



DACOWITS: Articles of Interest 7 August 2015

WELLNESS

[Social Support Is Vital to Women at War](#)

(27 Jul) DCoE Public Affairs, By Carol Roos

Men and women experience war differently, new research shows. For women in the military social support appears even more vital for maintaining good psychological health, compared to their male peers.

[New body fat rules, big changes to Navy BCA](#)

(3 Aug) Navy Times, By Mark D. Faram and Meghann Myers

The Navy is shaking up the body composition assessment, increasing body fat limits for sailors, moving away from career-ending punishments for BCA failures and taking a deeper look at how it measures health in general.

[Navy triples maternity leave for sailors, starting now](#)

(7 Aug) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

New moms are now eligible for up to 18 weeks of postpartum maternity leave, a policy change that took effect Wednesday.

[Army reviewing rules for maternity, paternity leave](#)

(7 Aug) Army Times, By Michelle Tan

The Army is reviewing its policies regarding maternity and paternity leave and how long new mothers have at home before they can be called to deploy.

ASSIGNMENTS

[Flag Officer Assignment.](#) The Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert announced today the following assignment: Captain Shoshana S. Chatfield, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy U.S. military representative to NATO Military Committee, Brussels, Belgium. Chatfield is currently serving as senior military assistant, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Shape, Belgium.

[Army faces recruit deficit, may miss '15 goal](#)

(30 Jul) Army Times, By Tom Vanden Brook

The Army is nearly 14% short of the recruits it will need to fill its ranks, marking the first time in six years — and only the third in the last 20 — that it may fall short of its recruiting goal for the year.

[As U.S. moves to allow women in combat, researchers help set the bar](#)

(30 Jul) Science Magazine, By Kelly Servick

By January 2016, each branch of the military—the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines—must open up its combat specialties to females or ask the Secretary of Defense to keep the gender restriction on certain jobs. The deadline has prompted a slew of new research projects, including studies of physical standards, gender differences in injury rates, and service members' attitudes towards integration. But the surge of new science has also prompted suspicions that the services will arbitrarily lower standards in order to meet political demands for equality.

[Two women pass Mountain Phase at Ranger School, now one step short of graduation](#)

(31 Jul) The Washington Post, By Dan Lamothe

Only the swamps of Florida stand between two female soldiers becoming the first women to ever graduate from the Army's famously difficult Ranger School.

[DoD Announces Recruiting and Retention Numbers for Fiscal 2015, Through May 2015](#)

(31 Jul) DoD News Release

The Department of Defense announced today recruiting and retention statistics for the active and reserve components for fiscal 2015, through May 2015.

[Carter: Future Force Depends on Military Child Education](#)

(31 Jul) DoD News, Defense Media Activity, By Amaani Lyle

Defense Secretary Ash Carter today thanked military children for their sacrifices and championed a family-focused approach to educational pathways for them and their service member parents.

DoD Announces Recruiting, Retention Numbers Through May 2015

(31 Jul) DoD News, Defense Media Activity

The active-duty Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force met or exceeded their fiscal year-to-date 2015 accession goals through May 2015, Defense Department officials announced today.

CNO: More ships to be forward-deployed

(31 Jul) Navy Times, By David Larter

The Navy's outgoing top officer confirmed his commitment to open all billets to women by the start of 2016.

Two female Ranger students move on to Swamp Phase

(31 Jul) Army Times, By Michelle Tan

Two of the three female Ranger School students and 125 male students will move on to Florida this weekend after successfully completing the course's 20-day Mountain Phase.

The boot camp gender divide: The case for co-ed training

(3 Aug) Marine Corps Times, By Hope Hedge Seck

"..critics say it's time for a change, and that integrating boot camp is a necessary step in preparing for the Defense Department mandate that will open all combat fields to women by 2016."

Odierno: Army to open most field artillery jobs to women

(3 Aug) Army Times, By Michelle Tan

This decision, which opens up MOSs such as cannon crewmember (13B) and field artillery automated tactical data system specialist (13D), comes just weeks after the Army opened the combat engineer (12B) MOS to women.

Inside the swamp phase of Army Ranger School as women attend for the first time

(4 Aug) The Washington Post, By Dan Lamothe

Two women who completed the previous phase in the mountains of northern Georgia arrived with about 125 men over the weekend, reaching the home stretch of the famously grueling Ranger course. A third woman remains in the mountains, where she was "recycled" along with 60 male students, allowing them to try again.

Department of Defense Announces Recruiting and Retention Numbers for Fiscal Year 2015 through June 2015

(4 Aug) DoD Press Release

The Department of Defense (DoD) announced today recruiting and retention statistics for the active and reserve components for fiscal year (FY) 2015 through June 2015.

Marine Corps revives Female Engagement Team mission

(5 Aug) Marine Corps Times, By Hope Hedge Seck

A concept that proved widely successful during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may soon have female Marines back in the Middle East alongside infantry troops.

Two women training to be Army Rangers may reshape military

(7 Aug) The New York Times, By Richard A. Oppel Jr.

Leaders of the Army and other services are considering the question of how far they should go in integrating women into combat roles, including the most dangerous jobs, such as the fast-roping Ranger battalions that often work with the nation's premier counterterrorism organization, the Joint Special Operations Command, and that serve as a farm team for the Army's most elite unit, Delta Force.

New Track For Officer Careers Taking Shape

(10 Aug) Navy Times, By Andrew Tilghman

Top Pentagon officials are drawing up plans to end the "up-or-out" rules and joint billet requirements that have defined officer career paths for generations, a defense official said.

EXTRA

Emmy award-winning film honors women in military

(27 Jul) Fox News, By Taylor Bishop

We see military movies based on strong male roles all the time, but what about the women who serve our country?

[Fort Drum's First Female Deputy Commanding General Embraces New Role](#)

(30 Jul) *Watertown Daily Times*, By Gordon Block

The first woman to serve as the 10th Mountain Division's deputy commanding general at Fort Drum said her military dreams began at the age of 6.

[Admiral Says Public Schools Nationwide Shortchanging Military Kids](#)

(4 Aug) *Military.Com*, By Richard Sisk

"Our educational system simply isn't designed, much to its discredit, to support the lifestyle that accompanies a career of service," Adm. Harry Harris, said at a two-day seminar last week sponsored by the non-profit Military Child Education Coalition.

[Missing In Action](#)

(4 Aug) *The Atlantic*, By Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

Over the past decade, a string of war movies emerged in the wake of 9/11: *The Hurt Locker*, *Syriana*, *The Messenger*, *Green Zone*, *Lone Survivor*, and *American Sniper*, to name just a few. Some have performed better than others at the box office, and many have received critical acclaim. Almost none has included portrayals of women in combat.

[First Female Earns Spot on F-22 Demo Team at Langley Air Force Base](#)

(6 Aug) *Daily Press*, By Ali Rockett

Senior Airman Kyara Johnson is the first woman to become a member of the F-22 Raptor Demonstration Team at Langley Air Force Base.

[Nearly 95, woman gets long-deserved WWII medals](#)

(6 Aug) *ABC News*, By Tim Becker

Nearly 95, Spyker got an early birthdaygift from U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici – the eight medals she never received for her service during World War II and beyond.

[Military Still Not Fully Accepting Of Women](#)

(7 Aug) *San Diego Union-Tribune*, By Christina J. Prejean

A recent news article revealed staggering statistics of female veterans committing suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women. Reading this, I could not help but feel pain and sadness for my fellow sisters-in-arms.

[Film explores female veterans' struggles](#)

(7 Aug) *Democrat & Chronicle*, By Robin L. Flanigan

Service: When Women Come Marching Home, showing for free on Monday, depicts the courage of several female veterans as they transition from active duty to civilian life. It brings to light a disturbing disparity: Women who have been in the military are more likely to be single parents, unemployed, homeless, living in poverty and victims of sexual trauma.

Social Support Is Vital to Women at War

(27 Jul) *DCoE Public Affairs*, By Carol Roos

Men and women experience war differently, new research shows. For women in the military social support appears even more vital for maintaining good psychological health, compared to their male peers. Yet social support may be more difficult to find with **85 percent of the active-duty force composed of male** service members. According to some female service members, sometimes women in the military find themselves ostracized by their units and social support withheld by the male service members who surround them.

"Ostracism can produce long-term psychological and physical consequences," said Dr. Kate McGraw, a 16-year Air Force veteran and former missile operations officer who is currently the associate director for psychological health clinical care at Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC).

McGraw spoke to a group of military women of all ranks as part of a recent panel about the experiences of women in the military at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in Arlington, Virginia.

Ostracism socially excludes or rejects an individual or group. It does not discriminate in gender but can be more prevalent when there is a minority subset, such as female service members.

For women who enter previously male-only occupations in the military, the potential for ostracism is high, she explained. The behavior can be blatant or subtle. For instance, a new female Army Ranger trainee may not be invited to hang out with her male peers during break time, may be excluded from a group's off-duty workout, or may enter a room occupied by her male peers and discover the conversation stops when she steps through the doorway.

Women have served in the American military in support roles as cooks, nurses and laundresses since 1775, a year before the country's independence. Some even disguised themselves as men in order to serve illegally in the infantry. During World War II, Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) flew at 126 bases across the United States, towed targets for gunnery training and served as instrument instructors for the Eastern

Flying Training Command. Other all-female units served in the Army and Navy. However, women weren't officially recognized as part of the military until 1948. Since then, their roles have gradually expanded. The **Defense Department** broke through another barrier two years ago when it announced that it will rescind the exclusion on women in direct combat. Women will integrate in combat roles beginning Jan. 1, 2016.

Despite their improved legal status, it may still take some time before the old rules change and women are accepted and fully integrated into military culture, agreed members of the panel, which covered physical and psychological health topics from the book "Women at War," edited by Elspeth Cameron

New body fat rules, big changes to Navy BCA

(3 Aug) Navy Times, By Mark D. Faram and Meghann Myers

The good news for sailors with PFA problems: You're getting a do-over, and a new set of easier body fat standards.

The bad news is the service is dropping the number of failures it takes to get booted.

The Navy is shaking up the body composition assessment, increasing body fat limits for sailors, moving away from career-ending punishments for BCA failures and taking a deeper look at how it measures health in general.

The shifts are a new direction in the fitness program that's designed to move away from a punitive system to one that encourages year-round fitness, with a focus on helping those struggling to stay fit.

"We like to speak of a culture of fitness, but we really haven't implemented a culture of fitness across the Navy," said Vice Adm. Bill Moran, chief of naval personnel, in a July 28 interview. "Fitness should truly be about being healthy and mission readiness — Are you physically fit for times of combat and stress in the fleet? We need a system that speaks to better health, to the readiness of our sailors. And part of that is, are we doing things to encourage a culture of fitness?"

The new rules make it harder to fail the body composition assessment portion of the physical fitness assessment. But that comes at the cost of only getting two failures in three years before getting kicked out.

Moran said he's heard the sailors' cries for reform and said these changes aren't the end, but the beginning of a "more realistic" fitness program that's more than two tests per year.

Frankly, he'd like a system that could end the twice-yearly testing cycles, and instead actively gauge fitness and health on a year-round basis, he said.

PFA fail reset

It started with the Navy realizing that there's no "one size fits all" in fitness and certainly not in body composition.

Ritchie and Anne L. Naclerio. McGraw contributed a chapter to the book.

McGraw said that ostracism is a particular problem for mission readiness, since psychological health is key to unit and command mission readiness. The behavior affects not only those who are ostracized, but also those who witness or participate in social exclusion. Rigorous research is lacking on the topic she said. More work is required, McGraw added, to identify the psychological health concerns related to ostracism for both men and women in the military.

http://www.dcoe.mil/blog/15-07-27/Social_Support_Is_Vital_to_Women_at_War.aspx

Moran said he sees the extremes at nearly every all-hands call — fit sailors looking for better recognition and those who say they're in good shape but can't pass the BCA.

"What we've tried to do in this policy change — with the tenets of better health and being mission ready as the focus — is to also make sure we're not throwing out good sailors because we can't meet both ends of that spectrum," Moran said.

Moran said that the Navy's fitness program is entering what he calls a "transition" phase during the rest of the year.

Starting during this fall's cycle, a BCA failure with the current body fat standards no longer equals a PFA failure. Sailors who bust the body fat test will be allowed to take the Physical Readiness Test, but they'll have to enroll in the remedial Fitness Enhancement Program work-outs and nutritional counseling.

That's great news for the many sailors who say they have no problem with the run, sit-ups and push-ups, but consistently fail height and weight standards.

But it gets better.

Sailors on the edge of a forced separation for PFA failures will get a second chance to stay in.

Those with an approved or pending administrative separation as of July 1, for three PFA failures in the past four years, can notify their commanding officers that they'd like to stay in the Navy, then pass a PRT before Dec. 1.

Regardless of the number of failures in the past three years, sailors meeting standard by the deadline will be reset to one failure starting next year, when new BCA standards take effect. Those who fail the PFA for a third time this fall, if it's their third failure in four years, will still be separated.

Moran made it clear that appealing the admin separation is voluntary.

"We're going to give them a chance to continue with the discharge if they don't want to continue in the Navy or reset during this fall period," Moran said.

"Between now and December, if they get down within the new standards and can pass under the new guidance, we reset their failure to one — then if they fail again, they're on the way out."

The move will potentially save thousands of sailors' careers. More than 6,700 active-duty and reserve sailors have three PFA failures in the past four years, according to official data, and an additional 20,000 have failed twice in four years.

The new BCA

The next step is raising the threshold for a BCA failure.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2016, body fat limits will go beyond the previous under-40 and over-40 age standards, with four new groups.

Men ages 18 to 21 will stay at the previous 22 percent body fat max, but from 22 to 29 they're allowed up to 23 percent, 24 percent between 30 and 39, and up to 26 percent over 40.

For women, it's 33 percent from 18 to 21, 34 percent for 22 to 29, 35 percent for 30 to 39 and 36 percent over 40.

"It's a little more stringent than the DoD standard, but a bit more graduated by age than the current BCA standard," Moran said. "It takes into account the physical changes that happen as we all age, too — so in that way, it's a little more realistic set of standards."

Moran said the DoD limits are there for a reason and can not be lifted.

"DoD has established a maximum limit for body fat percentage based on the American Medical Association and other institutions who say, if you exceed that limit, you have reached an obesity level that raises your likelihood for things like cancer or diabetes and other medical issues," Moran said.

"For me, that's the right side limit of where we will allow sailors to be — if you exceed that DoD limit, you are, by definition, obese, at-risk and that's a failure."

Starting in January, sailors who don't meet the standard height and weight measurements, will first get a waist-only tape test, which maxes out at 39 inches for men and 35.5 inches for women. Pass that and you're good. It's the current test used by the Air Force as their BCA measurement.

But the Navy is adding yet one more chance for sailors to pass.

The final chance will be the existing and very unpopular "rope and choke" tape test that measures them at the neck and waist

(plus hips for women), then calculates the measurements to a body fat percentage. For those over the Defense Department's maximum of 26 percent for men and 36 percent for women, it's a PFA failure.

And a failure will land an over-standard sailor for their age group in the Fitness Enhancement Program. But initially, they won't fail PFA altogether.

And even that, Moran said won't be punitive, but instead it'll be "educational."

"We're going to give you the tools, nutrition guidance, exercise guidance and we're going to have you take the PRT every 30 days until you can pass and until you get down below the new Navy BCA standard," Moran said.

The Navy also plans to develop a Navy-wide registered dietitian plan, giving sailors more access to professional counseling where food choices are concerned.

