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WELLNESS

[Gillibrand: Obama MIA on Pentagon sex assault](#)

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ASSIGNMENTS

[A Look Ahead At The Joint Women's Leadership Symposium](#)

(5 Jun) Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

This year's theme is 'progress and possibilities – embrace our future now. And what that is focused on is the integration of women into all billets in the Navy – specifically into all operational forces and Special Forces. We want to understand the impacts and the kinds of things we need to do to move ourselves forward on this, and we're going to have those discussions.'

[Ranger training leaders: Women recycles showing 'grit, determination'](#)

(6 Jun) Ledger-Enquirer, By Chuck Williams

Three who were dropped to start all over on June 21st.

[Moran: Navy must revisit 'up or out' system, bonuses](#)

(9 Jun) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

The economy is on an uptick, so the Navy must work harder to compete with the private sector to bring in new sailors and keep them when their service obligations end.

[Newest female four-star takes command of acquisitions program](#)

(10 Jun) Air Force Times, By Phillip Swarts

Gen. Ellen Pawlikowski will lead Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, charged with testing, acquisition, installation and maintenance of current and future weapons systems. She takes over command from Gen. Janet Wolfenbarger — the Air Force's first female four-star — who is retiring after 35 years of service.

['War of Women' panel: Change is on the way for military culture](#)

(11 Jun) Military Times, By Oriana Pawlyk

Lively discussion from military officials (and from critics) surrounds the skill sets women could contribute to missions if given the opportunity to work within highly coveted career fields, or attend notoriously tough courses like Ranger School.

Time For Change Is Now

(12 Jun) Navy News Service, By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Katarzyna Kobiljak

"I just want you to know, I am really uncomfortable," said Chief of the Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Bill Moran. "This is a very intimidating crowd." Moran shared the intimidation and the overwhelming feeling from the gender minority by asking the men at the symposium to stand up.

Tackling Troubling Trend Of Women Leaving Military

(11 Jun) San Diego Union-Tribune, By Ann Rondeau

Much has been written about the role women should play in our military. There are some who argue now is the time to open all jobs to those who seek equal opportunity to serve, fight, win and, if necessary, die for our country. Others worry we simply are not ready for this type of total inclusion and must study the question further.

EXTRA

7 Women In The Marine Corps On Life Beyond The Uniform

(29 May) Bustle, By Jackie Bernstein

As of this writing, women make up about 8 percent of the U.S. Marine Corps. Being that they represent a small fraction of the already small cadre of women who serve (14.5 percent of all military units combined), I had a few questions about why they joined and how they're perceived.

Bea Abrams Cohen dies at 105; WWII vet was advocate for military personnel

(5 Jun) Stars and Stripes, By Ann M. Simmons

Believed to be California's oldest female veteran, Cohen served her country during World War II, spent more than 70 years supporting U.S. military organizations and charities and clocked thousands of hours volunteering for causes that helped bring comfort and joy to former service personnel.

Army Nurse Remembers D-Day

(6 Jun) Fox News San Antonio, By Andrew Lofholm

Initially, Josephine Reaves was in a general hospital during the war, but when the opportunity came for her to go out on a floating hospital, she took it. But the captain of the liberty ship wasn't having it quite yet.

Survey: Women struggle to be seen as 'real' veterans

(8 Jun) Military Times, By Leo Shane III

Women already facing discrimination issues in the ranks confront similar challenges being accepted as "real veterans" in their post-military life, according to a new study released by officials at The Mission Continues on Monday.

What Doctors Say About Transgender Troops

(9 Jun) New York Times Editorial

The American Medical Association on Monday challenged the military's policy barring transgender troops, stating in a resolution that there is "no medically valid reason" to disqualify them from serving.

Homeless female vets are focus of multimedia project

(10 Jun) Military Times, By Lindsey Wray

Lily Casura, an independent journalist, was awarded a \$19,500 grant to complete a multimedia project on homeless female veterans in the U.S. She is one of nine journalists to receive a grant.

When G.I. Jane comes home

(11 Jun) Los Angeles Times, By Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

Since 9/11, more than 200,000 women have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and more than 160 women have died in service to their country. Women have fought on the front lines as combat pilots and military police platoon leaders. They have received Silver Stars and Bronze Stars for Valor. Some have even joined special operations forces on combat missions. Yet when people think of veterans, they rarely think of women.

Navy weighs rule change for transgender sailors

(11 Jun) Washington Examiner, By Tara Copp

The Navy is considering policy changes for how it deals with transgender sailors, following similar changes underway in the Air Force and Army.

Gillibrand: Obama MIA on Pentagon sex assault

(8 Jun) The Agenda, By Darren Samuelsohn

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand blasted President Barack Obama and Pentagon brass on Thursday for failing to show leadership in the fight against military sex crimes, saying there's been a "100 percent failure" in protecting victims from retaliation after they've reported an assault.

In a wide-ranging interview with POLITICO, the New York Democrat said the president has been missing in action on the sexual assault issue, and hasn't lived up to his promise from December 2013 to force an overhaul of the Defense Department's judicial system if it didn't make progress within a year.

"He's not providing leadership that he said he would," Gillibrand said. "He said, and so did [Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman] Gen. [Martin] Dempsey, that they're on the clock, they had a year to solve this problem, to fix this problem, to take responsibility for this problem, and they haven't." White House officials say they have been reviewing for months the Pentagon's progress in implementing dozens of new sexual assault reforms. Impatient with the wait, Gillibrand next week is planning to force a Senate floor vote on her own controversial amendment to remove sexual assault prosecutions from the military's chain of command. Instead of letting senior officers supervise cases within their own ranks, she wants to set up an independent military prosecution system to make those tough calls.

Gillibrand fell five votes short of winning on the same issue the last time she forced a vote in March 2014, despite having support of then-Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Republican presidential hopefuls Rand Paul and Ted Cruz. This time around, facing continued opposition from the Pentagon and a bipartisan collection of senators, Gillibrand is again expected to lose.

The Pentagon's allies argue that Gillibrand's efforts are premature, and the military deserves space to institute the recent reforms to its World War II-era system. These include making retaliation against victims a crime, setting up service-wide victim assistance programs and eliminating commanders' power to overturn jury verdicts. "I think that really at this point we made very sweeping significant reforms and we should give time to implement those reforms," Sen.

Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) said Thursday not long after Gillibrand previewed the debate with her own floor speech. "I still firmly believe we should hold commanders more accountable, not less accountable, for ensuring that victims are treated properly and also that within their units, they do everything they can to prevent and end sexual assault."

Facing an uphill climb, Gillibrand is hoping Obama's support could soften the military's opposition to her amendment, and also free up lawmakers historically loyal to the Defense Department to switch their vote. Gillibrand also challenged one of her opponents' chief arguments by citing a recent Pentagon-sponsored survey that shows 62 percent of women service members continue to face social or professional pressure after they've reported an assault. That data, she said, undermines one of her critics' main talking points in favor of keeping sex assault prosecutions inside the current military justice system.

"To have that retaliation rate be at 62 percent, where they said, 'This is why commanders need to be in charge, we're going to make sure there's not retaliation.' Well, if that was your measurable it's a 100 percent failure," she said.

"I wish the president would show more leadership," Gillibrand added. "I wish he would understand how this is actually negatively affecting good order and discipline. It's affecting our ability to have our best and brightest serving."

White House spokeswoman Brandi Hoffine said Thursday in an email the Obama administration "continues to work" with Defense Secretary Ash Carter as the Pentagon "takes additional steps to prevent instances of sexual assault in the military." She didn't address Gillibrand's specific call for Obama to demand a change in the chain of command structure for sex assault cases.

A senior Pentagon official declined comment when asked about Gillibrand's remarks but noted that "this problem is never going to be fixed" to the point there are ever zero sex crimes in the military.

"We've shown improvements," the official said. "There's been discernible progress. Is it there yet? No."

<http://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2015/06/gillibrand-obama-mia-on-pentagon-sex-assault-000070>

Suicide rate of female military veterans is called 'staggering'

(8 Jun) Los Angeles Times, By Alan Zarembo

New government research shows that female military veterans commit suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women, a startling finding that experts say poses disturbing questions about the backgrounds and experiences of women who serve in the armed forces.

Their suicide rate is so high that it approaches that of male veterans, a finding that surprised researchers because men generally are far more likely than women to commit suicide.

"It's staggering," said Dr. Matthew Miller, an epidemiologist and suicide expert at Northeastern University who was not

involved in the research. "We have to come to grips with why the rates are so obscenely high."

Though suicide has become a major issue for the military over the last decade, most research by the Pentagon and the Veterans Affairs Department has focused on men, who account for more than 90% of the nation's 22 million former troops. Little has been known about female veteran suicide.

The rates are highest among young veterans, the VA found in new research compiling 11 years of data. For women ages 18 to 29, veterans kill themselves at nearly 12 times the rate of nonveterans.

In every other age group, including women who served as far back as the 1950s, the veteran rates are between four and eight times higher, indicating that the causes extend far beyond the psychological effects of the recent wars.

The data include all 173,969 adult suicides — men and women, veterans and nonveterans — in 23 states between 2000 and 2010.

It is not clear what is driving the rates. VA researchers and experts who reviewed the data for The Times said there were myriad possibilities, including whether the military had disproportionately drawn women at higher suicide risk and whether sexual assault and other traumatic experiences while serving played a role.

Whatever the causes, the consistency across age groups suggests a long-standing pattern.

"We've been missing something that now we can see," said Michael Schoenbaum, an epidemiologist and military suicide researcher at the National Institute of Mental Health who was not part of the work.

The 2011 death of 24-year-old Katie Lynn Cesena is one of a dozen cases The Times identified in Los Angeles and San Diego counties. Cesena's death highlights two likely factors in the rates.

