



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Articles of Interest: 30 Jan – 5 Feb 2016

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Fact Sheet: [Building the First Link to the Force of the Future](#)

1. [Army board to select line officers for captain tracks](#)

(30 Jan) *Army Times*, By Jim Tice

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2. [Enlisted tapped for Navy's new industry internships](#)

(31 Jan) *Navy Times*, By Meghann Myers

Later this year, nine enlisted sailors will head out for prestigious year-long internships with Fortune 500 companies.

3. [New Army reenlistment bonuses now in effect](#)

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4. [Mission Family: Spouse job training part of unified effort](#)

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5. [Air Force massively expands re-up bonus list; some could get \\$90,000 to stay in](#)

(2 Feb) *Air Force Times*, By Stephen Losey

The Air Force is nearly tripling the number of jobs eligible for selective re-enlistment bonuses in fiscal 2016.

6. [Airmen in 122 jobs could get an 'up or out' extension](#)

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Some enlisted airmen in 122 jobs are now eligible to extend their high-year tenure for another year or two, the Air Force said in a Monday release.

7. [Air Force drops two-phase process for master sgt. promotion boards](#)

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The Air Force is abandoning its short experiment with a two-phase process for deciding which eligible airmen will go before a master sergeant promotion board.

8. [Top General Wants 1 in 10 Marines to Be Women](#)

(3 Feb) *Military.com*, By Hope Hedge Seck

The Marine Corps has long had the fewest female members of any of the military services, but Commandant Gen. Robert Neller said Tuesday he's working to change the demographics.

9. [Navy begins to force out senior enlisted sailors](#)

(3 Feb) *Navy Times*, By Mark D. Faram

Notification begins today for 219 senior enlisted sailors who will be forced out of the Navy by the end of fiscal 2016.

10. Pentagon to Offer Plan to Store Eggs and Sperm to Retain Young Troops

(3 Feb) The New York Times, By Michael S. Schmidt

Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter believes he has come up with a way to help the Pentagon retain troops: freezing sperm and eggs.

EMPLOYMENT & INTEGRATION

General Officer Assignments. The chief of staff, Air Force announced the following assignment: Maj. Gen. Veralinn Jamieson, director of intelligence, Headquarters Air Combat Command, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, to deputy commander, Joint Functional Component Command for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, U.S. Strategic Command, Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, District of Columbia.

General Officer Announcements. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced today that the president has made the following nominations:

- Air Force Brig. Gen. Dawn M. Dunlop for appointment to the rank of major general. Dunlop is currently serving as the commander, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Airborne Early Warning and Control Force Command, Headquarters Supreme Allied Command Europe, Casteau, Belgium.
- Air Force Brig. Gen. Mary F. O'Brien for appointment to the rank of major general. O'Brien is currently serving as director of intelligence, J-2, Headquarters U.S. Cyber Command, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland.
- Air Force Col. Brook J. Leonard for appointment to the rank of brigadier general. Leonard is currently serving as the senior military assistant to the secretary of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Pentagon, Washington, District of Columbia.

11. Register Women for the Draft? Not so fast

(30 Jan) Lawfire, By Charlie Dunlap, J.D.

Even though the combat restrictions so important in *Rostker's* holding are now gone, there may still be a legitimate rationale to limit the draft to males. Specifically, it might prove true that only a small percentage of women are *physically* able to serve as combat troops in, for example, the infantry.

12. Army seeks enlisted troops to serve as generals' aides

(31 Jan) Army Times, By Jim Tice

Applications are being accepted for a special program that prepares active component soldiers in the ranks of promotable sergeant through master sergeant for service as enlisted aides to general officers.

13. Mabus: Marine Corps Standards Will Not Be Lowered For Gender Integration

(1 Feb) Task & Purpose

"This is not about quotas. This is about opening up opportunity and I can tell you emphatically, categorically, that I will never do anything as long as I'm in this job to lower the Marine combat effectiveness," Navy Secretary Ray Mabus told Task & Purpose in a Jan. 28 interview about integrating women into combat arms units.

14. Senators scold Mabus for causing drama with Marine Corps

(2 Feb) Marine Corps Times, By Jeff Schogol

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus explained what persuaded him to allow men and women to continue training separately at Marine boot camp a month after he ordered Corps leaders to develop a plan to make its entry-level training coed.

15. Marine, Army Leadership Panel to Senate: Women in Combat Jobs Need Standards, Not Quotas

(2 Feb) USNI News, By John Grady

Setting standards and maintaining them, rather than establishing quotas for women in ground-combat units, was the consensus that emerged between the testifying service witnesses and members of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

16. Officials Describe Plans to Integrate Women into Combat Roles

(2 Feb) DoD News, By Terri Moon Cronk

Defense leaders testified at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on keeping job specific standards for all ground combat units for men and women.

17. Military leaders: Register women for draft

(2 Feb) Military Times, By Leo Shane III

The Army and Marine Corps' top uniformed leaders both backed making women register for the draft as all combat roles are opened to them in coming months, a sweeping social change that could complicate the military's gender integration plans.

18. Exclusive: Report shows Marines' shifting approach to women in combat

(2 Feb) The Christian Science Monitor, By Anne Mulrine

The Marines have long been resistant to including women in combat units. But a Pentagon document obtained by the Monitor offers a more optimistic view.

19. Top Military Officials: Women Should be Required To Register for the Draft

(2 Feb) Jezebel, By Stassa Edwards

During today's Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on women in combat two top generals said that women should be required to register for the Selective Service, along with men, as the branches begin to integrate women into combat roles.

20. What mountaineers can teach the Marines about how to integrate women

(3 Feb) The Washington Post, By Joe Plenzler

From an early age, I knew that women could "hack it" in the backcountry. Many of my female colleagues could climb harder routes than most men, and I respected them for it.

21. Pentagon chief expects Congress to consider draft for women

(3 Feb) The Hill, By Kristina Wong

Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Wednesday that he expects Congress to take up the question of whether women should begin registering for the draft.

22. Army to Let Women Apply for Infantry and Armor Jobs by This Spring

(3 Feb) Military.com, By Matthew Cox

The U.S. Army's chief of staff told Congress on Tuesday that female soldiers could begin their training to serve in direct combat arms jobs such as infantry and armor by this spring, but it could take up to three years to form gender-integrated units.

23. Commandant Concedes Female Marines Lacked Infantry Experience in Study

(3 Feb) Military.com, By Matthew Cox

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller acknowledged to lawmakers on Tuesday that female Marines who fared poorly in recent gender-integration study did not have the infantry experience of the male Marines they competed against in the effort.

24. Female Marines may be allowed to bulk up as service opens infantry to women

(3 Feb) The Washington Post, By Dan Lamothe

As the Pentagon grapples with how to integrate women into all jobs in combat, the Marine Corps is considering something new: Boosting how heavy it allows women to be so that they are able to bulk up in the gym to carry heavy loads more easily.

25. Navy Secretary Promises Not To Lower Standards For Gender Integration

(3 Feb) Task & Purpose

"A more diverse force is just a stronger force," Mabus said. "I mean we've seen it over and over, again. We saw it when 70 years ago when the military was integrated. That was a stronger force than it was before. We saw it in the 80s when women were first recruited in larger numbers across the services. They became stronger because of the diversity of backgrounds."

26. Women's integration in the Marine Corps will only succeed if top leaders fully commit

(4 Feb) Stars and Stripes, By Dianna Cahn

The Marine Corps and Special Operations Command are on the threshold of integrating women into combat roles, but unless leadership in those resistant units is fully committed to changing the cultures regarding women, the efforts will fail, a panel of experts advocating for integration warned Thursday.

27. Carter urges Congress to reconsider draft registration

(4 Feb) The San Diego Union Tribune, By Joshua Stewart

Defense secretary visits San Diego amid national attention to women and Selective Service

28. Combat roles open to women, Alabama has its first

(5 Feb) Montgomery Advertiser, By Rebecca Burylo

Army Private Kelly Elizabeth Wilson, 18, left her home in Selma, for basic training last week and by doing so, she became a part of history.

