



DACOWITS: Articles of Interest

WELLNESS

[Probe of sex-harassment case finds ‘festering’ problem in unit at Scott AFB](#)

(28 Feb.) *BND.com*, By Mike Fitzgerald

The Air Force’s determination to fight workplace sexual harassment is being put to the test because of a case that has roiled the Air Mobility Command at Scott for nearly the past year.

[New Hearing Set for Air Force Academy Cadet in Sexual Assault Case](#)

(2 Mar.) *The Gazette*, By Tom Roeder

A new hearing will air evidence against an Air Force Academy cadet charged with sexual assault on a classmate.

[Gender-based focus groups to address sex harassment at Air Mobility Command](#)

(3 Mar.) *Stars and Stripes*, By Mike Fitzgerald

Troubling attitudes regarding sexual harassment and low morale uncovered during a survey of workers within a key Air Mobility Command unit have led the Defense Department to start a series of gender-based focus groups at Scott Air Force Base.

ASSIGNMENTS

[Pentagon push for women's equality gets murky at academies' doorsteps](#)

(1 Mar.) *The Christian Science Monitor*, By Anna Mulrine

It is clear that the services place a special value on a military academy education. Roughly 60 percent of the Army’s four-star generals and 90 percent of the Navy’s four-star admirals are academy graduates. What’s more, every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – except the Marines – are academy graduates. That goes for women, too. Of the three women who have been promoted to the rank of four stars in the military, two of them are academy graduates.

General Officer Announcement: Air Force Gen. Robin Rand has been nominated for appointment to the rank of general and for assignment as commander, Air Force Global Strike Command, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. Rand is currently serving as commander, Air Education and Training Command, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas.

[Navy judge named in Guantanamo discrimination complaint lifts no-touch order to female guards](#)

(1 Mar.) *Stars and Stripes*, By Carol Rosenberg

A military judge has lifted his restraining order and is again allowing female prison guards to touch an alleged war criminal while moving him between Guantanamo’s most clandestine prison and legal appointments.

[Fort Carson lieutenant could be first female Army Ranger](#)

(2 Mar.) *The Gazette*

A Fort Carson lieutenant could become the first female Ranger, the Army said on its website.

[4,100 jobs opening to women in special operations units](#)

(4 Mar.) *Army Times*, By Jim Tice

More than 4,100 officer and enlisted "men only" positions in special operations units of the Regular Army, National Guard and Army Reserve will be opened to women.

[Air Force secretary announces bold moves to boost women, minorities](#)

(4 Mar.) *Air Force Times*

Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James on Wednesday announced bold moves to boost the careers of women and minorities in the service.

EXTRA

Md. National Guard leadership takes historic turn

(28 Feb.) Baltimore Sun, By Arthur Hirsch

Major General Linda L. Singh took command of the Maryland National Guard, the first woman and the first African-American to hold the position, saying, "This is absolutely the best job I could hope for in the military and the best state in which to do it."

Study assesses toll heavy packs have on Marines' backs

(4 Mar.) Marine Corps Times, By Hope Hodge Seck

A multi-year Navy study is using Magnetic Resonance Imaging to find out just how much wear and tear infantry Marines are putting on their backs in years of carrying heavy loads. The research could also help test out modifications to standard gear to help reduce the toll.

This Female Vet Is One Of History's Most Decorated Combat Photographers

(4 Mar.) We Are The Mighty, By Blake Stilwell

This is the first in a series of profiles of incredible female veterans that WATM will be presenting in concert with Women's History Month.

Probe of sex-harassment case finds 'festering' problem in unit at Scott AFB

(28 Feb.) BND.com, By Mike Fitzgerald

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE — The Air Force's determination to fight workplace sexual harassment is being put to the test because of a case that has roiled the Air Mobility Command at Scott for nearly the past year.

Mary K. Reid, 51, is seeking to regain her job paying more than \$100,000 per year as a supervisor in a key AMC civilian unit after being accused by three female employees of inappropriately touching them and making indecent and humiliating comments about their bodies. Reid, through her attorney, denies the allegations and says the accusers have financial motives.

Reid, of O'Fallon, is also seeking to dismiss a misdemeanor charge of battery filed against her by the St. Clair County state's attorney's office nearly 10 months ago after one of the alleged victims — whose name is being withheld consistent with News-Democrat policy regarding people listed as victims of sex crimes — accused Reid of approaching her at her desk and grabbing "her breasts with her hands," according to a St. Clair County Sheriff's Department report on the allegation.

The alleged victim said Reid massaged her breasts "for about five seconds on the outside of her clothes, then Reid walked away," according to the report. The victim told the investigator she has "been scared to say anything to anyone in fear of losing her job and retaliation from Reid."

In October, Reid filed a motion in the court case, asking the judge to throw out a statement she gave to the federal government regarding the allegations against her.

That statement "was made involuntarily, as defendant felt she had to give such sworn testimony in order to keep her GS 13 job" at Scott Air Force Base, according to her motion. "That said statement was given after the government refused to allow the defendant to have counsel beside her when she was" being interrogated, "in derogation of the Air Force's own rules."

The allegation made by the Analysis Branch employee against Reid was the culmination of years of harassment — a series of publicly-embarrassing incidents that Reid's supervisor repeatedly ignored, according to the woman.

Two years earlier, the woman said, she was bent over her desk working on paperwork "when Reid walked up behind her, grabbed her buttocks and began massaging" them, according to the sheriff's report. The woman said Reid announced to the rest of the office, "Oh my god, you're not wearing any underpants, you're gross."

In addition, the three women accusing Reid of harassment and fostering a hostile work environment have filed claims with the 375th Air Mobility Wing's Equal Opportunity Office, which initiated an investigation and is in the process of making financial settlements with the three alleged victims.

Portia Kayser, the lawyer for the three women, declined to comment for this story.

Reid did not return calls seeking comment.

Eric Rhein, Reid's Belleville lawyer, denounced the allegations against his client, contending the three alleged victims were motivated by a pursuit of money.

Reid was not charged with sexual assault, Rhein noted.

"My client has been charged with simple battery," he said. "She has pleaded not guilty. The case has been continued."

Rhein noted that the woman who filed the battery charge against Reid also requested an order of protection against her, but failed to show up three weeks later at a court hearing on whether to extend the protection order.

"I have a guess as to why that is," Rhein said. "They wanted money from the federal government for what they saw as a bad claim. And her lawyer did not want to risk her ruining the case by having me, who has experience, cross-examine her."

Rhein called the case against Reid "a bad criminal case, and I predict my client will be found not guilty."

A hearing before a St. Clair County judge on motions involving the case is set for March 18.

In addition, Reid's hearing to reclaim her old job before the federal Merit System Protection Board is scheduled for March 31 at a federal office building in downtown St. Louis.