First, she had reported being raped by a fellow service member. The Pentagon has estimated that 10% of women in the military have been raped while serving and another 13% subject to unwanted sexual contact, a deep-rooted problem that has gained attention in recent years as more victims come forward.

The distress forced Cesena out of the Navy, said her mother, Laurie Reaves.

She said her daughter was being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder and depression at the VA Medical Center in San Diego and lived in fear of her purported rapist — who was never prosecuted — and his friends.

Cesena had started writing a memoir and shared the beginning on Facebook. "I would like to dedicate this book to the United States Navy and all the men and women who have bravely served our country with humility and have been raped and were brave enough to tell someone, whether anything came of it or not," she wrote.

The second factor was Cesena's use of a gun, a method typically preferred by men.

In the general population, women attempt suicide more often than men but succeed less because women usually use pills or other methods that are less lethal than firearms. Female

veterans, however, are more likely than other women to have guns, government surveys have shown.

In the new data, VA researchers found that 40% of the female veterans who committed suicide used guns, compared with 34% of other women — enough of a difference to have a small effect on the rates.

Another area of interest to researchers is the backgrounds of women who join the military.

Female service members have always been volunteers, and their elevated suicide rates across all generations may be part of a larger pattern. Male veterans 50 and older — the vast majority of whom served during the draft era, which ended in 1973 — had roughly the same suicide rates as nonveteran men their age. Only younger male veterans, who served in the all-volunteer force, had rates that exceeded those of other men.

The differences suggest that the suicide rates may have more to do with who chooses to join the military than what happens during their service, said Claire Hoffmire, the VA epidemiologist who led the research. A more definitive explanation would require information not included in the data, such as when each veteran served and for how long.

Hoffmire pointed to [recent research showing](#) that men and women who join the military are more likely to have endured difficult childhoods, including emotional and sexual abuse.

Other studies have found that Army personnel — before enlistment — had elevated rates of suicidal thinking, attempts and various [mental health problems](#). Those studies did not break out the numbers for women.

Though the U.S. military has long provided camaraderie and a sense of purpose to men, it has been a harsher place for women. "They lack a sense of belonging," said Leisa Meyer, a historian at the College of William and Mary in Virginia and an expert on women in the military.

The Pentagon capped the number of women at 2% of the total military until 1967. Women trained in separate units until the late 1970s. Historically, they were nurses, which in wartime meant exposure to trauma.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, where roadside bombs were common, women suffered unprecedented numbers of casualties. But Defense Department data show their active-duty suicide rate did not rise — a sharp contrast to men, who saw their rate double.

The new data, which cover about half the veteran population, show that suicide rates rise sharply after service members leave the military.

In all, 40,571 men and 2,637 women identified as veterans through military records killed themselves over the 11 years in

the data. The overall results were published online last month in the journal *Psychiatric Services*.

Suicide rates are usually expressed as the annual number of deaths for every 100,000 people. For male veterans, that figure was 32.1, compared with 20.9 for other men.

The numbers were much further apart for women: 28.7 for veterans and 5.2 for everybody else.

A stratification of the data by age group — which was provided to *The Times* — shows that young veterans face the greatest risk.

Among men 18 to 29 years old, the annual number of suicides per 100,000 people were 83.3 for veterans and 17.6 for nonveterans.

The numbers for women in that age group: 39.6 and 3.4.

The differences between female veterans and other women are less extreme in older age groups but still considered alarmingly high by researchers.

The states in the study represent about half the nation's veterans but did not include California.

In the local cases identified by *The Times*, one pattern stood out: Several women had been discharged early for psychiatric or medical problems.

A back injury forced out Sara Leatherman in 2009 and continued to cause her pain. She was also suffering from traumatic memories of maiming and death she witnessed as a medic in Iraq, said her grandmother, Virginia Umbaugh.

Breast pumps, nursing supplies to be covered by Tricare

(8 Jun) Military Times, By Patricia Kime

Tricare will begin covering the cost of breast pumps and lactation counseling services for new moms starting July 1.

Under an update to the Tricare policy manual released Friday, the military health program will expand lactation benefits for new mothers to include manual or electric breast pumps, some supplies and outpatient counseling services.

The change is retroactive to Dec. 19, 2014, so Tricare beneficiaries who obtained these supplies or services on or after that date may be eligible for reimbursement if they meet the requirements.

According to the new policy, Tricare will cover — at no cost or co-payment — one manual or standard electric breast pump per birth as well as supplies such as power adapters, storage bags and special bottles to beneficiaries with a prescription.

Leatherman was 24, attending community college in La Mesa in San Diego County and receiving treatment for PTSD when she hanged herself in her grandmother's shower in 2010, Umbaugh said.

The war, however, was not the only factor. Leatherman had tried to kill herself with pills while stationed in Texas, before going to Iraq, said Umbaugh, who raised her. "I don't think there's any one answer," she said.

In other cases, veteran status seemed almost incidental, with decades passing since military service and no clear link to the broken relationships, financial problems, mental health troubles and other disappointments that can accumulate in the course of a life.

Linda Raney was 65 years old in 2011 and dealing with problems that mounted for several years: the death of her sister in a car accident, money and health difficulties.

She was living with an aunt in Acton and was disappointed that she didn't meet the financial requirements for the VA to help her get her own place.

"She didn't want to be a burden on her aunt," said her nephew, Kevin Percy. One afternoon, she called him to say goodbye, then committed suicide with prescription pills.

She had never talked much about her time in the Air Force.

"I don't know her specialty," Percy said. "She was very young."

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-female-veteran-suicide-20150608-story.html#page=2>

Breast pump kits also are covered, as are outpatient lactation counseling services — up to six sessions — provided the counseling is done by a Tricare-approved provider.

Covered items must be obtained from a Tricare-authorized provider, supplier or vendor to be covered, but according to Tricare, any civilian store or pharmacy meets that criterion.

If items are purchased at a retail store or online, beneficiaries need to file a claim for reimbursement.

To be eligible for reimbursement, Tricare beneficiaries must file a claim form along with a current prescription and itemized receipts for equipment and supplies.

The fiscal 2015 National Defense Authorization Act mandated that the Defense Health Agency change its lactation coverage policies to align them with the provisions of the Affordable

Care Act, which requires private insurers to cover rental or purchase of breast pumps, support and counseling at no cost.

The new policy also provides for coverage of hospital-grade breast pumps for moms whose infants are unable to nurse directly because of illness, birth defects, adoption or other medical conditions.

It does not pay for supplies such as batteries and battery packs, regular baby bottles, travel bags, cleaning supplies, nursing

bras and pads and other tangential nursing items, such as specialty garments or medicated ointments.

A Tricare official said more details on the benefit and its implementation will be released sometime in the next two weeks.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/health-care/2015/06/08/breastfeeding-tricare-ndaa-2015-covered/28685915/>

Military sexual assault dispute between McCaskill, Gillibrand, could arise again

(9 Jun) Stars and Stripes, By Chuck Raasch

Debate over the Pentagon's proposed \$612 spending bill for 2016 is about to rekindle a battle from last year over sexual assault in the military, a disagreement that has put frequent allies Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., on opposite sides.

Gillibrand wants prosecution of military sexual assault to be done by independent, trained, military prosecutors, leaving other crimes to be prosecuted within the chain of command. Last week, Gillibrand blasted President Barack Obama and Pentagon leaders for what she says is insufficient progress in dealing with sexual assault in the military and vowed to try to amend the National Defense Appropriations Act to do that. Debate on that bill continues in the Senate this week.

McCaskill favors keeping the prosecution inside the military chain of command and her position won last year. She says there has been noticeable progress since legislation she sponsored passed the Senate early in 2014, and her advisers expect the same result when Gillibrand attempts to amend the Pentagon spending bill.

Gillibrand cited a recent Pentagon survey showing that 62 percent of women in the military face some kind of retaliation after reporting an assault. Gillibrand told Politico that those findings show that Pentagon promises to make it easier to report sexual assault in the military are not sufficiently working.

"I wish the President would show more leadership," Gillibrand told Politico. "I wish he would understand how this is actually negatively affecting good order and discipline. It's affecting our ability to have our best and brightest serving."

Gillibrand's efforts failed by five votes to defeat a filibuster in March, 2014, and McCaskill prevailed in keeping prevention efforts and prosecution inside the military. McCaskill's aides

believe that the election of more Republican senators in last fall's elections make Gillibrand's task even more difficult this time.

McCaskill makes a glass-half-full argument in defense of her law. Her office Monday issued a background report pointing out that a 2014 Pentagon study showed a 29 percent drop in incidents of unwanted sexual contact since 2012, and that the number of reported incidents were up 11 percent from 2013 to 2014 -- proof that efforts to lower incidence and increase reporting of those incidents that did occur were going in the right direction.

McCaskill spokesman John LaBombard said the Missouri senator believes that retaliation against victims who do report is still too high, but that much of the retaliation is peer-to-peer, not from commanders to people filing complaints. Stripping commanders of those responsibilities by sending prosecution outside the military would backfire by making commanders less accountable, he said.

LaBombard issued a statement from McCaskill that said: "With incidents down, reporting up, and survivors reporting more confidence in the chain of command, I believe most of my Senate colleagues are aware of the concrete progress being made and the historic protections we now have in place for our victims."

This isn't the only amendment that could stir up debate around the Pentagon spending blueprint. Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., said he plans to offer an amendment that would continue operation of the Export-Import bank beyond its expiration date at the end of the month.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/us/military-sexual-assault-dispute-between-mccaskill-gillibrand-could-arise-again-1.351485>

A Look Ahead At The Joint Women's Leadership Symposium

(5 Jun) Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

The Sea Services Leadership Association's (SSLA) 28th annual Joint Women's Leadership Symposium (JWLS) is going on next week from June 11-12 in San Diego. Each year, JWLS brings together service members, decision makers and policy influencers to address global challenges

and to encourage and strengthen leadership development within the services.

