



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Articles of Interest for the Week of 30 October 2015

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

1. [Bringing the IRR into the 'Total Force'](#)

(26 Oct) *Navy Times*, By Andrew Tilghman

Time to overhaul long-neglected talent pool, experts say

2. [Who will fight the next war?](#)

(24 Oct) *The Economist*

Failures in Iraq and Afghanistan have widened the gulf between most Americans and the armed forces.

3. [Study: Troop cuts could hurt military diversity](#)

(26 Oct) *The Hill*, By Kristina Wong

Troop cuts could reduce gains made in racial and gender diversity of the military since the 1990s, according to a new Rand Corporation study released Monday.

4. [Report: DOD must evaluate effectiveness of sabbatical program](#)

(28 Oct) *Stars & Stripes*, By Jennifer H. Svan

The Pentagon needs to evaluate the effectiveness of a pilot sabbatical program for U.S. military members that officials want to make permanent despite low participation levels, the Government Accountability Office says in a report published Tuesday.

5. [Why Military Personnel Reform Matters](#)

(29 Oct) *War On The Rocks*, By Amy Schafer

With the human costs of war so heartbreakingly high, there is a moral imperative to recruit and retain the best people and place them in jobs in which their skillsets are best used.

6. [Most U.S. troops, vets would steer kids away from service](#)

(29 Oct) *Washington Examiner*, By Jacqueline Klimas

Less than half of those polled in an annual survey of troops, veterans and military families would encourage their children to join the military, according to a report released Thursday.

EMPLOYMENT & INTEGRATION

7. [Sub leaders discuss progress on integrating women into force](#)

(23 Oct) *Navy Times*, By David Larter

Sailor issues were on the docket at the annual unclassified gathering of the Silent Service in late October, from the expanding number of female submariners to the resiliency of junior sailors.

8. [Marines' women in combat study 'flawed,' researchers say](#)

(26 Oct) *Stars & Stripes*, By Wyatt Olson

A Marine Corps study examining the impact of integrating women into combat occupations is "inherently flawed" for failing to establish basic standards for such positions, say researchers who obtained the report, which has not been publicly released.

9. It's Not The Uniform That Matters

(26 Oct) Task & Purpose Blog, By Enid Brackett

The Navy's new "gender-neutral" uniforms don't detract from the value women bring to the military.

10. Senators blast order barring female guards from transporting Gitmo inmates

(27 Oct) Fox News

Female soldiers serving at Guantanamo Bay are not being allowed to transport inmates following a court order issued in response to prisoners who complained on religious grounds, according to Republican senators who recently returned from a visit to the prison camp.

11. Army opens 19,700 field artillery jobs to women

(29 Oct) Army Times, By Michelle Tan

The Army has officially opened more than 19,700 field artillery jobs to women.

WELL-BEING & TREATMENT

12. 2 AF Academy cadets face sexual assault charges in separate cases

(23 Oct) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey

A junior Air Force Academy cadet will face an Article 32 hearing on Oct. 26 for allegedly sexually assaulting a woman earlier this year. In another case, jury selection began on Oct. 19 in the civilian trial of academy Cadet 1st Class Daniel Ryerson, who is accused of kidnapping and raping a female cadet in Boulder, Colorado.

13. Army sex assault victim runs to put trauma behind her

(27 Oct) Army Times, By Angela G. Barnes

Army veteran Catherine Bane competed in Sunday's Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, but she said the event meant more to her than merely a running accomplishment.

14. 10th sailor disciplined in submarine shower video case

(27 Oct) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

Ten sailors out of 12 original suspects have been found guilty for participating in an alleged ring that shared videos of female shipmates undressing aboard their sub, following a final non-judicial punishment hearing on Tuesday.

15. DoN SAPRO Participates in SAPR Panel at NATO

(28 Oct) Navy News, From the Office of the Chief of Information

Jill Loftus, director, Department of the Navy Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (DON SAPRO) will participate in a panel with other international defense officials at The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels, Belgium, Oct. 29 to discuss departmental strategies that are currently being employed to prevent sexual assault, provide victim support and better understand reporting barriers for male victims of sexual assault.

16. DoD Recognizes Innovative Efforts to Prevent Sexual Assault

(28 Oct) DoD News, Defense Media Activity

The Defense Department today honored groups and individuals from each military component who contributed an innovative idea or approach to positively affect sexual assault prevention.

17. Airman acquitted of sexual assault charge

(29 Oct) Air Force Times, By Jeff Schogol

An airman has been found not guilty of sexual assault after his case was transferred from Europe to Washington following a three-star general's initial decision not to proceed with a court-martial.

18. How a Marine Unit's High Suicide Rate Got That Way

(29 Oct) The New York Times, By Dave Phillips

In the military as in the general population, rates of suicide are consistently higher in men than women. However, research suggests that currently deployed women may have higher rates of suicide than military women who have never deployed

WOMEN VETERANS

19. Call to Action For Our Female Veterans

(6 Oct) Roll Call, By Katy Beh Neas

Female veterans shoulder a double dilemma in our society...many do not identify themselves as veterans and as such don't access available veteran supports and services. Those that do and seek assistance often find veteran systems and programs ill-equipped to address their needs.

20. CJTF-HOA Valor Run honors fallen female veterans

(25 Oct) CJTF-HOA

This Valor Run comes at a pivotal time for women in the military, as many combat positions will become available to both genders.

21. Women veterans recruited for federal border duty

(26 Oct) Military Times, By Adam Stone

When it comes to hiring veterans, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has a great track record: Of its 21,000 agents, 28.8 percent are prior military. CBP also has a lousy history of hiring women, who make up just 5 percent of the workforce.

1. Bringing the IRR into the 'Total Force'

(26 Oct) Navy Times, By Andrew Tilghman

While most military recruits sign up for active or reserve component duty for three or four years, their enlistment contracts actually obligate them to a total service agreement of eight years.

Troops who choose to hang up their uniforms short of eight years of service transition into the Individual Ready Reserve for the remainder of that commitment and serve as an emergency backup "force of last resort."

The vast majority of IRR members are never called back to duty.

But that could change in a big way if reserve advocates gain traction on a new plan to significantly overhaul how the IRR is managed. The goal is to make this historically disorganized component into a more integrated, reliable and useful part of the 'total force' in an era when the services are under pressure to reduce active-duty personnel strength and its associated high costs.

The Reserve Forces Policy Board, a federal advisory group, has suggested that a revamped IRR might seek to tap inactive vets for a wider range of potentially short-term missions, creating a relationship similar to the private sector's use of part-time consultants. The board is calling for new laws and policies that would redefine the IRR and the role of more than 250,000 young veterans who do not drill regularly or receive pay but have prior military service and are committed to mobilize in the event of a crisis.

Big Talent Pool

The push comes at a time when the military is shrinking, defense budgets remain tight and the Pentagon is looking for ways to modernize the all-volunteer force and tap new sources of talent.

The IRR is "a pool of pre-trained, high-quality manpower that the American military has invested a lot of money in – and they are just sitting there," Arnold Punaro, chairman of the Reserve Forces Policy Board, said in an interview. "If we are looking at creating greater flexibility and maximizing the use of all talent, the IRR could play a very important role."

Punaro and the RFPB recently sent Defense Secretary Ash Carter a letter urging large-scale changes that could include:

- Improving official tracking of individual IRR troops and their skills by modernizing personnel data systems.
- Possibly changing the laws governing when and how IRR troops are mobilized.
- Attaching IRR troops to traditional reserve units.
- Offering IRR troops access to some level of Tricare health coverage and retirement benefits.
- Allowing IRR troops to freeze their high-year-tenure clocks to incentivize the possibility of resuming a career with the active or Select Reserve components.

In most cases, the military is able to fill any gaps in its manpower needs through the traditional reserve components, known as the Selected Reserve, in which part time troops are assigned to units, drill regularly and are often dubbed "weekend warriors."

But during severe personnel shortages, the IRR is tapped, too. During the peak years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, about 30,000 soldiers and Marines from the IRR were mobilized for deployments. The most common occupational fields for which they were recalled were the combat arms, military police, vehicle operators, mechanics and engineers.

The Navy and Air Force also maintain their own IRRs, but have not mobilized large numbers of those personnel.

At the time of the Army and Marine Corps mobilizations, critics said the Pentagon was using the IRR as a “back-door draft” that disrupted the lives of veterans who were trying to assimilate into the civilian world and workforce and move on with their post-service lives. The Navy and Air Force maintain IRRs but have not mobilized large numbers.

Punaro said a first step toward revamping the IRR would be to simply figure out a better way to maintain basic contact with the extremely diffuse community of veterans with a remaining IRR commitment.

The Defense Department struggles to maintain an accurate database of IRR troops and their contact information because its personnel directorates use outdated database systems and do not share information with other government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service.

But now, new technology and social media tools should make that a manageable task.

A comprehensive, up-to-date and searchable database would let the services identify IRR members with unique training, such as language skills, technical or cyber skills or advanced professional schooling, and tap them for short term missions, Punaro said. “Think of it as temporary manpower. Businesses go out and use temp manpower pools all the time. We don’t really do that in the military that well,” he said.

Tighter Integration

Assigning IRR members to reserve units would help integrate them into the operational force more efficiently and effectively. In 2012, the Army began assigning troops who were separating and shifting into the IRR to specific reserve units. Those personnel are not required to drill or even maintain contact with their assigned units, but it gives those veterans a military point of contact if needed, Army officials said.

Today’s IRR troops do not receive a Common Access Card, a primary form of military identification, because they have access to few if any military benefits. The reserve policy board suggests DoD give them a version of the access card to expedite integration if needed.

Current law also limits the use of IRR troops for specific high-demand contingency operations. But the reserve board suggests moving to a policy that would “improve access to IRR personnel to support mission requirements in peacetime as well as contingencies,” according to the letter to Carter.

To encourage troops to remain in the IRR, the reserve board suggests offering them access to the same Tricare health benefits available to today’s Selected Reserve members and possibly offering them credit toward retirement benefits, in the event they want to resume a military career in the active or reserve components in the future.

The board’s vision would require both high-level policy changes and approval from Congress, which defines the parameters of military duty statuses.

Suggesting greater use of the IRR is likely to get a mixed reaction from veterans in that component, said Jeffrey Phillips, executive director of the Reserve Officers Association.

The ROA is generally supportive of the proposed changes, but managing expectations is a primary concern, he said.

“There are some people who want to get back into the mix, but there are a lot of people who want to do other things with their lives. They want to start a family, they want to form a career as a manager. If they start going on deployments periodically, that could be a challenge for them,” Phillips said in an interview.

