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Women in the Armed Forces

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Women in the Armed Forces

SUMMARY

Women have become an integral part of the armed forces, but they are excluded from most combat jobs. Several issues remain. One is whether to reduce, maintain, or expand the number of women in the services as the total forces are being reduced. Difficulties in obtaining enough qualified males led to increasing recruitment of women during the 1970s and 1980s, and women now comprise more than 13% of the armed forces. The percentages vary among the services from 5.3% for the Marines to over 17% for the Air Force. The reduction of armed forces, in response to a changing world situation and budget pressures, and the availability of enough qualified males, could change the perception of need for military women.

A second question is to what extent women should continue to be excluded from some combat positions by policy. Women are not assigned to certain jobs including many that form the core of defense in actual battle, such as the infantry. All legal barriers have been removed. In 1991, Congress repealed the law prohibiting women serving on combat aircraft in the Air Force and Navy. In 1993, Congress repealed the law barring women from Navy combat ships. Policy on assignment of women to combat was left to the Air Force and Navy, as it already was to the Army, which excludes women from most combat jobs. Congress, in P.L. 103-160, also required advance notice of changes in policies to open or close assignment of women to combat units, indicating its intent to monitor policy on this issue.

U.S. military actions in Grenada, Libya, the Persian Gulf, and Panama revealed nu-

merous inconsistencies in policy among the different branches and practical problems in having a growing number of persons in the armed forces prohibited from combat posts but representing a substantial part of the forces and serving in combat support units. The deployment of approximately 40,000 women to Saudi Arabia provided the most extensive experience to date.

Some observers contend that additional military jobs could be opened to women. Others contend that adding more women to non-combat posts reduces the number of rotation slots available for men in combat units. In either event, since the main mission of the armed forces is to deter war by being prepared to wage one if it occurs, there is a limit to the extent to which the armed forces can increase the number and expand the assignments of women as long as there are restrictions on assigning women to combat posts.

The two basic considerations involve national security and the role of women in American society. Would national security be jeopardized or enhanced by increasing reliance on women in the armed forces? Should women have equal opportunities and responsibilities in national defense? Or do role and physical differences between the sexes, the protection of future generations, and other social norms require limiting the assignments of women in the armed forces? Opinion in the United States is deeply divided on the fundamental issues involved.

MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As a result of complaints concerning sexual harassment and fraternization, particularly at training facilities, some have advocated that basic training should be administered on a "gender-segregated" basis. Currently, only the Marine Corps conducts basic training in this manner. The FY 1999 National Defense Conference Report included compromise language that would require gender-segregated housing for male and female recruits during recruit training.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Two major factors led to the expansion of the role of women in the armed forces. First, after the end of the draft and the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force in December 1973, the military services had difficulty in recruiting and retaining enough qualified males, thereby turning attention to recruiting women. Women were recruited in increasing numbers and assigned to a wider variety of occupations as one method of meeting shortfalls in enlistments by qualified men.

Second, the movement for equal rights for women led to demands for equal opportunity in all fields, including national defense, and a gradual removal of restrictions against them. The Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948 (62 Stat. 356-75) had given women a permanent place in the military services by authorizing women in the regular Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. However, it had limited the number of enlisted women to 2% of enlisted strength, the number of female officers (excluding nurses) to 10% of enlisted female strength, and the rank a female officer could achieve to Lieutenant Colonel (or Commander in the Navy).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the movement for equal opportunity for women gave new momentum to efforts to eliminate discriminatory treatment of women in the armed forces. Changes were brought about by policy directives from the services, court decisions, and legislation. In 1967, P.L. 90-130 repealed the limitation of 2% for female enlisted strength. In 1974, the age requirement for enlistment of women without parental consent was made the same as for men (P.L. 93-920). In 1976, women were admitted to the three major service academies: Military, Naval, and Air Force (P.L. 94-106); women had already been admitted to the U.S. Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Academies by administrative action.

In 1978, P.L. 95-485 modified Section 6015 of Title 10 of the U.S. Code, which had precluded women from serving on Navy ships, to permit women to be assigned to permanent duty on vessels not expected to be assigned combat missions, and up to 6 months of temporary duty on other Navy ships. In 1991, the Defense Authorization Act for FY1992 and FY1993 repealed the limitations on assignment of females to combat aircraft in both the Air Force and Navy. Congress in the Defense Authorization Act for FY1994 repealed the ban on women on combat ships.

Current Status

Women have become an integral part of the U.S. armed forces over the past few decades. The percentage of women in the armed forces steadily increased from less than 2% at the end of FY1972 to 13.9% at the end of September 1997, although the total number decreased from 210,048 in FY1992 to 200,526 in September 1997 as part of a general reduction in military force levels. The percentages of women vary among services: Army, 14.8% (72,827); Navy, 13.3% (52,578); Marines, 5.3% (9,286); Air Force, 17.4% (65,835). (See tables at end, Active Duty Enlisted and Officer End Strengths.) Also, the number of career fields and military jobs open to women has steadily increased. Although it has been argued that women are essential to fill the ranks, the recent downsizing statistics shows this not to be the case. Women have never accounted for more than 14% of the armed forces. During the draw down following the end of the Cold War, approximately 33% of the entire active duty force was removed. In other words, statistically speaking, the recruitment of women was no longer necessary merely to fill the ranks.

