



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Articles of Interest for the Week of 11 September 2015

GENDER INTEGRATION

1. Grunt life: Marines dish on the Corps' women in combat experiment

(7 Sep) Marine Corps Times, By Hope Hedge Seck

Marine officials are expected to make data and findings collected from the task force experiment public in coming weeks. Ahead of official results, however, male and female participants told Marine Corps Times that only a small number of female volunteers proved capable of taking on the more physically demanding combat jobs.

2. See Women's Progress In the U.S. Military

(8 Sep) Time, By Dave Johnson

A growing demand for equality combined with reduced male enlistments led the Department of Defense to steadily ease bans on how closely women could get to the front lines. And as the lines between combat and noncombat roles became increasingly blurred in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 1994 rule barring women from direct ground combat has become increasingly contested.

3. Marine Corps' women-in-combat experiment gets mixed results

(8 Sep) The Washington Post, By Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Over the past nine months, the Marine Corps tested a gender-integrated task force in both Twentynine Palms, Calif. and Camp Lejeune, N.C. in an attempt to gauge what the Corps might look like with women in combat roles.

4. Marines Wrestle Over Gender

(10 Sep) The Wall Street Journal, By Michael M. Phillips and Gordan Lubold

Marine Corps commanders signaled Thursday that they likely would fight a Defense Department order to allow women to join infantry, artillery and other ground-combat units.

5. Marine Corps Study: All-Male Combat Units Performed Better Than Mixed Units

(10 Sep) NPR, By Eyder Peralta

A yearlong Marine Corps study trying to understand how gender integration would affect combat readiness has found that all-male units were faster, more lethal and able to evacuate casualties in less time.

6. Marines experiment finds women get injured more frequently, shoot less accurately than men

(10 Sep) Washington Post, By Dan Lamothe

"This is unprecedented research across the services," said Marine Col. Anne Weinberg, the deputy director of the Marine Corps Force Innovation Office. "What we tried to get to is what is that individual's contribution to the collective unit. We all fight as units... We're more interested in how the Marine Corps fights as units and how that combat effectiveness is either advanced or degraded."

7. Gender war: Debate over women in combat escalates

(11 Sep) The San Diego Union-Tribune, By Gretel C. Kovach

Marine Corps releases more details of findings from its yearlong experiment

8. Why Marines, Unlike Army And Navy, Are So Against Women In Combat

(11 Sep) Christian Science Monitor, By Anna Mulrine

A study by the corps released Thursday painted a bleak picture of the effectiveness of women in combat, suggesting they are weaker, more prone to injury, less adept at shooting weapons accurately, and their presence was a potential catastrophe for unit morale.

9. This Is How The US Navy Secretary Responded To A Marine Corps Study Critical Of Women In Combat

(11 Sep) Independent Journal, By Kelsey Rupp

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus emphasized his commitment to integrating women into the Marine Corps infantry and criticized a study

released by the Corps that showed female Marines underperformed male Marines in mixed units in several key areas.

PREGNANCY & PARENTHOOD

10. [Child care subsidy program moved from GSA](#)

(10 Sep) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

The Army is moving its program that subsidizes child care fees back to a contractor after the General Services Administration failed to manage it, causing financial hardship for thousands of Army families. The transition is expected to be complete by January.

11. [Backlogged child care program burdens Army families](#)

(10 Sep) Military Times, By Karen Jones

The Army's child care fee subsidy program is in such disarray that many families are experiencing financial hardship — some forced to deal with collection agencies for unpaid bills from child care providers, some filing bankruptcy, and some spouses being forced to quit their jobs or stop their education, according to a new report issued Tuesday.

12. [Soldiers in uniform pose for photo to 'normalize breastfeeding'](#)

(13 Sep) CNN, By Emanuella Grinberg

"Through the guidance of my military friends, the Fort Bliss P3T Program and Breastfeeding in Combat Boots, our Garrison command and our Public Affairs, we were able to show that even our mummies in uniform can provide for their babies," [Tara Ruby] said.

13. [Navy's New Maternity Leave Policy Aimed At Helping Mothers](#)

(13 Sep) News Herald, By Collin Breaux

Now other mothers in two military branches will have more maternity leave time. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus earlier this year tripled maternity leave from six weeks to 18 weeks for women in the Navy and Marine Corps.

14. [Dual-Military Families, Junior Enlisted Find Inequality In Sponsorship Rules](#)

(14 Sep) Stars and Stripes, By Erik Slavin

Dual military couples and married, junior servicemembers based overseas say they face obstacles to normal family life that do not exist for most of their co-workers.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT & SEXUAL ASSAULT

15. [SAPR Training and Awareness: Something We All Can Relate To](#)

(10 Sep) Navy Live, By Ms. Jill V. Loftus

Last week I had the opportunity to attend and speak at the [National Sexual Assault Conference](#) in Los Angeles as part of the Military Track session "Inside the Armed Services: Sexual Assault Response and Prevention as a National Priority."

1. [Grunt life: Marines dish on the Corps' women in combat experiment](#)

(7 Sep) Marine Corps Times, By Hope Hedge Seck

Lance Cpl. Callahan Brown kept losing her tentmates.

The 20-year-old Marine had spent months in co-ed training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, before moving west to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, California, for a series of combat assessments in grimy field conditions — the closest any female Marine has been permitted to get to infantry life and training.

She watched as the number of women involved in the experiment dwindled by the day.

"I was stressing out because all my girlfriends started getting hurt," Brown told Marine Corps Times. "They're all getting this common injury from hips. I was waiting to feel something in my hips and I never did."

Brown was one of just two women left standing in the pair of infantry-trained rifleman platoons at the end of the nine-month-long experiment, she and other members of her unit said. Most of the other women in those two platoons had been dropped or temporarily sidelined with light duty due to injury.

While Marine officials declined to provide any figures on the makeup of the units, it has been reported that there were roughly two

dozen women in the infantry company when the task force activated.

Marine officials are expected to make data and findings collected from the task force experiment public in coming weeks. Ahead of official results, however, male and female participants told Marine Corps Times that only a small number of female volunteers proved capable of taking on the more physically demanding combat jobs. And some volunteers reported perceived unequal treatment that broke down unit cohesion and fostered resentment between male and female counterparts.

With the Army's Sept. 2 announcement that it will open Ranger training to female soldiers and Navy Secretary Ray Mabus' recent statement that he supports full combat integration within the Marine Corps, the chance of seeing all fields open to female Marines at the start of next year seems increasingly likely.

In light of that, accounts from Marines who participated in the groundbreaking experiment at Lejeune and Twentynine Palms raise questions about how many women are able — and willing — to make it as a grunt.

The experience has even left some participants questioning whether the Marine Corps is ready for the cultural and organizational challenges of gender integration.

The ground combat experiment

While all the military services face the same Jan. 1 deadline to open closed combat jobs to women or argue for specific exceptions, the Marines' approach to the question of integration was unique in its rigor.

The Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force turned training bases into laboratories, hooking Marines like Brown up to heart-rate monitors and GPS devices. Their rifles were rigged with devices that could determine the placement, accuracy and timing of every shot. Some 400 Marines, including about 100 women, signed up to be test subjects.

They were divided by military occupational specialties representative of those in the ground combat element of a traditional Marine air-ground task force: infantry; weapons; artillery; and mechanized units, including tanks and other armored vehicles. A provisional rifle platoon rounded out the unit, allowing officials to assess and compare the performance of Marines who had received no formal infantry training with those who had completed Lejeune's Infantry Training Battalion, including some of the first female graduates.

After a series of athletic tests and functional screenings administered by researchers from the University of Pittsburgh, Marines embarked on a four-month training period at Camp Lejeune. There, leaders reinforced small unit-level training and readiness standards for each MOS being evaluated.

The entire unit then "deployed" to the California desert for a repetitive series of assessments conducted under human testing conditions that attempted to simulate the toughest physical requirements for each combat MOS.

The goals were twofold. First, the data will be provided to Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford in order to assist in his decision about whether to request exceptions to the integration mandate. It will also be used to establish a baseline for gender-neutral physical standards that the Marine Corps can apply in the future to infantry and combat jobs that open to women.

But even with the clinical approach to testing, there were challenges from the outset, several Marines said.

While many male volunteers had years of experience in their given MOS, the female volunteers either came from non-combat units or were straight out of boot camp and follow-on training, making them significantly less experienced in their new roles compared to their male counterparts.

That dynamic could help to explain, in part, why participation in the task force was a cold wake-up call for some.

'It really sucked'

Cpl. Janee' Sheffield knew she was done when she kept rolling the same ankle on daily hikes, leaving her in constant pain. She dropped on request from the provisional rifle platoon — made up of Marines who had not attended ITB — six days before the unit completed its round of assessments at Twentynine Palms and traveled to nearby Bridgeport for mountain warfare exercises.

Like the other rifle platoons, the provisional platoon was on a repetitive cycle that alternated between two assessment days: a movement-to-contact exercise in which Marines would charge 1,000 yards up a hill with weapons and 30-pound packs, scramble over an 8-foot shipping container and maneuver together toward simulated enemy fire while shooting at pop-up targets; and a hike day involving a roughly 4.5-mile march followed by two arduous hours digging fighting holes.

Before opting out of the task force, Sheffield, 23, had decided the infantry wasn't for her.

"It sucked; it really sucked," she said. "I wouldn't do this experiment again."

Within the integrated rifle platoons, Sheffield and other volunteers said unit cohesion became quite strong. In dirty and charmless field conditions, male and female Marines got serious about the tasks at hand and developed close sibling-like relationships, they said. But Sheffield said most of her female colleagues in the unit agreed with her by the time the assessment was done. It wasn't for them, she said.

"Over time, your body breaks down," Sheffield said. "Our backs were hurting. Out of 100 female Marines, I'm going to say a good 20 could do this."

Infantry platoon volunteer Sgt. Jeremy Bradshaw arrived at the same conclusion about women capable of living the grunt life following his time in the task force.

"It's a very small number; I'd say two out of 10," he said.

