

Foreign Military Strategies to Recruit and Retain Women

Response to DACOWITS RFI 3



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Introduction

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) requested a literature review on research related to successful strategies the military services of other countries have used to attract and retain highly qualified women. Results from the literature review follow. Chapter 1 presents an overview of foreign militaries that have women serving in their armed forces. Chapter 2 includes four case studies of militaries that allow women to serve in combat: South Africa, Australia, Canada, and Norway. Chapter 3 ties the findings back to the recruitment and retention approach of the United States.

Chapter 1. Women Serving in Foreign Militaries

According to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, women serve in the armed forces of at least 74 countries around the world (see Table 1).¹

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ Nine of the 74 countries that allow women to serve in the military rely on conscription for recruitment, and 36 rely on voluntary recruitment; approaches vary in the remaining countries. Of the 74 countries that allow women to serve, 13 permit women to formally serve in combat roles.

Table 1. Countries With Women Serving in Their Armed Forces by Region

Country	Recruitment	Description
Africa		
Angola	Varies	20–45 years of age for compulsory male and 18–45 years for voluntary male military service (registration at age 18 is mandatory); 20–45 years of age for voluntary female service; 2-year conscript service obligation; Angolan citizenship required; the Navy (MGA) is entirely staffed with volunteers (2013)
Benin	Conscription	18–35 years of age for selective compulsory and voluntary military service; a higher education diploma is required; both sexes are eligible for military service; conscript tour of duty: 18 months (2013)
Burkina Faso	Volunteer	18 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription; women may serve in supporting roles (2013)
Cabo Verde	Conscription	18–35 years of age for male and female selective compulsory military service; 2 years conscript service obligation; 17 years of age for voluntary service (with parental consent) (2013)
Cameroon	Volunteer	18–23 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; no conscription; high school graduation required; service obligation 4 years; periodic government calls for volunteers (2012)
Chad	Conscription	20 is the legal minimum age for compulsory military service, with a 3-year service obligation; 18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary service; no minimum age restriction for volunteers with consent from a parent or guardian; women are subject to 1 year of compulsory military or civic service at age 21; while provisions for military service have not been repealed, they have never been fully implemented (2015)
Comoros	Volunteer	18 years of age for 2-year voluntary male and female military service; no conscription (2015)
Congo, Republic of the	Volunteer	18 years of age for voluntary military service; women may serve in the Armed Forces (2012)

Country	Recruitment	Description
Cote d'Ivoire	Volunteer	18–25 years of age for compulsory and voluntary male and female military service; conscription is not enforced; voluntary recruitment of former rebels into the new national army is restricted to ages 22–29 (2012)
Equatorial Guinea	Varies	18 years of age for selective compulsory military service, although conscription is rare in practice; 2-year service obligation; women hold only administrative positions in the Navy (2013)
Eritrea	Conscription	18–40 years of age for male and female voluntary and compulsory military service; 16-month conscript service obligation (2012)
Gambia, The	Volunteer	18 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; no conscription; service obligation 6 months (2012)
Jordan	Varies	17 years of age for voluntary male military service; initial service term 2 years, with option to reenlist for 18 years; conscription at age 18 suspended in 1999; women not subject to conscription but can volunteer to serve in noncombat military positions in the Royal Jordanian Arab Army Women's Corps and RJAF (2013)
Kenya*	Conscription	18–26 years of age for male and female voluntary service (under 18 with parental consent), with a 9-year obligation (7 years for Kenyan Navy); applicants must be Kenyan citizens and provide a national identity card (obtained at age 18) and a school-leaving certificate; women serve under the same terms and conditions as men; mandatory retirement at age 55 (2012)
Lesotho	Volunteer	18–24 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription; women serve as commissioned officers (2012)
Mozambique	Varies	Registration for military service is mandatory for all males and females at 18 years of age; 18–35 years of age for selective compulsory military service; 18 years of age for voluntary service; 2-year service obligation; women may serve as officers or enlisted (2012)
Niger	Varies	18 is the presumed legal minimum age for compulsory or voluntary military service; enlistees must be Nigerien citizens and unmarried; 2-year service term; women may serve in health care (2012)
Senegal	Varies	18 years of age for voluntary military service; 20 years of age for selective conscript service; 2-year service obligation; women have been accepted into military service since 2008 (2013)
Sierra Leone	Volunteer	18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service (younger with parental consent); women are eligible to serve; no conscription; candidates must be HIV negative (2012)
South Africa	Volunteer	18 years of age for voluntary military service; women are eligible to serve in noncombat roles; 2-year service obligation (2012)
Sudan	Varies	18–33 years of age for male and female compulsory or voluntary military service; 1–2 year service obligation; a requirement that completion of national service was mandatory before entering public or private sector employment has been cancelled (2012)
Swaziland	Volunteer	18–30 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; no conscription; compulsory HIV testing required, only HIV-negative applicants accepted (2012)
Zambia	Volunteer	National registration required at age 16; 18–25 years of age for male and female voluntary military service (16 years of age with parental consent); no conscription; Zambian citizenship required; grade 12 certification required; mandatory HIV testing on enlistment; mandatory retirement for officers at age 65 (Army, Air Force) (2012)