WELL-BEING & TREATMENT

29. U.S. Military to Standardize Maternity Leave at 12 Weeks

(28 Jan) Time, By Julia Zorthian

That's less time for Navy and Marine moms, but more for the Army and Air Force

30. Military Fertility: It's Complicated

(28 Jan) US News, By Anna Medaris Miller

When childbearing years and military deployment coincide, servicewomen can feel stuck.

31. Carter Announces 12 Weeks Paid Military Maternity Leave, Other Benefits

(28 Jan) DoD News, By Lisa Ferdinando

The Defense Department is increasing military maternity leave and instituting other changes in an effort to support military families, improve retention and strengthen the force of the future, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said today.

32. Report: Breast-feeding increase could save more than 800,000 lives annually

(29 Jan) CNN, By Kelly Wallace

A new two-part comprehensive report published Thursday in the medical journal The Lancet and billed as the largest and most detailed analysis of the existing research on breast-feeding...focused on the levels, trends and benefits of breast-feeding.

33. Military's new fertility benefit will let troops freeze their sperm and eggs

(29 Jan) Military Times, By Patricia Kime

Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced Thursday that the Pentagon will start covering sperm and egg freezing for troops who want to preserve their gametes for future use.

34. Overseas servicemembers say parenting benefits 'long time coming'

(29 Jan) Stars and Stripes, By Steven Beardsley

Servicemembers overseas largely welcomed a new Pentagon plan to boost benefits for military parents, many saying the changes were long overdue and some arguing they still fell short of what military families need.

35. Soldier 'Filled with Gratitude' at New Family Policies

(1 Feb) DoD News, By Karen Parrish

One Army officer scheduled to give birth by cesarean section said recently that the new 12-week maternity leave period and other family focused policies announced last week by Defense Secretary Ash Carter have left her "shocked."

36. The Pentagon's New Parental Leave

(2 Feb) The New York Times, By The Editorial Board

Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced last week that women in the military would get 12 paid weeks of maternity leave in all the services, twice the amount most were previously entitled to.

37. Military leaders promise to extend child care hours, shorten wait lists at child development centers

(3 Feb) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

Military families will see more flexibility in child care as defense officials move to extend the operating hours of child development centers to 14 hours a day.

38. Coast Guard Increases Maternity Leave to 12 Weeks

(3 Feb) Military.Com, By Amy Bushatz

Female Coasties will be given 12 weeks of maternity leave effective immediately under a new policy announced this week by the Department of Homeland Security.

39. Military child care website to reach more locations. D.C. region is next

(3 Feb) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

By the time moving season starts, parents will be able to research child care options and get their children on waiting lists at 36 more military installations.

40. Presentation Highlights Importance of Sexual Assault Prevention

(3 Feb) Navy News, By Zach Mott

Eliminating sexual assault in the ranks is a top priority for military leaders. For the more than 5,000 new accession Sailors in Training Support Center (TSC) Great Lakes, learning skills and tactics to reach that goal were the focus of a presentation Feb. 3 to a packed Ross Theater crowd.

41. Navy Medicine Hosts Inaugural Women's Health Summit

(3 Feb) Navy News, By Steve Van Der Werff

U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) hosted its first Women's Health Summit, Jan. 25-28.

42. For sailors, Marines who want 18 weeks of maternity leave, the clock is ticking

(4 Feb) The Virginian-Pilot, By Brock Vergakis

The clock is ticking for sailors to become pregnant if they want 18 weeks of maternity leave with little doubt they conceived before the most generous leave policy in the military expires later this month.

43. Sex for career advancement: Navy says commander propositioned subordinate

(5 Feb) Navy Times, By David Larter

The commander of a multi-billion dollar American warship was fired on the eve of its Middle East deployment last year after a drunken night out with his subordinates led to allegations of sexual harassment, Navy Times has learned.

44. Moms and Deployment

(8 Feb) Navy Times, By Patricia Kime

Military mothers face no more health risk than other deploying women

WOMEN VETERANS

45. Osteoporosis and soft-tissue damage affecting female veterans

(27 Jan) WCYB.com, By Olivia Bailey

There are a few things that stick out for female veterans specifically: osteoporosis and soft-tissue damage from carrying gear of nearly equal body weight.

46. Alarming rate of female veteran suicides addressed in Brown bill

(4 Feb) Cleveland.com, By Brian Albrecht

A bill aimed at stemming a disproportionate rate of suicides among female veterans has been introduced by Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown, a senior member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

1. Army board to select line officers for captain tracks

(30 Jan) Army Times, By Jim Tice

Basic-branch officers of the Regular Army who were promoted to first lieutenant in 2014 and early 2015 will be in the primary zone for selection to captain by a board that meets this spring.

The annual Army Competitive Category captain board is slated for April 19-May 6.

The resulting selection list should be available for promotions by late summer. After February promotions, 2,753 names will remain on the 2015 ACC captain list.

The primary-zone window for the upcoming board will include first lieutenants with active-duty dates of rank of April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015. Previously considered lieutenants with DOR of March 31, 2014, and earlier, will be in the above-zone category.

Competition for captain tracks has increased recently, with select rates running well below the near-100 percent levels of just a few years ago. For example, the 2015 board generated a primary-zone select rate of 89 percent.

Officer evaluation reports submitted for the 2016 board must arrive at the Human Resources Command by April 12. The online "My Board File" record review system will open Feb. 19, and close April 1. MBF can be accessed from the Human Resources Command

homepage at <HTTPS://WWW.HRC.ARMY.MIL>.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/officer/2016/01/30/army-board-select-line-officers-captain-tracks/79459922/>

2. Enlisted tapped for Navy's new industry internships

(31 Jan) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

Later this year, nine enlisted sailors will head out for prestigious year-long internships with Fortune 500 companies.

It is the first time enlisted will be participating in the Navy's new Tours with Industry program, where participants will work a year-long stint at an esteemed company while earning their Navy pay and benefits.

The program is expanding in its second year, increasing opportunities from five lieutenants and lieutenant commanders in 2015 to 33 spots in 2016, along with enlisted sailors E-6 and above from throughout the Navy.

Individual spots are being selected to best match up sailors with companies that need their talent. The list of enlisted spots, like that for officers, is broken down their service branch:

- Submarine force: Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Lockheed Martin.
- Surface force: UPS and Marotta.
- Aviation: Boeing, Amazon, Lockheed Martin and AT&T.
- Civil engineer corps: CH2M Hill.

The selection announcement comes a few months into the first round of tours, which sent two officers to FedEx in Memphis, Tennessee, and three to Amazon in Seattle.

Throughout the tour, sailors will provide monthly reports to Navy Personnel Command on what they've been working on. They will also be assigned to a local command to keep up to date with the physical fitness assessment and any other administrative issues.

When the tour is over, they'll receive fresh orders to a billet that will let them apply their new skills.

Top-performing sailors interested in signing up for the 2017 cycle must send a bio and letter of intent to their commands, who will pass the applications to Navy Personnel Command for selection.

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2016/01/31/enlisted-tapped-navys-new-industry-internships/79524322/>

3. New Army reenlistment bonuses now in effect

(1 Feb) Army Times, By Jim Tice

The new menu of re-up bonuses announced by the Army in early January are now in effect for Regular Army enlisted soldiers who are in the fiscal 2016 re-enlistment window.

The Jan. 27 changes to the Tiered Selective Retention Bonus program include lump-sum cash incentives in more than 200 specialty, skill and career management field combinations.

Re-up bonuses for most soldiers who meet specialty and re-enlistment criteria range from \$500 to \$72,000 for service extensions of three to six years.

Under Army policy, enhanced bonus payments of up to \$90,000 are available to certain soldiers with proficiency in priority languages.

The re-enlistment window for 2016 opens 15 months in advance of a soldier's expiration term of service (ETS), and closes 90 days before the end of the ETS.