That's part of a push that includes beefing up the ShipShape healthy eating program and SECNAV's new "Go for Green" initiative, which uses color-codes to advise sailors on the healthiest choices at the galley and also eliminate fried foods.

Unlike the current policy, sailors who fail the BCA will now take the PRT if they're medically cleared.

"We had several thousand of sailors who failed the BCA last year," Moran said. "None of these sailors took the [PRT] last year, so we don't have any idea if whether they're fit at all or capable of carrying on a mission — we just fail them."

Previously, sailors with three PFA failures over four years were forced out. Now, with the looser BCA standards, two PFA failures in three years will end in a discharge.

To keep sailors on a fitness path in between PFAs, Moran is encouraging commands to randomly stop sailors for body fat spot-checks throughout the year. They could serve as a warning to borderline sailors or result in FEP enrollment ahead of the next cycle.

Officials hope the move will cut back on the number of sailors discharged every year for PFA failures, which has totaled thousands in the past four years.

Nearly 1,300 sailors have been discharged because of failures in the 2014 cycles, though those numbers aren't final. That was up from 1,200 in 2013 and over 1,100 in 2012, when the numbers jumped significantly from about 700 in 2011.

Right now, the only changes to the Physical Readiness Test will be a return to the old scoring levels eliminated a few years ago. That graduated scoring put intermediate levels of low, medium and high under each of the major categories of satisfactory, excellent and outstanding, something the fleet pushed hard for, Moran said.

"We are going to bring back levels of excellence because it's a way of measuring progress and for COs to recognize sailors for their fitness level or improvements in their evaluations if they choose to," Moran said.

Long time coming

The Navy's PFA has been the bane of many a sailor's existence for years. In a May speech at the Naval Academy, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus likened it to a twice-a-year crucible, where sailors go to extreme measures to get within standards.

The discussion came to a head last summer, when a list of PFA proposals drafted at a Command Fitness Leaders summit circulated through the ranks and caught fire.

The suggestions included doing away with "bad-day" retests for the PRT, mandatory tape tests and random BCAs throughout the year. Officials acknowledged the list but denied that any of those proposals were hitting the fleet.

Navy Times readers then responded to a call-out with their suggestions for improving the PFA. Chief among them were rethinking or canning the BCA, making CFLs better at taking measurements, more flexible gym hours and incentives for those who consistently score an outstanding on their tests, ideas the Navy took to heart.

Late last year, the Navy Personnel Command instituted a CFL Navy Enlisted Classification, to help commands keep better track of their CFL's qualifications and to help in the search for new fitness coordinators.

Then, in May, Mabus announced there would be changes this year that included the new waist-only tape test, BCA spot-checks, expanded gym hours and a new Outstanding Fitness Award, an idea that had been batted around since 2005.

Rewards for maxing out your PFA are two-fold. Those who score an outstanding on one PFA cycle are authorized to wear a badge on their fitness suit, when it comes out next year.

Navy triples maternity leave for sailors, starting now

(7 Aug) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

New moms are now eligible for up to 18 weeks of postpartum maternity leave, a policy change that took effect Wednesday.

That number includes the six weeks that had already been available immediately after giving birth, according to a service-wide message released Wednesday, and adds up to 12 weeks of "Additional Maternity Leave" that a new mom can take within the first year of her child's life.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus announced the move to triple maternity leave in early July.

Sailors who max out three PFAs in a row will earn a uniform award, though it hasn't been determined whether it will be a ribbon or a medal. Sailors can expect to see more information in the fall, CNP spokesman Cmdr. Chris Servello said.

Looking ahead

The latest policy change includes long-term goals aimed at promoting and measuring sailors' fitness.

Moran said that the Navy's goal is to find a way to measure fitness year-round that could eliminate the twice-a-year testing regimen. But don't expect that to happen soon.

"These changes are the first step toward making this a year-long process, as opposed to a semi-annual test to get through," he said. "We still have to have the test for a while until we find a better way to measure mission readiness, to gauge if you are physically fit enough that you can carry out missions at sea."

As Mabus said in May, different jobs have different fitness requirements — but the bottom line is the Navy needs a way to measure health.

Moran said that early next year, the Navy will begin a pilot program in yet-to-be-named Pacific Fleet and Navy Reserve units using wearable fitness trackers like Fitbit .

It's part of what Moran called a search to find if "there's ways to measure better health — heart rate blood pressure, cholesterol levels — all things that promote better fitness and result in better performance on the PRT," he said.

"We have to measure it, track it for a full year, but the notion is rather than two annual tests, it's a focus on, are you making improvements and are you meeting standards for weight control, blood pressure cholesterol? Instead of a discussion of, are you inside your height-weight levels and can you pass the PRT? — which is where we are today."

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/careers/navy/2015/07/30/new-fitness-standards-easier-girth-focus-health/30849729/>

"When the women in our Navy and Marine Corps answer the call to serve, they are making the difficult choice to be away from their children — sometimes for prolonged periods of time — so that they can do the demanding jobs that we ask them to do," he said in a release. "With increased maternity leave, we can demonstrate the commitment of the Navy and Marine Corps to the women who are committed to serve."

The 18-week figure was inspired by Google's maternity leave, according to Cmdr. Chris Servello, a spokesman for the chief of naval personnel.

When company officials increased its maternity leave from 12 to 18 weeks in 2007, they found that half as many new moms were leaving the company.

The policy is retroactive for female sailors who gave birth in 2015. New moms can spread out their AML through the first year after their child is born, and if they become pregnant and have another child within that year, the leave balance resets to 18 weeks.

"If a member does not elect to take AML in a single block, COs will make every effort to accommodate members' requests on timing of AML with members encouraged to create mutually agreeable, individualized leave plans with their chains of command," the message said.

The move to extend leave is part of a Navy-wide push to attract and retain more women, who leave at a much higher rate than men, particularly when starting a family.

"Meaningful maternity leave when it matters most is one of the best ways that we can support the women who serve our country," Mabus said in the July release. "This flexibility is an investment in our people and our services, and a safeguard against losing skilled service members."

Days of leave are determined by a sailor's work week. For example, women who work a seven-day week will be able to take up to 126 days of leave, while those with a five-day work week get 84.

Reservists who give birth while on active orders can be extended on active duty to take advantage of the 18-week

Army reviewing rules for maternity, paternity leave

(7 Aug) Army Times, By Michelle Tan

The Army is reviewing its policies regarding maternity and paternity leave and how long new mothers have at home before they can be called to deploy.

"There is no predetermined timeline for completion of this review," Hank Minitrez, a spokesman for the Army, said. It follows recent policy updates by the Navy Department and Air Force.

New mothers in the [Navy and Marine Corps](#) are now eligible for up to 18 weeks of postpartum maternity leave, according to a policy change that took effect Wednesday. That number includes the six weeks that was already available immediately after giving birth. The additional maternity leave can be spread through the first year of the child's life and is part of a Navywide push to attract and retain more women who leave the Navy at a much higher rate than men, particularly when starting a family.

In July, the [Air Force expanded its rules](#) so that new mothers will not have to deploy for a full year; the previous rules gave airmen six months at home before they were eligible for deployment. Like the Navy, the Air Force's move is part of its ongoing efforts to retain female airmen who "struggle to

leave, by request. New mothers going through a permanent change-of-station move will have to take their leave before checking out of their current command or after checking in to the new one.

New moms will still be required to get back in body fat standards within six months of giving birth, the message said.

For now, because the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System hasn't been updated, maternity leave will be charged as convalescent leave, until the expected fix in December.

During that time commands will need to manually track maternity leave to make sure it doesn't go over 18 weeks, the message said.

According to current data, about 5,000 women a year are eligible for maternity leave.

The benefit will not extend to adoptive parents or new fathers, Servello confirmed.

Maternity leave and parental leave are governed separately, so while Mabus has authority to expand leave for post-partum mothers, expanding leave for adoptive parents and fathers would require a change to laws set by Congress.

Refer to [NAVADMIN 182/15](#) for complete details.

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2015/08/05/navy-triples-maternity-leave-sailors-starting-now/31168645/>

balance deployments and family issues, and this is especially true soon after childbirth," Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said.

Current Army regulation gives female soldiers six weeks of post-pregnancy convalescent leave. It also states that a new mother is nondeployable for six months.

For military couples or single parents who are seeking to adopt, one adult is "non-deployable for six months from the date the child is scheduled to be officially placed in the home pending adoption," according to [Army Regulation 614-30](#), "Overseas Service."

Soldiers can request a waiver from the deferment, which would allow them to deploy before the six-month period is up, Minitrez said. Commanders also can "further extend" the deferment period if it is "operationally feasible," he said.

New fathers can take a nonchargeable administrative absence, Minitrez said. That absence can be no more than 10 days and must be taken consecutively and within 45 days of the child's birth, he said.

Deployed soldiers have 60 days after they return from their deployment to use the 10 days of paternity leave, Minitrez said.

If the leave is not used within the established time frame, that leave is lost, he said.

Paternity leave is authorized only for a married soldier on active duty, including Title 10 and Title 32 Active Guard and Reserve duty, whose wife gives birth to a child, according to Army regulation. It cannot be applied to single soldiers fathering a child out of wedlock.

In addition to its maternity leave policies, the Army also has been reviewing its policy regarding [nursing mothers](#).

"The Army is currently conducting a comprehensive review of its personnel policies to include breastfeeding and lactation support," Paul Prince, an Army spokesman, said. "This review will leverage the expertise of our medical professionals as well as coordinate with the appropriate Army offices responsible for policy implementation."

The Army also is reviewing other services' policies to gather and consider best practices, Prince said.

Army faces recruit deficit, may miss '15 goal

(30 Jul) Army Times, By Tom Vanden Brook

The Army is nearly 14% short of the recruits it will need to fill its ranks, marking the first time in six years — and only the third in the last 20 — that it may fall short of its recruiting goal for the year.

The Army's top officer for recruiting, Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Snow, acknowledged in an interview with USA TODAY on Thursday the difficulties in attracting young men and women to the active-duty Army in an improving economy and the greater effort his recruiters are taking to find new soldiers.

"It is a challenging mission, and we're not going to get around that," Snow said. "And there are indications that the economy is going to continue to improve."

Snow, who took command this summer, expressed confidence that recruiters would hit the goal of 59,000 new recruits when the fiscal year ends Sept. 30.

The shortfall in recruiting comes as the Army is planning to pare 40,000 soldiers from its ranks over the next few years. Despite that reduction to 450,000 men and women, the Army still needs about 60,000 young recruits a year to fill out its combat and support units.

And recruiters are working harder just to get potential soldiers to meet with them.

The review comes after prodding from Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-Mass., who reported numerous women who have come forward with concerns about the Army's lack of a standard breastfeeding policy.

Tsongas is calling for the Army to create a policy that, at a minimum, designates a private, clean area with electrical outlets for expressing milk and an allowance for breaks.

As the review is underway, the Army also will continue to promote and encourage mothers to take advantage of several resources that support breastfeeding, including lactation support rooms and Nursing Mothers' Programs, Prince said.

As with the review of maternity leave rules, there is no specific timeline for when this review might be completed.

"We are working diligently in a systematic and yet deliberate approach to publish new guidance as soon as possible," Prince said.

Staff writers Meghann Myers and Stephen Losey contributed to this report.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/08/07/army-reviewing-rules-maternity-paternity-leave/31285283/>

For the first 10 months of fiscal year 2015, recruiters made more than 415,000 appointments with young men and women interested in the Army. Those resulted in just over 50,000 signing up to serve. For the same period in 2014, they made 371,000 appointments and had signed up 52,000 soldiers.

"We made more appointments," Snow said. "We conducted more appointments. Yet there were fewer contracts achieved."

Meanwhile, the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy all have made 100% of their recruiting goals through May, according to the Defense Department.

During the height of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, the services struggled to make their annual goals. Standards for recruits were lowered, and greater signing bonuses were handed out. In 2006, for example, it spent \$1 billion on bonuses to recruit and retain soldiers.

Bonuses and educational incentives, however, have decreased in recent years, Snow said. The Army paid out \$117 million in 2014 compared with \$235 million in 2013.

Moreover, the quality of recruits has remained high, Snow said. There has been a decrease in the percentage of recruits who have received waivers for failing to meet educational or other standards.

In 2005, the Pentagon relaxed standards for recruits who fared poorly on standard military exams. Those who scored in the lower third of the test, so-called Category Four recruits — had been limited to 2% of recruits. The relaxed standard allowed 4% of those recruits, and even that was exceeded at times. Less than 1% of recruits this year belong in Category Four, Snow said.

As U.S. moves to allow women in combat, researchers help set the bar

(30 Jul) *Science Magazine*, By Kelly Servick

On a sunny June afternoon, a U.S. Air Force airman is staring up at a 2.5-meter wall. The young woman has just lugged more than half her weight in gear down 5 kilometers of a dirt jogging path and dragged a 98-kilogram dummy across a long stretch of grass. She's already failed at one attempt to clear the wall. Now the clock is ticking: She has 2 minutes to make it or move on to the next task.

“Why am I so dizzy?” asks the airman, who cannot be identified by *Science* under the study's privacy rules. She's determined to get over. This obstacle course, designed to mimic the physical demands of military combat, is her last challenge in a 2-week Air Force study. So far, she hasn't had to leave anything unfinished.

She has volunteered for the grueling exercise along with nearly 200 other airmen (the term used for both men and women) in order to help answer a thorny question: How should the U.S. military decide who is physically qualified to be a combat soldier? That question is getting urgent attention since the Department of Defense moved in 2013 to integrate women into ground combat roles—the last military occupations to remain male-only.

By January 2016, each branch of the military—the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines—must open up its combat specialties to females or ask the Secretary of Defense to keep the gender restriction on certain jobs. The deadline has prompted a slew of new research projects, including studies of physical standards, gender differences in injury rates, and service members' attitudes towards integration. But the surge of new science has also prompted suspicions that the services will arbitrarily lower standards in order to meet political demands for equality.

“For a lot of people, this isn't a scientific issue. It's a very emotional issue,” says Jennifer Hunt, an Army Reserve staff sergeant and Iraq veteran in Gaithersburg, Maryland, who is one plaintiff in an ongoing lawsuit against the Pentagon aimed at lifting the ban on women in combat. “There's a big sociological aspect to it—of how we conceptualize a woman's role.” The lawsuit is on hold as the military decides whether to keep any positions closed.

The legal and political backdrop can make for a highly charged research environment, in which a wall standing on a Texas air base is more than just a wall. The airman, who in her spare time is a competitive weight-lifter, has her eye on one of the soon-to-open combat specialties, such as pararescue. “I work behind a computer and there's no windows, all damn

“On quality we're doing very well this year,” he said.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/news/nation/2015/07/30/army-recruiting/30900555/>

day,” she explains at one point. “I absolutely hate it.” That may be why, on her second try, she approaches the barrier with a certain ferocity.

THE QUESTION OF whether to open ground combat positions to women has sparked decades of controversy, but attitudes—and government policies—are evolving. In the past 3 decades, Canada, Australia, and many nations in Western Europe have moved to do away with combat restrictions, and the United Kingdom is currently reconsidering its policy. In part, the changes reflect the fact that women have already served and died alongside men in combat, despite their formal exclusion. In conflicts without clear front lines—in Afghanistan and Iraq, for example—female medics, pilots, engineers, and intelligence analysts have all been exposed to enemy fire.