Country	Recruitment	Description
Zimbabwe	Volunteer	18–24 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription; women are eligible to serve (2012)
Asia		
Burma	Volunteer	18–35 years of age (men) and 18–27 years of age (women) for voluntary military service; no conscription (a 2010 law reintroducing conscription has not yet entered into force); 2-year service obligation; male (ages 18–45) and female (ages 18–35) professionals (including doctors, engineers, mechanics) serve up to 3 years; service terms may be stretched to 5 years in an officially declared emergency; Burma signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on August 15, 1991; on June 27, 2012, the regime signed a Joint Action Plan on prevention of child recruitment; in February 2013, the military formed a new task force to address forced child conscription; approximately 600 children have been released from military service since the signing of the joint action plan (2015)
China*	Varies	18–24 years of age for selective compulsory military service, with a 2-year service obligation; no minimum age for voluntary service (all officers are volunteers); 18–19 years of age for women high school graduates who meet requirements for specific military jobs; a recent military decision allows women in combat roles; the first class of women warship commanders was in 2011 (2012)
Korea, South*	Conscription	20–30 years of age for compulsory military service, with middle school education required; minimum conscript service obligation: 21 months (Army, Marines), 23 months (Navy), 24 months (Air Force); 18–26 years of age for voluntary military service; women, in service since 1950, admitted to seven service branches, including infantry, but excluded from artillery, armor, anti-air, and chaplaincy corps; HIV-positive individuals are exempt from military service (2012)
Kyrgyzstan	Varies	18–27 years of age for compulsory or voluntary male military service in the Armed Forces or Interior Ministry; 1-year service obligation, with optional fee-based 3-year service in the call-up mobilization reserve; women may volunteer at age 19; 16–17 years of age for military cadets, who cannot take part in military operations (2013)
Philippines	Volunteer	17–23 years of age (officers 20–24) for voluntary military service; no conscription; applicants must be single male or female Philippine citizens with either 72 college credit hours (enlisted) or a baccalaureate degree (officers) (2013)
Taiwan	Varies	Starting with those born in 1994, males 18–36 years of age may volunteer for military service or must complete 4 months of compulsory military training (or substitute civil service in some cases); women may enlist; women in Air Force service are restricted to noncombat roles; for men born before December 1993, compulsory service (military or civil) is 1 year; for 8 years after discharge, men are subject to training recall four times for periods not to exceed 20 days (2016)
Vietnam	Varies	18–25 years of age for male compulsory and voluntary military service; females may volunteer for active duty military service; conscription typically takes place twice annually and service obligation is 18 months (Army, Air Defense), 2 years (Navy, Air Force); 18–45 years of age (male) or 18–40 years of age (female) for Militia Force or Self Defense Force service; males may enroll in military schools at age 17 (2013)

Country	Recruitment	Description
Central America and the Caribbean		
Bahamas, The	Volunteer	18 years of age for voluntary male and female service; no conscription (2012)
Cuba	Conscription	17–28 years of age for compulsory military service; 2-year service obligation; both sexes subject to military service (2012)
Dominican Republic	Volunteer	17–21 years of age for voluntary military service; recruits must have completed primary school and be Dominican Republic citizens; women may volunteer (2012)
El Salvador	Varies	18 years of age for selective compulsory military service; 16–22 years of age for voluntary male or female service; service obligation is 12 months, with 11 months for officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) (2012)
Guatemala	Varies	All male citizens between the ages of 18 and 50 are eligible for military service; in practice, most of the force is volunteer, however, a selective draft system is employed, resulting in a small portion of 17–21 year-olds conscripted; conscript service obligation varies from 1 to 2 years; women can serve as officers (2013)
Europe		
Belgium	Volunteer	18 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; conscription abolished in 1994 (2012)
Czechia	Volunteer	18–28 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; no conscription (2012)
Denmark	Varies	18 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service; conscripts serve an initial training period that varies from 4 to 12 months according to specialization; reservists are assigned to mobilization units following completion of their conscript service; women eligible to volunteer for military service (2012)
Finland	Varies	18 years of age for male voluntary and compulsory—and female voluntary—national military and nonmilitary service; service obligation 6–12 months; military obligation to age 60 (2012)
France	Volunteer	18–25 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; no conscription; 1-year service obligation; women serve in noncombat posts (2013)
Germany*	Volunteer	17–23 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; conscription ended July 1, 2011; service obligation 8–23 months or 12 years; women have been eligible for voluntary service in all military branches and positions since 2001 (2013)
Greece	Varies	19–45 years of age for compulsory military service; during wartime the law allows for recruitment beginning January of the year of inductee's 18th birthday, thus including 17-year-olds; 18 years of age for volunteers; conscript service obligation is 1 year for the Army and 9 months for the Air Force and Navy; women are eligible for voluntary military service (2014)
Ireland	Volunteer	18–25 years of age for male and female voluntary military service recruits to the Permanent Defence Forces (PDF); 18–27 years of age for the Naval Service; 18–28 for cadetship (officer) applicants; 18–35 years of age for the Reserve Defence Forces (RDF); maximum obligation 12 years (PDF officers), 5 years (PDF enlisted), 3 years RDF (4 years for Naval Service Reserves); EU citizenship, refugee status, or 5-year residence in Ireland required (2014)
Italy*	Volunteer	18–25 years of age for voluntary military service; women may serve in any military branch; Italian citizenship required; 1-year service obligation (2013)

Country	Recruitment	Description
Latvia	Volunteer	18 years of age for voluntary male and female military service; no conscription; under current law, every citizen is entitled to serve in the armed forces for life (2012)
Luxembourg	Volunteer	18–24 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; no conscription; Luxembourg citizen or EU citizen with 3-year residence in Luxembourg (2012)
Norway	Varies	19–35 years of age for male compulsory military service; 16 years of age in wartime; 17 years of age for male volunteers; 18 years of age for women; 1-year service obligation followed by 4–5 refresher training periods through ages 35–60, totaling 18 months (2012)
Poland	Volunteer	18–28 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; conscription phased out in 2009–12; service obligation shortened from 12 to 9 months in 2005; women only allowed to serve as officers and noncommissioned officers (2013)
Romania	Volunteer	Conscription ended 2006; 18 years of age for male and female voluntary service; all military inductees (including women) contract for an initial 5-year term of service, with subsequent successive 3-year terms until age 36 (2015)
Serbia	Volunteer	18 years of age for voluntary military service; conscription abolished December 2010; reserve obligation to age 60 for men and age 50 for women (2013)
Slovakia	Varies	18–30 years of age for voluntary military service; conscription in peacetime suspended in 2006; women are eligible to serve (2012)
Spain*	Volunteer	18–26 years of age for voluntary military service by a Spanish citizen or legal immigrant, 2–3 year obligation; women allowed to serve in all SAF branches, including combat units; no conscription, but Spanish government retains right to mobilize citizens 19–25 years of age in a national emergency; mandatory retirement of non-NCO enlisted personnel at age 45 or 58, depending on service length (2013)
Sweden	Varies	18–47 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; Swedish citizenship required; service obligation is 7.5 months (Army), 7–15 months (Navy), 8–12 months (Air Force); the Swedish Parliament has abolished compulsory military service, with exclusively voluntary recruitment as of July 2010; conscription remains an option in emergencies; after completing initial service, soldiers have a reserve commitment until age 47 (2013)
Switzerland	Varies	19–26 years of age for male compulsory military service; 18 years of age for voluntary male and female military service; every Swiss male has to serve at least 260 days in the armed forces; conscripts receive 18 weeks of mandatory training, followed by seven 3–week intermittent recalls for training during the next 10 years (2012)
United Kingdom*	Volunteer	16–33 years of age (officers 17–28) for voluntary military service (with parental consent under 18); no conscription; women serve in military services including some ground combat roles; the UK's Defense Ministry is expected to further ease existing women's restrictions by the end of 2016; must be citizen of the UK, Commonwealth, or Republic of Ireland; reservists serve a minimum of 3 years, to age 45 or 55; 17 years 6 months of age for voluntary military service by Nepalese citizens in the Brigade of Gurkhas; 16–34 years of age for voluntary military service by Papua New Guinean citizens (2016)