The 2016 Regular Army retention mission is limited to soldiers whose re-up opportunity window occurs during the fiscal year, which

ends Sept. 30.

To qualify for an SRB, soldiers must meet the rank and specialty requirements identified in the payment chart. Additionally, they must have at least 17 months of continuous active duty, but no more than 14 years of active federal service.

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2016/02/01/new-army-reenlistment-bonuses-now-effect/79412488/>

4. Mission Family: Spouse job training part of unified effort

(2 Feb) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

Military spouses have struggled for decades with difficulties in moving their careers with them as they follow their service member from base to base. And over that time, the Defense Department and the services have tried to help spouses prepare for the job search and to find jobs.

But in the last 10 years or so, there has been a shift in efforts, both within DoD and in the private sector, with attempts to drill down into solving pieces of the problem: removing barriers, identifying portable careers that can make a military move, connecting employers to the spouses they want to hire, and providing assistance with education and training.

One of DoD's efforts is the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, where companies and organizations that want to hire military spouses connect with spouses who have the skills and experience they need. A number of efforts are underway in the private sector, too, born of spouses' frustrations and their determination to do something about the problem themselves. For example, the Military Spouse JD Network, which supports military spouses pursuing careers in the legal profession, is working to educate states about the hardships of military spouse attorneys on the move, including some who have taken three or four bar exams through various moves.

A new initiative is underway to give military spouses an edge on some lucrative and portable technical careers. The Blue Star SpouseForce initiative provides Salesforce administrator training to military spouses for free; the training normally costs \$5,000. The pilot program will start small Feb. 8, with about a dozen military spouses in the San Diego area. The next location will be San Antonio, expected in May. The training gives students the knowledge and tools to prepare for the Salesforce Certified Administrator exam.

Salesforce is a customer relationship management technology platform that businesses and other organizations can use to manage customer data and customer interaction, access business information, and for a variety of other applications. It's all about making connections, in a technical way.

"It's very appealing. It's about fostering relationships," said Kathy Roth-Douquet, chief executive officer of the nonprofit Blue Star Families, which is a partner in the SpouseForce initiative, along with the Clinton Foundation's Health Matters Initiative and the company Salesforce. WalMart Foundation is also funding the programmatic aspects.

It's also appealing that the average salary for a Salesforce administrator is more than \$80,000. There's a shortage of employees in this growing field, which also has room for upward mobility. These careers can move with spouses.

Applications are being [accepted](#) for the San Diego area. But spouses are encouraged to apply even if they are not in San Diego, Roth-Douquet said, so that Blue Star Families officials can gauge the interest in this career field, and also keep spouses informed when the opportunities for training open up for them in the future.

The eight-week virtual training will provide spouses with the knowledge and tools to prepare for the Salesforce Certified Administrator exam. These careers can move with spouses.

These technology jobs are available in a wide variety of fields: nonprofit organizations, financial institutions, health care and sales. Essentially these jobs allow companies to automate complex business processes, creating reports that help the businesses meet the needs of their customers.

Blue Star Families' mode of operation is to research the need, and work with other groups to find a solution. Some programs for military families are designed with the organization itself in mind. This one is designed with the family member in mind, Roth-Douquet said.

The pilot program provides extra resources — a local peer group of others going through the training, as well as mentors. Perhaps most importantly, there will be help finding an employer once spouses finish the certification. Even though the training is online, they're providing these extra resources because they help spouses be more successful, Roth-Douquet said.

"We're trying to do wraparound services to set up spouses for a positive experience and success in the end," she said. "We're trying to design it to be as helpful as possible."

Roth-Douquet and other spouses like her are paving the way for military spouses in the future, understanding that the Defense Department can't — and shouldn't have to — provide every solution.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/family/2016/01/30/mission-family-spouse-job-training-part-unified-effort/79511174/>

5. Air Force massively expands re-up bonus list; some could get \$90,000 to stay in

(2 Feb) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey

The Air Force is nearly tripling the number of jobs eligible for selective re-enlistment bonuses in fiscal 2016.

Airmen in 117 career fields could receive bonuses of as much as \$90,000 if they re-enlist. That's far more than the 40 Air Force specialty codes that were eligible for the bonuses in 2015, the Air Force said in a Monday release.

The SRB expansion is proving to be far greater than Brig. Gen. Brian Kelly, director of military force management policy, hinted at in an interview with Air Force Times last November. Kelly then said that airmen in more than 70 career fields would likely be eligible for more than \$220 million in re-enlistment bonuses this year.

Most of the jobs eligible for bonuses last year — such as 1A8X1 airborne cryptologic language analysts, 1C2X1 combat control, 1C4X1 Tactical Air Control Party, and 1T2X1 pararescue — remain on the new list. However, the 1N4X1A fusion analyst-digital network analyst career field, which was eligible for re-enlistment bonuses last year, has now been dropped from this year's list. A similar career field — 1N4X1B fusion analyst-analysis and production — is newly added this year.

Also new to the list are jobs such as 1A0X1 in-flight refueling, 1A1X1 flight engineer, 2A3X8A and B remotely piloted maintenance for MQ-1 Predators, MQ-9 Reapers and RQ-4 Global Hawks, and 2M0X2 missile and space systems management.

In the release, the Air Force said the expansion goes hand-in-hand with its plan to fix shortfalls in its nuclear, maintenance, cyber, intelligence, remotely piloted aircraft and support career fields. The Air Force is also trying to grow to meet increasing mission demands, as the service is increasingly tapped to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, provide air support in Afghanistan, and bolster European allies in the face of a resurgent Russia.

"This year's SRB list is increased by nearly threefold as we focused on retaining key experience while continuing our deliberate plan to grow our force," Col. Robert Romer, chief of military force policy, said in the release. "We are increasing our accessions and training pipeline to support the increased growth, but these new enlistees won't be seasoned for some time. Retaining the experience we have is critical to our success in reaching target end strength.

Romer said that the Air Force looked at current and projected manning levels, re-enlistment trends, career field force structure changes and stress levels, and costs associated with training new airmen when deciding which career fields should be eligible for bonuses.

The bonus changes went into effect Monday.

The list of eligible jobs can be found [here](#).

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/02/02/air-force-massively-expands-re-up-bonus-list-some-could-get-90000-stay/79689192/>

6. Airmen in 122 jobs could get an 'up or out' extension

(2 Feb) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey

Some enlisted airmen in 122 jobs are now eligible to extend their high-year tenure for another year or two, the Air Force said in a Monday release.

The so-called "up or out" rules mean that airmen have to leave the service if they don't get promoted within a certain time period.

The Air Force is trying to rebuild its force after the steep drawdown of 2014 and the increased demands of the continuing wars against the Islamic State and in Afghanistan. Last May, Brig. Gen. Brian Kelly, director of military force management policy, announced high-year tenure extensions for a few hundred airmen in 35 career fields as part of that effort.

Kelly said last year that the Air Force is trying to recruit more young airmen, but that it will take years before they are fully trained. So in the meantime, the Air Force wants to hold on to experienced airmen through high-year tenure extensions and other programs such as [expanded selective re-enlistment bonuses](#).

But the newly-announced extensions for fiscal 2016 and 2017 represent a vast expansion of the program from last year.

Career fields such as 1C4X1 Tactical Air Control Party, 1C2X1 combat control and 1T2X1 pararescue, which were eligible last year, remain on the new list of eligible jobs.

Newly added to the list are jobs such as 1A0X1 in-flight refueling, 1N3X1 crypto language analysts who speak Russian, Persian or Urdu, 2F0X1 fuels, 2W0X1 munitions systems and 2W1X1 aircraft armament systems.

The list of eligible career fields was not immediately available, but they will be open to senior airmen through master sergeants in these career fields.

Eligible airmen are now able to apply through May 31, 2017. The Air Force said that eligible airmen who will hit their high-year tenure this month should apply as soon as possible if they wish to extend their service.

