

## BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

### WOMEN IN SERVICE (WISR)

#### Executive Talking Points

- Air Force has 99% positions open to women and decision to open affected 6 occupations and 4K+ positions
- Air Force Implementation Plan consists of two main parts:
  - Use of & timeline of existing personnel lifecycle processes from recruit, access, train, and assign
  - Considerations and incorporation of SecDef's integration concerns as outlined in his Dec '15 memo
- Recruiting and retraining opportunities opened to women for 6 newly opened AF occupations on 4 Jan '16; widened applicant pool but facing same challenge with males in finding qualified volunteers
- Successful integration based on ability to meet standards, not quotas, critical mass or gender preferences
- Mental and physical standards in place were used prior to opening and were validated as occupationally specific, operationally relevant and applied equitably to measure individual capabilities
- Due to long training pipeline up to 2+ yrs, do not foresee a large number of females in operational units in 2016
- Mitigating efforts: Senior and junior training cohorts where possible, Female Support Cadre to include female military training leaders and commander appointed senior female leaders, Education on a healthy organization, Injury tracking and prevention, Proper equipment and facilities, Lessons learned, and Assessment reports
- Successful integration will take time and requires a focus on standards, policy, education and engaged leadership while continuing focus on unit readiness, cohesion and combat effectiveness

**Purpose:** To provide information to DACOWITS on the US Air Force's Implementation Plan/Timeline for Full Integration

#### **Background:**

- The 6 Air Force occupations opened to women are: Combat Rescue Officer, Special Tactics Officer, Pararescue, Combat Control, Tactical Air Control Party, and Special Operations Weather (enlisted)
- AF also opened 22 closed positions in open occupations serving with previously closed Army/SOF units (14 Jump Qualified Weather Officer positions and 8 Air Liaison Officer (ALO) and Rated ALOs positions)
- The initiative to eliminate all remaining gender-based assignment restrictions will ensure that the mission is carried by the best-qualified and most capable Airmen, regardless of gender

#### **Discussion**

- AF is leveraging existing recruiting media, marketing and attending high propensity sporting events that demonstrate physical and mental toughness needed for Battlefield Airmen/Special Operations Forces (i.e. swim meets, water polo, wrestling, cross-fit, etc...)

- AF will enter qualified females into the training pipeline for these 6 occupations as they are identified and will pair senior females with junior females where possible, but will not delay entry for any qualified female applicant to allow for clusters of females to go through training pipeline
- Females will be assigned to operational units following AF normal assignment processes
- Due to the long training pipeline of up to 2+ years and average attrition rates from 40-90%, depending on occupation, we do not foresee large number of females in operational units in 2016. We have had a handful of women try to qualify for these career fields, two have passed the initial physical entry exam, and one retrainee will move forward with the training pipeline for Tactical Air Control Party in July 2016.
- What is being done to encourage women to laterally move into these newly opened combat billets
  - Recruiting and Career Field and Functional Managers reaching out to potential females
  - AF conducted Battlefield Airmen Propensity Survey and AF followed up with males and females interested in retraining or finding out more about these career fields
  - AF issued policy Apr 2016 to allow Airmen currently serving in the Air Force the opportunity to retrain into these critical career fields, and if an Airman does not pass, to return to his/her current career field without prejudice
- *SecDef Concern of Transparent Standards:* AF is using same standards used prior to opening since standards were validated after 3+ yrs studies which established standards link directly to occupational standards/battlefield tasks. Scientific studies provide potential for future modifications for potential ways to improve our capability and decrease attrition
- *SecDef Concern of Population Size:* Initial assessment ensures AF has adequate equipment, supplies, gear, facilities for integration, but AF will continue to assess if there's a need to readdress
- *SecDef Concern of Physical Demands and Physiological Difference:* Tracking injury rates and addressing injury prevention, mitigation, recovery time and overall health and welfare
- *SecDef Concern of Conduct and Culture:* Leverage existing AF culture and leadership education which already emphasizes dignity and respect; leadership is the responsibility for all Airmen. Incorporated Instructor module addressing bias, sexual assault/harassment, hazing and unprofessional behavior
  - Female Support Cadre in place at the training pipeline with female military training leaders and will be present in the units when commanders appoint senior female support personnel as Female Support Cadre to assist with integration

- *SecDef Concern of Talent Management*: Performance continues to be driver for evaluations and promotions & females like males will follow already established career paths for these occupations
- *SecDef Concern of Operating Abroad*: AF will follow guidance and lead from SOCOM and other COCOMs and OIF/OEF lessons learned showed the presence of women can be seen as a challenge or an advantage depending on situations
- *SecDef Concern of Assessment and Adjustment*: AF Inspector General will conduct tri-annual review & continued assessment to ensure compliance with law & standards are being applied according to policies, and AF will have quarterly Implementation Plan Assessment Reports to assess status of integration and to allow sharing of lessons learned and best practices

**Recommendation:** For information only in response to DACOWITS RFI 2