Reid, after about six months on paid administrative leave, lost her job with AMC in early October, about three months after the drafting of a report from an internal investigation of the workplace climate in the Analysis Branch office, called AMC/A3B.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Scott M. Hanson, AMC's director of operations, appointed an officer to look "into all aspects of the facts and circumstances concerning the alleged existence of a hostile work environment in AMC/A3B," according to the report, a copy of which was obtained by the News-Democrat.

The investigating officer was directed to look into four separate allegations of harassment and intimidation against Reid that involved claims of indecent or inappropriate touching and statements.

The investigator also looked into two other separate allegations: that an atmosphere of improper or wrongful harassment and intimidation existed within the AMC/A3B office in violation of Air Force regulations; and that Reid's supervisor had known about the allegations against Reid but had failed to report them to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, as required under Air Force rules.

The AMC/A3B is also known as the Department of Defense Commercial Airlift Division. It consists of three branches responsible for the assessment of commercial air carriers to provide safe, quality and reliable airlift to Pentagon units. The unit performs capability surveys, data collections, analysis, and technical evaluation of data relative to the quality and safety of air transportation services.

One of AMC/A3B's three branches is called Analysis. It consists of nine civilian employees, including Reid, the unit branch chief. Reid presided over a female clique of employees nicknamed "the henhouse," according to the report.

The report, called a "Commander Directed Report of Investigation," whose author's name was redacted, provides an often-unflattering portrait of a work environment characterized by frequent unprofessional behavior, lax supervision and hostility to newcomers. As a result, the lines blurred between the cultures of work and off-duty socializing, according to the report, while a clique mentality prevailed.

One of the three alleged victims of Reid's harassment said Reid ran her branch "like a high school with all the intimidation, cliquishness and drama you'd expect of high school girls," according to the alleged victim's interview statement. Reid is the leader of the pack who "uses physical intimidation like slapping people on the rear end and grabbing their breasts to try to intimidate the stronger personalities," according to the woman's statement.

Ultimately, the investigator determined that the four harassment allegations against Reid had been substantiated, while the allegation of a hostile work environment had also been substantiated, according to the investigative report.

"The hostile work environment is not caused by one person," the investigator wrote. "It is a collective of all those who've participated in unprofessional behavior over a long period of time. This will take incredible leadership to be able to correct the festering and neglect that occurred over a long period of time."

The investigator, however, labeled as unsubstantiated the allegation that Reid's supervisor had been aware of the harassment and intimidation and had failed to report it in compliance with Air Force regulations.

In response to written questions from the News-Democrat, an AMC spokesman wrote that the Air Force policy is to have "zero tolerance for this type of behavior and to take timely and appropriate action when problems occur."

When a problem like the one identified in AMC/A3B is discovered "it commands our immediate attention," the spokesman wrote. "The Air Force response is to investigate

and then take appropriate action. This ensures the matter is resolved and those responsible are held accountable.”

As for the specific problems that surfaced in AMC/A3B, “Command officials took swift action to investigate the incident and hold accountable those responsible,” the

New Hearing Set for Air Force Academy Cadet in Sexual Assault Case

(2 Mar.) The Gazette, By Tom Roeder

A new hearing will air evidence against an Air Force Academy cadet charged with sexual assault on a classmate.

The case against junior cadet Brock Mangum stalled last fall after the woman told a military hearing officer that she considered Mangum a friend and didn't want to see him face courts-martial.

Now the academy has a hearing set for Monday to determine whether there's enough evidence to prosecute Mangum on fresh charges of sexual assault that were issued on Dec. 12, but relate to the same March 2014 incident. The Article 32 hearing is similar to evidence hearings held in civilian court.

"Previously, on Nov. 7, 2014, an Article 32 hearing for Mangum was held regarding the same allegations," the academy said in a news release Thursday.

"However, based on the evidence presented at the Article 32 on Nov. 7, 2014, the preliminary hearing officer, a military judge, recommended modifications to the charges, which required a second hearing to be held. That is the hearing scheduled for March 2, 2015."

According to court papers, Mangum unlawfully touched the woman's breast and attempted to have intercourse with her without consent.

During the November hearing, witnesses said Mangum put himself in the defendant's chair after he told an academy counselor about the March 2 incident in a dorm room at the

Gender-based focus groups to address sex harassment at Air Mobility Command

(3 Mar.) Stars and Stripes, By Mike Fitzgerald

BELLEVILLE, Ill. (Tribune News Service) — Troubling attitudes regarding sexual harassment and low morale uncovered during a survey of workers within a key Air Mobility Command unit have led the Defense Department to start a series of gender-based focus groups at Scott Air Force Base, beginning today.

spokesman wrote. “In addition, a number of group and individual counseling sessions were conducted to reinforce Air Force policy prohibiting this type behavior.”

http://www.bnd.com/2015/02/28/3685520_probe-of-sex-harassment-case-finds.html?rh=1#storylink=cpy

school. That led to a probe by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, which led to the charges.

The female cadet, also a junior, and Mangum met when they were freshmen at the academy and spent free time together for nearly two years. The relationship took a romantic turn before it chilled. By March 2014, the cadets remained friends, but weren't romantically involved, the woman testified in November.

On March 2, 2014, the two were relaxing in Mangum's room. The woman said Mangum fondled her as they lounged on the bed and she resisted before giving in.

"I'll give you 6 minutes to do what you want to get it out of your system," she told Mangum, according to her November testimony.

Later the woman fell asleep and said she awoke to Mangum pulling down her pants and sexually assaulting her from behind.

Sexual assault at the academy was highlighted in a Pentagon report this month. The Pentagon found that one in 10 women at the school had been sexually assaulted in the past year, according to survey results. The same survey found that one woman in five at the school reported they faced sexual assault in their academy career. <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/03/02/new-hearing-set-for-air-force-academy-cadet-in-sex-assault-case.html>

In an email sent out Friday, a top AMC civilian official announced that focus groups, in which men and women will be interviewed separately, will run today, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday on base as a result of a workplace survey in which workers in the A3 unit participated in December.

The focus groups are being set up at AMC a day after the BND published an article about a sexual harassment case that has roiled AMC for nearly a year.

The focus groups “are designed to gain greater insight and understanding of the climate within the A3,” wrote Terry Johnson, director of staff for AMC’s Directorate of Operations.

Dealing with sexual harassment and abuse has become a top priority for the U.S. Air Force, which in recent years has been stung by a series of embarrassing scandals.

Earlier this month, a well-publicized Pentagon survey showed that one in 10 female Air Force Academy cadets suffered unwanted sexual contact during the school year, while half of female cadets reported being sexually harassed during the school year that ended in May, according to the report.