Airmen with a high-year tenure in March, April or May should apply at least 30 days before they hit their limit. All others should submit their requests at least 120 days before hitting their limits, the Air Force said.

The new list of eligible jobs, along with eligible ranks, [can be found here](#).

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/02/02/airmen-122-jobs-could-get-up-out-extension/79691756/>

7. Air Force drops two-phase process for master sgt. promotion boards

(3 Feb) Air Force Times, By Stephen Losey

The Air Force is abandoning its short experiment with a two-phase process for deciding which eligible airmen will go before a master sergeant promotion board.

When the Air Force launched its first master sergeant board last year, officials worried that the promotion board would be overwhelmed if they tried to consider all 22,000-plus eligible technical sergeants. Senior master sergeant boards, for example, reviewed a little more than 14,000 eligible airmen last year.

So the Air Force set up a two-phase process to limit the master sergeant board to only the top 60 percent of promotion-eligible tech sergeants. Under the first phase, eligible tech sergeants finished their specialty knowledge tests and promotion fitness examinations, which were then combined with other weighted factors — time in grade, time in service, decorations, and enlisted performance reports. Those initial scores were sorted by Air Force specialty code, and those who made the top 60 percent cutoff went to the second phase — the actual promotion board.

Air Force personnel chief Lt. Gen. Gina Grosso told commands of the master sergeant board change in an email, which retired Air Force officer and blogger Tony Carr posted on his John Q. Public Facebook page Monday.

Air Force spokeswoman Rose Richeson on Tuesday confirmed the board is now a one-phase process — identical to the boards for senior and chief master sergeant — beginning this year. Richeson also said EPR points will no longer be a separate weighted factor for master sergeants, similar to how senior and chief boards work.

"After going through the first master sergeant evaluation board in 2015, we were able to assess our capacity to review all eligible airmen," Brig. Gen. Brian Kelly, director of military force management policy, said in an email to Air Force Times Tuesday. "We now know our systems, facility and annual board schedule can support boarding all eligible technical sergeants. This adjustment allows every technical sergeant a chance to have their performance reviewed on its own merit directly by the board."

And beginning this year, promotion boards for senior non-commissioned officers also will only review the last five years of EPRs. The redesigned SNCO boards last year looked at the last 10 years of EPRs, as part of an effort to ensure performance carried the most weight in deciding who got promoted.

Richeson said that reducing the number of EPRs considered "focuses the evaluation board's assessment on recent performance."

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/02/03/air-force-drops-two-phase-process-msgt-promotion-boards/79712988/>

8. Top General Wants 1 in 10 Marines to Be Women

(3 Feb) Military.com, By Hope Hedge Seck

The [Marine Corps](#) has long had the fewest female members of any of the military services, but Commandant Gen. Robert Neller said Tuesday he's working to change the demographics.

Speaking before the Senate Armed Services Committee to discuss the integration of women into combat roles, Neller said he was exploring ways to bring more women into the service.

In the Marine Corps, fewer than eight percent of active-duty troops are women.

"I directed our recruiting to look at increasing the number of women in the Marine Corps to 10 percent," Neller said.

If successful, that initiative would bring the Marine Corps closer to the [Navy](#), with 18 percent female troops in its active force, and the Army, 14 percent female.

It's a more modest goal, however, than the one set by Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, who said last year he wanted one in four new recruits in the Navy and Marine Corps to be female. Pressed for specifics, he said the recruiting figure was "a floor" and he would like to see an even higher number of female recruits.

It could be years, though, before the Marine Corps makes any progress toward the 1-in-10 goal.

A Marine Corps recruiting official, who requested anonymity in order to speak freely, said some numbers had been discussed for female accessions, but no decisions had yet been made. Other factors beyond recruiting will also affect the demographic makeup of the Corps, the official said, including long-term retention of female Marines and projected attrition over time.

"As you're growing the force, are you incentivizing female Marines to stick around," the official said. "It's not just, 'go recruit more females.'"

Currently, the official said, Marine recruiters do not have any goals or quotas regarding female accessions. While everything remains "pre-decisional," the official said senior Marine Corps brass were discussing their approach to the new goal now.

"It's not something that is a quick process," the official said. "These things take several fiscal years to execute."

The Marine Corps is now waiting on final approval of its plan to open previously closed ground combat jobs to female troops. [In that plan](#), first obtained by Christian Science Monitor and reviewed by Military.com, officials say they estimate 200 female Marines will successfully enter ground combat jobs every year, making up fewer than 2 percent of all Marines in those jobs.

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/02/03/top-general-wants-1-in-10-marines-to-be-women.html>

9. Navy begins to force out senior enlisted sailors

(3 Feb) Navy Times, By Mark D. Faram

Notification begins today for 219 senior enlisted sailors who will be forced out of the Navy by the end of fiscal 2016.

The fiscal 2016 Senior Enlisted Continuation Board reviewed the records of nearly 6,600 retirement-eligible active, Reserve and full-time support chiefs, senior chiefs and master chiefs and selected roughly 3.2 percent of them for mandatory retirement,

Navy officials released the board's results to command leaders at 11 a.m. today, and notification of those selected to retire began immediately.

The notification window is expected to continue for one week. Traditionally the notification window for this board is longer than for normal selection boards as officials must also notify selected reservists, too.

“Results of the fiscal 2016 Senior Enlisted Continuation Board were posted to command leadership's [BUPERS online] — triad-access-only accounts Wednesday,” said Lt. Cmdr. Nathan Christensen, spokesman for the chief of naval personnel.

“Command leadership teams will personally notify their sailors who were not selected to continue their service in the Navy.”

Christensen said that, more than any other board results, "this is an issue that needs to be handled with care." That's because everyone selected not to continue has served honorably and will leave the service under those terms, he noted. "We believe it's important for leadership to notify their sailors in person ahead of the results being posted to individuals' BOL accounts next week.”

Once the notification window has closed at 11 a.m. EST on Feb. 10, officials will update the continuation status in the service records of those considered by the board. Also expected is a release of a naval administrative message releasing the overall statistics from the board. But because this board sends people home, officials do not publicly release the names of those selected by the board, only statistics.

The board has met every year except for fiscal year 2014, when a scheduling conflict caused officials to cancel the panel for the year.

This year, the board was originally set to start deliberations on Aug. 3, but an “inadvertent email release” of the board’s planned membership, which typically isn’t made public until the board is in session, delayed the proceedings..

The rescheduled board convened Dec. 7 and adjourned on Dec. 16.

The continuation board was devised in 2009, when overmanning in the E-7 and above ranks among sailors with 20 or more years of service was causing a significant slowdown in advancement opportunity.

At the time, the Navy’s senior leadership strongly considered mandatory quotas for the board, but then-Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (SS/SW) Rick West opposed quotas and argued that the panel should make a pure “quality cut” of the senior enlisted ranks instead.

Last year's board examined the records of 7,017 active, Reserve and FTS chiefs, E-7 through E-9, and sent home 161 of them — 2.9 percent of the total. That was the lowest percentage — and number — of chiefs forced into retirement since 2010.

This year, the board looked at roughly 400 fewer records, but sent home 49 more CPOs, resulting in a slightly higher percentage of those selected for mandatory retirement.

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2016/02/03/navy-begins-force-out-senior-enlisted-sailors/79746264/>

10. Pentagon to Offer Plan to Store Eggs and Sperm to Retain Young Troops

(3 Feb) *The New York Times*, By Michael S. Schmidt

Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter believes he has come up with a way to help the Pentagon retain troops: freezing sperm and eggs.

As part of an initiative to make military service more appealing and family friendly, Mr. Carter has created a pilot program that will pay for troops to have their reproductive cells preserved.

The goal is to give those in uniform the peace of mind that if they are hurt on the battlefield — hundreds of veterans suffered injuries to their reproductive organs in Iraq and Afghanistan — they would still be able to have children.

The program is also meant to encourage women to stay in the military during their 20s and 30s, a time when many leave after giving birth. By freezing their eggs, they will have the flexibility to remain deployed overseas or otherwise pursue their careers and put off having children.