“The reserve component is not the active component, so you have to balance this use. I think the nation has to very soberly look at how it uses the reserve components and not make it a proxy for the active component,” he said.

For example, combatant commanders might want an economist, a regional expert or some other academic professional to deploy for a specific mission. And under current rules, there’s no mechanism to allow that.

“There are people out there who have these kinds of credentials who would love to do this,” Phillips said.

For years, the Pentagon has debated the proper role of its reserve force, either as a Cold War-era “strategic” reserve that standing by for a World War III-style crisis or an “operational” reserve that mobilizes and deploys regularly, as it did during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Susan Lukas, the ROA’s director of legislative affairs, said the new discussion of the IRR’s future highlights a potentially new model, a “third way” that is not strictly strategic or operational, but perhaps more of a “part-time active” force.

Managing Expectations

She expressed confidence that reservists can adapt to that kind of new role if the parameters are clearly communicated.

“I think if you manage those expectations and let [IRR members] know when they go into the IRR that there will be a certain amount of expectations and a certain amount of training, then they will deal with that,” Lukas said.

The reserve board is not the only entity thinking in new ways about the IRR; that component is also the focus of an ongoing study by the Center for Naval Analyses, expected to be completed in February.

In recent years, the services have summoned some IRR troops to muster at local reserve centers for one-day events for the purpose of updating their personnel information and undergoing health, fitness or readiness screenings.

IRR troops who face an actual recall to duty can submit paperwork seeking a delay or exemption for personal or professional reasons. In 2004, when the Army initially recalled 3,600 IRR troops to active duty to deploy to Iraq, about 30 percent applied for such delays or exemptions. For another 10 percent, the Army’s initial notification via certified mail was returned because the address on file appeared to be outdated, officials said.

In keeping with the haphazard aura that has traditionally enveloped the IRR, even the military’s legal authority to force IRR vets back into active duty is hazy.

Those troops are not typically subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, so it’s unclear exactly how IRR recall notices can be enforced. During the spate of IRR mobilizations a few years ago, some veterans reportedly avoided the orders simply by passively ignoring them, refusing to answer their phones or sign certified letters.

In October 2014, many veterans were stunned to learn that President Obama signed an executive order authorizing the recall of IRR reservists in case they were needed for Operation United Assistance, the mission to curtail spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa. That mission ended earlier than expected and no IRR troops were recalled.

But Punaro stressed that recalls for major contingency operations is not the only option for a future IRR.

Social media could allow the Pentagon to form the IRR into a more tightly-knit community, and also help ease transitions of these recently separated troops into civilian life by ensuring they’re aware of their benefits and other support networks. It could also help the military target prior-service recruits or bring them into civilian jobs.

“You would not only want to keep track of where they are, you’d want to send them information,” Punaro said. “Let’s say you’re in the Army IRR and getting a bachelor’s degree with your GI Bill. Maybe they could say ‘Here’s an opportunity ... maybe we could use you at Fort Gordon (Georgia) and you could make a lot more money than you would with any other summer job.’”

That would be impossible today. “We are still in the Stone Age when it comes to using modern personnel management techniques,” Punaro said.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/10/26/irr-review/74274560/>

2. Who will fight the next war?

(24 Oct) The Economist

Cruising a Walmart in Clayton County, Georgia, with Sergeant Russell Haney of US army recruiting, it would be easy to think most Americans are aching to serve Uncle Sam. Almost every teenager or 20-something he hails, in his cheery Tennessee drawl, amid the mounds of plastic buckets and cut-price tortilla chips, appears tempted by his offer. Lemeanfa, a 19-year-old former football star, says he is halfway sold on it; Dseanna, an 18-year-old shopper, says she is too, provided she won’t have to go to war. Serving in the coffee

shop, Archel and Lily, a brother and sister from the US Virgin Islands, listen greedily to the education, training and other benefits the recruiting sergeant reels off. “You don’t want a job, you want a career!” he tells them, as a passer-by thrusts a packet of cookies into his hands, to thank him for his service.

Southern, poorer than the national average, mostly black and with longstanding ties to the army, the inhabitants of Clayton County are among the army’s likeliest recruits. Last year they furnished it with more soldiers than most of the rest of the greater Atlanta area put together. Yet Sergeant’s Haney’s battalion, which is responsible for it, still failed to make its annual recruiting target—and a day out with the unit suggests why.

Much of the friendly reception for Sergeant Haney he puts down to fine southern manners; in fact, no one in Walmart is likely to enlist. Lemeanfa has a tattoo behind his ear, an immediate disqualifier. Dseanna has a one-year-old baby, and would have to sign away custody of him. Lily’s girlfriend has a toddler she does not want to leave; Archel won’t leave his sister. Even the cookie-giver is less propitious than he seems: he symbolises, Sergeant Haney says ruefully, as he bins his gift, that paying lip-service to the armed forces, as opposed to doing military service, is all most Americans are good for.

In a society given to ostentatious public obeisance to the services—during National Military Appreciation Month, on Military Spouse Day and on countless other such public holidays and occasions—the figures that support this claim are astonishing. In the financial year that ended on September 30th America’s four armed services—army, navy, air force and marines—aimed to recruit 177,000 people, mainly from among the 21m Americans aged 17-21. Yet all struggled, and the army, which accounted for nearly half that target, made its number, at great cost and the eleventh hour, only by cannibalising its store of recruits for the current year. It failed by 2,000 to meet its target of 17,300 recruits for the army reserve, which is becoming more important to national security as the full-time army shrinks from a recent peak of 566,000 to a projected 440,000 by 2019—its lowest level since the second world war. “I find it remarkable,” says the commander of army recruiting, Major-General Jeffrey Snow. “That we have been in two protracted land campaigns and we have an American public that thinks very highly of the military, yet the vast majority has lost touch with it. Less than 1% of Americans are willing and able to serve.”

That is part of a longstanding trend: a growing disconnect between American society and the armed forces that claim to represent it, which has many causes, starting with the ending of the draft in 1973. Ever since, military experience has been steadily fading from American life. In 1990, 40% of young Americans had at least one parent who had served in the forces; by 2014, only 16% had, and the measure continues to fall. Among American leaders, the decline is similarly pronounced. In 1981, 64% of congressmen were veterans; now around 18% are.

Seasonal factors, including a strengthening labour market and negative media coverage of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have widened the gulf. So have the dismal standards of education and physical fitness that prevail in modern American society. At a time of post-war introspection, these factors raise two big questions. The first concerns America’s ability to hold to account a military sector its leaders feel bound to applaud, but no longer competent to criticise. Andrew Bacevich, a former army officer, academic and longstanding critic of what he terms the militarism of American society, derides that support as “superficial and fraudulent”. Sanctified by politicians and the public, he argues, the army’s top brass have been given too much power and too little scrutiny, with the recent disastrous campaigns, and similarly profligate appropriations, the almost inevitable result. The second question raised by the civil-military disconnect is similarly fundamental: it concerns America’s future ability to mobilise for war.

During the Korean war, around 70% of draft-age American men served in the armed forces; during Vietnam, the unpopularity of the conflict and ease of draft-dodging ensured that only 43% did. These days, even if every young American wanted to join up, less than 30% would be eligible to. Of the starting 21m, around 9.5m would fail a rudimentary academic qualification, either because they had dropped out of high school or, typically, because most young Americans cannot do tricky sums without a calculator. Of the remainder, 7m would be disqualified because they are too fat, or have a criminal record, or tattoos on their hands or faces. According to Sergeant Haney, about half the high-school students in Clayton County are inked somewhere or other; according to his boss, Lieutenant-Colonel Tony Parilli, a bigger problem is simply that “America is obese.”

Spurned by the elite

That leaves 4.5m young Americans eligible to serve, of whom only around 390,000 are minded to, provided they do not get snapped up by a college or private firm instead—as tends to happen to the best of them. Indeed, a favourite mantra of army recruiters, that they are competing with Microsoft and Google, is not really true. With the annual exception of a few hundred sons and daughters of retired officers, America’s elite has long since turned its nose up at military service. Well under 10% of army recruits have a college degree; nearly half belong to an ethnic minority.

The pool of potential recruits is too small to meet America’s, albeit shrunken, military needs; especially, as now, when the

unemployment rate dips below 6%. This leaves the army, the least-favoured of the four services, having either to drop its standards or entice those not minded to serve with generous perks. After it failed to meet its recruiting target in 2005, a time of high employment and bad news from Baghdad, it employed both strategies zealously. To sustain what was, by historical standards, only a modest surge in Iraq, around 2% of army recruits were accepted despite having failed to meet academic and other criteria; "We accepted a risk on quality," grimaces General Snow, an Iraq veteran. Meanwhile the cost of the army's signing-on bonuses ballooned unsustainably, to \$860m in 2008 alone.

That figure has since fallen, as part of a wider effort to peg back the personnel costs that consume around a quarter of the defence budget. Yet the remaining sweeteners are still generous: the army's pay and allowances have risen by 90% since 2000. In a role-play back at Sergeant Haney's recruiting station, your correspondent, posing as an aimless school-leaver, asked what the army could offer him. The answer, besides the usual bed, board and medical insurance, included \$78,000 in college fees, some of which could be transferred to a close relative; professional training, including for 46 jobs that still offer a fat signing-on bonus; and post-service careers advice. Could the army perhaps also overlook the youthful drugs misdemeanour your correspondent, in character, admitted to? Sergeant Fred Pedro thought it could.

It is a good offer, especially set against the bad jobs and wage stagnation prevalent among the Americans it is mostly aimed at. That the army is having such trouble selling it is partly testament to the effects on public opinion of its recent wars. In the three decades following America's withdrawal from Vietnam, in 1973, the army fought a dozen small wars and one big one, the first Gulf war, in which it suffered only a few hundred casualties in total. Even as Americans grew apart from their soldiers, therefore, they were also encouraged to forget that war usually entails killing on both sides.

In that blithe context, America's 5,366 combat deaths, and tens of thousands of wounded, in Iraq and Afghanistan have come as a terrible shock. Most young Americans associate the army with "coming home broken, physically, mentally and emotionally", says James Ortiz, director of army marketing. Almost every member of the journalism class at D.M. Therrell High School in Atlanta concurs with that: "I'd maybe join if there's no other option. But I just don't like the violence," shudders 16-year-old Mayowa.

Decades of army advertising that focused largely on the college money and other perks of service probably added to the misapprehension. "Americans do not understand the army, so do not value it," says Mr Ortiz. A marketing campaign launched last year, Enterprise Army, instead emphasises the high values and good works the army seeks to promulgate. Yet it will take more than this to turn Americans back to a life which many consider incompatible with atomised, sceptical, irreverent modern living. Moreover, it is also likely that, when the army next needs to surge, it will be for a war much bloodier than the recent ones. America's biggest battlefield advantage in recent decades, its mastery of precision-guided weapons, is fading, as these become widely available even to the bigger militant groups, such as Hamas or Hizbullah.

