



## DACOWITS: Articles of Interest 28 May 2015

### WELLNESS

#### [Carter Names New Sexual Assault Prevention Office Director](#)

(22 May) DoD News

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#### [Courts-Martial to Begin This Week in USS Wyoming Shower Video Case](#)

(25 May) Stars & Stripes, By Steven Beardsley

Three sailors are scheduled for court-martial in Florida this week on charges related to making and sharing videos of female officers and midshipmen showering aboard the ballistic missile submarine USS Wyoming.

#### [Lt. col. says speaking up about assault hurt her career](#)

(26 May) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey

For six years, Lt. Col. Teresa James of the West Virginia Army National Guard kept her rape a secret because she was afraid coming forward would spell the end of her career. When she did report it in 2012, she said, her fears were realized.

#### [Lawyer: Navy fails to prosecute all in sub video ring](#)

(27 May) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

Two sailors have pleaded guilty this week for secretly filming and sharing videos of female shipmates undressing over a period of 10 months aboard the submarine Wyoming. But one sailor's attorney contends that the Navy has so far failed to punish others in the alleged ring, based on information provided by his client. This includes allegations that two chiefs watched the videos but have not been charged.

#### [2nd Submariner Guilty Of Sharing Videos Of Women Officers](#)

(27 May) Associated Press, By Jason Dearen

A second submariner pleaded guilty Wednesday to sharing videos of female officers undressing for a shower, continuing a case that a prosecutor calls a "black eye" for the Navy's integration of women into the nation's sub fleet.

### ASSIGNMENTS

[General Officer Assignments.](#) The chief of staff, Army announced the following assignments:

- Brig. Gen. Janice M. Haigler, U.S. Army Reserve, director (Individual Mobilization Augmentee), Cybersecurity, Office of the Chief Information Officer/G-6, U.S. Army, Washington, District of Columbia, to deputy commander (Signal) (Troop Program Unit), 335th Signal Command (Theater), East Point, Georgia.
- Brig. Gen. Tammy S. Smith, U.S. Army Reserve, deputy chief of staff (Individual Mobilization Augmentee), Office of the Chief, Army Reserve, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, to commanding general (Troop Program Unit), 98th Training Division (Individual Entry Training), Fort Benning, Georgia.

[Flag Officer Assignment.](#) The Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert announced today the following assignment: Rear Adm. (lower half) Lisa M. Franchetti will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Nine, San Diego, California. Franchetti is currently serving as commander, Navy Region Korea; commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea; and commander, Naval Component, U.S. Forces Korea, United Nations Command, Seoul, Korea.

#### [While at War, Female Soldiers Fight to Belong](#)

(24 May) The New York Times, By Benedict Carey

One of the biggest adjustments the United States military attempted during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars was cultural: the integration of women into an intensely male world. Women made up about 15 percent of the force during these two wars, compared with 7 percent in the Persian Gulf War of 1991, and they saw more combat in greater numbers than ever before.

### **Mabus: 1 in 4 Marine recruits should be women**

*(26 May) Marine Corps Times, By Derrick Perkins*

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus wants more female Marines in the Corps, a goal the service's recruiting command say they were working toward before the call to action.

### **Women in Combat Jobs Watch Marines Test Their Ability to Fill Roles**

*(26 May) Stars and Stripes, By Jennifer Hlad*

The Marine Corps had begun assessing the performance of female volunteers at its Infantry Officer Course and enlisted infantry training school – with the understanding that even successful graduates would not become infantrywomen. Since 2012, 29 women have started the Infantry Officer Course, and only four have made it through the notoriously challenging combat endurance test that kicks off the class.

### **Women Fight Their Way Through Army's Grueling Ranger School**

*(27 May) NPR*

At Georgia's Fort Benning, female soldiers are fighting a two-month battle. They're fighting their way through the Army's notoriously hard Ranger School, trying to make history by becoming the first women to graduate from it.

### **SECNAV: SEALs should open to women under fair standards**

*(27 May) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers*

The Defense Department is scheduled to open all operational billets to women on Jan. 1, 2016, unless individual services provide pressing reasons against it or lawmakers intervene.

## **EXTRA**

### **How we're failing our female veterans**

*(21 May) The Boston Globe, By Kathryn Miles*

The VA's Veteran Health Administration is the nation's largest integrated care system. Despite its more than 1,500 hospitals, clinics, and other facilities, the VHA is struggling to keep up with the influx of female patients. That number almost doubled between 2003 and 2012, from 200,631 to 362,014. It's expected to double again by 2020.

### **Giving new hope to female homeless vets**

*(25 May) CBS News*

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, there are more than 4,456 homeless female veterans in the U.S., many of whom have children. They account for 8 percent of the nation's 58,000 homeless vets.

### **5 Tough Leadership Lessons From The Navy's Top Female Commander**

*(25 May) Fortune, By Donna Fenn*

In honor of Memorial Day, Fortune asked her share some of those lessons. During an interview, she talked about everything from her role as the commander of Task Force 151, which devised the plan to rescue Captain Philips, to a life-changing conversation with her mother.

### **VA's Ban On In Vitro Coverage Draws Fire**

*(26 May) The Washington Post, By Emily Wax-Thibodeaux*

Under a 23-year-old law, VA is prohibited from covering IVF. The law also predates the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where widespread use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in attacks on U.S. forces has caused far more reproductive injuries than in past conflicts.

### **Malloy signs into law program to aid women veterans**

*(27 May) Associated Press*

Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has signed a law requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish a Connecticut women veterans' program.

## **Carter Names New Sexual Assault Prevention Office Director**

*(22 May) DoD News*

WASHINGTON, May 22, 2015 – Army Maj. Gen. Camille M. Nichols will assume duties as director of the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office effective June 8, according to a Defense Department news release issued today. The current director, Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey J. Snow, was selected to be the next commander of the U.S. Army

Recruiting Command at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, according to the release.

"I want to thank Maj. Gen. Snow for his deep commitment to helping lead our efforts to eliminate sexual assault in the military," Defense Secretary Ash Carter said in the release.

"On his watch, DoD has taken important measures to prevent these crimes, support the survivors, and hold offenders accountable. I wish him well as he goes on to lead the Army in helping recruit our force of the future."

### **Nichols was 'Clear Choice'**

The secretary said he'd personally interviewed candidates to take over for Snow, noting that Nichols "was the clear choice."

Carter said he and Nichols had "worked together when she was in charge of contracting for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I saw firsthand how instrumental she was in supplying and supporting our people with everything they needed for the mission -- from protective gear and equipment to vital reconnaissance assets."

Nichols' "mettle" made an impression, Carter said in the release.

"Given her skills, professionalism, and devotion to the safety and well-being of our men and women in uniform," he said, "I'm confident she'll help drive real change as we continue to do whatever it takes to rid our ranks of sexual assault." During 17 months as the SAPRO director, Snow oversaw improvements to the department's capability to support victims of the crime, as well as the implementation of the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy which provides a framework to institutionalize sexual assault prevention practices, the release said.

Snow led the development and ongoing implementation of more than 50 initiatives designed to strengthen the SAPR program, increase accountability, and improve victim advocacy and support, the release said.

Additionally, the release said, Snow worked with the Joint Chiefs and department experts to develop accountability metrics for the SAPR program.

### **Courts-Martial to Begin This Week in USS Wyoming Shower Video Case**

*(25 May) Stars & Stripes, By Steven Beardsley*

Three sailors are scheduled for court-martial in Florida this week on charges related to making and sharing videos of female officers and midshipmen showering aboard the ballistic missile submarine USS Wyoming.

The group is among seven sailors referred so far for court-martial in the case. All are second- or third-class petty officers accused of making the videos, trading them among each other and then lying about their existence when questioned. The disciplinary proceedings will be held Tuesday and Wednesday at Naval Station Mayport near Jacksonville, Fla.

The episode has been an embarrassment for the Navy as it integrates women into its submarine branch, one of the last communities in the service still largely restricted to men. The Wyoming, based at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga., was one of the first ballistic submarines integrated with female officers when the process began in 2011.

### **'It's Been a Privilege'**

"It has been a privilege to be a part of a team that is so passionate about their commitment to eliminating sexual assault from our ranks," Snow said in the release. "I am encouraged to see that so many in the DoD community have worked to better understand their role, and are also taking the next steps to learn how to do their part and step in to prevent this crime."

Nichols comes to the position with a distinguished career of service, most recently as director of business operations in the secretary of the Army's office of business transformation, the release said. Prior to that assignment she was the deputy commanding general of the Army's Installation Management Command.

Additionally, Nichols has more than 20 years of Department of Defense acquisition experience and served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf War, according to the release. Nichols enlisted in the Army in 1975 in her home town of Niagara Falls, New York, the release said. In 1981, she was commissioned as an engineer officer upon graduation from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York.

"I am honored to be selected as the next SAPRO Director and to have the secretary's trust and confidence in me," Nichols said in the release. "Sexual assault in our ranks is truly unacceptable -- it is an affront to our ethos, our values, and the commitment we make to protect and defend our nation, and take care of each other. I am passionate and fully committed to working with all of you to continue the good work of Jeff Snow and the SAPRO team. This effort is the responsibility of every soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine; we owe this to each other."

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128876&source=GovDelivery>

The Navy originally investigated 12 sailors it believed either recorded the women or shared the videos. Seven of those were eventually referred for court-martial, while four others continue to await a decision on their case. One sailor was not charged.

Those accused face charges ranging from sexual misconduct to conspiracy and making false statements.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Charles Greaves will go to a general court-martial on Tuesday. The former missile technician is accused of making several of the videos and trading them for energy drinks to another of the accused, according to his charge sheet.

Petty Officers 2nd Class Joseph A. Bradley, an electronics technician, and 3rd Class Brandon S. McGarity, a missile technician, face special and summary courts-martial, respectively, on Wednesday.

The Wyoming is part of Submarine Group 10 out of Mayport. According to the redacted charge sheets, the sub was often underway when the videos were taken, between August 2013 and June 2014.

Several female midshipmen -- students at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis -- were aboard during that time for their summer cruises and were possibly filmed, according to Navy officials, although none of the videos were found.

Exactly how the videos were taken remains unclear. Berthing for female officers is segregated, but women use common shower facilities at designated times.

At the end of last year, 57 female officers were serving on 15 Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine crews, two of which

### **Lt. col. says speaking up about assault hurt her career**

*(26 May) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey*

For six years, Lt. Col. Teresa James of the West Virginia Army National Guard kept her rape a secret because she was afraid coming forward would spell the end of her career.

When she did report it in 2012, she said, her fears were realized.

James, a former military police battalion commander who deployed to Anbar Province, Iraq, in 2009 and 2010, will have to take a medical retirement June 29 after 35 years in the Guard. And she's certain her medical board has to do with coming forward about being raped in 2006 by a senior officer.

"At one time, I considered myself to be a part of the good-ol'-boy system," James said in an interview with Military Times. "I've held all the assignments that are traditionally held by men. I've been a commander. I've deployed. I did all those things. I paid my dues, and I was very respected by my peers."

The West Virginia National Guard said that it did not retaliate against James, and that her medical retirement was not because she reported her sexual assault.