The President of the SSLA and the Chair of this year's JWLS, Lt. Cmdr. Rosie Goscinski spoke with Mass Communication

Specialist 1st Class Elliott Fabrizio on [@USNPeople's Weekly Wire Rundown](#) to discuss this year's event.

Here are a few highlights from the interview:

Beyond ear-marking an application to apply for next year, why should Sailors not in attendance care about and follow what's happening at this symposium?

"Last year, the Chief of Naval Personnel attended, and he heard from Sailors that they needed longer gym hours, expanded Child Development Center (CDC) hours and increased maternity leave. Those ideas translated into the SECNAV's recent policy changes that included all those issues. So at the symposium, we have this dialogue that can affect changes for our Navy's future."

What issues do you see being discussed during this year's symposium?

"This year's theme is 'progress and possibilities – embrace our future now'. And what that is focused on is the integration of women into all billets in the Navy – specifically into all operational forces and Special Forces. We want to understand

the impacts and the kinds of things we need to do to move ourselves forward on this, and we're going to have those discussions."

I know this event is open to both men and women, but who is your ideal candidate?

"We encourage anyone from E-1 to O-10 to attend. We want both men and women to be a part of these discussions. Also, Sailors that are considering their career milestones or considering if the Navy is still for them – we've found that of those that come to this symposium, 92 percent of them have made a decision to stay in the Navy, because they've felt recharged and reenergized, and that the mentorship and training they've received has been really beneficial to their career."

For more information on JWLS,

visit <http://www.sealeader.org/events/>

[View Clip](#) (RT: 3:55)

<http://navylive.dodlive.mil/2015/06/05/wwr-interview-a-look-ahead-at-the-joint-womens-leadership-symposium/>

Ranger training leaders: Women recycles showing 'grit, determination'

(6 Jun) Ledger-Enquirer, By Chuck Williams

Three soldiers remain at Fort Benning awaiting the opportunity to become the first women to complete the most physically and mentally demanding training offered by the U.S. Army.

Their task to complete Ranger School was made much taller on May 29 when they took the command staff's offer to start the course over after failing to meet standards more than six weeks into it. They join the next class on June 21, two days after the class they started with graduates.

The three women who will restart Ranger School -- what the Army terms a "Day 1 recycle" -- would not have been offered that opportunity if there was not a chance of success, Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Arnold said Friday.

"We believe that they are close enough if they start again that there would be a success," Arnold said. "What is the physical condition? That is a consideration. Their mind will tell them they want to do it, but a lot of times their body is incapable of that. ... These women have done the same thing. They came in and said, 'Please let me do this again. I really want to be here.' And we have done it. We look at the files, and they can be successful."

The final decision on whether or not a student gets an offer to recycle part or all of the course rests with Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade Commander Col. David G. Fivecoat and Arnold. They make those decisions using data collected by Ranger instructors who grade the students on small-unit patrols and write them up for positive or negative actions.

The three women who remain in the school were part of a group of 19 who started April 19. That was cut to eight by the end of the Ranger Assessment Phase. On May 29, five women

were dropped after failing the Darby patrol phase for the second time. The three women waiting to start the course over also failed Darby twice.

Five soldiers -- including the three women -- were offered the opportunity to recycle from the beginning. Two male soldiers declined the offer and were dropped from the course.

"I would like to take this back and not just focus on the women, but anyone who takes a Day 1 recycle -- been through Darby twice or has been further in the course -- is displaying an incredible amount of grit, determination and desire to earn the Ranger tab," Fivecoat said during a Friday telephone interview.

By starting over, the three soldiers have to pass the Ranger Assessment Phase for a second time. It's a four-day process designed to test for the physical demands that will be needed throughout the course.

Students must pass a basic physical fitness test that includes being able to do 49 push-ups, 59 sit-ups, six chin-ups and a 5-mile run in 40 minutes.

They also must pass a water assessment in Victory Pond at Camp Rogers.

Before the assessment phase is over, soldiers have to pass a land navigation test and complete a 12-mile road march in under three hours carrying about 50 pounds of equipment and water.

They would then move to Camp Darby to run the Darby Queen, a 26-obstacle course that is arguably the Army's most difficult.

"Realistically, they are starting over from the beginning," Arnold said. "They are going all the way back. Got to do every RAP week standard like every other student. ... If they come in and they are asking for a Day 1, they present the desire and passion because they want to earn their tab."

What does it say about soldiers who are willing to start the course over?

"What it says about them is they are outstanding soldiers and they have grit and determination," Arnold said. "They are not asking for any special favors. They are not asking for anything but the opportunity to earn a Ranger tab. We do this with the male soldiers, as well."

At the end of each patrol phase, the students are given an honest assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, Fivecoat said.

"We are trying to make sure they go away from Ranger School with an acknowledgement of what their shortcomings were from the course and a plan to try and fix it so they can come back and be successful at Ranger School," Fivecoat said.

Camp Darby, which sits on the eastern edge of Fort Benning, is the first of three patrolling phases. After successfully completing Darby, students move to Camp Merrill in the north Georgia mountains, then to Camp Rudder in the Florida swamps near Destin.

Darby has proved difficult for the women students, who have failed each time.

Small-untill patrols are the core of the Darby training, and those patrols are done as soldiers are deprived of sleep and food.

"You are talking about extended movement through the woods and rolling terrain," Arnold said of the Darby patrols. "You are given a mission. That mission is to conduct a

Moran: Navy must revisit 'up or out' system, bonuses

(9 Jun) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

The economy is on an uptick, so the Navy must work harder to compete with the private sector to bring in new sailors and keep them when their service obligations end.

The Defense Department's personnel system, more than half a century old, is ripe for overhaul in this effort, as is the Navy's inflexible bonus system, Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Bill Moran said in meeting with Washington reporters Tuesday.

Moran joined leaders from the Army staff and DoD personnel management in a discussion on shaping the future of the force, from the old school "up or out" promotion system to recruiting

raid/ambush/squad attack on an objective. You have to come up with a route to get from Point A to Point B, tell everyone the plan, react to contact enroute, complete the mission, exit off objective and go to the patrol base and reset for the next mission."

The patrols are designed to be completed in 24 hours or less.

"During that 24-hour period, they are changing the leadership within the organization at least twice," Fivecoat said. "Start with one, halfway through switch to another group of leaders. Make sure next group of leaders is ready to execute the plan."

Ranger instructors are with the patrols the entire time.

The April 19 Ranger School class was initially the only one that the Army said would admit females. Opening a Ranger School class to women is part of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Soldier 2020 effort. The plan aims to integrate women into previously closed military occupational specialties. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno said last month the Army is looking at allowing female soldiers to attend "a couple more" classes of Ranger School.

As the women await the next class to start June 21 -- two days after the class the women started with graduates -- the soldiers are not sitting in the barracks relaxing, Fivecoat said.

"I don't think they -- the Day One recycles and the other recycles -- would describe it as waiting," Fivecoat said on Friday. "This morning they did a road march along with push-ups and sit-ups and chin-ups. They are conducting demanding physical training so they have the ability to make it through RAP week, which, as you saw, was a pretty demanding physical event."

http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/2015/06/06/3756942_ranger-trainers-say-women-earned.html?rh=1#storylink=cpy

pools and adopting a more corporate approach to talent management.

"I do agree that up-and-out is a necessary part of how we operate," Moran said. "The question we all have is, how wide is that pyramid?"

While the Army and Marine Corps might be more concerned about maintaining troop volumes, he said, the Air Force and the Navy are focused on technological expertise.

Up and out might work for the more straightforward jobs, he said. But for more specialized careers, the Navy has so far

been unable to satisfactorily analyze its own data to find a threshold where it could retain more experienced sailors — who aren't being selected for promotion — without jamming up advancement chances in the lower ranks.

Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Ben Carson offered that fields like the judge advocate general corps and cyber might benefit from letting officers off the admiral track, giving them longer times in grade and longer careers because of their expertise.

In those fields, he said, a service member's career might peak in their 40s or 50s, but the system is designed to send them back into the civilian sector if they aren't reaching the highest ranks.

And then there is the problem of retaining junior and mid-grade officers and enlisted, who can take their skills to the private sector for more pay.

To tackle it, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus wants to offer bonus packages more like those in the private sector, including non-monetary incentives like guaranteed duty stations and advanced training along with money.

"Money is the principle tool we have for retention, and it's out of balance with the non-monetary options we have," Moran said.

For many sailors, incentives that would benefit their careers or personal lives, like plum assignments or favored bases, could be as important, or more so, than money.

There's also the issue of an "archaic" bonus system that casts a wide net via naval administrative message every year.

Newest female four-star takes command of acquisitions program

(10 Jun) Air Force Times, By Phillip Swarts

The Air Force's newest female four-star general took command of the service's weapons acquisition program Monday.

Gen. Ellen Pawlikowski will lead Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, charged with testing, acquisition, installation and maintenance of current and future weapons systems.

She takes over command from Gen. Janet Wolfenbarger — the Air Force's first female four-star — who is retiring after 35 years of service.

"The fact that we're changing command from one woman to another is interesting, and it's historic," Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh said. "But it's not as cool to me as the fact that we're changing from one phenomenal leader to another."

"What we can't do is tell you how good that reeling in of product is," Moran said. "Often times we end up paying people who are going to stay in anyway."

New bonus packages could be tailored to a sailor's individual skills and education, and possibly weed out those who aren't looking for an incentive to remain in uniform.