Country	Recruitment	Description
Middle East		
Israel*	Conscription	18 years of age for compulsory (Jews, Druze) military service; 17 years of age for voluntary (Christians, Muslims, Circassians) military service; both sexes are obligated to military service; conscript service obligation is 32 months for enlisted men and 24 months for enlisted women (varies based on military occupation), 48 months for officers; pilots commit to 9 years' service; reserve obligation to age 41–51 (men), age 24 (women) (2015)
Pakistan*	Volunteer	16–23 years of age for voluntary military service; soldiers cannot be deployed for combat until age 18; the Pakistani Air Force and Pakistani Navy have inducted their first female pilots and sailors; the Pakistan Air Force recruits aviation technicians at age 15; service obligation (Navy) 10–18 years; retirement required after 18–30 years' service or age 40–52 (2012)
Syria	Varies	18 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service; conscript service obligation is 18 months; women are not conscripted but may volunteer to serve; reenlistment obligation 5 years, with retirement after 15 years or age 40 (enlisted) or 20 years or age 45 (NCOs) (2012)
Turkey	Varies	21–41 years of age for male compulsory military service; 18 years of age for voluntary service; 12-month conscript obligation for nonuniversity graduates, 6–12 months for university graduates (graduates of higher education may perform 6 months of military service as short-term privates, or 12 months as reserve officers); conscripts are called to register at age 20, for service at 21; women serve in the Turkish Armed Forces only as officers; reserve obligation to age 41; Turkish citizens with a residence or work permit who have worked abroad for at least 3 years (1,095 days) can be exempt from military service in exchange for 6,000 EUR or its equivalent in foreign currencies; a law passed in December 2014 introduced a one-time payment scheme which exempted Turkish citizens 27 and older from conscription in exchange for a payment of \$8,150 (2013)
United Arab Emirates	Varies	18–30 years of age for compulsory military service for men, optional service for women; 17 years of age for male volunteers with parental approval; 2-year general obligation, 9 months for secondary school graduates; women may train for 9 months regardless of education (2014)
North America		
Bermuda	Varies	18–45 years of age for voluntary male or female enlistment in the Bermuda Regiment; males must register at age 18 and may be subject to conscription; term of service is 38 months for volunteers or conscripts (2012)
Canada*	Volunteer	17 years of age for voluntary male and female military service (with parental consent); 16 years of age for Reserve and Military College applicants; Canadian citizenship or permanent residence status required; maximum 34 years of age; service obligation 3–9 years (2012)
Mexico	Varies	18 years of age for compulsory military service, conscript service obligation is 12 months; 16 years of age with consent for voluntary enlistment; conscripts serve only in the Army; Navy and Air Force service is all voluntary; women are eligible for voluntary military service; cadets enrolled in military schools from the age of 15 are considered members of the armed forces (2012)

Country	Recruitment	Description
United States*	Volunteer	18 years of age (17 years of age with parental consent) for male and female voluntary service; no conscription; maximum enlistment age is 42 (Army), 27 (Air Force), 34 (Navy), 28 (Marines); 8-year service obligation, including 2–5 years active duty (Army), 2 years active (Navy), 4 years active (Air Force, Marines); DoD is eliminating prohibitions restricting women from assignments in units smaller than brigades or near combat units (2013)
Oceania		
Australia*	Volunteer	17 years of age for voluntary military service (with parental consent); no conscription; women allowed to serve in most combat roles, except the Army special forces (2013)
South America		
Bolivia	Varies	18–49 years of age for 12-month compulsory male and female military service; Bolivian citizenship required; 17 years of age for voluntary service; when annual number of volunteers falls short of goal, compulsory recruitment is effected, including conscription of boys as young as 14; 15–19 years of age for voluntary premilitary service, provides exemption from further military service (2013)
Brazil	Varies	18–45 years of age for compulsory military service; conscript service obligation is 10–12 months; 17–45 years of age for voluntary service; an increasing percentage of the ranks are "long-service" volunteer professionals; women were allowed to serve in the armed forces beginning in early 1980s, when the Brazilian Army became the first army in South America to accept women into career ranks; women serve in Navy and Air Force only in Women's Reserve Corps (2012)
Chile	Varies	18–45 years of age for voluntary male and female military service, although the right to compulsory recruitment of males 18–45 is retained; service obligation is 12 months for Army and 22 months for Navy and Air Force (2015)
Peru	Volunteer	18–50 years of age for male and 18–45 years of age for female voluntary military service; no conscription (2012)
Portugal	Volunteer	18–30 years of age for voluntary military service; no compulsory military service, but conscription possible if insufficient volunteers available; women serve in the armed forces, on naval ships since 1993, but are prohibited from serving in some combat specialties; reserve obligation to age 35 (2012)
Uruguay	Varies	18–30 years of age (18–22 years of age for navy) for male or female voluntary military service; up to 40 years of age for specialists; enlistment is voluntary in peacetime, but the government has the authority to conscript in emergencies; minimum 6-year education (2013)
Venezuela	Conscription	All citizens of military service age (18–60 years old) are obligated to register for military service, though mandatory recruitment is forbidden; the minimum conscript service obligation is 12 months (2015)
South Asia		
India*	Volunteer	16–18 years of age for voluntary military service (Army 17 1/2, Air Force 17, Navy 16 1/2); no conscription; women may join as officers, currently serve in combat roles as pilots, and will soon be allowed in all combat roles (2016)

* Indicates countries that allow women to serve in combat roles.