"West Virginia National Guard is adamant that there were no adverse actions taken against LTC Teresa James as an officer or as a commander as a result of her report of sexual assault," the guard said in a written statement.

The West Virginia National Guard said that as soon as it learned of James' assault, it acted immediately to report it to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

"Three separate law enforcement entities declined to prosecute the case," the guard said. "As a result, [the Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. James Hoyer] immediately referred the case to [the National Guard Bureau's Office of Complex Investigations] for a thorough investigation."

"Maj. Gen. Hoyer was thorough and transparent in reaching out to external authorities with the jurisdiction and the power to prosecute. Not one agency could prosecute based on the

rotate for every sub. Smaller, Virginia-class fast-attack submarines began receiving female officers in January.

The Navy is planning for the first integration of enlisted women in a submarine crew next year, when it opens positions on the Ohio-class USS Michigan. Plans call for enlisted women to come aboard Virginia-class submarines beginning in 2020.

The service's long-term goal is to have females represent 20 percent of enlisted aboard all submarines.

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/05/25/courts-martial-to-begin-this-week-uss-wyoming-shower-video-case.html>

information provided to them. With all other avenues exhausted, [Hoyer] took the most severe administrative actions available to him within the limits of his office, which included adverse separation and forfeiture of retirement benefits."

The officer who allegedly raped James is not being named in this story. Telephone messages left at his home requesting comment were not returned by press time.

Military survivors of sexual assault often face professional or social retaliation when they come forward, according to a new report from Human Rights Watch, an international nongovernmental organization that focuses on defending human rights. James was one of 150 sexual assault survivors interviewed and is identified under a pseudonym in the report, but agreed to allow her real name to be printed in this story.

"People see what happened to me and it instills fear," James is quoted as saying in the Human Rights Watch report. "If it can happen to a lieutenant colonel ... "

James' sexual assault allegations were substantiated in a National Guard investigation completed in January 2013, which she obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request and provided to Military Times. Investigators said they found James "very credible," and that she provided documentation, witnesses and medical records that were consistent with her version of events.

As it substantiated her report of sexual assault, the report about James' case concluded:

"The [Defense Department] definition of sexual assault is extremely broad. It includes use of intimidation or abuse of authority when the victim does not or cannot consent. We interviewed four witnesses and the victim. There is a preponderance of evidence to find the perpetrator used intimidation and fear to sexually assault the victim, resulting in nonconsensual intercourse. He was in a senior position to gain access to the victim, and evidence demonstrated a pattern

of inappropriate conduct directed toward the victim. We find the victim very credible; she provided documentation, witnesses, and medical records consistent with her version of events."

The report said the alleged perpetrator declined to meet with investigators, but that another investigation in 2011 concluded he "had used hostility, fear, and strategic alliances that were extremely detrimental to the West Virginia National Guard, to the point that people felt unsafe at work." Investigators also said witnesses described his conduct as "unprofessional with an inability to control his anger, violent outbursts, and the use of threats and intimidation."

James, a full-time Active Guard Reserve soldier, is stationed at the West Virginia Guard's Joint Forces Headquarters in Charleston. She is now on terminal leave, but was most recently a personnel officer.

The guard investigators said James was described by those who knew her as always professional and not likely to fabricate a story of assault, and that she "has decades of military service and her performance on her OERs [Officer Evaluation Reports] has always ranged between good and excellent."

After her assault, James said she just wanted to put it behind her. But concerned that he may have done the same thing to other women, James came forward in August 2012. The investigation report said the delay in her reporting "is both understandable and common."

"Unfortunately, these common feelings of shame and embarrassment are how serial perpetrators go undetected," the report said. "Eventually, it was her feelings of guilt that other women may have become victims and sexually assaulted that she felt she had a duty and responsibility as a senior leader to report this extremely difficult and personal experience. When she realized that she was not the only one affected, she took immediate action."

The Army's Criminal Investigation Division decided it didn't have jurisdiction over James' case because she wasn't a Title 10 active-duty soldier, she said, so her case was eventually turned over to civilian prosecutors in Little Rock, Arkansas, where the alleged assault happened. But prosecutors there weren't able to collect enough evidence to move forward with a case before the statute of limitations expired, James said.

The retaliation started soon after she reported her assault, James said. After receiving a career of "good to excellent" evaluations, as inspectors said, that November James received a negative officer evaluation report, which she believes was retaliation.

"It was horrible," James said. "It was the worst report I had ever gotten in my life."

She was placed on convalescent leave for 30 days while she sought care — her health deteriorated due to the stress of reporting and the guilt she felt for not speaking up earlier — and while she pursued legal options.

In a March 2013 meeting, James said she was told her alleged perpetrator would be forced out of the Guard. James said she was also told that she was being referred to a medical board because she had not been at work since September 2012.

"That's where I said, 'Nobody's even called me to tell me what they want me to do, and you're going to send me to a med board, because I don't come to work?'" James said. "That's how I know it was reprisal. They said I refused to come to work, which is not the case at all."

"At the time, I'm a 32-year veteran, and I know right and wrong, and sitting at the house is not right," James said. "I never said I would not come to work. I wanted to get better, and I wanted to get back to work."

James fought the med board for nearly two years, but her appeals were unsuccessful and she will retire this summer. She said she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress stemming from both her sexual assault and her deployment. She filed a complaint with the Defense Department's inspector general April 2013 alleging retaliation, which is still ongoing.

The West Virginia National Guard strongly denied she was medically boarded as retaliation, and said her accusation "is in error and not reflective of the facts."

"The Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) is an independent process, separate and apart from oversight or decision making from the WVNG," the guard said. "A command must refer a service member for evaluation when that service member is unable to perform assigned duties."

But the Guard said it could not discuss any further details about the medical board with Military Times until James signed a full medical release.

James signed a Standard Form 180 military records request form to authorize the West Virginia National Guard to discuss her case with Military Times. But she said she would not sign a full medical release authorization, due to her ongoing IG reprisal complaint.

James said dealing with the aftermath of her disclosure was more stressful than going to war.

"The deployment was easier than the [stuff] I've been through the last three years," James said. "I'd do that ten 10 times over before I'd do what I did the last three years."

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2015/05/26/she-came-forward-then-another-ordeal/27639681/>



## Lawyer: Navy fails to prosecute all in sub video ring

(27 May) *Navy Times*, By *Meghann Myers*

Two sailors have pleaded guilty this week for secretly filming and sharing videos of female shipmates undressing over a period of 10 months aboard the submarine Wyoming.

But one sailor's attorney contends that the Navy has so far failed to punish others in the alleged ring, based on information provided by his client. This includes allegations that two chiefs watched the videos but have not been charged.

"We gave them a barrel full of information," Jim Stein, a Georgia-based civilian attorney, told *Navy Times* on Wednesday. "There was no way in this world that they followed up on it."

Missile Technician 2nd Class Charles Greaves will serve 24 months in prison, be demoted to E-2 and receive a dishonorable discharge for three of the 11 charges originally brought against him.

He admitted to one count each of recording and distributing videos, as well as disrespecting a superior officer for his characterization of the videos as like Pokemon trading cards, while he was assigned to Trident Training Facility Kings Bay, Ga.

"This is a terrible thing to have done to anyone, especially fellow sailors," Greaves said to the Naval Station Mayport, Fla., courtroom. "I shamed myself and derailed my ambitions."

His guilty plea was part of a deal with prosecutors to testify against other sailors implicated in the case. Of 12 original suspects, seven have been indicted and four are still under consideration.

On Wednesday, MT2 Joseph Bradley pleaded guilty to one count of distributing the videos, a deal that disregarded his four other charges of conspiracy, obstructing justice and two for distribution.

He was sentenced to 30 days in prison and a reduction in rank to E-3.

Greaves testified Tuesday that he learned how to film the sub's shower areas in "C" school, Stein said.

He told the courtroom that while underway, other sailors would serve as lookouts when the female officers were working out.

## 2nd Submariner Guilty Of Sharing Videos Of Women Officers

(27 May) *Associated Press*, By *Jason Dearen*

A second submariner pleaded guilty Wednesday to sharing videos of female officers undressing for a shower, continuing a case that a prosecutor calls a "black eye" for the Navy's integration of women into the nation's sub fleet.

When they headed to the showers afterward, he said, he set up his cellphone camera in a crack between pipes that provided an opening to the changing area.

Greaves has emerged at the center of the case, as his cooperation with investigators led to the current list of suspects, as well as allegations of more videos taken by other sailors.

All four female officers who were assigned to Wyoming testified at the court-martial. Stein said he thinks the Navy is dropping the ball in holding every party responsible.

"On cross-examination, I said, 'Do you want each and every person held responsible?'" he said, talking about the female officers. "They all said yes."

MT2 Ryan Secrest and MT3 Cody Shoemaker face charges of recording female midshipmen while they were underway with the crew.

Greaves contends that two of his chiefs asked to see the videos and did not report them, his lawyer said.

"I feel sorry for those ladies. What happened to them was unbelievable," Stein said. "But to not follow up on it is letting down these ladies and the ones to follow."

The female officers, some of the first ever to serve aboard submarines, described to the courtroom the trauma of learning about the videos.

"I broke down," said one, whose name was not reported. "The people I was working next to, who I had immense faith and trust in ... were not anything that I thought they were."

The prosecutor, Lt. Cmdr. Lee Marsh, said the trials will serve as a warning to the rest of the Navy.

"We need to send a message ... that we value female service members," he said. "Great women are here to stay. Get with the program or get out."

A summary court-martial was also underway Wednesday at Kings Bay for MT3 Brandon McGarity, who faces two counts of failing to report the videos and one count of making a false official statement, saying he was not aware of the videos. <http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2015/05/27/wyoming-submarine-shower-videos-greaves-lawyer/28014397/>

Electronics technician Joseph Bradley entered his guilty pleas in a court-martial trial and was sentenced to 30 days' confinement and a reduction in rank.

Bradley received the videos after they were secretly recorded by another sailor aboard the USS Wyoming nuclear submarine based at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in Georgia, prosecutors say.

Bradley admitted in a plea agreement to sharing the images with other sailors.

"This is a betrayal of trust and a violation of that brotherhood and that sisterhood of submariners," Navy prosecuting attorney Lt. Cmdr. Lee Marsh said.

"This accused furthered what has become a black eye to the Navy."

On Tuesday, missile technician Charles Greaves received two years in prison and a dishonorable discharge for making the videos. Greaves worked with lookouts on the sub who notified him when the female officers were done working out and were headed to the showers, prosecutors say. Greaves covered his cellphone in tape and stuck it between a gap in pipes that had a view of the sub's shower area.

The case has been a blight on the Navy's integration of women into the submarine force, which it started in 2011.

The women officers videotaped were among the first wave to serve on nuclear submarines. They all said they felt proud to be trailblazers and honored to qualify as submariners, a grueling task that requires mastery of the ship's complicated systems.

## **While at War, Female Soldiers Fight to Belong**

(24 May) *The New York Times*, By Benedict Carey

The day's work was in full swing, the men in the platoon needed a break, and one of them began imitating his leader's style of walking. Head down, elbows flapping, legs flying forward, he soon had the other soldiers laughing and calling out modifications:

*Swing your arms out more!*

*No, really throw your legs out!*

*Don't forget to look like you're about to punch somebody!*

The "rhino walk," they called it, and it was a way to ease the tension of long days in southern Kandahar Province. The platoon leader loved it, too, at first. "I thought the rhino walk was funny, and totally true; they got me," Lt. Courtney Wilson, who served in Afghanistan in 2010 and 2011, said in a recent interview.

