

DACOWITS' 2023 Recommendations:

1	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to review and revise their enlisted accessions programs to incorporate best practices from the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course to increase the pool of qualified applicants.
2	The Secretary of Defense should assign an Assistant Secretary of Defense-level official to coordinate and synchronize Department of Defense and Service efforts to increase and inspire our Nation's youth's propensity to serve.
3	The Secretary of Defense should implement the military service recommendations published by the National Commission on Military, Public, and National Service's Final Report, Inspired to Serve, to more effectively educate and inspire America's youth to serve in the Military Services.
4	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to develop and implement consistent policies regarding the accession of single custodial parents, with the intent of maximizing the opportunity for potential single custodial parent recruits—especially women—to serve, in order to increase the pool of qualified recruits.
5	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Marine Corps to integrate recruit training at the platoon level, where recruits are formed into integrated platoons after basic daily routine. Maximizing integration, at the platoon level, develops the foundation of a successfully integrated Force. This would be a milestone towards compliance with the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.
6	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Marine Corps to institute mixed-gender drill instructor teams for all integrated companies at recruit training to reinforce the operational environment and present women and men as equally capable and competent Marines and leaders. This would be a milestone towards compliance with the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.
7	The Secretary of Defense should establish a working group focused on women in Special Operations Forces (SOF), led by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. This group should comprise Service SOF communities, Special Operations Command, and the Joint Staff to provide strategic oversight on and direction of current integration plans and challenges, metrics, lessons learned, and best practices. This would enhance recruitment, integration, growth, and retention of women in SOF.
8	The Secretary of Defense should implement all recommendations from the 2022 Government Accountability Office report on Women in Special Operations, which would increase women serving in previously closed Special Operations Forces positions.
9	The Secretary of Defense should adopt a Department-wide, contemporary scientifically-based body composition standard and measurement technique to reflect gender, racial, and ethnic differences of today's Force because current policies and practices disproportionately affect servicewomen's health and military careers.

DACOWITS' 2023 Recommendations:

10	The Secretary of Defense should decouple the physical fitness and body composition (B/C) program by reassigning B/C policy development and execution to medical professionals. This will ensure consistent and precise measurement, provide servicewomen with relevant gender-based resources, and promote greater focus on the holistic health pillars of Total Force Fitness.
11	The Secretary of Defense should establish a joint working group within the Office of the Secretary of Defense to synchronize and expedite the development, distribution, and accessibility of female-specific aviation gear. These efforts will maximize human performance, combat lethality, and readiness, and ensure the overall health of servicewomen in aviation.
12	The Secretary of Defense should direct immediate implementation of the Candidates Afforded Dignity, Equality and Training (CADET) Act retroactive to December 27, 2022, to include grandfathering affected cadets and midshipmen, and publish guidance for the development of new policies related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care and, more immediately, provide leave with health care for a cadet's or midshipman's period of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care, as well as health care coverage for the child.
13	The Secretary of Defense should establish a more robust women's health care directory on Military OneSource to include topics such as reproductive health, pregnancy, mental health, and contraceptive care. This directory should provide information and links to all Department of Defense, Service, and Defense Health Agency resources, information, and publications, to more effectively aid servicewomen in locating and easily navigating to relevant health care information.
14	The Secretary of Defense should: (1) direct the Defense Health Agency (DHA) to publish guidance for the Services, their medical providers, commanders, and pregnant servicewomen regarding the necessity, authorization, and recommended minimum length of maternity convalescent leave (CONLV) for birth events; (2) prescribe necessary procedures to ensure servicewomen who give birth in civilian facilities receive the necessary maternity CONLV; and (3) require the Services, with DHA guidance, to define the limited circumstances under which commanders may disapprove maternity CONLV or, preferably, prohibit commanders from denying recommended maternity CONLV.
15	The Secretary of Defense should issue additional guidance to the Military Services on implementation of the Family Care Plans Instruction (DoDI 1342.19) to ensure the policy is being utilized as intended for operational readiness, program elements are tracked adequately, Department guidance is executed consistently across the Services, and policy application is aligned to appropriately support Service members.
16	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to update maternity uniforms to present a professional, modern appearance while providing functionality, comfort, and ease of movement for the wearers.

DACOWITS' 2023 Recommendations:

17	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to closely monitor Service implementation of DTM 23-001, Expansion of the Military Parental Leave Program, to ensure timely issuance of final policy directives, consistency of key policy elements, and processes across the Services (e.g., disapproval authorities and appeals, distinction between maternity convalescent and parental leave), and proper implementation of legislative intent.
18	The Secretary of Defense should direct that only a senior Service leader (first O-6 in the chain of command) be authorized to disapprove Service members' parental leave requests for incremental or single block parental leave to ensure reasonableness of disapproval actions and consistency of policy application across the Military Services.
19	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to routinely survey Service members to assess whether those eligible for parental leave have been treated equitably by their chain of commands and were not unreasonably denied or discouraged from taking their full parental leave entitlements.
20	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Defense Health Agency to further study and take proactive action to improve quality of and access to care for servicewomen's unique reproductive health care needs (e.g., fertility, assisted reproductive technology, pregnancy, depression) that could adversely impact their well-being, readiness, and retention.
21	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to update Department of Defense policies to: (1) distinguish between sexual harassment and gender-based discriminatory harassment; (2) define how gender-based, non-sexual discriminatory harassment can occur; and (3) clarify reporting mechanisms so that Service members can better comprehend, identify, and report discriminatory behavior.
22	The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services' senior leadership to support and foster women's barrier analysis/initiative teams in order to identify and remediate unique challenges faced by servicewomen.
23	The Secretary of Defense should direct the USD(P&R) to review, and revise as needed, DoD and Military Services' parental leave and operational deferment policies to ensure they do not adversely impact servicewomen's career progression, including training, professional education opportunities, promotions, and performance evaluations.

DACOWITS' 2023 Recommendations:

24	The Secretary of Defense should direct a study of the feasibility of and implementing actions necessary to establish programs enabling servicewomen to (1) transfer from the Active to Reserve Component for a temporary period; and (2) elect a later promotion year group to recover lost training, education, or operational opportunities resulting from pregnancy duty reassignments, operational deferments, and maternity convalescent and parental leave absences.
25	The Secretary of Defense should direct the USD(P&R) to conduct (1) a comprehensive review of promotion rates of Service members from the last 10 years across the Military Services, Reserve Component, and National Guard by gender, race/ethnicity, and occupational specialty/community to identify trends in servicewomen's career progression and promotion rates and (2) additional studies and research (e.g., via mock boards) to assess whether eliminating gender and race/ethnicity indicators in promotion board records reduces bias against women, in all of their diversity, in promotion selection.
26	The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to provide education, in appropriate professional development courses, to Service members in supervisory enlisted and officer grades to prevent and reduce gender bias in performance evaluations and selection boards. Curriculum should (1) identify gendered language and descriptors, (2) describe how gender status expectations and biases can impact the way performance evaluations are written and rated, (3) indicate how to recognize and remediate unconscious bias and gender behavioral expectations, and (4) provide Service members the opportunity to participate in mock boards with postexercise analysis to enhance their learning experience.