Although women have not achieved the status that some would like, others believe the services have gone too far. In addition to remaining a growing minority, the percentage of women in the higher officer and enlisted ranks continues to be lower than the percentage of women in service. (See table at end, Distribution of Active Duty Women By Rank and Percentage of Total Personnel in Each Rank.) The disparity is much greater if medical officers, which includes nurses, were excluded. The Department of Defense has explained that the clustering of women in the middle to lower officer grades is a reflection of women entering in the lower ranks in large numbers beginning in 1972, and that with time the distribution of women officers has begun to approximate that of men. However, as long as combat jobs are closed to women, there is likely to be a lower proportion of women in the senior officer grades, as these tend to be filled by officers whose careers have been involved in the central mission of the armed forces, which is combat.

A primary barrier to the expansion of the number of women in the services has been that women are not allowed in most combat jobs and many combat-related jobs. Under Defense Department policy, they have been excluded from many other combat-related assignments and occupational specialties. In 1988 the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that about half of the active duty military positions were open to women and half were closed. The GAO concluded that “the services limit the number of jobs that women may hold beyond the requirements of the combat exclusion and related program needs. As a result women may not compete for all jobs identified by the services as unrestricted by the combat exclusion or their program needs.” Some of this exclusion is related to the need to maintain a rotation base for personnel returning from sea or overseas duty.

In February 1988, the Defense Department adopted a “risk rule” that excludes women from non-combat units or missions if the risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture are equal to or greater than the risk in the combat units they support. It permitted women to be assigned to noncombat units or positions if the risk is less than comparable to the combat units with which they are associated. In September 1988, the Secretary of Defense said that to protect combat readiness, decisions of the Military Departments to assign women to certain units must be made with the understanding that they would be so assigned in times of peace and conflict.

On Jan. 14, 1994, then-Secretary Aspin announced that the risk rule would be lifted in October 1994. The new rule would be replaced by the following three criteria of direct ground combat, all of which would have to be met to exclude jobs from women: "Women may not serve in units that engage an enemy on the ground with weapons, are exposed to hostile fire, and have a high probability of direct physical contact with the personnel of a hostile force." On July 29, 1994, then-Secretary of Defense William Perry announced the service would open more than 80,000 additional positions to women, effective Oct. 1, 1994, after which date more than 92% of the career fields and 80% of the total jobs would be open to women. As more women have been recruited, the rate of women failing to complete basic training has increased above that of men.

A service-by-service review found the following:

- **Air Force:** The Air Force has, for several years, had a higher percentage of women than the other services primarily because a small percentage of Air Force personnel serve in direct combat positions. The Defense Authorization Act of 1989 prohibited the Air Force from setting a minimum or maximum percentage of persons according to gender for original enlistments for skill categories or in any other way basing acceptance of a person on gender, except for enlistments for training for duty assignments prohibited by the combat exclusion. A legal ban on women in combat aircraft was removed in December 1991 by P.L. 102-190. On Apr. 28, 1993, then-Secretary Aspin lifted the policy ban on women in combat aircraft slots, and women began fighter training. On May 27, 1993, the Air Force reported it had opened all aircraft assignments to women. By June 1994, the Defense Department said, 99% of Air Force duty positions were open to women. On Feb. 15, 1994, Air Force Chief of Staff Merrill McPeak presented Lt. Jeannie Flynn, who had just completed training on the F-15E Eagle fighter-bomber, as the first Air Force female combat pilot.
- **Army:** With then-Secretary Perry's approval of a plan effective to open more jobs to women, effective Oct. 1, 1994, the Army expected to open approximately 32,700 positions to women in the active and reserve forces. The number of Army career fields open to women would rise from 61% to 91%. Special Operations Forces aircraft units and some air cavalry units remained closed to women because they deploy with close ground combat units. On June 1, 1994, Secretary of the Army Togo West, in a memorandum published in *Inside the Army*, recommended assigning women to Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) units, Special Operations Forces aircraft, air cavalry troop and support, and several other MOSs that have been closed to women. After vigorous objections from Army generals, a compromise was worked out in which 32,000 new combat posts will be opened. Women are still barred from some career fields including Armor, Infantry, Special Forces, Cannon Field Artillery, Multiple Launch Rocket Artillery, and Forward Area Air Defense Artillery. On Nov. 22, 1994, a company at Ft. Leonard Wood was the first group to complete coed basic training under a renewed policy of gender-integrated basic training for many noncombat jobs. Given recent developments at Aberdeen Proving Grounds and other Army facilities, some are beginning to openly question the value of such training—see below.
- **Navy:** In Section 541 of the Defense Authorization Act for FY1994, P.L. 103-160, Congress repealed the law, 10 U.S.C. 6015, prohibiting women from serving on

combat vessels. On Mar. 7, 1994, the Navy issued its first orders for women to take up assignments aboard a combat ship, the aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower. The Navy assigned between 400 and 600 women to the aircraft carrier and to other combat ships later in that year. Closed jobs include those specifically associated with submarines, such as submarine sonar technician or gun or missile crew member. Reserving some positions to permit ship-to-shore rotations also limits the number of women. As of Oct. 1, 1994, 94% of the jobs and 96% of the Navy career fields were to be open to women. On May 3, 1994, then-Chief of Naval Operations Jeremy Boorda said he wanted to recruit more women into the Navy and that the goal was to allow women on all ships. Navy Secretary John Dalton has directed that the issue be reexamined annually, with the next report due in April 1995. As the Navy has broadened its recruitment of women, the number failing to complete their first tour of duty has increased. The Navy is the only service in which the "wash out" rate is higher for women than men. On Oct. 25, 1994, a Navy female combat pilot, Lt. Kara S. Hultgreen died attempting to land an F-14 fighter on the deck of the *USS Abraham Lincoln*. Some have attributed her death to the Navy's haste in advancing women.