But by the time she was in her bunk, she wondered. "Was it just being funny, or were they getting exasperated with me? That was the hard part," she said. "I started feeling a little like it was me versus them. I was worried the men didn't like me. I wasn't sure if they were making me one of the guys, or completely disrespecting and making fun of me."

In the months to come, that sense of exclusion would deepen into depression. Halfway through her deployment, she sent an email to a friend at home saying she was determined not to kill herself.

Now, the four women officers say the videos have ruined or derailed their careers.

On Wednesday, three of the officers testified about how devastating it has been. They said knowing the videos were shared among the male sailors they led as officers eroded their abilities to do their jobs.

"After this happened, I lost the trust of everybody," one woman said. "I couldn't look anyone in the eye and know if they had seen me."

Others said the incident has left them paranoid about using restrooms at the gym or in public.

Five more male sailors face charges in the case. The next related court-martial is scheduled on Friday at Kings Bay, and will be a closed proceeding.

Bradley received a more lenient sentence because he was the sailor who ultimately provided the illicit videos to Navy criminal investigators.

Bradley faced the women in the courtroom and offered an apology. The women stared back at him as he spoke, stone-faced.

"I don't expect you to accept my apology, but I needed to tell you guys," he said.

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/2nd-submariner-guilty-sharing-videos-women-officers-31341845>

## ***Entering a Man's World***

One of the biggest adjustments the United States military attempted during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars was cultural: the integration of women into an intensely male world. Women made up about 15 percent of the force during these two wars, compared with 7 percent in the Persian Gulf war of 1991, and they saw more combat in greater numbers than ever before.

Yet even though women distinguished themselves as leaders and enlisted soldiers, many of them describe struggling with feeling they do not quite belong. For men, the bonds of unconditional love among fellow combatants — that lifeblood of male military culture — are sustaining. But in dozens of interviews with women who served, they often said such deep emotional sustenance eluded them.

"It's not a fair comparison to say the deployment is more or less stressful based on gender; it's stressful for everyone," said Lisbeth Prifogle, a supply officer who was attached to Marine Aircraft Group 16 in Al Asad, Iraq, in 2005. "But there are a whole bunch of little things you have to deal with that men don't even think about, because it's their world."

The psychic distress is measurable. More than 38 percent of women report depressive symptoms after deployment, compared with about 32 percent of men, according to a study published by the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. Women are 10 times more likely than men to have reported serious sexual harassment. Suicide has been an enormous issue across the military, particularly for white men. But Army

data show that the suicide rate for female soldiers tripled during deployment, to 14 per 100,000 from 4 per 100,000 back home — unlike the rate for men, which rose more modestly.

“Clearly these data beg us to account for why there’s this apparent surge in felt hopelessness and alienation among so many women service members during deployment,” said Dr. Loree K. Sutton, a retired brigadier general, a psychiatrist and the commissioner of the New York City Mayor’s Office of Veterans’ Affairs. “This is a critical endeavor, and it’s got to go beyond individual factors and look at group dynamics.”

### *‘She Plays to Win’*

Any self-doubts Lieutenant Wilson had about deployment were buried in a stampede of forward motion.

She arrived in Afghanistan on April 1, 2010, landing at Kandahar Airfield — a dusty, chaotic staging area, swarming with convoys and contractors. “It reminds me of those postapocalyptic towns in ‘The Terminator’ and ‘The Matrix,’” she wrote in an email to a friend back home.

Soon she was leading a platoon in the 864th Engineer Battalion on projects outside the wire, in the Kandahar region and beyond. Her team moved heavy equipment; built security towers, barriers and fences; shored up roads and buildings; and leveled terrain for construction crews.

“You try moving 40-foot flatbeds full of equipment through those narrow dirt streets full of mud buildings without ruining anyone’s house,” said Lt. Nicholas LaPonte, who later inherited her job. Running the platoon, he said, “means you’re up 20 hours a day, you’re planning missions, you’re on the move all the time.”

Lieutenant Wilson was hooked. Like many young people, she had enlisted to prove herself to be a player in the world’s biggest live-action drama. “To be able to say, when I’m 40 or 50, ‘I did this, I did something very cool,’” she said. “I guess secretly I always wanted to be a badass.”

Growing up in suburban Boston, the daughter of business consultants, she was forever competing with her older brother. “Fierce, fearless, driven — like a young, blond version of myself,” said her mother, Debbie Depp Wilson. “You give her a goal and she plays to win.”

After graduating from Phillips Exeter Academy, a preparatory school, she attended the women’s college Wellesley and majored in English, with a minor in psychology. There, she joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps.

She graduated first in the R.O.T.C. cadet class from the Paul Revere Battalion. “When she decided to officially enlist, I interrogated her,” said her father, David Wilson. “Are you sure you really want to do this? Why? She said it was the people. She said: ‘They have my values. They stand for something.’”

On missions in Afghanistan, Lieutenant Wilson projected determination. Her soldiers worked to exhaustion, without complaint. “I’m biased, of course, but I don’t think there’s a better platoon out there,” she emailed a friend at home.

She also learned how to handle the rich girl comments: “So what, I’m here just like you.”

But soon the “rhino walk” ribbing started, and her self-doubt, dormant in the initial rush of deployment, stirred.

### *‘Little Things’*

As social scientists have sought to understand the increased rates of depression and suicide among enlisted women, they have looked at research on other groups at the margins of a culture, whether blacks in the Ivy League, whites attending a nonwhite high school — or women in male professions. And they have found that the mental costs borne by those in the minority are similar.

Members of such groups tend to report as many insults and bad days as members of the dominant culture. But compared with the majority, they feel far less secure.

“Every bad thing that happens, they interpret it as a sign that they don’t belong,” said Gregory M. Walton, an assistant professor of psychology at Stanford University. That uncertainty is likely to become especially predictive of mental trouble during deployment, he added, “when the unit becomes all-encompassing, the social network contracts.”

A research team led by Amy Street of the National Center for PTSD and V.A. Boston Healthcare System, and Ronald Kessler of Harvard University has ransacked Army data for factors that might explain the spike in suicide rates. In the journal *Psychological Medicine*, the team in March ruled out some of the most plausible explanations: Women did not enter the Army with more psychological problems than men. Reported sexual assaults did not explain the elevated rate. And the proportion of women in a given unit did not seem to matter. The search for answers continues.

Researchers are now asking how much “all those little things” — the differences inherent in being on the margins of a culture — affect a person’s mood, especially under the stress of combat.

### *Socially Isolated*

One of the little things, in Lieutenant Wilson’s case, nearly led to starvation.

The rhino-walk comments prompted a psychological retreat. She never doubted her ability, and neither did anyone else. “Lieutenant Wilson is a model officer whom I would trust with the most difficult mission,” her company commander wrote in September of 2010.



But she was less certain she inspired affection. “Courtney doesn’t have that laid-back humor a lot of guys have, so she’d get teased and didn’t know how to shrug it off,” said Lieutenant LaPonte, who became a close friend. “She took everything personally.”

Perhaps no more so than when a couple of soldiers cracked that she looked fat.

It was a bad joke, at best; a distance runner, she worked out whenever she could. Still, it got under her skin. “I was living on carrots and water,” she said. “I was down to 122 pounds, so skinny you could see my clavicle. It was crazy, but I felt I had to prove something to them.”

Female veterans said in interviews that the expectations for male soldiers were clear: Do your part, keep your head, cover your buddy’s back — and you’re in.

In contrast, the women said, they got mixed messages. The Army bans most jewelry and makeup yet is institutionally protective toward women, at least out in the field. “You’re treated like a girl, and yet you can’t really be a woman — that’s the feeling,” Lieutenant Wilson said.

Mixed into this odd displacement were ever-present sexual undercurrents. Many women said that at night, on base, they would not go to the bathroom without an escort. Lieutenant Wilson said a noncommissioned officer in her unit continually made sexual jokes that made her so anxious she thought about reporting him. She decided against it, but the threat lingered.

In fact, almost any consorting with a male soldier was enough to feed an appetite for gossip that rivaled high school, veterans said. “What made it unbearable were the moments you felt you couldn’t socialize or bond with the men after a hard day — they were mostly hard days — because of the rumors that would fly,” said Susanne Rossignol, who served in Baiji, Iraq, in 2004 and 2005.

Many women said forming close, collegial ties with fellow soldiers was not easy. “It’s such a tricky thing to navigate; you have to learn to approach guys like a sister, not as a potential romantic partner,” said Anne, a woman who served two tours in Iraq and wanted her full name omitted because she is currently on active duty. “When you do that, they’ll do anything for you. But so many females coming into the Army, they’re so young, they don’t understand how to do that.”

Some female soldiers found companionship with other serving women. “I was lucky,” said Elizabeth Verardo, who flew Apache helicopters and served two tours in Afghanistan. “I had a group of women of my same rank. We were close and hung out all the time.”

Many women had nothing of the kind, either because of a scarcity of women in their unit, or because of the vagaries of service — different schedules, ranks and jobs. “The number of other women in the unit is one way to get at social isolation,

but it’s not the crispest measure,” Dr. Street said. “There are factors that it doesn’t account for.”

Lieutenant Wilson had three good friends in Afghanistan — Lieutenant LaPonte; Lt. Elissa Adams, now a captain; and Capt. Michael L. Fortune — but they were stationed at different bases and crossed her path only occasionally. She felt so cut off that she counted the days between those visits.

“Whenever I was on the same location she was, I would stop in and we would talk about what was going on,” Captain Fortune said in an email. Lieutenant Wilson’s main problem, he added, was that “she overthought every encounter she had with others.”

“She would question if people liked her and if they respected her,” he said.

After one especially long stretch, she wrote a friend at home, “I just cannot connect. It’s like there is this 12-inch-thick sheet of glass separating me from the rest of humanity. I see people, and I hear muffled sounds and everything, but none of them can reach me.”

One low point came one night in November of 2010 when mortars rocked her base in Kandahar. Even as she squeezed into a cramped bunker with dozens of other soldiers, she felt no adrenaline rush, no fear, no concern for herself. She had gone dead empty.

“All around me, guys were calling home, calling other soldiers, checking on people to see if they were O.K.,” Lieutenant Wilson said. “I was just standing there, numb, thinking, ‘O.K., maybe now is when I die ... hmm, that’s interesting.’”

“I didn’t care whether I lived or died.”

### *Lingering Anxiety*

Out of the bunker, out of Afghanistan, Lieutenant Wilson began suffering panic attacks, bursts of anxiety that squeezed her throat. “It got to where I couldn’t breathe, like I was close to blacking out,” she said.

Jack Daniel’s and Coke blunted the anxiety, but the relief did not last. She tried biofeedback, prayer, meditation and psychiatric medications. Finally, reluctantly, she began regular talk therapy with a psychologist at the Fort Hood military base in Texas.

“She really struggled to connect with other people, and in part it’s because she was trying to be someone she was not,” Roger Belisle, a clinical psychologist at Fort Hood’s Resilience and Restoration Center, said in a phone interview.