While videos and photographs released by the Marine Corps show women excelling at combat tasks, Bradshaw said they omitted the moments of failure. He watched a four-woman team struggling for more than seven minutes to move a 200-pound dummy, without success, he said. Another time, he said, female Marines failed to clamber over the top of the shipping container during movement-to-contact assessments.

A reservist from Delta Company, 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Bradshaw acknowledged that his years of infantry experience gave him a performance advantage over female Marines coming directly from the School of Infantry and learning in real time how field operations differed from the basics learned in school. And the repetitive grind of the assessment days was hard for the men, too, he said. In the first few days at Twentynine Palms, he said 12 members of his platoon — 10 men and 2 women — dropped from the unit for various reasons.

Because everyone in the platoon had graduated from ITB, Bradshaw said the experience raised serious questions about whether existing standards were stringent enough to select Marines who were cut out for success as a grunt.

"When the commandant came to visit us out at the range one day, he asked how many Marines felt that [infantry training] is adequate," he said. "Half raised their hands."

A change of heart

Lance Cpl. Chris Augello arrived at the integrated task force believing that women should get a shot at service in the infantry as long as they could meet existing standards. It was a perspective that made him different from most male Marines, he said, and he'd argued with his unit members for hours on the point.

When Augello checked out of the task force months later, however, he submitted a 13-page essay to unit officials explaining exactly why the experience had made him change his mind.

Another reservist from Delta Company, 4th LAR, Augello, 23, said he volunteered for the task force for personal reasons — namely, a chance to accrue the six consecutive months of active duty that would qualify him to take advantage of the post-9/11 GI Bill.

He was assigned to the light armored vehicle platoon once he got to Camp Lejeune. Over time, he said, discipline broke down because some noncommissioned officers were hesitant to hurt the feelings of more junior female Marines with orders or correction. Romantic relationships and friendships between male and female unit members also became a distraction, he said.

"The female variable in this social experiment has wrought a fundamental change in the way male NCOs think, act and lead," Augello

wrote in the 13-page paper he presented to Marine leaders, which he shared with Marine Corps Times. "A change that is sadly for the worse, not the better."

Physically, both the men and women in Augello's platoon fared well. No one was dropped due to injury over the course of the experiment, unit members said. But the lance corporal said he became frustrated during group assessments, such as an exercise in which platoon members had to work together to haul a dummy weighing nearly 200 pounds out of the vehicle turret and to a designated recovery spot dozens of yards away. When partnered with the platoon's female Marines, he said he frequently had to compensate for their smaller frames and lack of upper body strength by hauling more of the load.

"I told myself, 'I don't know how much longer my back will have after doing this,'" he recalled.

During one assessment, Augello said he found himself paired with the smallest male Marine in the platoon — one who was physically shorter and slighter than a number of the unit's female Marines. But the Marine's build and musculature made a significant difference, he said.

"I didn't feel a lot of stress on my back because he was able to actually help me," he said. "His upper body strength made the difference at the end of the day."

Asked about Augello's assertions, Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Philip Kulczewski said forthcoming task force data would illustrate individual Marines' opinions of fatigue, workload and unit cohesion, though he declined to provide the data ahead of an official release. Kulczewski also refrained from commenting on Augello's observations about unit dynamics.

"Thorough objective data and comprehensive survey information was collected," Kulczewski said. "Not anecdotes."

Augello's observations regarding unit cohesion likely shed more light on upcoming challenges for the Marine Corps regarding enforcement of discipline and professionalism than they do on universal truths about dynamics in integrated combat units.

Another member of the LAV platoon, Sgt. Curtis Clifton, said he felt some of the problems in the unit were inevitable. Female volunteers fresh from school were given crew tasks that fleet Marines often worked for a year to earn, which he said he believed helped to foster a sense of elitism among some.

They also struggled to develop a serious "combat mindset" about their daily tasks, he said, likely because they lacked significant fleet and combat experience.

And for male Marines accustomed to ground combat units, Clifton said, working with women every day proved to be a distraction to which they needed to become accustomed.

"You had a whole bunch of guys who had never worked with women before now working with them and developing feelings for them," he said. "It's like jumping from a Jacuzzi into the pool."

'We can do it'

Despite some of the concerns they raised about the experiment, each of the four male task force volunteers who spoke with Marine Corps Times identified a number of women in their unit who impressed them. Even if they felt the majority of women they observed were not up to the task of joining the infantry, some stood out to them as fully capable.

That's an important point for groups like No Exception 2016, a coalition formed by the Truman Project think tank to promote gender integration in every currently closed military job.

"There's no need for a mass amount of women to pass to legitimize the accomplishments of those few," said Mary Kate Cunningham, a spokeswoman for the group. She compared the phenomenon to the 1993 removal of restrictions on female aviators flying combat missions.

"Only a handful of women of women became fighter pilots in the Marine Corps, but [the Marines] had the best pilots flying overhead" because they had a wider pool to draw from, she said.

And to be sure, the stories of success that have emerged from the task force are inspiring.

Brown, the lance corporal who was one of only two female Marines to complete the infantry assessment, said she is certain she has found her calling as a grunt. She loved the experience, she said, from grueling humps to sweaty field operations and rough-edged, coarse camaraderie with other infantrymen. She attributed her success in the physical challenges in part to her background in sports, including a competitive soccer career that began when she was 6 years old.

"Every time a female would drop, it motivated the crap out of me to stay there," she said. "Only 7 percent [of Marines are female] and so few even wanted to be in the infantry, and that's all I want, is to be with the grunts."

Returning to noncombat work at Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26 out of Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina, was a culture shock after her time at the task force, she said. She's now working to hone her skills there while pursuing the possibility of moving to a combat unit if they open, or linking up with a female engagement team on a Marine expeditionary unit. Returning from the task force was in some ways a humbling experience, she said.

"You know, you spent a year in the grunt world, but you're a boot in the POG world, Brown," she said her colleagues told her, using an acronym for "persons other than grunts." "Get used to it."

Cpl. Angeliqe Preston, 21, also believes she found her calling at the task force. A wireman with 8th Communications Battalion out of Lejeune, she volunteered to be part of an integrated artillery battery because her father had been an artilleryman.

The artillery assessments, which involved carrying and loading 100-pound rounds, were physically difficult, she said. But with her 5-foot-5-inch, 170-pound weightlifter's frame, she said she was more than a match for the challenge. She most enjoyed loading the rounds, one of the most physically demanding tasks on the gun.

Preston said the male Marines in her unit were uncomfortable working alongside women at first, but began to accept them as peers after the first few field operations at Lejeune.

As the prospect of integration approaches, Preston said she had a few recommendations for artillery units. First, a minimum weight requirement should be set, she said, as she observed slighter female Marines struggling most with tasks on the gun line. And second, she said, more experienced Marines from the experiment should be moved into the integrated units to add an element of maturity — a task for which she would readily volunteer.

"I think it would be helpful if there were females from the task force who were in the battery who will go to other batteries first," she said. "We know what to expect."

Even Sheffield, who left the task force knowing that she wanted no part of grunt life, said the infantry ranks should be opened to allow the minority of women who prove capable of the challenge to excel.

"Hell, yeah, why not?" she said. "We can do it. Maybe not me, but there are females who can actually do it and hack it and are actually good at it. I say, 'do it.'"

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/09/07/grunt-life-marines-dish-corps-women-combat-experiment/71632666/>

2. See Women's Progress In the U.S. Military

(8 Sep) Time, By Dave Johnson

The Army permanently [opened Ranger School to all women](#) this month, just weeks after two female soldiers graduated from the school for the first time. That decision is part of a series of efforts that will expand where and how women serve in the U.S. armed forces.

On Jan. 1, 2016, with the repeal of a 1994 rule that excluded women from direct combat assignments, all positions in the U.S. military will be open to women unless the services can convince Defense Secretary Ashton Carter that some should remain closed. Currently, women account for 15.3% of active-duty personnel in the U.S. military. The Marines have the lowest percentage of women, at 7.6%. Twenty of 336 Marine jobs are closed to women. The Air Force and Navy have the highest percentage of women serving: 17.8% for the Navy, and 18.7% for the Air Force.

According to a report by [Women In International Security](#), 255,000 additional positions will open to female service members in 2016.

Women have been involved in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War, but were only made a permanent fixture with the Women's Armed Service Integration Act of 1948, which prohibited women from combat positions.

A growing demand for equality combined with reduced male enlistments led the Department of Defense to steadily ease bans on how closely women could get to the front lines. And as the lines between combat and noncombat roles became increasingly blurred in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 1994 rule barring women from direct ground combat has become increasingly contested.

In 2003, enemy forces in Iraq captured three Army women— assigned to a noncombat unit providing logistic support to ground units—highlighting the threat to women, often without the recognition or promotion that comes with combat positions. As of April 2015, 161 women had lost their lives and 1,1015 were wounded since President George W. Bush declared the Global War on Terror on Sept. 20, 2001.

The military services have until next month to explain to Carter why women should continue to be barred from any military assignments beginning next year.

<http://time.com/4022143/women-in-military/>

3. Marine Corps' women-in-combat experiment gets mixed results

(8 Sep) The Washington Post, By Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Over the past nine months, the Marine Corps tested a gender-integrated task force in both Twentynine Palms, Calif. and Camp Lejeune, N.C. in an attempt to gauge what the Corps might look like with women in combat roles.

According to a [recent report in the Marine Corps Times](#), only a small number of women were left by the experiment's conclusion — two of the roughly two dozen who started — mostly in part because of the physical and mental stress that comes with combat roles. Both the men and women in the task force also reported a breakdown in unit cohesion with some voicing a perceived unequal treatment from their peers.

The experiment comes as all branches of the military face a Jan. 1 deadline to open all combat positions to women — from basic infantry battalions to elite special operations units such as U.S. Navy SEALs. While branches like the Air Force and Navy have relatively small communities where women are currently barred from serving — namely special operations detachments — the U.S. Army and Marine Corps have a host of units and jobs closed to women. These jobs, known as combat arms, include infantry, artillery and armored divisions.

