
TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Red Tail Honor with Pride



A publication of the
AE Division of Civil Air Patrol's
National Headquarters



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TUSKEGEE AIRMEN: RED TAILS

Chapter 2:

General Daniel “Chappie” James, Jr.

The First
African
American to
Become a
4 Star General
in the Air
Force and in
all Branches of
Military



U.S. Air Force Photo

Objectives

Identify characteristics James exemplified which propelled him to become the first African American 4-star general.

Describe why the pilots called General James the “Black Eagle.”

Name two wars in which General James fought.

Objectives

Write an essay about the General James comment, “The strength of the U.S. lies in its unity.”

Build a model of a F-4 Phantom.

Explore the “League of Extraordinary Losers.”

Experience perseverance activity.

Daniel James, Jr. was born on February 11, 1920, in Pensacola, Florida.

He was the youngest of 17 children in his family. His father worked for the local gas company and his mother, who did not approve of the segregated schools in the area, started her own school and taught young Daniel. Other neighborhood children also attended the Lillie A. James School she ran for 52 years until her death at age 82. Daniel would always give his teacher/mother credit for instilling in him the importance of effort, preparation, and character. One of his favorite quotes by his mother was, "Don't stand there banging on the door of opportunity, then when someone opens it, you say, 'wait a minute, I got to get my bags.' You be prepared with your bags of knowledge, your patriotism, and your honor, and when somebody opens the door, you charge in."

HIS MOTHER FELT THE SCHOOLS IN PENSACOLA WERE NOT GIVING HER CHILDREN A PROPER EDUCATION, SO SHE STARTED HER OWN—THE LILLIE A. JAMES SCHOOL.

—HER BASIC COMMANDMENT WAS "THOU SHALT NOT QUIT."