Rules and their enforcement for military servicewomen vary in different countries, and it is possible that women serve in de facto combat roles in some countries not listed in this table (Fisher, 2013).²

Except for very minor punctuation and style corrections, the information in this table has been provided exactly as it appears in the source text.

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.³

Chapter 2. Case Studies

The recruitment and retention of women remains a challenge for militaries around the world. Countries that allow women to formally serve in combat employ a variety of techniques to attract and retain these individuals. To highlight the variations, this chapter provides case studies outlining the recruitment and retention strategies of four countries: (1) Australia, (2) Canada, (3) Norway, and (4) South Africa. These countries were selected because the military forces of these countries as well as that of the United States face similar logistical and cultural challenges to gender integration; however, each of the other countries maintains a substantially smaller force than the United States does. Moreover, similar to the United States, the other four countries face continued challenges with recruiting and retaining women for military service. Taken together, the Committee can learn important lessons about efforts that have been successful as well as those that have fallen short.

A. Australia

This section provides an overview of the strategies that have been successful in the recruitment and retention of women in the military services of Australia. Created under the Defence Act 1903, the Australian Defence Force (ADF)'s primary mission is to "defend Australia against armed attack."⁴ ADF has three distinct branches: the Royal Australian Air Force, the Australian Army, and the Royal Australian Navy. As of 2016, ADF employs a total of 77,399 permanent and active reserve personnel.⁵

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ ADF's commitment to full gender equality in each of its service branches is demonstrated by the number of unique strategies it has implemented to recruit and retain female service members and by its full transparency with regard to progress toward those goals. For example, ADF's annual "Women in the ADF Report" provides a detailed accounting of progress toward recruitment and retention goals and aims to keep ADF accountable to itself and the public on gender-related issues within its branches. ADF employs a range of techniques to recruit women that focus on highlighting the lifestyle and opportunities available in the military, supporting women during the recruitment process, and minimizing obstacles. Gender integration is progressing similarly in the respective military forces of Australia and the United States, and the U.S. military could apply several of Australia's strategies.

1. Background

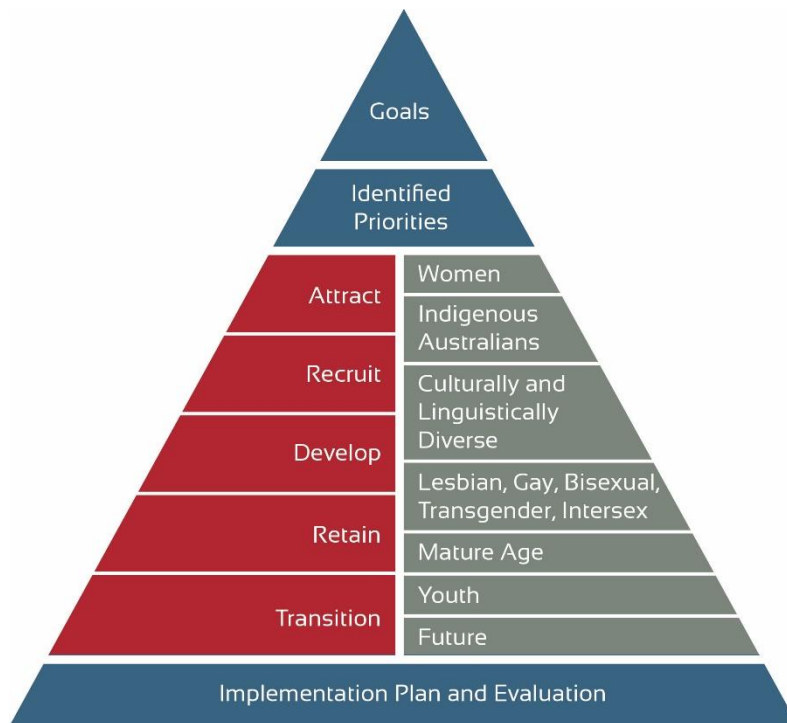
Women have served in the Australian armed forces since 1899, though for much of that time, they served primarily in support roles. In 1941, Australia created female branches of its Air Force, Army, and Navy to provide support during World War II; after the war, these branches were disbanded. The manpower shortage during the Korean War prompted the creation of the Women's Australian Air Force (WRAAF) and the Women's Australian Army Corps (WAAC). Beginning in 1975, women were fully integrated into ADF, and WRAAF and WAAC were permanently disbanded. In 2011, all restrictions for women serving in frontline combat roles were removed.⁶

2. Recruitment Goals

Despite full integration into the armed services in 2011, women are still underrepresented in ADF. According to the Australian Department of Defence's 2012 "Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2012–2017)" report, ADF "does not accurately reflect the society from which it is drawn."⁷ To increase

the representativeness of its forces, ADF seeks to increase the recruitment and retention of women in an effort to “better reflect . . . Australian society.”⁸ This report identified the recruitment and retention of women by ADF as one of the top five priorities for the organization from 2012 to 2017, and each ADF branch has sought to achieve this goal using different strategies. Figure 1 illustrates ADF’s priority goals for 2012–2017.

Figure 1. Australian Defence Force Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 2012–2017



“Future” refers to any identified priority groups that may have arisen after the publication of this strategy. Source: Government of Australia, Department of Defence, Defence People Group, 2014⁹

In 2016, ADF published details on the success of its efforts to recruit women into each of its services against 2015–2016 recruitment targets. The Air Force met 71.2 percent of its target and achieved greater recruitment into general entry (77.5 percent) than officer (61.5 percent) roles.¹⁰ The Army met 57.5 percent of its target and was only moderately successful in recruiting women for general entry (57.7 percent) and officer (56.8 percent) roles. Finally, the Navy met 79.1 percent of its recruitment target and was more successful at recruiting into general entry (82 percent) rather than officer (64 percent) roles.