Women who reach 10 years of service — what Mr. Carter called “their peak years for starting a family” — have a retention rate that is 30 percent lower than their male counterparts.

Few companies offer egg and sperm freezing, so the initiative will place the Pentagon — one of the world’s largest employers — at the forefront on the issue, reproductive advocates said. Some Silicon Valley companies like Facebook have begun offering to cover the cost of freezing eggs — which can be more than \$10,000 — to help recruit top female candidates.

But the initiative, which Mr. Carter first mentioned in a speech last week about improving retention, raises legal and ethical questions that Defense Department officials will have to navigate.

“Freezing sperm and eggs is not like freezing chicken for dinner,” said Arthur Caplan, a professor of bioethics at New York University’s Langone Medical Center. “What happens if you die — can your wife use it? And what if your mother wants grandchildren and your wife doesn’t, does that mean the sperm can be used with a surrogate? If you’re cognitively disabled, can it be used? And what happens if the company housing your sperm or eggs goes bankrupt?”

Dr. Caplan said that the practice of freezing eggs had become widespread only in the past five years, and that it could be more problematic than preserving sperm, which has been done for decades. He said the Pentagon should inform service members that the freezing of eggs is not always successful and can cause complications.

“If your eggs won’t work, you won’t find out until you’re 39,” Dr. Caplan said.

A Pentagon spokesman declined to comment on the legal and ethical questions, saying that details were being worked out. The Defense Department is expected to outline the program in a memo from Mr. Carter in the coming weeks. The program, which applies only to active-duty service members, will be re-evaluated in two years, and could ultimately be made permanent.

“As many families know all too well, these treatments are very expensive and often require multiple attempts,” the spokesman, Matthew Allen, said. “We know that providing this benefit across the board would result in a significant cost for the department. In addition to cost, we want to better understand the importance of this to our force, as well as its impact on recruiting and retention. In addition to hormone therapies and egg and sperm freezing, we are going to continue looking at ways to provide additional support for these types of treatments in the future.”

The Pentagon estimates that the program could cost about \$150 million over five years. It will be offered through Tricare, the military’s health care plan.

During the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, several cryogenic firms offered to cover the cost for troops to have their reproductive cells frozen. It is not clear whether any soldiers ultimately used those materials to have children. In recent years, some fertility advocates have lobbied the Defense Department to cover the cost.

Mr. Carter mentioned the program in a speech last week at the Pentagon. Outlining the Defense Department’s efforts to improve the lives of service members, he focused on longer maternity leaves, improved child care and the creation of [lactation](#) rooms at military

facilities. He touched briefly on freezing sperm and eggs.

“This investment will also provide greater flexibility for our troops who want to start a family, but find it difficult because of where they find themselves in their careers,” Mr. Carter said.

“Particularly for women who are midgrade officers and enlisted personnel, this benefit will demonstrate that we understand the demands upon them and want to help them balance commitments to force and commitments to family,” Mr. Carter said. “We want to retain them in our military.”

The initiative is part of a series of measures that Mr. Carter has pushed to create what he calls “the force of the future.” He is worried that the military has not adapted enough to compete with top companies for millennials, who put a greater emphasis on work-life balance than did previous generations.

In November, Mr. Carter said that the Pentagon would expand its sabbatical programs to more service members so they could gain experience in academia or different industries. He said that the military was working to modernize its retirement benefits and was creating a LinkedIn-style program to match service members with open positions. In December, he opened all combat positions to women.

Sean Tipton, a spokesman for the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, said he hoped that the rest of the federal government would follow the military’s lead.

“This is the difference between a returning military member being able to have children or not,” Mr. Tipton said. “We think this country has an obligation in its power to keep its military members whole, and building families is certainly part of being whole.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/04/us/politics/pentagon-to-offer-plan-to-store-eggs-and-sperm-to-retain-young-troops.html>

11. Register Women for the Draft? Not so fast

(30 Jan) *Lawfire*, By Charlie Dunlap, J.D.

Veteran journalist Sig Christenson wrote an [interesting article](#) (in which I am quoted) about whether women will be required to [register for the draft](#) now that all combat specialties are [open](#) to them.

At first blush, the answer for many would seem to be a resounding “Of course women should have to register!” In fact, last Friday Lawrence G. Romo, the Director of Selective Service System, said that “[it’s quite likely that females will have to sign up for Selective Service in coming years.](#)”

That may be the right *political* answer, but would it be *legally* required?

Maybe not. When the Supreme Court upheld the Constitutionality of the male-only draft in the 1981 case of *Rostker v. Goldberg*, it concluded that men and women were “simply not similarly situated for purposes of a draft” because there were then existing “combat restrictions” on women’s military service. Consequently, the Court said that as the “purpose of [draft] registration is to develop a pool of potential combat troops,” Congress could reasonably conclude that it was necessary to draft only men since they were the only ones who could then serve as combat troops.

Even though the combat restrictions so important in *Rostker’s* holding are now gone, there may still be a legitimate rationale to limit the draft to males. Specifically, it might prove true that [only a small percentage of women are physically able](#) to serve as combat troops in, for example, the infantry. Accordingly, the courts may continue to find it not unreasonable for Congress to maintain a male-only draft if it *is mainly aimed at developing a pool of infantry troops*, simply because it would be so militarily inefficient and costly to draft thousands of females when it can be reasonably expected that doing so will yield only a small number physically-qualified for direct combat roles.

In other words, I just don’t think the courts will say, in effect, that if the government wants to have a draft because it needs *infantry*, it also must draft women as a matter of constitutional imperative – even if the facts show that only a small percentage of women will actually qualify for the infantry, and if they also show that all the combat troops that are needed can be much more efficiently obtained from a male-only draft.

Put another way, under the circumstances described above, I doubt the courts would override Congress' determination as to the best conscription scheme to fill infantry billets, especially in the midst of the kind of serious national emergency which would necessitate a draft in the first place. After all, historically the judiciary has been reluctant to second-guess the findings of the elected branches of government in these sorts of issues. In *Gilligan v. Morgan* (cited with approval in *Rostker*) the Court noted:

[I]t is difficult to conceive of an area of governmental activity in which the courts have less competence. The complex, subtle, and professional decisions as to the composition, training, equipping, and control of a military force are essentially professional military judgments, subject always to civilian control of the Legislative and Executive Branches. The ultimate responsibility for these decisions is appropriately vested in branches of the government which are periodically subject to electoral accountability.

Yes, the Court did not defer to Congress in its post-9/11 detention and military commissions' decisions (and other cases arguably involving national security), but I would contend that they did not dismantle the entire edifice of deference to the legislative branch in military matters, and especially with respect to "the *composition*, training, equipping, and control of a military force" – adding emphasis (in this context) to the word "*composition*."

However, here's what could generate a major exception to the Court's traditional deference: at some future point an urgent need arises for thousands of military personnel with certain minimum abilities, but those abilities are *mental* in nature, not physical, and many women (and, for that matter, disabled people of either gender) could meet them. An example? Consider the operation of complex, high-tech weaponry via a computer console. That might be one kind of vital but hard-to-fill billet that requires great intellectualism, yet little physicality. If able-bodied men are the only ones being drafted to fill such positions, then the Constitutional basis for the draft as presently constructed by Congress would be undermined.

In that situation all sorts of people not currently physically qualified for military service could become subject to the draft. Keep in mind that as a Constitutional matter, it is well-settled that military service can be compelled of everyone. In fact, the Supreme Court has never held that even conscientious objection was a Constitutional entitlement (it does exist as a matter of legislative grace). In *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, the Court said (in *dicta*) that someone "may be compelled, by force if need be, against his will and without regard to his personal wishes or his pecuniary interests, or even his religious or political convictions, to take his place in the ranks of the army of his country and risk the chance of being shot down in its defense."