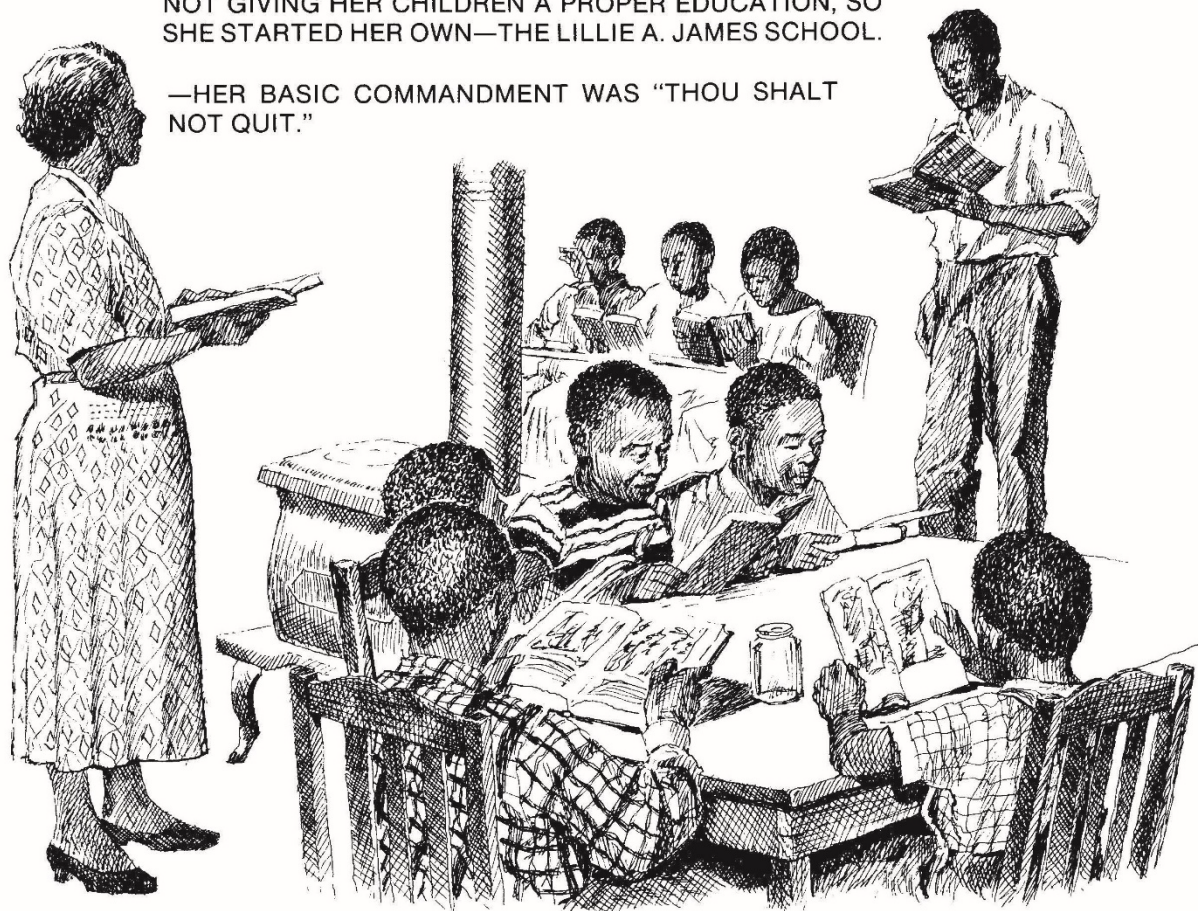


Photo: CAP Chappie James Activity Booklet

Daniel's older brother, Charles, gave him the nickname "Chappie." Growing up in Pensacola, young Chappie learned to love the airplanes that flew at the nearby Naval Air Station. He soon

decided he wanted to be a pilot. However, he was constantly reminded that he could not do so because he was black. This didn't seem to bother him, as he never lost sight of his dream to fly.

He entered the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1937 where he studied physical education and enrolled in a government flight training program. Daniel excelled as an athlete and was a leader on campus. While flying, he even learned to perform aerobatics. He graduated from Tuskegee in 1942 with a Bachelor of Science degree in physical education and a civilian pilot's license when he completed the [Civilian Pilot Program at Kennedy Field](#). He worked at Tuskegee as a flight instructor and enjoyed teaching others to fly.

In 1943, he entered the Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet program and the following year, he was commissioned a second lieutenant. He became one of the Tuskegee Airman, the first Black pilots in the U.S. Air Corps serving with the 332nd Fighter Group that trained at Selfridge Field, Michigan.

He served as an instructor pilot during World War II, but was not involved in combat until he went to Korea. He flew 101 combat missions in P-51 Mustangs and F-80s. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for leading a flight of P-51s in a close air support mission to support U.N. troops in 1950.

Colonel James went on to serve in the Vietnam War where he flew 78 more combat missions in F-4 Phantoms. He became Vice Wing Commander of the eighth Tactical Fighter Wing in Thailand under the command of Robin Olds. He led a mission where seven MIG 21s were destroyed. This was the highest total MIG kill of any mission during the war.



Flying F-4 Phantoms in Vietnam

U.S. Air Force Photo

When he returned to the U.S., he was offered a public affairs job due to his outstanding speaking abilities. He was promoted to general and continued to excel in leadership roles. In 1974, he was promoted to lieutenant general when he became vice commander of the Military Airlift Command at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.

One year later, on September 1, 1975, he became a four-star general and was named commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command known as NORAD. He was the first African American to achieve four stars in any branch of the military. General James was nicknamed the “Black Eagle” by his fellow pilots because of his superb flying skills, but even more importantly, his amazing ethics of achievement, hard work, and self-reliance. Sadly, he retired from the military in 1978 and less than a month later died of a heart attack.

The following quote, taken from an essay General James wrote after receiving the George Washington Freedom Medal in 1967, provides a philosophy that all people should understand. His message by which he lived: ***You are what you believe you are.*** (See associated character connection activity at end of chapter.)

