



## DACOWITS: Articles of Interest

### WELLNESS

#### [AMC supervisor accused of sexual harassment](#)

(9 Mar.) *Air Force Times*, By Kristin Davis

Air Mobility Command held four days of focus groups for employees of a unit whose former supervisor has been accused of sexual harassment.

#### [Air Force gives new mom three years off](#)

(8 Mar.) *Air Force Times*, By Stephen Losey

Capt. Shannon Williams is a C-21 pilot, an Air Force Academy graduate, and — as of Feb. 26 — a new mother. And with the help of a new program called the Career Intermission Program, Williams will spend the next three years tending to — and hopefully further expanding — her new family.

#### [Appeals court grants rare hearing in academy sex crime case](#)

(11 Mar.) *Air Force Times*, By Kristin Davis

A rare hearing Thursday will help the military's highest court decide whether prosecutors in an Air Force Academy sexual misconduct case erred when they failed to disclose that one of their witnesses was a confidential informant.

#### [Former Marine indicted on rape charge](#)

(11 Mar.) *San Diego Union Tribune*, By Kristina Davis

A former Marine has been charged in an indictment unsealed Wednesday with sexually assaulting an active-duty Marine on Camp Pendleton, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

### ASSIGNMENTS

**[60-Minutes News Story](#):** A full 60-Minutes story will feature a piece on the Marine Corps' integration efforts (focused on IOC and ITB). “The Marine Corps is under orders to open up its ground combat units - one of the last all-male bastions in the military -- to women, but it has been unable to find any female capable of making it through its three-month infantry officer course. 60 Minutes gets an inside look at the brutal training for a story that examines how the Marines are dealing with the order to open their infantry units to women.” The story will be broadcast on 60 Minutes Sunday, March 15 at 7 p.m. ET/PT.

**[Flag Officer Assignment](#):** The Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert announced the following assignment: Capt. Kathleen M. Creighton, selected for the rank of rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as director for command, control, communications and cyber (C4), J-6, U.S. Pacific Command, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii. Creighton is currently serving as special assistant to the deputy chief of naval operations for information dominance, N2/N6, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, District of Columbia.

**[General Officer Assignment](#):** The Chief of Staff, Air Force announced the following assignment: Brig. Gen. Dawn M. Dunlop, director, plans, programs, and requirements, Headquarters Air Education and Training Command, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas, to commander, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Airborne Early Warning and Control Force Command, Headquarters Supreme Allied Command Europe, Casteau, Belgium.

**[Flag Officer Announcement](#):** Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced today that the president has made the following nomination: Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Nancy A. Norton has been nominated for appointment to the rank of rear admiral. Norton is currently serving as director for command, control, communications and cyber (C4), J6, U.S. Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii.

#### [Testing male, female combat strength](#)

(6 Mar.) *San Diego Union Tribune*, By Gretel C. Kovach

Research into performance of men and women will guide Marine Corps' integration plans.

#### [Army researchers testing strength to better match soldiers to jobs](#)

(8 Mar.) *The Gazette*, By Tom Roeder

Weights, medicine balls and other common exercise gear are being studied at Fort Carson this month as a way to test future soldiers on their fitness for combat. It's part of an Army initiative that seeks to open all combat jobs to women by 2016. But the research will set standards for men, too.

## EXTRA

### [Army's paradox: 'Culture of lying' vs. professionalism](#)

(8 Mar.) *Army Times*, By Col. Charles D. Allen (ret.)

My U.S. Army War College colleagues have caused another ripple in the pool of Army culture. Drs. Lenny Wong and Steve Gerras's monograph "Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession" is sure to evoke discussion among members of the largest military service.

### [Army eases ban on transgender soldiers](#)

(6 Mar.) *Army Times*, By Tom Vanden Brook

The Army issued a directive Friday that protects transgender soldiers from being dismissed by mid-level officers by requiring the decision for discharge to be made by the service's top civilian for personnel matters.

### [First Afghan female pilot aims to soar](#)

(9 Mar.) *San Diego Union Tribune*, By Gretel C. Kovach

State Department honoree visits Marine fliers at Miramar air station.

### [2015 DACOWITS Committee Members Announced](#)

(11 Mar.) *DoD News*

The Department of Defense announced today the induction of four new members to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).

### [20-Year Effort Preserves Stories Of 1st Female Sailors, Marines](#)

(12 Mar.) *Stars and Stripes*, By Wyatt Olson

The U.S. Naval War College has just completed a 20-year oral history project with the earliest women in the Navy and Marines.

### [MCPON: If ruled fit for duty, transgender people should be able to serve](#)

(12 Mar.) *Navy Times*, By Meghann Myers

If transgender volunteers are deemed fit for duty by the Pentagon, the Navy should provide opportunities for them to serve and be successful, the service's top enlisted sailor said Tuesday.

### [Lawmakers want IG to probe VA's women's health policies](#)

(12 Mar.) *Military Times*, By Leo Shane III

A bipartisan group of House lawmakers is asking for an investigation into the Veterans Affairs Department's outreach efforts to female veterans, calling the issue critical to the future of the agency.

## AMC supervisor accused of sexual harassment

(9 Mar.) *Air Force Times*, By Kristin Davis

Air Mobility Command held four days of focus groups for employees of a unit whose former supervisor has been accused of sexual harassment.

The former supervisor, Mary K. Reid, lost her job in October as chief of the Department of Defense Commercial Airlift Division at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, after a commander-directed investigation substantiated allegations that Reid had sexually harassed three civilian female employees, the Belleville News-Democrat first reported Feb. 28.

Reid also faces a misdemeanor battery charge in St. Clair County for allegedly grabbing the breasts of a female employee a year ago, according to the sheriff department's complaint report. Two years earlier, the woman alleged in the report, "Reid walked up behind her, grabbed her buttocks and began massaging it."

The woman also accused Reid of showing the woman her breasts in the restroom "because she had breast implants and wanted an opinion as to how they looked," the report said.

The alleged victim said she did not come forward earlier "because she was scared to say anything to anyone in fear of losing her job and retaliation from Reid," according to the complaint report.

Reid plans to challenge the battery charge and her dismissal, the News-Democrat reported.

Phone messages left by Air Force Times for Reid's attorney, Eric Rhein, were not returned.

But Rhein told the News-Democrat that Reid had pleaded not guilty to the charges and that her accusers were motivated by money.

The 375th Air Mobility Wing's Equal Opportunity Office has settled claims with the women.