That type of person — high expectations, tough on others, tougher on oneself, averse to asking for help — is a well-worn military role that is hard enough to fill for men. For women, it is an invitation to isolation, psychiatrists said. The best

fighters are fierce, but they have a deep well of support from buddies.

"It creates a kind of bond between members, a love that transcends anything you've ever known," David H. Marlowe, the founder of the Army's behavioral health unit, who died last year, once said. "You come to the absolute belief that the noblest and most important thing you can do is die for the others."

Like Lieutenant Wilson, many women in the military did not have that kind of love — at least when they were deployed. "It's like, I got all the downside of serving in the Army and none of the upside, the camaraderie," Lieutenant Wilson said.

Out of the service, she is now in close contact with her friends, her parents and her brother. Whenever her mood wavers, she phones one of them — "therapy time," she calls it. In a final

### **Mabus: 1 in 4 Marine recruits should be women**

*(26 May) Marine Corps Times, By Derrick Perkins*

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus wants more female Marines in the Corps, a goal the service's recruiting command say they were working toward before the call to action.

Mabus announced a plan to boost the sea service's enlisted female recruitment efforts to at least 25 percent of all accessions during a mid-May speech at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. The move, he said, will help attract, recruit and retain women in communities in which they are underrepresented.

"[We] need more women in the Navy and Marine Corps; not simply to have more women, but because a more diverse force is a stronger force," Mabus told an auditorium of midshipmen.

Boosting female accessions to 25 percent would dramatically change the look of the Corps. Female Marines currently make up only about 7 percent of the Corps.

It's a challenge Marine Corps Recruiting Command has attempted to address in a variety of ways in recent years, said Master Sgt. Bryce Piper, a MCRC spokesman. One example is working with groups like the Women's Basketball Coaches Association. Another is sending two million direct mail packages to female high school seniors, Piper said.

"[The] Marine Corps has already demonstrated a commitment to making concerted efforts to attract, mentor and retain the most talented men and women who bring a diversity of background, culture and skill in service to our great nation," he said in an emailed statement.

And while the Corps' television advertisement campaigns have not implicitly targeted women, they do feature female Marines. The first was "The Climb," which aired in 2001.

Female Marines are featured in print and online advertisements as well as in support material provided to

session, her therapist, Dr. Belisle, asked: What is your passion, right now?

"Travel," she answered.

"Then do it."

In August last year, Lieutenant Wilson finished her contract with the Army. On Oct. 29, after visiting with her brother and parents, she flew to Madrid.

She was determined to visit India and Africa, before returning. Or not.

This time the mission was open-ended, and the goals much harder to measure.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/25/health/while-at-war-female-soldiers-fight-to-belong.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/25/health/while-at-war-female-soldiers-fight-to-belong.html?_r=1)

recruiters. In 2014, MCRC launched a series of "success story" videos on YouTube featuring female officers. They currently have brochures geared for women looking to earn a commission, and MCRC is developing something similar on the enlisted side, Piper said.

But the Corps lacks a gender-specific goal when it comes to recruitment. Though Mabus was explicit in his call for more female recruits, Piper said direction on how to achieve that objective has yet to come down from Headquarters Marine Corps.

Of the Corps' nearly 3,900 recruiters, only 166 are women, Piper said. And officials do not intentionally pair women recruiters with potential female poolees, he said.

"To us, Marines are Marines," Piper said.

Mabus' push to recruit more women comes just months before Pentagon officials have to determine what additional jobs they'll open to female troops. At a congressional hearing in March, leaders indicated they were on track to meet the target date.

It was then that Mabus first raised the problem of recruiting women for the Navy and Marine Corps. He told the House Armed Services Committee that his department struggled to attract women.

"One of the reasons we're having problems is that we do not have enough flexibility in how we manage our force," Mabus told lawmakers.

Women increasingly enjoy more career opportunities within the Corps, though it remains to be seen if that will drive up recruitment. The service opened up 371 billets in combat units previously closed to women in 2012 and 11 military occupational specialties to female Marines in 2014.

The Corps is also wrapping up a month's long experiment involving male and female Marine volunteers to test job-specific training and readiness standards.

Mabus made it clear he wants to see that work continue. Women comprise the majority of college graduates in the general population and the Navy Department needs well-educated officers, he said.

Change may come gradually, but it is coming, Mabus said.

## **Women in Combat Jobs Watch Marines Test Their Ability to Fill Roles**

*(26 May) Stars and Stripes, By Jennifer Hlad*

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. — As the Humvee bumped along in the dust, the communications officer for 1st Tank Battalion picked up the radio handset.

"Delta 6, this is Tiger 10. Radio check, over."

It's a scene that has played out hundreds, if not thousands, of times in deserts and jungles all over the world. The only difference is that this time, the communications officer for the tank battalion is a woman.

In late 2012, the Marine Corps began assigning women to artillery, tank, combat engineer, combat assault, low altitude air defense and assault amphibious battalions. The move was part of a broader effort to open more combat roles to women, in advance of then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's decision to rescind the policy that barred women from units whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat.

Panetta in January 2013 gave the services until January 2016 to allow women to compete for all jobs and units, or to request an exception for positions they believe must remain male-only.

The Marine Corps had begun assessing the performance of female volunteers at its Infantry Officer Course and enlisted infantry training school – with the understanding that even successful graduates would not become infantrywomen. And last year, it created a coed experimental task force to test how women perform as part of a ground combat unit.

Since 2012, 29 women have started the Infantry Officer Course, and only four have made it through the notoriously challenging combat endurance test that kicks off the class.

Three hundred and fifty-eight women volunteered for the enlisted infantry training course, and 122 had graduated from the course by February 2015, when Marine Corps officials determined they had enough data for their studies. The women who graduated were not allowed to become infantry Marines.

The Marine Corps has denied Stars and Stripes access to and interviews with members of the experimental task force, known as the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force. Officials said only a handful of the 120 women who started out in the task force in the fall have dropped out, mainly due to injuries.

"By the time you reach your second or third tour, your squadron, ship or unit will be much more demographically representative of the nation you serve," he said at the academy. "And that is critically important both to the quality of our all-volunteer force, but also important to fulfilling the principles of the democracy we defend."

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/05/26/diversifying-the-marine-corps/27606749/>

Even as the Corps conducts these high-profile tests of female volunteers in infantry roles, dozens of other women have been smoothly and quietly integrated into units previously closed to them.

Gender a non-issue

In 2012, Capt. Megan Selbach-Allen, now the communications officer for 1st Tanks, became one of the first women ever assigned to 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion.

Though she didn't volunteer for the job, she was thrilled because it meant she would get to deploy.

Selbach-Allen's father was in the Marine Corps just after the end of the Vietnam War and never deployed, and she wanted to avoid a similar story.

"I didn't want to miss the war," she said.

Selbach-Allen went to Afghanistan with 3rd CEB in 2013, and was assigned to 1st Tanks when she returned.

Although she was one of the first women in both units, she said her gender has been a non-issue.

Critics of introducing women to combat roles have argued women simply aren't as strong as men and couldn't physically hack it. However, in Afghanistan, Selbach-Allen worked out with infantry Marines, taught a Cross Fit class and learned that she is stronger and fitter than some of the men.

"I don't think you can make the claim that we're slowing them down, or that we're not capable of doing the job," she said.

First Lt. Isis Culver, also a communications officer, was the first female officer to arrive at 1st Tanks, in January 2014.

She said she got a few doubletakes, but no negative comments.

"I love what I do and I love this unit," she said. "It's definitely been challenging, but not because I'm female."

First Lt. Zully Pasindo Rubio, a supply officer, was the fifth female Marine to arrive at the unit. She said she had asked for the job because she heard it was one of the most challenging accounts for a supply officer in the Marines.

“Throw that word out there and I’ll volunteer,” she said. “That’s why I wanted to join the Marine Corps: the challenge.”

The difficulty isn’t related to her gender. Pasindo Rubio said each of the tanks is worth \$2.5 million, and they break down often, so managing the accounts and money is not easy.

The male Marines seemed a little shocked to see her when she first arrived, she said, but she believes it was simply because of the novelty.

Pasindo Rubio, who also serves as a battalion high intensity interval training instructor, said she has never been treated any differently than male Marines.

Cpl. Jordan Kountz hasn’t been quite as lucky.

The motor transport truck driver who joined the Marines because her father was in the Army and she wanted “to do something a little bit harder,” said she was worried when she learned she would be one of the first women assigned to the artillery battery 1st Battalion, 11th Marines.

During pre-deployment training at Twentynine Palms with her previous unit – which has included women for years – Kountz and a few other female Marines were assigned to rooms at an infantry barracks. Male Marines saw the women, assumed they were part of the new gender integration efforts, and began posting nasty messages and photos of them on Marine infantry-themed Facebook pages.

Kountz said the male Marines posted things like, “How long do you think it will take for them to get pregnant?” and “Wait for the sexual assault reports to start rolling in.” They also posted updates when the women would leave the barracks for food or training, Kountz said.

Though the male Marines’ command and Kountz’s command dealt with the problem, she said the whole experience was “pretty creepy.”

However, she said, her gender has not been an issue in 1/11.

“No random cat calls or Wookie calls,” she said, referencing the nickname some male Marines on the infantry Facebook pages use to talk about female Marines.

Instead, she said, things have been good – even when living in the desert for the 1st Marine Division exercise.

## **‘Everybody’s a Marine’**

When the Marines with 3rd Amphibious Assault Battalion found out women would be assigned to their unit, a few were “iffy,” said Cpl. Cody Langley, a crew chief.

They were concerned about where women would sleep, shower or go to the bathroom.

During the division exercise here, everyone slept on the ground and used portable bathrooms; there were no showers or special facilities.

“It hasn’t affected anything,” Langley said. “They do what we do.”

Maj. Peter Schnurr, executive officer of 1st Tanks, also said he wasn’t concerned when he heard that women would be assigned to the unit, and he didn’t sense any apprehension from the other men.

A total of 10 women have been assigned to the battalion of roughly 800 Marines; one of the women has since retired.

Though the unit has not deployed since the women arrived, the division exercise is designed to ensure the battalion is ready to go when needed and is “essentially like deploying,” he said.

There were no problems, and the unit was able to use a new system that Selbach-Allen and Culver were critical to bringing online.

“It’s been a positive experience for us,” Schnurr said. “At the end of the day, everybody’s a Marine.”

## **Crossing the infantry line**

Women began joining the Marine Corps Reserve in 1918, and Capt. Anne Lentz became the first female commissioned officer in the active-duty Marine Corps in 1943. Now, women make up about 7 percent of the Corps, and about 93 percent of the occupational fields are open to them.

But the heart of the Marine Corps is the infantry.

Nearly 12 percent of male officers and 18 percent of male enlisted Marines have infantry as their primary specialty, according to Marine Corps statistics released in March. Infantry is the most popular specialty for male enlisted Marines and the second-most popular for male officers.

Although “every Marine is a rifleman,” some current and former infantrymen were horrified when Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey announced that women might be allowed to join ground combat units.

Allen West, who served in the Army's 4th Infantry Division and in 2013 was a member of the House of Representatives, wrote on Facebook then that the decision to lift the combat exclusion policy was "the misconceived liberal progressive vision of fairness and equality, which could potentially lead to the demise of our military."

