



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Articles of Interest for the Week of 9 October 2015

GENDER INTEGRATION

1. [New Marine commandant: 'Personally insulting' to talk about women in combat](#)

(2 Oct) *The Washington Post*, By Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Newly instated Marine Commandant Gen. Robert Neller made some pointed comments regarding women in combat Thursday, following a public back and forth between the Marine Corps and the Secretary of the Navy over whether the Marine Corps would allow women into previously closed ground combat roles.

2. [Davis: SEAL teams may be next for females](#)

(3 Oct) *Pensacola News Journal*, By Marketta Davis

Watching the grueling tasks the candidates were executing made me start sweating and panting ... and I was just the reporter, standing there taking notes and pictures.

3. [Biden backs transgender military service](#)

(4 Oct) *Military Times*, By Josh Lederman

Vice President Joe Biden is throwing his unequivocal support behind letting transgender people serve openly in the U.S. military, as the Obama administration considers whether and when to lift the longstanding ban.

4. [Marines unveil new gender-neutral standards for 29 jobs](#)

(5 Oct) *Marine Corps Times*, By Gina Harkins

It could get a whole lot tougher for Marines to make it into more than two dozen ground combat jobs as Corps officials unveil new physical standards that troops must meet before shipping off to the fleet.

5. [Commandant: women in combat are your teammates](#)

(5 Oct) *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, By Gretel C. Kovach

New leader of Marines speaks to infantrymen at Camp Pendleton

6. [Of Methodology and Men](#)

(6 Oct) *Political Violence @ a Glance*, By Kyleanne Hunter

What is striking is that the two primary infantry services—the Army and the Marine Corps—went about their evaluation in very different ways. The difference in their methodologies resulted in very different conversations. Given that the results of these evaluations will have a direct impact on national security, it is essential that they be as unbiased and systematic as possible, and not based on passionate emotion.

7. [Carter sounds nearly ready to open combat jobs to women](#)

(6 Oct) *The Washington Post*, By Lolita C. Baldor (AP)

Defense Secretary Ash Carter sounded like he's nearly made up his mind about opening all combat jobs to women, as he told U.S. troops in Sicily on Tuesday that limiting his search for qualified military candidates to just half the population would be "crazy."

PREGANCY AND PARENTHOOD

8. Senators: Give military families more stability in moves

(6 Oct) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

Military families would get some extra flexibility during permanent change-of-station moves — allowing them to leave up to six months before or after the service member's reporting date to the next installation — under a bipartisan bill introduced Tuesday in the Senate.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT & SEXUAL ASSAULT

9. Report: Language school leader sexually harassed students, teachers

(3 Oct) San Antonio Express News, By Sig Christenson

An Air Force investigation last year agreed with complaints that a supervisor at the Defense Language Institute on Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland sexually harassed students and fellow instructors. It found that the behavior had gone on for a decade in a program described as a vital part of American foreign policy.

10. Sexual Assault in the Military and the Unlawful Command Influence Catch-22

(7 Oct) War on the Rocks, By James Joyner and James W. Weirick

Recently, a military appellate court once again overturned a rape conviction on the grounds of unlawful command influence.

WOMEN VETERANS

11. PTSD common among female Vietnam-era veterans

(7 Oct) Reuters, By Andrew M. Seaman

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be more common than previously thought among female veterans of the Vietnam War era, suggests a new study.

12. VA addresses suicide by gun problem among female veterans

(8 Oct) The Washington Post, By Emily Wax-Thibodeaux

Female veterans who try to take their own lives are often successful at a far higher rate than their female non-veteran counterparts because of one reason: They use guns.

1. New Marine commandant: 'Personally insulting' to talk about women in combat

(2 Oct) The Washington Post, By Thomas Gibbons-Neff

Newly instated Marine Commandant Gen. Robert Neller made some pointed comments regarding women in combat Thursday, following a public back and forth between the Marine Corps and the Secretary of the Navy over whether the Marine Corps would allow women into previously closed ground combat roles.

"This has nothing to do about women in combat," Neller said to a theater full of Marines at Marine Base Quantico in Virginia. "I buried three women in Iraq in 2006 and they died alongside 311 men."

"To me its personally insulting to talk about women in combat. Women have been in combat," he added.

Neller was dismissing the idea that including women in combat was anything new, and he made sure to point out that the debate was about women being directly assigned to positions in ground combat units such as the infantry.

The Marine Corps is perhaps on the verge of being the only military service that has asked for an exemption to opening all positions to women. While the Marine Corps has not publicly stated that it will seek to keep ground combat positions closed to women, in September, then Commandant Joseph Dunford asked Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus for an exemption to the 2013 mandate that all jobs in the military be open to women by the new year, according to Marine officials.

According to the officials, Dunford requested that Marine infantry and reconnaissance units remain closed to women.

"Gen. Dunford, when he was still commandant, made his recommendation on this issue to the Secretary of the Navy," said Neller "And right now it is the policy of the Marine Corps that we're not going to talk about what that recommendation was because

we're going to let the Secretary of Defense make his decision.”

Neller's silence on the Marine Corps stance comes after a somewhat public clash between the Marine Corps and Mabus. In September, the Marine Corps released a four-page summary of a nine-month experiment, known as the Ground Combat Integrated Task Force. The summary indicated that women were more prone to injury and performed poorly at a majority of infantry-focused tasks in comparison to their male counterparts.

Upon release of the summary, Mabus pushed back on the experiment, almost discounting it entirely by saying that the women tested should have had a “higher bar to cross” to get into the study and that the Marines carrying out the experiment had a predisposed mindset from the start.

While a number of enlisted Marines criticized Mabus's remarks and Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) even [called](#) for Mabus's resignation, Neller took the time Thursday to laud the efforts of those who participated in the experiment.

“The Marines who were a part of the GCITF did a great a job...they worked their tails off,” said Neller. “The people that made it to the end deserve our gratitude for their discipline and strength and fortitude to make it to the end.”

On Wednesday, Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter told reporters that he would not review the service's recommendation on gender integration for “some months,” even though the service secretaries submitted their recommendations by Wednesday night.

While the Army has remained mum on its requests, both the Navy and Air Force plan to open all jobs to women by the start of the new year—including special operations.

Mabus has made it repeatedly clear that he will not seek an exemption for either the Navy or the Marine Corps

“I'm not overly concerned about it,” said Neller, referring to Carter's eventual decision. “We'll get told what to do and we'll execute the plan...it's as simple as that.”

Correction: This post has been updated to reflect that Rep. Hunter is a Republican, not a Democrat as originally written and the accurate reflection of Secretary of the Navy Mabus's remarks in regards to women in the GCITF.

Thomas Gibbons-Neff is a staff writer and a former Marine infantryman.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/10/02/new-marine-commandant-personally-insulting-to-talk-about-women-in-combat/>

2. Davis: SEAL teams may be next for females

(3 Oct) Pensacola News Journal, By Marketta Davis

Having grown up with a "girls can do anything boys can do" mantra, there was no prouder military brat and spouse rooting for the two female Army Ranger graduates than me.