A motions hearing in the criminal case is scheduled for March 18. On March 31, Reid will appear before a federal Merit System Protection Board in an effort to be restored to her position.

"The Air Force has the burden to prove to the merit system board," the actions taken against Reid were appropriate, AMC judge advocate Col. James Dapper said March 5. He declined to discuss the details of the case pending the upcoming hearing.

AMC has not made public the commander-directed investigation that led to the dismissal of Reid. Air Force Times has filed a Freedom of Information Act request for the documents.

Dapper said the allegations substantiated in the report "had to do with sexually charged discussions and remarks as well as inappropriate touching of a sexual nature."

AMC leadership was first alerted to a problem within the unit after the alleged victim in the criminal case made a report with the 375th Air Mobility Wing's Sexual Assault Response coordinator. The complaint was eventually referred to the wing's Equal Opportunity Office.

Dapper said that claim as well as others stemming from the case "have been fully resolved."

He declined to say how many complaints were made or to provide details about the nature of the allegations.

Dapper said the claims against Reid were given "immediate attention at the highest levels of command leadership. A careful investigation was launched and conducted by a seasoned officer. An appropriate response has been issued."

## **Air Force gives new mom three years off**

*(8 Mar.) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey*

Capt. Shannon Williams is a C-21 pilot, an Air Force Academy graduate, and — as of Feb. 26 — a new mother.

And with the help of a new program called the Career Intermission Program, Williams will spend the next three years tending to — and hopefully further expanding — her new family.

Williams, at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, said if CIP hadn't come along, she probably would have left the active duty, and possibly even left the Air Force entirely. She was looking into the Palace Chase program, which allows airmen to serve out the rest of their careers in the Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve, or holding out hope for another round of voluntary separation payments.

Command leadership also worked to reinforce guidance and care for those affected by what took place within the unit, from those who were victimized to those who witnessed it, said Col. Michael Zick, the command's assistant operations director.

In addition to firing Reid, the Air Force also took additional action against others within the unit, Zick said. He declined to say how many were disciplined or what actions were taken, saying only that "all those that were responsible were held accountable."

"When we tell you that action has been taken, it has," Zick said. "We need to ensure there's always a place they feel comfortable in doing their best, and actually working in a place where professionalism and dignity and respect are always stressed. We fell short in this. And frankly, we need to do better. A lot better."

An AMC command climate survey conducted around the same time Reid was fired found further issues of low morale and attitudes about sexual harassment. In response, the Air Force took the additional step of conducting focus groups.

The groups, which concluded March 5, were led by Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, which provides training to service members and DoD civilians, said Chief Master Sgt. Sherley Jones, the command's EO strategic adviser.

The groups met off campus to further promote the free flow of information, Jones said. Participants are encouraged to talk issues such as communication and leadership as well as about problems or issues within the workplace. They are also urged to talk about what is working.

Group facilitators will draft up their findings and present them to AMC leadership, Jones said.  
<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/crime/2015/03/06/air-mobility-command-supervisor-accused-sexual-harassment-new-training/24469125/>

But now that she will be able to take three years off to raise her new daughter, Jillian — and, she hopes, have a second child fairly soon — Williams said she plans to stay in the Air Force for a full 20-year career.

"I still love flying, and I'm pumped that the Air Force has this program where I can come back to it," Williams said in an interview the day before she gave birth. "It's great that this program can help me balance the two [starting a family and having an Air Force career] — and hopefully not have too negative an impact on either of them."

The Career Intermission Program — one of nine initiatives to improve opportunities for women, minorities and enlisted members highlighted March 4 by Secretary Deborah Lee

James — is the Air Force's first attempt at a multiyear sabbatical program that will let airmen put their careers on hold for up to three years while they pursue personal goals. In a March 2 interview at the Pentagon, Col. Rob Romer, chief of the Air Force's military force policy division, said that 32 airmen — 14 officers and 18 enlisted — will take part in the first round of CIP.

Of those, about 70 percent are taking time off to go back to school, and 30 percent are taking time to start a family — like Williams — or care for a family member. They are taking anywhere from one year to three years off, and the average time off is 25 months, the Air Force said. An equal number of men and women are taking the sabbaticals, although Romer said the Air Force wasn't aiming for a 50-50 split.

Under the program, airmen will enter the Individual Ready Reserve, and continue to receive their usual medical and dental coverage. They also receive a small stipend of 1/15th of their usual monthly basic pay. The Air Force will pay to move an airman from his or her duty station to any location in the U.S., and then move the airman to his or her follow-on base at the end of the program. They will be required to check in with the CIP's program manager once a month.

When they return, airmen will be required to spend twice as long in active-duty status as they spent in CIP. That means Williams will be required to serve another six years after she returns.

Romer said the program's selection panel last November considered 46 airmen — 15 officers and 29 enlisted airmen. One of the officers was in the Air National Guard, and one of the enlisted airmen was a reservist. They chose 34 of those airmen — all of the officers, and 19 of the enlisted airmen, including the reservist. Later, one active-duty officer and one active-duty enlisted airman who were picked decided to drop out.

"When the panel met, they looked at performance, they looked at leadership, and they also took a look at the ability of the airman to continue to develop and contribute to the Air Force," Romer said. "Because ultimately, they're going to give back two months for every one month that they're gone. So they need to be able to come back recharged and be ready to resume their Air Force careers."

The panel did not consider the reasons airmen wanted to take a sabbatical. Performance reports and decorations were some of the factors the board considered, Romer said.

The application period for the second round of CIP will be held Aug. 15 to Oct. 15, and this year's selection panel will again meet in November.

"I feel pretty confident that the next go-around, once we start getting some feedback in from airmen, I think you'll find that more people will participate," Romer said.

Williams was interested in the program as soon as she heard about it last summer for many reasons.

She wanted to spend time at home raising her daughter during her first few years.

"I grew up with two military parents, and I don't remember a lot of missing them when I was younger," Williams said. "But I grew up hearing my mom always saying she wishes she had been home more, she wishes she could have gone to this, or could have gone to that. I want Jillian to have a stable home life when she's young, but it's also for me, so I don't have to miss all the major milestones like walking, or her first smile, or her first words. I don't have to be at risk of deploying when she's learning how to potty train, or having to wait to have our second kid because I have a deployment coming."

And one of the most frustrating things about her pregnancy, she said, was not being able to fly during her first and third trimester. She was limited to office duty, which left her feeling like she wasn't contributing as much as she could. That is why she plans to start trying to have a second child this August, to ensure her second pregnancy happens during the sabbatical.