- **Marines:** The Marine Corps, which plans to expand the number of women to 10,493 in the next two decades, has the smallest percentage of women largely because a higher proportion of Marines than members of the other services are serving in combat roles. As of Oct. 1, 1994, 48,000 new positions were to be open to women, including assignments on combatant vessels and Marine Corps Air/Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Headquarters and Air Defense Artillery Battalion Headquarters. The career fields open to women would rise from 33% to 93%. Women already serve as Marine Security Guards for U.S. Embassies overseas and may serve as Hawk Missile technicians and operators. All pilot positions remained closed to women at the end of 1992, but after then-Secretary Aspin's announcement of Apr. 28, 1993, the Marine Commandant said women would in the future compete for aviation slots on a gender-neutral basis.

Military Women in Combat Actions Abroad

Considerable experience has been gained in recent years with the deployment of women in the armed forces to military actions abroad. According to the Department of Defense, over 1,200 females have been stationed in Haiti. Women were included in actions in Grenada in October 1983, Libya in 1986, the Persian Gulf in 1987, and Panama in December 1989. More than a thousand women troops were stationed in Somalia during the operation there from December 1992 to 1994. The largest deployment was to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf in 1990 and 1991, Operation Desert Storm, so it is discussed here to illustrate both the progress women have made in the military services and the policy dilemmas.

Women were included in the forces sent to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf soon after the U.S. deployments to halt Iraqi aggression against Kuwait began on Aug. 8, 1990. From that time and throughout the hostilities that started Jan. 16, 1991, they served both in traditional roles such as nurses and non-traditional roles such as aircraft ground crews, intelligence, and communications specialists. According to the Defense Department, 7% of the service personnel in the area were women. The following is the Defense Department

breakdown by service of the total number of women deployed during Operation Desert Storm, as of July 11, 1991.

Women Deployed during Operation Desert Storm

Branch of Service	Active Duty	Reserves	Total
Army	19,590	11,265	30,855
Navy	3,400	1,049	4,449
Marines	1,098	134	1,232
Air Force	2,978	1,268	4,246
Total	27,066	13,716	40,782

Operation Desert Storm showed that women could satisfactorily perform many jobs traditionally held by men and that they could be in danger even if restricted from combat posts. The action also called into question the belief that the American public would be unable to accept female casualties or the idea of female prisoners of war. Casualties among female military personnel, which included 13 deaths and two prisoners of war, appeared to be viewed in the same spirit among the American people as casualties among males. A GAO study of July 1993 found that health and hygiene problems were minor for both men and women and had no negative effects on mission accomplishments. But Operation Desert Storm also dramatized the broad social issues involved as mothers, as well as fathers, were separated from their children for long periods during the deployment. Moreover, one of the female prisoners of war testified that she had been sexually abused by an Iraqi guard. In addition, the *Army Times* revealed that at least 24 U.S. Army servicewomen had been raped or sexually assaulted while serving in the Persian Gulf region.

According to an Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR Fact Sheet released by the Pentagon, women assigned to duty in the former Yugoslavia “can be assigned to positions already open to them in the air and ground units and Naval vessels. Current assignment policy does not allow women to be assigned to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground.” The issue of sexual activity has also been raised in Yugoslavia. It has been reported that, on average, every three days a women has been rotated out of Bosnia due to pregnancy.

Should the Armed Forces Expand Recruitment of Women?

One issue is whether to expand the number of women in the armed forces. As the total size of forces decreases, an increase in the number of women would rapidly increase the percentage of women. The question of whether the percentages should be increased or decreased could become more acute during the 1990s as active duty military personnel strengths decline greatly, and the military services can meet their recruiting requirements with men as qualified as any women applicants. Thus far, the proportion of women has been increasing even while the total force number declined. From 1989 until 1997, the active duty

female strength declined from 232,823 to 200,526, but the proportion of women increased from 10.9% to 13.9%.

At issue are the qualifications needed for modern armed forces, whether women meet these qualifications, the effect more women in the services would have on the ability of the armed forces to carry out their missions, and the effect on society.

One qualification is education, which some believe is becoming more important with the growing complexity of modern weapons systems. The services have been able to achieve higher standards for women recruits than for men because of the small recruitment levels for women. A principal argument in favor of increasing the numbers of women in the armed forces has been that it would be better to raise the number of women recruits who are better educated than to recruit less educated men. If the number of women recruits is increased, however, and the male recruiting requirements decline, the differences in education level between male and female recruits has narrowed. Moreover, some argue that while educational credentials may indicate a recruit's likelihood of completing an enlistment term, they are not necessarily an indicator of ability to perform a military mission.