The result is that America may be unable, within reasonable cost limits and without reinstating the draft, to raise the much bigger army it might need for such wars. "Could we field the force we would need?" asks Andrew Krepinevich of the Centre for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. Probably not: "The risk is that our desire to ask only those who are willing to fight to do so is pricing us out of some kinds of warfare."

<http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21676778-failures-iraq-and-afghanistan-have-widened-gulf-between-most-americans-and-armed>

3. Study: Troop cuts could hurt military diversity

(26 Oct) The Hill, By Kristina Wong

Troop cuts could reduce gains made in racial and gender diversity of the military since the 1990s, according to a new Rand Corporation study released Monday.

The report, titled "Force Drawdowns and Demographic Diversity: Investigating the Impact of Force Reductions on the Demographic Diversity of the U.S. Military," looked at multiple drawdown scenarios to examine the potential effects on women and racial minorities.

The cuts to "nontactical operations" jobs could have an adverse effect on female and black service members, and in some cases, Hispanic service members, the study said.

Cuts involving troops with longer service could adversely affect black personnel, but cuts to troops with shorter service could adversely affect women, the study also said.

Tightening test standards as part of a strategy to cut recruitment could result in adverse impact on female, black and Hispanic recruits, it also found.

Under budget pressure, the Army is planning to reduce from about 490,000 currently to 450,000 by the end of 2017, and possibly to 420,000 by 2019 — creating the smallest Army since before World War II.

The Marine Corps and the Air Force are also planning workforce reductions, although they will be smaller.

“During major drawdown periods, the services must balance reducing the budget, ensuring fair treatment for current service members and retaining people with the right skills,” said Maria C. Lytell, lead author of the study and a senior behavioral scientist at Rand.

“One aspect that hasn’t been factored in much during past drawdowns is retaining a demographically diverse workforce,” she said.

The cuts are expected to rely more on separations versus lowering recruitment as with previous drawdowns in the 1990s.

The services are limited in how they can use demographic information in the cuts.

Research for the study was sponsored by the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

<http://thehill.com/policy/258140-study-troop-cuts-could-hurt-military-diversity>

4. Report: DOD must evaluate effectiveness of sabbatical program

(28 Oct) Stars & Stripes, By Jennifer H. Svan

The Pentagon needs to evaluate the effectiveness of a pilot sabbatical program for U.S. military members that officials want to make permanent despite low participation levels, the Government Accountability Office says in a report published Tuesday.

The services use the Career Intermission Pilot Program as a tool to retain talented men and women who might otherwise give up their careers to pursue goals outside the military. Through the program, servicemembers can take a sabbatical from their full-time military duties for up to three years in exchange for a period of obligated service when they return.

The Defense Department wants to make the program permanent and modify it to increase participation, but the GAO says DOD needs to find a way to evaluate whether the program is effective in achieving its aim.

“Without an evaluation of the program, the basis for DOD’s proposed changes to the program is unclear,” the GAO report said.

Congress first authorized the pilot program in 2009 to enhance retention and provide greater flexibility in servicemembers’ career paths. After subsequent extensions, the program is currently approved through Dec. 31, 2019.

The Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Army are allowed to accept 40 participants each per calendar year into the program. But so far, fewer than half that many have participated, according to the GAO report. In 2014, for example, 76 participants across the services were accepted into the program — the highest to date — and as of July 2015, only 28 people had been approved.

Defense Department officials, however, continue to support the program. They plan to ask Congress to lift participant caps and ease some restrictions they say may be affecting participation rates, according to the report.

The GAO didn’t weigh in on the merits of the program, but stressed DOD needs to develop and implement a way to evaluate whether it is effective in retaining servicemembers who might otherwise end their military careers to pursue other goals.

Defense Department officials said in comments attached to the report that they would work with the military services to develop common measures to evaluate the program across the services.

But military officials have said determining the program’s effectiveness could take years. Marine Corps officials said that if a participant took the maximum three-year sabbatical followed by a six-year obligated service period, it could take up to nine years to determine whether the individual would decide to stay in the military beyond what’s required. For each month of sabbatical taken,

servicemembers must complete two months of obligated service upon their return to active duty.

As of July 2015, the services had approved 161 men and women to participate in CIPP. The Navy has accepted the most applicants; it was the only service to accept personnel during the program's first several years. Of the 111 sailors so far approved, 18 declined the offer. As of July, 37 had completed sabbaticals and five had finished their follow-up service obligation. Of those five, one has since left active duty for the Navy Reserves and one has separated from the Navy, according to the report.

GAO sought feedback on the program from the services as well as CIPP participants.

Servicemembers seek a break in service for a variety of reasons: to pursue an education, to travel, to take care of a family member, or to attend seminary. In one instance, a Navy petty officer second class who showed potential was encouraged to take a sabbatical to complete her law degree. She subsequently earned a commission in the JAG Corps and became a Navy attorney.

But GAO also found the military culture doesn't always support the idea of a pause in service. One person told the GAO that upon returning from a sabbatical, some senior leaders not familiar with the program assumed the member had decided to make family a priority over career advancement. Other barriers to participation include financial constraints. Servicemembers receive a small stipend equivalent to about two days' pay per month while on sabbatical and serving in the Individual Ready Reserve. One participant reported to GAO that while CIPP gives servicemembers options that are not available in any other program, "the deal is not that great ... because of the monetary hit."

<http://www.stripes.com/news/report-dod-must-evaluate-effectiveness-of-sabbatical-program-1.375560>

5. Why Military Personnel Reform Matters

(29 Oct) War On The Rocks, By Amy Schafer

The United States is notoriously bad at predicting future conflicts and changes in the international order. From the bestselling *The Coming War With Japan* in the early 1990s to our failure to foresee the fall of the Soviet Union, even the near future has often remained elusive to scholars and practitioners. We have always gone to war with the force we had — which has inevitably been geared toward a different kind of war than the one we ended up fighting. Perhaps in the next few decades, we will see war with China and continued conflict in the Middle East — but if the past is any indication, your guess is as good as mine.

Given the lack of predictability of conflict, the human capital in the U.S. military is of paramount importance. Rarely if ever do we have time to shift the composition or technology of our forces, but the personnel we invest in can pivot strategically and adjust as needed. Retaining "the best and the brightest" is of the utmost importance for a simple reason: More so than any other factor, personnel make the U.S. military the best fighting force in the world.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter and Undersecretary Brad Carson's "Force of the Future" initiative has renewed interest in a long-bemoaned problem plaguing the all-volunteer force: its outdated personnel system. While recently proposed legislative changes are aimed at modernizing the military compensation and retirement system, the most important reforms are those that truly focus on capturing the "best and the brightest" by combining best practices in retention with reform of the billet selection system to ensure that the best people not only remain in the military, but are also placed in the right jobs. The proposed "Force of the Future" initiative is estimated to cost more than \$1 billion a year to implement. In a time of fiscal austerity and drawdown, it is critical that these resources are spent in a way that yields true returns on investment.

The value of innovative and flexible thinkers in future conflicts is woefully absent from current personnel considerations. Rather, young service members must "check the box" until they reach O-6, whereupon those talented or lucky enough to be promoted to general officer are asked to strategize and innovate on a moment's notice. Not only is strategy and innovation not a skillset that we should be confining to the upper echelons of our military, but the current method nearly guarantees that those who are innovative by nature will struggle to make it to the highest levels of military leadership.

The first step to effectively valuing our human capital is focusing holistically on retention. New proposals for personnel reform acknowledge the changing nature of society at large. There are pushes toward the more sustainable work-life balance and career flexibility of the private sector, since even those committed to public service may balk at the toll the current military lifestyle can take on a family. If the military can shift cultural norms to be more conducive to a two-career family and to lessen the stresses of constantly moving, it will enable the retention of younger generations past their initial commitments.

Second, if personnel are slotted into jobs in which they excel, it would make more sense to have longer tours. Adding this career

stability not only aids in retention, but also lessens stresses that may lead to sub-optimal performance. With per-troop costs on the rise, it makes far more sense to allocate resources in ways that are productive and respond to current weaknesses in the personnel system, while also creating cost savings from fewer military-financed permanent changes of station. However, this type of stability-focused change will be most effective if implemented with a reform of the billet system and with a willingness to remove poor performers from key posts.

A personnel system that creates a higher level of stability by extending tours will make the military a more feasible option for mid-career personnel, as well. Providing easy “on and off ramps” in places with highly-skilled workers such as Silicon Valley and offering two- to three-year tours to accomplished experts will diversify thinking in the military and open the door to new levels of expertise.

As technology evolves at a breathtaking pace, maintaining a technically adept force requires the recruiting and retention of personnel who fall outside of the military’s normal profile. To maintain the military’s competitive edge will likely require a degree of flexibility that is currently untenable under our Soviet-style personnel system. Again, people are our greatest platform — investing in those who will create or adapt to changing technology makes far more sense than pushing them out of the military for not fitting the current mold.

With the human costs of war so heartbreakingly high, there is a moral imperative to recruit and retain the best people and place them in jobs in which their skillsets are best used. It does a disservice to our service members and their families to treat people as though they are interchangeable. There are many compelling proposals as to what this new system should look like, be it “on and off ramps” to the private sector or more meritocratic features. Improvements to the personnel system may require a hefty price tag, but the cost of not making these changes will be far higher. Without a significant and long-overdue investment in our military’s human capital, the United States will struggle to maintain military superiority. We may not be able to foresee where our military will be required next, but an investment in the “force of the future” will ensure we remain the world’s premier fighting force.

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<http://warontherocks.com/2015/10/why-military-personnel-reform-matters/>

6. Most U.S. troops, vets would steer kids away from service

(29 Oct) Washington Examiner, By Jacqueline Klimas

Less than half of those polled in an annual survey of troops, veterans and military families would encourage their children to join the military, according to a report released Thursday.

The [Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey](#) polled almost 6,300 people earlier this year to find the biggest issues facing military families. Between increasing uncertainty about benefits, expensive moves and difficulty finding employment for spouses and vets, only 45 percent of respondents said they would recommend military service to their own child.

"Military families are increasingly doubting if they'd like to wish this same life on their children," said Michael O'Hanlon, a national security analyst at the Brookings Institution. "It's an awareness of how hard it can be."

