

28 November 2016

Subj: STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOSEPH M. PLENZLER, USMC (RET.) TO THE DEFENSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE SERVICE

I am writing this public statement to convey my support for the repeal of the Combat Exclusion Policy of January 24, 2013 and preservation of the historic gains made by opening of all ground combat jobs and units to qualified women.

I am a recently retired combat veteran of the United States Marine Corps. During my 20-year career, I served both as an infantry officer and a public affairs officer – most notably to the 34th, 35th, and 36th Commandants of the Marine Corps from 2010 - 2015. Since leaving active duty, I have been a vocal proponent in support of increasing opportunities for women to serve while maintaining high job standards and combat readiness.

Following the results of the recent presidential election, I am very concerned that the next administration will seek to roll back all of the progress made over the past few years and reinstitute discriminatory policies that would limit career opportunities for women based on their sex alone. I believe that such a practice would be fundamentally un-American. Recall that the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, while serving as Commandant of the Marine Corps, was the only service chief to request an exemption to the repeal that would allow his service's ground combat units to remain all-male.

I am also concerned that the demonstrated misogynistic behavior of the president-elect will exacerbate the very real problem of sexual harassment and gender bias that exists within military culture today as he assumes the role of commander-in-chief.

I am confident that, in our country of 318M people, there are many women who could ably serve in ground combat jobs within infantry, artillery, and armor units. Women also are human intelligence enablers in that they, and solely they, are able to interact with women within many of the middle eastern, North African, and Asian countries where the U.S. is presently operating. Women also enable better decision-making among teams, and research suggests that organizations that have women as members behave more ethically.

I strongly urge DACOWITS to stand firm in protecting the rights and opportunities of military women. Their service is often underappreciated, and they remain a vital part of our all volunteer force and greatly contribute to our national security.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

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