Another qualification is aptitude for the needed jobs. In aptitude tests given by the Army, men as a group have consistently scored higher than women as a group in three areas: electronics, general mechanics, and motor mechanics. Men and women have scored roughly the same in the general technical and clerical composites, with women scoring slightly higher in the clerical. Some contend that these differences might be expected as a result of differences in the educational and cultural backgrounds of men and women, and that the tests do not reliably predict the performance of properly trained women in fields such as electronics and mechanics. Others note that the issue is not one of the origins of aptitude differences, but the assignments of individuals to the military position for which they are best suited, and that aptitude tests correlate interest, ability, and speed in learning skills.

A related question is the kind of jobs to which women should be assigned. Should jobs be assigned on the basis of aptitude testing without regard to gender, or should special effort be made to train women for jobs in the traditionally non-female occupations even if they do not initially have high aptitudes in these fields? Most women have traditionally been assigned to the administrative and medical occupations in which their aptitudes and preferences are higher. Some favor continuing this policy since most women prefer these jobs and there is room for more women in these areas. Studies by the Department of Defense have shown that enlisted women have much higher rates of retention in the service when they are assigned jobs in the traditionally female skills (administrative and clerical, and medical and dental) and lower retention rates in traditionally non-female occupations (mechanical and electrical equipment repair.) Other observers believe that assigning women in the whole range of military jobs is required for equal opportunity in the military services and, with proper training, women will demonstrate they are capable of performing most military jobs.

A third issue involves the entire range of physiological differences between men and women. One aspect is physical size and strength. The average female recruit has from 50%-70% of the strength, stamina, and muscle mass of the average male recruit with the greatest disparity existing in the female's upper body strength. Since the major physical capacity requirements for many military jobs are deemed to be lifting and carrying, upper body strength is a limiting factor for women in these jobs. The Army has developed criteria

for determining whether individuals could meet the strength requirements for each job. Section 543 of the Defense Authorization Act for FY1994 required that for any military occupational specialty for which the Secretary of Defense determines certain physical qualifications are demanded, the Secretary must prescribe specific physical requirements and apply the requirements on a gender-neutral basis. It also required notice to Congress when changes in occupational standards are expected to result in an increase or decrease of at least 10% in the number of females assigned to that occupational field. The U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine conducted a study showing that a physical fitness regiment can substantially increase the strength of women. The study has been criticized because it did not include men under the same experimental conditions, thus making any comparisons futile.

Another aspect of the physiological differences involves pregnancy and childbirth. There is concern that because of these uniquely female conditions, and the related traditional responsibility of mothers for child care, women will lose more time away from duty, be less able to deploy rapidly, and have shorter service careers. (This, in part, explains the lower number of women in senior positions.) With more women, the services are likely to be faced with an increasing number of persons who have sole or primary responsibility for children or dual military couples in which both parents are in the military. Some believe that the military services could meet this challenge by providing adequate child care facilities. Others argue that assuming responsibility for child care would be too costly and is not a part of the defense mission. In 1996, an Academy graduate and now helicopter pilot, Lt. Emma Cuevas, sued the service because the army refused her request for a discharge so that she could nurse her new born. Some claim that to accept her resignation would allow her to walk away from nearly \$500,000 in training paid for by the taxpayers. At an April 8, 1997 hearing, District Judge Kessler refused to issue an injunction that would have forced the Army to discharge Cuevas or provide her with a temporary leave of absence, thereby forcing her to fulfill her Army commitment.

Some look beyond individual qualifications to group performance and contend that even if they meet all necessary qualifications and can perform the necessary tasks, women will decrease the efficiency and effectiveness of the armed forces. In their view, having women in large numbers might impair the cohesion and efficiency of men who have taken pride in the masculinity of their profession. According to reports, a U.S. Army Research Institute, a "1994 test program found mixed-sex training caused a striking increase in morale and performance of women, but had little or a negative effect on 'unit cohesion,' or a unit's ability to fight together. Although the training is coed and the treatment in most areas is supposed to be equal, many men still complain the physical performance requirements for women are too easy." (See Washington Post, Feb. 5, 1997: A1, A7). Critics contend that the United States already has a greater percentage of women in its armed forces than almost all other countries and view this as a weakness. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Army conducted integrated basic training, only to abandon it. As noted above, the Army and the Navy have now integrated basic training. This integration has resulted in increasing opportunities of disruptive sexual behavior between personnel, including harassment and rape. On December 16, 1997, the Federal Advisory Committee on Gender-Integrated Training and Related Issues submitted its report. Among its any recommendations, the committee concluded that limits should be placed on gender integration at training installations. Secretary of Defense Cohen appears to be unwilling to push for segregated training despite the recommendations of the commission he appointed. Shortly afterwards, a report was released by DACOWITS

(Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services) arguing for greater gender integration of training. Critics contend that this is further evidence of the 'feminist bias' of DACOWITS and that DACOWITS has outlived its usefulness as an 'objective' advisory organization. In February 1998, the House and Senate appointed members to a special panel that is to consider the issue of segregated/integrated training of men and women. Language adopted by the House Personnel Subcommittee in May 1998, for inclusion in the FY1999 DoD Authorization Act, directs the Army, Navy and Air Force to separate men and women in basic training. DoD has expressed its opposition to this language and sees the Senate as its "best hope" of maintaining integrated basic training for the Army, Navy and Air Force. (Navy Times, May 11, 1998: 6) Shortly thereafter, according to a press release, S. 2057/S. 2060 (FY1999 DoD Authorization Act) contains language that would prohibit any changes with "regard to separation or integration on the basis of gender" until the congressionally appointed commission issues its report. On June 24, 1998, the Senate considered an amendment in its version of the Authorization act that would require separate quarters for male and female trainees. However, the amendment was made moot by a secondary amendment stating that no change may take place until the congressionally appointed commission is terminated. The FY 1999 National Defense Conference Report included language that would require separate housing for male and female recruits during recruit training. In addition, the conferees extended the reporting dates for the congressionally appointed Military Training and Gender-Related Issues Commission. The new dates are: initial report Oct. 15, 1998; and, final report, March 15, 1999.