“The strength of the United States of America lies in its unity. It lies in free men blessed and ordained with the rights of freedom working to provide, build, enjoy, and grow. Those who would subvert us – or any free people – try to disrupt this unity by breaking the small parts from the whole – driving in the wedges of fear and discontent. I am a Negro and, therefore, I am subject to their constant harangue. They say: ‘You, James, are a member of a minority – you are a black man.’ They say: ‘You should be disgusted with this American society – this so-called democracy.’ They say: ‘You can only progress so far in any field that you choose before somebody puts his foot on your neck for no other reason than you are black.’ They say: ‘You are a second-class citizen.’

“My heritage of freedom provides my reply. To them I say: ‘I am a citizen of the United States of America. I am not a second-class citizen and no man here is unless he thinks like one, reasons like one, or performs like one. This is my country and I believe in her, and I believe in her flag, and I’ll defend her, and I’ll fight for her and serve her. If she has any ills, I’ll stand by her and hold her hand until in God’s given time, through her wisdom and her consideration for the welfare of the entire nation, things are made right again.’

“Today’s world situation requires strong men to stand up and be counted – no matter what their personal grievances are. Our greatest weapon is one we have always possessed – our heritage of freedom, our unity as a nation.”

General Daniel “Chappie” James, Jr.

Retired, USAF February 01,1978 Died, February 25,1978

[See video of “Chappie” James](#) Yesterday’s Air Force: Chappie James by Jarid Watson

General Chappie James Accomplishments and Recognitions



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

GENERAL DANIEL "CHAPPIE" JAMES JR.

Daniel "Chappie" James Jr. became the first African American to reach the rank of four-star general in 1975.

During WWII, he graduated from Tuskegee University and trained pilots for the all-black 99th Pursuit Squadron. A decorated fighter pilot, James saw battle during the Korean War and Vietnam War.

His son, General Daniel James III, also served in the U.S. Air Force as a fighter pilot, and became the first African American to hold the title of Adjutant General of the Texas National Guard from 1995-2002.

Notable Awards:

- Defense Distinguished Service Medal
- Air Force Distinguished Service Medal
- Legion of Merit
- Meritorious Service Medal
- Army Commendation Medal
- Distinguished Flying Cross

The Citadel Daniel Library

<https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Biographies/Display/article/106647/general-daniel-james-jr-asp/>

General James is widely known for his speeches on Americanism and patriotism for which he has been editorialized in numerous national and international publications. Excerpts from some of the speeches have been read into the Congressional Record. Civilian recognitions include:

- 1976 and 1968- Awarded the George Washington Freedom Foundation Medal
- 1969 - Builders of a Greater Arizona Award
- 1970 - Phoenix Urban League Man of the Year Award, Distinguished Service Achievement Award from Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity;
- 1970- (ROTC) Arnold Air Society Eugene M. Zuckert Award for outstanding contributions to Air Force professionalism; his citation read "... fighter pilot with a magnificent record, public speaker, and eloquent spokesman for the American Dream we so rarely achieve."
- 1971- Honorary national commander, Arnold Air Society
- 1971 - American Legion National Commander's Public Relations Award, Veteran of Foreign Wars Commander in Chief's Gold Medal Award and Citation;
- 1971- Honorary doctor of laws degrees from the University of West Florida;
 - 1973- the University of Akron
 - 1974- Virginia State College
 - 1975- Delaware State College
 - 1976- St. Louis University
- 1975 - Capital Press Club, Washington, D.C., Salute to Black Pioneers Award

- 1976 - Air Force Association Jimmy Doolittle Chapter Man of the Year Award
 - ▬ Florida Association of Broadcasters' Gold Medal Award
 - ▬ American Veterans of World War II Silver Helmet Award
 - ▬ United Service Organization Liberty Bell Award
 - ▬ Blackbook Minority Business and Reference Guidance Par Excellence Award
 - ▬ American Academy of Achievement Golden Plate Award
 - ▬ United Negro College Fund's Distinguished Service Award
 - ▬ Horatio Alger Award
 - ▬ VFW Americanism Medal
 - ▬ Bishop Wright Air Industry Award
 - ▬ Kitty Hawk Award (Military)
- 1993- National Aviation Hall of Fame Enshrinee



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A signed portrait of Gen. Daniel "Chappie" James hangs in the Pentagon. It pictures James in front of his F-4 at Ubon AB, Thailand, during Vietnam. Painting by Maxine McCaffery/USAF.