In addition, the flying service has instituted major changes in basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, to safeguard against sexual harassment and assault. The changes occurred after a scandal exploded at Lackland, where more than 30 instructors were investigated for misconduct with 68 recruits and technical training students. Master Sgt. Michael Silva, a former training instructor, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for raping a recruit in 1995 and his then-wife in 2007. Another instructor convicted of rape, Luis Walker, committed suicide in prison last year.

The focus groups scheduled to take place this week at Scott will focus on the unit called A3, but known officially as the Directorate of Air, Space and Information Operations. The survey conducted last December is known as the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Organizational Climate Survey, which annually seeks to assess racial, religious, gender and ethnic diversity and workplace issues within units across civilian and active duty military units.

On Sunday, the BND reported on a case that involved Mary K. Reid, a branch chief within A3 called A3B, otherwise known as the Department of Defense Commercial Airlift Division.

Reid lost her job as chief of the A3B analysis branch in early October after a commander-directed investigation substantiated

allegations that Reid had sexually harassed three female employees. The allegations have led to offers of financial settlements to the three from Scott’s office of Equal Employment Opportunity and a misdemeanor charge in St. Clair County of battery against Reid filed by one of her alleged victims.

Reid, through her attorney, denies the allegations and says the accusers have financial motives. Reid is seeking to dismiss the misdemeanor charge and reclaim her old job.

Both the Air Force and Reid potentially face legal liability if the alleged victims of Reid’s harassment filed, and won, lawsuits against both, according to employment lawyer Adam Carter, of Washington, D.C.

“The reason why you impute liability to the Air Force, to the employer, is because she is a manager and managers should know better and should be trained not to do that,” Carter said.

Reid, by virtue of her supervisory role, potentially faces individual legal exposure “because it’s not the employer’s business groping their employees, and therefore this person was acting outside the scope of her employment,” Carter said. And because of her management role, Reid was changing “the working conditions of the employees by virtue of their power relationship” because of her ability to evaluate their work performance, to hire and fire and control promotions, Carter said.

If lawsuits are filed against the Air Force and Reid, and they lose them, then a key factor in assessing damages would be the psychological impact on the victims of the alleged abuse and harassment, Carter said.

“If for example, they haven’t had any mental health history, then all of a sudden they had these breakdowns, and depression and had to go on medication, and can peg that to the time of the harassment,” he said, “then the damages are a lot greater.” <http://www.stripes.com/news/us/gender-based-focus-groups-to-address-sex-harassment-at-air-mobility-command-1.332539>

Pentagon push for women's equality gets murky at academies' doorsteps

(1 Mar.) *The Christian Science Monitor*, By Anna Mulrine

Washington — In Jennifer Bower's freshman year at the United States Air Force Academy in 2003, a sexual assault scandal gave her a glimpse of where she stood as a woman at the school.

To its credit, the service appeared to be taking the scandal seriously. The three-star general who led the school was demoted amid charges of a coverup. In a subsequent survey by the Air Force inspector general, nearly three-quarters of the 659 women at the academy reported that they had been victims of sexual harassment.

But one of the solutions struck her as odd.

Captain Bower and some of the women in her class were told to move from their originally assigned dorms into new rooms clustered around the bathrooms. The intent was to reduce the risk that women might be assaulted on their way to the showers.

That led the women to joke about "whether there really was safety in numbers, or whether it was now just one-stop shopping."

Not long after, there came other apparently well-intentioned changes, including "the brief but illustrious period of time," she says, when men and women were not allowed to sit on the same horizontal surface, and all dorm doors had to be open to 90 degrees.

The academy "was trying to eliminate opportunities where something untoward could happen," says Bower, who left active duty in 2011 and now serves in the Air Force Reserves.

The problem was that "it really had this shaming effect," she recalls. "There were times when I really thought maybe this place would be better off without us. I thought, maybe I'm ruining all the fun."

For more than 30 years, many women have felt like party-crashers at the nation's three service academies — the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy, and the Military Academy. And for more than 30 years, there has been a good reason for the mostly male student bodies: The academies have needed men to fill a certain number of combat jobs that women were not allowed, by law, to do.

As early as next year, however, that barrier could disappear as women are set to be cleared for combat, with growing numbers of those jobs now already open to women. For the academies, the mounting question is: Will they follow suit?

For now, the answer is something of a mystery. No service academy has a student body that is more than 20 percent

female, and it is unclear why. While it is presumed that more men than women apply to the academies, just how many more is not. Nor is it clear whether the armed forces are particularly interested in trying to increase the number of women admitted.

That's because the Pentagon isn't saying. It rejected a Freedom of Information Act request from the American Civil Liberties Union asking for admissions data for the military academies. So this month, the ACLU filed a federal lawsuit demanding it.

The legal wranglings are just one sign of how the push for equal status for women is rippling through the military. But the academies' admissions policies are particularly important to the broader cause, advocates say.

In lifting the ban on women in combat in 2013, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said having "separate classes" of male "warriors" creates an environment that can lead to harassment.

Moreover, many female service academy graduates argue that having more fellow female classmates would, for starters, create a larger and more diverse cadre of troops who might encourage each other to stay in the military and make a career of it.

Indeed, pushing more women through the academies could be one of the most effective ways to get women into the midgrade and senior positions that General Dempsey has said is a priority.

The current ratio of women in the service academies "is sort of out-of-whack. Women can now do so many jobs within the military, and will soon be able to do many more," says Ariela Migdal, senior staff attorney for the Women's Rights Project at the ACLU.

"It just doesn't make sense anymore," she adds.

The academies contend that the size of their female student body is based on "goals" and not caps or quotas, but without admissions data it is difficult to know how the admissions process works, Ms. Migdal says.

West Point's first coed graduating class was 10 percent female in 1980. Nearly 35 years later, that figure has risen 7 percentage points.

What the groups involved in the lawsuit are trying to do is to get a clearer picture of the process for selecting students.

“What is the percentage of women who start an application who are ultimately deemed to be qualified candidates? And how about recruiting – is there any particular effort made to attract women?” asks Greg Jacob, policy director at the Service Women’s Action Network, an advocacy organization that is also taking part in the lawsuit.

For example, candidates must go through a pre-qualification process before being considered for admissions, including receiving congressional nominations. That is an opaque procedure, Migdal says, since lawmakers are not required to keep any statistics on who gets nominations through their office, who requests them, or the number of men compared to women who are deemed worthy candidates.

It is a question of fairness, she says, to make sure a US taxpayer-funded institution that spends approximately \$350,000 on the education of each cadet is not excluding women.

For Bower, who lived through the door-open-to-90-degrees-rule at the Air Force Academy, it might mean a different sort of fairness. It would mean “having women not feel like a bunch of intruders,” she says.