A higher number — 57 percent — would recommend military service to a young person close to them who is not their own child. Brad Carson, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said this statistic is especially troubling given that more than 80 percent of those who join today have a family member who served.

"One of the most concerning things is this is a family business we're in, increasingly so," he said, noting that the poll results will make a difficult recruiting environment even worse.

Military spouses, current service members and veterans all listed military benefits and retirement reform as the top two most concerning issues, according to the report. More than 40 percent said "uncertainty in military life" was the top obstacle to their families feeling financially stable.

There was also a lack of trust between those polled and the government, as nearly half said they do not feel confident they will get the benefits they were promised upon their retirement.

Carson promised to communicate better with troops and families to keep them up-to-date and make sure they understand why and how their benefits will change under new laws.

"We have made some significant changes to retirement. These are not changes always understood by even the most financially literate people," Carson acknowledged.

The military is transitioning to a 401k-like retirement system, which will enable the majority of troops who do not serve 20 years to leave service with some retirement benefits. The new system will enable those who join in 2018 or later to pay into a retirement account with government matching.

Those who are already retired or currently serving will be grandfathered into the old system, something Carson acknowledges all troops and their families may not understand.

The high number of moves and the expense of moving that military families experience also plays a role in dissatisfaction with military life. Nearly three-quarters of families said they incurred "unexpected expenses" as a result of the military lifestyle, and 60 percent have moved three or more times within the continental U.S., the report found.

A high operational tempo also places strains on relationships with spouses and children, the report said. Sixty percent of service members spent more than a year deployed since Sept. 11. Half said families said their children experienced "moderate or greater worry" as a result of a parent's deployment, and 21 percent experienced "relationship" challenges in just the past year because of worry about future deployments.

In addition to these struggles, the majority of troops and families who were polled don't feel as if the country appreciates what they go through. Ninety percent of respondents feel the general public doesn't really understand the sacrifices made by service members and their families, the report found.

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/most-u.s.-troops-vets-would-steer-kids-away-from-service/article/2575286>

7. Sub leaders discuss progress on integrating women into force

(23 Oct) Navy Times, By David Larter

Sailor issues were on the docket at the annual unclassified gathering of the Silent Service in late October, from the expanding number of female submariners to the resiliency of junior sailors.

Leaders discussed new approaches to handling stress and mental health and their planning as enlisted women enter the submarine fleet over the next year. Some highlights:

Mental health

A submariner is medevaced from their sub every 14 days for mental health issues, an issue the Submarine community is trying to tackle through better access to mental health care, the Atlantic Fleet's top enlisted bubblehead said Oct. 22.

Mental health issues account for about 30 percent of the unplanned losses — where sailors leave the fleet for reasons other than normal rotation or temporary assigned duty, Force Master Chief Wes Koshoffer said.

It's a trait that is pronounced among the millennial generation now populating the lower ranks, with most losses among sailors E-1 to E-6.

"I'm a fan of millennials all day long: They are smart, capable, driven — they are getting the job done," Koshoffer said. "But there is a flaw in the system, and that's this millennial phenomenon that the reaction to discipline, failure or rejection, generally [elicits] a response disproportionate to what you would expect."

Setbacks and challenges can cause tumult, even suicidal thoughts for younger sailors.

"A first breakup with a girlfriend, maybe they fail a qualification board and they've never failed anything before ... and the first words out of their mouths are 'I'm going to kill myself.'"

The force is trying to get ahead of the problem by improving crisis lines and making sure sailors aren't stigmatized for reporting mental health issues, an important step toward lowering the Navy's suicide toll.

"We cannot rewire an entire generation, but we can adjust, we can change the environment," he said.

Fleet areas now have an embedded mental health professional who works with chaplains to better address the issues.

"We've trained ourselves on how to react, we don't overreact," he said. "We take them off the ship, get them help ... and when we get the 'go' signal from a mental health professional, we get them right back in the force instead of overreacting and having them as a loss forever."

Women on subs

The first four enlisted women passed the intensive basic enlisted submarine course Oct. 16, Koshoffer said, bringing the integration of enlisted women on subs this year one step closer.

The women will join the Blue and Gold crews of the guided-missile submarine Michigan, where berthings are being modified to accommodate them.

The sub force is reviewing its policies around relationships between submariners, Koshoffer said, citing a few couples who met in "A" school and who are now in advanced training together.

"The sum total of the plan to integrate enlisted women into submarines, we are revising our instruction that was — no kidding — 49 pages long of excruciating detail on what you wear on the treadmill and how you manage the head. The instruction just ought to read: We will treat each other with dignity and respect because we are professionals.

"We have a fraternization policy and until we cross those lines, proceed."

The videotaping of women officers undressing on board the ballistic missile submarine Wyoming was alluded to during the junior officer panel.

Lt. Cmdr. Krysten Ellis, a supply officer who served on a submarine, told the audience that she thought the Silent Service could integrate enlisted women but that setbacks are likely.

"The sub force has always been able to adapt," Ellis said. "Obviously things happened when women were integrated. ... When enlisted women integrate, they'll have a plan, they'll execute it and some bumps will happen. They'll recover from those bumps and good things will happen. I don't have any doubts the sub force will be able to adapt."

Naval Reactors controversy

The selection of Adm. John Richardson to be the chief of naval operations has been a sore point in the retired submarine community, who were concerned that his leaving the eight-year Naval Reactors job after just three years sets a precedent that could undermine nuclear safety.

If NR becomes a landing pad for rising four stars, the thinking goes, then the Reactors boss could be thinking about follow-on military commands instead of overseeing the Nuclear Navy and its largely spotless safety record.

At the conference, one audience member asked Adm. Frank Caldwell, the new NR head, if he would serve his entire term so he "won't have to worry about his fitness reports or any of that BS."

"I think the answer to that is the Navy and the nation sees value in this eight-year tour," Caldwell replied. "There is a lot in this program that is significant, and there is value in having continuity of leadership. And I think what's been indicated to me is a commitment to preserve this as we go ahead."

Also during the answers, the Reactors boss said the force was looking at upping its capabilities against ships, by adding an anti-ship missile.

"I think its something we need to consider and move out on," he said. "We are looking at that and we are taking some steps to deliver

that to the submarine force."

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2015/10/23/women-on-subs-integration-mental-health-millennials/74426066/>

8. Marines' women in combat study 'flawed,' researchers say

(26 Oct) Stars & Stripes, By Wyatt Olson

A Marine Corps study examining the impact of integrating women into combat occupations is "inherently flawed" for failing to establish basic standards for such positions, say researchers who obtained the report, which has not been publicly released.

About 400 male and 100 female Marines participated in the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force study, which was conducted from October 2014 to July 2015 at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Twentynine Palms, Calif.

In September, the Marines released an executive summary that said women in the study sustained significantly higher injury rates than men, were less accurate with infantry weapons and had more difficulty moving "wounded" troops off the battlefield.

The release of the synopsis immediately led to questions about its methodology and calls for publication of the full report, particularly after reports that the top Marine Corps command recommended keeping some combat positions closed to women.

There has been bipartisan pressure to release the full report from two Marine Corps veterans in Congress, Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., and Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass. Klein has called for its immediate release for "review by members of Congress and the American people."

Maj. Chris Devine, a Marine Corps spokesman at the Pentagon, told Stars and Stripes: "We plan to release our studies as soon as practical."

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, who has seen the full study, wrote in an opinion piece published in the Washington Post in late September that the analysis relied on "1992 language," even as "the way we fight and the landscape of our battles has significantly evolved from a quarter-century ago."

The study, he wrote, did not evaluate the performance of individual female Marines and instead used only averages that "have no relevance to the abilities and performance of individual Marines."

Defense Secretary Ash Carter has received recommendations from the service branches on which positions should remain off-limits to women; he is expected to make a final decision early next year.

Two researchers — Ellen Haring, a retired Army colonel and senior fellow at Women in International Security in Washington, and Megan MacKenzie, a senior lecturer at the University of Sydney in Australia — are vocal advocates for the full integration of women into combat roles. They say the executive summary failed to convey shortcomings and caveats in the full study they obtained.

"From a research perspective, there's almost nothing you could reliably draw from this research," said MacKenzie, who has published two books about women in combat, most recently "Beyond the Band of Brothers: The U.S. Military and the Myth that Women Can't Fight."

"The volunteer selection was poor. The physical screening was poor. The consistency and number of people they put in each of the groups was very varied," she said.

Asked about issues raised by MacKenzie and Haring, the Pentagon's Devine said in a statement: "Successful integration of women into currently closed positions will take time to get right and requires all the services to be thoughtful and deliberate as the process unfolds. Speculation on the release of information or the nature of Military Department Secretary recommendations and inputs is not appropriate at this time. Our research effort was built upon scientific method and experience, to ensure we continue to maintain our high standards and preserve the quality of our All Volunteer Force."

The study's central flaw, MacKenzie and Haring say, is that it failed to establish occupation-relevant standards for Marine combat positions.

“The fact that the Marines chose to do a \$36 million study that didn’t establish any standards is, I think, interesting in itself,” MacKenzie said. “We still don’t have combat-specific standards in the Marines. Once you’re in the Marines, the only qualification you need to be in an infantry [military occupational specialty] is to be a man.”

The study pitted all-male groups against integrated groups in physically challenging tasks — some combat-related, some not. That design created a “race with no finish line,” MacKenzie said.

“We know that some teams performed faster than others, but we don’t know if any of them performed adequately or all of them performed adequately,” she said. “We just know some were faster, and so the Marines concluded that the teams that were faster were better. But it doesn’t tell us if they were adequate at performing combat-related activities.”

MacKenzie and Haring criticize the executive summary for not mentioning the report’s conclusion that “gender integration, in and of itself, will not have a significant impact on unit morale.”

“It counters one of the biggest arguments in keeping women out of combat: that they spoil the alchemy of the ‘band of brothers,’” MacKenzie said.

The study also ignored the accomplishments of certain women “who were just amazing physically,” MacKenzie said.

“In fact, there was one woman who outperformed men consistently, just an outlier throughout the whole study,” she said. “There were quite a few women above the 50th percentile. There were all these indicators that there were physically superior women who performed well; it’s just that the Marines focused on how the women performed as a group.”

The full study also noted that had the female participants been properly screened for physical fitness before entering the study, the male/female injury rates would likely have been similar, she said.

“There are members of Congress who want this study,” MacKenzie said. “There’s a very heated debate between the Marines and the Secretary of the Navy about whether women should be in combat and whether this study is legitimate. I think in many ways the release of this study should help settle that debate.”