The gender-integrated Ground Combat Element Task Force served as a snapshot of sorts of what the Marine Corps might look like if women were a staple in combat positions. Each closed position was represented: infantry, artillery and mechanized units, such as tank platoons and light armored reconnaissance detachments, all operated in tandem with one another. The women were spread among them in ratios that would be expected in an integrated Marine Corps, with roughly 90 percent of the branch made up of men.

The nine-month exercise was broken down into two parts. Initially there was a four-month training period, or “work-up,” at Camp Lejeune, followed by a five month “deployment” to the Mojave Desert in Twentynine Palms. Certain elements of the task force also participated in training at Camp Pendleton, and mountain warfare in Bridgeport, Calif. This two semester cycle was common over the past 15 years. During the height of the Iraq War, it was common that Marine units would train for six to eight months and then deploy for a similar amount of time.

During both phases of the training, the Marines were hooked up to heart monitors and equipment that monitored their shooting abilities. According to the report, the data will be sent to Marine Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford in order to better tailor his approach to integrating women into Marine combat positions and help establish a baseline for gender-neutral standards that the Marines can possibly apply in the future.

Yet for all the monitoring technology in the field, most of the feedback, both negative and positive, has thus far been anecdotal.

“[The Marine Corps] hope[s] to provide transparency to our research and findings soonest,” Marine spokesman Maj. Christian Devine wrote in an e-mail.

The Marine Corps Times report cites a number of instances where women had a difficult time completing physical tasks, like moving 200 pound dummies off the battlefield or from the turret of a “damaged” vehicle. Peer assessments were also mixed.

Lance Cpl. Chris Augello, a reservist who prior to the experiment was pro-integration, submitted a 13-page essay—which he shared with the Marine Corps Times—on why he had changed his mind. “The female variable in this social experiment has wrought a fundamental change in the way male [non-commissioned officers] think, act and lead,” he wrote, referring to the female presence and its effect on how Marine Corps small-unit leaders do their job.

Augello, according to the report, also noted that relationships between the female and male Marines in his platoon sometimes turned romantic and in turn became a distraction. Integration, Augello wrote, is “a change that is sadly for the worse, not the better.”

Though the experiment is the first of its kind, women have been serving in roles that have brought them close to or into combat over the past 15 years during two wars. The Marine Corps used Female Engagement Teams or FETs extensively in Afghanistan and Iraq to interact with the women in both countries.

Another issue was training. Female marines received different training from their male infantry counterparts, and so there was a gap in their preparedness, according to the Marine Corps Times report.

While a majority of the women dropped from the program, some men did as well. According to the Marine Corps Times, one platoon dropped 10 men and two women, while another [report](#) in the San Diego Union-Tribune noted that 13 men had dropped from a gender integrated company. Though according to the Union-Tribune, 12 of them left for personal reasons not due to injury.

In the end, though, male members of the task force pointed out a number of women that impressed them. And the two women who stayed until the experiment’s conclusion told the Marine Corps Time they had found their true calling as infantrywomen.

“Every time a female would drop, it motivated the crap out of me to stay there,” Lance Cpl. Callahan Brown, one of the two final women to remain in the task force, told the Marine Corps Times. “Only 7 percent [of Marines are female] and so few even wanted to be in the infantry, and that’s all I want, is to be with grunts.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/09/08/marines-women-in-combat-experiment-gets-mixed-results/>

4. Marines Wrestle Over Gender

(10 Sep) The Wall Street Journal, By Michael M. Phillips and Gordan Lubold

Marine Corps commanders signaled Thursday that they likely would fight a Defense Department order to allow women to join infantry, artillery and other ground-combat units.

In a hint of the service’s thinking, the Marine Corps released research data showing that all-male teams outperformed units comprising men and women in 69% of ground-combat tasks, especially those that involve carrying heavy ammunition or weapons.

The findings, Marine officers said, show mixed-gender units are less effective in combat and more likely to suffer casualties than traditional all-male units.

“The data points are starting to show things,” said Col. James Glynn, a Marine spokesman.

Col. Glynn and other Marine officers emphasized that Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Joe Dunford hasn’t yet revealed whether he will seek an exemption to a 2013 Pentagon order to open all combat jobs to women. Then-Secretary of Defense [Leon Panetta](#) gave the commandant and other service chiefs until Jan. 1, 2016, to ask for a waiver; the services are expected to submit any such requests next week.

The Marines appeared to be laying the groundwork for such a decision by releasing selected data from an extensive study it conducted to test mixed-gender ground units. In a summary of the findings, the Marines cited a 1992 presidential report that concluded: “Risking the lives of a military unit in combat to provide career opportunities or accommodate the personal desire or interest of an individual, or group of individuals, is more than bad military judgment. It is morally wrong.”

The debate over the role of women in combat caps decades of social change in the military, from racial integration in the 1940s to the lifting of the ban on open service by gay men and lesbians in 2011. Since Mr. Panetta’s 2013 order, the Pentagon has opened about 111,000 jobs to women. Another 220,000 positions within the active-duty military remain off-limits.

In the Army, there are currently 145,000 positions closed to female soldiers. The Army has been open to creating more opportunities

for women, including at its fabled Ranger school, although Chief of Staff Mark Milley recently indicated he is still on the fence on the broader issue of allowing women in combat jobs.

The Navy has about 3,700 jobs that are barred to women, mostly among the service's elite SEAL teams, though that is likely to change given the Navy leadership's desire to open those jobs to women. There are about 4,100 jobs closed to women in the Air Force.

Marine Commandant Dunford is expected to provide his recommendation to his superior, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, by Sunday, setting up a possible clash. Mr. Mabus, who led the push to open submarine duty to women, has said he isn't interested in granting the Marines a waiver.

Next month, Gen. Dunford will become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and as such will be the top military adviser to Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who will make the ultimate call on gender-integration exceptions.

Of 337 Marine job categories, 22 remain closed to women, including infantry, light-armored reconnaissance and tanks.

Faced with Mr. Panetta's order, the Marines last year set up an all-volunteer unit with 295 men and 105 women who were randomly sorted into teams and run through months of electronically monitored tasks, from loading rounds into cannons to assaulting mock enemy positions.

The intention [was to test how gender integration affected the unit, more than the individual](#).

The study found that in 93 of 134 tasks, all-male teams outperformed mixed-gender teams. In 39 tasks, there was no difference. In two tasks, the mixed-gender teams performed better.

"The brutal and extremely physical nature of direct ground combat, often marked by close, interpersonal violence, remains largely unchanged through centuries of warfare, despite technological advancements," the Marines said in a summary of the research findings.

Not everyone is persuaded by the Marines approach. "I have questions about the way these experiments were administered," said Sen. [Kirsten Gillibrand](#) (D., N.Y.) in a statement. Ms. Gillibrand has expressed concerns that the testing at one point compared the women to an all-male "control group" rather than an objective performance standard.

Col. Anne Weinberg, a senior Marine officer overseeing the research, said further work is needed to determine whether better training could narrow the gap. "I think what we showed was average females in our current population do not perform as well as average males," she said.

One of the tasks involved firing a .50-caliber machine gun from atop a dirt mound. The mixed-gender teams were more accurate, on average. But the all-male teams scored better when the task included lugging the heavy weapon and its ammunition to the firing position.

"We weren't trying to make them do something that was unrealistic. Machine-gunners are required to carry their machine guns," said Paul Johnson, the study's principal investigator.

The researchers generally found women performed worse and were more susceptible to injury when maneuvering while loaded down with heavy gear. To serve in the infantry, Marines must march 24.8 miles in eight hours while carrying 114 pounds of equipment. A loader on a howitzer crew must repeatedly hoist 100-pound shells into a cannon at a rapid clip.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/marines-wrestle-over-gender-1441928742>

5. Marine Corps Study: All-Male Combat Units Performed Better Than Mixed Units

(10 Sep) NPR, By Eyder Peralta

A yearlong Marine Corps study trying to understand how gender integration would affect combat readiness has found that all-male units were faster, more lethal and able to evacuate casualties in less time.

Overall, [according to a summary of the study](#), all-male squads performed better than mixed groups in 69 percent of the tasks evaluated.

NPR's Tom Bowman filed this report for our Newscast unit:

"The Marines created a battalion of 100 female and 300 male volunteers. During the past year, they trained in North Carolina and California, taking part in realistic combat exercises.

"All-male squads, the study found, performed better than mixed gender units across the board. The males were more accurate hitting targets, faster at climbing over obstacles, better at avoiding injuries.

"The Marine study says its main focus is maximum combat effectiveness, because it means fewer casualties. The Marines have not said whether the study's results will lead them to ask for a waiver that bars women from ground combat jobs.

"Defense Secretary Ash Carter said he hopes to open all combat jobs to women."

The Pentagon [lifted a ban prohibiting women from serving in combat in January 2013](#). The question since then has been [whether the military could open up those jobs without lowering standards](#).

Of course, this news comes just weeks after [two female soldiers graduated from the U.S. Army's Ranger School](#) at Fort Benning, Ga. As we reported, it's a grueling course that "puts a premium on physical strength and endurance."

The summary of the Marine Corps study quotes [a 1992 report from the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces](#). That was the last time the government studied the effect of gender integration on ground combat units.

According to that commission, winning a war is sometimes "only a matter of inches."

Back then, the commission concluded: "unnecessary distraction or any dilution of the combat effectiveness puts the mission and lives in jeopardy. Risking the lives of a military unit in combat to provide career opportunities or accommodate the personal desires or interests of an individual, or group of individuals, is more than bad military judgment. It is morally wrong."

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/09/10/439190586/marine-corps-study-finds-all-male-combat-units-faster-than-mixed-units>

6. Marines experiment finds women get injured more frequently, shoot less accurately than men

(10 Sep) Washington Post, By Dan Lamothe

Women in a new Marine Corps unit created to assess how female service members perform in combat were injured twice as often as men, less accurate with infantry weapons and not as good at removing wounded troops from the battlefield, according to the results of a long-awaited study produced by the service.