Though I didn't get to meet or even see them, it wasn't for lack of effort. I traveled to Camp Rudder in August during the swamp, and airborne and air assault operations phases and had my eyes peeled throughout my entire visit, but they were well integrated in the group before they ever touched down at Eglin Air Force Base.

Watching the grueling tasks the candidates were executing made me start sweating and panting ... and I was just the reporter, standing there taking notes and pictures.

It became crystal clear to me that being able to physically complete the tasks wasn't a problem for these ladies. Carrying 60-pound ruck sacks and jumping off high platforms practicing their parachute landing falls, they fit in with the men so much that no one could tell them apart.

It was around the time of my visit to Camp Rudder that reports of the Navy opening their SEAL teams to women began making rounds. While my mantra was ringing strong in the beginning, I surprisingly started to rethink my feelings regarding women on the battlefield.

While I thought it was great that females were being offered the same opportunities as their male counterparts, I'm began to question not the "fairness" of it but the safety. Speaking with a few of my readers in the past months, I've been reminded that just because a woman can physically do what a man can do doesn't necessarily mean she should.

I'm a 190-pound, 5-foot-6-inch woman who can barely help my husband lift the loveseat off the floor and carry it to the next room. How would I feel if I my brother falls in battle and I can't carry him to safety, or worse: we both die because I can't get us out of harm's way? What if my being smaller than my counterparts interferes with a 10-person static parachute jump in 10-knot winds?

And no, not all women are small and petite but even I know that a person has to be built to be an Army Ranger or Navy SEAL. It's a calling and honestly, it simply isn't possible for all women ... it's not even possible for all men.

In late August, Navytimes.com reported that the Navy SEALs would move forward with an integration plan and that the standards and training would remain the same. For those that don't know, only one-third of SEAL candidates complete the intense program.

There are those chauvinists who think women shouldn't be Rangers or SEALs simply because they're women but not everyone who thinks women shouldn't be offered these opportunities is being chauvinistic. Some are looking at it from a scientific point of view. Others are being protective, like many of my vets who wouldn't dream of having their wives out there fighting on the front lines because they'd worry about their safety.

While I still believe in my mantra and fully support my fellow ladies breaking down barriers, I'd offer the advice of making the decision to become a Ranger or SEAL after careful deliberation. It certainly isn't a job for the faint of heart.

<http://www.pnj.com/story/news/military/2015/10/03/military-musings/73303200/>

3. Biden backs transgender military service

(4 Oct) Military Times, By Josh Lederman

Vice President Joe Biden is throwing his unequivocal support behind letting transgender people serve openly in the U.S. military, as the Obama administration considers whether and when to lift the longstanding ban.

Biden's declaration at the Human Rights Campaign's annual dinner Saturday goes further than anything the Obama administration has said before, evoking memories of when Biden outpaced President Obama in endorsing gay marriage. Although the White House says Obama supports a Pentagon review aimed at ending the transgender ban, neither Obama nor the military has said definitively that the policy will be changed.

"No longer is there any question transgender people are able to serve in the United States military," Biden told a crowd of 3,000 gay rights activists at the group's star-studded gala.

Biden, who is considering running for president, declared transgender rights to be "the civil rights issue of our time" as he delivered the keynote speech, just hours after Hillary Rodham Clinton — his top rival if he enters the race — gave a rousing address elevating LGBT rights as a main pillar of her 2016 bid. Biden said gays and lesbians shouldn't fear "those shrill voices" trying to undo gay marriage and other advances because Americans "have moved so far beyond them and their appeals to prejudice and fear and homophobia."

"There's homophobes still left — most of them are running for president," Biden said, in a playful yet cutting jab at the Republican candidates he could one day face.

Transgender rights were a commanding focus at this year's gathering of the Human Rights Campaign, whose endorsement and members' support are eagerly sought in the Democratic primary. With gay marriage now law of the land nationwide, many gay rights activists have turned their attention to transgender issues, which have burst into the public spotlight only recently.

"We need to say with one voice that transgender people are valued," Clinton said to a smaller gathering Saturday morning. "They are loved, and they are us."

Defense Secretary Ash Carter has said the Pentagon's current regulations banning transgender individuals are outdated and has ordered a study aimed at formally ending one of the last gender- or sexuality-based barriers to military service. The study began in July and is

slated to last six months, with an eye toward assessing any impact on the military's readiness to fight.

But the White House has avoided prejudging the outcome of the review, wary of criticism that Obama is imposing politically driven changes irrespective of the advice of his military commanders.

"They have said that they would conduct this review with a bias in favor of changing this policy," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said after the review was announced over the summer. "The president certainly supports that approach."

Biden, in his speech, left no such wiggle room.

"It's simple," the vice president said. "All Americans are qualified to serve, should be able to serve."

The vice president made no explicit reference to his pending decision about the 2016 race, which has dragged on beyond his self-imposed deadline. When an audience member interrupted with a loud shout of "you should run," Biden quickly shifted back to a story about his dad.

Biden won praise for endorsing gay marriage in 2012 ahead of Obama or Clinton, becoming the highest elected official to support the politically charged issue. This year, Clinton, Sen. Bernie Sanders and the other Democratic candidates are aggressively courting LGBT voters' support and working to outdo one another with expressions of support.

"I'm running for president to stand up for the fundamental rights of LGBT Americans," Clinton said.

Clinton had been the Human Rights Campaign's first choice to keynote the dinner, but she turned it down when she was booked on "Saturday Night Live" for the same evening. The group also asked Obama to speak, then invited Biden when Obama was unavailable.

Although Biden has enjoyed strong support from gay groups, many prominent gay Democrats have committed to Clinton, who drew loud cheers whenever her face appeared in videos played before Biden's speech. Richard Socarides, a former senior adviser to President Bill Clinton, said gay activists have a strong emotional connection to Clinton despite Biden's "special footnote in the history of our battle for marriage."

"He deserves our special thanks for that," Socarides said. "But I think we're sticking with Hillary."

Associated Press writer Lisa Lerer contributed to this report.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2015/10/04/biden-backs-transgender-military-service/73332168/>

4. Marines unveil new gender-neutral standards for 29 jobs

(5 Oct) Marine Corps Times, By Gina Harkins

It could get a whole lot tougher for Marines to make it into more than two dozen ground combat jobs as Corps officials unveil new physical standards that troops must meet before shipping off to the fleet.

Marines who leave boot camp or Officer Candidates School hoping to join infantry, weapons, artillery and mechanized units will now face a host of new requirements before they can graduate from their military occupational specialty schoolhouses, Marine Corps Times has learned.

The new rules, which require Marines to prove they can accomplish some of the toughest tasks related to their jobs, are gender-neutral. That means all Marines — male or female — will have to meet the requirements before they're cleared for graduation.

The requirements affect Marines heading into 29 MOSs in the following fields: infantry; artillery; combat engineering; tanks and amphibious assault vehicles; ground ordnance; and some close-air support roles.