Should Women Be Barred from Combat Positions?

Since the main mission of the armed forces is to be prepared to wage war if it occurs, there is a limit to the extent to which the armed forces can increase the number and expand the assignments of women as long as there are restrictions on assigning women to combat posts. Operation Desert Storm brought new attention to the subject, and the Defense Authorization Act for FY1992 and FY1993 (P.L. 102-190) and for FY1994 (P.L. 103-160) repealed the legislated limitations on assignment of females to combat aircraft and ships. It is now up to each service Secretary to set policy and assign personnel according to needs and abilities. Currently, women are still barred from many combat positions by service policies.

Section 542 of P.L. 103-160 requires 30-days' advance notice to the Armed Services Committees of Congress before implementing personnel policy changes made to allow women to be assigned to any type of combat unit or class of combat vessel that was not already open to women. Section 542 also requires 90-days' notice before making any changes to the ground combat exclusion policy, including any changes in categories of units or positions open to women.

On July 29, 1994, then-Secretary of Defense Perry announced plans to open additional jobs to women as a result of the rescinding of the previous Risk Rule effective Oct. 1, 1994. Secretary Aspin had announced the rescinding in a memorandum of Jan. 13, 1994, along with the following new direct ground combat rule and definition:

- A. Rule. Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground, as defined below.

B. Definition. Direct ground combat is engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect.

Those who emphasize equal rights and responsibilities say women in the armed forces cannot advance to the top without combat experience. Some carry the argument further to say that women cannot be equal in society as long as they are barred from full participation in all levels of the national security system. In their view, modern weapons have equalized the potential for women in combat, since wars are less likely to be fought on a hand-to-hand basis, and have made it impossible to protect women from the destructiveness of combat; in any event, properly trained women would be able to fight successfully and exempting them from combat is not fair to men.

Those opposed to women in combat note that the progress of women is not the most important issue at hand. They contend that national security has been and would further be jeopardized because of the presence of women in the ranks. They note the Canadian experience in which women were recruited for the 16-week infantry training course which was identical to the men's course. Forty-five of the 48 women recruited, failed to complete the course. The male failure rate was 30 percent. Critics also point out that countries such as Israel and Russia, in which women have fought in emergencies, do not now place women in combat positions.

Since women themselves are divided on the issue, one option is to permit women who meet the criteria to be assigned to combat positions, but not unless they volunteer for such assignments. Critics contend that it would be unfair to permit women a choice that is not available to men, and that to make the choice available to both men and women would make it difficult for the services to function, especially in the event of war. According to a 1997 RAND survey, 71 percent of female army noncommissioned officers and 79 percent of army enlisted women said they would not volunteer for combat.

What is the Status of Single-Sex Military Academies?

In July 1976, the U.S. military academies began admitting women. In so doing, a number of accommodations were made to facilitate the living spaces and training standards of women. In recent years, state-sponsored military academies, particularly the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and the Citadel have been integrated. Following legal challenges to VMI's single-sex tradition, an alternative program for women was established at nearby Mary Baldwin College. Although the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Baldwin program was an acceptable alternative to integrating women at VMI, the Justice Department sought an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. On January 17, 1996, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in the VMI case.

Shannon Faulkner applied and was accepted to the Citadel after she had all references concerning her sex removed from the application process. Upon learning that she was a female, the Citadel withdrew its acceptance. After a two and one-half year legal battle, she gained admittance into the state-funded military academy. During her first week, and prior

to taking the oath, she fell ill, spent a few days in the infirmary and resigned. In August 1995, 22 women entered an alternative leadership program at Converse College in South Carolina. The Court also rejected the Citadel's appeal to remain a single sex institution.

On June 26, 1996, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (7-1) that the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) can no longer exclude women as a publicly funded institution. Both VMI and the Citadel began to comply. Proponents note that the entrance of women into these academies will end officially-sanctioned discrimination in public academies and provide women with the same opportunities that men have enjoyed. Opponents note that any effort to restructure these programs to accommodate women, including softening or eliminating "adversative training," destroys the very programs that women sought to join. As a result of the VMI decision, the Citadel admitted four women in 1996. Special accommodations have been made at the Citadel. In addition, the Citadel's elite drill platoon voluntarily disbanded as a result of the admission of women. The group noted that the administration relaxed requirements and physical standards to such a degree that it has been "altered unrecognizably to an awkward and virtueless mutation" of what it was before." (Washington Times, Feb. 2, 1998: A6). On September 22, 1996, VMI's governing board voted 9-8 to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling. Women have since matriculated at VMI.

What Provision for Motherhood?

Secretary of Defense Aspin also asked the implementation committee he established on Apr. 28, 1993, to review the services' parent and family, and pregnancy and deployability policies, in connection with his emphasis on opening more assignments to women and maintaining readiness and effectiveness.