The research was carried out by the service in a nine-month long experiment at both Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Twentynine Palms, Calif. About 400 Marines, including 100 women, volunteered to join the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, the unit the Marine Corps created to compare how men and women do in a combat environment.

"This is unprecedented research across the services," said Marine Col. Anne Weinberg, the deputy director of the Marine Corps Force Innovation Office. "What we tried to get to is what is that individual's contribution to the collective unit. We all fight as units... We're more interested in how the Marine Corps fights as units and how that combat effectiveness is either advanced or degraded."

The study, [an executive summary of which was released Thursday](#), was carried out as all the services prepare to submit recommendations to Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter this fall on whether any jobs should be kept closed to women. In a landmark decision in January 2013, then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta rescinded a decades-old ban on women serving in combat jobs like infantry, but gave the services until this fall to research how they wanted to better integrate women and if any jobs should be kept closed.

The Pentagon faces increasing pressure to fully integrate women, following the historic Aug. 21 graduation of two female officers from the Army's Ranger School. The legendarily difficult school was opened on an experimental basis this spring, with 1st Lt. Shaye Haver, 25, and Capt. Kristen Griest, 26, completing the requirements. Sixteen other women who attempted the course failed, while one other woman remained in the school's third and final phase at Eglin Air Force Base as of last week.

The Marine Corps' research will serve as fodder for those who are against fully integrating women. It found that all-male squads, teams and crews demonstrated better performance on 93 of 134 tasks evaluated (69 percent) than units with women in them. Units

comprising all men also were faster than units with women while completing tactical movements in combat situations, especially in units with large “crew-served” weapons like heavy machine guns and mortars, the study found.

Infantry squads comprising men only also had better accuracy than squads with women in them, with “a notable difference between genders for every individual weapons system” used by infantry rifleman units. They include the M4 carbine, the M27 infantry automatic rifle (IAR) and the M203, a single-shot grenade launcher mounted to rifles, the study found.

The research also found that male Marines who have not received infantry training were still more accurate using firearms than women who have. And in removing wounded troops from the battlefield, there “were notable differences in execution times between all-male and gender-integrated groups,” with the exception being when a single person—“most often a male Marine” — carried someone away, the study found.

The full study is more than a thousand pages long, Marine officials said. They anticipated publishing it online in coming days.

A physiological assessment carried out by the University of Pittsburgh’s Neuromuscular Research Laboratory found that the average man in the experimental integrated unit weighed 178 pounds with 20 percent body fat, while the average woman weighed 142 pounds with 24 percent body fat.

Researchers hooked men and women alike up to a variety of monitors, and found that the top 25th percentile of women overlapped with the bottom 25th percentile of men when it came to anaerobic power, a measure of strength, Marine officials said. Those numbers were expected to a degree given the general size difference between the average man and woman.

The gender-integrated unit’s assessment also found that 40.5 percent of women participating suffered some form of musculoskeletal injury, while 18.8 percent of men did. Twenty-one women lost time in the unit due to injuries, 19 of whom suffered injuries to their lower extremities. Of those, 16 women were injured while carrying heavy loads in an organized movement, like a march, the study found.

The kinds of injuries varied, too: The majority of women in the unit who lost time due to injuries suffered through hip problems, with foot and toe injuries also problematic. In men, the most common injuries were to the feet and toes, followed by the ankles, Weinberg said.

The research raises the question whether the Marine Corps may press to keep the infantry and Special Operations, in particular, closed to women. If they do so, they could face resistance from above: Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, who oversees both the Navy and Marine Corps, already has indicated that he sees no reason to keep the infantry closed to women.

“That’s still my call, and I’ve been very public,” Mabus said in a [Sept. 1 interview with the independent Navy Times](#). “I do not see a reason for an exemption.”

Ellen Haring, a reserve Army colonel and vocal advocate for fully integrating the military, said the results of the Marine Corps’ research are not surprising. The service was told to assess how individual women do in combat situations, but the task force instead assessed groups with average female Marines — rather than high performers — in them.

“They’re always coming up with these averages,” Haring said. “The average woman can’t do what the average man does. I don’t think that’s a surprise to any of us. But they weren’t told to do this based on averages. It has to be based on individual capabilities.”

A Marine Corps veteran who has advocated for full integration, Katelyn van Dam, also took issue with the study, saying it is time to stop asking if women can “hack it” in combat units and instead focus on developing gender-neutral standards that apply to all. She is a spokesman for the Truman Project and Center’s No Exceptions initiative, which calls for opening all military jobs to women immediately.

“It has been scientifically proven that overall physical fitness — not gender — correlates to injury,” she said. “While the methodology and data from the Task Force has not been made available to us, we do know that female participants only had to meet the physical requirement of passing a third-class male physical fitness test, and that most came directly from the schoolhouse or non-combat jobs. Thus, their participation was based on old standards.”

Female Marines previously struggled heavily at the Infantry Officer Course (IOC), a grueling school at Quantico, Va., at which the service trains lieutenants to lead infantrymen in combat. All 29 women who attempted the course failed, mostly in the initial Combat Endurance Test, an exhausting exam that includes everything from land navigation to swimming in combat gear. By comparison 71 percent of the 978 men who took the course in the same time frame passed. The school was first opened on an experimental basis to

women in 2012, ahead of Panetta's landmark decision.

The service also opened its enlisted infantry training at Camp Geiger, N.C., to women. They have performed a better than those at IOC: Between September 2013 and June 2015, 144 of the 401 female volunteers (36 percent) passed the course, Marine officials said. By comparison, 5,448 of 5,503 men (99 percent) passed, according to the executive summary released Thursday.

Women have fared better at a couple other schools the Marine Corps has opened to women. At the artillery cannon crewman course, 12 of 14 women (86 percent) have passed, as compared to 226 of 263 men (86 percent). Five of seven female Marines (71 percent) each completed the service's tank crewman course and assault amphibious vehicle (AAV) crewman courses, Marine officials said. By comparison 67 of 68 men (99 percent) and 106 of 113 men (94 percent) completed the tank and AAV course, respectively in the same time frame.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/09/10/marine-experiment-finds-women-get-injured-more-frequently-shoot-less-accurately-than-men/>

7. Gender war: Debate over women in combat escalates

(11 Sep) The San Diego Union-Tribune, By Gretel C. Kovach

A simmering battle over Marine Corps research on women in combat broke into all-out warfare this week after the service disclosed results of its nearly yearlong experiment, reporting that the addition of female troops to traditionally all-male units resulted in lower performance on most tactical tests.

The Secretary of the Navy joined a chorus of military women and scholars who questioned the validity of the study and its ability to gauge the long-term potential for women in jobs such as infantry rifleman or artillery cannoneer, should they soon open as planned to all troops who qualify. They accused the Marine Corps of setting the female research subjects up to fail with faulty methodology, inadequate physical conditioning to prepare for rigorous ground combat tasks, and preconceived notions that allegedly skewed outcomes.

Another faction comprised primarily of men who want to keep the infantry and other ground combat units closed to women shot back at the critics, saying they just don't like the results.

The debate over the premise and execution of the study started last year when the Marine Corps announced it was expanding its research on women in combat by establishing an experimental unit called the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force. The Corps assigned some 600 troops including staff to the task force and ran mixed-gender groups through months of combat trials, comparing them to those with only men.

The effort was designed to help the commandant, Gen. Joseph Dunford, decide whether to seek an exception to the Defense Department's new gender-neutral employment policy taking effect Jan 1.

From the start, some observers said the task force experiment was flawed because it lacked a true control group and pitted experienced men against inexperienced women. The accusations caught fire Thursday when the Corps released a limited summary of findings from the experiment, all detailing average group results with no mention of individual top performers who met or exceeded requirements for the combat tasks.

Marine Corps leaders involved in the research on women in combat — including the architect of the study as well as the female colonel who is second-in-command of the service's Force Innovation Office — characterized the criticism as inaccurate and unfair. They released additional results of the experiment Friday in interviews with The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Methodology

Paul Johnson, of the Marine Corps' Operational Test and Evaluation Activity at Quantico, Va., is principal investigator of the task force experiment. It began with about 300 men and 100 women training together as research volunteers.

Participants were required to have third-class physical fitness test scores to join, but most of the women who signed up were at the top of the spectrum for female Marines, Johnson said. Many could perform far more than three pull-ups, the minimum required for all male Marines.

During combat trials at Twentynine Palms and other California bases, researchers tracked parameters like speed of evacuating casualties and lethality during an infantry assault. They found that all-male groups performed significantly better than mixed-gender groups on 93 of 134 tasks, or 69 percent. Including women produced better outcomes on two tasks, both of which involved accuracy by crews shooting the M2 .50-caliber heavy machine gun. There was no significant difference on the others.

"Holding all things constant, we were not able to come away with any other explanation than integration, integrating women into these units," Johnson said. No other factors, including strength or endurance, were as important as gender, according to

their research.

The Marine Corps was forced to make trade-offs between scientific rigor and practicality. Ideally they would have taken a large group of men and women recently graduated from recruit training and studied them over a longer period of time, Johnson said. That wasn't feasible because of cost, the drain on operational forces, and career needs of individual participants.

Instead, researchers tried to mute factors such as leadership or familiarity with the tasks through a variety of means, including statistical modeling, training the Marines for several months before combat testing began, running a pilot test so they could acclimate to conditions at the combat center, random assignments shuffling groups, and the testing of basic skills that could be quickly mastered.

Although almost everyone in the task force who wasn't seriously injured improved over time, according to observations by The San Diego Union-Tribune at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Twentynine Palms, the men improved more than the women on average, the Marine Corps research indicates.

The only unit in the task force wholly comprised of untrained men assessed against untrained women was the provisional infantry platoon. The men in that platoon out-shot the women, Johnson said. The untrained men also bested women in the other platoon who went through infantry school, the Marine Corps reported, hitting targets 44 percent of the time with M4 rifles compared to the 28 percent accuracy rate of infantry-trained women.