A couple of the new standards are universal. Marines in all 29 of the MOSs must be able to perform a casualty evacuation and an MK19 grenade launcher lift. Others vary by job, such as carrying a casualty out of a tank, scaling a wall, swimming 2,000 yards or

loading heavy artillery rounds for certain weapons systems.

The new standards went into effect Sept. 30 in accordance with Defense Department policy, said 1st Lt. Matt Rojo, a spokesman for the Marine Corps' Training and Education Command. They affect all Marines who start their MOS schools after that date, he said.

The standards were developed as a result of the Marine Corps' nine-month-long experiment during which men and women assigned to ground combat specialties were studied as they carried out a series of combat assessments. While the full report on the data collected during that experiment has not yet been released, leaders have said it would be used to determine what it takes for Marines to serve in infantry, weapons, artillery, or mechanized units, including tanks or other armored vehicles.

Here's the first look at the demanding physical standards Marines joining those communities will now have to meet.

How it works

While many of the MOS-producing schoolhouses already cover the types of requirements now laid out in the gender-neutral standards, this will be the first time Marines will be formally tested to make sure they are able to meet the requirements associated with their new jobs.

Each schoolhouse will examine how best to integrate the new requirements into existing programs of instruction, Rojo said. Those running the new tests have already received formal, on-site training on how they should be administered, he added.

For now, the new gender-neutral standards only apply to new Marines entering into their MOSs, Rojo said. It raises questions about how Marines at boot camp or Officer Candidate School might be screened for jobs in certain communities.

It also remains to be seen how the standards might affect Marines already assigned to these 29 MOSs.

"While only new Marines will be tested at the formal learning centers, all Marines are expected to maintain proficiency in their training standards," Rojo said.

The Marine Corps was the only military service to launch a physical requirements study on the scale of its Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, ahead of the Defense Department-wide mandate to open all jobs to women. About 400 Marines, including about 100 women, were hooked up to heart rate monitors and GPS tracking devices as they carried out a host of repetitive assessments.

Initial findings from that study indicated that all-male teams outperformed those that included women in nearly every area. Not only did the female Marines sustain higher injury rates, but were also slower, fired weapons with less accuracy than men, struggled to clear walls, and sometimes failed at simulated casualty evacuations.

The new standards will now require all male and female Marines entering certain jobs to prove they can do those things successfully.

Marines in all infantry MOSs must scale a wall. Those looking to go reconnaissance must swim 2,000 yards while wearing fins and climb rickety ladders. Marines heading to light armored vehicle units must prove they can move an injured Marine out of a vehicle and lift heavy vehicle towbars. Combat engineers must be able to breach doors with heavy objects and lift the accordion-shaped HESCO barriers, which Marines use to fortify their positions.

Download: [Standards by MOS](#)

All of that is a direct result of the data and observation collected during the Marines' women-in-combat study. A Marine involved with the study, who spoke on the condition of anonymity since it hasn't been fully released yet, said TECOM "meticulously reviewed, validated, and developed operationally relevant, gender-neutral standards that correlate directly to individual capabilities and their contribution to the accomplishment of team missions."

The new tests won't take the place of the standard Physical or Combat Fitness Tests all Marines must take, which he said will remain as important assessments of overall fitness. Anyone who might fail to meet a new standard on the first go-around will have a chance to retake it, he added.

Marine training and readiness manuals are now updated to reflect the new requirements for the 29 MOSs.

The controversy

If all MOSs open to female Marines on Jan. 1, despite the Marine Corps' request for an exemption from the Defense Department-wide requirement, the new standards could prove difficult for women to meet.

At the end of the Marines' nine-month study, only two women in the infantry-trained rifleman platoons were left standing. There were roughly two dozen women in the infantry company when the experiment began, but most were dropped due to injury.

The new requirements could be difficult for some men entering into certain MOSs as well. During the experiment, Capt. Mark Lenzi, the commanding officer of the weapons company, which consisted of machine gun, anti-armor and mortar platoons, said some male Marines aren't up to the tasks that come with serving in the infantry.

Sometimes, he said, unit leaders are forced to give weaker Marines an administrative or clerical position in order to avoid moving them out of the unit. Gender-neutral standards would prevent that Marine from ever joining a unit with which they can't keep up, he said.

"If you're [5 feet, 6 inches tall] and 120 pounds, you have virtually no chance of doing this job, whatsoever," Lenzi said.

The Marines' study has led to controversy, however. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus called the experiment flawed, and alleged that some male Marines went into it not wanting to see the women succeed. He also criticized the Corps for measuring average performance instead of looking at individual capabilities.

But the Marine involved with the study fired back at Mabus' remarks. When the study began, researchers went into it with the expectation that they would see no differences between the all-male teams and those that included women, he said.

"The use of averages is merely a way to categorize overall performance of the different groups," the Marine said. "If the study had seen no difference in the 'averages' it would conclude that the introduction of women has no effect — be it positive or negative. However, given that differences existed, the GCEITF study conducted further analysis at the individual level."

It was then that researchers began looking at the traits of each Marine in a crew, squad or team to see whether individual physical characteristics proved essential for all members to be able to carry out a specific mission. That, the Marine said, would help determine what all Marines in that job should be able to prove they can do.

"Identifying individual characteristics is important because it would help to establish gender-neutral standards that could be applied to future applicants to those MOSs."

Staff writer Hope Hodge Seck contributed to this report.

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/10/02/marines-unveil-new-gender-neutral-standards-29-jobs/73173524/>

5. Commandant: women in combat are your teammates

(5 Oct) The San Diego Union-Tribune, By Gretel C. Kovach

When Gen. Robert Neller was promoted to commandant about 10 days ago, he inherited one of the most contentious issues in Marine Corps history – whether women should serve as infantry.

During a talk Monday at Camp Pendleton, the new leader of Marines made it clear they would salute and carry on whether or not restrictions barring women from ground combat jobs are lifted by year's end, ensuring that combat effectiveness does not suffer.

The 62-year-old infantry officer led operations for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in Anbar, Iraq, in 2006. More recently, he oversaw combat forces deployed to Afghanistan as commanding general of Marine Corps Forces Central Command.

"I've been a grunt for 40 years," Neller told several thousand infantrymen and combat engineers on the parade deck near 5th Marine Regiment headquarters, in one of five town hall meetings with Camp Pendleton Marines. "These are my people. I know

you. You're hard. This is why you are good at what you do.”

Can they be just as tough if women serve among them?

The Marines asked Neller about a dozen questions – on cyber warfare, the Corps' tattoo policy, veteran suicide, and downsizing of the military, among others – before the women-in-combat issue came up. The query spurred rumbling in the crowd and exclamations of “there it is!” and “got him.”

“What is your opinion on allowing females into the infantry, sir?” asked a lance corporal from 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment.

Neller did not reveal his opinion during the speech. But a Marine official told The San Diego Union-Tribune that Neller is in complete agreement with the recommendation made by Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr., before the previous commandant moved up to chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Neller's predecessor lobbied defense officials to keep women from Marine Corps infantry and elite reconnaissance units, citing [research by the Corps](#) that found a risk of reduced combat effectiveness and higher injury rates on average if female troops are integrated into those front-line forces.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, the civilian who oversees the Navy and Marine Corps, [discounted the Corps' research methodology](#) and declined to seek any exceptions for either service.