"It was really hard to be in a flying squadron and not be able to fly," Williams said.

But Williams also wanted to take some time off from the Air Force to allow her husband, Kevin, time to better establish his career. The Williamses met their freshman year at the Air Force Academy in their Engineering 100 class, and graduated in 2009. Kevin was also hoping to become a pilot, but didn't make it and he was not reclassified. His commitment was waived and he left the Air Force in December 2010.

Williams said Kevin wasn't able to gain traction on his own career while following her on her assignments. Kevin worked odd jobs when Shannon was stationed in Texas, and got his master's degree last May while she was stationed at Scott. He started a new job in June.

But Williams' time flying C-21s was going to come to an end this year, and if she hadn't entered into the pilot program, they would have had to move this summer. If they went anywhere other than the East or West coasts, Kevin would have had to find a new job, she said.

And since Kevin had supported and followed her around the country, Williams said she's glad she'll be able to return the favor.

"It's just nice for him to have a stable three years with one company, build up his résumé a little bit, before we have to move and he has to go into the job market again," Williams said.

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/careers/air-force/2015/03/08/air-force-new-mom-three-years-off/24505427/>

## Appeals court grants rare hearing in academy sex crime case

(11 Mar.) *Air Force Times*, By Kristin Davis

A rare hearing Thursday will help the military's highest court decide whether prosecutors in an Air Force Academy sexual misconduct case erred when they failed to disclose that one of their witnesses was a confidential informant.

The informant, former cadet Eric Thomas, was one of 12 witnesses who testified on behalf of the prosecution in the June 2012 court-martial of classmate Stephan Claxton.

Claxton was convicted of wrongful sexual contact of a female cadet, assault and attempted abusive sexual contact of a former female cadet and assault of two male cadets, including Thomas. Claxton was sentenced to six months' confinement and dismissal from the Air Force for the crimes.

Claxton challenged the findings to the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals, which in December 2013 upheld the conviction and sentence. He next appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces (CAAF), arguing the defense had the right to know that Thomas was a confidential informant.

In September, the CAAF ordered a seldom-decreed fact-finding hearing – called a Dubay hearing – to determine when Thomas became a confidential informant, whether prosecutors were aware of his role, and whether that role had any impact on Thomas' testimony at trial, said Capt. Sarah Carlson, an Air Force judge advocate and an assistant professor of law at the Air Force Academy.

The military appeals court will use that information to determine "whether the government's failure to disclose Thomas worked as confidential informant was harmless beyond a reasonable doubt," she said.

"If the evidence [that Thomas was an informant] wasn't turned over, there's an issue as to whether or not there was error," said Greg Rinckey, a military law attorney and former Army JAG.

Working as an informant for the government could give a witness the motive to lie, Rinckey said. "That's grounds for cross-examination by the defense."

Thursday's hearing is expected to last as many as two days, but the appeals court could take much longer to decide whether to affirm Claxton's original disposition, overturn it, modify it or order a new court-martial.

If the court overturns the conviction, "Claxton would be returned [as an Air Force Academy cadet] as if a court-martial had not occurred," Carlson said.

## Former Marine indicted on rape charge

(11 Mar.) *San Diego Union Tribune*, By Kristina Davis

San Diego — A former Marine has been charged in an indictment unsealed Wednesday with sexually assaulting an

Thomas, who in 2013 found himself at the center of an ongoing debate over the academy's use of cadets as confidential informants, is among four witnesses expected to testify, she said.

Thomas was expelled from the academy just weeks before he was to graduate for demerits he said he received while working as an informant for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. That work required him to break cadet policy; when he got into trouble, Thomas said, he was abandoned by OSI.

An inspector general inquiry released a year ago concluded that while Thomas did receive some demerits from his work as an informant, they were not enough to make a difference in his expulsion.

Thomas' attorney, Skip Morgan, said there were "big errors in the IG report."

"He is looking forward to this opportunity [to testify] because it will be the first time he is on the record with the Air Force" about his work as an informant, Morgan said. "Since the time he was dis-enrolled, he has never really had an audience with anyone from the academy. At least this will establish when he worked as a confidential informant for OSI and what he did."

According to the appellate court's summary of the case, after a night of drinking with friends, including Thomas, Claxton locked himself alone in a dorm room with a woman who had passed out. When Thomas and a second cadet found the room locked, they "pounded on the door" until Claxton opened it slightly.

"Seeing the lights were out, the cadets forced their way in and pulled [Claxton] into the hallway" and a fight ensued, the summary stated. Thomas and the second cadet found the victim unconscious with her jeans unbuttoned and her shirt pulled up to her chest.

She was removed from campus by ambulance.

Though Thomas came to the woman's rescue that night, the statements he gave OSI about the incident served as the basis for a bulk of the demerits against him, Morgan said.

Thomas is appealing his dis-enrollment to the Air Force Board for Corrections of Military Records.  
<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/crime/2015/03/11/appeals-court-rare-hearing-academy-sex-offense-case/70151968/>

active-duty Marine on Camp Pendleton, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

Pedro Javier Orellana, 23, surrendered to authorities in Maryland on Wednesday and pleaded not guilty in federal court there to one count of sexual abuse of an incapacitated victim, officials said.

The indictment accuses Orellana of raping a Marine while she was “incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct or was

physically incapable of declining participation in the sex act” in November.

He is to be transferred to San Diego to face the charge, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2015/mar/11/marine-indicted-rape-orellana/>

## Testing male, female combat strength

(6 Mar.) *San Diego Union Tribune*, By Gretel C. Kovach  
CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — Exactly how strong does an infantryman, or woman, need to be? The Marine Corps is finding out.

University of Pittsburgh scientists who moved into a brick building at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina last year are studying the physiology of men and women in ground combat occupations.

At the Warrior Human Performance Research Center, staff members armed with calipers, sensors and resistance machines spent months taking baseline measurements of the 350 volunteers in an experimental task force. The Marines, including 100 women, are assigned to mixed-gender units of infantry, artillery and mechanized vehicles.

Under orders from the Pentagon, each of the armed services as well as special operations command must decide whether to integrate women into all occupations and units by the first of the year, or lobby for an exception to the new gender-neutral policy. As the deadline approaches, the question of whether women can excel in physically demanding ground-combat jobs has been central to public debate and military research. To help the commandant reach a decision, the Marine Corps enlisted the Pittsburgh researchers to track a broad range of factors including strength, flexibility, stamina, balance, and nutrition. That data will be correlated with injury rates and performance during a three-month combat assessment at Twentynine Palms to produce a profile of desired outcomes. “The big question is what makes a successful combat Marine, that is what our information is going to provide, physiologically speaking,” said Katelyn Allison, a health fitness specialist and principal investigator of the study. A stream of Marines cycled through the Camp Lejeune research center before the task force deployed last month for California.