The changes will be incremental, as Congress must approve new bonus schemes, Moran said, and the Navy will have to build a system to better paint a complete picture of a sailor's service record, assets and expertise when putting together a bonus package.

In terms of recruitment, Mabus announced in May that the Navy is working toward a recruiting and retention goal of 25 percent women.

Officials said Tuesday that DoD is looking at more ways to appeal to high school graduates and college students, and Moran added that even more diversification could benefit the services.

So many service members are people whose family members also served that the pool is becoming insular, Moran said.

"Are we becoming a caste system that isn't healthy for the overall national security apparatus?" he said.

The services need to look beyond the "usual suspects" if they want to attract and retain the best talent, he added.
<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/careers/navy/2015/06/09/navy-personnel-moran-recruiting-retention-bonuses/28735317/>

Pawlikowski has spent much of her career dealing with research and acquisitions, including serving as the director of the Airborne Laser System Program Office, commander of the Air Force Research Laboratory, and commander of the Space and Missile Systems Center.

Her previous posting was as the military deputy for William LaPlante, the assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition at the Pentagon.

"I have seen what the AFMC men and women can do, and I'm excited about leading and working with you all to make this the most agile Air Force we've ever seen," Pawlikowski said at her swearing-in ceremony.

She takes command of an office with 80,000 people and a \$60 billion budget, according to Defense Department records.

'War of Women' panel: Change is on the way for military culture

(11 Jun) *Military Times*, By Oriana Pawlyk

It's no secret the Pentagon is closely monitoring how female service members move forward as more career fields open up to women.

Lively discussion from military officials (and from critics) surrounds the skill sets women could contribute to missions if given the opportunity to work within highly coveted career fields, or attend notoriously tough courses like Ranger School.

But a panel of military experts said it should not be about what women could bring to the table, but what women already bring.

"The issue ... is tied up with the whole larger conversation of women in combat, and ... we seem really shocked when we see women who are working with [elite combat forces] when for the people in that community that has long been the case — but our conversation is just catching up," said Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, author of "Ashley's War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield." Lemmon's book follows 1st Lt. Ashley White, as Lemmon describes, a "Martha Stewart meets G.I. Jane" soldier who had a great desire to serve and "not [be] confined to having to live up to other people's definitions of what women in combat ... bring to war."

The panel, which came together at Washington's New America Foundation on June 10, explored Lemmon's book in the context of what the future holds for women in the military.

Other panelists were: Army Reserve Staff Sgt. Jennifer Hunt, who was one of four plaintiffs seeking to overturn the Pentagon's exclusion of women from many combat roles in 2012; Marine Corps vet Sgt. Sebastian Bae, a former squad leader and current contributor to *Foreign Policy*; former Army infantryman with the 3-2 Stryker Brigade Alex Horton, currently with The Mission Continues and the Truman National Security Project organizations; and Capt. Elizabeth Verardo, an AH-64D Apache pilot and company commander who's pursuing global affairs studies at Yale University.

The panel was moderated by New America's Douglas Ollivant, a retired Army officer and former director for Iraq at the National Security Council during the George W. Bush and Obama administrations.

The panel members said that change — within the culture of the military and the general public — is on its way not only because of progressive discussion but because women have and continue to be resources within every rank.

And women can apply their special skill sets — from working with cultural support teams or generally skills they attain

within their career fields, for example — regardless of the decision to move forward in combat roles, Horton said.

"No one's being used to their capacity," he said of retaining the best within the military ranks — male and "doubly" for female. "And at this point, we have to think about recruiting for a decade down the line ... but you're leaving out this wide berth of people with the haves and have-nots and when drawing women in, and this is a national security issue. ... We cannot get away from our talent pool."

And panelists agree: These women, current and future, are the talent pool necessary when dictating how future battles are won.

Here are some highlights from the ["War of Women" panel](#), and about the furthering the female combat story:

On the Marine Corps' infantry experiment and on Ranger School:

Verardo: Your credibility lies in your ability to perform physically. With Ranger School, the one concern that I have is people will jump on the fact that none of these women advanced to the next stage, but I have a lot of male friends who are Ranger-qualified who would say, "Well you're not really a Ranger unless you recycled." And I think it's important to realize just how far these women went, and ... it's just a matter of time. They can do it, they just don't have the exposure to train for it like an infantry lieutenant from Officer Basic who has drilled into his head from day one.

Lemmon: There was never a push from women to change to standard. I promise you, if the standards are revisited, women will be up in arms because they don't want a "dumbed-down" standard.

Hunt: The women who joined the military, we didn't make up those standards. ... I would say, for physical training tests (which vary by service, age group, gender), raise those standards and then women would be expected to meet those levels and train for them.

Horton: We don't allow women to be in the same capacity, and yet when we see them try and don't make it, it's just a confirmation [of that bias].

Bae: One of the gripes I have with these "experiments" the Marine Corps is having and the Army's having is that, even if these women pass these schools, especially Ranger School, they won't be considered infantrymen. It becomes, "Thank you for your three months of your hellish training, now go back to your unit, or maybe have a different career [altogether]." The

conversation should not be whether women do serve in combat roles, it should be, how do we set up a system to not only have them succeed but excel in those roles.

On integration: A step forward or "just an experiment" to bring women into combat roles/more military roles?

Hunt: There's no female out there ... that wants a leg up, and I would even say that the combat exclusion policy actually gives men in the military an unearned advantage because they don't have to compete with the best qualified women; they can maybe skate by where they may have gotten weeded out if women had been allowed to compete.

Bringing another skill set and another experience from someone who happens to be a woman helps us prepare for the next battle.

Lemmon (in the context of speaking to a Ranger): He said to me, "A job well done sticks out, I don't care who's doing it."

Verardo: When I'm going to flight school, I'm not trying to be the best female pilot I could be, I'm trying to be the best pilot, and best lieutenant.

Time For Change Is Now

(12 Jun) Navy News Service, By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Katarzyna Kobiljak

The Sea Service Leadership Association (SSLA), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the mentorship and development of military leaders, hosted a women's symposium June 11-12 in San Diego to discuss current issues for women in the military.

The 28th Annual Joint Women's Leadership Symposium, which welcomed more than 750 attendees – men and women, focused on opportunities for women while exploring options for the future.

Lt. Cmdr. Rosie Goscinski, SSLA's president, kicked off the two-day event by asking all present members to take a "selfie". She then took a "groupie" of everybody taking a "selfie". The audience erupted in laughter.

The theme of the symposium was "Progress and Possibilities: Embrace Our Future Now" and included discussion forums, questions-and-answer panels, interactive workshops, and multiple military and civilian speakers.

The SSLA Chairwoman of the Board of Directors Rear Adm. Cari B. Thomas of the U.S. Coast Guard was the first guest speaker.

"Last year when we were in Norfolk, an E-9 who worked for me, came up to me after the conference and told me that it was the most uncomfortable he has ever felt when he walked into a room full of women," Thomas said. "When I asked him why he felt like that, he said 'he had never walked in a room so full of women before.' And, I said to him 'now you know what it feels like master chief.'"

Thomas encouraged the audience to take time and to learn from each other's experiences and struggles and to allow ourselves to be imperfect and supportive of one another.

Bae: (on being told by his commander not to associate with two women attached to his unit): I learned the women [with us were] our asset, not a liability, but we were treating them like they were toxic; and I wish we included the women more and honestly, the whole conversation in America about whether they should serve in combat roles is ridiculous; how can you deny — women who are asked to defend our nation — the quality of access in their own military and own public service?

On public perception:

Lemmon: I think that in some ways the Pentagon is hemmed in by the public. The public has yet to realize that these are their daughters, their sisters, their wives ... that these are people they know who are driven to serve in this kind of way. And I really wanted "Ashley's War" to puncture this kind of "otherization." It's still kind of shocking for the general public [to accept that].

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/06/11/war-of-women-panel-change-is-on-the-way-for-military-culture/71065916/>

Chief of the Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Bill Moran followed Thomas as the next guest speaker. He walked on stage and took a selfie with the audience before starting his speech.

"I just want you to know, I am really uncomfortable," said Moran. "This is a very intimidating crowd."

Moran shared the intimidation and the overwhelming feeling from the gender minority by asking the men at the symposium to stand up.

The percentage of females in the military is 17.8, said Moran.

"You are a such key component in today's military."

Moran stressed the importance of diversity in the military – whether gender, race, background or geographic – and the necessity to move forward and become an even more successful military. He encouraged the women to engage in conversation with leaders present at the symposium.

"We need to hear from you," said Moran. "We can't solve our challenges, and we can't look into future without your input." Before closing, Moran discussed last year's conference where women spoke about challenges they had met. He explained that leadership listened to their concerns and are working to implement changes in current policies.

"Our single biggest challenge in today's Navy, and it is probably the truth with all the services, is that we have powerful, wonderful women joining our service, but then you all leave," said Moran. "I need your help to understand why." According to Moran, lower retention rates of females in the military have led to fewer women in high-ranking positions. He further said that it is time to change so we can have more of women's perspectives on certain issues.

"Leadership is listening now," said Moran.

After the military panel, civilian guest speakers shared their experiences and best practices and talked about overcoming the barriers many women may encounter.

Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, author of two New York Times best-sellers, said people want to know the struggles and the reality of life facing women in the military.

"Woman can be heroes too," said Lemmon.

During an intermission, women spoke to one another about the symposium and the ideas they would like to share with leadership.

"It is nice to know you are not the only one going through the struggles you face in day-to-day military life," said

Information Systems Technician 1st Class Annette Yap, from Littoral Combat Ship Crew 201.

Yap said it makes her feel good to know that somebody is listening to the problems women in the military encounter and that she appreciates the support from both military and civilian counterparts.