Ryan Smith, a lawyer who served as a Marine infantryman, wrote in an opinion column in the Wall Street Journal at the time that during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, he and other Marines had no choice but to empty their bowels and bladders mere inches from their fellow Marines' faces during 48-hour convoys. They also were lined up naked and washed with pressure hoses, he said.

Being forced to be naked in front of the opposite sex in a state of terrible hygiene "would be distracting and potentially traumatizing," Smith wrote, and unit cohesion "can be irreparably harmed by forcing them to violate societal norms."

But in April, as a team of artillerymen sat in the shade waiting to begin a late-night Howitzer shoot as part of the 1st Marine Division exercise, they couldn't see any problem with allowing women to join artillery units – as long as they can do the job.

Lance Cpl. Corey Osborne, whose job involves using a staff to ram rounds into the M-777 Howitzer, said operating the weapon is fast-paced and physically demanding. He had to

pass an artillery strength test during his initial training, he said, but as long as a woman can pass by the same standard, he doesn't see why they couldn't do the job.

Cpl. Andrew Sigo, who sets up the aiming points and helps operate the weapon, said that generally, just one man lifts the 97-pound round to load it, and that a fast crew can reload in six or seven seconds.

If women can do the same work, he said, "there's no problem."

Cpl. Tara-Lynn Morris, a truck driver with 1/11, the artillery battery, said she was one of six women from her previous unit who were assigned to the battery in January. Having deployed as one of only two women in a battalion of men, she said she was used to being in the extreme minority.

"Most male Marines don't look at us differently," she said.

Cpl. Blanca Pedroza, an administration Marine with 1st Tanks, said working with a previously all-male unit "wasn't weird at all."

"Everyone's worried about male-female integration," she said. "I'm just trying to learn my new job."

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/05/26/women-combat-jobs-watch-marines-test-their-ability-to-fill-roles.html>

## Women Fight Their Way Through Army's Grueling Ranger School

(27 May) NPR

At Georgia's Fort Benning, female soldiers are fighting a two-month battle. Their enemies? Hunger, fatigue, even hallucination. They're fighting their way through the Army's notoriously hard Ranger School, trying to make history by becoming the first women to graduate from it.

It's one of several Pentagon experiments to see how best to move women into ground combat roles. And it's a test that thousands of men before them have failed.

With sharp-tongued instructors looking on, Ranger School students rocket down a zip-line from a 70-foot tower. They land into a pond so hard that they can dislocate limbs if they hit the water wrong. The instructors are trying to see who might struggle with heights and water because later the class moves into the mountains and then to coastal Florida.

First Lt. Tracy Ross is one of 28 women observers who the Army brought in to help evaluate the training. She had to take all the physical tests the students did, but didn't have to pass them.

"We're just here to understand what they're going through, so actually going through an event gives us an idea of how it's going to be like so we can provide feedback," she explains.

It's only hours into the 62-day course. By this point nearly a quarter of the 400 students have washed out for good,

including three of the 19 women. In a normal year, only about half the men who try are able to finish.

Ranger school is voluntary, but vitally important training for anyone who aspires to be an infantry leader. About 90 percent of the Army's senior infantry officers wear the coveted, arch-shaped Ranger Tab.

"Everyone... wants the ranger tab. It's kind of like instant credibility," says Ross.

Opening the school to women is billed as a one-time experiment. Two years ago, the Defense Department lifted the ban on women serving in small ground combat units. Now each service branch has until the end of the year to figure out how to fit women into those jobs, or explain why it can't.

Three hundred students pair off in a giant, dirt and woodchip circle known as the Pit. They brand black plastic daggers; an instructor with a bullhorn coaches them on knife fighting.

A female soldier a little more than 5-feet-tall with a blank expression faces a man, who is 6-feet-tall. After the knife practice, instructors urge the students to crawl, jog and lunge in a circle yelling, and at times hoisting each other aloft for the buddy carry.



One woman staggers along with a nearly 200-pound man draped across her shoulders.

The instructors are starting a process that Ranger School is famous for: Pushing students to their physical and mental limits for weeks on end.

Most who drop out of Ranger School do so in the first four days, which are built around a battery of must-pass basic physical fitness tests. That means lots of "ups:" push-ups, sit-ups, chin-ups, and up at 3 a.m. to navigate by compass solo through bogs and thick underbrush.

It peaks with a 12-mile march under heavy packs that has to be finished in three hours.

Ranger training replicates the pressures of combat. And it's a kind of human pressure cooker.

"We yell at 'em to create that stress they're going to have in combat... because no one has a quiet conversation in combat," says Sgt. First Class Travis Pheanis, a long-time Ranger instructor.

The students are kept moving, kept awake, and kept hungry. They get about three and a half hours of sleep a day, and so little food that even men in great shape typically lose 15 to 20 pounds.

By the final phase of the training — after the basic push-ups, sit-ups and zip-line, and after working on small unit tactics — the soldiers are sent to a Florida swamp, so exhausted that many are no longer sure what's real.

"Everybody hallucinates. I don't think there is one Ranger student who can tell you they didn't have one time where they saw something that was not there," Pheanis says. "I watched guys go up an escalator in the middle of a swamp. But then I blink four times and laughed it off. The problem is some guys take what their eyes see as the gospel."

The decision to let women try Ranger school triggered an outcry from some retired and active-duty Rangers. Inevitably, they say the school's harsh standards will have to be lowered to accommodate the female troops.

Officials say that's not true.

Critics also complain women are taking hard-to-get student slots that should go to men. Here at Fort Benning, the trainers don't have time to focus on the criticism.

Maj. John Vickery runs the land navigation test as part of the Ranger course. When asked about the idea of women as Rangers, he says:

"I think it's fair to give the opportunity to people who are up for the challenge. There are women in special operations who have been in positions of substantial danger who have been

attached to Ranger units and even who have been killed in Ranger units in Afghanistan. So I think to deny them the same opportunity for training is probably not right."

But Vickery says passing a training course — no matter how tough — isn't the same as leading a unit in combat.

"Putting a woman in a small outpost in Afghanistan with 30 males, I think may pose some significant challenges that the Army would really have to work through to make sure that that's ok," he says.

The women still have to get through the Ranger Course. The land navigation is one of the toughest parts of the first week. Half of the exercise is in darkness, and all of it is in heavy underbrush infested with several kinds of venomous snakes, fire ants and wild boars.

For those who make it through those first days, the odds improve sharply. They're moving to phases where the challenges are as much mental as they are physical.

As Ross, the female observer, watches the soldiers trickle in from the woods, she says the women she's seeing aren't worried about whether they're making history. They're in the moment.

"They're soldiers, that's their primary task," she says. "If you tell them to do something they're going to do it. Male, female, it doesn't matter."

The Army is gathering lots of data during the experiment, like how many women manage to crank out 49 push-ups in two minutes. But the Army thinks Ranger School will also reveal things that can't be measured, like how women will take on leadership roles under the stress of combat.

As the navigation exercise ends, the leaders make sure everyone made it out of the woods. This time a woman is among the first to finish.

She's filling her canteen at a water truck when another jogs past on the way to report in and pats her shoulder. They exchange a quick smile that simply says: "still here."

Of the 19 women who started the course, eight are still in — a dropout rate not too different from the men.

The remaining women who didn't initially pass the first major phase of the training, which focuses on small-unit operations, had to try again.

That's not unusual. Only about 25 percent of men who graduate from Ranger School make it without "recycling" at least one of the three phases. But each do-over adds more weeks of hunger and fatigue, making it increasingly difficult to pass.

Officials at Fort Benning are expected to release an update on the women's status as soon as this week.

<http://www.npr.org/2015/05/27/407666851/women-fight-their-way-through-armys-grueling-ranger-school>

## **SECNAV: SEALs should open to women under fair standards**

*(27 May) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers*

The Defense Department is scheduled to open all operational billets to women on Jan. 1, 2016, unless individual services provide pressing reasons against it or lawmakers intervene.

For the Navy, that means that the storied SEAL brotherhood could be welcoming women early next year — a momentous cultural shift that Navy Secretary Ray Mabus

One of the main concerns around integration is whether qualification standards will be changed to accommodate women, who have higher body fat levels and different fitness standards in the fleet.

The special operations community has a much tougher PRT, and it could change with integration.

"In all cases, I personally believe we ought to have one standard for both sexes, a standard that matches the demands of the job, and if you pass, you pass," Mabus said in a May 13 speech at the Naval Academy.

The Navy is studying current standards to see if they're directly related to doing the job, he said, and will revise them if necessary.

But when asked by a midshipman whether the qualifications would be lowered

"Keep the standards," he said. "Do not lower standards in any regard."

Mabus said the Navy Department will make recommendations about how to integrate women as Navy special operators, the last jobs closed to them, to President Obama and Defense Secretary Ash Carter later this year.

This would also affect the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, infantry and other combat jobs still closed to women, as well as the corpsmen and other sailors assigned to these units.

Though he would not elaborate on how standards could change once women are allowed to attend Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training, he alluded to the idea that the special operator fitness standards as they exist are about to change.

"First we're going to make sure there are standards, second that they're gender-neutral and third that they have something to do with the job," Mabus told Navy Times.

The SEALs would be the latest, and the last, of the traditionally male-only branches to open to women during Mabus' tenure.

In 2011, the first female officers reported to ballistic missile submarines, and early this year several more reported to Virginia-class attack subs. Enlisted women are on track to join them next year and the service is already recruiting enlisted women off the streets to enter submarine ratings.

And in 2012, riverine training opened to women, making way for the go-ahead to assign them to billets and deploy them last year.

But what's not clear is how many women would even attempt to be SEALs, even if the career were open to them as the number of women in similar ratings and communities to special warfare are very low.

Both the Navy Diver and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Specialist ratings have been open to women for the better part of 30 years. In those ratings open to women, they rank first and second with the fewest women in their ranks.

Out an end strength of 1,153, there are only seven female ND's — just .61 percent of the force. In EOD as a whole, there's 1,094 sailors of which women make up .91 percent with 10 in the ranks.

In the officer ranks, Explosive Ordnance Disposal officers fill officer billets at both EOD and fleet diver commands — billets that have also been open to women for decades — just 2.79 percent of women in that community are women.

But what Navy officials say they are committed to is that women have the opportunity to serve where they want. Since January 2013, when the Combat Exclusion was ended for good, the Navy first conducted a thorough review of all billets closed to women and since then opened 17,000 of them to women, according to Cmdr. Renee Squier, head of enlisted plans for the chief of naval personnel.

"The Department of Defense will announce final decisions to integrate the remaining closed positions and occupations and any approved exceptions to policy on or about January 1, 2016," Squier said. "Navy foresees no insurmountable obstacles to integration."

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/careers/navy/2015/05/27/navy-secretary-ray-mabus-women-female-seal-navy-combat-exclusion/27653965/>

## How we're failing our female veterans

(21 May) *The Boston Globe*, By Kathryn Miles

ON A RECENT MONDAY MORNING, Ruth Moore and her family stopped for a late breakfast at the Denny's in Ellsworth, Maine. Their coffee had not yet arrived when an elderly man approached their table. Moore had never seen him before, but it took her only a moment to find signs he might be in trouble: the stains on his "World's Greatest Husband" sweat shirt, the overgrown fingernails, the meekly held cap proclaiming him a veteran of three wars.