In one room they sat inside an egg-shaped “Bod Pod” that measured body fat. In another full of wall-mounted cameras, they jumped over obstacles with reflective sensors taped to their bodies while a computer tracked their form and the impact absorbed by their joints.

To demonstrate endurance, the Marines ran until exhaustion on a treadmill. One morning, a 27-year-old man hoping to join Marine special operations forces jogged on an incline.

The sergeant stared at a photo of the flag-raising at Iwo Jima taped to the wall in front of him, running until his skin reddened all the way to his calves and sweat dripped off the face mask monitoring his aerobic capacity. Every few minutes, a research assistant squeezed a drop of blood from his finger to measure lactate.

On the other side of the treadmill, an athletic trainer watched screen readouts of his heart rate and the exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen.

“Looking good, keep it up! Lots more fuel in the tank,” Renee Hendershot said over the soft thump of footfalls and whirring of the treadmill.

At the stationary bike nearby, researchers measured anaerobic output and wind gate needed for sprinting. As Lance Cpl. Anthony Jordan, 24, of San Pedro, pedaled, two research associates hollered “Drive, drive, drive! You got this. Finish strong!”

Jordan let out a long gasp. The wheels rattled to a stop, and he limped away.

## SCREENING

The data will reveal whether task force Marines are giving it their all during the Twentynine Palms combat assessment, and it will help the Corps establish gender-neutral entry and performance standards for physically demanding jobs.

All Marines undergo basic fitness tests twice a year, with results adjusted for gender and age. “They are an overall measure of a Marine’s physical health and fitness, not an indicator of success in a physically demanding job,” said Capt. Maureen Krebs, Marine Corps Force Integration Plan public affairs officer.

In 2012, the service created a battery of six combat proxy tests in an attempt to answer the question “Are Females Ready for the Fight?” according to results presented at the 3rd International Congress on Soldiers’ Physical Performance, which was hosted in Boston in August by the United States Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine.

About 400 male Marines and nearly the same number of female Marines were tested on pull-ups, two weight-lifting exercises, a 120-mm tank loading drill, a 155-mm artillery round carry and a 7-foot wall-climb while wearing a fighting load of about 30 pounds.

For the 35 Marines deemed best performers, 92 percent were males and 8 percent were females, proving that some women “are physically capable of meeting the demands of closed combat occupations,” according to results of the study presented by Karen Kelly, a San Diego-based research physiologist.

The Corps decided the proxy tests were not an adequate predictor of success in ground combat jobs, which led to the establishment of the experimental ground combat task force. Among the other services, the Army has been conducting strength tests for male and female soldiers similar to the Marine combat proxy tests. The Air Force had integrated women into all jobs outside of special operations after air combat opened to women in the mid ‘90s. The Navy recently followed suit and started assigning women to the last submarine and riverine craft communities formerly reserved for men.

In preparation to allow the first women to attempt Army Ranger school for research purposes, the Army announced in February that five women had passed the first-ever gender-integrated Ranger Training Assessment Course, a two-week pre-qualification for the special operations training.

Historically, more than half of soldiers who pass the assessment will successfully complete the Ranger course, the Army said.

Other special operations forces, including the Coronado-based command overseeing the training of all Navy SEALs, have said they have no plans to allow women into their schoolhouse on an experimental basis while related jobs remain closed to them.

Naval Special Warfare Command already has a rigorous and time-tested physical screening test for entry and a highly competitive pool of applicants performing well above minimum standards, according to the commander, Rear Adm. Brian Losey.

For example, the minimum number of pull-ups required during screening to enter SEAL training is 6, but 25 is optimum.

“We’ve been doing frogman for 50 years. The standards are high, they are validated and they are uncompromising. So we know what it takes to make a frogman,” Losey said last month during a breakfast talk to the San Diego Military Advisory Council.

Women have been serving with naval special operations teams in direct combat support for more than two decades, he noted. Now as the command considers the question of women SEALs and combatant craft crewmen, in his opinion performance is all that matters — not race, sexual orientation or gender.

“It was an irrational and emotional discussion about the integration of homosexuals. We’ve crossed that rubicon. ... Integration occurs over time. We are now at the crossing where the question is being asked of women.

“Again, I think it’s about standards and candidates. Pure and simple,” Losey said.

## **PRIOR RESEARCH**

Much was already known about the physical capabilities of women before the services embarked on the latest round of research.

On average, women are smaller, weaker, and slower than men, numerous studies have shown. This puts them at a disadvantage as combat loads have steadily increased. The average rucksack carried by troops in Iraq and Afghanistan was more than 60 pounds, twice as heavy as during the Vietnam War.

In 1994 as opportunities for women in air and naval combat expanded, Congress provided \$40 million for biomedical research on military women. A landmark series of more than 130 studies in ensuing years was organized by the Defense Women’s Health Research Program at the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command. The gender-specific research affirmed that women have twice the overall injury rates as men and, among basic training recruits, roughly five times the risk of stress fractures.

On the other hand, “several important assumptions about female physiology and occupational risks were found to be astoundingly wrong,” according to a 2005 overview of the research published by Karl Friedl in the *Journal of Women’s Health*. Among them:

- Moderate exercise by young women did not produce changes that would lead to reproductive dysfunction, as long as they ate enough food.

- Exercise did not increase risk of amenorrhea and consequent bone mineral loss.
- Hormonal changes through the menstrual cycle were less important to acute health risks and performance than previously predicted.
- Women were found to tolerate G-forces in the cockpit as safely as men if their equipment was designed for normal strength and size ranges.
- Ovarian hormones did not help women perform better during rapid ascents to high altitude.
- A ten-year review of Marine boot camp training at Parris Island, S.C., found that men were at much higher risk of hospitalization for exertional heat illness than women.

One of the most ambitious studies compared different weight-lifting programs for women. Researchers with Pennsylvania State University who looked into the “gender gap” in physical performance found that women who underwent six months of training focusing on explosive power and strength exercises combined with endurance conditioning could dramatically improve performance on combat tasks.

After the resistance training, researchers were surprised to find that women performed as well as the control group of untrained men on a two-mile run with 70 pounds of weight as well as repetitive boxlifting, according to the study published in 2001 in the *Official Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine*.