3. Recruitment Strategies

The section that follows outlines the various recruitment strategies employed by each ADF branch.

a. Air Force

As of June 2016, the Australian Air Force’s female participation rate was 19.2 percent. For 2023, its target participation rate is 25 percent.¹¹ In addition to setting female representation rate targets, the Air Force implemented the following strategies to boost female recruitment:

- ▶ Created the Women in the Air Force online marketing campaign “Do What You Love”¹²
- ▶ Continued support for the specialist women recruitment team
- ▶ Established the “Chief of Air Force” flying scholarship, which is administered via the Australian Women Pilots Association
- ▶ Distributed “PropElle,” a recruitment guide designed to support female candidates during the recruitment process
- ▶ Piloted the reduced initial minimum period of service program, which began in July 2013 and was extended for an additional 2 years to the end of 2017
- ▶ Implemented changes to female pilot obligations that removed the initial minimum period of service for female direct entry pilots and removed on-appointment commitments
- ▶ Implemented the “Graduate Pilot Scheme,” which aims to recruit female pilots from those actively pursuing careers as civilian pilots and working to obtain a bachelor’s degree in aviation from local universities; the Air Force plans to expand this program in the future
- ▶ Implemented an experiential camps for girls, through which young women aged 16–24 may obtain hands-on experience by participating in either Flight Camp or Tech Camp; the camps aim to increase awareness of and opportunities to engage with potential Air Force employment opportunities

These strategies emphasize introducing women to potential career paths in the Air Force and supporting women during the recruitment process.

b. Army

As of June 2016, the Australian Army’s female participation rate was 12.1 percent; for 2023, its target participation rate is 15 percent. The Chief of Army set an additional long-term goal for a female participation rate of 25 percent.¹³ To meet these recruitment goals, the Army implemented the following recruitment strategies:

- ▶ Implemented the “Recruit When Ready” initiative, which allows suitable, qualified recruits to fast track through the traditional recruitment process
- ▶ Implemented the “Recruit to Area” initiative, which allows recruits to specify a particular location for their first posting
- ▶ Established a reduced initial minimum period of service for specific employment categories
- ▶ Established the Army Pre-Conditioning Course (prerecruitment fitness program) and Army Physical Fitness Program preenlistment training (combat preparation), designed to assist female recruits in meeting entry-level fitness requirements
- ▶ Continued support for the all-female Specialist Recruiting Team (Perth, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Parramatta)

The Australian Army’s recruitment initiatives focus on minimizing obstacles that may hinder the recruitment of women who are ready to serve. Each of these strategies is marketed directly to potential female recruits via the Australian Defence Force website (www.defencejobs.gov.au).

c. Navy

As of June 2016, the Australian Navy's female participation rate was 19.1 percent; for 2023, its target participation rate is 25 percent.¹⁴ To reach this goal, and to increase the representation of women in several labor categories in which they are disproportionately underrepresented (e.g., skilled trades, engineering, aviation), the Navy implemented the following recruitment initiatives:

- ▶ Opened all Navy positions to women (with no upper limit on female recruitment for 2016–2017)
- ▶ Established the “Women in the Navy” webpage (<http://www.defencejobs.gov.au/navy/about-the-navy/women-in-the-navy/>), which profiles currently serving female members and emphasizes nontraditional roles and job categories
- ▶ Established a specialized recruiting team (Women in the Navy) in four primary recruitment locations (Brisbane, Parramatta, Melbourne, and Perth) that focuses on attracting and mentoring female candidates
- ▶ Established Navy recruitment targets, particularly in underrepresented labor categories
- ▶ Expanded the Gap Year Programme, which allows recruits to explore naval careers before committing to one themselves
- ▶ Reduced the initial minimum period of service for selected labor categories (implemented for other ranks enlistment to specified categories as of January 2015)

The Navy's female recruitment strategies focus on increasing the number of women serving in underrepresented employment areas, and highlighting “the lifestyle and opportunities open to women . . . [to improve] women's propensity to join the service.”¹⁵

4. Retention Strategies

The Australian Department of Defence has fully committed to making retention of women by ADF a high priority. In the 2015–2016 “Women in the ADF Report,” the Defence Department outlined its current retention strategies and each branch's progress toward retention goals.¹⁶ This section lists these strategies and provides more detail about those that are most intriguing.

The Defence Department's ongoing strategies to retain women in its services follow:

- ▶ Monitor career satisfaction and satisfaction with the recruitment process
- ▶ Increase participation in learning, training, education, and professional development opportunities
- ▶ Monitor and address the gender pay gap
- ▶ Provide formal avenues toward flexible work arrangements (the Total Workforce Model)
- ▶ Make it easier for members to take and return from mid-career breaks
- ▶ Increase promotion opportunities by providing leadership development courses, increasing female representation on promotion boards, and offering female career advancement mentorship opportunities
- ▶ Monitor career management and satisfaction

- ▶ Address cultural barriers that may impede female representation in leadership roles
- ▶ Provide maternity and paternity leave
- ▶ Improve access to quality childcare¹⁷

Next, this section discusses several of these strategies in further detail.

a. Monitor Satisfaction With the Recruitment Process

ADF considers satisfaction with the recruitment process to be an important factor in the retention of women in its services, and it has invested resources in studying this issue. Women who are dissatisfied with the recruitment process are less likely to stay and advance in their military careers. Satisfaction with the recruitment process was similar across each ADF branch and did not vary significantly between genders (i.e., men and women were similarly satisfied with the recruitment process). A total of 67.9 percent of women recruited in 2015 indicated that the recruitment process was satisfactory.¹⁸

b. Increase Mentorship Opportunities

ADF has created several formal and informal mentorship programs aimed at providing women at all levels with career coaching. Formal, established mentorship programs include the Women's Network, a Navy initiative; the Army Regional People Forum; the Women's Integrated Networking Groups program, an Air Force endeavor; and the Women's Forums. Another initiative, The Women's Speaker Program, allows women from higher ranks the opportunity to reach out and share their knowledge and expertise by speaking with women in lower ranks. Other, more nascent mentorship programs are under development or are in early stages of implementation within every branch of ADF, each with its own focus (e.g., the Navy Women in Engineering Mentoring Program).¹⁹