<http://www.stripes.com/news/marines-women-in-combat-study-flawed-researchers-say-1.375210>

9. It’s Not The Uniform That Matters

(26 Oct) Task & Purpose Blog, By Enid Brackett

The U.S. Navy recently introduced a number of new policies that significantly change women’s uniforms to make them more closely resemble men’s uniforms. The changes have not been without controversy and I’ve read with keen interest the ever-growing barrage of commentaries and complaints.

Welcomed or not, the human reaction to change is almost always angst, and the Navy’s recent uniform changes do not deviate from the norm. Many decry the loss of a traditional female uniform design that was largely unchanged since women first entered naval service, saying that such change to enforce more gender neutrality flies in the face of diversity, which appreciates differences rather than tries to diminish them. On top of this is the argument that it’s yet another superfluous change and waste of money. To my sisters in arms, I ask that we focus on what is really important in our lives and careers, because this just doesn’t matter.

As members of the military, our uniforms are only one of many ways in which we honor our heritage and those who have walked before us. I absolutely respect and appreciate the commitment, sacrifices, and accomplishments of the women who paved the way for my career, but I don’t need to look like them to honor them. I need to uphold the highest standards of performance and professionalism; the uniform in which I do that is irrelevant.

We take pride in donning a uniform or any item that identifies us as a member of an elite cadre because we are proud to be a part of that group. Space suits do not have much going for them in terms of form or fashion, but what kid doesn’t want to try one on if given the opportunity, if nothing else, to feel for a moment what it might be like to be one of the people who dances among the stars. Our children love to put on parts of uniforms, although they may know little about their history and tradition. What they do know is that someone they love and respect wears that uniform every day, and when they wear our cover, they feel just a little more like the future self they may become. Old cover, new cover, it just doesn’t matter.

Diversity is more than clothing deep. My value as a member of the team has no correlation to what I’m wearing. You earn your

reputation through your day-to-day conduct and performance. Wearing a different uniform will not make people appreciate your contribution more, nor will it diminish the value of your work. Initial impressions are just that, initial. Show me your work and I'll show you your reputation. I sincerely hope that my fellow female service members are proud to be women in uniform and in the service of our country. Just like they are proud of their other, but not necessarily visible, diversifying characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, culture, and life experience. The adornment of that individuality just doesn't matter.

It remains to be seen how much of an impact these uniform changes will have on unit cohesion and desegregating the female minority within the fleet as Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus has argued. My guess is that most sailors will barely notice the change after the initial commotion. We already spend most of our time in the same uniform as our male peers, so extending that uniformity to dress events and formations is not likely to elicit much more than a momentary recognition that something is different. Or maybe we won't, because we'll all look the same, and once the novelty wears off, we just won't think about it anymore.

Female officers are unfortunately the one segment of the Navy population that is personally bearing the financial cost of these changes. Sure, it sucks. But so does paying a premium for all our uniform items of mediocre quality. I do not relish the thought of shelling out \$97 for a new combination cover when I just bought one last year for \$145 when I was promoted. But when I think of things I want to see change during my career and lifetime, this doesn't even register.

I hope that one day women will join the Navy knowing that a successful career is compatible with a family, and see women in leadership positions as the norm, not the exception. I yearn for the day when we don't have sexual assault prevention training because sexual assault is a thing of the past. I look forward to people asking about my experience as a military member, and not how I handle it as a military mom. So I'll grumble a bit when ordering my new cover, and when it arrives, I'll put it away with the plethora of other uniform items and get back to work. I'll probably give my almost brand-new cover to my daughter, who asked if she could have it when I didn't need it any more. And pretty soon she'll probably ask for my new combination cover too, because what the cover looks like just doesn't matter.

Commander Enid Brackett is an active-duty Navy foreign area officer (Africa) serving overseas.

<http://taskandpurpose.com/its-not-the-uniform-that-matters/>

10. Senators blast order barring female guards from transporting Gitmo inmates

(27 Oct) Fox News

Female soldiers serving at Guantanamo Bay are not being allowed to transport inmates following a court order issued in response to prisoners who complained on religious grounds, according to Republican senators who recently returned from a visit to the prison camp.

Inmates apparently complained the female soldiers' actions were an insult to their Islamic faith, but the senators blasted the court decision as an "insult to women." Top U.S. military leaders agreed the directive is "outrageous," while suggesting they're currently bound by the order.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., first revealed the decision at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing Tuesday morning. She told Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford that on a visit Friday to the detention center, she was told female soldiers were not being allowed to transport the "9/11 five" – five inmates suspected of masterminding the 2001 terror attack -- after the court order.

"We have a situation down there where we met with women guards who are being prevented from fully performing their mission because the five 9/11 attackers who are charged with killing 3,000 Americans will not allow them to perform their duties because they're women," Ayotte said.

"It's outrageous," Dunford agreed. "That's being worked by lawyers, it's an injunction. I'm not using that as an excuse, but that's where it is right now."

"I think it is counter to the way we treat service members, including female service members, and outrageous is a very good word for it," Defense Secretary Ash Carter added.

A military judge issued the order in January prohibiting female guards from transporting the defendants, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, to and from legal proceedings after they refused to meet with defense lawyers and complained that any physical contact with unrelated women violated their Muslim beliefs.

The ruling by Army Col. James Pohl was meant to deal with their complaints, which posed a threat to legal proceedings.

At a press conference following Tuesday's Senate hearing, Sens. Ayotte; Tim Scott, R-S.C.; and Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va. -- who accompanied Ayotte on the visit to the facility -- expanded on the issue.

Capito said the country is letting the "9/11 five dictate" the procedures in the U.S. military, adding that it is "amazing" a military judge would rule in such a way.

"Terrorists should not dictate to us what our men and women in uniform are permitted to do," Ayotte said. "This is not an insult to Islam, it's an insult to women."

Fox News' Kara Rowland and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/10/27/female-soldiers-at-gitmo-not-allowed-to-transport-11-inmates/#>

11. Army opens 19,700 field artillery jobs to women

(29 Oct) Army Times, By Michelle Tan

The Army has officially opened more than 19,700 field artillery jobs to women.

Under policies now in effect, jobs in the 13B (cannon crewmember) and 13D (field artillery automated tactical data system specialist) military occupational specialties are now available for fill by qualified female soldiers.

Also open is the U6 Additional Skill Identifier, which is field artillery weapons maintenance.

The [Army directive](#), dated Wednesday, applies to the active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

It comes on the heels of the Army [opening its 12B](#) (combat engineer) MOS to women.

The only 13-series MOS still closed to women is 13F. A decision about the 13F, or fire support specialist, MOS will be made along with the decision about whether to open the infantry and armor specialties to women.

This is because 13F soldiers often are embedded with infantry and armor units, officials have said.

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

The campaign began in 2012 when the Army opened about [14,000 positions](#) previously closed to women. The service opened six MOSs to women, including multiple launch rocket system crewmember and M1 Abrams tank system maintainer, and began placing women in 37 battalions across nine brigade combat teams.

Since 2012, the Army has conducted extensive tests as it tried to determine which MOSs should be opened to women and how it should be done. The goal is to open most positions to women by the end of this year.

In addition to the 13F MOS, the other jobs still closed to women are infantry, armor and special operations.

Senior Army leaders have submitted their recommendations about those jobs to the Defense Department; a decision isn't expected until the end of the year.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/enlisted/2015/10/29/army-opens-19700-field-artillery-jobs-women/74833850/>

12. 2 AF Academy cadets face sexual assault charges in separate cases

(23 Oct) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey

A junior Air Force Academy cadet will face an Article 32 hearing on Oct. 26 for allegedly sexually assaulting a woman earlier this year.

On Aug. 26, Cadet 2nd Class Mark R. Czerner was charged with two counts of sexual assault and one count of wrongful sexual contact in violation of Article 120 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. According to the charge sheet provided by the academy, Czerner allegedly had sex with a woman and digitally penetrated her without her consent, as well as allegedly touched a woman's breast and inner thigh without her consent, on or about Feb. 14.

The academy would not say whether the victim was also a cadet. The charge sheet said the alleged assault happened on or near the academy campus in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Article 32 hearings are similar to civilian grand juries. The academy said a preliminary hearing officer will preside over the Article 32, and then submit reports of the proceedings with recommendations to the commandant of cadets. The commandant, serving as the Special Court Martial Convening Authority, will then decide whether to dismiss the case, refer it to a general court-martial or dispose of it through other disciplinary or administrative action.

In another case, jury selection began on Oct. 19 in the civilian trial of academy Cadet 1st Class Daniel Ryerson, who is accused of kidnapping and raping a female cadet in Boulder, Colorado. The [Daily Camera in Boulder reported](#) that during opening arguments on Oct. 20 in Boulder County Court, Ryerson's attorneys said that Ryerson and the alleged victim had consensual sex on the evening of Nov. 1, 2014, but that neither remembered, "possibly due to drugs they unknowingly ingested."

But prosecutors said Ryerson violated "a code [cadets] live by" to look out for their wingmen when he allegedly took the heavily intoxicated victim into a bathroom and had sex with her, the Daily Camera reported. Ryerson's trial is scheduled to conclude Oct. 27.

Ryerson was also charged separately with contacting the alleged victim in violation of a court order. That case remains open and will proceed once the sexual assault trial is finished.

The academy said Ryerson is on administrative turnback, which allows cadets to take time off from the academy without having to resign, and is not enrolled in classes or at the academy. Although Ryerson is officially considered to be a cadet 1st class, or a senior, academy spokesman John Van Winkle said he is not a cadet in good standing.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2015/10/23/academy-cadet-faces-sexual-assault-hearing-on-monday/74397954/>

13. Army sex assault victim runs to put trauma behind her

(27 Oct) Army Times, By Angela G. Barnes

Army veteran Catherine Bane competed in Sunday's Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, but she said the event meant more to her than merely a running accomplishment.

"Running for me has always been the thing that I go ... and just let it all out there," said Bane, who left the Army as a specialist and now lives in New Bern, North Carolina. "So 26.2 miles ... that's a good therapy session for me."

Bane was sexually assaulted in 2004 by two men in her unit, she said, and she grappled with guilt and shame in the aftermath. The military, she said, didn't do enough to help her. But [Hope for the Warriors](#), a nonprofit, was there for her with comprehensive counseling and support at a time when her marriage was crumbling.

Bane's husband, Marine Corps veteran Raymond Bane, said the group saved their family.

"Hope for the Warriors has been there giving us a positive outlet ... bringing us together closer as a family."

Since Catherine Bane's ordeal, she has served as a mentor for the organization's Women's Veteran Initiative.