Women in the U.S. military have been selected for increasingly risky jobs. In 2010, for instance, the military created all-female “cultural support teams” that served as liaisons between U.S. forces and Afghani women, collecting information and sometimes joining Army Rangers on dangerous raids. Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta emphasized women's combat experience when he announced, in January 2013, that the military would lift a categorical ban on women in units whose mission is to “engage in direct combat on the ground.” At the time, the policy applied to more than 250,000 positions. “The fact is that [women] have become an integral part of our ability to perform our mission,” Panetta said.

Still, questions persist about the physical abilities of female service members. On average, women have smaller hearts, slighter skeletons, less muscle mass, and more fat than males, noted a report on woman in combat published last December by the U.K. Ministry of Defence. Analysts worry those attributes could make it difficult for women to perform certain critical combat tasks, such as loading heavy artillery, conducting rescues, or bearing heavy combat loads, which can exceed 45 kilograms of weapons and gear. The U.K. report concluded that “the relative strength of females, compared to the combat load carried, is likely to result in a distinct cohort with lower survivability in combat.”

THE YOUNG AIRMAN eyeing the wall is intent on proving to military leaders that such statistics about “average” females aren't meaningful—that some women can meet the physical demands of combat. In the Air Force, those demands might include scouting for days behind enemy lines to coordinate an air attack, or parachuting into a battle zone to evacuate the

wounded. “We are going up against a pretty big cultural block,” the airman says. “Women in these career fields are generally seen as a hindrance, a burden: ‘Oh, she’s not going to be able to keep up. I’m going to have to drag her equipment.’”

So for the last 2 weeks, she has been sweating in the Texas sun and feeding data to Neal Baumgartner, a long-time exercise physiologist for the Air Force who designed and is running the study. Baumgartner, 55, is a retired major who has been “bleeding blue for the Air Force since I was 17.” And he has been waiting for more than a decade to do this research.

Baumgartner has long argued that the physical standards that combat airmen must meet to advance through training (which can last 6 to 24 months) should be based directly on the demands of real-world fighting—not, as is currently the case, on the physical fitness traits of previous candidates who have successfully completed the training. But in 1998, when Baumgartner first proposed running a study to reexamine the standards, the Air Force said funding wasn’t available. He kept chipping away at the project, and in 2011 worked with the RAND Corporation to design the study.

When Baumgartner first conceived the research, he didn’t anticipate that some of his subjects would be women. But the funding only began to flow after the Pentagon lifted its ground combat exclusion. Military leaders developed a policy, known as the Women in Service Review (WISR), which required the Air Force and other services to demonstrate that the occupational standards for combat jobs were scientifically defensible and gender neutral. Air Force officials asked: “Is anybody doing this work?” Baumgartner recalls. “Boom. We already had it in place.” His study finally had official backing—and a hard deadline. By this week, he will submit his recommended standards to the secretary of the Air Force.

Baumgartner moved quickly to recruit subjects—63 female airmen and 109 male airmen, about half of them current combat soldiers. During their first week in the study, subjects took 39 physical fitness tests: They squat-lifted dumbbells of increasing weights to find their limits, did crunches to the beep of a metronome until exhaustion, and tested their upper body strength on a pull-up bar.

Week 2 brought 15 combat and rescue simulations, all based on “mission profiles” that current battlefield airmen carry out to prepare for deployment. The test subjects evacuated a dummy named Rescue Gumby from a vehicle and towed another, Rescue Randy, back and forth across a swimming pool. They scaled a 6-meter rope ladder with 30 kilograms of gear. The weight makes most climbers tilt backward towards the horizontal, Baumgartner notes. “You end up like a turtle.”

After collecting data, he began comparing the results of the 39 fitness tests and 15 simulations. He’s looking for correlations. For example, does the ability to do crunches predict how fast an airman can climb a rope ladder, or do push-ups correlate better? He will also define what constitutes “success” on a simulation by surveying experienced combat airmen who have performed the tasks and consulting a panel of military experts.

For instance, how long should it take a rescuer to drag an injured comrade from a damaged vehicle, or hoist a rucksack over the slippery side of an inflatable Zodiac boat? Finally, he is developing practical standards that the Air Force can use to judge whether an airman is physically fit for combat: a minimum number of crunches, for example, or swimming a certain distance within a time limit.

Setting those magic numbers is a balancing act. Ideally, any cutoff should minimize the number of people who might meet the fitness standard but then fail the simulations. But it will also need to avoid axing less fit recruits who might succeed on actual combat tasks.

Although Baumgartner is often careful to explain the study’s nuances to his subjects, misconceptions abound. The young female airman shooting for a perfect completion record, for instance, can’t shake the notion that her data will count for more if her performance is exceptional. “We are here to set the standards as high as humanly possible so that when women behind us actually start moving into the community, they are absolutely equals [to men],” she says. “I have this phrase in the back of my head: ‘I will not be the reason they lower that standard.’”

In reality, the study is gender-neutral; Baumgartner is trying to develop measures that can predict whether any recruit, male or female, can handle the physical demands of certain combat tasks. A strong performance won’t necessarily bump the standard higher. It just adds another point to Baumgartner’s scatterplot—designed to detect good correlations and compensate for outliers.

Still, some fear that the Air Force will lower the bar so that more women will clear it. One experienced battlefield airman in the study admits that he came in skeptical. “If you’re going to open up career fields to females and make it gender-neutral, just have them run in, and shoot for the [existing] standard,” he says. “We have guys that have been doing it for years, and the standard has been the standard.”

Ultimately, any final decisions about which positions to integrate and where to set the standards will be made behind closed doors at the highest levels of the Pentagon and White House. For now, however, the Air Force doesn’t anticipate keeping any of its combat positions closed to women.

OTHER BRANCHES of the U.S. military are also scrambling for new data. The Army, for example, plans to create a screening test for new recruits. The goal is to disqualify some recruits—male or female—from pursuing combat training if the results suggest they are unlikely to complete the training or likely to get injured attempting it. Using actual combat tasks for such screening often isn’t practical, notes Jack Myers, a senior planner with the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command and a lead on the integration initiative. “Imagine a high school senior showing up at a recruiting station and we’re like, ‘Okay, I need you to load this howitzer.’”

Instead, physiologists at the U.S. Army Institute of Environmental Medicine in Natick, Massachusetts, are designing a predictive model. It reduces previously male-only jobs to their five to seven most physically demanding tasks, which are further simplified into exercises like a long jump or a grip test that could be performed at a recruiting station.

The Marine Corps is trying to evaluate another issue: how females might affect a team's performance in a combat mission. The Corps' 350-person study group, known as the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, includes about 65 women who have already completed the occupational specialty schools that feed into combat jobs. Some are trained as machine gunners, for example, and others learned to operate antitank missiles. This past spring, at a base in Twentynine Palms, California, the volunteers were tested in 12-member teams, some all-male, some including either one woman or two. The teams carried out test missions, sometimes with live ammunition, while GPS sensors and heart monitors tracked each volunteer's accuracy, speed, and exertion.

The data will allow researchers to compare the performance of male-only teams with integrated ones—how accurately the team explodes its target, for example, or how quickly it traverses difficult terrain. Researchers can also compare how much females must exert themselves on a given mission relative to their male teammates, and whether they sustain more injuries.

“That's a really important landmark study,” says Daniel Billing, a human performance scientist with the Australian Defence Force, which in 2011 announced it would open 24 combat roles to women. The government's Defence Science and Technology Organisation in Melbourne has been evaluating its own occupational standards, and is watching the U.S. research with interest. “I'm hoping that with the facts on the table, it will allow people to move from identifying reasons why women should not serve in these roles, to start getting really productive and looking at the strategies that might best accommodate and support females,” Billing says.

Injury experts are already thinking about how to provide such support to women. Musculoskeletal injuries—damage to joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments, and cartilage, often from overuse during training—have long taken a major toll on service members. An estimated 24% of evacuations from recent U.S. operations, for example, were the result of musculoskeletal injuries, not combat injuries. And military women appear to be at greater risk: In the Army, which has the highest rate of training-related injuries, studies have found that about twice as many women as men sustain a musculoskeletal injury during basic training.

Whether the women in the newly opened positions will also face a heightened injury risk is “the big open question,” says Bruce Jones, a physician and epidemiologist who manages the injury prevention program at the U.S. Army Public Health Command in Aberdeen, Maryland. He has been analyzing injury data since the early 1980s, when a commander asked

him to figure out whether his trainees would be better off running in running shoes or combat boots. (“We were never allowed to do the study,” Jones says, because “the issue was resolved” when the chief of staff simply decreed that trainees would wear running shoes.)

Jones and his colleagues have found that fitness, not gender, may underlie the injury risks. In a 2000 study of basic training recruits, they showed that differences in aerobic fitness, as measured by run times, accounted for most of the twofold difference in injury rates between men and women. That suggests “men and women of the same fitness level have similar risk,” Jones says, adding that it's not yet clear whether that pattern will hold among combat soldiers.

In a bid to prevent injuries, a new working group within the Army Medical Command is developing recommendations for safer training regimens. There is already some evidence that high-intensity, low-volume training—substituting short sprints for long hikes and jogs, for example—can reduce overuse injuries and improve performance in both men and women. And as women join the combat ranks, the working group hopes to use records of medical visits and time lost to injuries to identify any female-specific risks and suggest prevention measures. But it will be up to unit commanders to decide whether and how to implement any injury-prevention recommendations.

WITH OTHER SUBJECTS threatening to overtake her, the airman takes another shot at the wall. She flings herself up, grips the top, and wriggles like a worm. When she manages to get a foot over the wall, other subjects, who Baumgartner has discouraged from watching or cheering, watch and cheer.

Half an hour later, she hauls a 48-kilogram barbell up an incline that replicates the ramp of a C-17 cargo plane and hoists one end of a weighted stretcher above her shoulders. The task simulates loading a casualty—and it's the last one of the day. “Everything is a pass, right?” she asks. “Somebody look me straight in the eyes and tell me I passed everything.”

She doesn't get a response. But as she gets ready to return to her desk job, the airman says she's proud she was able to “get some data in the system” to support women entering the new positions. She knows that even this study can't accurately gauge how women will perform in combat—in part because those in the study haven't trained for it. But she's confident that she and many of the female volunteers could make the cut. “Give us the proper time and training to build those muscles, and we'll keep up with the boys, no problem,” she predicts. “We absolutely could have smoked this stuff.”

A final decision on whether she will get that chance is expected early next year.

<http://news.sciencemag.org/policy/2015/07/feature-u-s-moves-allow-women-combat-researchers-help-set-bar>

Two women pass Mountain Phase at Ranger School, now one step short of graduation

(31 Jul) *The Washington Post*, By Dan Lamothe

Only the swamps of Florida stand between two female soldiers becoming the first women to ever graduate from the Army's famously difficult Ranger School.

The women have completed the school's Mountain Phase, and will move on to the third and final phase of training, Army officials said Friday. It begins Sunday when they and 125 men who also completed the Mountain Phase parachute into the Florida Panhandle and start training at Eglin Air Force Base's Camp James E. Rudder.

A third woman who advanced to the Mountain Phase was "recycled" along with 60 men. That means they did not advance, but will be allowed to try the course again and can still graduate later. All three women began the Mountain Phase on July 11 alongside 156 male students who also were attempting it for the first time, and 42 men who already were training in the mountains, but failed to pass there the first time. The phase includes 20 days of climbing, hiking, rappelling and patrolling in the mountains of the Chattahoochee National Forest, mostly with minimal sleep and little food.

"The Ranger students, both male and female, are two-thirds of the way done with Ranger School," Col. David Fivecoat, the commander of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade, said of the those who passed. "I was very impressed with the students' toughness at leading platoon-size patrols in the North Georgia Mountains during this extremely hot summer. The coastal swamps of Florida will continue to test the students — only the best will be successful and earn the Ranger Tab."

The women are attending for the first time as part of an ongoing assessment by the military about how it should better integrate women into combat roles in the military. It follows a 2013 decision by Pentagon leaders to open all jobs in the military to women by 2016. The services were required to conduct research first, and are permitted to request an exception to the new policy in coming months for any jobs they want to keep closed, provided they can show evidence that it wouldn't work.

The odds of a woman completing Ranger School are now relatively high. In fiscal 2014, the average class in the Florida Phase had 190 students, with 4 percent dropped from Ranger School, 19 percent recycled to take it again and 77 passing, Fivecoat said. The average Mountain Phase course had 219 students, with 6 percent dropped, 24 percent recycled to try and 70 percent moved on to the Florida phase.

The earlier portions of Ranger School have historically been the biggest obstacles. The average class at the beginning included 369 students. Nearly half — 44 percent — failed to make through the initial four-day Ranger Assessment Phase.

Nineteen women started Ranger School on April 20. Any of the remaining three who graduate will be allowed to wear the Army's Ranger Tab, a prestigious decoration that greatly helps career advancement, if they graduate. They will not, however, be allowed to join the elite 75th Ranger Regiment, which performs Special Operations missions. Many male soldiers, ranging from pilots to artillerymen, also earn the tab and serve in roles outside the Rangers.

The Florida Phase is 17 days long, and focuses on extended platoon operations in the steamy coastal swamps near Valparaiso, Fla. It includes two airborne jumps from aircraft, four days of waterborne operations, a 10-day field training exercise with students leading patrols and two administrative days in which students are counseled on their performance.

Training at Camp Rudder takes place in several locations, and includes instruction on stream-crossing and small-boat operations. At least 22 students have died during Ranger training there, though none since an "invisible safety net" was put in place after [four students died of hypothermia](#) while maneuvering through chest-deep water in February 1995.

The course now includes field ambulances that are posted minutes away, evacuation helicopters and numerous rescue boats that are kept on standby, according to [an information paper published by the Army](#). Before students enter water, divers also check on conditions, and "an elaborate system to monitor weather and water conditions and depths exists at every step in the exercise," it said.

Maj. Gen. A. Scott Miller, the commanding general of the Maneuver Center for Excellence at Fort Benning, Ga., said in a statement released Friday that he observed the students during the Mountain Phase as they were close to completing an exhausting 10-day field training exercise.

Day Nine of it "develops all of the qualities we are looking for in our future Rangers: grit, refusal to quit, tactical competence, and perhaps most importantly, teamwork while under extreme individual conditions," Miller's statement said. "It is impressive to observe the students' problem solving in this environment, and equally impressive to watch our Ranger Instructors coach, teach and mentor in an absolutely professional manner."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/07/31/two-women-pass-mountain-phase-at-ranger-school-now-one-step-short-of-graduation/>

DoD Announces Recruiting and Retention Numbers for Fiscal 2015, Through May 2015

(31 Jul) *DoD News Release*

The Department of Defense announced today recruiting and retention statistics for the active and reserve components for fiscal 2015, through May 2015.

Active Component

Recruiting – Three of the four active services met or exceeded its fiscal year-to-date 2015 accession goals

through May 2015. The Army missed its goal by 5,222.

- Army – 33,382 accessions, with a goal of 38,604; 86.5 percent.
- Navy – 22,049 accessions, with a goal of 22,049; 100.0 percent.

- Marine Corps – 16,185 accessions, with a goal of 16,171; 100.1 percent.
- Air Force – 15,265 accessions, with a goal of 15,265; 100.0 percent.

Retention – The Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps exhibited strong retention numbers for the eighth month of fiscal 2015.

Reserve Component

Recruiting – Five of the six reserve components met or exceeded their fiscal-year-to-date 2015 numerical accession goals through May 2015. All six reserve components also met or exceeded the DoD quality benchmarks.

