



## Captain Gail Harris U.S. Navy

Raised in the ghettos of Newark, New Jersey, at the age of 5, Gail Harris saw a WWII themed movie called *Wing and a Prayer* starring Don Ameche. Mesmerized by a scene of the actor briefing Navy pilots before the climatic Battle of Midway scene, she decided that was what she'd do when she grew up. Unaware of the existence of a federal law which prohibited women from going into combat, one that would not be changed until 1994 she forged ahead with her dream. In 1973 she became the first woman in Naval History to serve as an Intelligence Officer in a Navy aviation squadron and at her retirement in December 2001 she was the highest ranking African American female in the Navy. Her

career included hands-on leadership during every major conflict from the Cold War to El Salvador to Desert Storm to Kosovo and at the forefront of one of the Department of Defense's newest challenges, Cyber Warfare.

She was the first female or first African American for every job assignment and frequently hand selected for challenging jobs based on her outstanding performance. In August 1988 she was pulled from her Hawaiian assignment 18 months early and sent to South Korea to head up the Defense Department intelligence support for the 1988 Olympics; a task that involved extensive coordination with U.S. and South Korean military, intelligence and civil agencies.

A Gulf War veteran, Captain Harris spent extensive time in the Middle East. Since her retirement she has worked in the Defense Industry as an Intelligence Subject matter expert. She was a contributing author to *Wake Up and Live Your Life with Passion* which reached number 4 on the Barnes and Noble best seller list. She's also had an essay "Reflections of a Retired Black Woman" published in *Lies and Limericks Inspirations from Ireland* in October 2006. Her memoir *A Woman's War* was published by Scarecrow Press January 2010. She writes a blog on National Defense topics for the Foreign Policy Association, the largest network of global affairs blogs online. A frequent guest on radio shows as defense expert, she hosts her own weekly R&B show and is writing a Broadway musical. She lives in Durango, Colorado where she's living happily ever after.

Address: Second star to the right, then straight on till morning.