To Whom It May Concern:

The decision to open all Combat Arms positions to women in the military is one to be based on plain, simple, irrefutable logic, not emotion. Evolved nations have consistently recognized women play a key role in their society, as well as in the defense of that society. Whether acknowledged, permitted or by unconventional and covert means, American Women have participated in our Society and in the defense of our American Society throughout each war, campaign, excursion, battle or skirmish. War, and thus combat, is not an event solely along identified battle lines or in certain uniforms. War, and Combat, occurs in any location, at any time, by any group of people (to include women), in any attire, under any condition. When war happens, everyone is a target, and thus a participant.

As a Cadet at the United States Military Academy, and as a member of the first Women to graduate, I often heard the comments from male classmates, upperclassmen, Instructors and even Staffers "Oh, you girls probably won't have to worry about this (strategy or maneuvers or concept)" And yet Military Science and Military History was taught with one focus – preparation for participation in combat. Mind you, no deriding comments were spoken to the boys who would not choose a Combat Arm. As part of our Plebe knowledge regarding each Combat Arm, Combat Support and Combat Service Support branch, they all carried the SAME secondary mission - to engage and fight like the Infantry. If Infantry isn't a Combat Arm I don't know what is. The same is true in Basic Training for our enlisted soldiers, airmen and naval personnel. So, right from the onset, a Woman in the Military acquires the mindset, or has it reinforced, she will be subjected to combat duty. As my Cadet career progressed, Military Science courses, Military History courses and summer training were all taught in one mode – participation in combat. Granted, each branch has a different role. Even with today's mantra "One Team. One Fight", everyone – that's every man and every woman - must be able to fight, anytime, anyplace, under any conditions.

I was fortunate to be commissioned into Field Artillery and was certified a Target Acquisition Survey Officer, 13D in November 1980. My first assignment was C TAB, 333rd FA in 8th ID (M) at Baumholder, Germany. My Battery Commander taught me early "It's not a matter of "If", it's a matter of "When" the Soviets would invade. My Survey Platoon, and later the Observers for my Sound/Flash Platoon, were as far forward or as close to battle front as any Infantry mortar platoon, Armor unit or Field Artillery Firing Battalion. My unit set their firing registration points. Thus, Women have already been in Combat positions prepared and ready for their combat role. During this timeframe, I was also involved in a war game. The sides were seriously stacked to favor the US "commanders" about to attend Command & General Staff College (CGSC) at Leavenworth, KS. As a young 1LT, I was on the Opposing Forces, and the only person in my "Brigade Command Staff" with a Combat Arms Branch on my lapel. Our US opponent was CPT (P) David Petraeus, protector of the Fulda Gap. Long story short – using my Combat Arms training, I decimated the US Forces with chemical and our Soviet horde over-ran the Fulda Gap. The 3 day Game ended in less than 4 hours. The War Game Commander, BG Norman Schwarzkopf, noted what occurred and why. Several years later, GEN Schwarzkopf delayed initiating Desert Storm until he knew his troops had enough protective gear. How many American lives were saved in 1991 because of a woman in Combat mode use combat initiative in 1982?

My last point to make is very simple. Every woman in the military is NOT under pressure to take on this type career. Every. Single. Woman. Is. A. Volunteer. Each woman takes on this career path with probably more awareness of consequence than can be measured. Each woman wants to be able and permitted to participate FULLY. Why does the Military limit itself and limit its resources?

Respectfully-
Doris A. Turner
USMA 1980, FA

Dear Rob,

I saw your email on a post in the West Point Women face book page. Since I can't make the meeting in DC, I wanted to share my thoughts.

I went to West Point in 1995 after growing up on Army bases all over the world. As I got close to graduation, I decided to choose a branch that was as close to combat as possible for women, engineers. When I attended the basic course, I joined three other women (also West Pointers incidentally) at the ranger prep program. This was basically an additional hour of PT every morning in order to prepare for ranger school. I finished ranger prep, hoping to get a sapper slot (there were rumors it may open to women), a dive slot (the slot went to a much better swimmer), or at the very least airborne. Unfortunately due to budget cuts, only soldiers going to airborne units got to go airborne. I would do ranger prep again because it got me in great shape, but it was a real disappointment to watch guys who quit ranger prep or didn't perform as well as I did, move onto ranger school and sapper school.