c. Address the Gender Pay Gap

One critical factor related to the retention of women in military services is the amount they are paid relative to men who occupy the same or similar positions (i.e., the gender pay gap). The Workforce Gender Equality Act of 2012 requires all Australian private employers to report these figures; ADF is exempted from this requirement but publishes these figures anyway as a means to maintain transparency and movement toward full gender integration goals. As of June 2016, the gender pay gap across ADF is approximately 5.3 percent (i.e., women earn 5.3 percent less than men for the same work), which is lower than the Australian national average. However, ADF was quick to note that the gap is an imprecise measure and does not take into account a worker's tenure—the amount of time an individual has served in a role. In other words, ADF has indicated that the existing gender pay gap is indicative of “women being disproportionately represented in lower ranks and in occupational groups that are in the lower pay grades and in lower pay increments.”²⁰

d. Implement the Total Workforce Model

The Total Workforce Model (implemented in June 2016) aims to “modernise career arrangements, provide greater workforce agility, and increase retention of skilled people to meet future capability requirements.”²¹ Essentially, this model makes it easier for individuals to move between active and reserve duty to meet individual circumstances and needs. It also introduced another service opportunity, Service Option D and Service Category 6. This opportunity allows members to serve in a dual employment arrangement and to transfer between service categories offering varying levels of

flexibility based on personal circumstances and life stage. Although this model was not designed with exclusively women in mind, the flexibility it offers may have a greater effect on female service members.

B. Canada

This section provides an overview of the strategies that have been successful in the recruitment and retention of women in the military services of Canada. The goal of Canada's Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is to protect Canada and Canadian interests and values while contributing to international peace and security. CAF has three branches: the Royal Canadian Air Force (13,000 regular force and 2,400 air reserve personnel); the Canadian Army (22,800 full-time and 18,700 part-time soldiers); and the Royal Canadian Navy (8,400 full-time and 5,100 part-time sailors).²²

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ Similar to the United States, Canada has faced significant issues in recruiting and retaining women. Recent research findings and media coverage have suggested that Canada is striving hard to recruit women into the military, but retention policies regarding female servicewomen are not as clear on that point. Senior military leaders have widely promoted their goal to increase female representation in the military to 25 percent by 2026, but it does not appear that the potential effectiveness of these proposed recruitment policies has been widely studied. The Canadian military is fighting the public perception that its culture is highly masculine with an underlying sexualized aspect. To address this cultural barrier, CAF must recruit and retain women and promote them to senior positions, but Canada is struggling to recruit and retain service members in general, not just women. As a result, CAF implemented new strategies to recruit and retain women in 2016, some of which could also be applied in the United States.

1. Background

Women have been serving in CAF with restricted employment since the early 1950s. In 1989, Canada's Human Rights Commission Tribunal ruled that excluding women from combat roles was discrimination. The tribunal gave CAF a decade to enact complete gender integration into all positions.²³ By 2000, all positions were officially opened to women when Canada's Navy lifted the restriction against women serving on submarines. As of January 2014, the percentage of women in CAF was 14.8 percent, with more than 9,400 women in the Regular Force and more than 4,800 women in the Primary Reserve.²⁴ During the 2014–2015 fiscal year, about 50 percent of women in CAF were concentrated across six occupations: resource management support clerks, supply technicians, logistics officers, medical technicians, nursing officers, and cooks.²⁵

The CAF website (<http://www.forces.ca/en/home>) prominently displays information relating to women in the forces, including testimonials from women currently serving and a frequently asked questions section that covers topics from physical fitness standards to childcare. Further detail on the strategies used by CAF to recruit and retain women follows.

2. Recruitment Strategies

In Canada, the Employment Equity Act requires CAF to maintain the following participation targets for full-time military personnel and reservists: 25.1 percent for women, 11.7 percent for visible minorities, and 3.3 percent for indigenous Canadians. In 2014, amidst threats from Canada's Human Rights Commission Tribunal, CAF senior leaders said they were unable to meet the original targets and

requested that they be reduced to 17.6 percent for women, 8.2 percent for visible minorities, and 2.6 percent for indigenous Canadians.²⁶

In February 2016, General Jonathan Vance, the chief of the Canadian Defense Staff, announced that the Canadian military would increase the number of women serving by 1 percent every year until women made up 25 percent of the armed forces.²⁷

In September 2016, the Canadian Office of the Auditor General conducted an audit to examine several initiatives enacted by CAF, including its efforts to increase recruitment of women.³ The office concluded, “While some efforts were made to attract women, no special recruiting program was developed for that purpose. In our view, without a more concerted effort to attract women in occupations where they are under-represented, CAF will remain significantly short of its 25 percent employment equity goal.”³ In response, CAF implemented the following recruitments strategies in 2016:

- ▶ Established priority processing and enrolment to women
- ▶ Created a reenergized marketing strategy with an assigned line of advertising for women
- ▶ Allowed female officers released from CAF in the past 5 years to return to military service
- ▶ Prioritized female applicants at military academies

In 2017, CAF will implement the following additional strategies:

- ▶ Establish a recruiting and diversity task force aimed at increasing diversity in CAF
- ▶ Found an advisory board of prominent Canadians to advise on recruiting
- ▶ Institute a women’s employment opportunity program to inform and educate women about the benefits of a CAF career

3. Retention Strategies

CAF has faced several barriers to retention in the services. In 2015, service members who left CAF most commonly cited (1) a desire for geographic stability, (2) job dissatisfaction, and (3) a desire for higher pay and additional benefits.²⁸ Several policies offered by CAF afford flexibility for service members throughout different stages in their career; these may particularly benefit women.

a. Flexible Parental Leave

CAF offers a flexible parental leave policy. The Canadian military offers up to 35 weeks for parental leave.²⁹ Parental leave can be taken any time during the 52 weeks after the day the child is born or placed with an adoptive family. For service members who cannot collect all their parental benefits during the 52-week eligibility period because of an imperative military requirement, the eligibility period is extended to 109 weeks.

b. Childcare

On every CAF base and within CAF wings, there is a Military Family Resource Centre, which offers childcare to military parents. These centres provide regular childcare and emergency childcare and offer discounted rates for childcare that exceeds 24 hours because of lengthened shifts or other emergency

situations. Each centre has a locally elected board that ensures the centre meets the need of each individual community.