In any event, if Congress were to decide to change the law to require *both* genders to register for the draft (and, in fact, serve in the armed forces), there is little doubt in my mind that the courts would *not* interfere with the conscription of women. To be clear, I believe this would be the case not only if the military needed high-tech talent, but *even where a draft was mainly aimed at providing infantry troops*. I'm convinced that the courts would still defer to Congress if it decided – perhaps as a matter of social equity or other policy reason – to draft women despite knowing that only few could physically perform the battlefield duties of the infantry.

Again, it's about deference to the elected branches in national security matters. As the *Rostker* court noted, there is "no area [in which] the Court [has] accorded Congress greater deference than in the area of national defense and military affairs."

But will there be a change in the law anytime soon? Not likely – and especially not in an election year. There doesn't seem to be any appetite among the presidential candidates – none of whom served in the military – to raise this potentially divisive issue under circumstances where the all-volunteer military is not short of personnel (and, in fact, is downsizing).

So long as the requirement is limited to mere registration, there won't be enough political incentive for action in Congress, at least in the near term. That, of course, could change rapidly if some sort of crisis arose where it became necessary to actually begin to *induct* draft registrants, especially those males who may not want to serve.

<http://sites.duke.edu/lawfire/2016/01/30/register-women-for-the-draft-not-so-fast/>

12. Army seeks enlisted troops to serve as generals' aides

(31 Jan) *Army Times*, By Jim Tice

Applications are being accepted for a special program that prepares active component soldiers in the ranks of promotable sergeant through master sergeant for service as enlisted aides to general officers.

The fiscal 2016 enlisted aide selection panel is slated to convene April 15 at the Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Ky.

The application deadline is April 12.

Soldiers may apply for the program, regardless of their military occupational specialty. Candidates who were not selected by a previous panel may submit a new application.

Noncommissioned officers who are selected for the program and complete the training regimen will become part of the Enlisted Aide Personnel Management Ready Pool, a cohort of soldiers who is overseen by the Quartermaster Corps career management branch of HRC's enlisted directorate.

Once placed in the pool, soldiers can be selected for assignment as an enlisted aide to a general officer in the ranks of major general through four-star general at the tactical, operational or strategic level.

Utilization tours are for two years, but can be extended by one year. Upon successful completion of the tour, soldiers will be returned to their basic branch for an operational assignment that will maintain their leadership and MOS proficiency.

Soldiers can return to the enlisted aide program upon successful completion of their basic branch assignment by submitting a new application packet.

While enlisted aide duties may vary from one general office to another, duties typically include:

- Maintaining the general's uniforms.
- Planning and executing official military social events.
- Daily meal preparation, to include menu development, shopping and storing of rations.
- Administrative requirements and record-keeping of finances.
- Household management, to include the upkeep of a general's assigned quarters.
- Perform other tasks that assist the general in the performance of his or her official duties.

Soldiers who are selected by the April 15 panel, and who have not attended the Enlisted Aide Course or the Advanced Culinary Skills Training Course at the Joint Culinary Center, Fort Lee, Va., will be scheduled for training.

Soldiers who do not hold MOS 892 (culinary specialist) will be scheduled for the Basic Culinary Course at Fort Lee.

Upon completion of all training, soldiers will be assigned additional skill identifier Z5 (enlisted aide).

For detailed information about this program, as well as application procedures, consult MilPer Message 16-020, dated Jan. 20, and access the [Enlisted Aide Program Web page](#).

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/enlisted/2016/01/31/army-seeks-enlisted-troops-serve-generals-aides/79394948/>

13. Mabus: Marine Corps Standards Will Not Be Lowered For Gender Integration

(1 Feb) Task & Purpose

“This is not about quotas. This is about opening up opportunity and I can tell you emphatically, categorically, that I will never do anything as long as I’m in this job to lower the Marine combat effectiveness,” Navy Secretary Ray Mabus told Task & Purpose in a Jan. 28 interview about integrating women into combat arms units.

In an exclusive interview with Marine veteran and Task & Purpose CEO Zach Iscol, Mabus discussed the criticisms he faces from Marine Corps leadership for going against the [recommendations of then-Marine Commandant Joseph Dunford](#), who in late 2015, called for combat arms units to remain closed to women.

“A more diverse force is just a stronger force,” Mabus said. “I mean we’ve seen it over and over, again. We saw it when 70 years ago when the military was integrated. That was a stronger force than it was before. We saw it in the 80s when women were first recruited in larger numbers across the services. They became stronger because of the diversity of backgrounds.”

The Marine Corps’ recommendation to keep women out of the infantry derives from a nine-month, \$30 million study that looked at how gender-integrated units perform compared to all-male units. Initially, only a four-page summary of the study was released stating that the study found all-male units to be faster, more lethal, and better able to evacuate casualties than its integrated-unit counterparts. The [978-page full report](#) is now available through the Secretary of Defense’s office and has undergone extensive scrutiny [from those on both sides](#) of the debate.

[Mabus himself has criticized](#) the study methodology for comparing averages and not individual performances, as well as maintaining a low bar for entry into the experiment. However, in speaking with Task & Purpose, the secretary also commended the study for identifying the need for creating consistent standards within each of the previously closed MOSs.

“Regardless of gender, if you don’t meet the standards, you shouldn’t be in the job,” Mabus told Task & Purpose. “I don’t understand the argument we’re going to exclude some people because of the shape of their skin, or the argument five years ago we’re going to exclude somebody because of who they love or the argument 70 years ago where we’re going to exclude somebody because of the color of their skin.

Mabus directed the Marine Corps to develop a plan for integrating boot camp and Officer Candidates School to be implemented by April 1.

<http://taskandpurpose.com/abus-marine-corps-standards-will-not-be-lowered-for-gender-integration/>

14. Senators scold Mabus for causing drama with Marine Corps

(2 Feb) Marine Corps Times, By Jeff Schogol

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus explained what persuaded him to allow men and women to continue training separately at Marine boot camp a month after he ordered Corps leaders to develop a plan to make its entry-level training coed.

“The Marines did a very good job of showing ... that the way it’s done now sets both men and women up for greater success,” Mabus told reporters Tuesday.

In a Jan. 1 memo, Mabus ordered the Marine Corps to develop a plan to integrate its boot camp and Officer Candidates School. Mabus met with Marine Commandant Gen. Robert Neller about two weeks after the memo was released, and Marine Corps Times learned then that the service would continue training its male and female recruits separately.

“It made sense to me to do it a more deliberate way,” Mabus said.

Mabus spoke after a vitriolic Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on opening all combat jobs to women, at which Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, slammed Mabus for initially ordering boot camp to become gender integrated.

“I’ve been on this committee for a year and I don’t think I’ve seen a more outrageous or ill-advised order from the service secretary to tell the Marines that they’re going to take boot camp — which has been honed and put together for the benefit of the American people over decades — and you’re going to order them to give a detailed plan in 15 days?” Sullivan said. “Is that even remotely possible? Why did you issue such an order when nobody on this committee thinks that it was remotely possible to integrate boot camp?”

Sullivan and other lawmakers also sharply criticized Mabus for his comments last year downplaying the Marine Corps’ months-long gender integration study, which found that mixed-gender teams didn’t perform as well as all-male teams and were more likely to be injured.

The day after the Marine study was released, Mabus told National Public Radio the gender integration experiment was flawed, in part because the female Marines who took part were not suited to march while carrying heavy loads.

“For the women that volunteered, probably there should have been a higher bar to cross to get into the experiment,” Mabus said in the Sept. 11 interview.

During Tuesday’s hearing, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., took Mabus to task for saying the female Marines who took part in the test were not the service’s best.

“These women were top-caliber Marines, self-selected and chosen to participate based on their aptitude and physical strength,” McCain said. “I hope that Secretary Mabus and others who have spoken ill of these women will repudiate their comments.”

Mabus praised all of the Marines who took part in the experiment, but he said the study “focused on the average performance of female Marines rather than individual abilities.”

“Averages don’t tell the abilities and performance of an individual Marine,” Mabus said. “There were — and are — capable women who can meet the arduous standards the Marine Corps set for ground combat arms units. We all know the Marines have never been about average.”