I joined an engineer bridge unit as my first assignment. At the time they had just opened engineer construction units to women, but still closed "combat engineers." Still we were attached to a combat engineer battalion and there was literally no difference in what I did as a bridge platoon leader and what the male combat engineer platoon leaders did. I even lived in a tent with ten men and changed clothes in my sleeping bag. I had the best operational rating in the battalion despite living in a muddy cesspool for 9 months. After platoon leader, I was the S1 of the battalion and deployed again the following year. I was chosen as the V Corps CG's scheduler and then aide and deployed a third time in 1999. That year we did recons to northern Albania where we liaised with Albanian muslims during the air war in Kosovo. At one point the CG thought about leaving me and his only female bodyguard behind because we were a "distraction" to the muslim men. But, he thought better of it and decided it was important for him to treat us all equally, particularly in front of our allies. SGT May and I joined him often as we helped identify targets for the air war.

I'm very excited to see how billets have opened up. It has taken way way too long. I am confident that had I gone infantry or armor, I would have been an excellent combat arms officer. I recall a female classmate who carried our platoon sergeant's ruck during a ruck march when he couldn't keep up. She went ordinance. He went infantry. It's just wrong and we have a chance to make it right. We want to serve. We can serve. We just need a fair shake.

Thanks,

Bridget Altenburg
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Bowling, Robert D II CIV OSD OUSD P-R (US)

Subject: FW: Regarding opening of all Army branches to Women

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I am an OEF veteran and served 5 years as a Quartermaster Officer on active duty. As an Airborne and Parachute Rigger qualified soldier, I first served as a platoon leader of a parachute rigger company at FT Bragg, NC. Following that position, I served as a platoon leader and executive officer for a DS Supply company. I deployed to Afghanistan with the Supply company in 2002. I also served as Deputy Support Operations Officer for the 2nd Infantry Division Support Command at Camp Casey, Republic of Korea before separating from active duty.

I do not support opening the Infantry and Armor branches to women for the following reasons:

1. Opening these branches will invalidate Rostker v. Goldberg. The argument against forcing all women to register for the Selective Service will no longer exist. If women are treated equally, they will be drafted into Infantry and Armor positions at an equal rate in time of war. I don't believe our country would have been as successful in past wars if Infantry and Armor units had been comprised of 50% men and 50% women. I do believe that the country's children would have suffered greatly if this had happened.

2. If women are treated equally, opening these branches to women will have the unintended result of women being forced into needed infantry positions at an equal rate when not enough men voluntarily enlist or commission into the infantry. I would not have joined the Army had there been a risk of me being forced into Infantry branch.

3. I don't believe a significant number of women are interested in or capable of these opportunities. Of course there a few who would out-perform males and do a superb job. However, is this tiny group worth putting all age appropriate women in the country at risk for draft into Infantry and Armor? Is it worth putting all Army women at risk for forced commissioning/enlisting into Infantry and Armor? I've recently heard that only about 1% of the Canadian Infantry is comprised of women.

4. Injury rates. According to a US Army Soldier Systems Center study released in 2004, the average fighting load carried by and infantry rifleman operating in Afghanistan was 63 pounds before adding a rucksack. The average approach march load, which includes a light rucksack, was 96 pounds. The average emergency approach march load, which includes a larger rucksack, was 127 pounds. In a 2011 article, the Seattle Times estimated the Department of Veteran's Affairs paid over $500 million in benefits annually for degenerative arthritis, cervical strains and other musculoskeletal injuries. Will disability payouts increase with women serving in Infantry and Armor Branches?

5. Long-term fertility impacts on women in physically strenuous positions must be carefully considered. The Journal of Endocrinology published a study titled, "The effects of intense exercise on the female reproductive system" (Warren/Perlroth), in July 2001 discussing the link between prolonged physical exercise and infertility and bone density. According to this study, such infertility may be irreversible.

6. When my company came down on orders in 2002 to deploy to Afghanistan, a significant number of females found themselves pregnant within a very short time. My platoon sergeant also became pregnant. So many of our women were pregnant and unable to deploy that we had to attach soldiers from two other Army posts. Also, several did not have adequate family care plans. Will a draft of women create a huge administrative burden for the country in time of national emergency? Will it leave thousands of children without a parent?

I fail to see how we can avoid drafting women and force branching of women into Infantry and Armor branches if we open these branches to women. This could result in major problems for the Army and for our Nation.