C. Norway

This section provides an overview of the strategies that have been successful in the recruitment and retention of women in the military services of Norway. The Norwegian Armed Forces provide for the country's national security and contribute to international peace and security through the United Nations as well as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) missions worldwide. The Norwegian Armed Forces has four branches: the Air Force, Army, Home Guard, and Navy. As of 2014, more than 11,000 people worked for the Norwegian Armed Forces.³⁰

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ Although Norway presents an interesting case model, the country still faces challenges with integrating women into its military. Norway has instituted mandatory conscription; therefore, its lessons on recruitment are not directly applicable to the United States. However, Norway has utilized unique strategies to retain women such as unisex lodging, all-female training programs, and employing women in the highest levels of Norwegian military leadership.

1. Background

In 2013, Norway became the first NATO country to implement mandatory military conscription for women. In response to the decision, a Norwegian lawmaker and supporter of the bill responded, "The armed forces need access to the best resources, regardless of gender, and right now mostly men are recruited."³¹

Since 1985, Norway has allowed women to serve in all combat positions, including on submarines.³² Relying on mandatory conscription, Norway has a population of 60,000 individuals eligible to fill the ranks of its military; however, to maintain its current strength, the country recruits 10,000 of the most motivated individuals from that pool. Between 2013 (when conscription was mandated for women) and 2016, the proportion of teenage female conscripts rose by a third.³³

While Norway's military is still working to fully integrate women, it has made enormous strides during the past decade. In 2002, just 0.7 percent of the Norwegian Armed Forces were women. However, by 2014, women made up 10 percent of the military and 14 percent of conscripts, and in 2015, of the 20,000 conscripts who entered the second phase of evaluation, 37 percent (7,000) were women.³⁴

2. Retention Strategies

A 2014 report by the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment found that 13 percent of female service members aged 20–24 left the military, compared with 8 percent of their male counterparts.³⁵ Senior leaders aim to have women represent 20 percent of the Norwegian military by 2020. Norway has implemented several strategies to retain women; descriptions of these follow.

a. Prominent Female Leaders

Women are well represented among Norway's military leadership. Since 1999, five women have served as Norway's Minister of Defence, including the current minister, Ine Marie Eriksen Sørreide. At present,

women serve as the Chief of the Royal Norwegian Air Force and the Head of the Norwegian Defence University College.³⁶

b. Unisex Lodging

Norway also offers unisex dormitories for soldiers; each dorm houses two women and four men. The Norwegian military found that unisex lodging made women “one of the boys” and encouraged a team-like atmosphere for them in training. There have been fewer reports of sexual harassment on bases with unisex dorms compared with bases where dorms were segregated.³⁷

c. All-Female Special Forces Military Training Program

In 2014, a new special forces unit—the “Jegertroppen,” or Hunter Troop—became the first all-female Special Forces military training program. Although women in this unit carry 60-pound backpacks instead of 88-pound backpacks as their male counterparts do, they still complete the same physical demands as their male counterparts—for example, long-range patrols, Arctic survival, counterterrorism, urban warfare, and paratrooper training—sometimes going without food for days.³⁸ The pilot program was meant to last for 1 year, but after initial success among women trainees, it was expanded to 3 years. The unit specializes in surveillance and reconnaissance in urban areas; it was created to increase opportunities for Norwegian servicewomen to work with civilian Afghan women.³⁹ The selection process for the unit is rigorous. In 2015, there were 196 applicants; 37 completed the first round of selection, 17 completed the yearlong training, and 14 joined the unit after training. In 2014, just 20 completed the training, and 13 joined the unit. Women who complete the training score above average in evaluations compared with those entering Norway’s officer school.

D. South Africa

This section describes the landscape of female military recruitment and retention strategies utilized by the South African National Defense Force (SANDF). SANDF has four armed branches: the South African Air Force, the South African Army, the South African Military Health Service, and the South African Navy. SANDF has about 78,700 active personnel and 15,100 reserve personnel.⁴⁰

➤ **Bottom Line Up Front** ➤ Despite some progress in both recruitment and retention strategies, SANDF is still in a nascent phase of gender integration. Thus far, the country’s approach has been to base its policies on international guidance (e.g., United Nations resolutions). Many policies are “on the books” but have yet to be fully implemented. For women in SANDF, legal equality on many policies does not necessarily mean equal treatment or consideration in many cases. Given this, it is too early to judge the efficacy of many of the following strategies and their potential applicability for use by the U.S. military. However, SANDF and South Africa’s Department of Defence have demonstrated their collective commitment to enhancing their recruitment and retention of women, and the groundwork has been laid for successful implementation in the future.

1. Background

Since 1970,¹ SANDF (known as the South African Defence Force Council from 1957 to 1994)⁴¹ has allowed women to serve, with the purpose of freeing men from noncombat roles so they would be available for military operations.⁴² Though they are permitted to serve, women have been largely confined to support roles such as “finance, personnel, logistics, medical services, and welfare.”⁴³ In 2011, 26.6 percent of SANDF personnel were women.⁴⁴ Currently, though SANDF boasts the highest number of women in service in the continent of Africa, historical South African perspectives about prohibiting women from serving in combat roles still pervade.⁴⁵ Moreover, disproportionately few women hold top-ranking positions.

2. Recruitment Strategies

Within the past decade, in accordance with the South African constitution, SANDF has continued to make the armed forces more representative of the country’s population. The constitution states that the “. . . primary object of the Defence Force is to defend and protect the Republic, its territorial integrity and its people in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of International law regulating the use of force.”⁴⁶

In 2009, the Ministry of Defence underscored that the constitution’s reference to “people” be inclusive of all people, including all races as well as both women and men. To better align its practices with South Africa’s constitution, SANDF has worked to (1) increase the representation of women in all SANDF ranks, (2) move toward widespread acceptance of women in combat roles, and (3) provide mandatory gender sensitivity training to all Department of Defence personnel.⁴⁷

In 2000, SANDF adopted the gender mainstreaming strategy detailed in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325. The resolution stipulates that countries include “representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict,” including the military.⁴⁸ The approaches outlined in the strategy solidified the infrastructure and accountability mechanisms to facilitate gender representativeness in SANDF. The resolution also encourages female participation in peacekeeping missions, a strategy with which SANDF has found continued success. SANDF has successfully recruited the largest contingent of women serving in peace support operations worldwide; as of 2010, South Africa’s contribution to peacekeeping missions was ranked the 13th largest in the world.⁴⁹

In 2015, South Africa reaffirmed its commitment to increase the representativeness of SANDF to more closely approximate the demographics of the country. As a means to achieve that end, the Chief of SANDF was instructed to set recruitment targets for underrepresented groups, including women. As of 2016, SANDF had met its target goal of 30 percent female membership, which included 5 female major-generals, 41 female brigadier-generals, and 8 female defence attachés and assistant defence attachés. In 2016, approximately 15 percent of command positions and 38 percent of senior management positions were held by women.⁵⁰

¹ Until 1995, when South Africa ended its policy of racial segregation (“apartheid”), SANDF allowed only White women to serve in the military. Since 1995, SANDF has allowed women of all races to serve in the military. (See Skaine, R. [2011]. *Women in combat: A reference handbook* [p. 98]. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO).