Among other findings not previously released: there was no significant difference in the light-armored vehicle platoon between accuracy of shooting by mixed-gender crews compared to all-male crews; all-male artillery teams were faster than mixed-gender teams; and female tankers loading 55-pound rounds were slower than male tankers, stalling the mixed-gender crews compared to all-male tank crews, Johnson said.

Complete data from the nearly 1000-page report on the task force should be released in coming days, Marine officials said.

Cohort

Another complaint about the experiment was the small number of female Marines in the infantry company, since their performance could play a disproportionate role in the key decision that is looming on whether to integrate women permanently into the infantry.

The Corps started with 68 female Marines approved to participate in the infantry company, Johnson said, but the number had shrunk to 29 by the time the task force began training in October at Camp Lejeune. The others withdrew from the voluntary research program before it began for various reasons.

After months of combat testing at Twentynine Palms before the task force disbanded in July, 13 women remained in the infantry company, Marine officials said, not two as previously reported based on inaccurate accounts from task force participants. The initial group of 29 had been more than cut in half because of personal and professional reasons pulling the women from the program as well as injuries.

Is the Corps now deciding whether it should open the infantry to women based on the performance of about two dozen female Marines? No, said Marine Col. Anne Weinberg, deputy director of the Marine Corps Force Innovation Office.

The task force study is just one aspect of a much larger body of research the commandant reviewed, she said: "We commissioned around 30 studies. We clearly weren't doing this in a vacuum."

For example, in 2012 the Marine Corps developed a series of "proxy tests" for physically demanding combat skills. The tests are similar to the physical demands study the Army has focused on to establish performance criteria for combat jobs without regard to gender.

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

Of the 35 Marines deemed best performers, 92 percent were male and 8 percent were female.

The Corps later determined that the proxy tests were not a sufficient measure of the potential impact on combat effectiveness if women are integrated into all-male combat units, so it created the experimental task force.

Averages

Congress ordered the Secretary of Defense to develop gender-neutral occupational standards that would apply to individuals. So why did the Corps develop a costly study to determine average female performance in combat roles?

"The Marine Corps fights as a unit, we don't fight as individuals," Weinberg said.

When you have an artillery mission to quickly shoot a target, someone must crank the howitzer turret into position and someone else must load the round. “It is a collective task. When it is a competition for time and lethality on the battlefield, those are the things that go into combat effectiveness. It’s not about the individuals,” Weinberg said.

However it is individuals, not groups, who will have to pass the new screening tests for entry and meet new performance standards developed from the Marine Corps research. Some of those new standards will roll out by the end of this month.

As for the task force, “part of the study said women tend to not be able to carry as heavy a load for as long. But there were women that went through the study that could,” Navy Secretary Ray Mabus told National Public Radio in an interview broadcast on Friday.

He suggested that the Marines ended up proving their preconceptions. “It started out with a fairly large component of the men thinking this is not a good idea and women will never be able to do this. When you start out with that mindset you’re almost presupposing the outcome,” Mabus told NPR.

The Marine Corps’ conclusions contradict those of other organizations such as the Center for Naval Analyses, which determined there are ways to mitigate gender differences in combat performance to maintain the same lethality, Mabus added.

Marine Corps officials said they started the task force experiment with an open mind. “The Marine Corps afforded me the opportunity to do the study correctly. They weren’t interested in quick answers. I was never under any pressure to make the answer come out one way or another,” Johnson said.

Their goal wasn’t to determine if some women could do the job, he added. “I was asked to provide some facts on what we think might happen with the integration of females into the ground combat forces” during the early stages and the effect on combat performance. Because of that research, “We know a hell of a lot more about integration.”

Veterans

The verdict on women in combat is evident, said Doyle Clark, a former Marine Corps machine gunner who served in Vietnam during the 1968 Tet Offensive. “It’s a no-brainer. They can’t hack it,” he said.

John Bernard, who served as a Marine scout sniper during the Persian Gulf War, worries that the “political mad scientists studying this perverse petri dish” will usher in lower standards so that more women can qualify.

“At the core of the story rests what should be obvious: that men and women are different. Some women can build the necessary muscle to serve as a man (would), but they are, and shall remain, a minority,” said Bernard, a blogger whose son, Lance Cpl. Joshua Bernard, was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2009.

No one was surprised that the average female Marine in the ground combat task force performed worse than the men, said Marine Lt. Col. Jeannette Haynie, a Cobra attack helicopter pilot in the reserves.

The problem permeates the entire Corps: “We have consistently held women to lower standards,” which results in lower performance, she said.

“It’s tragic that we shoot ourselves in the foot by teaching both men and women to expect less of women, because that expectation perpetuates itself through time, over and over again. If in the 1990s we had made women start doing pull-ups as well (as men) we would have a Marine Corps of women doing pull-ups now,” Haynie said.

The Iraq combat veteran and Naval Academy graduate offers herself as example.

“I’ve been in 17 and a half years. For the first 14 years I was expected to do a flexed-arm hang and that was all I could do. Now as a 40-year-old mother of three I am knocking them out because I need to, and lo and behold I can do a bunch of pull-ups,” Haynie said.

If the Marine Corps wants to close the gender performance gap, it needs to adopt universal fitness and occupational standards even though it will temporarily cut the numbers of women in the Corps and their performance statistics, Haynie said.

In the interim, the commandant will present his recommendations on women in new combat roles to Mabus for approval, since the Marine Corps falls under the Navy Department, Weinberg said.

The deadline to seek an exception — and the Marine Corps is the only service, if any, expected to do so — is Oct 1.

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/sep/11/gender-war-marine-study-methodology-debated/>

8. Why Marines, Unlike Army And Navy, Are So Against Women In Combat

(11 Sep) Christian Science Monitor, By Anna Mulrine

This week, the Marine Corps left very little doubt about its view of women in its combat ranks: It does not want them.

A study by the corps released Thursday painted a bleak picture of the effectiveness of women in combat, suggesting they are weaker, more prone to injury, less adept at shooting weapons accurately, and their presence was a potential catastrophe for unit morale.

The day before, an opinion article penned by a retired Marine Corps general suggested that the “mysterious chemistry that forms in an infantry unit” included “clearing the urinals” and “nights of hilarious debauchery” – precluding women.

Just last month, however, two women graduated from the Army’s storied Ranger School, and the Navy announced that its SEAL program would be open to women.

Why was the Marines’ response this week to the prospect of women in combat so wildly different?

The force has long been associated with hard-drinking, hard-fighting “Great Santini”-style warriors, whose chest-thumping does – and by necessity should, supporters add – trump any nod to what is widely seen by many Marines as political correctness.

It’s a tough-guy culture cultivated by a force that prides itself on being the tip-of-the-spear – used by the US military to, say, take a beach from enemy forces by any means necessary.

That attitude, critics say, has prevented the Marines from taking steps toward integrating women more seamlessly into the force – steps the Army took long ago, such as opening support jobs in combat units to women.

The result is that the Marines largely remain where they were 20 years ago, while the rest of the military has shifted dramatically around them.

Come January, the Pentagon will have to decide whether the Marine Corps should open all its combat jobs to women, since it looks increasingly likely that the corps will request an exemption. This week offered insight into how difficult that decision could be. Within the halls of the Pentagon, the Marine Corps has widely been regarded as foot-dragging on the matter of women in its combat ranks.

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, who has authority over the Marines, questioned this week’s study, saying the fact that it “started out with a fairly large component of the men thinking this is not a good idea, and women will not be able to do this” could quite possibly have impacted results.

Many of the Marine Corps’ adherents argue that, beyond any physical differences between men and women, combat is a savage pursuit that should remain the sole domain of men who, as retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Gregory Newbold put it in his opinion article, have “shared the duties of clearing the urinals, the pleasures of a several nights of hilarious debauchery, and multiple near-death experiences.”

While conceding that women had impressively met the physical challenges of Army’s “very, very difficult” Ranger School, as he put it, Mr. Newbold argued that fighting in combat is something only men can understand.

“The characteristics that produce uncommon value as a common virtue are not physical at all, but are derived from the mysterious chemistry that forms in an infantry unit that revels in the most crude and profane existence so that they may be more effective killers than their foe,” he writes in an entry titled “What tempers the steel of an infantry unit” on the military blog, “War on the Rocks.” “Polite company, private hygiene, and weakness all step aside.”

Women would bring to units “sexual dynamics,” he adds, that would “degrade the nearly spiritual glue that enables the infantry to achieve the illogical and endure the unendurable.”

The article was widely seen as being encouraged by Marine leadership to help pave the way for the Marine gender integration study released the following day.

But critics say it promotes and seeks to maintain a bygone era. Multiple Pentagon studies have found that the more experience men have working with women, the less likely they are to be concerned that they affect unit cohesion.

“It was disturbing to read his piece,” says Greg Jacob, who served as a Marine trainer. “What’s really frustrating about this is that there’s a whole network of retired generals that the Pentagon relies on for advice.”

The perpetuation of this exclusionary “band of brothers cohesion” argument “is perpetuated on the reliance on these retired old guys,” he adds. “Newbold’s piece has a lot of the same tired old arguments that go back to the Carter administration.”

The male graduates of Army Ranger School, widely considered one of the toughest in the military, praised their fellow female soldier graduates last month, declaring that they would be proud to fight beside them anytime, anywhere.

Beyond that, they said, the matter of sexual dynamics was a moot point when they were exhausted and pushed to their physical limits in the midst of an ambush. Then, it only mattered that women could do the job, and they did, the male Rangers added. The male Rangers’ praise was welcomed by advocates for women in the military. But it was the product of more than a few months of Ranger School, they add.

Many male soldiers see women differently because the service itself sees women differently.

When Pentagon leaders decided to end the 1994 policy excluding women from combat, the Army began opening support jobs in combat units to women.

“They pushed these women down into these units as fast as they could,” says Mr. Jacob, who is the former policy director for the Service Women’s Action Network.

This created a different sort of mind-set, Jacob adds. Young male soldiers began seeing female noncommissioned officers as crew chiefs responsible for the maintenance of their Bradley Fighting Vehicle, for example.