“There will be [a discussion](#). There will probably be, potentially hearings up on Capitol Hill about this. But I assure you that whatever happens, whether there is a waiver or an exception or not, the standards are the standards,” Neller said.

“I'm not sure what's going to happen,” he added, but “I'm not really that worried about it, because when Marines train and they show up, I'm trusting you to make them part of the team, whoever they are.”

On Monday, the Corps announced the introduction of tough [new physical screening tests](#) Marines must pass to graduate from entry-level training in the infantry, weapons, artillery and mechanized units.

Marine Corps leaders said the old practice of assuming every man was capable of the physical demands of ground combat had created a certain amount of “wastage,” or Marines serving in those units who are not fit enough to fight.

Scoring for the general physical fitness and combat fitness tests for all Marines may also change because so many achieve first class. “Maybe it's not hard enough,” Neller said.

The Corps is fighting against the tide as Pentagon leaders and Congress push for gender-neutral employment standards in the armed forces, [following the lead of Australia](#), Canada, and all but two NATO allies.

Many Marines believe nothing less is at stake than the heart of the Corps and the all-male alchemy that makes its infantry units so lethal. Among the nation's armed forces, the Marines have been the most vocal and [resistant to the gender integration](#) push – declining to assign female support staff to the infantry [as the Army does](#), for example.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter will decide by Jan. 1 whether to grant any exceptions to the new all-in policy on ground combat jobs, after reviewing recommendations from the services and Special Operations Command.

In the interim, Neller said he wanted to clarify what is being considered. “This is not about women in combat. I don't know if there's any female Marines here or not ... There's a couple,” he said, spotting the handful of [female support staff](#) in attendance who serve with the School of Infantry and the combat engineers.

“Those are your teammates. And from where I sat in Iraq ... I saw women do what Marines do. I saw 'em get killed, I saw 'em get wounded, I saw 'em fight. So it's not about [women in combat](#),” said Neller, who is widely respected in the Corps as a gruff but effective combat leader.

“I understand the difference between being in combat and being assigned to a ground combat unit. So let's just make sure we keep the discussion in the right area. Because I think it's disrespectful to talk about women in combat and not in combat ... to

them,” Neller said.

Dunford made his recommendation for the Corps based on results of a nearly year-long experiment conducted by the [Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force](#).

“We did a test of units ... to see the effect of having an integrated crew, what it would do to the effectiveness of the organization,” Neller said.

“Everything we do has got to make us better war fighters,” Neller said, but he added, “You have to be willing to think outside the box ... adapt, and change.”

After the gender integrated task force disbanded in July, Brig. Gen. George Smith Jr., commanding general of the Marine Corps Force Innovation Office, laid out a plan for mitigating most of the risk of lower combat effectiveness and increased injuries if female troops are allowed to serve in ground combat units.

The key measures are rigorous screening, better training and supportive leadership, according to [Smith's report to Dunford](#) that was leaked to the Union-Tribune.

Two Marines who listened to Neller’s speech said the most heated phase of [debate in the Corps](#) about expanding roles for women in combat had passed.

Sgt. Mike Bajalia, 21, of Jacksonville, Fla., is an intelligence analyst with the infantry regiment. Bajalia said he was more interested in Neller’s perspective on technology to counter cyberattacks, since “The whole battlefield is shifting toward more of that technological warfare and cyber warfare.”

What about women in the infantry? “It used to be more of a hot topic. It’s kind of died down now. Really the mindset, the mentality of Marines now is if the females can pass it and they can do the same requirements as the males, there is no reason why they shouldn’t be given a chance.

“Marines are going to be Marines and they’re going to get the job done, no matter what,” he said.

Cpl. Wesley Clanton, 20, of Edgewood, N.M., is an embarkation specialist with the regiment, responsible for shipping people and gear on deployment.

When it comes to women in the infantry, “some attitudes are changing,” Clanton said.

“A lot of Marines that I talk to, all my buddies, it’s hey, a Marine’s a Marine. As long as you do your job and do it well, we don’t care... If we’re back in Iraq, if you’re going to save my life, I don’t care who you are,” he said.

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/oct/05/robert-neller-commandant-camp-pendleton/>

6. Of Methodology and Men

(6 Oct) Political Violence @ a Glance, By Kyleanne Hunter

With headlines like these: “[Marine Study Finds All-Male Infantry Units Outperformed Teams with Women](#),” “[Marine Experiment Finds Women Get Injured More Frequently, Shoot Less Accurately than Men](#)”, “[Marine Corps Study says Units with Women Fall Short on Combat Skills](#),” it’s not surprising that emotionally charged statements are shaping the debate surrounding women in combat. Since then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta [eliminated the ground combat exclusion rule for women in the military](#) in 2013, the services have embarked on various studies and experiments aimed at determining the feasibility of integrating women into frontline ground combat units.

What is striking is that the two primary infantry services—the Army and the Marine Corps—went about their evaluation in very different ways. The difference in their methodologies resulted in very different conversations. Given that the results of these evaluations will have a direct impact on national security, it is essential that they be as unbiased and systematic as possible, and not based on passionate emotion.

The Army approached the question of integrating women into ground combat units by essentially creating a natural experiment. By using Ranger School, the premier school aimed at advanced training for “[close combat and direct-fire battles](#),” as a testing ground for

women's capabilities, they utilized a long-established and transparent institution with set standards and expectations. Introducing women into Ranger School allowed Army leadership to evaluate women against a standard proven for decades to forge elite soldiers physically, mentally, and tactically. Women were judged against this standard, where "[a 5-mile run is still a 5-mile run. ... A 12-mile march is still a 12-mile march](#)," and succeeded against it. Knowing that women could perform against an preestablished and proven standard eliminated gender as a variable in combat effectiveness.

The graduation of women from Ranger School, while [greatly celebrated by female soldiers and veterans across the globe](#), was largely void of passionate or emotional rhetoric. And while it has been acknowledged that few women will likely meet these standards in the future, the success of the first two has led the Chief of Staff of the Army to open the school to "[all soldiers who are qualified and capable](#)" of meeting the standard.

The Marine Corps, however, had no equivalent to Ranger School in which to test the feasibility of integrating women into ground combat units. Prior to Secretary Panetta's announcement, the only requirement to be eligible for an infantry military occupational specialty was to be a male who has successfully completed boot camp or officer training. Without any established measurable physical or tactical benchmarks, the Marine Corps embarked on a year-long Force Integration Plan. This plan was intended to mimic an infantry unit's pre-deployment training and subsequent combat deployment in order to evaluate the "[physical performance and psychological characteristics](#)" necessary for combat. The findings of this study were released in a [four-page summary](#).