Instead, “It could open up the spectrum of women you come across,” she adds. “And the examples of women that you see succeeding.”

At the very least, the number of women wouldn’t be so small that you could have them all cluster around the bathrooms, she says.

The service academies say that they are endeavoring to improve the process. Naval Academy officials say that they are aiming for a student body that is 20 percent female next term.

In 2013, the Air Force Academy appointed the first-ever woman to lead it, Lt. Gen. Michelle Johnson.

“I think that’s awesome,” says Allison Doerter, a 2006 Air Force Academy graduate. “It’s great for the guys to have somebody in charge of them who’s a woman,” she adds.

“They get there, a woman’s in charge of them, and that’s the norm. That should be the norm.”

For their part, West Point officials say that “women have naturally matriculated in at about 17 percent for several years,” according to a statement provided to the Monitor.

With the revocation of the combat-exclusion policy, however, West Point is now seeking to “increase interest in college-age women,” and, to that end, “has initiated a marketing campaign in the past two years specifically to increase interest in this

population,” says Lt. Col. Webster Wright, director of public affairs at West Point.

The class of 2018 was the first class admitted after the marketing campaign was launched. It saw “an increase in the number of women completing their applications and becoming qualified for admission,” Lieutenant Colonel Wright adds in an e-mail to the Monitor. That resulted in a “marked increase in the acceptance rate of women in the class of 2018.”

Women applicants for the class of 2019 have increased by more than 30 percent from last year’s applicant pool, he says.

“It is still too early to say how this increase will affect the candidate acceptance rate, but suspect we will see an increase in the accepted women applicants for 2019 as well.”

Figuring out how to make the academies more equal is key to the Pentagon’s stated goal of fully integrating women into the armed forces. The more that the military “can treat people equally, the more likely they are to treat each other equally,” said Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in 2013.

That includes getting more women into midgrade and senior positions, as well as into commands where women are being introduced into combat roles, Dempsey added in the 2013 memo. “This may require an adjustment to our recruiting efforts, assignment processes, and personnel policies.”

Through the military service academies, the Pentagon can “get the senior women leaders that all of the military is saying that they desperately need,” adds Mr. Jacob of the Service Women’s Action Network.

It is clear that the services place a special value on a military academy education. Roughly 60 percent of the Army’s four-star generals and 90 percent of the Navy’s four-star admirals are academy graduates. What’s more, every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – except the Marines – are academy graduates.

That goes for women, too. Of the three women who have been promoted to the rank of four stars in the military, two of them are academy graduates.

“The people who are setting policy and enforcing regulations about women in the military are academy graduates,” Jacob says.

Now there needs to be greater transparency in the admissions process, says retired Col. Ellen Haring, a West Point graduate who has advocated for the inclusion of more women in her alma mater and the rest of the service academies.

“No one – not even faculty who read admissions packets – has the full picture.”

For now, Jacobs adds, “A lot of this academy stuff is still shrouded in mystery.”

For her part, Ms. Doerter, the 2006 Air Force Academy graduate, says there were some benefits to being in a small herd. The academy divides first years into units of about 30, which means about five or six women per group.

“Those girls – a lot of them are still my best friends,” she says. “You’re going through all this stress together, and you have this bond that I don’t know you would get anywhere else.”

It also accustomed her to being the only woman in the room, a skill that has come in handy in her new career learning the family business of farming.

Doerter now travels to farm shows, and recently attended a young farming professionals conference. At each of these stops, “I mean, there weren’t a lot of women, and when there were, they were all wives,” she says. “I thought, ‘Where am I?’ It was a worse ratio than my military experience.”

In her nearly four years in the reserves, Bower says she has encountered a wider variety of women serving than she did

during her time in the active duty. “It’s really been wonderful in terms of opening up the spectrum of women I’ve come across, so that’s been really cool.”

That’s partly because back during her active-duty days, she was a human intelligence officer working with Special Operations Forces, which are all-male. During her three deployments to Iraq between 2008 to 2011, she worked on the Special Operations compound at the US base in Balad.

“I volunteered for special operations knowing I’d deploy – that was my intent,” she says.

But she didn’t escape the sexual assault concerns, and the Air Force responded in a way that brought her back to her academy years.

On her third deployment, she arrived just after a sexual assault. “The women had to move rooms to all be together again,” she says. “And at that point I’m 27 years old.”

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2015/0301/Pentagon-push-for-women-s-equality-gets-murky-at-academies-doorsteps>

Navy judge named in Guantanamo discrimination complaint lifts no-touch order to female guards

(1 Mar.) Stars and Stripes, By Carol Rosenberg

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba — A military judge has lifted his restraining order and is again allowing female prison guards to touch an alleged war criminal while moving him between Guantanamo’s most clandestine prison and legal appointments.

Navy Capt. J.K. Waits lifted the restriction in a Feb. 24 ruling, according to lawyers who had seen it. It was still under seal at the Pentagon’s war court website on Sunday.

Last year, the judge forbade female guards from touching Abd al Hadi al Iraqi, 54, who invoked Islamic and traditional doctrine and said he had been handled only by men at Guantanamo. Hadi, captured in Turkey and sent here in 2007, is accused of commanding al-Qaida’s army in Afghanistan after the 2001 U.S. invasion. He could be sentenced to life in prison if he is convicted.

Some guards responded by lodging gender discrimination complaints against Waits and the military judge in the Sept. 11, 2001, mass murder case, who issued a similar no-touch order. The U.S. Southern Command investigated but has had no comment.

Waits made no mention of the guards’ bias complaint in his decision. He lifted the no-touch order based “on a very strict line of case law rather than the Religious Freedom Restoration Act,” said Marine Lt. Col. Thomas Jasper, Hadi’s Pentagon-paid defense attorney.

Prosecutors opposed the religious accommodation request as at odds with a Pentagon move toward greater gender neutrality in the U.S. military. One dismissed the question in court last month as a manufactured al-Qaida conspiracy.

Hadi’s lawyer, Jasper, was considering whether to appeal the decision. He cast the issue in an email Sunday as “a very simple accommodation so a devout Muslim, pending trial, can continue to practice his religion without restriction and being subjected to a violent-force cell extraction before attending mandatory medical appointments, legal meetings, court sessions and all other essential visits.”

The issue erupted in October inside the prison’s clandestine Camp 7 lockup when some female soldiers were for the first time assigned to an escort unit that shackles and moves

prisoners from their cells to medical, legal and Red Cross meetings. Hadi refused to be touched by a female soldier and was forced from his cell by an Army tackle-and-shackle team.