The long-time runner finished the race in less than four hours. She plans to run in the New York City marathon in early November.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/veterans/2015/10/27/army-sex-assault-victim-runs-put-trauma-behind-her/74702158/>

14. 10th sailor disciplined in submarine shower video case

(27 Oct) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

Ten sailors out of 12 original suspects have been found guilty for participating in an alleged ring that shared videos of female shipmates undressing aboard their sub, following a final non-judicial punishment hearing on Tuesday.

A Bangor, Washington-based sailor was convicted at captain's mast of violating a general lawful order by failing to report the videos, a representative for Submarine Group 9 confirmed to Navy Times.

The sailor received a reduction in rank from E-5 to E-4 and order to forfeit half a month's pay for one month, Lt. Cmdr. Brian Badura said.

The proceedings are wrapping up a year of investigations and prosecutions into the scandal aboard the submarine Wyoming. Sailors have been found guilty of offenses from recording and distributing the cellphone videos to viewing them without reporting or lying about them to investigators. One sailor was acquitted at court-martial.

The revelations shocked the Silent Service late last year, three years into its effort to add women to the historically all male force.

Two reports with details circulated through the submarine Navy last November, prompting national attention. Submarine Forces boss Vice Adm. Michael Connor said the Navy would handle it.

"What some people thought was a high-schoolish prank was a serious sexual offense, with significant penalties," Connor told the Associated Press in January.

"Out of a force of 17,000 people we have a very small number of folks who didn't get it, and they're going to learn," he added during a talk at a veterans' hall Groton, Connecticut.

Four of the 24 women originally assigned to the service were filmed aboard Wyoming and testified at several of the courts-martial. Additionally, potentially dozens of female midshipmen were filmed while on cruise aboard the sub, and were notified of their potential involvement. But no videos of the mids have been found.

As of Oct. 27, seven sailors were tried in total, with two prison sentences and discharges, several short jail terms and one pay forfeiture.

The three who went to mast were charged with a violation of Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice for failing to report the videos.

Two of the three were reduced in rank from E-6 to E-5 and ordered to forfeit half a month's pay for two months, plus a suspended 60 days restriction. That means they're free but on 60 days probation, and will be restricted if they are involved with any more misconduct.

A third sailor was found guilty at mast for failing to report the videos and ordered to forfeit half a month's pay.

Those proceedings bring the tally to 11 sailors charged, 6 convicted at court-martial, one acquitted at court-martial and three found guilty at mast:

- Missile Technician 2nd Class Jonathan Ashby pleaded guilty to failing to report the videos. He had originally been charged with one count of conspiracy for facilitating a transfer of videos and three counts of sexual misconduct for transferring the videos. He was sentenced to four months confinement and reduction in paygrade to E-2.
- MT2 Ryan Secrest pleaded guilty to using a recording device underway, lying to investigators and filming midshipmen in the shower changing area. He was sentenced to 10 months in the brig, along with a reduction in paygrade to E-2 and a bad-conduct discharge.

- MT2 Joseph Bradley pleaded guilty to one count of distributing the videos. He was originally charged with one count of conspiracy for coordinating transfer, three counts of distributing and one count of destroying evidence, He was sentenced to 30 days in the brig and reduction to E-3.
- MT3 Class Cody Shoemaker, 22, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute videos, one count using a recording device and one count of viewing and filming female midshipmen in a private area. He sentenced to 18 months in prison and a bad-conduct discharge.
- MT3 Brandon McGarity pleaded guilty to failing to two counts of failing to report the videos and one count of lying about their existence. He was sentenced to 15 days' confinement, reduction in rank to E-2 and forfeiture of two-thirds of one month's pay.
- MT2 Charles Greaves pleaded guilty to one count each of recording and distributing videos, as well as one count of disrespecting a superior officer. The court drooped eight of his originally 11 charges as part of a plea agreement to testify against the others charged. He was sentenced to two years in prison, a demotion to E-2 and a dishonorable discharge.
- MT3 Samuel Buchner was found not guilty of conspiracy to distribute videos at court-martial.

There are no plans to prosecute anymore sailors, Submarine Forces spokesman Cmdr. Tommy Crosby said.

Update: A previous version of the story said the final sailor was awaiting a decision on judicial proceedings as of Oct. 27. He has since been found guilty at a non-judicial punishment hearing.

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/crime/2015/10/27/11th-sailor-charged-submarine-shower-video-case/74673694/>

15. DoN SAPRO Participates in SAPR Panel at NATO

(28 Oct) Navy News, From the Office of the Chief of Information

Jill Loftus, director, Department of the Navy Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (DON SAPRO) will participate in a panel with other international defense officials at The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels, Belgium, Oct. 29 to discuss departmental strategies that are currently being employed to prevent sexual assault, provide victim support and better understand reporting barriers for male victims of sexual assault.

Loftus will join panelists from the Norwegian Armed Forces, Belgian Defense Forces and the United Kingdom's Armed Forces.

"This is a great opportunity to learn how other countries are addressing sexual assault in their militaries and share some of the successes we have had in reducing sexual assault," Loftus said.

The panel, which is being hosted by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), is a platform to launch a new handbook that highlights program initiatives related to preventing and responding to gender-based violence in differing military settings worldwide. Panelists will cover broad-ranging topics such as the role of senior leadership in preventing sexual violence to best practices related to facilitating environments conducive of sexual assault reporting.

"The combination of the panel and the handbook is demonstrative of the investment that military communities are making to ensure their service members are engaged in creating an environment where interpersonal violence is taken seriously," Loftus said.

Loftus expects to speak about the efficacy of theater-based interactive training, the policy implications related to reporting options and the challenges male victims face when reporting sexual assault.

For more information and resources to combat sexual assault, visit the SAPR website at www.sapr.navy.mil.

http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=91759

16. DoD Recognizes Innovative Efforts to Prevent Sexual Assault

(28 Oct) DoD News, Defense Media Activity

The Defense Department today honored groups and individuals from each military component who contributed an innovative idea or approach to positively affect sexual assault prevention.

The Sexual Assault Prevention Innovation Award recognizes service members and DoD civilians whose work in support of service members has been particularly noteworthy. DoD created these awards to spark creativity and incentivize efforts to address not only

sexual assault prevention, but also ideas that enhance overall command climate, officials said.

“The 2015 Prevention Innovation awardees deserve recognition for their leadership in strengthening our prevention efforts and the impact they have made in their military environment,” said Army Maj. Gen. Camille M. Nichols, director of the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. “We are grateful for the hard work and dedication shown by our personnel as they shape the environment in which service members live and work,” Nichols said.

The 2015 Sexual Assault Prevention Innovation Award awardees are:

-- Air Force 17th Training Wing, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas and Presidio of Monterey, California: Established a five-member team serving two geographically separated locations providing training to promote pro-social behavior called "Dating 101" and expanded their Teal Rope program into multi-service-member peer-to-peer mentorship and trust-building in the community.

-- Army Combined Arms Support Command Training and Technology Division, Fort Lee Virginia (Matthew MacLaughlin, Diane Jenkins, Tyler Gross, Christopher Borland, and David Garrison): Developed a template for a mobile application called "We Care" for soldiers of the Combined Arms Support Command, which was made available to all Training and Doctrine Command organizations.

-- Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina (Shirley Stephens): Designed the MCCS Dance Battle event using a clublike environment using the theme "Eliminate Sexual Assault. Know Your Part. Do Your Part" to highlight situational context in which the target population would likely be vulnerable. This event increased participants' awareness and provided tools to intervene.

-- Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, Mississippi (Deborah Brockway, Tammie Holland, Michael Jordy, Capt. Paul Odenthal): The Gulfport team collaborated with local businesses to develop the "Responsible Advertising and Bystander Intervention Training" campaign to provide training for local recreation establishments to identify potentially dangerous situations and intervene.

-- National Guard Bureau, Kentucky Army National Guard, Louisville, Kentucky (Sgt. Joshua Kemp): Proactively participated in peer-to-peer mentorship on topics of healthy relationships, responsible drinking, and bystander intervention in social settings. To further the SAPR messaging across the installation, Kemp also developed a DoD Safe Helpline vehicle wrap for the government vehicles that are driven on the installation.

-- Coast Guard, Base National Capital Region Headquarters, Washington D.C. (Simone Hall): Established the first and only sexual assault response coordinator Web page in the Coast Guard and regularly publishes sexual assault prevention news articles highlighting prevention efforts such as "Don't Be an Active Bystander...Intervene, Stop a Sexual Assault."

DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy

The sexual assault prevention strategy directs a comprehensive prevention approach across the department, officials said, focusing on educating all personnel to intervene in incidents of sexual harassment and assault, and on the development of healthy relationship skills through leadership mentoring and role-modeling.

“We are committed to effectively executing a prevention strategy that works consistently over time on a large scale,” Nichols said.

“We are developing performance measures for sexual assault prevention. The department is leading critical change by identifying desired outcomes, assessing our progress, and sharing with our external partners.”

The sexual assault prevention strategy stresses commanders' renewed attention to healthy command climates, and deterrence and accountability for conduct inconsistent with military values, officials said, noting that every service member must be a steadfast participant in creating and sustaining an appropriate culture.

“Since 2006, rates of past-year prevalence of unwanted sexual contact for both men and women have been cut in half. Over the same time period, we have seen a significant increase in the reporting of the crime,” Nichols said. “We know, however, that progress like this does not happen without continued commitment over the long run. Our efforts to eliminate this crime from the military must be sustainable, unrelenting, and pervasive. We know a long-term commitment is the only way to promote lasting social change.”

The Prevention Innovation awards are presented by their respective commands in conjunction with October's Crime Prevention Month. Nominees were submitted by each of the military services, the Coast Guard, and the National Guard Bureau.

DoD SAPR Connect is the overarching name for the collaboration, information and idea sharing community of practice. For more information on ideas to prevent sexual assaults in your organization, visit DoD SAPR Connect on milSuite at <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/dod-sexual-assault-prevention-team>.

17. Airman acquitted of sexual assault charge

(29 Oct) Air Force Times, By Jeff Schogol

An airman has been found not guilty of sexual assault after his case was transferred from Europe to Washington following a three-star general's initial decision not to proceed with a court-martial.

A military panel of three lieutenant colonels and four master sergeants exonerated Senior Airman Brandon Wright on Wednesday evening, according to Wright's two military defense attorneys: Maj. Jacob Ramer and Capt. Patrick Hughes.

"It was apparent throughout the full eight days of trial that each and every panel member understood the importance of their role and gave their full attention to resolving the question before them," Ramer and Hughes said in a statement Thursday to Air Force Times. "Through this ordeal, Senior Airman Wright's unit and those close to him were monumental in maintaining his resilience and helping him through the most difficult time of his young life. He is thankful for these people, and grateful that he is finally able to put this behind him and move forward with the rest of his life."