The Marines, by contrast, decided not to open these combat support jobs to women until they opened the combat jobs themselves to women. “The thought process was to keep women out of the units rather than bringing them in,” Jacob says.

“And what we’ve seen play out over the years is that the Marines are behind the power curve, and the Army is out in front,” he adds. The Marine Corps study speaks to the soft bigotry of low expectations for women, says Marine Corps Lt. Col. Kate Germano. During the Marine Corps’ integration study, “two major issues were at stake: female physical capability and the culture of the infantry,” she says.

“It stands to reason that the women tested were slower, had less upper body strength, and did not shoot as well as their male counterparts,” she adds, because “that’s exactly what we taught them was acceptable at segregated recruit training.” Lieutenant Colonel Germano has questioned these separate training standards, pushing the Marines under her command – the service’s only all-female recruit battalion – and holding them to tougher standards. She was subsequently fired amid complaints of overstepping authority.

Jacob did the same when he was training Marines from 2001 to 2004, insisting that they be held to the same standards. Initially, the female recruits – and some of the men – “couldn’t do them, and they were embarrassed, but the standard wasn’t changing, so they trained to that standard,” he says.

Women went to the gym, and the men helped them, building rapport. “The guys were like, ‘Here are some exercises you can do to build your lats [muscles], here’s how you do the free weights.’ In six months, they could all do it.” Jacob had some of the best-performing units at his installation.

The widespread belief that women cannot be held to male standards has led to female Marines being “undervalued and underappreciated,” Germano says. This mind-set also leads to comments like those made by Newbold, she adds. “General Newbold’s insinuation that women in the infantry would automatically undermine cohesion due to sexual tension and jealousy was insulting and degrading,” she says.

Pentagon leaders have long stressed that integrating women into combat ranks is about “talent development.” “A more diverse force is a stronger force,” said Mabus, the Navy secretary, in an interview with NPR on Friday. “If you have the same outlook, if you have the same mindset, you don’t get much innovation.”

The resistance to women in the military for cultural reasons ignores the positive contributions women have made in the past dozen years of war, critics add. US military commanders repeatedly used women to go into battle spaces where men could not go, most notably interaction with women in Muslim countries.

“They are not thinking of the value-added of women – of the impact that may come from not having them within the ranks,” says Jacob.

To achieve this, quality training must be in place, advocates argue. The Marine study did not evaluate mixed-gender teams with similar prior experience but in essence “pitted untrained women fresh from school against fleet Marines with years of experience,” notes Sue Fulton, a West Point graduate and Army veteran.

In the Marine study, noncommissioned officers were unaccustomed to working with women and, as a result, were “tentative” in correcting them, “unsure of how to treat them,” notes Ms. Fulton. She adds that a good first step would have been to simply correct them as they would have done any Marine.

“Let’s face it: Women Marines start with a disadvantage,” she says. “They go through boot camp separate from men, and the expectation of failure surrounds them.”

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2015/0911/Why-Marines-unlike-Army-and-Navy-are-so-against-women-in-combat>

9. This Is How The US Navy Secretary Responded To A Marine Corps Study Critical Of Women In Combat

(11 Sep) Independent Journal, By Kelsey Rupp

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus emphasized his commitment to integrating women into the Marine Corps infantry and criticized a study released by the Corps that showed female Marines underperformed male Marines in mixed units in several key areas.

In an interview with NPR Friday, Mabus said:

“It started out with a fairly large component of the men thinking this was not a good idea and women will never be able to do this. “When you start out with that mindset, you’re almost presupposing the outcome.”

Mabus wouldn’t go so far as to call the study “flawed,” however, but he said results “depend on what you put in” and differences in combat effectiveness between male and female Marines can be “mitigated.”

According to Mabus, the Marine Corps needn’t worry about women generally being unable to carry as much weight as men, for example, as long as the specific women in the infantry meet the weight-carrying standards.

Mabus said some of the report’s conclusions were based on generalizations and not actual performance:

“Part of the study said women tend not to be able to carry as heavy a load for as long, but there were women who went through the study who could.

“And part of the study said we’re afraid because women get injured more frequently that over time, women will break down more, that you’ll begin to lose your combat effectiveness over time.”

Mabus commented that declining effectiveness “was not shown in the study, that was an extrapolation based on injury rates.” Democratic presidential candidate Jim Webb held Mabus’ role during part of President Reagan’s tenure.

When asked what Webb thinks about Mabus’ dismissing the study, his spokesman, Craig Crawford, declined to comment on its merits, but told IJ:

“(Webb) has always said the military should be allowed to pursue its process on this matter, without political interference.” The report, released Thursday, is part of the Marine Corps’ study on integrating women into the infantry in order to meet a 2012 order by then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta to open all military roles to women.

The military branches must open all roles to women by January 2016 or submit an exception request by the end of this month. Defense Secretary Ash Carter will review the requests and decide on their merits by early next year, reported The Hill.

President Obama supports the move to put women into combat and other military roles. And in January 2013, then-White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters that Obama and Panetta had discussed the issue during their regular meetings.

This year marked the first year women were permitted to test for the elite Army Ranger unit, and two women successfully graduated from the school in August. That same week, the Navy announced it will open its elite SEAL teams training to women.

Mabus’ emphasis on standards is exactly where many in the military are most concerned. According to a survey earlier this year by the RAND Corp., nearly half of male special operations officers worry that their female colleagues will be unable to meet the physical and mental demands of their jobs, and that the Pentagon will lower its standards in response.

At this time, it is unclear how many military units applied for an exception to the integration mandate. According to the Pentagon, in 2011, women made up 14.5% of the active-duty force of nearly 1.4 million.

<http://www.ijreview.com/2015/09/418232-marine-corps-ray-mabus-npr-women-female-infantry/>

10. Child care subsidy program moved from GSA

(10 Sep) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

The Army is moving its program that subsidizes child care fees back to a contractor after the General Services Administration failed to manage it, causing financial hardship for thousands of Army families. The transition is expected to be complete by January.

And, pressed by lawmakers, the General Services Administration official now in charge of the failed program agreed that his office will pay all the backlogged invoices to child care providers within 30 days, and handle required verifications later. At the end of July, there were 9,100 backlogged invoices.

The subsidy programs help eligible military families reduce the cost of child care in the community when the service is not available on an installation. It compensates for some or all of the gap between the on-post cost of child care, and the cost for care outside the gates.

Families must provide documentation certifying their eligibility, and child care providers must prove they are qualified to provide the care. Providers submit invoices to GSA each month for each child enrolled. For years, Child Care Aware (formerly NACCRRRA) managed the program for the Army, and continues to do so for the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force.

The Army's decision to move administration of the child care fee subsidy program last October to the GSA was a cost-saving measure, said retired Army Col. Stephanie L. Hoehne, director of family and morale, welfare and recreation for the Army Installation Management Command, in testimony Thursday before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

The hearing was held two days after the GSA inspector general issued a report on the program, which has experienced increasing backlogs since last year. The primary cause of the backlogs was GSA's failure to plan adequately for the expansion, investigators found.

But the effect on Army families has been severe, they reported, ranging from bankruptcy to collection actions. Families have reported considering having a spouse quit a job or quit school so that one parent could stay home with their children.

After the hearing, two Army family members who had testified said they were encouraged by the response of the Army and GSA, and appreciated the lawmakers calling attention to the problem.

Army wife Kaela Hensley said she feels confident "that it will be taken care of the way it should be." Because of the delays they experienced, she and her husband, an Army sergeant, exhausted their savings and had to borrow money from relatives. Hensley said their situation has straightened out now; they were previously paying \$301 a week for care for their 2-year-old and now pay \$139.

Army Capt. Karmon Dyches said she is glad to see the contract moving back to the nonprofit organization Child Care Aware. "They were wonderful," she said. "Unfortunately, this is too late for a lot of families. Moving forward, I hope no more families have to experience this."

She and her husband, also a soldier, have experienced a number of problems with delays in payments and getting their child care provider recertified since GSA started administering the program, she testified. Out of the \$1,200 a month their child care costs, the fee program pays \$610 a month, she said.

In an interview, Eileen Huck, government relations deputy director for the National Military Family Association, offered a word of caution to service officials thinking of making changes to the fee subsidy program.

"It's important for the services to recognize how vital this service is for the families who use it," she said. "Anyone thinking about changing this service needs to be cautious, because it's critical that military families be able to afford high-quality child care."

Hoehne, who was not in her current position when the decision was made in 2013 to transfer the program, testified that according to documentation she reviewed, fiscal pressures were forcing the Army to look everywhere to save money. Officials expected to save \$4

million to \$5 million, compared to the previous contract to Child Care Aware of \$8 million.

But Hoehne acknowledged that hasn't worked out. The program has already cost the Army \$8.4 million this year, she said. Army officials didn't do due diligence in making sure GSA was capable of handling the new program, she said.

The problems not only affected Army families seeking child care, but also child care providers — many of who are military family members — who were put into a financial bind when they were not paid.

Hoehne and the current GSA official in charge of the program, Gerard Badorrek, chief financial officer of GSA, apologized for the hardships caused to families, and outlined plans to remedy the situation. Badorrek said he learned of the problem Jan. 7 through an email complaint from an Army family, and traveled to the administrative office of the program two weeks later.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, questioned why GSA employees had deleted emails and voice messages from frustrated families, and said the committee will look into possible violations of the Federal Records Act.

Chaffetz said the committee also is concerned about families whose credit records were affected because of the problems. Some families faced issues ranging from bankruptcy to collection agencies, the GSA inspector general found. Chaffetz challenged GSA and the Army to perhaps come up with a letter certifying that problems with lack of payment were not the fault of the Army families.