Unlike the Army's pragmatic response to women being able to meet already established standards, the Marine Corps' findings elicited [great amounts of passionate discourse](#) and speculation. This emotional response can largely be traced to faults in both the way the Marine Corps went about its study and presented the analysis.

Methodological Missteps

1. *Unlike Initial Conditions.* The Marine Corps' first challenge was determining how to establish a performance baseline for women's entry into the study. However, the [disparity in initial training](#) between male and female recruits (both physical and tactical) means that the initial conditions were not equal. Comparing women with less tactical training and lower physical expectations to men with more initial training is not a legitimate comparison.
2. *Inconsistent Unit of Analysis.* The long-form [memo released](#) about the study states that the its purpose was to "essentially deconstruct many collective ground combat arms tasks [and] identify what individual tasks and standards an individual Marine must achieve...to be a fully contributing member of that unit." However, despite this focus on the *individual* Marine, women were judged as a group based on their *average* performance, while men were judged as individuals. This is not only bad science, but denying female Marines their individual agency is both counter to the original guidance by Secretary Panetta to set gender neutral standards for all specialties and [reinforces the hyper-masculine culture](#) that largely fuels the emotional response to this study. Note that buried deep in the Marine Corps memo it is acknowledged that individuals (men or women) of similar initial fitness levels performed at the same level and sustained similar rates of injury.
3. *Changing Measurements.* Prior to the start of the Corps' Force Integration Plan, there was no preestablished standard for entry into combat arms specialties. Because of this, standards and measurements were adopted as the exercise was in progress. Without a predetermined set of measurements identified as the standard for success, this experiment is not objective nor can it be replicated.

Misleading Analysis

These methodological missteps are compounded by a non-transparent data analysis. Rather than allowing for outside observers during the evaluation or providing access to the raw data collected, the results were released first on September 10th via a four-page summary, and later via a fourteen-page memo (leaked to the press on September 23rd). The manner in which the results have been presented are largely responsible for emotional response.

1. *Subjective ranking rather than objective analysis.* The four-page summary states, "All-male squads, teams and crews demonstrated higher performance levels...compared to gender-integrated squads, teams and crews." The inclusion of a term such as "higher" tells us nothing about whether an objective performance standard was met. Groups or individuals can be infinitely ranked against one another, and someone will always come out as "best." However without the actual performance data, there is no way to determine what "higher" means. What words like "higher" and "better" do, however, is offer fodder for emotionally charged headlines.
2. *Missing Information.* Both the four-page summary and the fourteen-page memo allude to 134 "tasks" units were asked to

perform. However, there is no record of what these tasks are, or their relationship to combat effectiveness. Reporting one group is “better” at a “task,” yet not mentioning what the task is, is a hollow statement, offering little insight on relative performances. Furthermore, there was no discussion as to the composition of the teams judged against one another. “Mixed gender” can relate to large range of group composition. Without knowing the actual breakdown of the teams, an objective judgment is difficult to render.

3. *No Discussion of Military Effectiveness.* At root, the purpose of Secretary Panetta’s lifting of the combat exclusion rule was to increase military effectiveness by harnessing the talents of the broader population. While the Marine Corps mentioned participants of the study being judged against the performance of specific “tasks,” there was no overall mention of combat effectiveness. Military effectiveness is [more than just running fast or shooting straight](#).
4. *Emotionally Charged Language.* In the prelude to any discussion on the study, the author of the fourteen-page memo, Brigadier General George Smith, writes about women as a “self-selected population with much to prove.” This sort of bias, especially when devoid of any actual data, does not contribute to objectivity, but fuels hyperbole and misinformation.

The current popular and political debate surrounding women in combat integration highlights the importance of methodology, analytical rigor, and careful framing. It appears that the top decision makers [recognize the flaws](#) in the Marine Corps study and in the way the study has been presented to the public—but this hasn’t prevented [great political theater](#) from playing out and further confusing the issue. The men and women of our armed services, and the nation as a whole, deserve more and better evidence, not ill-formed methodologies and emotional drama.

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<http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/10/06/of-methodology-and-men/>

7. Carter sounds nearly ready to open combat jobs to women

(6 Oct) The Washington Post, By Lolita C. Baldor (AP)

Defense Secretary Ash Carter sounded like he’s nearly made up his mind about opening all combat jobs to women, as he told U.S. troops in Sicily on Tuesday that limiting his search for qualified military candidates to just half the population would be “crazy.”

Meanwhile, in memo obtained by The Associated Press, Carter gave the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff until the end of October to forward his review of the services’ recommendations on which jobs — if any — should remain closed to women. The chairman, Gen. Joseph Dunford, was commandant of the Marine Corps until recently and was the only service chief to recommend that some front-line combat jobs stay male-only, according to several U.S. officials.

Speaking to a crowd of troops that included a large number of Marines, Carter said he hasn’t decided on the recommendations sent to his office and to Dunford. He pledged to thoroughly review the recommendations, particularly those of the Marine Corps, but said that generally he believes that any qualified candidate should be allowed to compete for jobs.

“You have to recruit from the American population. Half the American population is female,” Carter told the troops at Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily, in response to a question from a Marine. “So I’d be crazy not to be, so to speak, fishing in that pond for qualified service members.”

For that reason, he said the military should recruit women into as many specialties as possible.

In the memo to all the service secretaries and chiefs, Carter said that he is “fully committed to removing unnecessary barriers to service” in the military, and he asked Dunford to review all the reports and send his final recommendation to Carter by Oct. 31.

But Carter also said that he wants to hear from everyone before he decides.

“I am less interested in who is making a particular recommendation and more interested in the reasoning behind it,” he said. “My ultimate decision regarding any exception to policy will be based on the analytic underpinnings and the data supporting them.”

According to officials familiar with the process, Dunford submitted a report about five-inches thick outlining why he believes women should not be allowed to compete for certain Marine infantry and front-line jobs.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus forwarded Dunford’s recommendation but also included his own conclusion that the Navy would open all

jobs to women, and that he did not agree with Dunford's conclusion. The Marine Corps is a separate service within the Navy.

The Air Force and Army also did not seek to keep any jobs closed to women — including Army infantry. And, officials said that U.S. Special Operations Command determined that it will rely on the military services to send qualified candidates to compete for the jobs, which can include the Navy SEALs and Army Special Forces. The elite commando units decided that while there are concerns about women serving in the nation's most grueling military posts, they would leave it up to the services to decide who could compete.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss publicly the private reports.

The contentious issue — including the disagreement between the Navy and Marine Corps — has played out publicly. The Marines released part of their review's conclusions and Mabus has been vocal in his criticism of the Marine decision. Carter's latest memo tries to limit those tensions, warning the services that any further public discussion of the process would not be "helpful or prudent."

The Marine Corps said it did extensive research, including comparisons of all-male and mixed gender units. The units went through a lengthy testing program where they were evaluated on a variety of combat tasks.

They concluded that mixed-gender units are not as capable as all-male units, and that women often couldn't carry as much weight or shoot as well as the men. Allowing women to compete for ground combat jobs, they determined, would make the Marine Corps a less-efficient fighting machine.