Looking at pure power and strength, men and women have stark physiological differences, “particularly of the upper body. But with military occupation performance, that is a combination of strength and endurance and the gender differences are less,” said Lt. Col. Bradley Nindl, scientific advisor with the Army Institute of Public Health and one of the study authors.

What’s more, increasing interest by women in weight-lifting and intense fitness programs like CrossFit and Insanity is pushing the parameters of peak performance. For example, the reigning female champion of the CrossFit Games maxed out at 80 pull-ups last year. The Fittest Man on Earth titleholder could only do 75 pull-ups, but he deadlifted nearly twice as much weight as her.

“Things have changed. When you see what those women can do, it’s crazy,” said Rep. Duncan D. Hunter, R-Alpine, a former Marine artillery officer who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. “Those women who do the CrossFit Games are more intense in that way than a lot of guys in the military.” That translates into combat aggression, Hunter said: “those women are driven, motivated. They will pick stuff up and throw it and lift it and kill you.”

## **TASK FORCE**

Col. Matthew St. Clair, commanding officer of the gender-integrated Marine task force, said he was most concerned going into the research about physical capabilities.

“Our tasks are very physically demanding. The loads that we carry are very heavy. And we carry them often,” said St. Clair, an infantry officer and 49-year-old former marathon runner. “I thought there would be a lot of injuries, physical injuries related to the tasks that we are performing. Those injuries have been much lower than I thought.”

In the first four months of training, the task force of roughly 600 staff and volunteers reported 183 injuries. About 30 were

severe enough to limit duties. Most involved prior injury and chronic pain.

During that time, the infantry company dropped eight women for medical reasons — all for hip or severe foot or leg injuries — and one woman for personal reasons. Men showed an inverse pattern, with 12 pulled for personal reasons, and one for medical, commanders said.

Back strain and other musculoskeletal injuries, not gunshots and bomb blasts, were the leading cause of medical evacuations from Iraq and Afghanistan during the recent wars. The majority of the injuries, 56 percent, stemmed from physical training, according to a study published in 2013 in *The Army Medical Department Journal*.

Better technique, stretching, strengthening, and avoidance of overuse can prevent most training injuries if minor strains are addressed early, medical experts say.

For example, “ankle sprains, if you don’t rehab it you are going to be more apt to sprain it again. ... Catching it early would prevent the chronic pain,” as well as lifelong problems, said Lt. Cmdr. Stephanie Elenbaum, the task force medical officer.

### **Army researchers testing strength to better match soldiers to jobs**

*(8 Mar.) The Gazette, By Tom Roeder*

Weights, medicine balls and other common exercise gear are being studied at Fort Carson this month as a way to test future soldiers on their fitness for combat.

It's part of an Army initiative that seeks to open all combat jobs to women by 2016. But the research will set standards for men, too.

"It's about the person next to you and whether they can do the job," Spc. Jessie Kirchner said as he went through drills under the watchful eyes of researchers from the Army's Research Institute for Environmental Medicine last week.

By fall, the Army hopes to have a full report on what strength is required for combat tasks - a report that can be used to weed out men and women who don't fit the bill before they enlist.

"It's for all individuals who want to join the Army," said Edward Zambraski, who heads the institute's studies on military performance.

The Army has spent two years researching the physical requirements of combat jobs to clear the way for women on the front lines.

Maj. Alison Hamilton said the goal is to create guidelines that are blind to gender.

The study started with analyzing what soldiers do in combat, from hefting 155 mm artillery rounds to taking long marches with full equipment.

The researchers broke down the tasks and measured soldiers, including hundreds at Fort Carson, to come up with a measure of physical requirements. Now, research has turned to look at how to measure a soldier's ability for those combat roles by using equipment that's available at any gym.

Sgt. Emily Gavidia, 25, of Fairfax County, Va., repeatedly injured her ankle as a high school basketball player. During boot camp training in 2008 she ignored the pain and ended up with a hairline stress fracture.

"If you roll your ankle does that mean your ankle is going to be stronger later?" she asked Yosuke Kido, as the research associate pressed a device to her ankle to measure resistance. "Not necessarily," Kido said.

Corinne Ruttiger, a certified athletic trainer, said "they never want to admit there's anything wrong."

The Marine on her exam table that day was a classic example. Sgt. Luis Martinez, 29, of Newark, N.J., ached with hip pain for weeks. The infantry squad leader sucked it up, he said, until his platoon sergeant spotted his limp and ordered him to medical.

Martinez buried his face in his arm and moaned while Ruttiger stretched his leg into the air. "Just relax. Still pain in there?" she asked, massaging his flank. "This is the stuff you're supposed to be doing so you don't get in this position again." <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2015/mar/06/marines-strength-ground-combat/?#article-copy>

"It's an easy-to-administer, low-cost test we can implement in the training pipeline," said Hamilton, a planning officer for the institute.

The method would allow soldiers to take the tests before they enter basic training to screen them for Army jobs. Zambraski said that screening process could save the Army time and piles of money.

The Army spends millions of dollars every year on medical care and disability payments for soldiers who are not physically capable of holding combat jobs. The screening tool would put those troops in less demanding work, Zambraski said.

Hamilton said the Army uses carefully crafted multiple choice tests to match mental capabilities of recruits with military jobs but hasn't paid the same attention to the physical qualities of those who enlist.

"This is hopefully another tool that will help us be better managers of human capital," Hamilton said.

Driving the study, though, is a Pentagon mandate to incorporate women into traditional combat roles, including infantry, artillery, combat engineers and special forces.

Kirchner, an artillery observer, said he's ready to serve alongside women.

"If they can do the job, I'm all for it," he said.

The Army has women in some traditionally male jobs, including Fort Carson 1st Lt. Kate Murphy, an artillery officer in the post's 4th Brigade Combat Team.

Murphy said she wanted to see how she measures up against the male soldiers who serve under her command, so she joined the study.



"It's good for me, as an officer, to see the strength behind the job," she said.

Female officers have been allowed into front-line artillery jobs for two years, and Murphy said she was initially warned about breaking into the male-dominated field.

But attitudes are quickly changing in the Army, and Murphy said she loves her job.

"I really like field artillery. I really definitely want to stay," she said.

### **Army's paradox: 'Culture of lying' vs. professionalism**

*(8 Mar.) Army Times, By Col. Charles D. Allen (ret.)*

My U.S. Army War College colleagues have caused another ripple in the pool of Army culture. Drs. Lenny Wong and Steve Gerras's monograph "Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession" is sure to evoke discussion among members of the largest military service.