Wright had been accused of aggravated sexual assault in connection with a July 2012 incident while he was stationed at Aviano Air Base, Italy. Wright had also been charged with rape, but the prosecution later withdrew that charge.

Retired Col. [Don Christensen](#), the Air Force's former top prosecutor who joined the victims-advocacy group Protect Our Defenders, issued a statement on Wednesday critical of how the military justice system handled this case.

"This case is Exhibit A of the devastating consequences of our failed military justice system," Christensen said in the statement. "Due to multiple errors committed by the command-driven justice system, both parties have had their lives on hold for more than three years awaiting a verdict.

"The survivor in this case endured a slew of avoidable hearings and appeals for over three years that repeatedly delayed her from having her day in court," Christensen wrote. "An empowered independent military prosecutor based justice system would have ensured the administration of swift and efficient justice, something all of our military service members deserve."

Christensen concluded that the military's justice system was broken after securing a sexual-assault conviction against Lt. Col. James Wilkerson, an F-16 pilot and Aviano inspector general, only to see that conviction overturned in February 2013 by then-Third Air Force commander Lt. Gen. Craig Franklin.

In September 2013, Franklin also decided not to prosecute Wright on rape and related charges. Only three days later, acting Air Force Secretary Eric Fanning transferred the case to Washington, where Maj. Gen. Sharon Dunbar, then-commander of the Air Force District of Washington, ruled in March 2014 that the Wright would face a court-martial.

The Air Force's decision to reinvestigate the Wright case came as Franklin was dealing with a firestorm of controversy for overturning the Wilkerson conviction, which [outraged lawmakers](#), such as Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Missouri, and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrad, D-New York. McCaskill called for Franklin to be fired.

Wilkerson would later leave the Air Force as a major after he was disciplined for [fathering a child](#) with another woman while he was married eight years earlier. In January 2014, Franklin [announced he would retire](#) because "my judgment has been questioned publicly regarding my decisions as a general court martial convening authority." He left the Air Force as a two-star general.

After Franklin's decision to dismiss charges against Wright, Capt. Maribel Jarzabek, the special victims counselor for the alleged victim, complained that her client had [not been treated fairly](#) during the investigation and that Franklin had refused to meet her before deciding not to prosecute Wright.

"The investigating officer was badgering her" about how long the assault lasted, Jarzabek said for a January 2014 Air Force Times story. "He was incredibly biased" and asked questions that violated her privacy, she said.

18. How a Marine Unit's High Suicide Rate Got That Way

(29 Oct) *The New York Times*, By Dave Phillips

Since coming back from Afghanistan in 2008, the hard-hit Second Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment [has struggled to adjust](#). The battalion, known as the 2/7, lost 20 men in war. In the years since, it has lost 13 more to suicide. The battalion now has a suicide rate 14 times that for all Americans.

The New York Times asked [Dr. Charles Engel](#), of the RAND Corporation, and two [Marines](#) who served with the battalion in Afghanistan, Arthur Karell and Keith Branch, to answer readers' questions about the devastating effects of combat and the high suicide rate among veterans. The conversation took place on Facebook in October, moderated by Dave Philipps, a reporter for The Times who covers veterans' affairs. Here are some of the questions and answers, which have been condensed and edited.

Q. *Why were the mental health concerns of the battalion not identified following deployment? What can be done to better identify service members who are struggling?*

Arthur Karell: The process for identifying mental health concerns consisted of one post-deployment health assessment (a questionnaire), along with two weeks of downtime leave after getting back to the States. Then the battalion immediately enters a training cycle for the next deployment. The overwhelming emphasis is on constant tactical training — longer-term considerations got crowded out. I have heard that this is now starting to change, and I hope that is actually the case. Allowing Marines and other service members more time to spend together as a cohesive unit after a combat deployment would go a long way to better identifying service members who are struggling. Finally, that there is zero information-sharing between the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration makes it impossible for health providers or volunteer organizations to have access to information that could provide indications of possible problems. Privacy is an issue, but service members should at least have the option to allow their D.O.D. service records to inform V.A. health providers.

Keith Branch: Ideally, if someone scored as “high risk” on the post-deployment assessment, he or she would be referred to on-base mental health services. From my memory, there were only a handful of service members who utilized these services — I was one of them. However, my stint in therapy lasted less than a month. First, there is an extremely prevalent negative stigma associated with seeking mental health services, especially in the combat arms occupations where weakness is not tolerated. I hope things have changed since 2009. Second, the mental health services on base had long waiting periods and the solution was to prescribe medication. I know more than a few Marines who became addicts while seeking mental health services. From my experience, many Marines do not show signs of mental health problems until they separate from the service. I think being surrounded by the people who served in combat with you provides a sense of security. However, that security is lost when service members separate and return home.

Q. *Are multiple combat deployments a contributing factor to suicide?*

Dave Philipps: The data suggest there is little or no added suicide risk associated with multiple deployments, but those studies have been unable to address the amount of combat seen. Second, no study has looked at this question after active duty. We simply don't know. Anecdotally, nine of 13 members of the 2/7 who killed themselves did multiple tours. And I think it is important to note the quick succession of these tours, with less than a year between.

Q. *Is the pain experienced by veterans who return from combat rooted primarily in the events of the past or in their outlook for the future?*

K.B.: For myself and many other veterans from Second Battalion, Seventh Marines, the pain that is rooted in the past gives rise to an irrational outlook for the future. That is to say, an emotional trigger in the present can provoke the anxiety experienced in a past event and cause a veteran to have an irrational, grim view of the future. Being the tip of the spear for your country instills the highest amount of purpose one could seek to achieve in a lifetime, at least from a veteran's perspective. The veterans who soon establish a purpose, whether through a career, volunteer work or some other activity, and have a supportive environment, tend to become happy and successful. On the other hand, if a purpose is not found during the critical period of military to civilian transition, veterans will suspend themselves in time. This can lead to many devastating behaviors such as addiction, isolation, and the list goes on. There are other important secondary factors such as the health of intimate relationships, financial stability and treatment from society.

A.K.: The events of the past inform the outlook for the future. When the events of the past repeatedly trigger an anguish that doesn't abate, it may cause a veteran to question what kind of future they have in store. I've heard of post-combat stress described as a response to deep moral trauma, as war is just about the most intense and certainly the largest-scale moral trauma humans inflict on one

another. For veterans, post-military activities, pursuits and/or careers that involve or embody a shared purpose, go a long way toward recovery from that moral trauma.

Q. *What role do guns have in veterans' suicides?*

D.P.: In the 2/7, nine of the 13 Marines who killed themselves used guns. I spoke to three more who put a gun to their head and pulled the trigger but did not die, and several more who had contemplated suicide with a gun. It appears to be a very big risk factor to have a gun in the house. The V.A. has recognized this, but has been careful in how it presents advice (recommending storing weapons voluntarily with a friend) because doctors don't want veterans to avoid treatment out of fear they will lose their guns.

Dr. Charles Engel: Six of 10 gun-related deaths are suicides, and about half of all suicides are gun-related. Most suicides occur on impulse, and the availability of a gun makes it all too easy for a person experiencing suicidal thoughts to act on that impulse. Some have speculated that perhaps one reason that suicide is elevated among military personnel and veterans is their experience with guns. Exchanging hostile fire in battle, especially the experience of killing, may represent an important psychological threshold. The tragic psychological familiarity that comes with crossing that threshold may well increase the likelihood of subsequent self-inflicted injury in someone already thinking about suicide.

Q. *I know so many veterans who are prescribed all sorts of prescriptions off label and leave the V.A. with a plastic bag full of drugs. Do we know whether these drugs have an effect on the suicide rate?*

C.E.: Unfortunately, determining whether there is a causal link between multiple medications and suicide is extremely difficult. The bag of pills observation is all too common in my clinical experience and never a good thing. It's essential that any person taking prescription psychoactive medication only does so while under the close care of an appropriately credentialed and skilled clinician. Leftover medications and old pill bottles should be disposed of completely to prevent confusion. Less is often more when it comes to the benefits of medications — more medications leads to increased chance of side effects, drug-drug interactions, and mistakes — both by patients when taking them and clinicians when prescribing them. It's always best to have a primary care clinician who leads the treatment team who can review and oversee your entire treatment regimen.

Q. *The public generally uses post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, as a catchall label for the psychological effects of combat. Are there distinct treatments for other issues — guilt, depression, loss of interest in life — that seem to fall outside the clinical definition of PTSD?*

C.E.: PTSD, as used among mental health professionals, is a clearly defined constellation of persistent symptoms that is serious enough and lasts long enough to result in significant problems for the person suffering from them. The traumatic psychological events that can result in PTSD go well beyond military-related trauma and can include, for example, accidents, natural disasters, child abuse, and physical and sexual assault. Similarly, the downstream effects of PTSD can be broad and include a range of mental and physical health effects that fall outside the technical definition of the disorder. The most common of these include depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug misuse, chronic pain and sometimes poorly explained but disabling physical symptoms. There are evidence-based treatments for these problems. Those treatments can sometimes overlap with the treatments for PTSD, but combining treatments to target each person's unique circumstances and health profile is essential.

Q. *Why isn't more being done to try and understand the connection between drug and alcohol use and PTSD?*

D.P.: In my reporting on the 2/7 battalion, I found alcohol was a huge factor in a number of deaths. Many of the guys were treating their anxiety and sleep problems with alcohol, which generally created more problems (eroding their support system of loved ones, for example.) At least five of the 13 Marines I wrote about shot themselves while drunk.

Q. *Why doesn't the V.A. track suicides by unit and command? Wouldn't that tell us a lot about conditions inside those units and who might be in danger?*

D.P.: For generations, the V.A. has for the most part attempted to look at all veterans the same regardless of rank or service. This was done altruistically in an attempt to provide veterans the same standard of care. Now, however, health care increasingly uses Big Data to do risk prediction. So all the factors of military service may be extremely helpful in predicting who, for example, is most likely to kill themselves, and what patterns or clusters are emerging. A system that combined military and V.A. data could conceivably spot a combat unit with a high level of mental health issues and target it for outreach. It could also inform policy makers about who is at risk and when, so resources could be designed to meet actual needs. However, the military and V.A. still have a bureaucratic gulf between

them that neither is likely bridge alone.

Q. *The figure coming from the V.A.: “22 veteran suicides every day” is said to be misleading. Why?*

D.P.: The statistic was offered by the V.A. in one of their recent suicide reports. While it seems to be a staggering number, it is actually misleading because it doesn't tell us the rate as compared to the larger population, so we don't know if the rate is elevated, and what the trend is. A couple more helpful numbers: The suicide rate for all veterans who served [between 2001 and 2009](#) is about 30 deaths per 100,000 — more than twice the national average. And the risk for them is greatest in the first three years after separating from the military.