- Army National Guard – 29,173 accessions, with a goal of 32,169; 90.7 percent.

- Army Reserve – 18,760 accessions, with a goal of 18,300; 102.5 percent.
- Navy Reserve – 3,575 accessions, with a goal of 3,575; 100.0 percent.
- Marine Corps Reserve – 4,965 accessions, with a goal of 4,903; 101.3 percent.
- Air National Guard – 6,030 accessions, with a goal of 6,030; 100.0 percent.
- Air Force Reserve – 4,699 accessions, with a goal of 4,699; 100.0 percent.

Attrition – Each of the six reserve components met their attrition goals or were within the allowed variance. Current trends are expected to continue. (This indicator lags due to data availability.)

<http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=17418&source=GovDelivery>

Carter: Future Force Depends on Military Child Education

(31 Jul) DoD News, Defense Media Activity, By Amaani Lyle
Defense Secretary Ash Carter today thanked military children for their sacrifices and championed a family-focused approach to educational pathways for them and their service member parents.

Speaking on the final day of this year’s Military Child Education Coalition seminar here, Carter said that as a former university professor, he realizes the importance of education as it relates to a richer quality of life, a vibrant democracy, and from his current perspective as defense secretary, to national security and building the future force.

“It’s true that a capable, dynamic force of the future will depend on maintaining an unmatched operational edge and unmatched capabilities,” the secretary said.

But, he said, the nation requires more than advanced weapons platforms to keep people safe.

“People keep people safe,” Carter said. “It’s our men and women in uniform and their families, their conviction, their courage, their sacrifice . . . it’s that that makes ours the finest fighting force the world has ever known.”

DoD Must Adapt, Compete for Talent

To maintain its advantage, the U.S. military must remain an attractive, inviting, supportive place for those who serve, and for families of all kinds, the defense secretary said.

“The world’s changing, the labor market is changing,” he said. “Younger generations and young families want flexibility and choice in their career paths.”

Carter compared today’s workforce evolution to a “jungle gym,” in which people advance by moving around and benefitting from new experiences rather than the traditional style of linear ascent.

Given the abundance of career path choices, the secretary said, the Defense Department must not take for granted that military children are twice as likely to become service members as other children or that service members are more inclined to recommend uniformed service to their children.

This changing workforce and economy, Carter explained, means that the need to compete for talent will persist.

“There’s tremendous value of families upholding a tradition of service that is passed from generation to generation,” Carter

said. “There’s no substitute for the unique, potent mix of passion and mentorship that comes from a military mom, dad, [grandparent], or all of them.”

New Pathways to Success

According to Carter, maternity and paternity leave expansion, creating on- and off-ramps between active duty and the National Guard and reserve for education, and enhancing Department of Defense Education Activities schools are among the myriad ways DoD will ensure service remains a worthy endeavor.

“Our personnel don’t have to derail their careers to get an advanced degree or to have a family,” the secretary said.

Carter said the department will overhaul the way it places personnel to offer more options and potentially fewer moves, which he said translates to “fewer first days as the new kid in school.”

And for parents, Carter said he wants to ensure serving in uniform doesn’t equate to a tradeoff in wearing a cap and gown.

“The 9/11 GI Bill has helped over 1.3 million Americans pay for college, and those benefits are transferable to family members,” he said.

More than 74,000 children attend DoDEA schools, which boast quality teachers, high graduation rates and above-average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, Carter said.

To build on that success, Carter said that this coming school year, DoDEA schools will adopt college- and career-ready standards across the board.

“Our military kids can hit the ground running in college and be first in line for 21st century jobs,” he said.

Targeted Resources Maximize Success

But since more than 90 percent of military children attend local public schools, Carter stressed the importance of working with groups such as the Military Child Education Coalition to push progress in that realm.

To that end, the DoD is creating a military dependent student identifier, which allows parents, educators and schools to track

performance, funnel resources and make smart policy decisions on behalf of military children over the span of their educational careers.

"If we know how particular groups of kids are performing, we can better target resources to maximize their success," Carter said.

Other creative outreach efforts include the competitive educational partnership grant program, in which funds go toward local schools with 15 percent or greater military child enrollment.

"Those funds recently paid for a [science, technology and engineering and mathematics] partnership that helped more than 10,000 high school students earn AP exam scores that qualified them for college credit," the secretary said. "That's an incredible return on investment."

This year's round of educational partnership grant program funding totals \$52 million, the secretary said.

For many of today's younger service members, "the entire time they've been in school -- during elementary school spelling bees, junior high school prep rallies, and senior proms -- America has been at war," Carter said.

Children Also Serve

The secretary also saluted the spunk of today's military children.

"Regardless of the tumultuous reality they've lived in, military children continue to muster the same grit and courage their parents devote to defending our country," the secretary said.

DoD Announces Recruiting, Retention Numbers Through May 2015

(31 Jul) DoD News, Defense Media Activity

The active-duty Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force met or exceeded their fiscal year-to-date 2015 accession goals through May 2015, Defense Department officials announced today.

The active-duty Army missed its goal by 5,222, officials said. Here are the active-component recruiting numbers for fiscal year 2015 through May 2015:

- Army: 33,382 accessions, 86.5 percent of its goal of 38,604;
- Navy: 22,049 accessions, 100.0 percent of its goal of 22,049;
- Marine Corps: 16,185 accessions, 100.1 percent of its goal of 16,171; and
- Air Force: 15,265 accessions, 100.0 percent of its goal of 15,265.

The Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps exhibited strong retention numbers for the eighth month of fiscal 2015. Five of the six reserve components met or exceeded their fiscal-year-to-date 2015 numerical accession goals through May 2015. All six reserve components also met or exceeded the DoD quality benchmarks.

CNO: More ships to be forward-deployed

(31 Jul) Navy Times, By David Larter

The Navy's outgoing top officer confirmed his commitment to open all billets to women by the start of 2016 and to forward deploy more ships.

Carter recounted the story of a high school girl, who as the daughter of a Coast Guardsman, has moved six times in her life. The secretary said she described moving as both the "best and the most challenging thing about being a kid."

But, Carter said, she also asserted "kids serve, too," and many children are proud to own their service.

"They're determined, creative, wise beyond their years and they seize their story, their unique experiences as an opportunity," he said.

Carter commended the grit and wisdom that some two million military children of active duty, Guard and reserve service members display.

"Our mission is to have their back, to cheer them on, to make sure their stories are success stories," Carter said, "because the brave men and women who defend our freedoms and risk their lives all over the world deserve the peace of mind that comes with knowing their families are being taken care of back home."

The Military Child Education Coalition ensures quality educational opportunities for military children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition. The 501(c)(3) non-profit, worldwide organization performs research, develops resources, conducts professional institutes and conferences, and develops and publishes resources for all constituencies.

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129387&source=GovDelivery>

Here are the reserve-component accession numbers for fiscal year 2015 through May 2015:

- Army National Guard: 29,173 accessions, 90.7 percent of its goal of 32,169;
- Army Reserve: 18,760 accessions, 102.5 of its goal of 18,300;
- Navy Reserve: 3,575 accessions, 100.0 percent of its goal of 3,575;
- Marine Corps Reserve: 4,965 accessions, 101.3 percent of its goal of 4,903;
- Air National Guard: 6,030 accessions, 100.0 percent of its goal of 6,030; and
- Air Force Reserve: 4,699 accessions, 100.0 percent of its goal of 4,699.

Each of the six reserve components met their attrition goals or were within the allowed variance. Current trends are expected to continue. This indicator lags due to data availability.

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129389&source=GovDelivery>

Adm. Jon Greenert, scheduled to step aside as chief of naval operations in September, hit familiar themes and laid out priorities in his newly released report, which he calls a

"navigation plan." The plan has remained remarkably consistent through four years of Greenert's tenure, marked by heavy budget cuts and ceaseless demand for the Navy forces in the Middle East, the Pacific and now in Europe.

Greenert pushes for maintaining the Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine fleet and funding the yet-to-be-named Ohio replacement class; keeping ships forward; staying ahead of enemies technologically; increasing readiness, cyber and electromagnetic warfare capabilities while sustaining the industrial base.

On the personnel front, Greenert reaffirmed the Navy's commitment to open all billets to women next year.

"Over 96 percent of all Navy jobs are currently available to women and we expect to open all occupations by January 2016," the plan said.

He also committed to retaining special pay increases designed to keep sailors at sea longer.

This year's Navy budget, Greenert writes, "Emphasizes and rewards sea duty by continuing increased sea pay, sea pay premium, and critical skill retention pays."

In March 2014, the Navy announced it was hiking career sea pay and sea pay premium — a kicker that starts after 36 months at sea — as a way to fill empty billets at sea. Greenert also delivered on long deployment pay, known as hardship duty pay-tempo, which kicks in for sailors deployed beyond 220 consecutive days; only the Navy and Marines offer this.

Greenert also cited the new deployment schedule, known as the optimized fleet response plan, as a way the Navy was improving the lives of sailors, calling it "the readiness framework which serves as the foundation of our planning to restore readiness and provide stability and predictability to the lives of our sailors and their families."

For officers, Greenert said the budget bankrolls the expansion of the foreign area officer ranks to more than 400 by 2019. Foreign area officers work as liaisons and naval attachés overseas.

Presence

Greenert's plan says the Navy is on track to maintain an average of 36 ships at any point in the Middle East by 2020, from an average of 22 today. In large part, that's due to an increase in the number of forward-based ships, from 95 to 115, by 2020.

The Navy is also on track to station seven LCSs in the Persian Gulf, stationed in Bahrain on a rotational basis by 2020.

The service is also going to begin deploying a coastal patrol ship to Southern Command, which includes Central and

South America, and expects to deploy at least one joint high speed vessel per year to Africa and one to South America.

Greenert called this an "innovative, low-cost and small-footprint" approach to providing presence in the areas.

The JHSVs, civilian-crewed high-speed ferries that can be configured to carry Marines and heavy equipment, would also be used to provide additional presence in Europe.

Ships, planes and gear

The budget funds the refueling overhaul of the carrier George Washington, returning from Japan now after seven years as the ready carrier in the Pacific.

It also funds building four new fleet oilers, coming to an underway replenishment near you, and keeps the Navy on track to convert all its E-2 Hawkeyes to the advanced E-2D airborne surveillance aircraft by 2020.

On the F-35, the service is still on track for welcoming the fighter to the fleet in 2018, Greenert said in the report.

The service also plans to purchase 24 V-22s to replace the old C-2 carrier onboard delivery planes used to shuttle sailors, supplies and VIPs around the fleet.

The report includes mention of the cyber, signals intelligence and electromagnetic sectors and plans for investing in new anti-jamming technology and rolling out new jamming equipment. The service will bring its total cyber workforce up to about 1,700 sailors by the end of 2016.

Hanging threads

While the plan lays out a comprehensive view of Greenert's priorities, experts say the plan leaves some unanswered questions.

The investments in EM were scattered around the document but didn't lay out a clear strategy for how they would be used to boost the Navy's capabilities, said Bryan Clark, a former Greenert aide who's now an analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington, D.C.

Clark also said that, while the implantation of the latest deployment scheme is supposed to bring consistency back to the deployment rotations, the navigation plan didn't address one of the foremost drivers of the erratic ship schedules: demands placed on the Navy by commanders seeking forces that far outstrips what the fleet can provide.

"It doesn't address the supply and demand mismatch for naval forces," Clark said.

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2015/07/31/cno-greenert-navigation-plan-2016-2020/30586803/>

Two female Ranger students move on to Swamp Phase

(31 Jul) *Army Times*, By Michelle Tan

Two of the three female Ranger School students and 125 male students will move on to Florida this weekend after successfully completing the course's 20-day Mountain Phase.

The third female student, along with 60 male classmates, will recycle the Mountain Phase at Camp Merrill in Dahlonega, Georgia, the Army said Friday. They will re-start the Mountain Phase on Aug. 8.

The three women are part of the Army's gender-integrated assessment of the grueling two-month Ranger School. The women, all officers, started the Mountain Phase on July 11 after [three tries](#) at the school's first phase, known as the Darby Phase, at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The July 11 rotation of the Mountain Phase included 158 male students. Six men failed the phase and were dropped from the course.

The students who did not meet the standards were unsuccessful for a variety of reasons, officials said. The vast majority, however, were unable to successfully lead a patrol.

Maj. Gen. Scott Miller, the commanding general of the Maneuver Center of Excellence, and his command sergeant major observed and participated in training with the class.

"Day nine of a 10-day field training exercise in the north Georgia mountains develops all of the qualities we are looking for in our future Rangers: grit, refusal to quit, tactical competence, and, perhaps most importantly, teamwork while under extreme individual conditions," Miller said in a statement. "It is impressive to observe the students' problem-solving in this environment, and equally impressive to watch our Ranger instructors coach, teach and mentor in an absolutely professional manner."

The two women who successfully completed the Mountain Phase are now moving on to Camp Rudder, on Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, for the Swamp Phase of Ranger School.

This is the third and final phase of the school, and it focuses on the continued development of the students' leadership and small-unit tactics, according to the [Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade](#) website.

During the 17-day Swamp Phase, students learn waterborne operations, small boat movements and stream crossings. They also will be required to execute extended platoon-level operations in a coastal swamp environment.

Ranger students who successfully complete this phase will graduate from Ranger School and earn the coveted Ranger tab.

Successful students in this rotation of the phase are expected to graduate Aug. 21 at Fort Benning.

On average, about 45 percent of Ranger School students will graduate from the course.

"The Ranger students, both male and female, are two-thirds of the way done with Ranger School," said Col. David Fivecoat, commander of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade, in a statement. "The coastal swamps of Florida will continue to test the students. Only the best will be successful and earn the Ranger tab."

The women in the course are part of a one-time, [integrated assessment](#) of the storied school. The assessment is part of a wider effort to determine whether and how to open combat arms jobs to women, and it is a first for Ranger School, which until now has been open only to men.

Nineteen female and 381 male soldiers [started Ranger School](#) on April 20. Eight of the women made it through RAP week.

None of the eight women made it past the Darby Phase on the first try and were recycled, along with 101 of their male classmates, on May 8.

After the second attempt at the Darby Phase, three female and two male students on May 29 were given the option of a Day One Recycle, which is a normal course procedure that's used when students struggle with one aspect of the course and excel at others, said officials at Fort Benning.

The two male students declined to recycle, officials said.

The remaining five women returned to their units and were not recycled again. A total of 29 students were dropped from the course for failing to meet the standards of the Darby Phase.

These students did not meet the standard for a number of reasons, including leading patrols, poor peer evaluations, too many negative spot reports, or a combination of all three.

The three remaining female students started the Mountain Phase of Ranger School on July 11.

This phase is 20 days of intensive platoon training and operations in the Chattahoochee National Forest near Dahlonega. Students receive instruction on military mountaineering tasks, mobility training, as well as techniques for employing a platoon for continuous combat patrol operations in a mountainous environment, according to the ARTB website. This includes learning about knots, belays, anchor points, rope management and the basics of climbing and rappelling. The students also learn how to operate in the mountains, including how to move personnel, equipment and simulated casualties across mountainous and restrictive terrain.

Students who successfully complete the Mountain Phase move on to the Swamp Phase at Camp Rudder.

On average, more than 34 percent of Ranger School graduates recycle at least one phase of the school. About 61 percent of recycles are due to patrols.