Some opponents of women in combat believe a major issue is the role of women in society as mothers and that keeping them out of combat is a method of safeguarding the human race. Proponents of allowing women in combat agree that safeguarding infants and children is essential, but they believe this can be achieved through flexible deployment policies and adequate child care arrangements. Another view is that women in the military make up such a small proportion of the population that the impact of on society of allowing mothers in combat would be slight, so the issue should be based on the impact on operational effectiveness of the armed forces.

Both men and women may have the primary responsibility for young children who would have to be left behind if they were deployed in combat and orphaned if they were killed. The potentially harmful effect on children was perhaps the principal issue raised by the deployment of women to the Persian Gulf. Many hardship stories were published concerning single parents or military couples sent to Saudi Arabia, leaving their children in the care of relatives, neighbors, or whomever they could find. Defense Department figures indicated that on Feb. 13, 1991, 16,337 single parents and 1,231 military couples with children were deployed in Operation Desert Shield. Thus, in all 17,500 families, children were separated from their parents by the war. (The Services seek to assign military couples to the same post to the extent possible and ordinarily couples would favor this policy, but the war in the Persian Gulf presented a new situation.)

In connection with the war, some Members of Congress sought to bring about policy changes, and Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to study the policies on deployment as they affected family responsibilities and to report to the Armed Services Committees by Mar. 31, 1992. (Section 315, the Persian Gulf Conflict Supplemental Authorization and Personnel Benefits Act of 1991, P.L. 102-25). The House also stated its sense that the armed services should strive for a uniform policy with respect to the deployment of mothers of newborn children, and that to the maximum extent possible such policy should provide that mothers of newborn children under the age of 6 months should not be deployed (Section 317, P.L. 102-25.) On Aug. 21, 1991, the Defense Department directed that military mothers should be deferred from assignments necessitating separation for 4 months after the birth of a child.

In February 1995, Secretary of the Navy John Dalton updated Navy policy concerning pregnancy aboard ships. These new guidelines state that pregnancy is compatible with Navy life and that it cannot be used to shirk sea duty. In addition, any woman who is transferred from ship to shore as a result of pregnancy is expected to be returned to the ship or to an equivalent billet.

In August 1995, the Naval Academy modified its position on midshipmen who become parents. Under the former policy, a midshipman who becomes a parent (or becomes pregnant unless the pregnancy is terminated within 30 days) would be expelled. Under the new policy, midshipmen would be granted a one-year leave of absence. Under the new rule, midshipmen who take a leave of absence would be required to reapply to the academy and provide proof that they are not legally responsible for the child.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment has been a recurrent issue for members of the military, as in civilian occupations. Recent surveys show that reports of sexual harassment have declined.

In addition to problems during Operation Desert Storm discussed above, incidents concerning the Tailhook Association, a private group of retired and active-duty Navy and Marine Corp aviators, in Las Vegas in September 1991, brought the issue to the forefront. Approximately 25 women, 13 of them naval officers, reportedly were forced to run a gauntlet of men and encountered various assaults. The Navy's initial investigation of the incident was criticized as slow and ineffective, and the Navy turned the investigation over to the Defense Department's Inspector General. On June 26, 1992, Navy Secretary H. Lawrence Garrett 3d resigned his post, saying he accepted full responsibility for the handling of the incident. P.L. 102-638, the supplemental appropriations act signed Sept. 23, 1992, provided an additional \$3,400,000 for the Department of Defense Inspector General to expedite the investigation. A report issued Sept. 24, 1992, by Deputy Inspector General Derek J. Vander Shaaf said senior Navy officials had undermined their own investigation to avoid negative publicity, and some officers were reassigned to other duties or forced to retire. The final report, issued Apr. 23, 1993, described the situation as "the culmination of a long-term failure of leadership" and recommended disciplinary action against approximately 140 Navy and Marine officers. On Oct. 15, 1993, the Pentagon announced that Navy Secretary John H. Dalton had ordered one retired Navy admiral reduced in rank and had censured two others for failing to prevent the Tailhook incidents, and had ordered non-punitive administrative

actions against 30 other admirals. Administrative penalties were levied in approximately 50 of 140 cases stemming from Tailhook.

On Feb. 8, 1994, military judge Captain William T. Vest Jr. held that Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Frank B. Kelso had manipulated the investigation to shield his involvement, and the court dismissed charges against three Navy officers. (For decision, see *Congressional Record*, Feb. 10, 1994, p. H460.)

After the Tailhook incident, the Navy established a Standing Committee on Women to assess policies on sexual harassment, and all Navy and Marine personnel were required to complete a 3-hour training course on sexual harassment and Navy policy, which Admiral Jesse Hernandez described as “zero sexual harassment tolerance.” The Defense Department and the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services were already monitoring and defining policy on complaints of sexual harassment. On July 20, 1988, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum defining sexual harassment and stating Department policy that “sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct and will not be condoned or tolerated in any way.” Sexual harassment was defined as “a form of sex discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person’s job, pay, or career, or (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person, or (3) such conduct interferes with an individual’s performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Any person in a supervisory or command position who uses or condones implicit or explicit sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, pay, or job of a military member or civilian employee is engaging in sexual harassment.” On July 12, 1991, Secretary Cheney issued a memorandum calling for each component of the Defense Department to implement a program to underscore that sexual harassment would not be tolerated..