Navy Rear Adm. Brian Losey, commander of the Navy's special warfare units, had many of the same concerns, but reached a different conclusion. In a memo, he said putting women in the commando jobs is not expected to increase the units' ability to fight in combat and could take focus away from readiness. But he concluded that allowing all qualified candidates to test themselves against the standards was the right thing to do.

Commanders have stressed that they will not reduce or change the standards for any of the military jobs.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/carter-sounds-nearly-ready-to-open-combat-jobs-to-women/2015/10/06/6a5e7ca2-6c65-11e5-91eb-27ad15c2b723_story.html

8. Senators: Give military families more stability in moves

(6 Oct) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

Military families would get some extra flexibility during permanent change-of-station moves — allowing them to leave up to six months before or after the service member's reporting date to the next installation — under a bipartisan bill introduced Tuesday in the Senate.

The proposal's key component: It would allow families to continue receiving their housing allowance at the "with dependents" rate for their location, while the service members either would be given temporary unaccompanied housing or compensation at their location.

The plan, called the Military Family Stability Act of 2015, would help ease some of the burden for working spouses and for families with children in school, said Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., who introduced the bill along with cosponsors Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, and Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C.

Blunt said the proposed legislation is aimed at creating a framework to help military families be more stable, especially in light of the many spouses who are pursuing their own careers alongside their service members.

"Military families confront challenges other families may not have to ever face," Gillibrand said, adding that the plan would help spouses wrap up their work while finding new employment, and allow students to finish out semesters.

The legislation, she said, "would relieve a major burden for our families."

Some of the services have different policies to help with some aspects of the destabilizing factors associated with relocation, but there is no force-wide standard focusing specifically on how those factors affect military spouses and children, according to a fact sheet from the lawmakers.

Blunt said the cost of the legislation has not yet been calculated by the Congressional Budget Office. The main cost will be the

housing expenses for the service member until the family is reunited, he said.

The following families would be eligible:

- The spouse is employed, or enrolled in a degree, certificate or license-granting program, at the beginning of the covered relocation period.
- The service member and spouse have one or more children in school.
- The spouse or children are covered under the Exceptional Family Member Program.
- The service member or spouse is caring for an immediate family member with a chronic or long-term illness.
- The service member is undergoing a PCS as an individual augmentee or other deployment arrangement.

In addition, families with other unique needs could receive exceptions granted by military commanders.

The proposal comes at a time when lawmakers have agreed to across-the-board reductions in the Basic Allowance for Housing. Congress has agreed to a Defense Department request to reduce BAH over the next few years to a level that covers only 95 percent of a service member's actual costs, rather than the traditional 100 percent. The first phase of that plan, a 1 percentage point reduction, has already taken effect.

Asked how that might be reconciled in the context of the new legislation, Gillibrand acknowledged that the BAH reduction plan "is one of the cuts that, frankly, not all of us support."

She said the arbitrary federal budget caps known as sequestration are "hollowing out our military. "The cuts that service members have had to accept are very, very, very harmful and difficult and it particularly affects the more junior members. We're trying to restore benefits as much as we can."

At the unveiling of the new legislative proposal, two Army wives spoke about the impact on their families because of the service's current policy.

Elizabeth O'Brien, who was living out her dream coaching college basketball when she met her Army husband, noted that not all families would need to use this benefit; in her family's case, she said they probably would have used it once in their nine moves, had it been available.

When her husband was reassigned to the Washington, D.C., area, and scheduled to report in May 2014, she said they could not afford to stay in Germany and pay for housing on the German economy and pay for housing for her husband in Washington.

So although their children's German school's academic year ended in July, they had to make the "heartbreaking" move of pulling their children out of the school in April 2014, she said.

"If the Military Family Stability Act had existed 18 months ago, they would have been able to finish the school year."

If the proposal becomes law, she said, "military families will no longer have to reach into their own pockets to support their dreams."

Mia Reisweber said delays in her Army husband's move forced them to use savings to move her early from Hawaii to Missouri. They packed their household goods and put them in storage in Hawaii because they couldn't afford to make rent payments in two places.

Knowing they'd be moving to Missouri, she had applied for and been accepted into a doctoral program in higher education, and also had an appointment to teach writing composition at Missouri University of Science and Technology. The couple was supposed to move in May 2014, but when that had not happened by July, "I was getting nervous," she said.

The couple tried every avenue to get approval for her to leave early, to no avail. "At one point, someone even joked that I could get to Missouri tomorrow if my husband and I were requesting a divorce, because there's a process for that," she said.

They flew to Missouri to find a rental house, and her husband then returned to Hawaii, where he slept on a friend's couch for more than a month. She made do in their new home without their household goods.

"If we had waited until September, I would have arrived too late to take classes or to teach," she said.

"My husband and I are equal partners in both our marriage and our professional career ambitions," she said. "I feel, however, that the military is indifferent in their acknowledgment of me as a professional, and they are failing to acknowledge the strain and instability burdening military families who must move every two to three years."

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/2015/10/06/senators-give-military-families-more-stability-moves/73473696/>

9. Report: Language school leader sexually harassed students, teachers

(3 Oct) San Antonio Express News, By Sig Christenson

An Air Force investigation last year agreed with complaints that a supervisor at the Defense Language Institute on Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland sexually harassed students and fellow instructors. It found that the behavior had gone on for a decade in a program described as a vital part of American foreign policy.

The inquiry, which was not a criminal investigation, found that the supervisor, John A. Wilson, made students from foreign military forces sit in his lap, inappropriately touched staffers and once took a student into a closet and closed the door, according to a report summary obtained by the San Antonio Express-News.

It also showed that English instructors assigned to his unit worked "in an environment where there was no trust" and "were reluctant to come forward," said Brig. Gen. Trent Edwards, commander of the Air Force's 37th Training Wing at Lackland. "And when we deal with this in a very real and open way, we have to ask why."

"And if the reason," Edwards said in a recent interview, "is because they didn't trust the system, then we have to just deal with that head on."

After the Express-News began asking about the report last month, Edwards ordered briefings to provide remedial sexual assault prevention and response training, as well as equal opportunity training on sexual harassment, reprisal and retaliation issues. So far, 455 of the DLI's 496 employees have received the training.

Wilson, 74, was not charged with any crime and denied in a recent interview that he had harassed anyone.

He retired last fall as the Air Force was preparing a "notice of proposed action," a disciplinary proceeding that could have led to his firing, the service said.

The report summary and seven accompanying witness statements emailed anonymously to the Express-News didn't include the full 229-page report but were confirmed as authentic by Air Force officials.

A cover letter from the Defense Department reflected that the documents had been provided in response to a request for information related to a "commander-directed investigation" of Wilson. His name was redacted elsewhere, along with the names of most staffers in the accompanying witness statements.

The Air Force said 13 instructors had made sworn statements saying they witnessed or personally experienced "inappropriate behavior" by Wilson, though they couldn't say if the behavior constituted sexual harassment in each case.