Review:

Ask students the following questions in review.

- 1- Name some characteristics that “Chappie” James exemplified which propelled him to become the first African American 4-star general.
- 2- Describe why the pilots called General James the “Black Eagle.”
- 3- Name two wars in which General James fought.
- 4- What is the message Chappie James lived by?

Review Answers:

- 1- Being black and all that involved in a time of segregation. But, he really did not let those things hinder him.
- 2- Because of his superb flying skills.
- 3- Korean and Viet Nam.
- 4- You are what you believe you are.

STEM Connection Activity: Make a Flying F-4 Phantom II Fighter Glider

- Found at [Awesome F-4 Phantom Paper Airopplane : 4 Steps - Instructables](#)
- Learn more at [Why the F-4 Phantom II Fighter is Such a Legendary Plane](#)



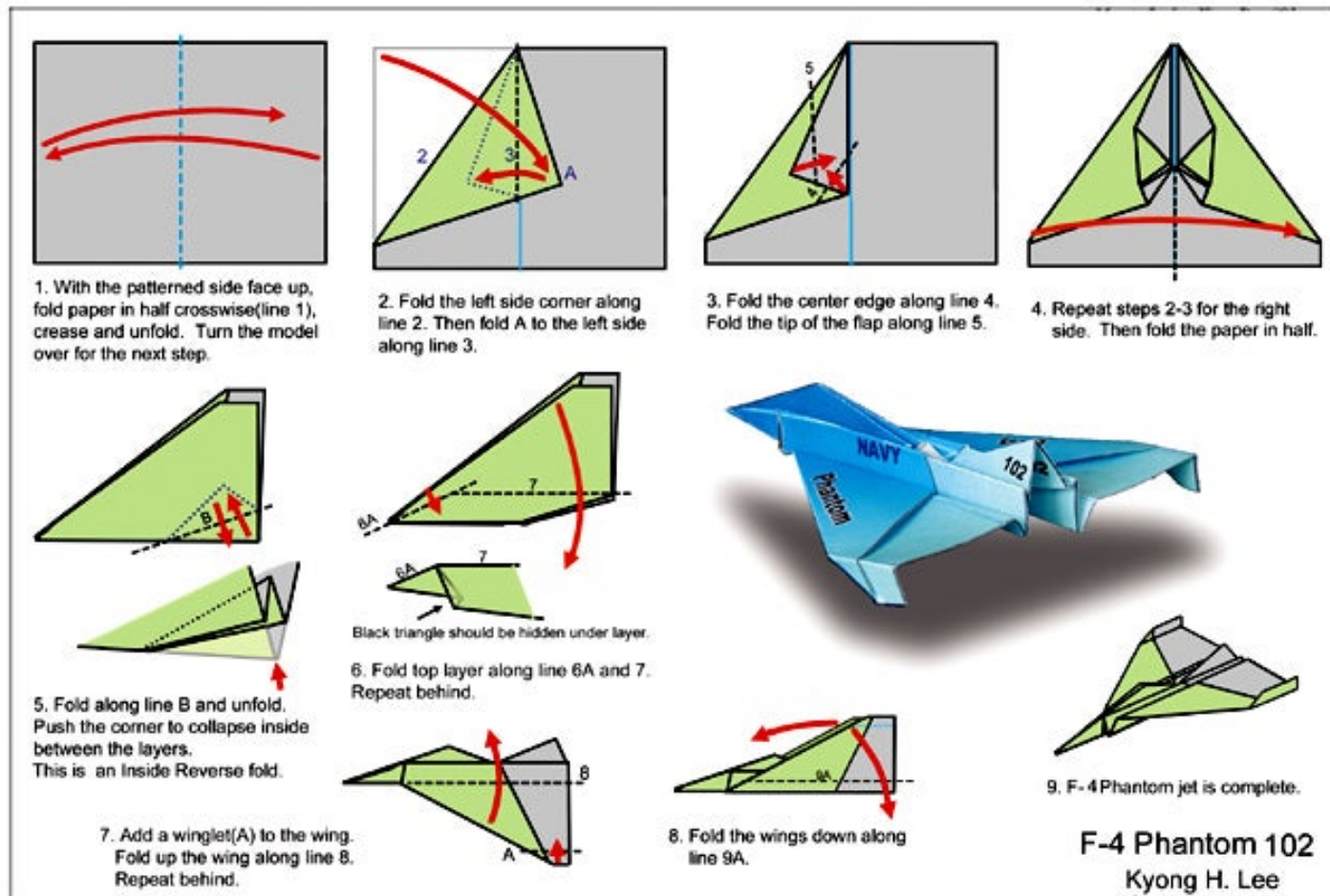
USAF Photo

- [Show the video of the F-4 Phantom II fighter in air and from the cockpit video.](#)

Materials for the F-4 Phantom II Fighter Jet:

- A regular piece of white printer paper
- Markers, crayons etc... for decorating

Steps to fold the paper glider are on following page. Students can either follow the directions by viewing the directions, or, have one student or the teacher give oral directions while demonstrating the folding process.



After all students have folded and decorated their gliders, find a good indoor space to fly the plane. Then, select which of the following additional activities are most purposeful and which ones there is time to conduct.

1. Show students some different terrain found in Vietnam [HERE](#). Have the students help determine and create a landing target that would have been a similar location during the Vietnam war when Chappie James flew this fighter jet. Then, allow the students to take turns trying to hit that landing target when they fly and land their paper glider.
2. Have the students each fly their glider and measure the length of flight in air before the glider touches the ground.
 - a. Try to find the longest in-flight glider and discuss what may have contributed to the long flight.
3. Have each student measure the length from touch-down on the ground until the glider comes to a full stop.
 - a. Gather a list of all their "landing lengths."