The boot camp gender divide: The case for co-ed training

(3 Aug) Marine Corps Times, By Hope Hedge Seck

As military leaders face the looming decision to open all jobs to women, one base in the Marine Corps continues to segregate new enlistees by gender — and there are no plans to change that.

When female recruits arrive at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina — one of two training depots where enlisted Marines are made — women are shuffled into their own unit: 4th Recruit Training Battalion. There, they have separate living quarters, physical training fields and even laundry facilities.

Their boot camp cycle is just as long as that of the male recruits and comprises the same activities and challenges. But occasionally, subtle differences emerge.

On the obstacle course, for example, a longer climbing rope used by shorter-stature recruits was once informally dubbed the "WM rope" in reference to women Marines, according to a Pentagon report on integrated training. A ladder adjacent to a wall obstacle is known by some as the "4th Battalion ladder," a former commander of a male recruit battalion said. And then there are rifle range qualification rates, a discipline in which the female recruits have, until recently, trailed the men by 20 percent or more for the last decade.

The Marine Corps is the only military branch to maintain gender-segregated recruit training. Leaders say the approach eliminates distractions and allows for better mentoring.

But critics say it's time for a change, and that integrating boot camp is a necessary step in preparing for the Defense Department mandate that will open all combat fields to women by 2016.

Lt. Col. Kevin Collins, a logistics officer, wrote in the Marine Corps Gazette last December, that allowing men and women to train together would better prepare them for what they'll face in the fleet.

"Male-only recruit training provides an artificial and unrealistic environment that can result in violated expectations of the realities of service in the Marine Corps and misconceptions about female Marines," Collins wrote. "[And] isolating our women during recruit training unfairly implies that our female recruits need to be sheltered and protected."

Performance gaps

About two-thirds of those who complete RAP week will eventually pass the Darby Phase and move on to the Mountain Phase, according to data on the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade website.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/07/31/two-female-ranger-students-move-swamp-phase/30931093/>

A recent investigation at Parris Island highlighted several troubling problems within 4th Recruit Training Battalion.

Lt. Col. Kate Germano, the former head of 4th RTB who was relieved of command June 30 after a command investigation found her leadership methods "hostile" and "abusive," was on a mission to change double standards she said she saw between male and female recruits.

Germano and her supporters say her hard-edged approach helped 4th RTB bring its rifle range qualification rates up by 12 percent in just one year and highlighted other ways the unit needed to become more competitive with its male counterparts.

"Because they aren't challenged to compete with their male counterparts during physical fitness events, most [female recruits] only aspire to achieve female standards for physical performance, which many would justifiably argue are too low to begin with," Germano wrote in an editorial accepted for submission to the Marine Corps Gazette, but spiked after her firing. "The truth is that when female recruits are held to higher standards, they rise to the occasion ... Clearly, it became an insult to 'train like a girl' when it became normal to expect less from female recruits."

The rifle range was not the only place on the island where male Marines were outperforming their female counterparts, according to a June investigation commissioned by the commanding general of Marine Corps Training and Education Command, Maj. Gen. James Lukeman, in response to complaints about Germano's leadership style.

Citing a survey of performance scores, qualification percentages and attrition rates from the last four years, the investigating officer concluded that "historically, the male battalions have out-performed the female battalion in nearly all aspects of measured performance, including drill, [physical and combat fitness tests], academics and rifle range."

The differences aren't always drastic, and in some areas, women at Parris Island outperform the men. Ten years of data on written test scores, for example, show that female recruits occasionally tie or outperform the average scores for men. And when using the scoring chart for female Marines on the Physical Fitness Test, recruits at 4th RTB outscoored the men every year.

For tests that measure upper body strength, though, the male recruits outperform the women. The female battalion tends to score about six to nine points below the male units on the Combat Fitness Test. Parris Island officials credit that difference to the ammunition can lift, which requires upper-body strength that men possess in greater amounts than their female counterparts.

Most dramatic was the difference in attrition rates. Female recruits dropped out of boot camp more than double the rate of their male counterparts — 13.3 percent compared to 6.5 percent — over the last four years.

Sgt. Stevie Cardona, a drill instructor at 4th RTB, said she has noticed some of those performance gap during her time at the recruit depot.

"I have observed a separated battalion composed of females not performing on the same level as their counterparts in areas such as combat conditioning hikes and physical fitness," she said.

For proponents of boot camp integration, the main contention is that female recruits will perform better across the board if given the opportunity to train and compete alongside men, rather than only with their female peers.

A segregated experience

While entry-level training for the other military services and Marine officers have been integrated for years, Corps officials maintain that separating the genders is the best way to train impressionable young recruits.

Splitting the genders at boot camp allows recruits to encounter same-sex role models, removing the stereotype of men in authority for female recruits, said Maj. Anton Semelroth, a TECOM spokesman for TECOM. It also helps limit distractions, allows for differences in physical strength and endurance, and enables recruits to report sexual assault and harassment incidents that occurred prior to service more freely, he said.

"In general, [recruits] arrive with immature, undeveloped and unfocused thoughts on professionalism and professional conduct," Semelroth said. "The only thing they have in common is their desire to be a Marine. By capitalizing on that desire, recruit training transforms these individuals from many diverse backgrounds into Marines imbued with a common set of values and standards."

Following the 70 days of boot camp, new Marines not designated for the infantry go to Marine Combat Training, where men and women train together. But those 70 days of segregation, some say, are enough to develop powerful misconceptions and prejudices that are hard to shake.

Retired Lt. Col. David Morgan, a former commander of 1st Recruit Training Battalion, said doesn't support the idea of co-ed recruit training. But he found a pervasive negative attitude

toward female Marines among their male counterparts, he said, and was forced to conclude the problem started with boot camp.

"We basically, in 12 weeks, imprint on them what the future of the Corps going to be," he said. "Ninety-seven percent of the time we're probably doing it the right way — but when we don't, that's pretty unfortunate. ...I'm living out here in society today, and nobody's looking at females as not equal. We're calling fire on our own position, to some extent."

A former 4th RTB company commander who remains on active duty and who spoke under condition of anonymity said even good-natured trash talking between the battalions can take on an ugly edge due to the divide between the genders.

"The thing is that Marines s--t-talk. Every unit does it," she said. "It turns into a male-and-female issue just because we're in separate battalions."

Greg Jacob, a former Marine mustang infantry officer and the policy director for the Service Women's Action Network, said his boot camp experience in 1994 impressed on him from the start that the women at Parris Island were adversaries or inferior, rather than peers and comrades.

"We were told by our DIs, the first or second day on the island, 'women recruits are nasty, stay away from them, they'll just get you into trouble.' I've heard that the same thing is said to the women in 4th Battalion," he said. "Right from the get-go, there's sort of this adversarial type of standing between the three male battalions and 4th Battalion."

'We are internally bleeding'

In addition to performance gaps and leadership issues, the investigation into Germano's behavior at 4th RTB also revealed severe manpower shortages in the all-woman unit, and some say the only way to fix it is by making boot camp co-ed.

Current and former members of the battalion say the requirement of a female-only staff left the unit hard-pressed to fill positions and strained from overwork.

The 25-page investigation, along with hundreds of pages of supplemental interviews and enclosures, was released to Marine Corps Times through a Freedom of Information Act request. It details manpower gaps and shortfalls within 4th RTB were "a significant issue that continues to go unanswered" and "does not allow for any semblance of comparable respite to the male battalions" due to the demand for staff and the high operational tempo the battalion observed to meet its training goals.

A member of 4th RTB whose name was redacted in the report said the unit was "internally bleeding" when it came to staffing. While most male battalions had five drill instructors per team, the female battalion had three or four at best, she said. The unit was short on enlisted manpower for a full year

due in part to a series of pregnancies, other medical issues and temporary duty assignments that left drill instructor billets unfilled, she said.

"I think temporarily having male officers in 4th Battalion would help alleviate our problems," she testified.

Another female Parris Island officer, who spoke to Marine Corps Times under condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, said integrating unit staff by gender was the only way she knew to solve the persistent manpower problem. Since less than 10 percent of Marines are women, there's a high demand for them throughout the fleet, she said.

"It would alleviate a lot of concerns for when we do have an officer that does go down or an enlisted marine who does have an emergency, because they can just fill in either to assist or just to help," she said.

Both TECOM and Parris Island leadership, however, dispute that the unit has systemic manning issues. Lukeman disapproved the investigating officer's opinion finding staffing shortfalls, saying "there is no indication of inadequate support to 4th Recruit Training Battalion."

Col. Jeffrey Fultz, the chief of staff for Parris Island, said the female unit was staffed to the same specifications within its table of organization as the male units, though he acknowledged the numbers sometimes fluctuated due to medical leave considerations. And the drill instructor-to-recruit ratio was actually better at 4th RTB than at the other battalions, he said.

"Forget how many hats are on a team," he said. "Female platoons are smaller than male platoons."

Marines push back

Even proponents of recruit training integration, however, acknowledge that the idea is unpopular with the majority of Marines. Enlisted Marines — male and female — treasure the gender-separate aspect of their boot camp experience, and drill instructors defend it as a key component of the legendary mentoring relationship that they foster with their recruits.

Sgt. Maj. Angela Maness, the first female enlisted leader at Parris Island and a former drill instructor, said she saw only benefits to keeping the genders apart for training during the first 12 weeks.

"For our recruits as part of their training, they see what right looks like; I've said that my whole career," she said. "They need to be focused on one thing, and that's the training that we give them."

While incidents such as male recruits being ordered to turn their backs on their female counterparts had occurred in the past at Parris Island, Maness said these events were examples of "drill instructors acting like an idiot" and were neither encouraged nor permitted at the recruit depot. Overall, she

said, she did not observe negativity between the genders during training.

A 4th RTB senior drill instructor, Staff Sgt. Rocio Ramirez-Martinez, said she was glad for the opportunity to give female recruits a role model they could aspire to emulate, even in a male-dominated Corps.

"[The recruits] most likely will end up working for a male staff noncommissioned officer and a male recruit can end up working for a female staff NCO. They will continue to be mentors and role models to those recruits," she said.

"However, we can assure that their introduction to the Marine Corps was with a positive role model that the recruit can aspire to be like."

Gunnery Sgt. Amina Saracay, a chief drill instructor for 4th RTB and a uniformed victim advocate, said she had found isolating the recruits by gender allowed her to bond with and mentor victims of previous sexual assault in ways a male drill instructor could not.

And these viewpoints are not devoid of scientific backing. A diverse and bipartisan Pentagon panel assembled in 1997 to study gender-integrated training found, among other things, that the co-ed recruit training employed by the Army, Navy and Air Force resulted in "less discipline, less unit cohesion, and more distraction from the training programs."

At Parris Island, the investigators raved about the success of female-only training.

"The committee observed impressive levels of confidence, team-building, and *esprit de corps* in the all-female training platoons at the Marine Corps Parris Island base," they wrote in a report summary.

But with much changed in the 18 years since the study, evidence of systemic problems at 4th RTB and massive changes on the horizon with combat integration, some say it's time to conduct a new evaluation.

"We were studying this at a time when there were a significant minority of [Marine] recruits who had essentially been sent there by judges, sent there in the hope that the Marine Corps had put them on the right path," said John Walcott, a panel member at the time of the study, who is now the team leader for National Security and Foreign Affairs at Bloomberg News. He added that he suspected the makeup of the recruit population had changed significantly since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"There's so many variables and such self-selection among recruits ... I think, first of all, you can't give a good answer to [the question of whether to change Marine boot camp] without giving another survey," he said.

Jacob, the SWAN policy director, said he couldn't see a way to successfully integrate the historic boys' club that is the

Marine Corps infantry in keeping with the Pentagon directive without starting at boot camp.

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/08/03/boot-camp-gender-divide-case-co-ed-training/30884655/>

"I think the time is now," he said. "It should have happened 20 years ago, to be honest."

Odierno: Army to open most field artillery jobs to women

(3 Aug) Army Times, By Michelle Tan

The Army plans to open to women all but one field artillery MOS, the service's top officer said Monday.

With the exception of the 13F military occupational specialty, "we have decided ... we are not going to ask for a waiver to keep it closed," said Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno.

This decision, which opens up MOSs such as cannon crewmember (13B) and field artillery automated tactical data system specialist (13D), comes just weeks after the Army opened the combat engineer (12B) MOS to women.

It also follows a decision from more than a year ago to open all field artillery officer positions to women.

A decision about the 13F, or fire support specialist, MOS will be made when the Army makes a decision about whether to open the infantry and armor specialties to women, Odierno said.

"We're going to do that with infantry and armor because they're embedded with infantry and armor units," Odierno said.

These changes are the latest in an ongoing campaign to eliminate the Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule by dismantling, in phases, policies that have barred women from serving in combat units below the brigade level.

The campaign began in 2012 when the Army opened 13,000 positions previously closed to women; the goal is to open most positions to women by the end of 2015.

Since 2012, the Army has conducted extensive tests as it tried to determine which MOSs should be opened to women and how it should be done.

"We've done a lot of pilot programs, we've done a lot of physical testing, we've done a lot of testing on how we integrate women into units, and those are all going well," Odierno said. "We want the best person, if they're qualified and meet the standards, we want to give them the opportunity to do whatever they want."

For the field artillery MOSs, using data from the physical studies, "we felt women, as part of an artillery crew, could do all the things necessary to do that [job], so we've opened that up," Odierno said.

Army senior leaders have not made a decision about whether they will ask for a waiver to keep infantry and armor closed to women, he said.

"We're headed in the right direction, but we still have some work to do," said Odierno, who is wrapping up his tenure as chief of staff later this month. "That was a decision I wanted to make, but, frankly, we didn't have the data in time for me to make that decision."

The decision about those remaining MOSs will fall to Odierno's successor, Gen. Mark Milley, who is pending Senate confirmation.

Ranger School update

Odierno also addressed the ongoing integrated assessment at the Army's storied Ranger School.

Two female Ranger School students on Friday successfully completed the course's 20-day Mountain Phase and have moved on to the Florida swamps for the last phase of the course.

If they are successful, they could be the first female soldiers to graduate from Ranger School later this month.

"In terms of Ranger School, it's the Army's most difficult leader development school," Odierno said. "I think it was important to allow women the opportunity to do that."

Odierno said he doesn't "necessarily connect" opening Ranger School to opening the infantry and armor MOSs, but "I think it's important that we give [women] the opportunity," he said.

"They can go to airborne school, they can go to sapper school. I think they should be able to go to Ranger School," Odierno said.

The assessment, which began in April, has gone very well, Odierno said, adding that he has been impressed by the female students as well as the professionalism of the Ranger instructor cadre.

Odierno also left the door open for another integrated assessment.

"I think we're probably headed towards another pilot course for women," he said. "I think we're looking at a semi-annual course that will have women in it, but that decision will be made down at the infantry school as they do the assessment,

and through [Training and Doctrine Command]. We still have a little bit more assessment to do, but I think that's where we're headed."

Odierno emphasized that the Army has not changed the standards for Ranger School.

"We have not changed the standards, and we're not going to," he said. "It's a school that's important, and over time we've

developed specific standards for it, and we think those are important, and we have maintained those. And, frankly, in all the conversations I've had, the women don't want us to change the standards. I think as long as we do that, that's the right way to go about this."

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/08/03/odierno-army-open-most-field-artillery-jobs-women/31083303/>

DoD Announces Recruiting and Retention Numbers for Fiscal Year 2015 through June 2015

(4 Aug) DoD Press Release

The Department of Defense (DoD) announced today recruiting and retention statistics for the active and reserve components for fiscal year (FY) 2015 through June 2015.