The Defense Language Institute has operated in some form at Lackland since 1954 and is called the "gateway to America" because about a third of international students coming to the United States for military training start at Lackland. Up to 1,400 students a day attend the school, depending on the time of year, from as many as 115 countries.

More than 200 of its staffers work in the unit that teaches English. The DLI's commander ordered the investigation in response to a complaint filed by an English instructor in June 2014.

<http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Report-language-school-leader-sexually-harassed->

10. Sexual Assault in the Military and the Unlawful Command Influence Catch-22

(7 Oct) War on the Rocks, By James Joyner and James W. Weirick

Recently, a military appellate court once again overturned a rape conviction on the grounds of unlawful command influence. This time (*United States v. Garcia*), the source of the influence went beyond a base commander or even a service chief and included comments made by President Obama and the general climate around sexual assault in the military command structure.

Concerns over the military's ability to effectively deal with sexual assaults had been percolating for years. These concerns were exacerbated by a spate of high-profile sexual assault cases: Naval Academy football players accused of sexual assault, members of the Fort Hood Sexual Assault Response Team accused of operating a prostitution ring, the head of the Air Force's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office arrested for sexual battery, and two Air Force general officers — Lt. Gen Susan Helms and Lt. Gen. Craig Franklin — overturning subordinates' convictions for sexual assault.

With this background, the Senate Committee on Armed Services convened a hearing in June 2013 to investigate the ability of the military to effectively combat sexual assaults in the ranks. The panel included then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, all the service chiefs, and their uniformed legal advisors, or judge advocates general (JAGs). The chiefs and their JAGs were unanimous in their insistence on the criticality of “maintaining the central role of the commander in our military justice system.”

From this hearing emerged proposed legislative changes that fall into two camps, one headed by Sen. Claire McCaskill, (D-MO), and the other by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, (D-NY). The Gillibrand proposal would remove commanders from the decision to prosecute serious crimes, such as sexual assault and murder, while leaving uniquely military crimes to the chain of command. McCaskill's plan leaves the decision to prosecute sexual assaults with commanders and focuses on mandatory minimum sentences, protecting victims from retaliation, and prohibiting a commander from overturning the results of a trial. McCaskill's changes have been approved, while Gillibrand's proposals have twice fallen short of the 60 votes required to overcome a filibuster in the Senate.

In the meantime, an ironic twist has further complicated the matter. In order to address the burgeoning issue of sexual assault in the ranks and combat the perception that dealing with it was not a priority, President Obama, service secretaries, service chiefs, and commanders down to the lowest levels mounted an aggressive campaign to highlight the severity of the issue to service members. Thousands of speeches were given and extensive training was instituted. This very campaign was found to constitute “unlawful command influence” under Article 37(a) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which provides that “No authority convening a general, special, or summary court-martial, nor any other commanding officer, may censure, reprimand, or admonish the court or any member, military judge, or counsel thereof, with respect to the findings or sentence adjudged by the court, or with respect to any other exercises of its or his functions in the conduct of the proceedings” and that “No person subject to this chapter may attempt to coerce or, by any unauthorized means, influence the action of a court-martial or any other military tribunal or any member thereof, in reaching the findings or sentence in any case, or the action of any convening, approving, or reviewing authority with respect to his judicial acts.”

The recent spate of unlawful command influence rulings began with a Navy judge's finding that President Obama's comments about sexual assault unduly influenced any potential sentencing.

Then, in the high-profile prosecution of Army Brig. Gen. Jeffery Sinclair for sexual assault against a subordinate, the military judge ruled that unlawful command influence had tainted the trial. Former Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James Amos, was also found to have exercised unlawful command influence when he commenced on a worldwide speaking tour addressing the Corps about the problem of sexual assault. His actions resulted in a military court of appeals overturning a conviction for sexual assault.

It is with this background that the *Garcia* case was decided. The *Garcia* opinion noted that “with multiple references — some overt and others thinly veiled — to the Army's efforts to confront sexual assault, the government attempted to impermissibly influence the panel's findings by injecting command policy into the trial.” In the *Garcia* case, the prosecutor repeatedly, and improperly, mentioned the Army's stance on sexual assaults. The military judge failed to provide the proper limiting instructions to the jury, i.e., to ignore the prosecutor's repeated references to the Army's stance on the problem of sexual assault. This issue would not exist, but for the repeated public statements by senior Army officials, and other government officials, about the need to eradicate sexual assault from the military. It is this means of improper influence that is so difficult to remove from a military trial, even with a military judge vigilantly policing the arguments of the prosecutor.

To be sure, improper and inflammatory appeals are common in civilian trials. Even though they are plainly prejudicial and have

nothing whatsoever to do with whether the defendant committed the particular crime for which he is on trial, prosecutors often implore jurors to “send a message” about the unacceptability of rape, drunk driving, or what-have-you. For that matter, as we’ve seen in the recent turmoil over police misconduct, mayors, governors, and even presidents frequently make impassioned statements about ongoing cases that could influence potential jurors.

Military justice is simply different. Because military jurors are under obligation to follow the orders of those above them — and in particular the president, secretary of defense, and senior generals — the command climate and references to the wishes of senior leaders are much more difficult for military jurors to discount. Civilian jurors are simply not subject to that same pressure. Which, in turn, means military defendants need more protection than their civilian counterparts.

Officers take an oath to the Constitution, which makes the president their commander-in-chief. Enlisted personnel additionally swear to “obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.” Doing otherwise not only breaks their covenant with the nation but places them in legal jeopardy under the UCMJ.

For good reason, uniformed military personnel are bound by all manner of restrictions not applicable to civilians, even civilian employees of the Defense Department. Officers may be punished for using “contemptuous words against the President, the Vice President, Congress, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of a military department, the Secretary of Transportation, or the Governor or legislature of any State, Territory, Commonwealth, or possession in which he is on duty or present.” Any uniformed member who “willfully disobeys a lawful command of his superior commissioned officer,” “violates or fails to obey any lawful general order or regulation,” or even merely “behaves with disrespect toward his superior commissioned officer” is subject to court-martial. A service member can even be punished for failing to shave or wearing his or her hair out of regulation.

Further, while officers and noncommissioned officers are expected to exercise good judgment and to disobey orders that are obviously illegal, the culture is one that instills obedience for lawful orders. While there is the requirement to disobey obviously illegal orders, one does so at one’s peril. If the service member is later tried for disobeying an order, it is presumed that the order is lawful, and the accused bears the burden of rebutting the presumption. Moreover, especially when coming from the president and general officers, the merest expressed wish of those higher in the chain of command is treated as an order enjoying a presumption of lawfulness. For Marines, in particular, the commandant’s word is gospel.

Thus, most of the public conversation on this topic has been focused on the wrong problem. While it’s true that some commanders have failed to vigorously do their jobs in prosecuting sexual assault as a serious crime, that’s fixable. The real problem is that commanders have two jobs here — sending the message that sexual assault will not be tolerated and prosecuting those who break the law — that are in conflict. Because the first of those jobs is essential to the commander’s role while the second can be done by objective outside professionals, the two must be split.