“Our Army families ... they sacrifice, they've got to be focused on their job. There's a reason why child care services are offered. Many of them are offered on base. But in those situations where they're not, we need to be able to take care of their children,” Chaffetz said.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/09/10/child-care-subsidy-program-moved-gsa/72018918/>

11. Backlogged child care program burdens Army families

(10 Sep) Military Times, By Karen Jones

The Army's child care fee subsidy program is in such disarray that many families are experiencing financial hardship — some forced to deal with collection agencies for unpaid bills from child care providers, some filing bankruptcy, and some spouses being forced to quit their jobs or stop their education, according to a new report issued Tuesday.

The General Services Administration's inspector general said GSA “failed to plan adequately for the expanded program” when it took over the Army program and added more than 9,000 Army families to GSA's previous caseload of 200.

Previously, the Army child care fee subsidy program was managed by contractor Child Care Aware, a nonprofit organization that continues to manage similar programs for the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force. Information was not immediately available about whether the Army is paying less for the administration of the fee subsidy program under GSA than it previously paid the contractor.

“Army families are suffering because of GSA's planning and process failures,” said GSA Inspector General Carol Ochoa, in a statement announcing the findings. “GSA's efforts to gain control of this program have so far failed, as backlogs continue to mount.”

The subsidy programs helps eligible military families reduce the cost of child care in the community when the service is not available on the installation. It compensates for some or all of the gap between the on-post cost of child care, and the cost for care outside the gates. Families must provide documentation certifying their eligibility, and child care providers must prove they are qualified to provide the care. Providers submit invoices to GSA each month for each child enrolled.

By the end of July, the backlog had grown to more than 9,100 unpaid child care provider invoices. Information was not immediately available about whether the Army plans to assist the families who have suffered financial hardships because of the problem.

One soldier wrote to the GSA IG: “It is to the point that my [spouse] and I are now filing for bankruptcy. I cannot stress how much we need assistance with day care. Right now we are paying \$1,000 a month out of pocket.”

GSA IG spokeswoman Sarah Breen said the IG's office is keeping those families informed who have contacted the office.

GSA agreed to accept the transfer of the more than 9,000 Army families beginning last October. The previous chief financial officer of GSA, who was in charge of overseeing child care subsidy programs at the time of the transfer, told IG investigators that in hindsight, GSA should have told the Army it needed more time to put the right systems in place before taking on the expanded program. He also cited “big errors” in planning.

Under the Army’s rules for the program, families must cover the full cost of child care while GSA processes applications for subsidy payments. Some families reported waiting months for GSA payments. They also expressed “extreme frustration” with the agency’s failure to respond to their emails and phone calls.

GSA staff members told investigators they didn’t have the “luxury” of listening to all the families’ voicemail messages, because of the backlog of other tasks. Thus, the voicemail messages periodically were deleted because of the limited size of the voice mailbox.

“We just had to pay \$1,500 to bring our account to a zero [balance] because of your failure to provide us with notice to re-certify and because of your failure to respond to our multiple inquiries,” wrote one Army spouse in an email to GSA. In a later email, the spouse wrote: “This is unacceptable. Still no callback from anyone. It has been two months since we started this process. I keep trying to call and leave messages and no one picks up and no one returns our calls.”

In response to the IG evaluation, GSA’s chief financial officer, who oversees the program, said the agency has taken a number of steps to improve the program’s management, including increasing staffing (another 60 people in July and August), implementing a new system to manage the information and workflow, and simplifying the application process for Army families.

GSA expects to eliminate the backlog by the end of the calendar year, wrote Gerard Badorrek, the agency’s current chief financial officer. “We have been disappointed that these actions did not result sooner in a reduction of the backlog,” he wrote.

GSA’s efforts to hire additional people were affected by on-boarding issues and finding contractors with the right skills, he added.

GSA is seeing some progress, he noted, pointing out that the number of emails that have not been reviewed dropped from over 4,000 on July 31 to 621 by Sept. 2.

GSA officials are meeting with Army officials to discuss the Army’s long-term plans for the child care subsidy program, Badorrek wrote. “We understand that Army is considering a range of options for administering the program, and we will work to support their decision on the program’s future. Once they have decided on a firm path forward, we will work with them to detail a transition plan, including the conditions for program transfer.”

Investigators noted that since 2003, the GSA administered the fee subsidy program for the 200 Army families enrolled in federal child care centers, and the Army was very satisfied with the high level of customer service. But before the GSA took on the extra 9,000 Army families for private child care providers, its sum total workload for all the child care programs it administered in the federal government was only about 1,400 families.

Earlier this year, the GSA IG found that contractors hired to process subsidy program applications were able to get access to sensitive information about Army families, including personally identifiable information, before those contractors had completed required background investigations, fingerprint checks, privacy training and nondisclosure agreements.

The IG issued a management alert, and GSA has taken steps to prevent unauthorized access.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/2015/09/08/backlogged-child-care-program-burdens-army-families/71885350/>

12. Soldiers in uniform pose for photo to 'normalize breastfeeding'

(13 Sep) CNN, By Emanuella Grinberg

There were no lactation rooms or dedicated spaces for breastfeeding mothers when Tara Ruby was on active duty in the Air Force from 1997 to 2001.

After her first son was born, Ruby remembers ducking into empty offices and bathrooms -- anywhere she could find privacy for 20 to 30 minutes at a time to pump.

That's why she was thrilled to learn about a new nursing room in the headquarters of Fort Bliss, the Army post in El Paso, Texas. It has comfortable chairs, a refrigerator for storing milk and a sink -- small things that make a big difference when you need to expel

breast milk every few hours.

All that was missing was a touch of decor on the bare walls. To make the room more inviting, Ruby, now an El Paso photographer, offered her services to donate pictures for the room.

Her vision: Portraits of uniformed soldiers breastfeeding their children.

"I thought it was be nice to offer some photographs as an additional show of support," she said. "Seeing a picture like that helps mothers understand they can be an active soldier and provide support to their children."

The shoot went off without a hitch, resulting in a photo that's drawing praise for normalizing breastfeeding within the hypermasculine context of the military.

Fort Bliss Public Affairs and Garrison Command approved the shoot, an Army spokesman said. Through the Fort Bliss support group for mothers (full name, [Pregnancy and Postpartum Physical Training Program](#); P3T for short) Ruby sought active duty soldiers to model in the photos. She thought she might get two or three volunteers; 10 women showed up for Thursday's shoot with their children, proudly wearing their boots and camo.

"I think it's great the Army is supporting active duty mothers," Ruby said. "Sometimes, you hit a point in your military career where you have to choose between being a soldier and a mother, and a photo like this helps mothers so they don't have to choose. "

Ruby posted the photo Thursday night on her Facebook business page. By Friday morning, for reasons unknown to her, it had been removed from her page and from other pages that had shared it. (Facebook did not immediately respond to a request for comment.) She reposted it Friday morning, thanking everyone involved for supporting her vision to #normalizebreastfeeding.

"Through the guidance of my military friends, the Fort Bliss P3T Program and [Breastfeeding in Combat Boots](#), our Garrison command and our Public Affairs, we were able to show that even our mommies in uniform can provide for their babies," she said. "Breastfeeding their babies doesn't make them less of a soldier, I believe it makes them a better one. Juggling the tasks and expectations of a soldier, plus providing for their own in the best way they possibly can, makes (these) ladies even stronger for it."

Within 24 hours the photo had been shared more than 4,000 times, generating hundreds of positive comments.

As [one person said](#), "Thank you Tara, Fort Bliss, everyone involved to make this possible and an extra big thank you to theses ladies and babies who participated to capture this photo. This is a beautiful way to show how much women give of themselves to country and family."

A few commenters questioned the "professionalism" of the women for breastfeeding in uniform. But Ruby and an Army spokesman said there is no policy that prevents women from breastfeeding in uniform as long as they "maintain professional standards."

Such critiques miss the point, Ruby said. The Army stands by the women in the picture and the idea it promotes. The creation of a nursing room shows the Army is taking steps to implement policies demonstrating that support, she said.

"Practically speaking, it's a matter of retention," she said: "Mothers need support so they don't have to choose between family and service."

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/13/living/breastfeeding-soldiers-uniform-feat/index.html>

13. Navy's New Maternity Leave Policy Aimed At Helping Mothers

(13 Sep) News Herald, By Collin Breaux

For Naval Support Activity Panama City (NSA PC) Chaplain Jennifer Howe, the recent increase in maternity leave for female Navy and Marine Corps service members was a benefit.

When Howe arrived at NSA PC in January 2013, she was nine weeks pregnant. In September of that year she had a son, Maverick, now almost 2 years old, and took six weeks off.

In August 2014, she found out she was pregnant and in April of this year she had another son, Soren, now 4 months old. Howe took

another six weeks and will take more time throughout the upcoming months as her schedule allows.

Now other mothers in two military branches will have more maternity leave time. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus earlier this year tripled maternity leave from six weeks to 18 weeks for women in the Navy and Marine Corps.

The time is available to use during the first year of a child's life, according to a news release. The 18 weeks is a combination of maternity leave and convalescent leave beyond 30 days.

"In the Navy and the Marine Corps, we are continually looking for ways to recruit and retain the best people," Mabus said in a released statement. "We have incredibly talented women who want to serve, and they also want to be mothers and have the time to fulfill that important role the right way. We can do that for them. Meaningful maternity leave when it matters most is one of the best ways that we can support the women who serve our country. This flexibility is an investment in our people and our services, and a safeguard against losing skilled service members."

The Navy said in the news release increased time following the birth of a child has tangible benefits for the physical and psychological health of both mother and child. "For the Navy and Marine Corps, there is the likelihood that women will return to and stay in her career, yielding higher readiness and retention for the services," the Navy said in its release.

Howe said the Navy previously was lagging behind in retaining women and mothers. With the increased time, mothers can return physically and emotionally ready, Howe said.

The policy was effective immediately and applies retroactively to any woman who has been authorized convalescent leave following the birth of a child since Jan. 1. A mother does not need to take all of her leave at once.

Her husband also is relieved with the change, since it will give them time to adjust as a family of four, Howe said. She will be looking at her calendar and seeing when she can take time off. She said planning time off can be focused on events such as holidays and birthdays. The increase in maternity leave helps the bond between mother and child, Howe said.