Testimony last month showed the Massachusetts and Colorado National Guard units, assigned to guard duty at the secret Camp 7 for former CIA black site prisoners, first tried to mobilize only men to the assignment but added women after they couldn't get enough skilled volunteers with appropriate security clearances.

A National Guard spokesman subsequently said Southcom first assigned the guard in 2012 to staff Camp 7 for a 2013 deployment with a requirement that stated "males only."

Spokesman Kurt Rauschenberg said by email Feb. 5 that "follow-on Southcom requirements did not specify gender." So, "in September of 2013 the requirements were open to male and female National Guard personnel."

Before Massachusetts and Colorado, it provided Military Police units from North Dakota and Louisiana to the mission.

At Southcom, spokeswoman Army Col. Lisa Garcia elaborated by email Feb. 10: "The manning of detainee camps has been gender neutral since 2006 with one exception from 2011-2012. During that period, the Military Police company that provided security within the camp was requested to be all male by the Joint Task Force commander," the commander of temporary unit running the temporary prison.

In response to a question about whether Southcom once used an all-infantry, and therefore necessarily male, Army force at

Fort Carson lieutenant could be first female Army Ranger

(2 Mar.) The Gazette

A Fort Carson lieutenant could become the first female Ranger, the Army said on its website.

The woman, whose name wasn't released, is a Fort Carson helicopter pilot and the only woman of 17 who attempted to complete the Ranger Training Assessment Course last month. Completing the course is a requirement for Ranger training.

The elite Rangers, who specialize in difficult airborne missions and fall under Special Operations Command, have no women in the ranks. The Army, though, is working this year

Camp 7, Garcia replied: "The internal security force has been Military Police (Army) or Master of Arms (Navy) since 2008."

The CIA transferred its captives to Guantánamo in September 2006, and President George W. Bush announced that they were in Defense Department custody.

But a recently released Senate Intelligence Committee report said those captives remained under the operational control of the CIA even at Guantanamo. Lawyers for some of the former CIA captives facing death-penalty trials say that contradiction leaves as an open question when, if ever, the U.S. military assumed full responsibility for the clandestine lockup whose costs and location are classified.

Jasper said he would seek to meet with Hadi on Monday but wondered if the Iraqi might refuse to be moved if a female guard would be handling him. "We are contemplating appellate and other procedural alternatives this week," he said.

Hadi is due back in court for a week of pretrial hearings March 23.

The Miami Herald has filed a Freedom of Information Act request for details of the guards' sex-discrimination complaint — who investigated it, when the guards filed it, what remedies they sought and what the investigators concluded. Southcom has not responded.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/us/navy-judge-named-in-guantanamo-discrimination-complaint-lifts-no-touch-order-to-female-guards-1.332222>

to open all units to women who can meet physical requirements.

The first step for Rangers has been allowing women to take the assessment course.

Women who complete the course, including the Fort Carson lieutenant, can go on to full Ranger training beginning in April, the Army said.

<http://gazette.com/fort-carson-lieutenant-could-be-first-female-army-ranger/article/1547133#prjT14KJ77vQEJQ2.99>

4,100 jobs opening to women in special operations units

(4 Mar.) *Army Times*, By Jim Tice

More than 4,100 officer and enlisted "men only" positions in special operations units of the Regular Army, National Guard and Army Reserve will be opened to women.

The Feb. 27 directive authorizing the policy change does not apply to the closed combat occupations and skills that comprise a bulk of the soldier jobs in Special Forces, Ranger and similar-type in-your-face combat units.

The changes are part of an ongoing campaign to eliminate the Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule by dismantling, in phases, policies that have barred women from serving in combat units below the brigade level.

The goal is to open most jobs to women by Sept. 30, the end of fiscal 2015.

The campaign began in 2012 when the Army opened 13,000 positions previously closed to women in 80 units, to include some jobs in field artillery battalions.

One year ago 3,600 field artillery officer positions were added to the gender-neutral count, followed in June by another 33,000 positions involving a diverse mix of officer and enlisted specialties in maneuver units, primarily brigade combat teams.

Included in the latter count are several hundred positions with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, which currently is recruiting women to serve as pilots, mechanics and in other duties with that high-speed unit based at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The Army also is moving toward opening up Ranger School to women.

Six female officers have successfully completed the Ranger Training Assessment Course, and are scheduled to attend Ranger School in April, a first for the Army.

About 80 more women are scheduled to attend the training and assessment courses that will be conducted at Fort Benning, Georgia, this spring in March and April.

Women who graduate from the Ranger Course will be awarded the Ranger Tab, but they will not be eligible for assignment to the 75th Ranger Regiment, which remains closed to women.

The previously closed units are being opened incrementally, so that female leaders can be assigned to units first, and provide support and mentoring to junior women soldiers as they flow into units via the normal assignment process.

The organizations being opened to women as a result of the Feb. 27 directive from Army Secretary John McHugh are:

- Army Special Operations Command (Airborne)
- Army National Guard Special Forces Group (Airborne) Battalions
- Military Information Support Operations Command Tactical Psychological Teams
- Special Forces Military Free Fall Operations, and associated additional skill identifiers 4X for officers and W8 for enlisted soldiers.

The changes will be reflected in an upcoming revision of Army Regulation 600-13, the go-to regulation for policies dealing with the assignment of female soldiers.

As the Army continues to assess the viability of opening additional jobs to women, the following specialties and skills remain closed to women:

Branch Officer Areas of Concentration

11A (Infantry), 18A (Special Forces), 19A (Armor, general), 19B (Armor) and 19C (Cavalry)

Branch Officer Skill Identifiers

3J (M1A2 Abrams tank), 3X (M2 and M3 Bradley fighting vehicles), 3Z (mortar unit officer), 4W (underwater special operations), 5R (Ranger) and 5S (Ranger parachutist)

Warrant Officer Military Occupational Specialty

180A (Special Forces warrant officer)

Warrant Officer Additional Skill Identifiers

4W (underwater Special Forces)

Enlisted Military Occupational Specialties

11B (infantryman), 11C (indirect fire infantryman), 11Z (infantry senior sergeant), 12B (combat engineer), 13B (cannon crewmember), 13D (Field Artillery Automated Tactical Data System specialist) and 3F (fire support specialist).

Also, 18B (Special Forces weapons sergeant), 18C (SF engineer sergeant), 18D (SF medical sergeant), 18E (SF communications sergeant), 18F (SF assistant operations and intelligence sergeant), 18Z (SF senior sergeant), 16D (cavalry scout), 19K (M1 armor crewman) and 19Z (armor senior sergeant).

Enlisted Additional Skill Identifiers

A1 (M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System and High Mobility Artillery Rocket System), A8 (master gunnery M1 and M1A tank), B7 (Bradley Transition Course), B8 (Anti-Armor Leaders course), C2 (Dragon gunnery), E9 (M901 Improved TOW Vehicle gunner and crew training) and F9 (Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data system).