But McCain faulted Mabus for not going to Twentynine Palms, California, and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to observe the study as it was happening.

“So you, with a straight face, make claims that the Marine study was flawed and biased, even if you didn’t go see the study being performed,” McCain said.

In his NPR interview, Mabus said there was a problem with the mindset of the Marines who took part in the integration study.

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

In a tense back-and-forth with Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., during the hearing, Mabus said he was referring to some of the conclusions from the study that were presented to him.

“The Marines that were chosen, the Marines who volunteered — and who I brag on for doing that — they did a great job in terms of establishing standards; however, some of the conclusions that were drawn ... that the male Marines in that experiment, most of them had no experience working with women in these occupations — they simply didn’t know how to do that.”

Cotton pressed Mabus about whether he owes the female Marines who took part in the study an apology for telling NPR “there should have been a higher bar” to participate in the experiment.

“Senator — and I have the entire interview here, I know exactly what you’re talking about — what I kept talking about was there were no standards for any of these [Marines] when we started out.”

Cotton interrupted, saying the female Marines who took part in the study did a better job meeting the service’s physical fitness standards than the male volunteers.

“On the generalized physical fitness test, combat fitness test,” Mabus continued. “Nobody had handed me a standard for these ground combat units. Nobody. There were no standards. One of the ways that you ensure that the integration is successful is by training to these very intense physical standards.”

After the hearing, Mabus took issue with the notion that he had denigrated the female Marines who participated in the study, saying he was responsible for all the volunteers receiving a meritorious unit citation.

Taking issue with her Republican colleagues, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., asserted that the gender integration study was skewed because some female Marines who took part were at a disadvantage because they were not trained for combat jobs.

“All that we really know from this study is that groups that have the right experience and training — and more training — did better,” Gillibrand said. “We don’t actually have data that can be used because these women who were asked to participate did not have the same training and experience as males who have been doing it for a long time.”

Neller responded that it would be unfair to say the female Marines who took part in the study were not trained.

“But it is fair to say — I will agree with you — that their experience in these [military occupational specialties] was probably not up to the level of their male counterparts.” Neller said. “In every other standard that I can tell, I would say that they were as good, if not

better, in overall quality of their service as their male Marine counterparts.”

The integrated task force experiment found that as mixed gender teams carried heavier loads, fatigue took a toll on female Marines’ accuracy, he said.

“Being big, strong and a certain body mass gives you an advantage,” Neller said. “One of the things that I’ve heard as I’ve gone around and talked to female Marines is: ‘Hey, I’m working out; I’m lifting weights; I’m getting bigger, and I’m outside the height and weight standards. Are you going to change height and weight standards? We’re looking at that right now.’”

The review, which will also look at the physical and combat fitness tests, will be done by July 1, Neller said.

“It’s going to be height, weight, PFT, CFT, scoring, gender-neutral [standards]; it’s everything,” he said. “I want to be fair. I don’t want people to be disadvantaged. And at the same time, I want them to be fit.”

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2016/02/02/ray-mabus-drama-marine-corps-boot-camp-women-in-combat/79703202/>

15. Marine, Army Leadership Panel to Senate: Women in Combat Jobs Need Standards, Not Quotas

(2 Feb) USNI News, By John Grady

Setting standards and maintaining them, rather than establishing quotas for women in ground-combat units, was the consensus that emerged between the testifying service witnesses and members of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

“I want every Marine to succeed,” Marine Commandant Gen. Robert Neller said, as the Corps moves forward to implementation. “There’s a lot of pieces [still] to study” as the Marine Corps and the Army move to integrating women into all specialties in ground-combat units.

Sen. John McCain, (R-Ariz.), chairman, noted he supported the announcement of opening these positions to women but wanted to “do the right thing in the right way” in implementing yet not rushing decisions on how best to integrate females into what had been all-male units.

Following its own study, the Marine Corps had asked for an exception to some ground combat positions. The announcement on gender integration was made by then- Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta in 2013. About 250,000 military skills in every service and Special Forces are involved.

The Marines sought the exception based upon the performance of integrated units versus all-male units in a study conducted at the Marine Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., and Camp Lejeune, N.C. The all-male units performed at a higher level than integrated units in 69 percent of the 134 tasks evaluated, Neller told the panel.

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, who several times during the hearing had to explain why he would not grant the Marines an exception going forward, said the integration of women in those combat positions was “putting policy in line with what already is reality.”

Later, he said the integration was “about equality of opportunity” and standards “have got to evolve for everybody” as threats change.

Mabus added that the nine-month study by the Ground Combat Element Integration Task Force “deconstructed every job” with the goal of examining how an individual’s skills would help Marines “to function better as a team.”

“Lowering standards would be unacceptable to every Marine,” he said.

There is a “tendency to equate warfighting capability with physical capability,” ranking member Sen. Jack Reed, (D-R.I.) said. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

“Mean body mass has an impact on your ability to carry a load,” Neller said in answering a question later in the hearing about the study results. “There are things you can train to” and better conditioning can mitigate injuries to lower extremities, but there is a physiological dimension of being able to carry heavier loads, run faster, and so forth, that needs to be acknowledged.

Neller said, in answering another question about the study, “From what we can tell no one ever looked at [ground combat] in this way,” including interviews with Canadian, United Kingdom, Australian and Israeli military counterparts over gender integration. “We will see where the chips fall.”

“We have to be successful on the battlefield,” he added, and said he was “confident we will be in the future.”

Mabus said the Navy Department has a great deal of experience in gender integration. Using warfare qualifications in the submarine force as an example, he said, “Women earn their ‘dolphins’ at the same speed as the men do.” The Navy is now beginning to place enlisted women aboard attack submarines.

For Marines, Neller said, the Corps has learned much in opening up combat units to women. “The talent pool has expanded,” he said by having women serve in intelligence, communications and motor transport positions in infantry units.

Opening all positions in the services to women likely would lead to an increase in female recruits in joining the services without decreasing quality, the witnesses agreed.

When asked by Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), whether women should be required to register with the Selective Service, Neller said, “Every American who is physically qualified should register for the draft.” Mabus said it was time for a national debate on the issue.

McCaskill said she favors having women register and that by doing so it could be seen as a career opportunity.

Although no women have yet graduated from the Marine Infantry Officer Course, Neller said, “There is no effort to deny anyone a chance to compete” for admission. Twenty-nine attempted the course. He added that Marine Corps recruiters have been told to look at increasing the percentage of women in the service from 8 percent to 10 percent.

Mabus said the Navy Department has sent its implementation plan to the secretary of Defense for his approval, but has not had a response. When approved, the plan is to be put into the field on April 1, but how quickly all positions would open is up in the air. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chief of staff, said that his service will need possibly three years to integrate women into all armor and field-artillery positions.

http://news.usni.org/2016/02/02/marine-army-leadership-panel-to-senate-women-in-combat-jobs-need-standards-not-quotas?utm_source=USNI+News&utm_campaign=8303b82896-USNI_NEWS_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0dd4a1450b-8303b82896-230408457&mc_cid=8303b82896&mc_eid=57550b48e0

16. Officials Describe Plans to Integrate Women into Combat Roles

(2 Feb) DoD News, By Terri Moon Cronk

Senior Army, Navy and Marine Corps officials outlined plans to integrate women into combat roles before the Senate Armed Forces Committee today, and agreed incorporating women into combat ranks is the right path for the future.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, Acting Secretary of the Army Patrick J. Murphy, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley and Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller updated committee members on the services’ integration efforts.

Marine Corps leadership has “thoughtful and deliberate plans” to execute the transition effectively, Mabus said, adding the 231 female Marines who successfully completed the ground combat arms military occupational specialty training can immediately switch to those previously closed jobs.

The secretary said because the integration process includes training and education evaluation at every level from recruits to the highest levels of leadership, implementing that policy was a priority.