"It's been nice," Howe said. "There was talk that change was coming. I'm surprised and glad they tripled it. I think it's a great thing. You need to rest for self-care. The extra weeks allow for that."

<http://www.newsherald.com/article/20150913/NEWS/150919660/?Start=2>

14. Dual-Military Families, Junior Enlisted Find Inequality In Sponsorship Rules

(14 Sep) Stars and Stripes, By Erik Slavin

Dual military couples and married, junior servicemembers based overseas say they face obstacles to normal family life that do not exist for most of their co-workers.

The military requires civilian children and family members living with servicemembers to obtain "command sponsorship," a concept with varying rules among services and overseas locations.

Command sponsorship confers legal residence abroad and gives families access to military benefits and services. Without it, some family members may be left behind in the U.S., or face difficulties when they arrive in a foreign country.

In Japan, where about 50,000 U.S. military personnel are stationed, servicemembers married to others in the service have found they can't always get command sponsorship for their newborns — even though babies born to servicemember-civilian marriages are granted command sponsorship at birth.

The same Navy regulations grant command sponsorship to spouses of sailors in grades E-4 and above, while a subset of lower-ranking sailors may face separation from their spouses for three years, based on a ship or unit commander's discretion.

Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan has relayed the difficulties faced by its sailors to officials at higher headquarters in Hawaii and Washington. Meanwhile, it is issuing waivers to affected sailors and studying the problem to see what changes it should make to regional policy.

"What we can do here at CNFJ is try to make sure we have processes that can quickly fix what we can, so that we take care of the sailors," said Cmdr. Ron Flanders, command spokesman.

Dual-military, different process

Chief Petty Officer Jennifer Brett was deployed when her husband, also a Navy chief, received paperwork necessary to bring their

family on orders to Japan.

Since the Navy's rules won't let two units sponsor the same children, Brett's husband became the sponsor.

For more than two years, Brett wasn't able to obtain school, medical and other basic services for her children without presenting a power of attorney document that allows her to act on her husband's behalf.

"Sometimes I feel like a second-class citizen," Brett told an audience of fellow chiefs during an assembly with Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Mike Stevens at Yokosuka in June. "I don't understand why command sponsorship can't be a dual thing."

If it were, the Brett family wouldn't have faced its final command sponsorship hurdle. When Brett last spoke with Stars and Stripes, her husband was set to retire in eight days. His command still hadn't yet transferred the paperwork to release sponsorship authority to her command.

If either of the Bretts was a civilian to start, there wouldn't have been any difficulty. One would be the civilian "dependent" and both would be able to tend to their children's needs under Navy regulations.

"If a servicemember's spouse is command sponsored, children born of that marriage during the current tour of duty are command sponsored at birth," according to regulations published online by the Navy Personnel Command.

The CNFJ regulation on command sponsorship quotes the same sentence, but later states that "children born of a dual military family are not command sponsored at birth."

The reasoning goes back to the Navy's servicewide regulation, Flanders said. Servicemembers and civilian spouses go through an overseas screening application process before moving. Since the family has been screened once, they don't need to go through it again when the family gains new members overseas.

In the case of an active-duty military couple living on their own, neither has ever had to go through command screening.

"If they don't have any other command-sponsored dependents with them, then the first child is the trigger for that process," Flanders said.

The same couple having a second child wouldn't have to reapply for command screening, officials said.

However, in some cases, dual-military couples with newborns are automatically denied command sponsorship when they do apply, according to policy.

Navy regulations bar command sponsorship to new family members whose dual military parents have less than a year left on their tour.

Sailors must instead apply for an exception-to-policy waiver.

However, until and unless they obtain the waiver, the regulation bars their noncommand-sponsored family member from living with them, and threatens servicemembers with punishment "including but not limited to eviction from government quarters."

While there is no one at CNFJ advocating kicking parents out of their house for taking care of their babies, sailors say the regulation creates anxiety because their accompanied family members must be listed in their personnel records.

"Pretty much everybody says, 'What am I supposed to do with my newborn?'" said Petty Officer 1st Class Rachel Thao, whose spouse is also an active-duty sailor.

Thao gave birth to her child before her tour wound down to the one-year mark, but her family still deals with the same difficulties as the Bretts.

Making command exceptions

Thao said she has also witnessed the negative effects of a provision within the regional command sponsorship regulation unrelated to dual-military couples. The regulation bars sailors E-3 and below from gaining command sponsorship for their spouses and children "unless an unusual circumstance exists."

Ship commanding officers and other unit commanders have enough leeway to interpret that as they see fit. However, Thao has known sailors married during "A school" — where sailors gain advanced skills after basic training — but after they've already been selected for orders to Japan.

"We have junior sailors often not granted command sponsorship because they came on unaccompanied orders," Thao said. "They go

home on leave, but they can't bring their spouses out, even paying out of pocket.”

The Navy sparingly assigns overseas orders to married sailors E-3 and below, based on service needs at different locations, Flanders said.

Younger, newly married couples tend to have a greater family and financial support structure around them in the U.S. than they would in Japan, Flanders said.

“But we are also in the business of approving waivers, and we are doing that. ... We do not wish to split up families, especially young families,” Flanders said.

Within roughly the past year, 27 requests for command sponsorship waivers have reached the desk of the two-star admiral commanding CNFJ, and all were approved. The waivers included sailors with less than a year left on their tour and married junior sailors.

Navy officials acknowledged that not all affected sailors might have known about the waivers in the past, or may have been wary of pursuing them after being denied by their commands.

CNFJ is also reaching out to unit commands and ombudsmen to explain how to help dual military families and married junior sailors seeking sponsorship for their families, Flanders said.

Sailors with less than 12 months left on their tour, or whose tour is less than three years, can receive an automatic review of their command sponsorship request from regional headquarters after submitting the necessary paperwork, officials added.

For dual military families, one parent will still need a power of attorney to obtain services for their child; Flanders conceded the inconvenience, but noted that the document can be provided by base legal services for free.

Flanders added that parents like Brett and Thao shouldn't have been denied the ability to take their children to the base hospital, since regulations do not require command sponsorship to make appointments.

In the meantime, region Command Master Chief Joe Fahrney is assembling a working group on command sponsorship that will include CNFJ's chief of staff and a mix of single and married sailors.

The group will assess the scope of command sponsorship-related problems before CNFJ considers changes to regional policy.
<http://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/dual-military-families-junior-enlisted-find-inequality-in-sponsorship-rules-1.367985>

15. SAPR Training and Awareness; Something We All Can Relate To

(10 Sep) Navy Live, By Ms. Jill V. Loftus

Last week I had the opportunity to attend and speak at the [National Sexual Assault Conference](#) in Los Angeles as part of the Military Track session “Inside the Armed Services: Sexual Assault Response and Prevention as a National Priority.”

The conference was kicked-off by high-level representatives from the White House, Department of Justice, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and was attended by over 1500 people.

My involvement in the conference was a strategic opportunity to share the breadth and dimension of our various Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) efforts as well as learn from the achievement of others in the field. Alongside my colleagues from the Department of Defense and the other services (Army, Air Force, Navy, USMC, and Coast Guard), we focused our presentations on recent accomplishments in the areas of victim support and sexual assault prevention. My office organized and moderated the two Military Track sessions that centered on victim support and prevention.

Through the course of the conference, I wanted to emphasize that addressing sexual assault requires multiple, simultaneous efforts that include, but are not limited to, interactive SAPR training in multiple settings, Sailor mentoring, anti-alcohol programs, restructured liberty hours, consistent and repeated leadership messaging, highly visible leadership engagement, and coordination with law enforcement.

One of the areas I focused on sharing with my colleagues was our strategy of using the “InterACT” Bystander Intervention training, which has to-date been attended by over 52,000 Sailors and Marines world-wide. Sailors and Marines learn victim empathy and necessary skills to intervene in volatile situations that could lead to sexual assault.

We are also working with [Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division](#) (NAWC TSD) in Florida to develop a new and innovative way to employ interactive bystander training via virtual reality for Marines. In an effort to address concepts of consent, incapacitation, and healthy relationships, we are collaborating with stakeholders to develop a scenario-based graphic novel aimed at raising awareness in these areas. Also, a video library of on-line training modules will soon be available Fleet-wide that will facilitate ease of access for ashore and afloat units alike.

In addition to sharing with my SAPR colleagues what the Navy is doing to promote bystander intervention and other specific sexual assault prevention strategies, I took the opportunity to see some of the innovative programs being implemented by the other military services such as: special victim counsels and prosecutors; building facilities that house comprehensive services and resources for sexual assault survivors in one location; deployed resiliency counselors; uniformed victim advocates; SAPR crisis intervention teams; bystander intervention campaigns; and leadership prevention summits.

In the company of my colleagues, it quickly became clear that the military, colleges and universities, and other civilian communities are confronted with similarly complicated SAPR issues.

Common themes discussed across the conference were addressing the myth that false reports are common; victim blaming; maintaining victim privacy; retaliation following a reported sexual assault; difficulty in prosecuting and convicting sexual assault offenders; the role of alcohol in sexual assault incidents; and engaging more men in sexual assault prevention efforts — all issues that the military confronts as well.

Additionally, I was pleased to see the progress in the realm of victim support programs. Survivors of sexual assault, both in the military and civilian institutions, more than ever, seem to have a multitude of resources to assist with trauma recovery. These include services that address the psychological, physical, and emotional outcomes related to being sexually assaulted such as individual and group counseling, spiritual and religious support, yoga, meditation, journaling, and other art-based therapy. Conference presenters shared numerous stories of survivor empowerment and examples of lives that have flourished as a result of the pioneering trauma recovery approaches now available.

As I reflected on the conference, I heard and saw many themes that ring true across the spectrum of military services and civilian environments alike. In the aggregate, it's about understanding that SAPR training and awareness is not just about preventing sexual assault, it's about basic human consideration – it's about taking care of one another, and that's something we all can relate to.

<http://navylive.dodlive.mil/2015/09/10/sapr-training-and-awareness-something-we-all-can-relate-to/>