

JBSA's National Basketball Association (NBA) Ties

Joint Base San Antonio Fort Sam Houston through the years have hosted Three legendary basketball figures who built the foundation for their Hall of Fame careers on United States military bases. Elgin Baylor, Shaquille O'Neal, and David Robinson all shared deep ties with the armed forces through direct service or military upbringings, shaping their outstanding athletic achievements.

In 1959, Elgin Baylor won the NBA Rookie of the Year award and completed a six-month active-duty assignment as an Army medical corpsman at Fort Sam Houston. During his time in San Antonio, he and his teammate Alex Ellis dominated local exhibition games for the Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) Comets. The Army recalled Baylor to active duty from 1961 to 1962 at Fort Lewis in Washington. Despite his military obligations, the eleven-time NBA All-Star and Hall of Famer used weekend passes to play forty-eight games for the Los Angeles Lakers. During that incredible season, he averaged an astounding 38.3 points and 18.6 rebounds per game.

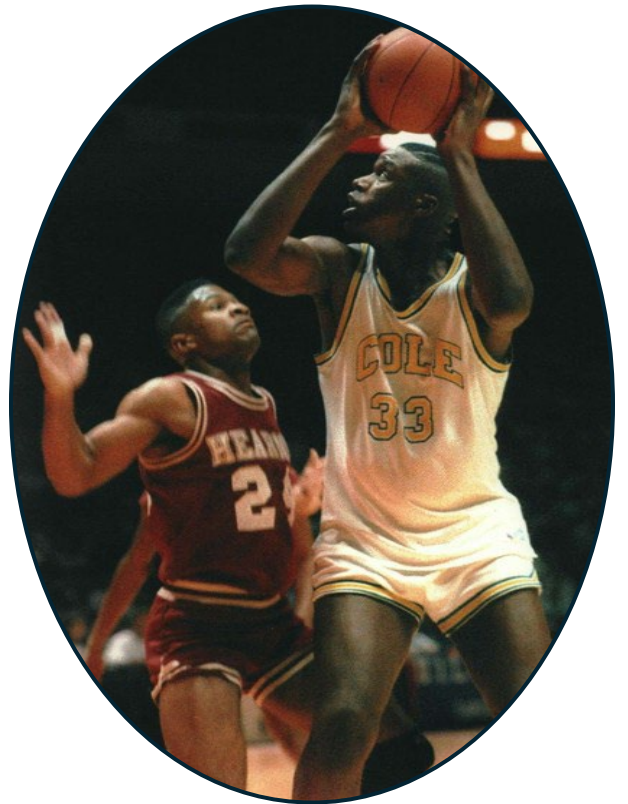
Shaquille O'Neal, another legend, grew up as a self-proclaimed Army brat on military installations, including Fort Sam Houston. His stepfather, an Army Sergeant, instilled a strong work ethic and discipline that O'Neal directly credited for his success. At Robert G. Cole High School on the post, O'Neal led his basketball team to an undefeated 36-0 season and captured the 1989 Texas State Championship. He later achieved legendary status in the NBA, winning four championships, three Finals MVP awards, and the 2000 NBA MVP award, while earning fifteen All-Star selections. To honor his legacy, officials at Fort Sam Houston retired his high school jersey, number 33, in 2014.

David Robinson attended the United States Naval Academy, where he majored in mathematics and received a height waiver to accommodate his massive seven-foot-one frame. The San Antonio Spurs drafted him first overall in 1987, but he delayed his NBA career to serve two years of active duty as a Civil Engineering Corps officer at Submarine Base Kings Bay. The ten-time All-Star and two-time Olympic gold medalist eventually engineered a historic thirty-five-game turnaround for the Spurs and won the 1990 Rookie of the Year award. He went on to secure two NBA championships and the 1995 NBA MVP award. Beyond his basketball achievements, Robinson established the Carver Academy in San Antonio for inner-city youth and frequently expressed his gratitude for the sacrifices of military families.

David Robinson also kept his military ties by visiting with military families. On May 9, 2019, he signed autographs and shot some hoops during a Military Spouse Appreciation Day event on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas. These Basketball legends have paved the way for future service men and women, ballers and hoopsters particularly in the San Antonio area, as the Western Conference Champion's San Antonio Spurs prepare for the 2026 National Basketball Association (NBA) Finals.



1959 Elgin Baylor Los Angeles Lakers



1989 Shaquille O'Neal Cole High School



1987 David Robinson San Antonio Spurs