Despite these efforts and the Tailhook incident, sexual harassment has continued to be a problem. A GAO report of January 1994 found that nearly 97% of military academy women in 1991, and 80% in 1993, reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment, such as sexist or demeaning comments. At hearings on Mar. 9, 1994, four women, representing each of the services, complained that often the services penalized the women who complain of harassment rather than the men who allegedly harassed them. Conversely, Cmdr. Robert Stumpf was denied promotion to Capt. despite the fact that he was exonerated of wrongdoing at Tailhook. The Senate Armed Services Committee requested “certifying” promotion files for officers suspected of being involved in Tailhook by the Navy when such files are sent to the Committee for consideration. Stumpf’s “unflagged” file was submitted and approved by the Committee and the Senate. Later, the Navy notified the Committee of its error and the Committee reversed itself. Navy Secretary Dalton then removed Stumpf from the promotion list, despite conflicting opinions concerning the Secretary’s legal authority to do so. Cmdr. Stumpf filed a suit in Federal court in Alexandria VA, accusing Secretary Dalton of improperly blocking his promotion. On April 19, U.S. District Judge Albert Bryan, Jr. dismissed the suit stating that military promotions are “not the court’s business.” It remained possible that Cmdr. Stumpf would have been promoted since he was selected by promotion selection board earlier this year. However, following a three-hour discussion with a Navy attorney on June 13, 1996, Cmdr. Stumpf announced his decision to retire from the Navy, effective October 1, 1996. Although the Navy states the three-hour meeting was in

preparation for a congressional review, Stumpf and his attorney said it was a confrontational interrogation intended to harass him.

Stumpf retired on October 1, 1996. Since then, the Senate Armed Services Committee has modified its promotion review process. Under the new process, "Tailhook officers" who previously had been reviewed and promoted will not be subjected to further "Tailhook flaggings" in future promotion considerations.

In spite of the above efforts and policies, charges of sexual harassment have not disappeared. Recent reports of senior military personnel harassing subordinates have surfaced. At a number of Army facilities, including Aberdeen Proving Grounds and Fort Leonard Wood, investigations and court-martials are underway or have been completed concerning harassment, fraternization, assault and rape. The Army acted quickly in investigating these charges, and established a "hotline" to determine the extent of these behaviors. Some contend that the creation of the hotline was nothing more than the vehicle for a "witch hunt" employed to mollify feminists at the expense of the accused. In addition, some have raised the issue of race, claiming that the services are targeting black men as suspects. Such claims have been contradicted by then-Secretary of the Army, Togo West. Although data show that the level of harassment reported by service personnel has decreased, the ability to eliminate harassment entirely may be unattainable.

In 1997, Air Force Lt. Kelly Flinn accepted a General Discharge in lieu of court-martial for allegedly filing a false statement, disobeying an order, conduct unbecoming an officer, and violating the General Article of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice. Under the General Article behaviors that are disruptive to good order and discipline or bring discredit to the service, such as certain cases of adultery or fraternization, can be grounds for disciplinary action. Lt. Flinn reportedly fraternized with an enlistment man and had an adulterous affair with an airman's husband. She refused to terminate the affair despite complaints from the airman and a direct order from her commander, thereby bringing about the charges of violating the General Article. On the heels of the Flinn discharge, Gen. Joseph Ralston withdrew his name from consideration as nominee for Chairman of the JCS, despite a lack of evidence that Ralston's affair 13 years before had violated the General Article.

More recently, the Sergeant Major of the Army, Gene McKinney, was removed from his post following allegations of sexual misconduct. The Army tried him for alleged violations of laws pertaining to the treatment of female subordinates. On March 13, a military court found McKinney not guilty of all 18 counts of sexual misconduct. He was found guilty of one count of attempting to obstruct justice and was sentenced to a reduction in rank and a reprimand. These and other incidents have led to a reconsideration of the value of gender-integration in the services, specifically, and the appropriate role, if any, of women, generally.