Active Component

Recruiting: Three of the four active services met or exceeded their fiscal year-to-date (FYTD) 2015 accession goals through June 2015. The Army missed their goal by 4,696.

- Army – 38,918 accessions, with a goal of 43,614; 89.2 percent.
- Navy – 25,380 accessions, with a goal of 25,380; 100.0 percent.
- Marine Corps – 21,025 accessions, with a goal of 21,005; 100.1 percent.
- Air Force – 17,495 accessions, with a goal of 17,480; 100.1 percent.

Retention: The Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps exhibited strong retention numbers for the 9th month of FY 2015.

Reserve Component

Recruiting: Five of the six reserve components met or exceeded their FYTD accession goals through June

2015. The Army National Guard missed by 3,527. All six of the reserve components met or exceeded the DoD quality benchmarks.

- Army National Guard – 32,654 accessions, with a goal of 36,181; 90.3 percent.
- Army Reserve – 20,897 accessions, with a goal of 20,773; 100.6 percent.
- Navy Reserve – 4,042 accessions, with a goal of 4,042; 100.0 percent.
- Marine Corps Reserve – 5,995 accessions, with a goal of 5,941; 100.9 percent.
- Air National Guard – 6,810 accessions, with a goal of 6,810; 100.0 percent.
- Air Force Reserve – 5,213 accessions, with a goal of 4,994; 104.4 percent.

Attrition: Each of the six reserve components met their FY attrition goals. Current trends are expected to continue. (Note: This indicator lags by 1 month due to data availability).

<http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=17424&source=GovDelivery>

Inside the swamp phase of Army Ranger School as women attend for the first time

(4 Aug) The Washington Post, By Dan Lamothe

As the sun beat down on Ranger students traversing the Yellow River here Tuesday, a handful of them in one inflatable Zodiac boat wondered if they'd really just passed a poisonous snake.

"I think I just saw a water moccasin," said one soldier, paddling on the back left side of the boat.

"Where?" another asked, pulling his left leg a little farther away from the river.

"It was on the left side," the soldier in the back said. "He went back below the water."

The phantom serpent — perhaps real, perhaps imagined — illustrates some of the dangers and challenges that students face in the swamps of Florida during the third and final phase of Ranger School. The Army has used the Florida Panhandle's wet terrain as part of Ranger School since 1951, but is incorporating women into it for the first time this week as the service continues to assess how it can better integrate female soldiers in more units.

Two women who completed the previous phase in the mountains of northern Georgia arrived with about 125 men over the weekend, reaching the home stretch of the famously grueling Ranger course. A third woman remains in the mountains, where she was "recycled" along with 60 male students, allowing them to try again. The three women remain

from a historic group of 19 that tried Ranger School for the first time beginning April 20.

The Army opened Eglin and its small Ranger post, Camp James E. Rudder, to a handful of journalists for a few days beginning Tuesday, offering a rare look inside Ranger School's Florida Phase. It was Day 3 in the 17-day program, and it included lessons on crossing a river too deep to slosh through on foot by using a bridge made of a single rope, maneuvering the Zodiac craft over water and carrying out an ambush.

The remaining two women were hard to spot — an indication that they have been integrated into the course and were receiving no preferential treatment, Ranger School officials said. It is focused heavily on platoon operations and forces students to continue moving even after weeks of physical punishment in the earlier "Darby Phase" at Fort Benning, Ga., and the Mountain Phase in the Chattahoochee National Forest near the small city of Dahlonega.

"By the time they get here to Florida, they're probably in the worst shape of their lives," said Lt. Col. Bart Hensler, commander of the 6th Ranger Training Battalion that trains students here. "They're tired, they're hungry and they're just emotionally spent, so part of our job is to not only provide a safe training environment, but to keep them motivated and

moving toward graduation. There's not a lot of sleep at night, and there's not a lot of food."

The instructor staff are typically all seasoned staff sergeants, sergeants first class and captains, and they have received 58 days of specialized training before teaching students, Hensler said. All of them have previously graduated Ranger School, as well. They work up to 30 hours at a time with students. The school also turns some instructors into licensed reptile handlers — key because the training also includes time around poisonous snakes. A Ranger instructor was last bitten two years ago while handling a water moccasin, but he made a full recovery and returned to train students.

Marine Corps revives Female Engagement Team mission

(5 Aug) Marine Corps Times, By Hope Hedge Seck

A concept that proved widely successful during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may soon have female Marines back in the Middle East alongside infantry troops.

The Camp Pendleton, California-based 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit has created its own Female Engagement Team while underway, training a small group of women as advisers and liaisons uniquely poised to cut through cultural sensitivities surrounding gender. It's the first time the concept has been revived after the Marine Corps disbanded its last FETs in Afghanistan in 2012, when local troops took on the mission. .

During the wars, Marine FETs — much like Army Lioness teams — deployed in small detachments with male infantry units in order to collect information from families and communicate with women without breaking cultural taboos. While combat deployments have formally ended, the need for such teams remains strong as Marines continue training and advising Middle Eastern partners, said Lt. Col. Steve Kahn, operations officer for the 15th MEU.

At Kahn's previous post at Marine Corps Central Command (Forward), he saw requests for support from female troops regularly get sent to U.S. Special Operations Forces. But with no women in their ranks, the command had no way to fulfill them, he said. The requests would occasionally get passed onto MEUs in the region, but they would often go unanswered because the units weren't prepared for those missions, he said.

When Kahn was assigned to the 15th MEU, he said he wanted to change that. When the MEU deployed in May, he teamed up with a female Marine lieutenant and captain to begin recruiting enlisted women for a FET. They emphasized the need for female Marines who were personable, outgoing and confident enough to operate in cultures where female troops are rare and men are not used to working directly with women.

They quickly found 25 enthusiastic volunteers from a variety of military occupational specialties ranging from cyber network operation to public affairs. They selected 17 for the mission and divided them into two smaller teams.

Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Sullivan, a Ranger instructor, said it is rare for students to see snakes while in the swamps and rivers. They typically scatter when the first instructors come through first. The bigger concern, he said, is actually the poisonous spiders, which include the brown recluse and the black and brown widow.

The Washington Post will continue to report from Eglin over the next few days.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/08/04/inside-the-swamp-phase-of-army-ranger-school-as-women-attend-for-the-first-time/>

Only one of the Marines, a staff noncommissioned officer, had deployed with a FET before, said 1st Lt. Jennifer Mozzetta, the FET's assistant team leader.

"She talked to the Marines in the beginning about her experiences and what it means to be not only to be a Marine and a female Marine to go out in these situations where you are expected to go out into the partner nations and be able to identify and relate to other women," Mozzetta said. "She talked about the scrutiny we're all under, and to bear in mind as we go out, we represent the Marine Corps."

When they began training, they focused on basic infantry tactics, Mozzetta said.

"We started with basic marksman training to see if they can handle basic weapons systems they haven't touched since boot camp," she said. "[We wanted] to see if they could pick up the idea and concepts, and more importantly teach it back."

The FET also linked up with the MEU's reconnaissance and law enforcement Marines for marksmanship and weapons training. They also took combat lifesaver courses from the unit's medical staff. As the FETs are tasked for specific missions, he said the training will become more tailored.

The unit has yet to deploy a FET, due in part to the recent passage of the month of Ramadan, in which Muslim nations' normal work schedules are relaxed. But Kahn said the MEU has already fielded requests from Middle Eastern countries for FET support. While he can't name specific nations the unit will deploy FETs to due to operational security concerns, Kahn said he's confident the teams will spend time off the ship soon.

When the MEU returns from deployment, the leaders plan to detail write an after-action report on the FET's mission so more units heading to sea can develop their own teams.

Capt. Tyler Balzer, a spokesman for Marine Corps Plans, Policies and Operations, said he was not aware of any other unit currently deploying with FETs.

As Marines deploy to theaters across the globe for security cooperation or crisis response missions, Mozzetta said it's possible the concept could extend beyond the Middle East.

"I believe that the FET not only broadens capabilities but reach out to populations we've never been able to reach out to

Two women training to be Army Rangers may reshape military

(7 Aug) The New York Times, By Richard A. Opiel Jr.

Wearing a cap, sunglasses and a 75-pound rucksack and carrying a 17-pound machine gun, the buzz-cut Army officer quickly traversed a muddy river, pulling on a rope stretched between trees on either bank.

After a short break, the soldier shoved a black Zodiac boat into the water for a two-mile paddle with nine other soldiers, one of hundreds of tasks over nine weeks of Ranger School, the top leadership course in the Army.

It was hard to tell anything was different about the officer, except when she opened her mouth to ask for the names and blood types of the other soldiers so she could fill out a manifest for a simulated mission, or when she took off her cap to reveal haircut a tad longer than that of her classmates.

If she and another female first lieutenant in the group manage to graduate this month from Ranger School, one of the most physically and mentally challenging courses in the military, they will be the first women to do so. They will also be the only graduates who will not be permitted, for now, to try out for the Ranger regiment or to serve as infantry or tank officers in the Army.

Leaders of the Army and other services are considering the question of how far they should go in integrating women into combat roles, including the most dangerous jobs, such as the fast-roping Ranger battalions that often work with the nation's premier counterterrorism organization, the Joint Special Operations Command, and that serve as a farm team for the Army's most elite unit, Delta Force.

In 2013, the Pentagon said it was lifting its formal ban on women in combat, a nod to gender equality and to the de facto progression of women toward the front lines that had been going on for more than a decade, from Marine female-engagement teams to the cultural-support teams that accompany Rangers, Navy SEALs and other special operators on raids. Women perform intelligence gathering and other tasks in SEAL Team Six's top-secret Black Squadron.

"There have been women in combat since the wars kicked off," said Sgt. 1st Class Frances Espinal-Teter, a female soldier assigned to observe the training here, and who supports women in the infantry. She deployed to Iraq a dozen years ago as a military police officer and top gunner in a Humvee, and later served alongside Marines and SEAL members in Afghanistan.

1. What stays off-limits?

The services have until Jan. 1 to decide which positions they want to keep off-limits to women, and they must provide a rationale for each, with the defense secretary making the final call. The performance of the two female officers, and 17 other women who started Ranger School this year but did not make

before," she said. "You open the doors to access information, building relationships ... I think that applies anywhere."

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/08/05/marine-corps-revives-female-engagement-team-mission/30796519/>

it this far, is expected to help inform that decision and whether to continue to allow women to attend Ranger School, which was open only to men before this year.

The military's other major infantry service, the Marines, recently opened its rigorous infantry-officer course to women, but none of the 29 female officers who started the program passed.

Though only 3 percent of soldiers in the active-duty Army have earned Ranger tabs, it is an unofficial prerequisite for obtaining many infantry commands and an explicit requirement for leading combat troops in the Ranger Regiment. It is also a significant career enhancer, even for officers who do not serve in combat units.

Out of privacy concerns and a desire to not create distractions for students or instructors near the end of an exhausting two-month course, the Army has not disclosed the names of the two women, both West Point graduates.

It also did not allow interviews with any students, as is standard practice. Yet it has invited journalists to observe their training, a move intended to help dispel the idea that the women have been cut any slack.

About 4,000 officers and enlisted soldiers start the Ranger course every year; and about two out of five graduate. Students drill and train with little sleep, carrying packs and combat equipment that typically weigh between 65 and 90 pounds, and over 61 days they carry out tactical patrols that cumulatively cover the same distance as walking from New York City to Boston.

Col. David Fivecoat, commander of the Army's Airborne and Ranger training brigade, says the female students are competing on the same terms as the 160 men still in their class: no flexed-arm-hangs instead of pullups. No push-ups from the knees. The same cutoff times (40 minutes for a five-mile run, for example) and the same number of repetitions in the initial physical assessment (49 push-ups, 59 situps, six chin-ups).

The two women have performed well on the least subjective evaluations, such as fitness tests and hikes with heavy backpacks, including a steep, 1.8-mile trek up Mount Yonah in Georgia.

"Everybody's backpack weighed the same," Fivecoat said, "and they all had to put one foot in front of the other."

Aside from slightly longer (but still buzz-cut) hair, the only official allowances for their sex are that the female officers are allowed to take prescription birth control (students generally cannot bring prescription drugs to the course) and when in barracks the women rotate shower and latrine time with the men, and string up ponchos as makeshift curtains when dressing.

The two women have gotten good marks in another key evaluation criteria: peer assessments, where classmates rank one another on how good a teammate and leader other students are, and how much they would want to be with them in combat.

The one major area where the two women have struggled is where male students also often stumble: graded patrols, where students take turns role-playing as platoon leaders, platoon sergeants or squad leaders, and are evaluated on how they plan and execute missions.

Meant to simulate what it is like for young Army officers and noncommissioned officers to lead troops during deployments, it also tests how well the students improvise, such as reacting to a surprise mortar attack, said Capt. George Calhoun, a platoon tactical trainer who served as a platoon leader in Afghanistan.

Do they seize up and just dive for cover? Or do they immediately report casualties and other information to their company commander, and see whether artillery or helicopters or jets can return fire?

2. 19 began the course

Of the 19 women who began Ranger School this year, most failed the early phases, though one, a major who is also a West Point graduate, is “recycling,” or retaking, an earlier phase in hopes of progressing to this last segment, which takes place at Camp James E. Rudder, deep inside Eglin Air Force Base in the swampy, sweltering heat of north Florida. The decision on who graduates will be made in late August, but typically more than three of four candidates who make it this far graduate with their class.

New Track For Officer Careers Taking Shape

(10 Aug) Navy Times, By Andrew Tilghman

Top Pentagon officials are drawing up plans to end the “up-or-out” rules and joint billet requirements that have defined officer career paths for generations, a defense official said.

The goal is to scale back the rigidity of today’s personnel system and create more leeway for officers to pursue individualized career tracks or even take sabbaticals in the private sector before returning to active duty and resuming their military careers.

That will likely include asking Congress to authorize changes to two key, longstanding Cold War-era laws: the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980, known as DOPMA, and the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, a defense

The two female lieutenants at Camp Rudder have had to recycle phases, and they have taken longer to make it to the final phase than most students who ultimately graduate from Ranger School. But officers also say it is not uncommon for male graduates to redo the same number of tasks as the women have.

Traditionalists have not been happy about the potential of women serving combat roles, fearing they will destroy unit cohesion or lead to lowered standards.

As a point man for one of the biggest debates in the military, Fivecoat has been on the receiving end of personal attacks on Facebook and elsewhere.

“There is definitely a group out there that is very vocal about this thing, and they’re not real happy with it,” he said. “First the naysayers said, ‘They’re not going to be able to do this,’ and then they did it, and then they said, ‘They are not going to be able to do this part,’ and they did it.”

Even some influential and enthusiastic supporters of expanding the roles women play in combat and commando units, such as retired Adm. Eric Olson, a former head of the military’s Special Operations Command, stop short of endorsing women for all combat jobs. Olson said last month that he questioned “how tactical leaders will respond to being in a position to put women to take the first bullet on a target.”

The course was also parodied on the popular military-satire website Duffel Blog, which joked that the colonel’s “pickle-jar opening test” was intended to make it harder for female Ranger candidates.

Fivecoat would not say whether he supported women serving in the infantry because he did not want to get out in front of his own commanders. But allowing them to attend Ranger School was a no-brainer.

“Why would you not want them to get this training, so they can be the best they can possibly be?” he said.