Also, J3 (Bradley infantry fighting vehicle master gunner), K8 (master gunnery M1A1 tank), K9 (combat engineer mine detection dog handler), Q5 (Special Forces combat diving, medical), R4 (Stryker armored vehicle operations and maintenance) and R8 (mobile gun system master gunner).

And, S6 (Special Forces combat diving, supervision), U6 (field artillery weapons maintenance), W3 (Special Forces target interdiction operations), W7 (Special Forces underwater operations), 2C (Javelin gunnery) and 6B (Long Range surveillance Leaders Course).

Enlisted Skill Qualification Identifiers

G (Ranger), T (1st Special Forces Operational Detachment Delta unit operator), V (Ranger parachutist) and W (Special Forces advanced reconnaissance, target analysis and exploitation techniques).

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/03/04/women-in-special-operations/24366457/>

Air Force secretary announces bold moves to boost women, minorities

(4 Mar.) *Air Force Times*

Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James on Wednesday announced bold moves to boost the careers of women and minorities in the service.

Speaking at the Center for a New American Security, she announced nine initiatives — from waiving height restrictions for pilots to improving mentorship programs — to increase opportunities for women and minorities.

"A fundamental question I ask is: Are we spending as much time and resources and energy thinking about the next generation of our people, the next generation of our airmen, as we are thinking about the next generation of aircraft?" she asked.

The initiatives:

- Career Path Tool — a revamped web-based mentor-matching capability, like match.com and a skill finder, like Craigslist. The tool "will allow airmen to find and request mentors, it will contain forum and live chat capability, and also additional features. We're going to rename it 'MyVector' and will be open to both civilians and to our military. By improving our ability to mentor, we hope to nurture and sustain an airman's growth throughout the course of their entire career," James said.

- Diversity and inclusion requirements for career field development team chairs. "Specifically, we will be asking them to conduct analyses to address barriers that may be now preventing some of our airmen from reaching their highest levels of performance," James said.

- Guidance, to promotion boards. "This year, in addition to seeking officers demonstrating commitment to the welfare of our airmen and to our core values, I am using my authority to instruct board members to find officers who have

demonstrated that they will nurture and lead in a diverse and inclusive Air Force culture," James said.

- Career Intermission Program. Already underway, the program allows "top performing airmen the flexibility to transfer from active duty to the IRR, the Individual Ready Reserve for one to three years and come back to us without losing their place in line for promotion in order that they be able to meet personal or professional needs and alleviate some work-life concerns," James said. She highlighted one participant, Capt. Shannon Williams, a C-21 pilot and mother of a seven-day-old daughter, who said she would have "tried to separate at the earliest possibility" if CIP were not available.

- Increased pool of female officer applicants. "Despite this deep talent pool, our female officer applicants currently comprise only about 25 percent of our applicant pool. I'm one who thinks we ought to be able to do better. Let's go for it. Let's try. So we are setting an applicant pool goal of 30 percent. We want our officer accession sources to go after a 30 percent female applicant pool in the future," James said.

- Reserve Officer Training Corps Rated Height Screening Initiative. Current pilot candidates must meet the standard of a standing height of 64 to 77 inches, and sitting height of 34 to 40 inches. Waivers are currently only available to Air Force Academy cadets, but James would expand waiver opportunities to ROTC cadets. "We estimate that approximately 900 women will now have the opportunity to more easily compete to be a pilot and to be able to get access to that waiver process over the next five years," James said.

- Identify and encourage enlisted personnel to apply for Officer Training School. "We're looking for enlisted members who have demonstrated the ability, specifically, to nurture and lead in a diverse and inclusive Air Force culture, and of course, those who are eligible to attend. We will encourage

this diverse talent pool to apply for the more than 500 OTS slots and provide the tools and opportunities to do so."

- Increase current six-month Post-Pregnancy Deployment Deferment to 12 months. The goal is to alleviate the strain on "some of our talented airmen [who choose] to leave the Air Force as they struggle to balance deployments and family issues, and this is especially true soon after childbirth," James said.
- Institute and standardize the use of civilian hiring panels for GS-14, GS- 15 and equivalent positions. "Our senior civilians, just like our military leaders, can benefit from diverse backgrounds, experiences, demographics and perspectives in order to provide innovative leadership, vision, and execution of missions within our Air Force," James said.

Md. National Guard leadership takes historic turn

(28 Feb.) Baltimore Sun, By Arthur Hirsch

Maj. Gen. Linda L. Singh took command of the Maryland National Guard on Saturday, the first woman and the first African-American to hold the position, saying, "This is absolutely the best job I could hope for in the military and the best state in which to do it."

With some 250 uniformed troops in formation before her and hundreds of guests seated on both sides of the podium at the Fifth Regiment Armory in Baltimore, Singh, a 50-year-old combat veteran of Kosovo and Afghanistan, said, "When I think of the journey we have ahead, it's going to be tough, it's going to be challenging."

Minutes earlier the state's 29th adjutant general accepted the ceremonial blue flag representing the colors of command from Gov. Larry Hogan, who appointed her to succeed Maj. Gen. James A. Adkins, who has held the post since June 2008. The ceremony also marked Adkins' retirement from the military — 40 years to the month since he enlisted in the Army.

"And what a journey it's been," said Adkins, adding that the Maryland National Guard, a force of nearly 7,000, including volunteers and civilians, would be in good hands under Singh's command.

"Linda will continue to move this organization forward in these most challenging times," said Adkins, who was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and the Maryland Distinguished Service Cross during the 50-minute ceremony.

The adjutant general serves as a member of the governor's Cabinet and is in charge of daily operations of the Maryland Military Department, an agency with a \$314 million budget

James also referred to the ongoing Women in Service Review plan that outlines how the services and U.S. Special Operations Command will manage the incremental opening of seven previously closed positions to women.

"[Chief of Staff Gen. Mark] Welsh and I are very, very like-minded on this," James said. "We have seven career fields closed to women in the Air Force, and Gen. Welsh and I, our position is that we need gender-neutral, job relevant standards to be in place. And then these positions need to open. And boy, the burden of proof will be heavy on any recommendation to keep any of these positions closed once we have gender-neutral, job relevant standards in place. We're very much leaning forward on this, so stay tuned on that."

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/careers/air-force/2015/03/04/af-secretary-deborah-lee-james-bold-moves-to-boost-women-and-minorities/24365719/>

that includes the Army and Air National Guard, the Maryland Emergency Management Agency and the Maryland Defense Force.

A veteran of more than 30 years in enlisted and officer ranks, Singh told the gathering that after meeting with Hogan about the position, she knew she wanted to accept it.