Moore wore amber-tinted glasses and a tight ponytail pulled high off her neck. She had a kind of beatitude about her, endowed by her time spent in seminary, perhaps, or her multiple black belts in martial arts. Or maybe it was because she'd spent so many years making peace with her role in a seemingly unwinnable fight.

The reasons behind Moore's demeanor didn't matter to the veteran. Nor did the fact that she was accompanied by her husband, their adolescent daughter, and me — a reporter following them around. Something about Moore made the man want to talk only to her. He told her about where he had been stationed, about his wife who had died a few years back, about how he'd been taught never to shake a woman's hand unless she offered it first.

Moore thanked him for his service and offered to connect him with the local VFW. She wrote down his name and phone number so she could check in on him. She told him again how much she appreciated his time in the military. And then she took his hand.

"Thank you, sir," she said. "I understand what your service means. I'm a veteran, too. US Navy."

The man didn't thank Moore for her service in return — if he cared that she was a fellow veteran at all, he didn't show it. Instead, he joked about not wanting to flirt in front of her husband and then meandered away.

When asked, Moore says the man's lack of recognition doesn't come as a surprise. And she frankly prefers his response to some of the others she has received. She's come out of stores to find that her truck, which has disabled veteran license plates, has been spat on. More than once, men have yelled at her for parking in a handicapped space, apparently assuming she's taking advantage of a husband's or father's plates. They've told her she should be ashamed of herself.

She's heard that line a lot. She's done believing it.

Moore, who is 46, grew up in Maine's Washington County at a time when the median household income was around \$10,000. Even by those standards, her family was poor. She enlisted in the Navy at 17. After finishing boot camp, she was sent to a duty station in the Azores. She'd barely been there three months when she was raped by her supervisor outside the station club. After she reported the incident to her

chaplain, her supervisor raped her again — this time for snitching.

A few weeks later, Moore was diagnosed with chlamydia. She tried to kill herself and was medevaced to a military hospital in the States. She reported the rapes to her psychiatrist there. He misdiagnosed Moore with a borderline personality disorder, which resulted in her discharge from the military in 1987.

Back home, Moore's parents didn't believe her story. Her sister stopped speaking to her. Her first marriage crumbled. She spent a while living in a van, picking blueberries for a couple bucks a box. Meanwhile, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder began to emerge: debilitating headaches, insomnia, anxiety. She enrolled in college but found it hard to make sense of the textbooks. Still, she struggled through a master's degree program in behaviorism and psychology. She became a special education teacher in Maine, then in Vermont, but panic attacks kept her from doing her job well, and she was eventually forced to leave her post. She applied for disability coverage through the Department of Veterans Affairs but was denied — eight times in all. Each one felt like a blow.

"I've gone through times that are really dark," Moore says. "I've spent a lot of time hiding myself."

Moore fought for 23 years before she received full recognition from the VA — not only that she had been raped but that it also had left her permanently damaged. Her brain scans resemble those of people with high-functioning autism. She still has unrelenting migraines. Anxiety attacks force her to pick outings carefully, and she never wants to be far from her vehicle when one strikes (hence the handicap plate). The tinted glasses help her process visual stimuli. "I might look fully functional, but I have a profound disability," Moore explains. "These problems can't be fixed or healed through therapy."

It's a story that has become common among women in the military. And Ruth Moore is dedicated to changing that. After receiving a \$405,000 settlement for back benefits from the VA last year, she founded a nonprofit organization. She gave her name to a bill that would make it easier for survivors of military sexual assault to seek aid from the VA. And that, she says, is just the beginning.

"This is about getting dignity and respect for *all* veterans."

THE VA'S VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION is the nation's largest integrated care system. Despite its more than 1,500 hospitals, clinics, and other facilities, the VHA is struggling to keep up with the influx of female patients. That number almost doubled between 2003 and 2012, from 200,631 to 362,014. It's expected to double again by 2020.

Such escalation poses challenges to a system that once relied upon barracks-like facilities for patients, including open exam rooms and shared bathrooms. But far more important than infrastructure is the ability to provide the specialized care women need, says Patty Hayes, the VA's chief consultant for Women's Health Services.

"We've known for quite some time that women vets' health is different than men's health," she says. "Historically, women have been an extreme minority at the VA, and many have felt invisible in our system. Now the challenge is figuring out how to ramp up fast enough for the women on our doorstep."

Some aspects of VHA care are regulated by federal statute. Other aspects, like how dollars are allocated, are decided at the state level. Veterans Affairs has mandated that every medical center employ a program manager to coordinate care for female veterans. The VA also offers online courses and three-day "mini-residencies" to train doctors and nurses caring for female veterans. But VHA staff members, together with advocates and veterans, say these steps aren't enough to meet the rapidly expanding number of women who need care.

Female veterans who use the VHA tend to be younger and more ethnically diverse than their male counterparts. Nearly 20 percent were on active duty in the Middle East (a percentage twice as high as male vets). They require specialized medical services, including mammograms and pap smears, along with labor and delivery and neonatal expertise. As they age, they will also require hormonal therapies, cardiac care, and hospice services in increasing numbers.

In the meantime, they report significantly higher rates of unintended pregnancy, rape, and domestic violence than civilian women. They are more likely to be homeless or unemployed than either civilian women or male veterans. They are also more likely than male vets to return home with PTSD and musculoskeletal damage, particularly in their backs, hips, and feet.

According to an Army task force created in October 2012, some injuries sustained by women on active duty are caused by ill-fitting gear. That doesn't surprise Jennifer Hogg, a cofounder of the Service Women's Action Network, an advocacy group seeking to end discrimination in the military. When she was a mechanic for the National Guard, Hogg was told her unit didn't have steel-toed boots small enough for her size 5 feet. Instead, they found a pair of lesser-quality boots that lacked the arch support and what she calls "the bells and whistles" seen in the standard-issue models worn by men. "Those boots caused me a ton of pain," Hogg says. "I don't think it was a coincidence I was eventually discharged for foot problems."

Just how big a problem ill-fitting gear is for female soldiers is difficult to determine. The VA does not keep statistics on the issue, and recent reports of retaliation against whistleblowers in the VA have made other care providers reluctant to speak on the record.

When I asked a VHA care provider about gear-related injuries, she told me about female patients with back problems. "They were given boots several sizes too big and told to stuff extra socks in the toe." She began to say more but was silenced by her public affairs representative. "We can't say anything critical of the Department of Defense," he said.

A spokeswoman at the Defense Department did not respond to questions about the extent of gear-related injuries in female soldiers, instead redirecting questions to the four military branches. "You've asked questions about uniform and equipment decisions that are made by the military services, so the answers would rest with them," she wrote in an e-mail. "You should reach out to them for comment."

Navy spokesmen did not return phone calls regarding the matter. An Air Force representative said women in that branch have access to female-specific boots but not body armor. The Army has just 2,963 female-specific body armor vests in circulation for its more than 74,000 female soldiers. A spokeswoman for the Marines said that branch is "monitoring" the Army's development of gender-specific body armor but doesn't issue any of its own. She said the Marines used to offer a female-specific boot but stopped "after data showed a lack of use and a preference for the male-sized boot."

Concerns over women-specific gear and medical attention don't end with service. Women who have returned from the Middle East missing limbs, for instance, demonstrate higher rates of prosthetic limb rejection and chronic pain than male patients. Last year, officials complained of reports that VHA providers were forced to fit female amputees with sanded-down prosthetics originally designed for men.

IN MANY WAYS, New England is leading the fight to improve health care for female veterans. US Representative Niki Tsongas, a Lowell Democrat, has championed legislation to provide more female-specific gear in the military, some of which is being manufactured at the state's Natick Soldier Systems Center.

"We must ensure that servicewomen receive the same quality resources and protections as servicemen," Tsongas says. "Continued scrutiny, including continued congressional oversight, can ensure that the development and implementation of modernized and gender-specific body armor makes its way to the troops it is intended to protect."

Tsongas is one of 12 women serving on the House Armed Services Committee. Seven women (including both New Hampshire senators) also serve on the Senate committee — the most in congressional history. Senator Jeanne Shaheen credits that record number with positive legislative changes, but the Granite State Democrat says Congress still needs to do more.

In 2013, she sponsored an amendment that allowed female servicewomen to seek an abortion in the case of rape or incest (all other abortions, along with abortion counseling and in-vitro fertilization, were banned at the VHA in 1999). This session, Shaheen also proposed legislation that would make birth control more widely available to women using the VHA.

“I don’t think it’s right that women who are putting their lives on the line for our safety don’t have access to the same care as civilian women,” Shaheen says.

US Senator Susan Collins, a Maine Republican, agrees. Earlier this year, she and Senator Angus King, also of Maine, again cosponsored the Ruth Moore Act, which would make it easier for survivors of military sexual trauma to receive benefits and treatment for conditions resulting from their assaults. The bill was passed in the House last year, but it never made it out of the Senate.

“Even in a time of severe budget constraints such as we are living in now, we cannot shortchange our veterans,” Collins says. “It is simply not fair to ignore, limit, or discourage legitimate claims.”

Both male and female veterans are victims of military sexual trauma. However, women are disproportionately affected. The VA’s Women’s Health Sciences Division, which is located in Boston, has spearheaded much of the research concerning female veterans and military sexual trauma. They contend that nearly 1 in 4 female VHA patients has been sexually assaulted or repeatedly sexually harassed while on duty. A study released by the Rand Corporation in December estimates that about 19,000 active-duty servicewomen endured unwanted sexual contact last year. Advocacy groups contend both statistics are actually much higher, but victims tend not to report their attacks for fear of retaliation — and theirs is a very real fear. According to that same Rand report, 62 percent of women who reported unwanted sexual contact experienced at least one form of retaliation.

For LaRhonda Harris, the Maine VA’s women veterans program manager, caring for female veterans who have survived military sexual trauma has become disturbingly commonplace. Many suffer from severe PTSD and associated conditions. “In so many ways, we weren’t ready to meet the needs of our returning soldiers,” she says. “That’s particularly true for our female veterans.”

One of Harris’s clients was severely injured by an improvised explosive device while serving in the Middle East. The woman said she has healed from that trauma, but recovering from the rape perpetrated by one of her fellow soldiers is taking a lot more time.

The fear of such trauma has also compelled women on active duty to make choices that compromise their health. Many women returning from active duty in the Middle East arrive with vaginal or urinary tract infections or both. “They’re dehydrating themselves and avoiding latrines at night because they don’t want to be raped,” Harris says. They know they’re far more likely to be raped by a fellow soldier than killed by an enemy combatant.

The stress related from that concern can be significant, says Harris. She and the military sexual trauma coordinator at Togus, Maine’s VA hospital, have also seen patients suffering anxiety and what psychologists call “betrayal trauma,” which

occurs when an individual has been misused or violated by an institution expected to support or protect that person.

THE FEAR OF MISTREATMENT can cause female veterans to avoid the VA altogether. That’s one factor that helps explain why even though some 360,000 women now use VHA for their health care, nearly 2 million women who are eligible don’t. And many don’t even know they qualify for care at the VHA, despite having served in the military for years.