Their study is based on data and evidence from discussion groups of officers across the Army. Wong and Gerras's thesis and findings are simple: the overwhelming number of requirements placed on military members both in garrison and operational settings drives falsification of myriad reports to the extent that senior leaders do not trust the veracity of Army assessments. This falsification or lying occurs in battlefield reporting, certification of training and personnel evaluations.

This duplicity obviously contradicts the espoused Army Ethic and the professional value of integrity.

Most troubling, this behavior seems to have acquired cultural acceptance and reflects that which is rewarded or, perhaps, does not have significant negative consequences when it comes to lying.

Reactions to the monograph have ranged from heads nodding in agreement to pouting faces of those who feel that the authors unfairly impugned the integrity of the officer corps. I suggest reading the full study (only 33 pages of text) rather than snippets from the news and media outlets before passing judgment.

While Wong and Gerras expose a current situation within the Army, I am more concerned about the future of the Army. Force reduction initiatives have targeted uniformed personnel to achieve force structure authorizations in grade (officer and enlisted), specialty, and component (active and reserve).

As Army boards seek to identify and retain the best soldiers, previously masked records, less-than-favorable documentation, or older evaluation reports are now in play for review. These serve as discriminating factors; they may contribute to the separation of talented and accomplished personnel.

The Arizona native proved to Army researchers she has the strength for it, outperforming her male comrades on many tasks. Murphy said that's something she can use to lead her troops - men and women.

"If I did it, then you guys can certainly do it," she said.

<http://gazette.com/army-researchers-testing-strength-to-better-match-soldiers-to-jobs/article/1547532#FIs31ogSuxjSVspf.99>

A second area of concern is a paradoxical effect of efforts to re-professionalize the Army with emphasis on accountability, especially in garrison environments. One can envision the increasing requirements for reporting maintenance, training, budgeting and administration. Accordingly, performance metrics for these requirements may drive reporting behavior that rewards "good" numbers and conversely jeopardizes anything less.

The Army culture has been down this road before. I recall the pressures of Quarterly Training Briefs (QTBs) and Logistical Readiness Reviews (LRRs) of the 1990s. For field grade officers in branch-qualifying positions, making the numbers have direct influence on their make-or-break officer evaluation reports (OERs).

Some of us also recall the days of "PowerPoint Rangers," when staff presentation skills may have been valued over warfighting skills in the peacetime Army.

The past decade-plus of war has fostered collaboration among people and military organizations. Without the operational necessity to work together, I foresee the return of a competitive environment that can quickly become dysfunctional. The drive-to-survive may lead people to provide our institution what it really rewards (dubious indicators of performance) rather than what it espouses. The culture could revert to rewarding looking good, rather than being good.

Some observers may contend that this culture of lying has surfaced because of the stresses of a long period of conflict for the Army. I offer a counter-point: During my military career, the Army has encountered the same challenges during the post-Vietnam and post-Desert Shield drawdowns that have initiated subsequent examinations of the profession.

We are once again at such an inflection point for the Army profession. I hope that this commentary adds another ripple in the reflection pool of Army culture.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/03/08/commentary-officers-lying-versus-professionalism/23944595/>

## Army eases ban on transgender soldiers

(6 Mar.) *Army Times*, By Tom Vanden Brook

WASHINGTON — The Army issued a directive Friday that protects transgender soldiers from being dismissed by mid-level officers by requiring the decision for discharge to be made by the service's top civilian for personnel matters.

The Army's new policy is the latest indication that the military's ban on transgender troops may be eased or even lifted.

Last month, Defense Secretary Ash Carter told troops he was "very open-minded" about transgender troops, adding that nothing but a person's ability to serve should keep them from serving. Two days later, White House press secretary Josh Earnest said President Obama endorsed Carter's comments.

USA TODAY first reported on the policy change in the All Army Activities directive when it was in draft form. The Army declined to comment on it Friday, said Lt. Col. Alayne Conway, a spokeswoman.

In essence, the announcement places a moratorium on dismissals by requiring officers to explain their decision to discharge a transgender soldier to a high-ranking civilian leader, a move many would view as potentially damaging to their careers. The Pentagon took the same tack when it backed away from its Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy that banned gay and lesbian troops. It required a review of decisions to discharge gay troops by the department's top lawyer and service secretaries, and no further dismissals occurred.

## First Afghan female pilot aims to soar

(9 Mar.) *San Diego Union Tribune*, By Gretel C. Kovach

Capt. Niloofar Rahmani was 18 years old when she heard a news announcement saying the Afghan Air Force wanted to recruit its first female pilots.

Her father had dreamed of flying in the military as a young man. He became Rahmani's strongest champion when she set out to join the all-male cadre, but he also warned his daughter that many difficulties lay ahead. "Go for it, but you must be strong," Rahmani recalled him saying.

When Rahmani earned her wings in July 2012 and qualified to fly the C-208 cargo plane, she became the first female pilot to serve in the Afghan military since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001. She is also the first female fixed-wing Air Force aviator in the nation's history, following the flight path of two female helicopter pilots during the Soviet era. Rahmani shared those milestone memories during a visit to Miramar Marine Corps Air Station on Monday. She also talked about the challenges of being a pioneer.

Distant relatives accused her of shaming their entire family. Men in her flight squadron were openly hostile, despite support from her commander. Taliban sympathizers have repeatedly threatened to kill Rahmani as well as her parents and siblings.

Yet Rahmani, now 23, has refused to quit. "If you don't fight for your rights, they will never give them to you," she said during the Monday visit. "I do the same things my colleagues do. Why do I have to be treated differently?"

Troops with gender dysphoria, a recognized medical condition, are barred from serving in the military for medical reasons. The Army is the first of the services to chip away at that ban. Last month, the Army also approved hormone treatments for Chelsea Manning, the transgender soldier convicted of divulging a trove of classified information to WikiLeaks. There are indications other services may follow suit, with Air Force Secretary Deborah James telling USA TODAY that she favors repealing the ban as well.

In 2010, the service chiefs voiced concern about repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell, telling Congress that it could affect discipline. Those worries proved unfounded as openly gay and lesbian troops have served with few issues.

The Pentagon does not count transgender troops who have been discharged. About 24 transgender troops have been dismissed, according to a report released last year by the Palm Center. It estimated that there are 15,000 transgender troops serving.