APPENDIX

Active Duty End Strengths

FY	ARMY	%	NAVY	%	USMC	%	USAF	%	TOTAL	%
Enlisted Women										
1964*	7,958	.9	5,063	.9	1,320	.8	4,845	.7	19,186	.8
1969**	10,721	.8	5,752	.8	2,443	.9	7,407	1.0	26,323	.9
1972	12,349	1.8	6,257	1.2	2,066	1.2	11,725	2.0	32,397	1.6
1973***	16,457	2.4	19,174	1.9	1,973	1.1	15,023	2.6	42,627	2.2
1974	26,327	3.9	13,381	2.8	2,402	1.4	19,465	3.7	61,575	3.3
1975	37,701	5.6	17,516	3.8	2,841	1.6	25,232	5.0	83,272	4.6
1977	46,094	6.8	19,464	4.4	3,506	2.0	34,610	7.3	103,674	5.8
1978	50,549	7.6	21,093	4.1	4,652	2.4	41,084	8.8	117,597	6.6
1980	61,968	9.3	30,955	6.7	6,269	3.7	52,205	11.4	151,397	8.6
1982	63,622	9.4	37,321	7.7	7,875	4.5	54,506	11.3	163,324	9.0
1986	69,151	10.4	46,796	9.3	9,246	5.2	60,694	12.3	185,887	10.1
1989	73,794	11.2	51,633	10.0	9,012	5.1	63,175	13.6	197,614	10.9
1992	61,202	12.0	50,513	10.8	7,875	4.8	55,598	14.8	175,188	11.5
1995	56,776	13.5	47,347	12.7	7,403	4.7	51,478	16.2	163,004	12.9
1996	58,509	13.4	46,248	13.0	7,814	5.0	52,129	16.9	164,700	13.4
1997	61,849	15.1	44,142	13.2	8,498	5.4	53,167	17.8	167,656	14.0
Officer Women										
1964*	3,772	3.4	2,678	3.5	128	.7	4,031	3.0	10,609	3.1
1969**	5,157	3.0	2,884	3.2	284	1.1	4,858	3.6	13,183	3.1
1972	4,422	3.6	3,185	4.4	263	1.3	4,766	3.9	12,636	3.8
1973***	4,279	3.7	3,454	4.9	315	1.6	4,727	4.1	12,775	4.0
1974	4,388	4.1	3,649	5.4	336	1.8	4,767	4.3	13,140	4.3
1975	4,594	4.5	3,676	5.6	345	1.9	4,981	4.7	13,596	4.6
1977	5,696	5.8	3,791	6.0	422	2.3	5,383	5.6	15,292	5.5
1978	6,292	6.4	3,980	6.4	433	2.4	6,010	6.3	16,715	6.1
1980	7,528	8.9	5,027	8.3	453	2.7	8,876	9.0	21,884	8.4
1982	9,033	8.8	5,740	8.5	560	3.0	9,942	9.8	25,275	8.7
1986	11,263	10.3	7,260	10.1	643	3.2	12,377	11.4	31,543	10.1
1989	12,197	11.1	7,453	10.3	696	3.5	13,403	12.9	33,749	11.1
1992	11,738	12.4	8,294	12.0	649	3.4	12,683	14.0	33,364	12.2
1995	10,786	13.1	7,899	13.4	690	3.9	12,068	15.4	31,443	13.2
1996	10,584	13.1	7,825	13.6	780	4.2	12,047	15.8	31,206	13.4
1997	10,389	13.1	7,796	13.9	788	4.4	12,008	16.2	30,981	13.6

Sources: Department of Defense Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics); Washington Headquarters Services. Directorate for Information.

* Last pre-Vietnam War fiscal year.

** Peak of Vietnam War, during draft period.

*** Beginning of All Volunteer Force.

**Distribution of Active Duty Women By Rank and Percentage of Total Personnel
September 30, 1997**

	Total		Army		Navy		Marine		Air Force	
	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)	(No.)	(%)
Officers										
O-9	3	2.5	1	2.3	1	3.7	1	8.3	0	0.0
O-8	4	1.4	1	1.0	2	2.7	0	0.0	1	1.2
O-7	12	2.7	3	2.1	4	3.4	0	0.0	5	3.4
O-6	757	6.7	251	7.0	255	7.6	11	1.8	240	6.3
O-5	3,216	11.5	960	10.6	1003	14.0	50	2.9	1,203	12.0
O-4	5,753	13.3	1,802	13.7	1,606	14.8	102	3.1	2,243	14.3
O-3	11,739	15.0	3,480	14.9	2,893	14.5	146	2.8	5,220	17.6
O-2	4,428	17.4	1,556	17.7	980	15.2	180	7.0	1,712	22.3
O-1	4,115	16.6	1,597	17.3	955	15.0	179	7.1	1,384	20.6
Warrant										
W-5	5	1.2	2	0.6	0	0.0	3	3.5	0	0.0
W-4	53	2.8	28	2.1	8	2.4	17	7.3	0	0.0
W-3	198	4.6	141	4.6	28	4.0	29	5.6	0	0.0
W-2	493	7.2	369	7.0	61	7.8	63	8.1	0	0.0
W-1	205	10.4	198	11.2	0	0.0	7	3.6	0	0.0
Officers Total	30,981	13.6	10,389	13.1	7,796	13.9	788	4.4	12,008	16.2
Enlisted										
E-9	543	5.0	146	4.6	112	3.4	23	1.7	262	8.7
E-8	2,261	8.2	1,014	9.4	459	6.2	130	3.9	658	10.9
E-7	10,540	10.1	4,446	11.5	2,177	8.1	500	5.9	3,417	11.1
E-6	17,971	10.6	7,019	11.9	5,831	9.7	706	5.2	4,415	12.0
E-5	30,881	12.3	10,792	14.0	8,051	11.0	1,191	5.3	10,847	13.9
E-4	43,564	16.5	17,186	17.1	9,616	15.0	1,525	5.4	15,237	21.0
E-3	34,124	17.4	9,858	17.5	11,146	21.2	2,357	5.4	10,763	24.9
E-2	16,557	16.4	6,721	19.3	3,826	14.0	1,293	6.2	4,717	26.4
E-1	11,215	15.1	4,667	16.7	2,924	14.3	773	5.4	2,851	25.3
Enlisted Total	167,656	14.0	61,849	15.1	44,142	13.2	8,498	5.4	53,167	17.8
Cadets & Midshipmen	1,889	15.5	589	14.5	640	15.6	NA	NA	660	16.4
Grand Total	200,526	13.9	72,827	14.8	52,578	13.3	9,286	5.3	65,835	17.4

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Compiled by the Congressional Research Service from Department of Defense data.