Respectfully,

Julie K. Pulley

DACOWITS Staff Members
Attn: COL Aimee L. Kominiak and Mr. Robert Bowling
4800 Mark Center Drive Suite 04J25-01
Alexandria, VA 22350-9000 4 September 2015

Colonel Kominiak and Mr. Bowling:

I would like to present my comments for consideration during the DACOWITS quarterly meeting this September 9-10, 2015. Col Kominiak and I are two gals who serve the nation, cut from the same fabric: West Point graduates who have experiences sustaining the US Army. I served from 1980 to 1985 in the Field Artillery in the roles of Service Battery Support Platoon Leader, then A Battery Firing Platoon Leader and then Battery Commander for HHB, 3/79 Field Artillery. In 1985, FA Branch came down and told the women to go away (we don't have a career path for you). There is a short Women Veteran story (circa 2010) which describes this found at this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8vaUljdsxQ

Feel free to edit and use that at this meeting if you so desire. As a result of the change in Field Artillery utilization of women, I branch transferred to Quartermaster/Logistics. Having served in the Field Artillery - a branch that my Korean War Uncle served in - was essential in setting the foundation of how to support and sustain the US Army Infantry Brigades and Divisions I later served and sustained. My fire direction, leadership, training and deploying with the troops (for 185 days in the field in one year). There were very few women across the Battalion but still the mission was accomplished. We had actual threats - Russian aircraft flew overhead, we spotted Soviet Military Liaison Vehicles on the autobahn and reported this. Leading troops was what I wanted to do.

(Department of the Army thought they needed to put the lid on women in the Field Artillery and their futures... for one reason or another. You may wish to talk to those Brigade and Battalion Commanders who had FA women in their ranks and get their take. You can find my outfit on social media: "Hardchargers" or 3/79FA at this web link http://manuelsweb.com/lance/archive/p08/b_3_79th_fa.htm.

The nation now has testimony which shows the demonstrated capabilities of women in uniform as a member fully integrated into the combined arms team: women serving alongside men to assist in those patrolling duties of the Cultural Support Teams (CSTs), or include the medics who respond to their comrades in need, and find all soldiers (Sgt Hester, for example) just doing their job in extraordinary situations. Let's not turn a blind eye to what women do everyday. Out of a transportation battalion (812th TC Battalion) of 1200 soldiers, 300 were women transporters. Our transport missions in the combat zone in 2004 HAD to include them to deliver what the Combatant Commander asked for! Several missions were performed by an all women truck driving team.

You have all watched, seen and heard the media (I am sure) but maybe have not met as I have our Ranger tabbed CPT (then 1LT) Shaye Haver and CPT Kristen Griest. Humble, unassuming soldiers who get the job done. These women demonstrated that it can be done (not by all, but by those who possess the mental determination, the tenacity, grit and strength). There is a role for them in today's fight against ISIS. We need every soldier to be engaged in this fight, even more so now than ever - our numbers are being sliced downward for those who wear the uniform. In tandem, the fiscal environment is tough, challenging. Let all soldiers do what best taps into their potential - accent their strengths, their talent set. Don't waste anyone's talent set or stifle their career movement if they show/demonstrate their worth and potential. What is needed next is to outfit these gals (maybe arm them with language skills to infiltrate the bad guys network, report and take them down) for their next challenge. Keep every soldiers' skill set honed throughout their service to the nation. Here are some suggestions on how to do this from a 13B, Field Artillery gal who served in 105mm towed artillery unit with the French Army in 1983 and (mistakenly was) assigned to a 105mm towed tube artillery unit in the US Army.

1. Establish drills and gender neutral standards for the 11B, 12B, 13B skill sets that cover all aspects (aptitude both mental and physical) to perform. Do not let a soldier reenlist in this MOS without this being demonstrated to standard. That is, require all soldiers to load, reload their weapon systems similar to performing tank gunnery; or to identify friend and foe weapon systems and aircraft. Send them to Ft Irwin's Training Center to battle test them using the closest set of wartime exercise conditions possible! Make the assessment as close to real conditions they may face as possible.

2. Continue working to provide each soldier with a proper fit of their gear and tooling needed to conduct their jobs. Whether this be boots, smaller CVC helmets, gas masks, or lower steps/grills to mount and dismount a tank or Medium Mine Protective Vehicle - keep moving in a forward direction with PEO soldiers gear. Funny, odd event as an episode in my soldiering days: during my cadet training I was driving the M60A3 tank at Fort Knox. The Tank Commander lowered the barrel of the main gun tube and it hit my head due to my 5ft 2 inch stature. That caused me to elevate the driver's seat in order to see out the window but, also caused me to hit the lowered main gun tube (a funny knock against my helmet). So, the message here is to outfit both the soldier and their hardware so that when a soldier drives the weapon system (Tank, Stryker, etc.) they don't create a condition that puts the soldier out of service or out of fighting posture.

3. Create career pathing that harnesses each soldiers strengths and human talent set. Putting the KABASH on someone's passion only deters and affects the morale of the troops... they will no longer look forward to serving and all that training will be a waste.