"Sometimes, you know, you get that feeling ... I knew it was the right thing," said Singh, who lives in Prince George's County with her husband, Raj Singh, and two daughters, Tara and Shaniece. She has been awarded the Bronze Star and holds an MBA in military management from Touro International College and a master of strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.

After the ceremony, Singh stood for more than an hour shaking hands, accepting congratulations and posing for photographs at a reception. She said she'd spent the week at meetings in Washington and Virginia with adjutants general from around the country and was inspired by their support.

"I was amazed at all the passion and support and wanting you to be successful," said Singh, who, along with her military duties, also worked as a director of operations for Accenture, a management consulting firm in Rockville. "That just makes me feel that I'm not alone."

She said her short list of things to do includes meeting soon with members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to talk about the National Guard.

"It's important they understand us," she said.

During the reception, Col. Janeen Birckhead, a brigade commander of the 70th Regiment at Aberdeen Proving Ground, pointed to the list of Maryland adjutants general on the ceremony program, noting that Milton A. Reckord, who held the position for 41 years between 1920 and 1965, had to be forced to integrate the guard during the 1950s, a few years after an order from President Harry S. Truman ended racial segregation of the military.

"To go from there to here, that's huge," said Birckhead, who said she has followed Singh in command positions a couple of times.

The significance of an African-American woman taking command of the guard was not lost on retired Lt. Gen. James F. Fretterd, who served as adjutant general from 1987 to 2003, and presided over a push to bring more diversity to the officer corps. He recalled a meeting with officers that took place at the Fifth Regiment Armory soon after he took command.

"I looked around the room — there was no woman above the rank of captain," said Fretterd, 84, who lives in Denton. "I said

we've got to change this with minorities and women. ... I had four women who became general officers under my watch."

There's more to do, he said. "If it wasn't for the women and minorities, we wouldn't have an Army, we wouldn't have an Air Force."

Asked to describe the meaning of the day, he called it a "dream come true."

Former Maryland Del. Clarence "Tiger" Davis of East Baltimore said he worked with Fretterd during his time in the legislature on getting more women and minorities into the Maryland National Guard.

"What you're seeing is the culmination" of those efforts, said Davis, 72. "It started back in the mid '80s and here we are. ... Who could have imagined where we'd be today?"

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-guard-ceremony-20150227-story.html>

Study assesses toll heavy packs have on Marines' backs

(4 Mar.) *Marine Corps Times*, By Hope Hodge Seck

A multi-year Navy study is using Magnetic Resonance Imaging to find out just how much wear and tear infantry Marines are putting on their backs in years of carrying heavy loads. The research could also help test out modifications to standard gear to help reduce the toll.

Conducted through the Naval Health Research Center, the study uses Marine volunteers with a range of experience levels to examine the impact on the spine and how the back changes over time as they walk and stand with loaded packs. The study also had Marines sit and lie prone on their elbows under load to collect data on all positions Marines in full battle rattle might find themselves in. The multiple-phase research began in 2011 and is slated to continue at least through the end of this fiscal year.

The research is taking place on the West Coast and recently troops from 5th Marine Regiment, out of Camp Pendleton, California, have been volunteer study subjects. To date, about 200 Marine volunteers, ranging from School of Infantry students to salty colonels, have participated so far. Officials say they need at least 65 more Marine test subjects before research is complete.

"We're looking at it from a perspective of, first of all, what's happening to the spine, how can we improve that," said Dr. Karen Kelly, a research physiologist with NHRC.

Researchers, she said, gauge the effects of load-bearing when the weight is distributed or positioned differently, with an eye

to finding the most ergonomic solution for the often unavoidable requirement of packing heavy loads into combat. A current line of research uses a vertical, walk-in MRI machine, typically used for clinical research, to image the spines of Marine volunteers. Some enter the machine wearing their plate carrier vests; others wear packs loaded with weights ranging from 20 to 112 pounds, Kelly said. The high-tech machine allows the scientists to create 3-D models showing the impact of the gear on Marines' backs.

So far, Kelly said there has been no lack of Marines willing to participate.

"They really enjoy it," she said. "Every Marine we've had that volunteers, they've been so great. We provide them with a copy of their image if they want. We try to tell them as much as we can as they go along. They give us a lot of great feedback."

While it's too early to discuss findings about the long-term effects of load-carrying on troops' backs, Kelly said researchers have found that older Marines can handle the load better. They have also been able to observe the immediate impact of loading down a Marine.

"The acute effect is, when you put a load on someone their spine changes, and when they take a rest, their spine fully recovers to normal," she said.

In previous load distribution testing, Marines have been sent through physical challenges including the combat fitness test, maneuver-under-fire exercise, and marksmanship tests. They used a redesigned plate carrier, still in the testing stages, that distributes loads more favorably for long humps and other endurance exercises. Research is planned to continue this year with small modifications to the Marines' main pack that use a modular hip belt to take some weight off the back.

"Marines said anecdotally that [the new plate carrier] felt better on their back," Kelly said.

The multi-pronged study also involves a special virtual environment, built on a high-tech treadmill, in which Marine volunteers are fitted with more than 40 motion capture-style markers. They're asked to simulate a hike under load, marksmanship tasks, and a mountainous ascent. NHRC staff can see how the loads change Marines' posture and movements as they accomplish all these tasks.

This Female Vet Is One Of History's Most Decorated Combat Photographers

(4 Mar.) We Are The Mighty, By Blake Stilwell

"When you're young, you have this sense of invincibility," says Stacy Pearsall. "You can hear the gunshots, but they can't touch you." Pearsall is a former Air Force Combat Photojournalist who spent much of her storied ten-year Air Force career assigned to the 1st Combat Camera Squadron in Charleston South Carolina. Her awards include the Bronze Star, Air Medal, and Air Force Commendation Medal with Valor. She is one of two women to win Military Photographer of the Year and the only woman to win it twice. She has an honorary doctoral degree from The Citadel and was declared a Champion of Change by the White House.

During her first Iraq deployment in 2003, then-23-year-old Pearsall documented everything from Blackhawk helicopter sorties to foot patrols with Army infantry units on the ground. This would be the cornerstone of an epic that would impact thousands of veterans from across the US and around the globe.

"Throughout my deployment I photographed a civil affairs mission to rebuild a bombed out school where Saddam's wife once taught," Pearsall reflects. "We targeted it during 'shock and awe' because Ba'athists used it as a headquarters. When we were gearing up for the convoy, there was one open seat in the lead vehicle and one in the rear. My partner and I drew straws to see who would sit where. As we departed the school, an IED buried under piles of debris detonated near my vehicle, sending projectiles and dust everywhere. It was fortunate the bomb wasn't bigger. Everyone walked away that day."