Tackling Troubling Trend Of Women Leaving Military

(11 Jun) San Diego Union-Tribune, By Ann Rondeau

Much has been written about the role women should play in our military. There are some who argue now is the time to open all jobs to those who seek equal opportunity to serve, fight, win and, if necessary, die for our country. Others worry we simply are not ready for this type of total inclusion and must study the question further.

These are important discussions for a democracy and an all-volunteer force to have, but as I ponder the question, I am left with the belief that the inclusion debate is secondary these days to a more fundamental challenge.

Like Silicon Valley and Wall Street, our military struggles to keep talented women at work. Even though young women make up almost 60 percent of the high school classes graduating this spring and are 33 percent more likely to earn a college degree, those who join the military choose to leave early in their careers at double the rate of their male counterparts.

Indeed, the real challenge of today is less about inclusion than of retention of high potential women. If we don't fix this troubling trend, we won't have enough high-potential women to fill leadership positions. For the success of the force at all levels, we must turn around the retention trend.

At a time when women are encouraged to "lean in" and "know their value," many do not believe it is possible to actually achieve both their professional and personal goals. They worry there is no way to be a successful wife and mother as well as a competent and successful military professional and warfighter. During my 30-plus years of service, this was not the case – there simply was not a choice. To be successful and competitive, my career had to come first. Notably, there were extraordinary individuals who somehow found the added hours and summoned superhuman strengths to make both career and family a possibility, but their numbers were few and they often did not compete for senior level jobs or responsibilities.

The good news is today's force and senior leaders recognize that work-life balance is not just a "women's problem," but a challenge to the stability and long-term health of the entire all-volunteer force. It is a societal challenge, particularly in

"This symposium lets me interact with women from other branches of the military," said Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Flor Joseph.

Army Maj. Marie Gutierrez said this was her first time at the symposium and she liked the concept. She also said she knows the hardship of being a woman in the military and the expectation of proving one's self to her male counterparts.

"Women in the military are expected to do everything as well as men but also backward and in high heels," said Gutierrez. Many women who attended the symposium raised concern about equal opportunity and a lack of opportunity to join special operations.

"A lot of people don't realize our potential," said Marine Sgt. Victoria Poland. "I would like to see more equal opportunity for females, because we are capable of doing everything that males can do, maybe differently, maybe not the same way, but we are capable of getting the job done."

http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=87618

democracies, and is not likely to solve itself. However, like so many other times in our nation's history, the opportunity is here for the talented and thoughtful men and women of our armed forces to lead change.

This week, here in San Diego more than 1,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, along with senior leaders, will come together at the Joint Women's Leadership Symposium to tackle these very issues. Beyond just networking and socializing, they will look for grass-roots solutions that can be enacted to help evolve opportunity and culture across the military and perhaps the nation.

The theme of this year's symposium, "Progress and Possibilities: Embrace our Future Now," is intended to identify ways to provide greater workplace choice and flexibility. It is just as important as developing the next game-changing weapon system. We must be as mindful of "cutting edge" approaches to people as we are of technology. Senior decision makers are pushing hard to break down barriers, but the market for good ideas is not theirs alone. The case and path for real and intelligent change must come from those in service. We know what the problems are; we know why the talented leave. The challenge for this generation, for those who will attend this week's symposium, is to stay, to make a difference and change the face and prospect of service for everyone.

The solution is in the hands of those in service and to do what the American military have reliably done: develop smart and cutting edge solutions to nettlesome challenges. We will need to try new and innovative approaches that ensure competence, reward service and recognize the hopes and dreams of all those who serve. To a large degree, the question for this symposium is about women's retention in the military. To a larger degree, it is about appreciating our people in the context of their times, modernizing approaches to talent and leading the way for the nation.

Rondeau is a retired U.S. Navy vice admiral and last served as president of National Defense University. She is a consultant with Allen Austin Leadership Consulting and an independent consultant to IBM Watson Group.

7 Women In The Marine Corps On Life Beyond The Uniform

(29 May) *Bustle*, By Jackie Bernstein

As of this writing, women make up about 8 percent of the U.S. Marine Corps. Being that they represent a small fraction of the already small cadre of women who serve (14.5 percent of all military units combined), I had a few questions about why they joined and how they're perceived. Outside of their small community of veterans, how do people react when they find out they've served? Does it change how they're perceived in the corporate world? How has being a Marine taught them the skills they need to succeed?

It turns out that their military service tends to challenge assumptions that many people have about women, and women in the military. There's no one type of woman that decides to join the Marines, but what they do share is instant credibility in any room they enter. They also share a deep pride in serving a higher mission, and a passion for dispelling misconceptions about what women are capable of doing, both in the military and civilian worlds.

We've partnered with the U.S. Marine Corps to give you a peek into the life of female Marines who have brought their unique skills to a vast number of industries – long after serving on active duty. Whether they're working for the government, dipping a toe into the startup world, or continuing to serve through nonprofit organizations, these women can teach us a thing or two about leadership and resilience.

Katie Horgan

Years of active duty: Six.

Rank before transitioning: Captain.

What she does now: Director of operations and logistics at Plated, an ingredient-delivery service based in New York.

What inspired you to join the Marines?

I think a lot of people would say that the major impetus was 9/11. I wanted to serve my country, and I decided to act on it. At first, I was in an ROTC program and intended to go into the Navy, but I saw the Marines and said, "that looks way more hardcore!"

Can you describe what you do now?

I got here by going to business school. I was looking for roles that allowed me to get my hands dirty and also have an ownership stake, which is especially true in startups. I work with all of our carriers, and we set up a network to get our product to customers. I also help with our sustainability initiatives.

How did your service help to get you where you are today, professionally and personally?

I was a convoy commander in the Marines, so I got used to operating in environments that are uncertain and making decisions without 100 percent of the information. Another big

lesson I learned, especially at Plated, is to welcome feedback and constructive criticism. We're very candid with each other; there's no room to have politics. The Marines taught me to have a thick skin.

What was one of the biggest lessons you learned?

The farther I get from the Marines, the more I realize that the leadership experience I got literally does not exist anywhere else. I led a team of 37 people on my first deployment and 39 on my second deployment. And I'm actually an introvert! I had to work really hard to overcome that. In the Marine Corps, there's no room to cater to your personality type, because a lot of people are counting on you. This has been invaluable as I've entered the workforce.

Maura Sullivan

Years of active service: Five years of active duty, June 2001-August 2006 (served in Iraq in 2005). Prior to that, she was in NROTC, Marine Option

Rank before transitioning: Captain.

What she does now: Assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental affairs at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

What inspired you to join the Marines?

My grandfather was a B-17 pilot who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and my other grandfather was a naval officer in the South Pacific. I was raised in the Jesuit tradition of "service for others." At the young age of 17 [...] my guidance counselor suggested ROTC. I think my words to her were, "I'm not the military type. I'm not at all what they're looking for." I never envisioned that my path to service would include the military. For one, I was a woman, and there weren't that many role models at the time. But I was also a three-sport athlete and did well in academics, so my guidance counselor chuckled and said, "Actually, you're *exactly* what they're looking for." I started out in the Navy ROTC program, and during Marine Week, when I met the Marine Corps, I knew that was the beginning of the rest of my life. It was like meeting the person you're supposed to marry. I knew that this was where I belonged.

Can you describe your path to your current position?

I was in Fallujah during 2005 and I saw the impact, on the ground, of policy decisions that were being made in Washington. I left Iraq with a deep resolve to take care of Marines and their families— and thought that the best way to do that was to leave active duty and go into policy. The ability to lead and run highly performing organizations is how I think I can make a difference for our country. I went to Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School of Government. I built a critical management skill-set at PepsiCo, where I held a number of general management roles. Simultaneously, I had the deep privilege of serving as a

commissioner on The American Battle Monuments Commission, managing America's 25 overseas cemeteries. The experience heightened my urgency to serve as I walked through 21 cemeteries around the world and viewed the final resting places of over 100,000 Americans. Last fall, I transitioned to leading a large team at VA as a part of [former Procter & Gamble CEO] Bob McDonald's leadership team, engaged in arguably one of the most significant management turnarounds of the decade. I am taking the lead for the department on our post-9/11 veterans, ensuring that they understand their benefits and services.

Do you think that serving in the Marines has changed how you're perceived?
People tend to be surprised. I chuckle and say, "I guess I don't have the typical haircut" and try to put them at ease with humor. I tend to take this opportunity to inform them of the great contributions that women have been making to our military for a long time. There's a misperception that women haven't been in combat, but women have been in combat for a long time. While I was on active duty, 6 percent of the officer corps were women, so you're certainly in the minority. But the way I think about it is this: I always wanted to be Captain Sullivan, a Marine Captain, as opposed to a "female Marine Captain."

Do you have any advice for a young woman looking to join the Marines?
Joining the Marines Corps was, far and away, the single best decision I ever made in my life. I simply would not be the person that I am today had I not done it. The Marine Corps will challenge you in a way beyond what you can probably fathom. It will change you in a way that you cannot predict. Most significantly, the Marines that you serve with will touch your heart and you will never be the same. To any smart, strong, woman who loves her country, I think it is simply the highest calling.

Mary Beth Bruggeman

Years of active duty: Eight, from 1999-2007.
Rank before transitioning: Captain. Served as a combat engineer.
What she does now: She's the executive director for the Southeast region of The Mission Continues.

How did your service help to get you where you are today professionally?
As a Marine, you're taught some very core things. One is to always make a decision – to make good decisions, and make them quickly. Another is the ability to work with lots of different kinds of people. I had 200 Marines under me when I deployed to Iraq. I learned how to identify with different people's personalities, learn what motivates them, and learn what strengths they had.