Heads of state convened in 2015 at the headquarters of the United Nations to define 17 sustainable development goals that would be prioritized in 2016. The fifth goal states that countries should aim to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” and the South African Department of Defence has pledged its commitment to achieving this goal within SANDF.⁵¹ SANDF’s approach to date has been to set priorities and recruitment strategies that follow international guidance on increasing the representativeness of women in the military.

3. Retention Strategies

Many factors, both positive and negative, affect the retention of female military service members. Some factors—such as offering maternity leave and equal pension benefits—are logistical. Other factors are cultural; predicated upon longstanding, strongly held beliefs about women in the military; and more difficult to change. One study that examined gender equality in SANDF found that “most women in all rank groups across all arms of the service expressed that although they are subjected to the same training with their male counterparts, they do not receive the same recognition.”⁵² Although it has yet to successfully achieve true equality for women serving in its ranks, SANDF has made significant progress within the past decade by addressing several factors related to the retention of women.

a. Maternity Benefits

Maternity leave policies are an important contributor to women’s retention in any workplace; they give mothers the ability to recover from childbirth and bond with their infants before returning to work. In accordance with policy 05/1996 of South Africa’s Department of Defence, SANDF offers women special leave with full pay for “confinement” (i.e., the period of time including late pregnancy, delivery, and postdelivery), which typically is up to 4 months.⁵³ During this time and for a period of up to 12 months post-maternity leave, women are to be considered for normal promotion. Though the policy states that women should freely report pregnancies, it does not explain how, or mandate through which mechanisms, women should report. Furthermore, the policy does not specify how pregnant women are to participate in training activities. As a result, these details are left to supervisor discretion. Although the policy is meant to protect women and retain them after pregnancy, it lacks important oversight mechanisms to monitor how the policy is implemented and ensure that “women are not removed [from service] unnecessarily.”⁵⁴ One recent high-profile incident highlighted the need for such oversight mechanisms: In 2013, several female SANDF officers were heavily reprimanded by their commanding officers for becoming pregnant. The officers berated the women and told them they “were a disgrace to the force and would be transferred to other units, as they were unwelcome at the base.” As a result of this treatment, one pregnant trainee committed suicide.⁵⁵ Although the provision of maternity benefits is a step in the right direction for retaining and protecting women in SANDF, more progress is needed in this area.

b. Military Health Benefits

Another key factor in retention rates relates to the health benefits afforded to military personnel and their families. Since 2016, SANDF has provided free medical services for male service members, their wives, and any dependent children. However, female service members do not share this privilege; married women serving in SANDF do not receive free medical care for their dependents. Though the General Regulations of SANDF were amended in 1998, it has not been fully implemented; SANDF still extends medical benefits only to members of the Permanent Force and Auxiliary services, and excludes dependents of Short-Term Service and Service Corps members.⁵⁶

c. Pension Benefits

As of 2016, both men and women were equally able to contribute to and receive pension benefits, though this has not always been the case. Previously, women and men in the same rank did not receive equal pension benefits. Although both men and women are now able to contribute to and receive benefits on an equal basis, the lingering effects of previous discrepancies means that after “many years of contributing less than their male counterparts . . . , [women] receive a smaller voluntary severance package.”⁵⁷ Despite this disparity, much progress has been made in SANDF’s handling of pension benefits.

Chapter 3. Implications for the United States

These findings on foreign militaries' approaches to recruiting and retaining female members provide important context for the information that DACOWITS has been provided in recent years regarding the strategies used by the U.S. military (see Table 2). It is important to consider that, although the United States does share some similarities with the four countries profiled earlier in this report, the U.S. military has its own set of unique circumstances. For this reason, the U.S. Department of Defense runs Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS), a program that develops market research and joint marketing communications to complement the marketing efforts of individual Services.

Table 2. Examples of U.S. Military Strategies to Recruit and Retain Women

Recruitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online advertising. The individual Services often use their websites to advertise to women. Example: The Army's website features profiles of women at all levels of the Army (both active duty and veterans) as well as information on the history of women in the Army.^a• Commercial marketing. The individual Services also engage in commercial marketing techniques often designed to target women. Example: The Marine Corps' new advertising campaign will feature more women.^b• Market research. JAMRS conducts marketing efforts to complement the individual Services' marketing efforts. Example: JAMRS developed the "Opportunities for Women in the Navy" video.^c• Female recruiters. The Army is increasing the number of female recruiters to better target women (the goal is to increase the proportion of female recruiters by 1 percent each year for the next 3 years to ensure that at least 1 woman is on staff at each of the Army's more than 780 larger recruiting centers across the country).^d• Outreach. The Marine Corps has begun recruiting from high school girls' sports teams.^e
Retention
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policies supporting flexibility. The individual Services offer policies that aim to retain more parents (most commonly women); for example, the Career Intermision Program, maternity leave, and child care resources.^f• Geographic stability. The individual Services also offer policies to support the geographic stability of dual-military families (almost half of all married female Service members are married to a fellow Service member). Example: The Navy recently introduced guidelines that heighten the priority to co-locate couples when both spouses serve in the military.^g• Mentorship. The Air Force is using a web-based mentoring system and a higher target for the percentage of females in the officer applicant pool in an attempt to better retain women.^h

^a See U.S. Army, n.d.⁵⁸

^b See Schogol, 2016⁵⁹

^c See U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.⁶⁰

^d See Baldor, 2016⁶¹

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