That was true for Judy Atwood Bell, a 20-year Army and Army Reserve veteran from New Hampshire. Atwood Bell worked in military intelligence for 10 years before earning her nursing credentials and moving on to stints in the ICU of an Army hospital and a VHA nursing home. She suffers from depression, PTSD, high blood pressure, and arthritis in her neck, she says, all the result of being raped by a fellow soldier when she was a 19-year-old private at Fort Devens in Massachusetts.

Atwood Bell didn’t seek care initially — she was afraid that she might lose her security clearance. When the concomitant depression began to interfere with her ability to work as a nurse at a VA facility, a colleague suggested she go to the VA for her own treatment. Atwood Bell says that idea had never even occurred to her.

“I was like ‘Really?’ Here I was, having served in the military for 19 years at that point, and I still didn’t consider myself a veteran.”

Educating female veterans about the care available to them at the VA has become a major project for people like LaRhonda Harris, especially after a recent report published by the American Legion indicated that women’s failure to identify as veterans was one of the primary barriers to their care (that same report also identified a need for more specialized providers, particularly in the areas of gynecology and therapists for military sexual trauma). Other studies, including some authored by the US Government Accountability Office, cite the backlog of unresolved claims at the VA’s benefits division as a significant issue.

Atwood Bell knows more about these issues than she would like. Like Moore, she had her claim for disability denied for years (it was eventually resolved in 2014, more than 15 years after she first applied). In the meantime, she joined a group therapy program offered through the VHA. It helped. But her visits to VHA medical centers are not without their own trauma. She used to go to a clinic in Massachusetts, but she was often the only woman in the waiting room. She says that, while there, she was harassed by both staff members and male patients.

“Walking into that place with all those men staring and jeering at me brought back lots of flashbacks. It’s too much. Why does a woman need that? I joined the military in 1978. I volunteered. I didn’t have to go, but I was proud to serve my country. I deserve to feel safe now.”



According to Patty Hayes, the VA consultant, experiences like Atwood Bell's are all too common. "We've recognized that one of the main barriers to women is the culture of the VA. Women veterans feel like they're walking the gantlet when they arrive for appointments. They're being catcalled — and even worse — by male vets. They're asked if they're lost or waiting for their husbands. They don't get recognition that they are soldiers."

The VA has introduced an educational campaign aimed at promoting respect at its facilities. They've hung posters as reminders that women have served, too. "But we recognize that we haven't done enough," says Hayes. She thinks training will need to go beyond care providers to include every level of staff at clinics, including security guards and janitors. It will also require a major dispositional shift in male veterans, particularly those of older generations who may not have served side by side with women.

Atwood Bell isn't content to wait for that to happen. She points to VHA facilities like the one at Vermont's White River Junction, which has a private entrance for women. She'd like to see those kinds of accommodations across the country. "It is imperative that our needs are met now," she says.

At Togus, in Maine, female veterans can choose to be seen at the main clinic or at a separate women's clinic housed in a different building. There, an enclosed waiting room includes a play area and toys for kids. Private exam rooms are painted a muted green. Glass etchings of trees obscure windows, and separate consultation offices allow women to meet with care providers before exams.

While on a recent tour of the clinic, which opened about a year ago, I am taken by Harris to a small, warmly lit room furnished with a large, comfortable chair. "This is our lactation room," she says. "Who would have ever thought we'd see the day when the VA has one of these?"

Harris would like to see every VHA facility in the country offer a clinic exclusively for women. "They at least deserve a choice," she says, "even if they decide they'd rather not be segregated."

In the meantime, she and her staff are working on logistics, such as where to locate the office of the military sexual trauma coordinator. Traditionally it's been housed in the women's

## **Giving new hope to female homeless vets**

*(25 May) CBS News*

After four years in the Army serving in Germany and Iraq, Danielle Chavez thought she had her life figured out.

"I thought it was gonna be a lot easier. Definitely, definitely a lot easier," Chavez said.

But when she left the military in 2011, her marriage ended, she struggled to pay for school and ended up living in her car. She had to send her two young girls to live with a relative.

clinic, but male survivors of sexual assault felt feminized there, Harris says. She kept the office where it was, but arranged for a separate waiting room. She spends a lot of her day ironing out problems like that, and they all take money to solve.

Earlier this year, President Obama proposed an 8.3 percent increase in funding specifically for women's programs at the VA. Harris knows it will take more than that. For her part, Atwood Bell is hopeful more funds will be spent on outreach as well. "There are so many women veterans my age or older that have remained silent and alone or have committed suicide because they've given up." It's because of them, she says, that she can't give up.

Neither can Ruth Moore. Earlier this spring, she used some of her settlement money to buy a camper, converting it to a mobile office that can be towed behind the family truck. She's started an organization called Internity to provide advocacy and assistance for survivors of military sexual trauma, and has been invited to run educational programs at VHA facilities across the country. She's planning on logging thousands of miles over the next couple of years as she seeks to train a new generation of caregivers.

Atwood Bell has joined the board of directors for Moore's Internity. So, too, has Stephanie Grant, an Iraq war veteran who was diagnosed with PTSD and traumatic brain injury after she was attacked by other members of her National Guard unit. Grant, who lives in Farmingdale, Maine, credits people like Moore and Atwood Bell with her recovery.

"We are people who have pulled ourselves up out of a dark hole," she says. "I've gone from wondering how I'm going to get through life to flourishing and really loving that life."

Grant is in the process of completing a bachelor's degree in psychology. When she's done, she hopes to get a job or volunteer at a group home specializing in veteran care.

"I'd like to become a counselor for veterans like me," Grant says. "I want to help build them back up."  
<http://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2015/05/21/how-failing-our-female-veterans/M4klZtWRNm3OAK0ri8IzxL/story.html?event=event25>

"Every day I missed them. Every day. I felt like they were growing up without me," she said.

Asked whether being homeless was tougher on her physically or on her pride, Chavez said it was "definitely" tougher on her pride, because she didn't want people to know she was homeless.

"You don't want to admit that this is something that could happen when you're a veteran," Chavez said.

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, there are more than 4,456 homeless female veterans in the U.S., many of whom have children. They account for 8 percent of the nation's 58,000 homeless vets.

But a housing development that just opened in the San Pedro area of Los Angeles is providing hope in the form of a key. It's called Blue Butterfly Village -- built specifically for homeless female veterans with children. The former Navy housing was rotting away but has been given new life in order to give vets like Chavez a new life, as well.

"Oh my God, look -- that's where you can eat breakfast!" Chavez exclaimed, seeing the house for the first time.

Three weeks ago, she and her daughters moved into to the fully furnished home. The community playground is right outside their back door.

"We don't have to leave. I don't have to go anywhere. I don't have to move my car. I don't have to fold my blankets on somebody's couch. And people can come visit us here instead of us sleeping somewhere else," Chavez said.

There are 73 subsidized town homes in the complex. It cost \$15 million to refurbish, paid for by the Volunteers of America. The veterans pay rent based on a sliding scale, but living there also comes with mental health counseling, job training, money management programs and childcare services. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald said the goal is to get these vets back on their feet, but they can stay here for the rest of their lives.

"We have lots of these that the Department of Defense is decommissioning. And we in the VA want to pick them up right away, we want to make them sites where we can best care for veterans," McDonald said. "This is the future."

## **5 Tough Leadership Lessons From The Navy's Top Female Commander**

*(25 May) Fortune, By Donna Fenn*

Admiral Michelle Howard is the first African-American Navy commander and first four star woman in Navy history. She also played a key role in the rescue of Captain Richard Phillips, whose kidnapping by Somali pirates became a film.

In April 2009, Admiral Michelle Howard had been in her new job as commander of an anti-piracy task force in the Gulf of Aden for just three days when Captain Richard Phillips was kidnapped by Somali pirates after they hijacked his cargo ship, the MV Maersk Alabama. "The pirates were using the fuel in the life raft to steer toward shore," Admiral Howard recalls, "and it was obvious that if they got to shore [in Somalia] with Captain Phillips, we were probably not going to get him back."

The goal was to get the pirates to stop moving, without stressing them into desperate action. The kidnapping and subsequent dramatic rescue became the plot for the 2013

Many of these veterans, including Mariatheresa Alcazar, suffer from PTSD. She was one of the first women to serve on an aircraft carrier and was stationed on the USS Carl Vinson during 9/11.

"It is a tough memory," Alcazar said, crying. "The military is a tough memory."

That's because she is also one the many women raped while serving their country.

A study by the Veteran's Health Administration found nearly 40 percent of female homeless veterans were sexually assaulted while in the military.

"I got assaulted by police officers in our military. And I thought I was so strong. ... I thought I could fight men off, even. And it's -- I can't. And that's just the truth about it," Alcazar said.

Alcazar's PTSD made it hard to keep a job. She wound up homeless with two young sons. But now, they've got a home at Blue Butterfly Village. Her boys have a place to play, and she has something she never thought she'd live without -- a bed.

Volunteers of America hopes to eventually take over 70 more vacant units owned by a nearby school. That would double the population at the village. Seventy more women like Alcazar would now have a home.

"It's freedom," Alcazar said. "I'm happy, and these are tears not of sadness but I'm happy ... because you don't have to worry about where you lay your head. You have an address."

And a foundation to build a better life with their families. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/female-homeless-veterans-blue-butterfly-village-san-pedro-los-angeles/>

movie, Captain Phillips, but the backstory, and Admiral Howard's role, was far more complex. Over four days, her team employed hostage negotiating tactics, came up with a way to push the life raft away from the Somali coast using waves from the USS Bainbridge, and ultimately brought in Navy Seals to kill the pirates.

Last July, Admiral Howard, who was the first African American woman to command a Navy ship, became the first four star woman in U.S. Navy history. She has learned a thing or two about leadership and the power of diversity over the course of her 33-year career in the military. In honor of Memorial Day, Fortune asked her share some of those lessons. During an interview, she talked about everything from her role as the commander of Task Force 151, which devised the plan to rescue Captain Phillips, to a life-changing conversation with her mother.

### 1. Diverse teams generate better ideas

When assembling the task force that would come up with solutions to rescue Captain Phillips, Admiral Howard says she “realized we needed to have folks outside the immediate problem to give us different perspectives.” Among others, she called upon the ship’s meteorologist, a Somali interpreter who advised on culture, a former FBI agent, and “a couple of Marines because I thought they’d bring an offensive aggressive mentality.” Admiral Howard also insisted on including enlisted sailors on the task force “because they’re the people who make things happen on deck.” The result: the task force came up with a solution that used the power of water to get the life raft to stop, ultimately allowing Navy SEALs to kill the pirates and free Captain Phillips. Diverse perspectives, Admiral Howard says, contributed to generating lots of ideas quickly. “I often quote Dr. Linus Pauling who talks about how it’s not a matter of having a good idea, it’s a matter of generating a lot of ideas and then picking the best one. If you have homogeneous teams, you end up with very similar solutions.”

### 2. You need to preach the diversity gospel

Admiral Howard is now a sought after speaker on diversity, but that wasn’t always a role that she relished. She recalls that when she was a lieutenant commander, she “was on the phone with my mother and I was griping about the fact that I had all this extra work to do that was not necessarily related to my day job, that was more related to gender integration.” Her mom took her to task. “She told me that I needed to embrace the role I was in or quit the Navy. She said ‘you are where you are historically and until you quit, there’s not going to be anybody ahead of you’. She was absolutely right.” Being first means you have a responsibility to pay it forward, so Admiral Howard studied up on gender integration, diversity, and inclusion, so that she could speak about those issues with authority from both a personal and historical standpoint.