And personally?
My challenges on active duty were one thing; my challenges as a Marine wife were another. If you don't learn patience from that, and if you don't learn independence from that, you

can't function. I've also learned that I'm not in any of this alone. Whether it's from being a Marine or a Marine wife, I've developed the ability to rely on other people to be my tribe, and be my pack. I have three kids and I wouldn't have survived [my husband's] deployment were it not for all of these things.

Can you tell me about The Mission Continues?

It's an organization that empowers veterans to serve in new ways after they transition from the military. Our six-month fellowship allows them to stay on an empowered track. Two years ago, we [also] started launching service platoons in communities and cities throughout the country. They zero in on a mission – homelessness, youth mentoring, hunger, health and fitness, the environment – and support other nonprofit partners in their communities.

Is there anything you want to tell young women who are thinking about joining the Marines?

Be authentic. Be yourself. Be proud of who you are. We are a vast minority in the military, particularly in the Marine Corps, and it's too easy to feel like you need to be "one of the guys." It is so imperative that women go out there and be themselves. They need to know that there are generations of female veterans who are supporting them and working really hard to break down important walls for them. We've got our hands on their backs – all of us.

Sarah Serrano

Years of active duty: Four.
Rank before transitioning: Sergeant. Squadron Headquarters Administrator.
What she does now: Director of social media at Veterans in Film and Television, freelance writer, actress, brand ambassador.

What inspired you to join the Marines?

It's kind of a funny story, and people look at me strange because I joined spontaneously. No one in my family is in the military. But I just didn't have a purpose. I had been 21 for two months and I was like, "Is this it?" I knew there was so much more to life. I don't regret it at all.

I was born and raised in Los Angeles, and I moved to Michigan when I was 21 years old. I basically just wanted to get out of Michigan, get back West, and be able to travel. At the time, my dad was paying my college bills, and I wasn't taking it seriously. I figured that if I were putting myself through college, I'd complete it. [When I joined], I thought, "I can do college later, but until then I'll have a steady job that I won't be able to quit."

Can you tell me about your role at Veterans in Film and Television?

I'm one of the only full-time staff members at an organization that has 1,800 members nationwide. We have partnerships with major networks and studios. I'm doing operations, social media marketing, HR, events, and outreach.

What challenges do veterans face in the entertainment industry, and how does VFT help?

We provide greater visibility for veterans to get jobs [in the industry]. We work with studios and high-profile names who know about VFT and want to use veterans because they see the discipline and talent that we bring. Our main function is that we connect veterans with these opportunities, and I think Hollywood has been very veteran-friendly.

What unique skills do you think you bring to the table?

I'm so lucky that I learned what I did in the Marines. I would have to go and speak to large groups of service members in the Marines because it was my job to coordinate events and host them. I was a sergeant talking to a whole battalion of officers, so those were very high-ranking people. I had to learn very quickly how to fake it until I make it. It's about rolling with the punches, rolling with change, and being able to step in and do the job, even if I don't actually know everything.

What surprises people about you?

Let's say a [movie studio] executive, they see how young I am. They're thinking, "How are you in this position?" I look young, and it doesn't help that I'm an actress. But as soon as I start speaking with confidence and know what I'm talking about, and they find out I served in the Marines, they say: "OK, you're badass!" They have some respect. They don't really understand, but they know they should be respectful, and it's instant credibility.

Reagan Odhner

Years of active duty: Three years and nine months, between December 2009 and September 2013.

Rank before transitioning: Corporal.

What she does now: Sophomore at Stanford University, studying economics.

Can you describe what you're doing now?

It's interesting being 26 years old and a sophomore in college! I'm studying economics and I'm volunteering as the director of undergraduate operations for Service To School, a small nonprofit that advises veterans applying to college. That takes up quite a bit of my free time, and I love it. I'm also volunteering at the VA hospital. I'm involved in a program that teaches disabled veterans how to kayak.

How did your service help to get you where you are today, professionally and personally?

I can honestly say that I don't think I would be at Stanford were it not for the experience I got from the military. [As part of my second deployment to Afghanistan in 2012], I was part of a program called the Marine Female Engagement Team, and it completely opened my eyes to the idea of international development.

Can you tell me a bit more about your interest in international development?

I was [in Afghanistan] with a corpsman and a linguist who were both female, and our job was to be the liaison between the military and the civilian populations. We did a lot of

community development work. We would sit down and talk to women about women's rights. Really, it was closer to humanitarian work than military work, and I totally loved it. When it came time to come home, I felt like I'd left my heart there and needed to find a way to go back and help. There are bizarre misconceptions that [Westerners] have about Afghan women, but these women are very passionate, strong, outspoken people. They don't feel like it's their right to be equal, and there isn't an infrastructure where they can start their own business and their own jobs because they're not able to [be supported].

Do you have any advice for a young woman looking to join the Marines?

When I was going in, I didn't really have any female military people in my life that I could reach out to. I wish I had known how much female veterans were willing to speak about their experience to people who are interested. I think it's important to speak to someone, just so you know what you're getting into.

Amanda Burke

Years of active duty: Four, and two in the reserves.

Rank before transitioning: Captain.

What she does now: Community engagement manager for Team Rubicon, a disaster-response organization with 25,000 veteran and civilian members.

What inspired you to join the Marines?

My parents were in the Air Force, and I knew I wanted to go into the military but I didn't know which service. My brothers were in the Army when I was in high school, but I thought that the Marines would offer the biggest challenge. There's a little interservice rivalry, which is fun.

Can you describe how you became involved with Team Rubicon?

My husband and I had quit our jobs and sold everything, and we were on a cross-country backpacking trip living out of our car. We were in LA when Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in 2013. My husband was volunteering with Team Rubicon, and I had just started volunteering. They needed someone who could deploy in 12 hours and lead a logistics team, and luckily, I had that background. I deployed for two weeks in Manila, making sure we had food and lodging and that our team had everything they needed to get in and out of the affected areas. On the ninth day, I said, "This is it." I was actually awaiting government orders at the time, but I turned them down and applied for a job at Team Rubicon.

How did your service help to get you where you are today, professionally and personally?

It taught me basic confidence. Being in situations where you're tired, grumpy, cold, and wet, and having to maintain composure and get things done – that boosted my confidence for any situation I've been in. You also learn small-unit leadership. The Marine Corps taught me how to take care of people, from A to Z.

Do you have any advice for women who are thinking of joining the Marines?

My favorite part is that the standards don't change whether you're a male or a female. You should be able to lead an infantry platoon through an attack. For example, my roommate was 4'11" and probably 95 pounds, and I remember seeing her carry an 85-pound pack up a hill. If you can physically keep up with the Marines, they respect you.

Lydia Davey

Years of active duty: Four, and just over two years as a mobilized reservist.

Rank before transitioning: Sergeant.

What she does now: Owns and operates a San Francisco-based PR firm, [Moriah Creatives PR](#). She recently founded Clear PR, a tech startup that productizes public relations services for small businesses.

What inspired you to join the Marines?

Both of my grandfathers served in the military during WWII, so I grew up listening to their stories. By the time I was 9, I knew I wanted to serve as well. Also, as a high school student I was incredibly lazy, but I couldn't find anything in my environment to incentivize me to make the kinds of changes I felt I needed. I knew I would have to change my environment to be transformed into who I thought I was capable of becoming. I researched each of the services, and decided on the Marine Corps because it's the only service I wasn't sure I could succeed in. It intimidated me. I figured that if I could make it in the Marine Corps, I could do anything. So off to boot camp I went, and once I was there I didn't question my decision. I knew I was where I was supposed to be.

Bea Abrams Cohen dies at 105; WWII vet was advocate for military personnel

(5 Jun) *Stars and Stripes*, By Ann M. Simmons

For Bea Abrams Cohen, life was all about "mitzvah," the Jewish tradition of doing a good deed.

Believed to be California's oldest female veteran, Cohen served her country during World War II, spent more than 70 years supporting U.S. military organizations and charities and clocked thousands of hours volunteering for causes that helped bring comfort and joy to former service personnel.

"Pay back. It works." That was Cohen's life philosophy.

Cohen died May 31 of congestive heart failure at an assisted living facility in Los Angeles, according to her daughter Janiece Cohen. She was 105 years old.

"She wasn't ready," Janiece, 68, said of her mother. "She always said there was still more to do. Mother just always felt that she wanted to help other people. It made her feel good."

Cohen was a tireless champion of veterans who plunged herself into causes to make sure they were well taken of and not forgotten, said Lindsey Sin, deputy director for Women

How did your service help to get you where you are today, professionally and personally?

The most important lesson I learned as a Marine is that people are so much more capable than they know – emotionally, physically, and mentally. Human beings are incredible; challenge and hardship expose that reality. That knowledge has empowered me to take tremendous risks as an entrepreneur, and they've paid off.

I also formed an incredibly powerful personal and professional network during my time in the service. Women make up a small percent of the Marine Corps, so most of my military network is made up of men. These guys have been some of my greatest friends, advisers, mentors, collaborators in business, and sources of encouragement and support.

When you tell someone that you've served in the Marines, are there any assumptions they make that are a little off-the-mark?

Interestingly, quite a few civilian men have wanted to physically challenge me. It makes me laugh, but I think the rigor of the training Marines receive serves as some kind of perceived challenge to their manhood.

What's something about you that usually surprises people when they meet you?

People sometimes say they're surprised by how feminine I am. I'm not sure what they're expecting, but capability and femininity need not be opposing forces. I'm a huge fan of being strong without being hard.

<http://www.bustle.com/articles/77955-7-women-in-the-marine-corps-on-life-beyond-the-uniform>

Veterans Affairs at the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

"She was an invaluable point of light for women veterans, and men," Sin said. "She continued to give back over and over again."