<http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/two-women-training-to-be-army-rangers-may-reshape-military/>

official said. The need to change those laws is among the key conclusions emerging from an internal Pentagon review of the personnel system launched earlier this year by acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Brad Carson. He has vowed to seek “revolutionary change” and create a military personnel system that emphasizes talent rather than seniority.

Carson plans to unveil a slate of about 50 recommendations in August, the defense official said.

Seeking Flexibility

“We’re looking at ways to help increase the flexibility to move people around on a timeline that’s more conducive to

the needs of the individual service but also the individual service member,” said one senior defense official familiar with the review.

Specifically, that includes looking at changing – or even scrapping – the parts of DOPMA that impose statutory caps on the number of field-grade officers each service can have at any one time, the defense official said.

The current law limits the total number of officers in the field grade O-4, O-5 and O-6 paygrades.

That helps create a rigid time based personnel system with fixed promotion “zones,” with selection for advancement based more on seniority than skills, experience and performance.

New Look At Old Law

DOPMA originally was drawn up in the early years of the all-volunteer force, aimed in part at ensuring that career opportunities for officers were roughly equal across all services.

For those services, removing the legal caps on the total number of officers would allow them to promote – or hold back – officers in a way that more closely reflects the private sector.

For officers, changing DOPMA might effectively eliminate the “up-or-out” system that forces individuals to earn a promotion on a set timeline or see their military career end with an automatic separation.

Under the current system, officers must compete against peers with whom they enter service, meaning, for example, that an officer seeking promotion to the O-5 paygrade must do so around 16 years of service and must compete with all of the other officers who also have about 16 years of service.

This system rewards officers who adhere closely to traditional career tracks and “doesn’t leave a whole lot of breathing room if you want to, say, take a career intermission to start a family or go get an MBA,” the defense official said.

“We’re going to address the issue of managing folks by year group,” the official said.

Carson likely will suggest that Congress authorize changes to DOPMA in the form of pilot programs and give the individual services a time window to implement the changes – perhaps five years, for example, the official said.

The push for change in the personnel system comes amid growing concern that the military will struggle to recruit and retain the high-skilled, high-tech force needed in an era of drones, cyberwar and weaponized space operations.

Emmy award-winning film honors women in military

(27 Jul) Fox News, By Taylor Bishop

We see military movies based on strong male roles all the time, but what about the women who serve our country?

And some Pentagon officials see a rare window of opportunity as Congress is finalizing the first major overhaul of the military retirement system in more than 30 years.

The retirement changes will help foster a less rigid personnel system by offering portable 401(k)-style individual investment accounts to all members, regardless of whether they serve full 20-year careers.

Another measure that could create more flexibility for officers is loosening the requirements for “joint” service under the Goldwater- Nichols Act.

Reconsidering Joint Billets

Today, officer promotion boards give priority to those who have served in jobs designated as “joint” and officially listed on the Joint Duty Assignment List. These typically include jobs at the Pentagon, with combatant commands and other Defense Department agencies outside the military service branches. The law initially was intended to tamp down interservice rivalries and encourage the services to work together. But nearly 30 years later, many military experts say it has achieved its mission and its requirements are outdated.

“In a lot of situations, the joint billet has become a perfunctory ‘check the box’ to make sure that your high-performers get past one of five sticky wickets before they are next up for promotion,” the defense official said. “Let’s reject that premise. A high-performer is a high-performer. Whether they execute a joint billet or not, that is an artificial construct.”

Carson’s team that is developing recommended changes for the personnel system is still hammering out potential implementation details. The aim is to give the services significant autonomy to set their own parameters and timelines, the defense official said.

After drawing up an array of related legislative and policy changes, the services might let them take effect simultaneously with a new round of recruits or other cross-section of the force.

“The notion would be a single cohort would go through the system with all of these new changes to get a better idea of how larger changes might look,” the official said.

Some changes will require Congress to pass new laws, and many of the far-reaching initiatives would need tacit approval from lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

“One of the big questions is ... how much ‘runway’ the Hill will give us,” the defense official said.

<http://www.navytimes.com/>

Women Veterans of Colorado hosted a screening of “Women Warriors – A Vision of Valor” at Centennial Hall Monday. The Emmy award-winning documentary features stories of nine Colorado women who served in the U.S. military.

FOX21 got to talk to several women who were in the movie about what it means to see women being honored for their service.

"If you think of a male military person as very strong, a female has to be stronger in order to get where she's at," Marine Corps Sgt. Nora Mund said.

"Women in the military have made such contributions and unfortunately they're often overlooked, not so much as they used to be," Retired Army Col. Mary Miller said. "We're really gaining some ground here in acknowledgement and recognition but this kind of movie is so important because it tells our story."

The film shares the experiences of these service women over a span of conflicts starting with World War II all the way to the Afghan and Iraq wars.

"You're going to see a lot about the history of women in the military all the way back to the earliest days of the country before it was the United States of America," Miller said.

"It's fascinating to see how our jobs have morphed into today and what possibilities we have been able to open up generation to generation for women in the military," said Mund.

Fort Drum's First Female Deputy Commanding General Embraces New Role

(30 Jul) Watertown Daily Times, By Gordon Block

The first woman to serve as the 10th Mountain Division's deputy commanding general at [Fort Drum](#) said her military dreams began at the age of 6.

Despite her small size, Brig. Gen. Diana M. Holland told her father, a [Marine](#), that she wanted to enlist, inspired by her grandfather's military service.

After a small warning -- "The Marine Corps makes the smallest person in the platoon carry the heaviest weapon" -- she said her father never discouraged her, though the [Army](#) had not yet integrated male and female soldiers.

Soon, a pullup bar would be in her room, and she and her father would go on runs together.

"He was surprised, and he was supportive," Gen. Holland said, "and it's been that way ever since."

On Wednesday she was promoted to brigadier general, confirming her spot as the first female officer to hold the role in a light infantry unit. In addition to her unique position in division history, her role is unique in the Army. Maj. Gen. Laura Richardson was the first woman to serve as a deputy commander of a combat division when she was picked in 2012 for the role in the 1st Cavalry Division, according to the Army Times.

It was produced by students and faculty at Front Range Community College in Westminster and recently won an Emmy.

"Actually, this film is showing a lot of strength in women and how much they provided during these times," retired Army nurse Dianne Wolf said. "Like the nurses in Vietnam, I mean, it was very traumatic."

"I was honored to be asked to be a part of the movie. I got goosebumps just thinking about it and it was very exciting," Miller said. "They spent a good I think hour with each of us talking about our experiences and it was just a tremendous honor."

FOX21 News asked what these ladies would say to young women considering going into the military.

"I'd say take the leap. It's a wonderful experience and it's very rewarding," retired Navy nurse Kathy Noll said. "We're an important part of all the services, both active and reserve. They can't do it without us women."

To see a trailer of "Women Warriors – A Vision of Valor," follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5c_YSe_DMdA&feature=youtu.be.
<http://fox21news.com/2015/07/27/emmy-award-winning-film-honors-women-in-military/>

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey L. Bannister, division commander, said he first met Gen. Holland while deployed in Iraq. With a deployment there possible but unconfirmed by the Army, the commander said she may be able to help continue plans she previously helped develop there years before.

"Our mission set is right along her DNA," he said.

Since graduating from the U.S. Military Academy in 1990, Gen. Holland has served in engineering roles throughout her career.

The Santa Barbara, Calif., native's service has included time in places such as Germany, [Fort Bragg](#), N.C., [MacDill Air Force Base](#) in Tampa, Fla., [Schofield Barracks](#), Hawaii, and the Pentagon, and she taught history at [West Point](#). She also has deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. She has been on post since May.

Gen. Bannister noted that of the 7,000 second lieutenants commissioned in 1990 like Gen. Holland, only 2,000 progressed far enough to make it to colonel.

Of that group, only 40 became general, of whom three were engineers.

"It's about more than competence," he said. "It's about character; it's about reputation."

Gen. Holland's role comes at a time when the Army and the military as a whole see women entering a wide range of new roles, and women have taken part in the Army's Ranger School.

"We take it a step at a time, a year at a time," she said. "I think our Army is very professional, and makes the adjustment like it's supposed to."

Though her promotion Wednesday and her new role is trailblazing, Gen. Holland noted someday a woman holding such a role may not be as rare.

Admiral Says Public Schools Nationwide Shortchanging Military Kids

(4 Aug) Military.Com, By Richard Sisk

The new head of U.S. Pacific Command charged last week that military kids are being shortchanged by the failure nationwide of schools to adapt to their needs.

"Our educational system simply isn't designed, much to its discredit, to support the lifestyle that accompanies a career of service," Adm. Harry Harris, said at a two-day seminar last week sponsored by the non-profit Military Child Education Coalition.

Harris, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey and other top leaders all spoke to the stress put on military kids since 9/11 by the frequent deployments of parents and siblings to war zones, and by the duty station moves that force military kids to adapt to different school standards at their new post.

"Children of military parents repeatedly face the challenges of engagement, disengagement, and re-engagement as they move to new schools every two or three years," Harris said.

"It's no surprise that studies have shown that children of military parents are often more vulnerable to fear and anxiety, and that those stressors manifest themselves behaviorally and academically," said Harris, who took over in May at PACOM from the retiring Adm. Samuel J. Locklear III.

There are now more than 1.3 million military-connected children in school districts near [bases](#) from kindergarten through grade 12, according to the Coalition. About 75,000 military kids attend the 178 schools worldwide run by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).

Military kids in both the public and DoDEA systems "live with perpetual challenges presented by frequent moves, parental and sibling deployments, and a host of life transitions that include re-integration and dealing with profoundly changed parents," the Coalition said.

"The well-being of these children depends heavily on a network of supportive adults who are trained to identify early

"Every day there's another first, and pretty soon we're going to be out of firsts, and it's going to be, as you say, just another officer taking one of these positions."

Gen. Holland arrives on post with her husband, James Jr., who served 20 years in the Army himself, and at times the only man in her unit's Family Readiness Groups, she said. They have two children and four grandchildren.

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/07/30/fort-drums-1st-female-deputy-commanding-general-embraces-role.html>

signs of emotional or physical challenge," according to the Coalition.

3. Bad Data

However, the systems lack accurate data on how well military kids are performing, and "without precise data, decisions about children, time, money, and initiatives are at risk of being based on supposition rather than reality," the Coalition said in its background information.

The Coalition cited a 2011 report by the non-partisan Government Accountability Office stating: "There are no data available on these (military family) students that could be used to assess their academic achievement or educational outcomes, or determine where funding needs are the greatest."

To address the problem, Carter said in his remarks at the seminar that the Defense Department was working to create a military dependent student identifier to allow parents, educators and schools to track performance, funnel resources and make policy decisions for military children during their school years.

"If we know how particular groups of kids are performing, we can better target resources to maximize their success," Carter said.

Carter noted that DoD for the current fiscal year has allocated \$52 million to support local schools, including a competitive educational partnership grant program in which funds go to schools with 15 percent or greater military child enrollment.

"Those funds recently paid for a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) partnership that helped more than 10,000 high school students earn AP (Advanced Placement) exam scores that qualified them for college credit. That's an incredible return on investment," Carter said.

4. Budget Cuts

Other leaders at the seminar spoke to the need to protect DoD funding for family and education programs from future budget cuts, and they also noted their own difficulties in coping with stress of frequent moves and deployments.

"The chief of naval operations has said we're not going to touch the child development centers or our youth programs -- those are fenced" against cuts, said [Navy](#) Vice Adm. Dixon R. Smith, commander of Navy Installation Command. "We're protecting those, and they're funded because we understand the importance of taking care of our children and families."

"Family is part of readiness, and we have to have that balance between mission, family and our community," said [Army](#) Lt. Gen. David D. Halverson, commander of the Army's Installation Management Command. "Funding is non-negotiable. It's really important that we commit to that family readiness."

In the course of his career, Halverson said his two daughters have attended 12 different schools and in each move "You want to get your kids integrated and back to normal as soon as possible so they feel comfortable and have confidence in themselves."

Lt. Gen. Samuel D. Cox, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services for the Air Force, said his two children attended nine different grade schools and three high schools.

To ease the pressure of constantly making new friends and integrating into a new community, "We had our kids

Missing In Action

(4 Aug) *The Atlantic*, By Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

Over the past decade, a string of war movies emerged in the wake of 9/11: *The Hurt Locker*, *Syriana*, *The Messenger*, *Green Zone*, *Lone Survivor*, and *American Sniper*, to name just a few. Some have performed better than others at the box office, and many have received critical acclaim. Almost none has included portrayals of women in combat.

For the last two years I reported on a team of women soldiers recruited by special operations in 2011 to serve on combat missions alongside Army Rangers and Navy SEALs, among other special operations teams, all while the combat ban on women remained in place. When I would tell friends I was working on a story about a "band of sisters" on the front lines—women connected forever by what they saw and did at war and by the fact that America had no idea they did it—they would ask me if the story was about rape or PTSD.

Neither, I would answer. The story was about valor.

I realized by the third time I heard the question that it kept resurfacing in part because the victim narrative has overtaken all others in recent years when it comes to the story of women in uniform. There have been precious few depictions of women in uniform doing their actual jobs, most noticeably

participate in team sports or the band or something that has more than one person so that when they went to a new school and it's time to go to the cafeteria, they had someone they could sit at the table with," Cox said.

Smith praised the Military Child Education Coalition's "Student 2 Student" program led by students at local schools to welcome military kids to their new school and also assist them when they transition to their next school.

"This is a central focus of our efforts," retired Marine Col. Dave Lapan, senior director for the Coalition in the national capital region, said of Student 2 Student. "We want to help level the playing field for our military kids," Lapan said, while adding that Student 2 Student was also available for civilian kids coming to a new school.

"We don't want to give the impression that military kids need special treatment," Lapan said, but it was also important to recognize the challenges they face from frequent moves.

One of those challenges was gaining acceptance for previous course work credit at the new school. Lapan cited the hypothetical example of a military kid who has taken a course in Virginia state history at the previous school. The family has now moved to Tennessee. Will that student now have to take a Tennessee state history course?

"We want to have high standards but we want them to be common across the board," Lapan said.

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/08/04/admiral-public-schools-nationwide-shortchanging-military-kids.html>

when it comes to the movies. Among the recent spate of war films, hardly any women are seen as service members central to the action. In Afghanistan, women in uniform are widely seen in the airports and across bases heading to work. But watch a war movie and the roughly 300,000 women who have deployed in America's post-9/11 wars are largely missing in action.

These untold stories have consequences both for how America sees its women in uniform and how they see themselves: With women mostly absent from our war stories, Americans find it hard to understand the combat their servicewomen have seen. And the women themselves are loath to explain their experience to a nation that already struggles to connect with the less than one percent of the country that has fought its wars.

Historically, war films have offered snapshots of how people have perceived the military in different eras, as well as a path to reckoning with what we ask of our young men in uniform. "There haven't been that many post-9/11 war movies, let alone good ones, and most of those have focused on parts of the military that are almost exclusively male," says Phil Carter, an Iraq war veteran and the director of the Military,

Veterans, and Society Program at the Center for a New American Security.

Carter points specifically to the special operations stories *Lone Survivor* and *American Sniper*, both of which did big business at the box office. Particularly in the wake of the successful raid on the Osama bin Laden compound in 2011, Navy SEAL stories have captured the American imagination. As of today women still remain barred from becoming SEALs and Army Rangers in their own right, which explains much of why they are absent from these stories. Still, they've played important roles in the special operations community for years, including serving as the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians featured in *The Hurt Locker*.