Q. *With the increased involvement of women in the military, how do their suicide numbers compare with those of men?*

C.E. In the military as in the general population, rates of suicide are consistently higher in men than women. However, research suggests that currently deployed women may have higher rates of suicide than military women who have never deployed. In contrast, currently deployed men show little if any increased suicide risk compared to military men who have never deployed. An [Army study](#) found that the risk of suicide among currently deployed women was about three times that of nondeployed women. Even so, the risk of suicide among currently deployed men was still almost twice as high as for currently deployed women.

D.P.: In general, women have much lower rates of suicide than men, in part because men tend to use firearms more often. But a recent study found women who are veterans are drastically more likely to commit suicide than civilian women. This may be because women who are veterans [use firearms more often](#).

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/30/us/how-a-marine-units-high-suicide-rate-got-that-way.html?_r=0

19. Call to Action For Our Female Veterans

(6 Oct) Roll Call, By Katy Beh Neas

Female veterans shoulder a double dilemma in our society. They face all the same problems as their male counterparts when re-entering civilian life, including getting and keeping a job, accessing health care and affordable housing. But many do not identify themselves as veterans and as such don't access available veteran supports and services. Those that do and seek assistance often find veteran systems and programs ill-equipped to address their needs.

This is important because women are one of the fastest-growing groups within the veteran population, according to the Veterans Health Administration. In fact, they will soon reach one-fifth of the total veteran cohort. While many female veterans find success following their military service, far too many live in poverty, are unemployed or are homeless.

Military service-connected experiences and transition challenges pose health and family threats to many female veterans. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, female veterans are more likely to be at risk for depression than their male counterparts, 11 percent more likely to be divorced than civilian women and nearly twice as likely to suffer from an eating disorder than male veterans. The numbers jump significantly for female veterans under 35 years old.

The growing number of female veterans has placed new demands on an already strained VA system, leaving policymakers, veteran groups and others to seek additional approaches to meet the needs of female veterans, including the 200,000 women expected to leave the military over the next four to five years.

So what works best in helping veterans, particularly females, excel during their transition?

Female veterans live in communities in all 50 states, so it stands to reason that the way a community welcomes, connects with and responds to service members leaving the military can make the difference between a transition success story and one of struggle and crisis.

Easter Seals, a national non-profit organization that has served veterans since World War II, has released a new report, “Call to Action: Support Community Efforts to Improve the Transition to Civilian Life for Women Veterans.” It posits that gender-specific programs put in place by Congress and the VA are important foundation steps, but more can and must be done, especially in expanding reintegration services at the community level.

Recent studies have identified the expansion of public-private partnerships as being critical to increasing access to community-based reintegration supports for female and male veterans. Easter Seals has worked with key public and private partners to help deploy a reintegration model that focuses on overall veteran wellness by leveraging available community services and emphasizing crisis prevention, before situations require crisis intervention. The organization provides a recommended community best practice model with five core components:

- Veteran-centered approach to focus on the unique and evolving needs of each female veteran;
- Care coordination to holistically address reintegration through a coordinated team approach;
- Community connection to link female veterans to other key federal and local supports within their communities;
- Emergency financial assistance to meet unexpected, temporary financial barriers to successful reintegration; and,
- Ongoing preventative and follow along supports to recognize that reintegration challenges can surface throughout a female veteran's lifetime.

The gap in reintegration services for female veterans exists not because we do not have a solution. It exists in part community-based solutions are not readily available in all parts of the country.

Congress has taken steps to close the gap in reintegration services that exist for female veterans, including through community care coordination programs that leverage existing community supports. However, many female veterans still struggle to access reintegration services at the community level, which is jeopardizing their transition to civilian life.

To enable our female veterans to succeed where they live, Congress must authorize and fund federal care coordination programs for female veterans. This goes beyond support of existing federal programs that utilize the community care coordination model and must add new programs for female veterans via community grants. Further, within the current federal programs, funds must be targeted to address the unique reintegration challenges female veterans face.

It's time for Congress to answer this call to action. Two million female veterans are depending on you.

Katy Beh Neas is the executive vice president of Public Affairs for Easter Seals.

<http://blogs.rollcall.com/beltway-insiders/call-to-action-for-our-female-veterans-commentary/>

20. CJTF-HOA Valor Run honors fallen female veterans

(25 Oct) CJTF-HOA

More than 800 runners and walkers participated in a Valor Run dedicated to fallen service women that was hosted by Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa and Camp Lemonnier October 21, 2015.

Valor Run honors the more than 160 female service members who have died in the line of duty during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the families they left behind.

More than 150 participants were coalition forces, including Japan, France, Germany, Italy, and Djibouti Armed Forces (FAD) officers, who wanted to show their support to the United States and its fallen heroes.

"It is important that we take part and provide sentiment for these women who died during war," said 2nd Lt. Mohamed Meraneh, FAD deputy director of international relations. "However, we are here to support every nation's soldiers."

As people gathered near the starting line, they participated in a moment of silence and reflection in remembrance of the fallen American service members.

"It's important to take time to remember and honor the sacrifices of those who have gone before us," said U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Bevin Keen, event coordinator. "Women in all branches have served alongside men and have made the ultimate sacrifice."

As the group moved through the course, many people experienced a feeling of unity and family, according to 2nd Lt. Loula Ali Moussa, FAD director of international relation's first assistant.

"We have formed bonds between us and many of the people here," said Moussa. "There is a big relationship between the United States and Djibouti. We are very happy training and doing activities with each other."

The event was organized to raise awareness for more than just women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

"Valor Run honors not only the fallen women, but all women who serve, by donating profits to the Women's Memorial in Washington D.C. and the Wounded Warrior Fund," said U.S. Navy Capt. Kimberly Walz, CJTF-HOA Security Force Assistance Division deputy-director.

This Valor Run comes at a pivotal time for women in the military, as many combat positions will become available to both genders.

"War is hard for everyone," Meraneh said. "We all face the same danger. We risk our lives to defend our countries. No one can promise anyone absolute safety."

"Women, like men, are answering the call to serve," Walz said. "We are members of the team, crew and units. This run is a reminder that no matter who we are, where we are or what our job in the military currently is, that we all face the same risk every day."

21. Women veterans recruited for federal border duty

(26 Oct) Military Times, By Adam Stone

When it comes to hiring veterans, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has a great track record: Of its 21,000 agents, 28.8 percent are prior military.

CBP also has a lousy history of hiring women, who make up just 5 percent of the workforce.

It's the same story at the Federal Air Marshal Service: Just 5.5 percent of the workforce is women. In the 2011 round of hiring, only 850 of 19,000 applicants identified themselves as female.

Clearly, both of these federal law enforcement agencies are weak when it comes to hiring women. But both say they're trying.

As Chief Patrol Agent in Spokane, Washington, Gloria Chavez helps lead a recruiting team that spends a lot of time at colleges, athletic events and other venues that attract young women.

"Many of them still don't know what they are seeking in a job," said Chavez, who has been with CBP for 20 years.

"So we stress what the job is about. It is outdoors. It is independent. You have to have the confidence in yourself to do your job and do it well."

That message resonated with former Petty Officer 3rd Class Stephanie Anaya, a hospital corpsman surgical tech who signed on as a CBP agent after leaving the Navy in 2007.

She said her military background made CBP seem like a natural choice.

"My training helped me gain confidence — it helped me become a leader," she said. "So for me, it wasn't a matter of being male or female, it was a matter of joining an organization that had a sense of purpose."

Still, Anaya encountered a few surprises when she first came onboard at CBP.

"I did not know at the time that it was so male-dominated," she said. "But what surprised me the most was that there were no different physical requirements for men and women."

Unlike the Navy, which held her to a lesser physical standard, CBP says men and women must work at the same level of physical ability.

That makes sense to Anaya.

"I rely heavily on my partners, and they should be able to rely on me. I should be able to function at the same level they function at," she said.

CBP has sporadic job openings, and when it does, it has been aggressive in seeking to bolster its female headcount — sometimes too aggressive, some might say.

In late 2014, the agency got a special waiver to run a job listing in USAJobs.gov that stated the position was "Restricted to Female Applicants Only." As it sought to fill positions in border states from California to Texas, the agency limited its search to women, with a preference for minorities and veterans. Men were told not to bother applying.

While there were some raised eyebrows in the media at the time, CBP said the move was necessary to make up for the underrepresentation of women in its ranks.

The Federal Air Marshal Service has been a bit more traditional in its approach to encouraging female applicants.

The service routinely reaches out to women through groups such as Women in Federal Law Enforcement, National Women Veterans of America and National Women Veterans United. Much of the messaging centers on the mission and the importance of air safety, just as it does with male applicants.

At the same time, recruiters rely on a personal element to help drive interest among women.

"The most effective technique we have is in utilizing our current employees," said Joe Samuels, a regional recruiting director. "They are the best storytellers for what it is like to be part of the Federal Air Marshal Service. So when we go out to different organizations, we utilize that female workforce to help make that connection."

Supervisory Federal Air Marshal Sukeena Stephens is among those who help tell that story. A New York native, she witnessed the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon and knew she had a mission.

"When they put out the announcement that they would be hiring for this, I immediately submitted my application," she said.

While women may shy away from the role of undercover in-flight security, Stephens said gender can make the job a perfect fit.

"When you think about what a federal air marshal looks like, you are not looking for a female. So it gives me an element of surprise, something we all wish we could have," she said. "When events happen, people just see you as someone who is being helpful. They don't see you as a law enforcement officer."

She said that as a woman, she finds it easier sometimes to keep a cool head, to bring a situation back down, where a man might tend to escalate. That's a helpful trait to have in a pressurized steel tube at 50,000 feet.

But despite potential advantages, women in general continue to steer clear of these jobs. While the agencies don't like to speculate, it's clear that public perception plays a role. As Stephens noted, people just don't visualize women in these scenarios.

At the same time, social constructs may limit the applicant pool.

"We know that women who apply have the same values as men, but they may have priorities that lean more toward home and family, so they have issues when it comes to rotating shifts and time in the field," Chavez said.

Women who have made the leap say they have found ready acceptance.

"When I am out at my station, my colleagues don't see me as a girl. I am part of the team," Anaya said.

And she is looking for others like her to be part of that same team.

"I have given presentations in schools, and young girls will look at me like, 'Wow, you can do that?' I see their eyes light up."

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/veterans/2015/10/26/women-veterans-recruited-federal-border-duty/74588294/>