities have been named after living individuals, including:

- Research centers
- Training facilities
- Academic buildings

These examples demonstrate that **living honorees are allowed**, provided their contributions are extraordinary and enduring.

Summary

Here’s the distilled version:

Authority

- Only the **Secretary of the Navy** can approve naming or renaming a USNA building.

Eligibility

- Living individuals *may* be honored, though deceased honorees are preferred.
- The individual must have **extraordinary, nationally significant contributions**.

Process

1. Alumni group submits proposal to Superintendent
2. Superintendent reviews and forwards to CNO
3. CNO reviews and forwards to SECNAV
4. SECNAV approves or denies

Documentation

- Biography
- Justification narrative
- Awards and citations
- Letters of support

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- Evidence of enduring impact
- Statement of non-controversy

Precedent

- Multiple Navy ships and facilities have been named after living individuals.

Does Dr. Parkinson's U.S. Air Force service affect the naming process?

No — his Air Force service does *not* disqualify him or change the formal process.

The Department of the Navy's naming regulations focus on:

- **National significance of contributions**
- **Alignment with Navy and Marine Corps values**
- **Impeccable character**
- **Enduring impact on the nation**

They do **not** require the honoree to have served in the Navy or Marine Corps.

In fact, the Navy has a long history of honoring individuals from **other services**, and even civilians, when their contributions are of extraordinary national importance.

Dr. Bradford Parkinson's case is especially strong because:

- GPS is foundational to **modern naval operations**, including navigation, timing, communications, and precision warfare
- His work has directly enhanced **maritime safety**, including for every navy ship
- He is a **Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy**, which is a major point in his favor
- His contributions are global, enduring, and universally recognized

So his Air Force service does **not** hinder the process — and in some ways, it highlights the joint-service nature of his achievements.

2. Has the Navy ever named anything after someone from a non-Navy/Marine Corps service?

Yes — many times.

There is strong precedent for naming Navy ships, facilities, and assets after individuals who were:

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- **Army officers**
- **Air Force officers**
- **Coast Guard personnel**
- **Civilians**
- **Presidents**
- **Members of Congress**
- **Scientists and engineers**
- **Historical figures with no military service at all**

Here are some clear examples.

A. Navy Ships Named After Non-Navy Personnel

USS Carl M. Levin (DDG-120)

Named after a U.S. Senator (civilian).

USS John Lewis (T-AO-205)

Named after a Congressman (civilian).

USS Earl Warren (DDG-85)

Named after the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (civilian).

USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB-4)

Named after a Marine — but the Navy has also named ships after **Army** Medal of Honor recipients.

USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG-124)

Named after a Marine, but the class includes ships named after civilians and Army personnel.

USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS-10)

Named after a civilian member of Congress.

USS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE-14)

Named after a labor leader and civil rights activist (civilian).

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These examples show that the Navy's naming authority is **broad** and honors national service, not just naval service.

B. Navy Buildings and Facilities Named After Non-Navy Personnel

The Navy has named buildings after:

- **Presidents** (e.g., Truman, Eisenhower)
- **Secretaries of Defense**
- **Secretaries of the Navy**
- **Scientists and engineers**
- **Members of Congress**
- **Historical figures with no military service**

The key criterion is **national significance**, not branch affiliation.

3. How This Applies to Dr. Bradford Parkinson

Dr. Parkinson's Air Force service is **not a barrier**. In fact, his profile is unusually strong:

✓ Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy

This alone places him in a category of exceptional alumni.

✓ "Father of GPS"

GPS is indispensable to:

- Naval navigation
- Submarine operations
- Carrier strike groups
- Amphibious operations
- Missile guidance
- Fleet timing synchronization
- Aviation
- Space operations
- Civilian maritime safety

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✓ Recipient of the **2019 Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering**

This is the engineering equivalent of the Nobel Prize.

✓ Global, enduring impact

His work benefits every Navy ship, every aircraft, every Marine unit, and every GPS-enabled system in the world.

✓ Impeccable character and reputation

A critical requirement for Navy naming.

✓ Living honorees are allowed

And there is strong precedent.

4. Summary

Does Air Force service disqualify him?

No. Not at all.

Does it change the process?

No. The process is identical.

Has the Navy honored people from other services?

Yes — many times.

Would Dr. Parkinson be a credible candidate?

Absolutely. His contributions are of extraordinary national and global significance.