A longtime resident of Los Angeles' Westchester neighborhood, Cohen was born Bea Hirshkovic in Bucharest, Romania, on Feb. 3, 1910. She had two older siblings. Her father died when she was 3, and her mother eventually married a Romanian widower and father of nine children who lived in Fort Worth. He sent for the Hirshkovicis, who arrived in America in 1920. Cohen took her stepfather's name and became Bea Abrams. In 1929, the family moved to Los Angeles.

Cohen, deeply grateful that America welcomed her family, wanted to find a way to show her gratitude. So she joined the U.S. war effort.

"I wanted to pay back for being an American," Cohen told *The Times* in a 2012 interview.

Her initial role involved trapping black widow spiders and sending them to USC, which collected the strong webs for use as crosshairs in submarine periscopes. She later studied riveting, which led to work at Douglas Aircraft Co. in Los Angeles, producing munitions and war supplies.

After enlisting in the U.S. Army, the private 1st class was sent to England, where her duties included working in the communications department with top-secret mimeographed documents — and kitchen patrol.

The fact that Cohen was originally from Romania and chose to join the U.S. military underscored the depth of her patriotism, Sin said.

In 1945 she returned to Los Angeles, where she met and married Ray Cohen, a Marine gunnery sergeant and former prisoner of war in China and Japan.

Cohen's daughter Janiece acknowledged that her mother's home life was not always easy. Her husband suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and was an introvert compared to the outgoing Cohen. She threw herself into activities outside the home, particularly volunteerism.

Cohen got involved with a local support group for former prisoners, including her husband, who died in 2003. She made lap blankets and wheelchair bags for veterans and collected thousands of pairs of donated socks for them. She became chairwoman for child welfare for the Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary and worked for 35 years with the United Cerebral Palsy/Spastic Children's Foundation, taking the kids on trips to Disneyland.

Chief Master Sgt. Jason Young, a Vietnam veteran who served 28 years in the Air Force, helped Cohen secure resources for

Army Nurse Remembers D-Day

(6 Jun) Fox News San Antonio, By Andrew Lofholm

Initially, Josephine Reaves was in a general hospital during the war, but when the opportunity came for her to go out on a floating hospital, she took it. But the captain of the liberty ship wasn't having it quite yet.

"Not on my ship, I don't take women on my ship, I have no facilities I don't need women on my ship," she remembers the captain saying. "The army officer said, 'yes you do because you're going to take these women, they're going over to Normandy.'"

The officer, of course won.

D-Day had just commenced.

"The boys that were on those LCT's that were going to land on

the children's trips. The pair met in 1970 while Cohen was volunteering at the Los Angeles Air Force Base in El Segundo, and they became fast friends.

The strapping African American would escort the diminutive Cohen, who stood less than 5 feet tall, to speaking engagements, meetings and other functions, which she continued to attend even after being diagnosed as legally blind in 1990.

"She set the bar very high in terms of her personal contributions to assisting others, especially veterans," said Young, 71. "She was obsessed with the need, the status and the predicament of veterans."

Cohen also had a personal effect on Young, who said he was socially aloof after returning from Vietnam.

"Just being around her was motivational for me, dealing with some of the issues I had," Young said.

Cohen's dream was to meet First Lady Michelle Obama to thank her "for helping to support our veterans." Former California Assemblywoman Betsy Butler, a champion of veterans' and seniors' issues, said she helped that dream come true — twice.

"She was unforgettable," Butler said of Cohen, noting that at one meeting — an event honoring veterans —Cohen managed to receive three hugs from the first lady.

"She was so grateful to be in the U.S., to have lived her life in this country," Butler said.

Besides Janiece, Cohen is survived by another daughter, Susan Cohen, 67.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/bea-abrams-cohen-dies-at-105-wwii-vet-was-advocate-for-military-personnel-1.350962>

that beach were young fellas, and they were 18 years of age, and they were just as cocky as could be, I loved every one of 'em."

She was waiting on the liberty ship until the nurses got the all clear--to hit the beach. She slept on the deck of the liberty ship--so just in case it started sinking, she would be first off.

"I heard fireworks every night, bang, bang bang...but of course, they never did hit our ship."

About five days later, they finally got the all clear. She knew the Allies losses were drastic.

"They had their guns slinged over their shoulders; they were going to take care of the Germans right? They never even got

their guns off their shoulders."

Before she could even get to the LCT boat that would take her to land, she had to get down to it, which she remembers with a smile, "I'm helping everybody,, 'oh thanks Jos, no trouble' and when it comes my turn to get up, and she says okay it's your turn, and I say I'm not going down that rope ladder.."

She eventually did make it, with her gear on her back, and they made it to the beach to begin the healing process, "of course I didn't see the beginning, but I sure saw the end of it. "

Looking back 71 years later, she remembers the troops distinctly-some she could save and some she couldn't.

Survey: Women struggle to be seen as 'real' veterans

(8 Jun) Military Times, By Leo Shane III

Women already facing discrimination issues in the ranks confront similar challenges being accepted as "real veterans" in their post-military life, according to a new study released by officials at The Mission Continues on Monday.

The survey of women fellows in the group in April found that about two-thirds did not feel "respected and valued as veterans," because of a lack of respect of their service or assumptions they must be spouses instead of former service members.

That feeling in turn hurt their sense of identity and ability to connect with others.

Paired with a shortage of female-specific services at the Department of Veterans Affairs and other military outreach efforts, the struggles left 70 percent of the women surveyed with significant difficulties forming strong relationships after their military lives ended.

"There are limited structured opportunities for women veterans to connect with others who can relate to their experiences and support them during their reintegration," the report states.

"The relatively small number of women veterans can make it even more difficult for them to connect with each other. This can have a negative impact on women veterans' mental health and their successful reintegration into to civilian life."

The 71-person survey does not carry any scientific or statistical weight for the veteran population as a whole, but does offer a snapshot of some of the specific challenges subgroups of veterans face transitioning back into a civilian

What Doctors Say About Transgender Troops

(9 Jun) New York Times Editorial

The American Medical Association on Monday challenged the military's policy barring transgender troops, stating in a resolution that there is "no medically valid reason" to disqualify them from serving. The association urged the

"They were very ambitious to beat the Germans and take care for the American people, they wanted that, they wanted safety for the American people. And they did they best they could, they gave their all...what more could you do when you give your life for something like that."

Josephine earned a Bronze Star, and achieved first lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps. She was married 60 years to her husband mark, who served for 23 years. He passed away 13 years ago.

<http://www.foxsanantonio.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/army-nurse-remembers-dday-13390.shtml#.VXXSIDYcTZN>

society that often has only a partial understanding of overall military culture and lifestyle.

Female veterans make up about 16 percent of the country's veterans population, the highest rate in U.S. history. But advocates have long complained that too many veterans services and resources are still geared toward men only, without enough flexibility or knowledge to fully assist those millions of female veterans.

The Mission Continues officials said the report is part of a larger yearlong effort to highlight women veterans and post-military successes, including work as volunteer fellows with the group.

The organization's stated goal is to help veterans with their military-to-civilian transition through community service, with a host of subsidized fellowship programs and volunteer teams nationwide.

Nearly all the women in the April survey reported feeling stronger connections to the community and to fellow veterans as a result of that volunteer work, leading to less overall stress and a better sense of identity.

Report authors say the report findings indicate more focus on the issue of women veterans reintegration, including "greater recognition and respect to women veterans" in the country at large.

The [full report](#) can be read at the group's web site.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/veterans/2015/06/08/survey-women-struggle-to-be-seen-as-real-veterans/28698003/>

Defense Department to offer medical care to transgender troops consistent with the type of treatment that is readily available to civilians.

While the Defense Department's health care regulations are designed to "maintain and restore health," the statement notes that military doctors are now barred from providing "safe, effective and medically necessary" treatment to service members who are transgender.

President Obama and Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter should move swiftly to repeal that discriminatory policy so that thousands of transgender Americans in uniform have the option to serve openly.

There is reason to be hopeful that officials at the Pentagon are taking a hard look at the arcane set of rules that for decades has forced thousands of transgender troops to serve in silence or face being discharged. The Army and the Air Force issued new policies earlier this year that made it harder for commanders to discharge transgender troops. The Pentagon took similar steps shortly before the policy barring openly gay and lesbian troops was rescinded in 2011.

With more transgender troops coming out, military doctors and commanders are being forced to choose between common sense approaches and adhering to indefensible policies.

When gays and lesbians were barred from serving openly, some officials at the Pentagon argued preposterously that allowing them to come out would undermine unit cohesion and readiness. When it comes to transgender service, though,

Homeless female vets are focus of multimedia project

(10 Jun) *Military Times*, By Lindsey Wray

A personal health diagnosis and social media networking spurred Lily Casura to examine homelessness among female veterans. And with the help of a grant she received June 1 from the [International Women's Media Foundation](#), Casura hopes to expand her research and call attention to a portion of the veteran population that is often overlooked.

Casura, an independent journalist, was awarded a \$19,500 grant to complete a multimedia project on homeless female veterans in the U.S. She is [one of nine journalists to receive grants](#), which are drawn from the IWMF's Howard G. Buffett Fund for Women Journalists to advance the contributions of women in the media worldwide. Other projects will focus on topics such as rape in India and water access in rural Colombia.

"The average American doesn't realize this is an issue," said Casura, who hopes to "fill a big knowledge gap" with her project, "Invisible No More: Homeless Women Veterans."

Casura plans to incorporate data visualization, interviews with veterans affected by homelessness and state-specific resources available to homeless veterans into her initiative, which is set to be finished in about eight months.