There is no specific reassessment of the ban on transgender troops, according to Lt. Cdr. Nate Christensen, a Pentagon spokesman. However, a routine review began earlier this month of the Pentagon's medical policy under which transgender troops are discharged, he said. The review is expected to take a year or more.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/03/06/army-eases-ban-on-transgender-soldiers/24529333/>

Even a conservative society such as hers, where women were forbidden during the Taliban era from attending school or working outside the home, needs women to work for the good of the nation, Rahmani said.

"We need females to be a doctor, to be in each part of society. And we need female pilots too," she said.

For her leadership at great personal risk, Rahmani was among 10 women honored this month with the Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award.

After a stop at the White House and praise from first lady Michelle Obama, Rahmani traveled to Miramar to meet commanders and female pilots. Other events scheduled as part of her five-day visit, coordinated by the San Diego Diplomacy Council, include a fighter jet ride with the Navy's Blue Angels and lunch with the CEO of Girl Scouts San Diego.

On her final stop, Rahmani and the other State Department honorees will participate in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Rahmani studied English for six months so she could understand her U.S. instructor pilots, then trained for a year and a half at Shindand Air Base in the Herat province of Afghanistan.

To celebrate Rahmani's first solo flight, American women dunked her in the pool — according to tradition. A photo of the event spread on social media, drawing accusations that she

was being baptized into another religion or touched by foreign men.

The harassment continued after Rahmani took her first assignment. Her fellow aviators, many of them as old as her father and grandfathers, treated her as if she were a publicity stunt.

“It was hard for me to be around people that didn’t want me there. They were searching for a reason for me to be disappointed and just leave,” she said.

Rahmani couldn’t prove them wrong with words. “The only way was flight hours,” she said. She volunteered for every shift she could and quickly qualified as flight commander. After that, she was the one issuing orders to the men who doubted her. “It was a day I felt so proud,” she said. “If they see a female, in their mind they see a weak person. But the idea they had about me, it’s changed now.”

On Monday, the female Marine pilots who met Rahmani could relate to being in a predominantly male profession. More than 30 years after the first women joined the Marine air wing as pilots, less than 1 percent of the service’s aviators are female — 194 out of 5,557, according to the 2015 Marine Corps almanac.

Lt. Col. Erin Benjamin, a 40-year-old Cobra attack helicopter pilot by training, told Rahmani: “Keep it up. We still face some of the same stuff you do. Not the threats, but ... I’ve been in the Marine Corps 18 years. I was going to get out and my mentor said no, you have to stay in for the women behind you.”

Rahmani’s critics followed her brother out of his university and threatened to shoot him. She fought back her fears and carried on, she told the female Marines, in hopes of becoming an instructor pilot to bring in the next generation of female pilots. She also plans to fly the larger C-130 plane someday. “My goal was to open or to break the very strong walls in front of the females in my country. ... They think the females have to be in the house, doing the housework,” Rahmani said. Inside a C-130 cockpit on the Miramar flight line, Rahmani and Marine Capt. K.C. Koepp, 26, of Vienna, Va., swapped war stories about near mishaps flying cargo planes. Like the time Rahmani’s single engine died about 20 minutes from base. “We just made it back to the runway,” she said, as the two women sighed in relief.

On the way out, Koepp gave Rahmani a big hug goodbye. “Good luck out there. You’re doing great things. Teach all those boys how to fly!” the American pilot said.

## 2015 DACOWITS Committee Members Announced

(11 Mar.) DoD News

The Department of Defense announced today the induction of four new members to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).

The committee, established during the Korean War in 1951 by Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, is an independent advisory committee that provides the department with advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of highly qualified professional women in the Armed Forces.

Previously comprised of 16 members, the 2015 charter authorizes a total of 20 committee members.

The incoming members are as follows:

- Dr. Kristy E. Anderson, Beavercreek, Ohio

Rahmani can push the fears out of her mind only when she is in the cockpit.

“The time when I am most calm and just focused on one thing is when I am in the air,” she said. “I think of the creator and see what God created, all for humans. ... I see how big it is.” The love of flying unites Rahmani with all aviators, male or female, American and Afghan, the Miramar commanders told her.

Maj. Gen. Michael Rocco, commanding general of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing headquartered in San Diego, told Rahmani that his first flight was on his honeymoon. His second was during flight training in Pensacola, Fla. The view up there was everything he had dreamed of since he was a boy, said Rocco, now a Cobra AH-1 attack helicopter pilot.

Rahmani will always have the international fellowship of aviators, Col. John Farnam, commanding officer of Miramar, told her. “You can all get together and talk with your hands ... it really is a global community,” said the F/A-18 Hornet fighter pilot.

Rahmani expects the threats to continue, but she feels buoyed by the support of her immediate family, the inspiration of the female aviators she met at Miramar and the State Department recognition.

“I have the support of people all over the world. They know what I am fighting for. This award is for all the females in my community,” she said.

The job itself is also its own reward, despite the difficulties. Rahmani remembered flying to Camp Bastion in the particularly violent Helmand province, where severely wounded soldiers and remains of the dead needed to be transported to Kabul.

As a female pilot, she was forbidden from transporting casualties. “They think the females have a very small heart. They will cry ... and crash the plane,” she explained. Rahmani defied the rule, then explained why to her commanding general. “This is my job. I was not that hard of a person to let them die there,” she told the Afghan general. “That was the first time in my life I felt I did something good. As a human, I was helping people, saving them. ... I saved someone’s life.”

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2015/mar/09/afghan-woman-pilot-visits-miramar/>

- Ms. Sharlene W. Hawkes, Centerville, Utah
- Retired Navy Vice Admiral Carol M. Pottenger, Virginia Beach, Virginia
- Dr. Jacqueline E. Young, Honolulu, Hawaii

DACOWITS members include prominent civilian women and men representing a distribution of demography, academia, industry, public service and other professions. Selection is on the basis of experience in the military or with women's-related workforce issues.

Members are selected for a four-year term, without compensation, to perform a variety of duties including visiting military installations each year, conducting a review and evaluation of current research on military women, and

developing an annual report with recommendations on these issues for Service leadership and the Secretary of Defense.

<http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=17171&source=GovDelivery>

## **20-Year Effort Preserves Stories Of 1st Female Sailors, Marines**

*(12 Mar.) Stars and Stripes, By Wyatt Olson*

The U.S. Naval War College has just completed a 20-year oral history project with the earliest women in the Navy and Marines.

The project preserves 83 firsthand accounts of Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) and Marine Corps Women Reservists. (The Marine Corps general who established the women's corps in 1943 eschewed a catchy acronym, declaring, "They are Marines.")