4. Learn from other Armies (like Sweden, Israeli, etc.) who already have women wearing Infantry branch on their collars. We do not have to recreate the wheel if someone has already learned how to career path their soldiers.

5. Test, hone, train and retrain - keep soldiers talent set relevant and ready (given the fiscal environment, this will be a tough deliverable). Proven soldiers who excel should be afforded promotional opportunities (take the standard Army photos off promotion boards and put their social media template on them instead... you get the whole character when you do this). Base the forward and upward mobility of a soldier NOT upon their Barbie doll looks but upon their demonstrated performances.

6. Get career pathing feedback as you go along (make adjustments in the plan); use the 360 feedback tool as a whole person indicator. Weed out the unsatisfactory soldiers as appropriate (retrain/rehabilitate or release).

7. Have a contractual method to permit women soldiers of child bearing age to serve and also deliver their children. Consider leave permissions and the re-entry of this soldier back into the ranks (recertifying them in their skill set similar to police or EMTs in the civilian sector.)

All temporarily (medically profiled) displaced soldiers who have a specific skill set may need a contract that spells out how they need to requalify once they have been "temporarily" medically profiled off full duty status. It would encompass all situations such as combating cancer, or completing the term of pregnancy. This scenario may closely translate to civilian Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) or Police who are Reservists, then get mobilized and leave their EMT/Police job and return after a year or more. They have to recertify or requalify to re-enter their prior civilian job (EMT or cop) upon return as they have vacated this role for an extended period of time. Similarly, establish these re-entry criteria into the contract of all soldiers.

8. As an all volunteer force, the DACOWITS staff may collectively realize that utilization of women in all the DOD branches has implications on registering for the draft. Well, have you been to the Post Office lately? In 2004, registration cards added the gender block to have male or female. I tried to register when I turned 17 as my older brothers had to do so. One of my older brothers still lives with his heart condition discovered at age 17. So, after finding out that HE had to register but, that I could not I wondered why not? Force him to register; but not me! Well, there may be a venue here to include service to the nation as a rite to citizenship. Other countries do just this. Perhaps, the Federal government could ask/require two years of service for every US citizen (the French do). Allow women to register for the draft if they wish to do so on a voluntary basis and have them do so in their demonstrated talent set. Requiring service to the nation may enlighten each citizen to a better understanding of what first responders (police, fire, EMTs) have to do to protect the public. We could bridge this cultural divide and gain mutual respect for one another's roles and responsibilities. This cultural divide (especially with police force across the nation today) could use a bridge to bring forth a better understanding and mutual respect.

Lastly, service to the nation has consumed most of my life and I look back upon those decades fondly. In playback mode, I can honestly say that what I did achieve was:

- Protected the home front from the bad guys,
- Protected my family, my soldiers,
- Kept the people I care about safe and free from harm.

Those soldiers I served with back then are now grandparents. Isn't that what serving the nation is all about? making it better, safer for the next generations to come? I thank you for your consideration of these comments and suggestions.

Respectfully,
Kathleen Silvia, US Army (1976-2006)

Bowling, Robert D II CIV OSD OUSD P-R (US)

Subject: FW: Combat Integration Remarks

I'm Bruce Shuttleworth and I write today about making our Armed Forces stronger than ever. I'm, of course, talking about with a stroke of the pen doubling the competition for some of the most important jobs in America.

As a Student Naval Aviator I was trained by some of the finest Flight Instructors in the world. One even became an acclaimed Space Shuttle Pilot - her name was Susan Still. I then had the relatively unique perspective of immediately becoming an Advanced Strike Flight Instructor where I had the honor of instructing our female Student Naval Aviators. Our women were just as good - I simply couldn't tell the difference. They did tend to be more professional and rule-abiding outside of the cockpit - perhaps knowing the spotlight was on them; or perhaps simply less-inclined to take foolish risks.

Of course there are benefits to being testosterone-laden in combat; but there are also drawbacks. I've seen many men looking for trouble, at home and abroad. I've never seen a woman looking to get into a fight, though I've seen plenty with the grit to see one through. When life or death decisions must be made in an instant, I think a premium should be placed on good judgment - and I believe women may have a slight edge here.

There is also a value on diversity on the battlefield that we are only now beginning to explore. This value is being statistically-proven in the boardroom today.

Finally, optics are important. How do you assign a value to having more role models for half the world's population? And what would our most gender-prejudiced enemies of today want us to do? Let's do the opposite.

There is more to this fight than simply physical strength - and the winner will be the side that doesn't exclude half their population.

Set the appropriate standards, and combat integration will make us a more inclusive, and competitive, country for the rest of the world to emulate.

Thanks,
Bruce