She waited to seek medical attention until she returned to the Air Force's Camp Sather. She'd seen far worse wounds and didn't want to make a big deal about whiplash and some blood

Other research has involved Marines who agreed to be imaged prior to attending the School of Infantry, mid-way through the school, and upon entry to the fleet to assess how their backs were affected in that short time period.

"The load did cause changes in the back, just biomechanical changes," Kelly said. "It was pretty interesting to see how the spine changes, and we wanted to follow that."

Kelly said NHRC works with I Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Systems Command to distribute their findings, which can be used to inform the development of new gear. Other findings are published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, she said.

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/03/04/study-assesses-back-toll/24321333/>

in her ears. She played down her injuries and continued to document missions nearly every day until the end of her deployment.

"Suffice to say I slammed a lot of vitamin M," Pearsall recalls.

Like many blast traumas, it was the injuries she couldn't see that followed her home from deployment. Once back home in Charleston, Pearsall was cooking dinner and suddenly fell over. Her world was off-kilter and she couldn't stand upright. Doctors thought her injuries gave way to viruses so she underwent the treatment for that with little to no relief. Today, a diagnosis of traumatic brain injury (TBI) would've been more likely. For Pearsall, that diagnosis would not come for another five years.

"So I learned to deal with the vertigo and headaches," Pearsall says. Despite the chronic headaches and neck pain, she continued her Air Force photojournalism career. Her work earned her Military Photographer of the Year (MPOY) in 2003, an annual award, open to all military personnel. During the judging, the panel referred to Stacy as 'he'. They did not do it years later, when she won for the second time.

While supporting Operation Enduring Freedom Horn of Africa, she teamed up with combat videographer Staff Sergeant Katie Robinson, an Air Force Reservist who would eventually become Pearsall's battle buddy for life. The two worked to deploy together at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warhorse, near Baqubah, Iraq.

Despite a mud-floored CHU with a leaky roof and a critical satellite transmitter sitting in a pool of water, set out to prove they could hang with the soldiers at Warhorse.

“I was never faced with anything regarding my competency because I am a female,” Pearsall says. Initially, everyone was apprehensive because I was a photographer. I caught earfuls of inter-service rivalry for being Air Force but after our first firefight, word got around that I was worth having around. Instead of seeking them out, they started asking for our support.”

FOB Warhorse proved to be the right place for action. The Battle of Baqubah was the last major offensive of the Iraq War and would last seven months. Having freedom to do so, Pearsall and Robinson moved around the AOR documenting one key mission after another.

“I put those soldiers on a pedestal,” Pearsall reveals. “They are still today, my personal heroes to whom owe my life.”

Pearsall and Robinson were supposed to accompany Delta Company into Baqubah on a raid to take down a house harboring enemy fighters. At the last minute, they were transferred to an Iraqi Army operation in nearby Buhriz. As they prepared for their new assignment, they listened to their friends’ progress as the reports trickled in.

“As the breach team moved in, the house blew,” Pearsall remembers. “The Bradleys came back to the FOB and began unloading the injured. The soldiers were a mess. We looked for our friends, but couldn’t see them. Then the last Bradley dropped ramp and unloaded those who were killed in action. Blue Platoon lost three really great guys that day. The rest of their team had to soldier on. Katie and I did too. We still had to go out and meet the Iraqi Army for our next operation.”

The two were split up between two Iraqi Army companies, with the idea they’d link back up in a few days. That was the plan, anyway.

“They shot my fucking thumb off!” Robinson said the minute she was struck by a nearby sniper. The sniper was aiming for an officer sitting next to Robinson. The bullet went through her left forearm, through her video camera and exploded the battery, which partially amputated her right thumb.

“I laughed when I heard that,” Pearsall remembers. “That’s what made us so close. Our collective humor, our unwavering bond, our utmost respect for each other.” When given the opportunity to redeploy home and rehab back in the United States, Robinson refused. Instead, she opted to return to FOB Warhorse.

“For me, the rest of the deployment was intense, just like that,” Pearsall says. “So many good soldiers taken so quickly,

so young. Photographing the rare moments between gunfights was my favorite thing to do. It was my sense of home, of humanity.”

Toward the end of her deployment, Pearsall further injured her neck during an operation. Robinson finally convinced her to see a doctor. An x-ray led to a CAT scan and more tests. Doctors concluded she needed surgery. For Pearsall, that was not an option. She wanted to leave Iraq on her own terms.

“Katie was strong. I wanted to remain strong too,” Pearsall says. I already lived with the pain for so long, one flight home wasn’t going to kill me. It was the one thing I could control in a situation that seemed out of my control.”

“My neck wouldn’t heal enough for me to stay in the military,” Pearsall explains. “It was devastating. They offered alternatives, like admin or finance. But after you’ve tasted combat, you can’t go back. If I couldn’t fight, what was I supposed to do? My career in the military was over.”

“One day, while waiting for an appointment at my VA hospital, a World War II veteran leaned over and asked if I was taking my grandfather to his doctor’s appointment. He seemed surprised to learn I was a veteran. He told me how he helped liberate a concentration camp during WWII and I realized that I judged him unfairly – just as everyone was doing to me. So I set about healing myself through the experiences of other veterans.”

Now her mission continues. First on her mind is a portrait project, photographing veterans from every conflict and preserving their stories their image for generations to come.

“I had the honor of photographing the last living pictures of soldiers on the battlefield,” she says. “And I wanted to continue that service to my fellow veterans.”

Her work and personal recovery, isn’t limited to her portrait project. There were some whose stories could no longer be told firsthand. In 2012, she published *Shooter: Combat From Behind the Camera*, a book of her Iraq War imagery.

“I couldn’t look at my photos without having an emotional response,” she says. “I wanted to put what happened on a page and shelve it, so I wouldn’t have to live that part of my life every day anymore. *Shooter* was my therapy. It was my way of honoring those who didn’t have a voice anymore, to share their experience with the world.”

Her second book, *A Photojournalist’s Field Guide* was published in 2013. Along with contributions from her heavy-hitter photojournalist friends, Pearsall created a guide to educate younger photographers. The book isn’t limited to photography tips. It includes insight on how to survive in

6 March 2015

austere conditions, cope with stress and maneuver through tough situations.

“I’m not the first woman to go into combat for the United States,” Pearsall explains. “There are a whole slew of women who fought for this country. Unfortunately, they’re not spoken much of in the history books.”

Not anymore. Pearsall’s project will ensure history won’t forget any veteran who fought for the U.S., regardless of gender.

<http://www.wearethemighty.com/this-female-vet-is-one-of-historys-most-decorated-combat-photographers-2015-03#ixzz3TccsovUI>