### 3. To lead, you need to let go

As a trailblazer, Admiral Howard has learned the value of traveling light and letting go of mental baggage. “A lot of times I was one of very few women and sometimes I was the only minority,” she says. “If you are one of one or one of few,

## VA’s Ban On In Vitro Coverage Draws Fire

(26 May) *The Washington Post*, By Emily Wax-Thibodeaux

TAMPA – After Army Staff Sgt. Alex Dillmann was paralyzed from the abdomen down in a bomb blast in Afghanistan, the Department of Veterans Affairs paid to retrofit his Chevrolet Silverado truck so he could drive it and bought him a handcycle so he could exercise.

But the agency that cares for former troops won’t pay for what the onetime squad leader and his wife, Holly, ache for most: a chance to have children.

VA will not pick up the bill for in vitro fertilization, which fertility experts say offers those with spinal cord and genital injuries the best hope for a biological child.

Under a 23-year-old law, VA is prohibited from covering IVF. Congress adopted the ban as the result of conservative opposition to assisted reproduction and concern that some fertilized embryos might be discarded.

it’s easy to become self-isolating and just presume that people aren’t engaging with you in a normal way. And I realized, boy, that’s going to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. You have to let go of your own biases and negative experiences you’ve already had and continue to try to be the successful person you want to be.”

### 4. Mentors don’t need to look just like you

“You can’t be what you can’t see” has become a popular mantra for those who bemoan the lack of female role models in positions of power. But what happens when you’re a trailblazer and there is no one who looks like you? “At some point, you come to the realization that it’s about people who have the same purpose and motivations in life,” says Admiral Howard. “What is it you want to accomplish, what attributes are you trying to gain in yourself, what do you see as the paragon of success in your field or in character? Go find the person who has those attributes.” For her, that person was Rear Admiral Gene Kendall, who became the 12th African American in the history of the United States Navy to achieve the rank of Rear Admiral.

### 5. Meet resistance head on

As an African American woman with talent and ambition, Admiral Howard faced her share of resistance as she rose through the ranks. “What it comes down to is, it really isn’t a conspiracy,” she says. It’s generally “knuckleheads,” she says – individuals who have preconceived notions about women and minorities. “You probably can’t just go through life saying ‘I’ll ride through this.’” Her advice: find a trusted battle buddy – someone who will confirm your suspicions that you’re truly facing discrimination and be your ally against it; or have a direct conversation with the offender. She’s done both. “There have been a couple of times in my life where I’ve had to be the person to go in and have the conversation,” she says. “And the first time that happened, I was a junior officer. I came to the conclusion that if I couldn’t get the courage to speak to someone about what was a difficult situation, I was probably never going to get the courage to lead people into combat.”

<https://fortune.com/2015/05/25/5-tough-leadership-lessons-from-the-navys-top-female-commander/>

Now, however, veterans and lawmakers from both parties are pushing to overturn the ban. They argue that it is outdated and that IVF is widely accepted and performed worldwide. The law also predates the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where widespread use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in attacks on U.S. forces has caused far more reproductive injuries than in past conflicts.

The Dillmanns are among thousands of young post-combat couples who are struggling to start a family after blast injuries left them unable to conceive naturally.

But IVF costs tens of thousands of dollars and often takes multiple tries to produce a viable pregnancy. Combat-wounded veterans say the financial burden and emotional toll are often overwhelming, especially on top of learning to live as an amputee or in a wheelchair. Some say that they have to take on debt or skip getting an education afforded them under

the GI Bill so they can rush back into the job market, or that they have to rethink plans to start a family altogether.

“At the end of the day, I’m so lucky to be alive. Part of that is this dream to be a parent,” said Alex Dillmann, 30, whose dirty-blond hair is still cut high and tight and whose tan arms are buff from years of exercise. “But this is a big pill to swallow for all veterans facing combat injuries, which have hurt their chances to have children.”

Their upcoming round of IVF will cost nearly \$25,000, which will wipe out years of savings. Alex said that if the treatment doesn’t work, he would be willing to curtail his education in information technology and delay his hopes for a job in “the virtual battlefield” for the Pentagon or another national security agency.

Last year, congressional efforts to overturn the law barring IVF and provide funding for veterans ran into resistance because of concerns over how to pay for it. But a new push is underway.

The Defense Department changed its policy in 2012 and said it would cover IVF for active military members in recognition of the increasing number of pelvic fractures and injuries to reproductive organs suffered during combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 1,830 troops have suffered such wounds since 2003, according to the Pentagon. That is in addition to the thousands of veterans who have spinal-cord injuries, which can also impact fertility.

But under the law, wounded military members can be covered only during a window of time between their injury and their discharge from the military – a period of hospital stays, surgeries and adjusting to their new postwar bodies. Many wounded veterans describe it as the most stressful and disorienting time of their lives.

“The timing was just all wrong. It’s the time when you are trying to learn to shower and get your mind around the fact that you will never walk again. I wasn’t in the position to think about starting a family at that moment,” Alex said. “Yet the pressure was on.”

Alex had been on patrol on a snowy night four years ago in Ghazni, nearly 100 miles southwest of the Afghan capital of Kabul, when his vehicle hit an IED. He said he doesn’t remember much immediately after, except waking up in a series of hospital beds.

He endured more than 25 surgeries – including painful procedures on his spinal cord as well as skin grafting for burns. He had a punctured lung and several broken vertebrae. He was on a feeding tube for so long that his weight dropped from 180 to 150 pounds. He spent a year in the hospital and another in and out.

Last summer, with Alex finally free of the hospital and with six months left before he was to be discharged from the Army, he and Holly started the IVF process.

Alex hoped for a “mini Holly, who would be earthy and like to play with worms and listen to Nirvana and Björk.” Holly dreamed of a “mini Alex, who would be adventurous and curious about how everything works and likes to go fishing and hunting.” They agreed that if they had a son, his middle name would be Kristopher, for one of Alex’s closest friends, Sgt. Kristopher Gould, who was killed in the same bomb blast that paralyzed Alex.

Two rounds of IVF failed.

“It was really stressful because we knew the stakes if it didn’t work,” said Holly, a petite 29-year-old with deep-set dark eyes and long black hair tossed into a ponytail.

So now they are trying again, this time paying for it themselves.

“The VA ban is literally adding insult to injury,” Holly said.

“It’s like the approach to this is: ‘We aren’t going to do anything to help you. You get to go this one alone.’”

Alex and Holly had moved back in with her mother to save money to pay for IVF, expecting it could be a long time before they could afford to buy or rent their own place. But last year, a nonprofit group, Homes for Our Troops, built them a wheelchair-accessible one-level house with wide hallways, kitchen shelves that pull down, an extra-large shower – and no mortgage.

Buoyed by this fortunate turn, they poured their savings into one round of IVF. “We are willing to keep going and exhaust all our resources,” Alex said.

On a recent morning, the Dillmanns drove to their new IVF clinic for a saline ultrasound of Holly’s uterus, a procedure that checks for any problems before attempting a pregnancy. The ultrasound is often covered by private insurance, and Alex and Holly were surprised to learn that theirs would not cover the \$800 bill. They sat in the fertility clinic stunned, discussing what to do because they hadn’t budgeted for it. They decided to go ahead with the test and pay out of pocket. In the generation since VA funding for IVF was banned, fertility technology has dramatically improved. Doctors can now perform “testicular sperm extraction,” removing a small portion of tissue from the testicle under local anesthesia and extracting sperm. The sperm is used to fertilize an extracted egg outside the body, and the embryo is then implanted in the womb.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) has called the ban on funding for this process “a shocking gap, outdated and just wrong” and introduced a bill to let VA pay for IVF. The measure also would cover the costs of surrogate pregnancies and adoption.

“It’s a bill that recognizes the men and women who are harmed in the service of this country have bright, full lives ahead of them,” she said. “To me, it’s such a no-brainer. The technology is there now. Why can’t we help them?”

Rep. Jeff Miller (R-Fla.), chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, had objected to Murray’s plan to pay for her bill with \$568 million designated for combat operations. But he said he was receptive to lifting the ban and introduced his own slimmed-down version. His measure is more limited – it wouldn’t cover adoption or surrogacy, for instance – and a source of funding has yet to be identified.

VA officials say the agency supports any legislation that would allow it help pay for combat-wounded veterans to have children. “VA’s goal is to restore, to the greatest extent possible, the physical and mental capabilities of veterans with service-connected injuries,” spokeswoman Victoria Dillon said.

Retired Army Staff Sgt. Matt Keil and his wife, Tracy, spent \$32,000 on IVF.

Keil was shot in the neck by a sniper in Ramadi, Iraq, six weeks after their wedding. He’s now a quadriplegic, with only 10 percent of movement in his left arm.

“Our husbands already have so many limitations – why does not having children have to be another one?” Tracy Keil asked.

They were able to have twins – Faith and Matthew Jr. – who are now rambunctious 4 1/2- year-olds. They love to crawl on their dad’s wheelchair and play in their home in Colorado Springs.

“To them, it’s not just a veteran in a wheelchair – a quad. He’s just Dad. And it’s remarkable to see the healing that having these kids has given him and us as a couple. We are a family now,” Tracy says.

That’s what the Dillmanns yearn for. In a sunny corner of their home is a cozy nursery – with fresh sheets tucked neatly into a new crib, a solar-system mobile hanging above, and a closet

full of frog and star onesies. Every day, Alex wheels past the open doorway of the room. Sometimes, he looks in, and sometimes, he said, he can’t bear to.

At times, Holly said, people come up to her and say, “Just relax, it’s going to happen.”

“But people don’t understand, we can’t have sex because of his combat wounds,” she said, her voice growing tight with emotion. “Do they think it’s going to be immaculate conception? We need help to do this.”

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/for-combat-veterans-va-ban-on-ivf-coverage-adds-insult-to-injury/2015/05/25/a5ae2940-fd8b-11e4-833c-a2de05b6b2a4\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/for-combat-veterans-va-ban-on-ivf-coverage-adds-insult-to-injury/2015/05/25/a5ae2940-fd8b-11e4-833c-a2de05b6b2a4_story.html)

## **Malloy signs into law program to aid women veterans**

*(27 May) Associated Press*

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Connecticut Gov. Dannel P.

Malloy has signed a law requiring the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to establish a Connecticut women veterans’ program.

The governor’s office announced Tuesday that he signed the bill, which includes a provision that the program be established “within available resources.”

The program is intended to reach out to women veterans to improve awareness of their eligibility for federal and state benefits and services and assess their needs for benefits and services.

The program also must submit recommendations annually for improving benefits and services for women veterans.

The legislation passed the Senate unanimously in April and without dissent in the House earlier this month.

Federal Veterans Affairs officials estimate 16,545 women veterans live in Connecticut. Some struggle with issues such as unemployment, homelessness and mental illness.

<http://wtnh.com/2015/05/27/malloy-signs-into-law-program-to-aid-women-veterans/>