

DACOWITS RFI #4 (DECEMBER 2023)

**Subj: DACOWITS RFI #4 - Impact of Key Influencers on Servicewomen's Career Paths**

**RFI #4:** Over the last decade, DACOWITS examined women's career progression, resulting in numerous recommendations. In December 2015, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) opened all remaining occupations and positions to women with no exceptions. As a result, the Defense Department opened approximately 213,600 closed positions and 52 closed military occupational specialties to women for the first time. Afterwards, the SecDef directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Chiefs of the Military Services to provide their final, detailed Gender Integration Implementation Plans no later than January 1, 2016. Once approved, the Military Services were tasked with executing their plans by April 1, 2016. The Committee continues to observe modest increases in the percentage of women joining the military and consistently low rates of women entering previously closed positions, such as special operations forces.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

**4b. Provide information on key influencers and mentoring efforts for enlisted women that impact career selection into SOF and other previously closed career fields, such as submarines and artillery forces.**

**Response 4b:** Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARFORSOC) employs a diverse range of influencers and mentorship opportunities for enlisted women that include targeted recruiting, a team of diverse career planners, and outreach, mentorship and support programs through the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) team that impact women service members' career selection and progression in SOF.

MARFORSOC has a dynamic and diverse recruiting team that directly engages with 100 percent of the enlisted women within the Marine Corps eligible population prior to each Headquarters Marine Corps Screening Team event. The direct engagement increases awareness, heightens interest, and encourages participation within the eligible population of enlisted women. MARFORSOC also informs eligible service members of additional SOF opportunities regarding the 8071 Military Occupational Specialty, Special Operations Capable Specialists. In addition, there are women augments temporarily assigned to Assessment & Selection that provide additional support for slated female participants.

The Career Planners assigned to MARFORSOC also play an integral role in recruiting eligible personnel into SOF. Specifically, MARFORSOC recruits in-service personnel and as such, Career Planners become a key influencer. Of MARFORSOC's nine Career Planners, three are from diverse backgrounds and one is a woman. These individuals interact with eligible Marines assigned to MARFORSOC and conduct outreach to educate Career Planners and Recruiters outside of the enterprise on SOF opportunities and options. In doing so, they serve as force multipliers that provide additional information and options for all Marines interested in SOF.

MARFORSOC has implemented outreach, mentorship, and support programs through the D&I team to ensure an inclusive and diverse culture within its formation. The team offers a monthly mentorship luncheon to all personnel; each luncheon focuses on a specific topic or challenge that women face within the workforce. MARFORSOC has hosted the United States Naval Academy (USNA) Midshipmen during their two-week summer program for the USNA Marine Air Ground Task Force Program. This program affords female students the opportunity to make informed decisions regarding service selection. Students can shadow Marine Officers who provide a broader perspective of the Service and SOF opportunities within MARFORSOC. MARFORSOC also offers a comprehensive female support system that includes both officers and enlisted service members and civilians with a population size of 170 women to fully support their endeavors.