The unlawful command influence restriction unnecessarily hampers senior leadership from trying to solve serious issues like the sexual-assault problem. While Amos was particularly ham-fisted in his messaging, his heart was in the right place by placing great emphasis on an issue that was impacting the welfare of the female Marines in his charge and the cohesion of his Corps.

And, of course, no one is going to stop the president of the United States or service secretaries from grandstanding when a military issue comes into the spotlight and puts pressure on them to weigh in. Commander-in-chief is only one of many hats the president wears and declining to speak out in the face of public perception that sexual assault is rampant in our armed forces would be unthinkable.

The combination of these two factors makes taking felonies out of the UCMJ imperative. For minor offenses — many of which aren’t crimes in the civilian world — the uniqueness of the military occupation, exigencies of location, and considerations as to whether an individual is otherwise a “good soldier” make the longstanding practice of commanders having a heavy influence vital for “good order and discipline.”

But felonies are a different matter. There, the aim is punishing transgression and separation of a bad egg from not only the military ranks but society at large. The civilian courts, lacking the conflict of interest inherent in military command, are simply the better venue for dealing with that.

The shared experiences of our allies — the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia — have demonstrated that removing felonies from their systems of military justice has increased the fairness and transparency of criminal trials, while maintaining the commander’s ability to ensure good order and discipline.

The United States federal justice system has demonstrated that it is well equipped to handle these types of felonies, even with the exigencies of location and unique difficulties presented by crimes committed on the battlefield. Military contractors are the closest analog to service members, and the recent convictions of four former Blackwater employees for murder, resulting from deaths of 17 Iraqis in 2007, demonstrates the feasibility of removing felonies from military jurisdiction while ensuring justice.

It is time to remove felony crimes from military jurisdiction. Military leaders have an obligation to address issues such as sexual assault and do all that they can to eradicate this scourge from our ranks. But as recent history had clearly demonstrated, these laudable efforts continue to result in criminal trials that courts find unfair and are forced to dismiss. The solution is to remove these cases from military jurisdiction, thus enabling commanders to continue to communicate openly with their units without impacting the fairness of criminal trials.

James Joyner is a security studies professor at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and a nonresident senior fellow with the Brent Scowcroft Center for International Security at the Atlantic Council. James W. Weirick is a retired Marine lieutenant colonel and Judge Advocate. Their views are their own.

<http://warontherocks.com/2015/10/sexual-assault-in-the-military-and-the-unlawful-command-influence-catch-22/>

11. PTSD common among female Vietnam-era veterans

(7 Oct) Reuters, By Andrew M. Seaman

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be more common than previously thought among female veterans of the Vietnam War era, suggests a new study.

Up to one in five women who served in the U.S. military during the 1960s and 1970s experienced PTSD at some point in their lives and many are still living with the condition, researchers found.

"We never expected the PTSD prevalence to be so high in those women who served in (Vietnam) — especially 40 years after the war ended," said lead author Kathryn Magruder, of the Johnson Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina.

Magruder and her colleagues write in *JAMA Psychiatry* that PTSD was the signature illness for men who served in Vietnam, but less is known about its effect on women's health.

They add that between 5,000 and 7,500 American women served with the U.S. military in Vietnam, at least 2,000 served on bases in the region and 250,000 were stationed in the U.S.

PTSD develops after terrifying ordeals involving physical harm or the threat of physical harm, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Symptoms include re-experiencing events, avoiding certain situations and being tense and easily startled.

For the new study, the researchers used data collected from 1,956 women who served in Vietnam, 657 who served near Vietnam and 1,606 who served in the U.S. between 1965 and 1973.

The women's average age was 22 when they enlisted in 1964 and 1965, and near 70 when researchers surveyed them by mail or phone in 2011 and 2012.

Most of the participants who served in Vietnam and the U.S. were members of the Army, and most of those who served in the region were in the Air Force. More than half of the women in all categories were nurses during the war.

About 20 percent of the women who served in Vietnam met the criteria for PTSD at some point in their lives, compared to about 12 percent of those who served near Vietnam and about 14 percent who served in the U.S.

About 16 percent of women who served in Vietnam still met the criteria for PTSD at the time of the surveys, compared to about 8 percent of women who had served near Vietnam and about 9 percent who had served in the U.S.

The results differ from a previous 15 percent lifetime estimate of PTSD for female Vietnam-era veterans, the study authors point out,

but differences in the tools used to evaluate the participants explain that gap.

The researchers also found that few cases of PTSD started before the women joined the military.

For all the types of traumatic wartime experiences the researchers asked about, like danger, death and environment-related stress, women who served in Vietnam reported the highest rates of exposure.

"It was these experiences — especially sexual harassment and performance pressures — that explained their higher levels of PTSD," Magruder told Reuters Health by email.

Sexual harassment, she said, should not be an inevitable war zone experience.

"We need to work hard to change military culture so that . . . military sexual harassment is not a PTSD risk factor for future generations."

There is another message in the study for doctors, she added. They should not forget to ask all women if they've been in the armed services and ask about their military experiences.

"They should be vigilant to symptoms of PTSD - even in aging women veterans - and encourage them to seek appropriate treatment if warranted," Magruder said.

SOURCE: bit.ly/1NnO3iq JAMA Psychiatry, online October 7, 2015.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/07/us-health-women-ptsd-veterans-idUSKCN0S12JE20151007>

12. VA addresses suicide by gun problem among female veterans

(8 Oct) The Washington Post, By Emily Wax-Thibodeaux

Female veterans who try to take their own lives are often successful at a far higher rate than their female non-veteran counterparts because of one reason: They use guns.

Female veterans die by suicide at nearly six times the rate as those with no service record, such an alarming number that mental health experts at the Department of Veterans Affairs say the agency is reaching out to former servicewomen to talk about gun safety.

The female veterans' suicide rate is also surprising because men generally are far more likely than women to die by suicide.

"One reason is that female veterans are more comfortable with firearms — it's part of the culture," said Caitlin Thompson, VA's deputy director for suicide prevention.

VA hospitals and clinics are offering free gun locks and education at every VA to ensure firearm safety, Thompson said.

VA experts are also studying the many reasons why female veterans have such a higher risk for suicide attempts. One of those triggers, Thompson said, may be sexual assault during military service, along with past traumatic experiences.

The suicide risk is highest in veterans age 18 to 29. In that age group, female veterans were nearly 12 times more likely than other women to take their lives, Thompson said.

"This is where we are doing the real outreach and everyone can make a difference," she said. She asked the public to reach out to all veterans, and women specifically, as part of the VA's awareness campaign The Power of 1. "One small act can change the life of a veteran," she said.

Veterans who are in crisis and their family members and friends can connect with VA responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by calling the toll-free hotline (800) 273-8255, and then pressing 1.

There's also a women Veterans Call Center: 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636).

They can also text the number 838255.

Or chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/chat.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/federal-eye/wp/2015/10/08/women-veterans-have-such-a-high-success-rate-in-committing-suicide-because-they-use-guns/>