The Department of Veterans Affairs "can't eradicate homelessness unless they address the female component," Casura said.

At least 40,000 veterans are estimated to be struggling with homelessness; women comprise about 16 percent of veterans,

officials at the Pentagon aren't even attempting to publicly articulate a defense. That is probably because the primary reason boils down to prejudice and ignorance among some senior leaders about what being transgender is and what it's not.

In February, when Mr. Carter was asked about the issue, he said he felt that military service should be open to the best candidates. In stating that he is open-minded about such issues, however, Mr. Carter used an unfortunate word – "proclivities" – which suggested that being transgender was something objectionable.

On Tuesday, Mr. Carter can affirm that the military grows stronger as it becomes more inclusive when he delivers the keynote speech at the Pentagon's annual gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pride event (civilian workers in the Defense Department are allowed to be openly transgender). The theme this year is "Celebrating Victories That Have Affirmed Freedom and Fairness." Those words will ring hollow to talented and dedicated transgender service members if Mr. Carter fails to announce a review of the ban and movement toward its repeal.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/09/opinion/what-doctors-say-about-transgender-troops.html>

and the number of female veterans is steadily increasing. A White House goal set five years ago aimed to eradicate veteran homelessness by the end of 2015, but heads of the departments of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Labor on June 3 backed off that goal, instead emphasizing the need to end the problem in a sustainable way.

"I don't think people know how bad this problem is," Rosie Palfy, a Marine Corps veteran who was homeless from November 2006 until March 2009, said.

Palfy, now a homeless advocate who serves on the board of the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services in Ohio, said Casura's "Invisible No More" project will raise awareness of homeless female veterans and help inform people that there's no "one-size-fits-all approach to ending homelessness."

Many studies on veteran homelessness focus on men, Palfy said, so Casura's project will help ensure that women are more than an afterthought in the discussion.

Casura's interest in veterans issues began by chance.

After being diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome in the 1990s, she leveraged her journalistic skills to research treatments and move toward recovery. That eventually led Casura to correspond with a Marine Corps officer in Ramadi, Iraq, which opened her eyes to the difficulties service members face when returning from war.

"It was an intro to PTSD in real time," she said, noting that she found similarities among treatments for her health issues and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Inspired to share this information with those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Casura created [Healing Combat Trauma](#), a website with a collection of articles and resources, in 2006.

"I found Lily's website to be very creative and very comprehensive," said Ray Scurfield, a professor emeritus of social work at the University of Southern Mississippi who works in a private psychotherapy practice in Mississippi. Scurfield, a Vietnam veteran, said the Healing Combat Trauma website comprehensively handles a subject that often lacks coverage.

In her quest to contribute solutions to post-traumatic stress, Casura read everything she could on the subject, including medical journal articles. She started getting to know other veterans via Facebook, and in 2013 she spoke at the Military Officers Association of America's Warrior-Family Symposium.

But it wasn't until Casura enrolled in a master's of social work program last year that she began to explore veterans homelessness in depth. A project propelled her to think about homeless female veterans and why they might not show up in the annual point-in-time counts, conducted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to estimate the homeless population. Casura theorized that homeless women may be less likely to stay in shelters or on the streets where they'd be counted, instead moving from couch to couch or staying in abusive relationships to avoid being officially considered homeless.

When G.I. Jane comes home

(11 Jun) Los Angeles Times, By Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

Since 9/11, more than 200,000 women have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, and more than 160 women have died in service to their country. Women have fought on the front lines as combat pilots and military police platoon leaders. They have received Silver Stars and Bronze Stars for Valor. Some have even joined special operations forces on combat missions.

Yet when people think of veterans, they rarely think of women.

As the veterans organization the Mission Continues found in a survey out this week of female veterans, a "common theme among our respondents was a perception of invisibility both in the service and at home. While in uniform, nearly two-thirds of respondents said they had to work harder than men to prove themselves. When those women left the military, barely a third (37%) said they felt recognized, respected and valued by society for their contributions as veterans."

Using contacts she developed on social media, including Palfy, Casura surveyed veterans who had dealt with homelessness. The responses spanned every era and branch of service, she said, and will help shape her "Invisible No More" project.

"Female vets will benefit from this research for generations," said Palfy, who lived in shelters and eventually transitional housing during the time she was homeless.

She said VA is moving in the right direction in ending veterans homelessness but that local efforts are necessary, too; that's why Casura's goal of featuring resources on a state level is particularly important.

Scurfield said Casura's determination and dedication will lead to lasting results for homeless veterans.

"When she gets hold of something, she doesn't let it go," he said.

Casura said she's excited to put the IWMMF grant to use, building on her work to "put even more of a spotlight" on homeless female veterans and make sure they're involved in discussions on reducing and eliminating homelessness among veterans.

"We can't help who we can't see," she said.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/veterans/2015/06/10/homeless-female-veterans-spotlighted-in-multimedia-project/28739033/>

One veteran in Minnesota told me recently that when she tried to join a local veterans organization, she was guided to the women's auxiliary rather than the group for service members. Another soldier based at Ft. Bragg told me that she saw a mandatory counselor after her tour in Afghanistan, who said that even though she "did not see combat" and was "mostly on base," she might have some reentry issues. He had no idea that she had served an eight-month tour as part of a special operations team of women and had been on night raids several times a week throughout her deployment.

And a few months back, a North Carolina Air Force veteran who served in Kuwait set off a media storm when she told local reporters about a nasty note she discovered after she left her car in a spot marked "Veteran Parking."

"This space is reserved for those who fought for America ... not you," read the missive Mary Claire Caine found stuck to her windshield.

"I think they took one look at me when I got out of my car and saw that I was a woman and assumed I wasn't a veteran and assumed I hadn't served my country," Caine said at the time. "They have this image of what today's American veteran is, and honestly, if you've served in the United States military, you know that veterans come in all shapes and sizes."

Evidently America is still thinking small, even as women in uniform make strides on the country's behalf.

Recent history is full of stories of women breaking new ground. The first woman to fly the F-35, the Air Force's "premier fighter," took to the skies last month. Years earlier she had flown combat missions in Afghanistan. The Navy's Blue Angels have their first female pilot this year.

Army Ranger school recently opened to women for the first time. No women made it through the first phase of the course. But 19 women qualified. And 42% of them made it through the grueling physical tests of the first four days, compared with 48% of men. Three will soon try once more.

The gap between women's service and our perceptions has consequences; it makes female veterans' reentry into American society especially challenging.

Many do not self-identify as veterans and do not apply for the help and the services — from housing to healthcare to job placement — they could receive once they return home.

The Los Angeles Times [reported Monday](#) that female veterans "commit suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women" — and perhaps not surprisingly, at nearly the same rate as their brothers-in-arms. In the piece, experts noted with concern that female veterans lack a "sense of belonging," which can exacerbate depression.

Navy weighs rule change for transgender sailors

(11 Jun) Washington Examiner, By Tara Copp

The Navy is considering policy changes for how it deals with transgender sailors, following similar changes underway in the Air Force and Army.

The Navy's modified policy will likely include elevating any potential dismissal of a sailor to at least the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Manpower and Reserve Affairs, according to a Navy official who requested anonymity.

The Defense Department's current policy prevents all transgender service members from openly serving, but in recent months both the Army and the Air Force have announced policy modifications that require each individual case be provided a high-level review. On Thursday, the Navy indicated it is following suit.

"The Navy is looking to elevate the administrative separation authority for transgendered personnel to ensure that this important issue receives the right level of review," Navy spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Ed Early said.

Early said while the policy would affect Navy personnel, he did not know if it would extend to the Marine Corps, which is

In the two years I spent reporting on women who served on the front lines with special ops in 2011, I found that community sustained the soldiers in this pilot program while they were on the battlefield and, even more so, when they returned home. While the rest of the Army and the entire United States had no idea what they had done and seen, they at least had one another to rely on. They are now family for life, one another's career coaches and marriage counselors and best friends.

Such do-it-yourself community-building is critical and important, but female veterans also need a nation that recognizes and celebrates them.

Whenever female veterans do receive a mention in public life, the focus tends to be on their suffering. The media leads with stories of military sexual trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Without doubt these are very real problems that must be addressed. According to the California Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly three-quarters of female veterans living in the state reported experiencing sexual harassment, and 40% reported experiencing sexual assault while in the military. Homelessness is also a critical issue.

But by defining female veterans by their victimhood, we leave out a crucial part of their service: their valor. Women have shown courage, grit and heart on the battlefield. They have already proved themselves on the front lines and in service, even if our national narrative hasn't yet recognized it. <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0611-lemmon-female-vets-20150611-story.html>

part of the Navy Department. The *Washington Examiner* reached out to the Marine Corps late Thursday for comment but none was immediately available.

At present, sailors who are discovered to be transgender are administratively separated from the military.

For an enlisted person, that process requires only a commanding officer's recommendation; for officers, their cases are elevated to at least the Navy's assistant secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

The Navy's proposed change comes amid significant moves within the Pentagon to have its policies more closely reflect the tolerance of the young millennial generation that it seeks to recruit and retain as its future force.

At an event at the Pentagon Tuesday celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Month, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter announced that sexual orientation would be added to its anti-discrimination policy.

Gay and lesbian service members have been allowed to serve openly since President Obama repealed the 17-year-old "Don't

Ask, Don't Tell," policy in 2011. The change announced Tuesday officially elevates sexual preference to the same protected status as race, gender, religion, nationality and age for men and women in uniform. However, servicemen and women who identify as transgender — identifying as one sex biologically but as another internally

— were not part of the new status. Instead, each of the services has been making smaller steps to add new levels of protection for its transgendered service men and women. <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/navy-weighs-rule-change-for-transgender-sailors/article/2566085>