While women have been going to war in greater numbers than ever before in the decades since 9/11, their stories have yet to catch up with their service. Two female service members have received the Silver Star. More have received the Bronze Star Medal, along with Purple Hearts and countless Combat Action Badges. Women have broken ground as pilots, military police, intelligence officers and, to a lesser-known extent, inside elite special operations units—all on the front lines and primarily while they were officially banned from ground combat.

But on the big screen, there's a decided absence of valor when it comes to women in uniform. This has implications because it means the hero war story—and the antihero war story—doesn't include women.

“In the majority of both movies and TV shows there's a real dearth of military women, and when they do exist they're often portrayed as victims of sexual assault,” says the Iraq veteran and author Kayla Williams. “That definitely contributed to my feelings of isolation and alienation when I came home. Not seeing myself represented alongside the people I served with added to civilians not understanding that women are there, because they are responding in large part to the portrayals they see in pop culture. When they don't see any women, it makes it easy to assume we're not there or that we play these really limited roles.”

How do you have a homecoming or approach to offer a “thank you for your service” to someone whose deployment isn't acknowledged or observed, let alone celebrated? Or as the novelist and author Cara Hoffman wrote in 2013 in *The New York Times*, “I can't help but think women soldiers would be afforded the respect they deserve if their experiences were reflected in literature, film and art—if people could see their struggles, their resilience, their grief represented.”

This isn't to say that women are absent from all portrayals of films focused on the War on Terror and America's role in fighting al-Qaeda. In both *Zero Dark Thirty*, which chronicles the hunt for Osama bin Laden and is best known for the controversy regarding the veracity of the torture scenes included, and *Fair Game*, the story of the ousted former CIA agent Valerie Plame and her fight to regain her name and reputation after her occupation was exposed, women were the primary characters. Those films showed the women who served at the center of America's battle against terrorism in

ways that illuminated the complexity of their work. And both contributed to the popularization of the “female CIA analyst/agent” narratives that remain very much a part of today's media moment. Both were based on true stories.

Yet for the most memorable portrayals of women in action, wearing a uniform for her nation in wartime, you have to go back to the 1990s, and to fiction.

In *Starship Troopers*, Denise Richards plays a pilot in a world where women serve in the Mobile Infantry, train, deploy—and hit the showers—alongside men. In *Courage Under Fire*, Meg Ryan plays a rescue helicopter pilot killed in Iraq. The central question of the film is whether or not she should posthumously receive the Medal of Honor. In *G.I. Jane*, Demi Moore plays an intelligence officer who refuses to quit after she's given a shot at becoming a Navy SEAL.

Perhaps it was because these movies were made at a relatively peaceful moment in America's pre-9/11 history that they feature women. They also could dance around the pressing questions of women in combat without having to wrestle with real life-and-death situations and the issue of how, exactly, America feels about having women on the front lines. But whether culture has caught up or not, women already are fighting America's wars.

“Reality has outpaced perception in terms of what people think that women are out there doing,” says Janine Davidson, a former Pentagon official, Air Force veteran, and one of the first women to fly C-130s. “Movies are what I think will help the American people and the audience to be able to really recognize and understand what women bring to the fight and that women can do this.” Davidson says that more war stories on the big screen featuring the real-life feats of women—and men—on the battlefield would help show America that women have been at war and seeing combat first-hand for years. They would also help those women after they return home.

“One of the things I've started to ponder is whether women's reluctance to self-identify as veterans is partly linked to this absence,” Williams says. Across America, veterans' service providers and non-profits seeking to offer services to female veterans say that they have to ask women specifically whether they've served because so few volunteer the information. One North Carolina non-profit actually began asking its clients directly whether they'd ever been part of the military because so few had self-identified as veterans.

How we see women in uniform matters both to them and to us. At a time when so few Americans serve, movies often offer people's only exposure to combat, shaping the way they see who fights the nation's battles. “For the American public, these movies are the reality of war,” Carter says. “Most Americans didn't go to Vietnam—their Vietnam was *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* and *Apocalypse Now*. And more than 99 percent of Americans did not go to Iraq and Afghanistan, so their reality is *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*.”

It's possible a shift is on the horizon. In the wake of *American Sniper's* box-office success and [the fact that unconventional women-driven films are on the rise](#) (as evidenced by the success of *Spy* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*) there seems to be an increasing appetite for fictional stories in which women are heroes. Now comes the test of whether they can be real-life heroes as well.

Since March, three books about women in war have been picked up by Hollywood. TriStar pictures purchased the film rights to *Shoot Like a Girl: How One Woman's War Against the Taliban Led to Her Victory Over the Department of Defense*, an upcoming memoir by Air Force Major Mary Jennings Hegar. Warner Brothers bought the war photographer Lynsey Addario's memoir *It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life of Love and War*. And Fox 2000 won the rights to *Ashley's War*, the book I had the privilege of writing about a team of women recruited to serve alongside Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, and other special operations units on combat missions in 2011.

As Adam Green wrote in the May issue of *Vogue* about *Grounded*, a play starring Anne Hathaway as a drone pilot, "Females in the line of fire now seem to be having a moment." Of course, how Hollywood depicts women on the battlefield

will be as important as the question of whether they are seen at all.

"Whether the upcoming movies featuring women in war will broaden the public's perception has everything to do with how those women are portrayed," says Helen Benedict, the author of two books about women and war and a professor at Columbia University. "If these films push women into the stereotypes of the past—women who wimp out and need rescuing or who are nothing but a [love] interest—that won't help at all."

But if these real-life warriors receive three-dimensional treatment, perhaps a new spate of war stories could help pry open the American definition of the hero to include more women—both fictional and real.

"It will make the biggest difference to young men and women who look to the movies for inspiration," Carter says. "My daughter will grow up seeing these stories and hearing these stories from me and my wife, and know that she can do anything she wants."

<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/08/misling-in-action/400235/>

First Female Earns Spot on F-22 Demo Team at Langley Air Force Base

(6 Aug) *Daily Press*, By Ali Rockett

Senior Airman Kyara Johnson is the first woman to become a member of the [F-22 Raptor](#) Demonstration Team at [Langley Air Force Base](#).

Before joining the team, Johnson was a weapons loader for the 94th Aircraft Maintenance Unit packing the stealth fighter with missiles and bombs. Now, Johnson is responsible for the music and video camera during the aerial team's shows, according to a base publication.

"She is definitely a breath of fresh air for the team," said Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Billie, F-22 Raptor Demonstration Team maintenance team chief, according to the base. "Her work ethic is astounding -- you never have to ask her to do anything because she is already three steps ahead of you, and she does it with a smile on her face."

Johnson said she welcomes the opportunity to branch out of her career field while still working with the [Air Force's](#) top aircraft.

She also enjoys the interaction with the public at shows, answering questions about the aircraft and the service.

"I've had people come up to me and tell me they just had to talk to me because they are happy that a female is on the team," Johnson told the base.

The demonstration team doesn't have any upcoming air shows in Virginia. But on Sept. 17 and 18, the team will preform in Washington, D.C., for the U.S. Air Force Tattoo and at the Washington Nationals Major League Baseball game. <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/08/06/first-female-earns-spot-on-f22-demo-team-at-langley-afb.html>

Nearly 95, woman gets long-deserved WWII medals

(6 Aug) *ABC News*, By Tim Becker

Ellina Spyker was ready for just another lunch where she lives at Summerfield Estates in Tigard. But she noticed there were a lot of TV cameras there.

She had no idea they were there for her.

Nearly 95, Spyker got an early birthday gift from U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici – the eight medals she never received for her service during World War II and beyond.

She enlisted in 1943 and said she served 24 years around the world in both the U.S. Army Air Corps and the Women's Army Corps. During World War II, she was stationed in

England, Belgium and Germany, reaching the highest rank attainable: Command Sergeant Major.

This day was like Christmas for her, only she earned every gift she received.

The medals she received included: Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Women's Army Corps Service Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

"I felt going to school wasn't that important and I wanted to do my share," she told KOIN 6 News. Spyker said she heard she'd be getting at least one medal — the WAC medal — some day in the mail. But she was caught off guard this day. "It's amazing, amazing. Overwhelming, I should say," she said. While flipping through old photos, she laughed and said she didn't know how many medals total she now has. "I haven't counted them," she said.

Military Still Not Fully Accepting Of Women

(7 Aug) San Diego Union-Tribune, By Christina J. Prejean

A recent news article revealed staggering statistics of female veterans committing suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women. Reading this, I could not help but feel pain and sadness for my fellow sisters-in-arms.

As an Air Force officer for nearly six years, I enjoyed serving my country, protecting our freedoms and knowing that my family was safe because of the work I did each day. Yet, I also experienced how unwelcoming the military can be for women at times.

Reading about the death of my fellow sister-in-arms, Katie Lynn Cesena, the 24-year-old veteran who was raped by a fellow service member and later committed suicide, was heartbreaking.

Yet it also reminded me of an experience I had, seeing a sexual assault case that was mishandled and poorly investigated. As a victim's advocate for the military Sexual Assault Prevention & Response (SAPR), I was assigned to aid a female soldier who was sexually assaulted by a male soldier while deployed to Afghanistan. I had zero resources available on base in Kabul, and had to take a helicopter ride to another city, Bagram, to meet with the leading SAPR officer in Afghanistan and get proper resources.

Just days after returning to Kabul and assisting the member in giving her testimony to base police, her perpetrator was sent home. His commander wanted to protect him from disciplinary action. Once sent home, nothing could be done to him.

I remember feeling extremely disappointed in the system, with no viable option for closure for the female soldier. This left her even more fearful, as she had to continue to work near her perpetrator's friends, who would taunt her. She was deployed to fight for her country, yet didn't even feel safe among her own comrades. Similarly, Cesena's purported rapist was never prosecuted and she feared both him and his friends.

Sadly, these two women are not alone. The Pentagon estimates that 10 percent of military women have been raped while serving, and 13 percent are victims of unwanted sexual contact. I believe that when the military fails to properly investigate and prosecute rapists, it subjects military women to a dangerous environment. This is uncalled for and must change.

As a SAPR instructor on bystander intervention techniques, I taught more than 100 of my fellow comrades about the impact that stereotypes of women in our culture have on rapes of female service members. Cultural views of femininity portray

It gave her another chance to share memories of a career and a life she loved and laughed her way through.

"You had to have a sense of humor," she said. "Otherwise you'd be going nuts."

These eight medals are just a small token of her accomplishments, distilled into a small stack bound by a ribbon of red, white and blue.

<http://wric.com/2015/08/06/nearly-95-woman-gets-long-deserved-wwii-medals/>

women as weak, subordinate and inferior, and this perception directly relates to the manner in which women veterans are treated. As Joshua Goldstein, in "War and Gender" explains, war was constructed as a test of manhood and masculinity. With our military's history of being all-male, and its constant praise of traditional masculine traits of dominance, power and aggression, nothing feminine is welcomed.

This resonates with historian Leisa Meyer's statement about the military long providing camaraderie and a sense of purpose to men, yet a harsher place for women, who "lack a sense of belonging." I saw how some military women desensitize themselves to sexist jokes and harassment, just to fit in. Knowing how important camaraderie is, they didn't want to jeopardize their unit's cohesiveness.

Today, women veterans in San Diego are still deprived of some of the excellent treatment that male veterans receive. This is unfortunate, because, as the article highlights, data show that suicide rates rise sharply after service members leave the military and several women who committed suicide had been discharged early for psychiatric or medical problems. I've met veterans who struggle with PTSD, yet are not given the proper attention and treatment, because they are women. I recently became a mentor at the Veterans Treatment Court, assisting veterans in the criminal system, and during a training tour at the Veterans Village of San Diego, was informed that the facility, founded in 1981 to help house homeless veterans, was built without female veterans in mind.

It wasn't until years later that homeless women veterans were allowed in, to receive the same care as men. Another example, is the exemplary San Diego jail program for male veteran inmates, which has reduced the recidivism rate among male veteran inmates. Sadly, no such program exists for women veterans.

Programs serving veterans must include women. Women veterans must be given equal access to programs and facilities that support veterans in receiving proper care and assistance. With proper access to assistance programs, it's likely for rates of women veterans attempting suicide to decrease. For decades, women have valiantly served our country. They deserve to be treated as the heroes they are.

Prejean, a United States Air Force veteran, is a law student at the University of San Diego.

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/aug/06/military-still-not-fully-accepting-of-women/>

Film explores female veterans' struggles

(7 Aug) Democrat & Chronicle, By Robin L. Flanigan

A [candid documentary](#) being screened at the Little Theatre aims to create awareness about the specific challenges female veterans face — and one of its featured voices is from Greece.

Service: When Women Come Marching Home, showing for free on Monday, depicts the courage of several female veterans as they transition from active duty to civilian life. It brings to light a disturbing disparity: Women who have been in the military are more likely to be single parents, unemployed, homeless, living in poverty and victims of sexual trauma. And though they make up just 14 percent of today's military forces, that figure is expected to double over the next decade, according to Disabled American Veterans, a national advocacy and assistance group.

Alicia Thompson, a program specialist at [Veterans Outreach Center](#) on South Avenue, opens up in the film about the post-traumatic stress disorder she has experienced since her deployment to Afghanistan as a member of the U.S. Army's Military Police Corps.

"You see things and experience things that a normal mind doesn't, so you have this prolonged exposure to an unnatural circumstance," explains the 33-year-old, who worked with a counselor up to three times a week after returning home, then once a week, then once every other week, then monthly. She hasn't been in counseling for a while, but she recognizes a need to return. "It's a maintenance thing. There has been no tipping point, just a self-awareness that there are reactions in situations that don't need to be the reactions I've had."

The film is part of [WXXI's Veterans Connections initiative](#), designed to help bridge military and veteran needs with community support and awareness. It is co-sponsored by the Veterans Outreach Center, which has launched a [Women's Veteran's Initiative](#) to identify needs, advocate for resources and tailor programming and strategies for this population in the greater Rochester area.

The center will generate a set of recommendations, scheduled for September, based on answers from a survey being

conducted with female veterans over eight months. To take the survey, go to veteransoutreachcenter.org.

"We're a nonprofit, so we can be very surgical in how we go out and solve problems," says Todd Baxter, the center's executive director. "We have that flexibility."

Women are less likely than men to access veterans benefits. "They're even less apt to identify themselves as veterans at all," notes former Monroe County Court Judge Patricia Marks, who is on the board of directors at the Veterans Outreach Center and is chair of its Women's Veteran Outreach Initiative. "To an extent, they feel invisible. Some tell me, when they see a bumper sticker on a car about being a veteran, they always assume it's about the driver's husband, not the woman driving. And some come back to family demands, so they remove themselves totally from the military and dig into what they need to get done at home."

Organizers of the screening hope the community learns not only about the distinct challenges women veterans face, but also about the increasing need for peer support groups and career mentoring services. There are opportunities for female veterans to connect — the [Rochester chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America](#) hosts a drop-in coffeehouse at 1010 East Ave. on select Friday evenings, for example — but more are needed.

Thompson, who is pursuing a master's degree in military social work through the University of Southern California, will speak to the audience and answer questions after the screening.

"It's very cathartic for me to talk about my experience, and it gives me the opportunity to tell others, 'I know what you're feeling. You're not alone,' " she says. "People tell me, 'You're not the same person anymore' and I say, 'You're right. I'm not.' "

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/lifestyle/movie/2015/08/06/female-veterans-movie/31218751/>