 - b. Have them watch the video, finding the [mean, median, and mode](#).

- c. Then, have them find the mean, median, and mode (and even the range) of their landing lengths.
- d. Finally, have the students discuss and determine which of these numbers (mean, median, and/or mode- or range) would be beneficial to pilots who are trying to land in unknown territory, such as the terrain in Vietnam, and why.
4. Have the students adjust the weight on the nose of the glider by adding a gem clip or other lightweight item to determine any changes in the flight of the glider.
5. Have students design and fly their own paper gliders.



Photo Susan Mallett

Character Connection Activities

- 1- ***You are what you believe you are!*** General James will always be remembered for the essay he wrote after receiving the George Washington Freedom Medal in 1967. (See excerpt on the 4th page of James' life narrative written above.) After reading this essay, have students write their own two paragraph essay describing what they feel General James meant when he said that the strength of the U.S. lies in its unity. They should use information from the essay to support their responses.
- 2- ***Fail-up!*** Read "[The League of Extraordinary Losers.](#)" (Scholastic) Then, have students reflect on times they had the choice to fail or fail-up! Have the students complete one or more of the following:
 - a. Describe something you will do in the future to push toward failing-up!
 - b. Describe how you can mentor a younger sibling, friend, or student about when to fail-up!
 - c. Who in the article is someone YOU look up to for failing-up?
 - d. Do you know of others who have used the choice strategy of failing up?

3- **Perseverance!** Ice Cream in a Bag.

Found at [Character in a Bag](#). Find out more at [Stephen Spangler Science](#).

Why ice cream? Students have to keep shaking the bag until the mixture becomes a solid-ice cream. This is just fun way to demonstrate perseverance, which is a character trait found in all Tuskegee Airmen. Anything worth doing is worth doing well, and perseverance is the key!

Make ice cream in a bag. Explain that adding rock salt to ice enables the temperature to decrease enough that it causes the cream to go from a liquid to a solid.