There had been some efforts in the past to document the experiences of female officers in the Navy and Marines. "But there was really little that had ever been done to collect the experiences of the rank and file of the WAVES until this project," said Scott Reilly, a Naval War College archivist who worked on making the project digital, in a news release.

More than 86,000 women served as WAVES. Women also served during World War II in the Women's Army Corps (WACS) and Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).

Not until 1948, under the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, were women able to serve as regular members of the armed forces.

In one oral account from 2008, Esther McElroy, born in 1922, said she was itching to do her part when World War II began and eventually joined the Marines Women's Reserve.

"I wanted to go in the Marines," said McElroy, whose brother died in combat in Saipan.

"By the time I got to go, in March of 1943, I was just 20 and had to get my parent's signature. My father did not want to sign, but my mother was kind of into all of this stuff."

<http://www.stripes.com/blogs/stripes-central/stripes-central-1.8040/20-year-effort-preserves-stories-of-1st-female-sailors-marines-1.334252>

## **MCPON: If ruled fit for duty, transgender people should be able to serve**

*(12 Mar.) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers*

If transgender volunteers are deemed fit for duty by the Pentagon, the Navy should provide opportunities for them to serve and be successful, the service's top enlisted sailor said Tuesday.

Asked whether he thought transgender recruits who have completed their gender transitions should be allowed to serve, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (AW/NAC) Mike Stevens told Navy Times he believes that if they meet the Navy's standards, they should be allowed to serve.

"So, I was a recruiter at one time. The Navy sets the guidelines for [who] we can allow to join the Navy," he said. "So if they're physically, mentally and morally qualified, anybody who meets those criteria has an opportunity to serve their country."

The Defense Department currently bans service for transgender people, but Defense Secretary Ash Carter recently signaled he would be open to lifting the ban.

In an interview, Stevens did not say whether he would support lifting the ban, but emphasized that if DoD decides to allow transgender people to serve, then it's the job of the MCPON and all the Navy's leaders not to judge people, but to ensure they can have a successful career.

"My philosophy has always been this, that as a leader, I have a duty and responsibility to provide an opportunity where every sailor can be successful — and that we're going to do that while treating one another with dignity and respect," he said.

"So, that's it, I don't pass judgment on any sailor and I don't hold anything against sailors but what I do as a leader is set

conditions and provide opportunity for them to be successful, plain and simple. As the master chief petty officer of the Navy, I see sailors."

### **DoD rules**

Current DoD policy bans service for transgender people under a regulation against those with a "current or history of psychosexual conditions, including but not limited to transsexualism, exhibitionism, transvestism, voyeurism and other paraphilias."

At a Feb. 22 town hall-style meeting in Kandahar, Afghanistan, Carter said he is open to lifting the ban.

"... I'm very open-minded about ... what their personal lives and proclivities are, provided they can do what we need them to do for us. That's the important criteria. Are they going to be excellent service members?" said Carter, who took over as SECDEF in mid-February.

Pentagon spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Nathan Christensen told Military Times that the department is not specifically reviewing its transgender policy, but acknowledged that military health officials in February began reviewing the current medical accessions policy, which includes the ban on transsexualism as a psychosexual condition.

The review is expected to take 12 to 18 months, Christensen said.

The issue has been in the news and on sailors' minds recently, coming up at a March 8 all-hands call with Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michelle Howard in Naples, Italy.

When asked by a sailor asked about the prospect of serving alongside transgender troops, Howard responded that logistical issues — such as increased medical care and deployability — could complicate the issue.

"I think the real issue will be — for the services — we are required to maintain worldwide deployability," Howard said. "The issue isn't merely, in the case of some sailors, where that is how they view themselves. The issue is, can they maintain worldwide deployability?"

She added that some countries in which sailors might be asked to serve would not accept transgender troops, and that this cultural intolerance is one consideration in accepting transgender troops.

"In some countries, the process of becoming transgender, would make them a criminal in that country. And there are some pretty horrific sentences," she said.

There is also the issue of medical commitments, including psychological treatment, hormone therapy and surgery.

"The other question is, how proactive is the person in that process?" Howard continued. "Just like any medical condition where someone needs a lot of medical help because they are working through the process. Then that might [impact] their ability to be worldwide deployable."

## **Lawmakers want IG to probe VA's women's health policies**

*(12 Mar.) Military Times, By Leo Shane III*

A bipartisan group of House lawmakers is asking for an investigation into the Veterans Affairs Department's outreach efforts to female veterans, calling the issue critical to the future of the agency.

The letter, sent Thursday by 11 members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, asks VA's Inspector General's office to look into privacy policies, facility access and gynecological services available throughout the Veterans Health Administration.

"Female veterans are the fastest growing population served by [VA]," the letter states. "Women currently comprise about 10 percent of the population of the VA, but are about 20 percent of the active-duty components. It is critical that [VA staff] are prepared to serve the unique needs of female veterans."

Lawmakers said they are concerned with recent reports that VA "drastically underserves" female vets, either due to missing services, untrained staff or inadequate facilities.

Howard did not come down for or against, but said it's a conversation that will go on at a higher level.

"I think we will probably end up starting this conversation underneath the secretary of defense, but much like the other conversations, it will probably not unfold quickly," she said. "It will probably take us some time to work our way through it."

MCPON offered that, to him, the situation isn't any easier or more difficult than other issues he has worked through.

"My take is that we need to get together as leaders and we need to have the conversation, and we need to figure out how to best proceed so we can provide all of our sailors with the opportunities I just talked about," he said.

He added that he hasn't been asked about it at all-hands calls, but he is ready to discuss it.

"So whatever comes to us, we will do our very best to work through that in a comprehensive and appropriate way, and darn it, we will treat everybody that has blood running through their veins with dignity and respect."

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/03/12/mcpon-mike-stevens-transgender-sailors-vcno-howard/24713285/>

VA officials said more than 635,000 female veterans are enrolled for VA health care, and about 400,000 actively use department services. Those figures have roughly doubled since 2000.

In testimony before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee last month, VA Secretary Bob McDonald said he has made recruiting gynecologists a departmental goal, recognizing the growing need. The department is also expanding the number of women's clinics nationwide.

But Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., said in a statement that she sees chronic problems in the system, "including a lack of women's health providers, problems with the coordination of care, and inappropriate treatment."

The letter does not set a timeline for the investigation, but lawmakers said they intend to take up the issue with the committee in coming weeks.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/veterans/2015/03/12/female-vets-va-investigation/70212614/>