Directions:

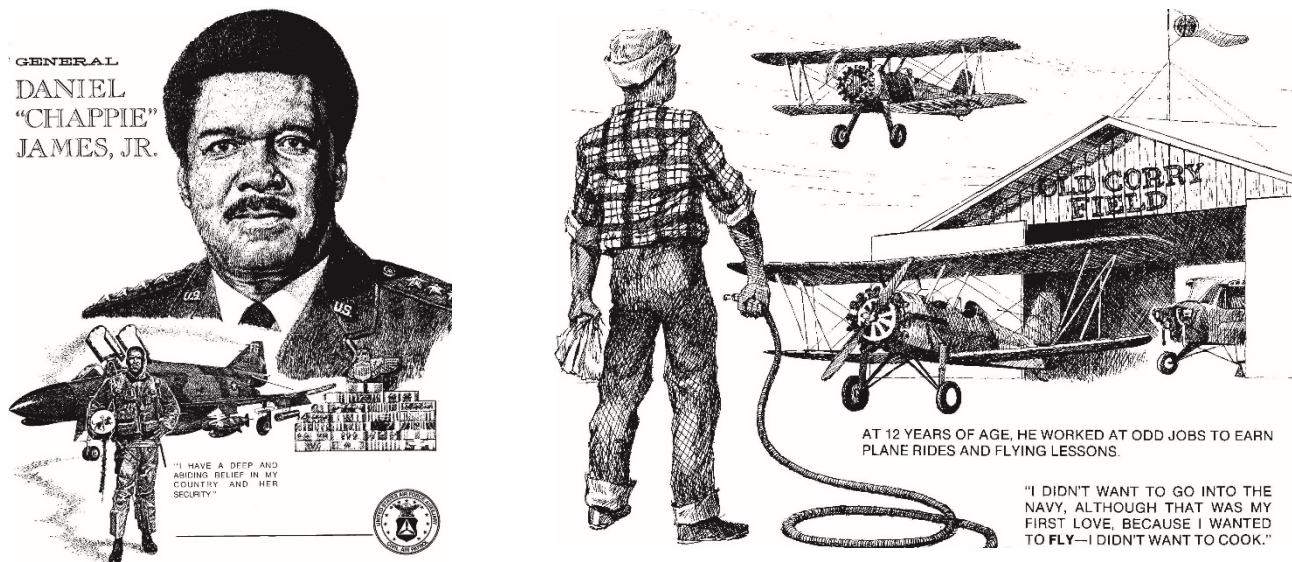
- Add 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream, 1 Tbsp granulated sugar, and 1/4 tsp vanilla in a Ziplock sandwich bag. Seal the bag completely
- Crush 3 cups of ice and put in a gallon Ziplock bag with 1/3 cup rock salt.
- Put the smaller bag inside the larger bag. Seal the bag completely.
- Shake until ice cream is formed – 5-10 minutes.
- Enjoy the ice cream! (The reward for perseverance!)

Photo Character in a Bag



Civil Air Patrol's Chappie James Activity Book

[Booklet of the story of Chappie James, with associated cross-curricular activities and task cards.](#)



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Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. References and Extension Videos

Extension Videos:

[Roscoe Brown of the Tuskegee Airmen - The National WWII Museum Oral History - YouTube](#)

[Dr. Roscoe Brown, Jr.: Significance of the Tuskegee Airmen - YouTube](#)

[Red Tails Interview w/ Dr. Roscoe Brown | Tuskegee Airman - YouTube](#)

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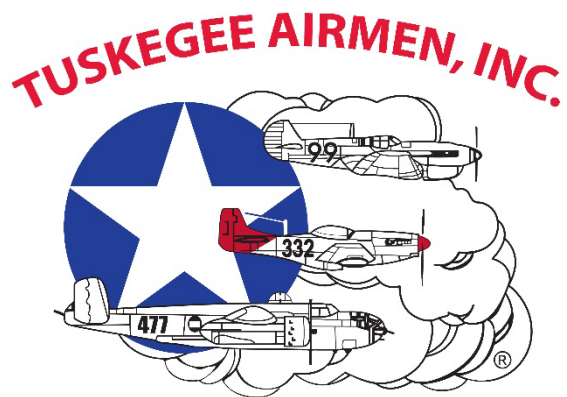
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[Famed Tuskegee Airman Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. Dies at 94- AFRO The Black Media Authority](#)

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