And while “suggestions” have been made to lower standards for female Marines to meet quotas, Mabus emphasized it’s “an unacceptable notion” for every Marine, especially those women who choose to compete for those positions.

“It’s unacceptable under the law, to me, [and] to every other senior leader in the Pentagon because it would endanger not only the safety of Marines, but the safety of our nation,” he said.

“Standards can never be lowered for any group or any job. Standards will evolve as threats evolve, but they will evolve for everyone equally,” Mabus said.

The Marine Corps also is ceasing its tradition as the only service branch that separates men and women in boot camp, he added.

Smaller Army Needs Maximizing

“As our Army gets smaller, our success increasingly depends upon our ability to maximize the contributions of every volunteer that fills our ranks,” Murphy said. “A soldier’s ability to meet established standards that contribute to our success will remain our overriding factor moving forward.”

And to take advantage of America’s diverse and deep talents, the Army began its integration efforts several years ago, leading to three primary conclusions, he said:

- Every soldier will have the opportunity to compete for every position to include infantry, armor and Special Forces;
- The Army’s high individual standards performance and professional conduct will continue to be based on requirements of the position and nothing else; and
- Enforcing the standards fairly and objectively will remain the guiding principle for mission success.

Murphy said he’s confident that integrating women into combat roles, while underpinned by strong leadership, will increase Army readiness.

“We will continue to monitor and report the lessons we learn so the Army can collectively integrate the force and share our experiences,” he said.

Murphy added, “The Army is prepared to act and benefit from integration -- now.”

No Quotas, No Pressure

Fully integrating women into the Army will “maintain, sustain or improve” overall readiness, Milley said.

To be successful in this endeavor, he said, the Army must “maintain and enforce rigorous combat readiness standards, remain a merit-based results-oriented organization and apply no quotas and no pressure.”

To do so, the Army will put in place a “very deliberate methodical and transparent process,” Milley said.

Milley called the Army’s methodical approach to gender-neutral training for all Army officers, noncommissioned officers and junior enlisted members the leadership’s first principle to ensure success.

“Female cadets and officer candidates who meet the gender-neutral standard will be given the opportunity to request either infantry or armor branches” by spring, he said, adding that every active-duty infantry, armor and field artillery battalion today already has women soldiers.

“It is my professional judgement that some women can perform every single job in the United States Army to include infantry, armor and special forces,” Milley said. “Army leaders will continue to assess [integration] and we will adjust the process [so] our standards in combat readiness are maintained. You, the committee, have my word on this.”

Corps’ Integration ‘Responsible’

When Defense Secretary Ash Carter on Dec. 3, 2015 opened all military occupations and positions to women, including combat roles, the Marines Corps began integrating all qualified Marines into previously closed MOSs in a well-planned responsible manner” based on Corps’ research, Neller said in his written statement submitted to the committee.

“We have already awarded additional MOSs to all Marines who earned it through primary MOS-producing schools,” he said, “and two female second lieutenants are now undergoing MOS training at the field artillery officer basic course.”

Marines who were awarded additional MOS qualifications also can now request formal reclassification for combat arms designation, he said.

“The Marine Corps is a learning organization,” Neller said in his written statement. “We will evaluate the success of our plan and

inform in-stride adjustments throughout this ongoing process as we recruit, train, develop, deploy and retain the highest-quality force.”

<http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/648766/officials-describe-plans-to-integrate-women-into-combat-roles?source=GovDelivery>

17. Military leaders: Register women for draft

(2 Feb) Military Times, By Leo Shane III

The Army and Marine Corps' top uniformed leaders both backed making women register for the draft as all combat roles are opened to them in coming months, a sweeping social change that could complicate the military's gender integration plans.

Both services, along with the Navy, have begun work to open all military jobs to any service member after a decision by Defense Secretary Ash Carter in December to lift all gender-based restrictions on combat and infantry roles.

On Tuesday, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley and Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller told senators during a Capitol Hill hearing that full integration of those jobs will likely take a few years, to overcome logistical and cultural issues.

One of those complications will be how to handle the Selective Service System, which requires all men ages 18 to 26 to register for possible involuntary military service.

Women have always been exempt, and past legal challenges have pointed to the battlefield restrictions placed on them. With that reasoning moot, lawmakers will need to determine what becomes of the system.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus Jr. said there needs to be “a national debate” over what the changes mean, balancing social concerns over the idea of drafting women with the reality of national security and military readiness.

But the uniform leaders were more blunt in their assessment.

“It's my personal view in light of integration that every American physically qualified should register for the draft,” Neller said. Milley echoed those remarks, saying “all eligible men and women” should be required to register.

The comments drew support from some Democratic lawmakers — “I agree with you,” said Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo. — but concerned looks from Republicans on the Senate Armed Services Committee, who spent most of the hearing criticizing how abruptly the decision to drop gender restrictions was made.

Several pressed military leaders over whether job standards would be lowered to allow women into combat roles, a charge officials repeatedly refuted.

Milley and Neller said no quotas for positions have been set. Mabus said that watering down physical standards is “unacceptable under the law, and unacceptable to me and every other senior leader in the Pentagon, because it would endanger not only the safety of Marines, but also the safety of our nation.”

But committee chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said military officials still have not provided enough study or implementation plans to justify the rapid changes laid out by military leaders.

“I am concerned that the department has gone about things backward,” he said. “This consequential decision was made and mandated before the military services could study its implications, and before any implementation plans were devised to address the serious challenges raised in studies.”

Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa — the only female veteran on the Senate committee — said she fully supported the changes “as long as standards are not lowered” to boost the number of women in combat jobs or force them to meet quotas.

“We need to ensure we don't set up men or women for failure,” she said. “It's clear we need to ensure that we're taking into account the impact this could have on women's health.”

Marine Corps officials had requested to leave some of their infantry and combat jobs closed to women, citing a service study showing

concerns about unit effectiveness. Carter denied those requests.

For many advocates, the controversy over women in combat jobs is an outdated debate.

Army leaders noted at Tuesday's hearing that more than 9,000 women have already earned the Combat Action Badge for actions in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 1,000 women have been killed or wounded in that fighting.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/capitol-hill/2016/02/02/army-marines-women-combat-jobs-draft/79695978/>

18. Exclusive: Report shows Marines' shifting approach to women in combat

(2 Feb) The Christian Science Monitor, By Anne Mulrine

A yet-to-be-released Pentagon document obtained by the Monitor suggests that the Marines – long resistant to including women in combat units – are convinced that their concerns can be overcome.

When Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter opened combat positions to women last year, the Marine Corps asked for an exception to the policy, which was denied. Earlier, in arguing against the move, the Marines had published a controversial study that suggested women got injured more than men and were a detriment to unit morale.

But the Marines' new gender [Force Integration Implementation Plan \(PDF\)](#) offers a more optimistic view, with Gen. Robert Neller promising that the corps "is stepping out smartly on this new mission."

The plan does not dismiss the Marines' earlier concerns, but suggests that "possible reductions in combat effectiveness can be addressed by effective leadership and gender neutral standards," General Neller writes. "This has been demonstrated over the past 14 years in combat operations, during which women have played a critical role."

The integration of women "may require a cultural shift in previously all-male career fields," he acknowledges, but "we are prepared to meet this challenge."

Neller and his colleague, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, were on Capitol Hill Tuesday for a hearing on women in combat. Senators both praised the decision to open combat jobs to women and worried about its implications – such as potentially requiring women to enter the draft.

"I am concerned that the department has gone about things backward," said Sen. John McCain (R) of Arizona. "This consequential decision was made and mandated before the military services could study its implications."

The female service members in attendance from Washington and abroad, wearing the medals they earned during their service overseas, took a different viewpoint.

Maj. Lisa Jaster, an Army Reserve officer and one of three women to graduate from Ranger School, was surrounded before the hearing began by fellow soldiers who came up to congratulate her, ask for advice, or simply hear some of her stories.

It was important to her to be at the hearing, Major Jaster says. "I wanted to hear firsthand that the military is planning on taking a deliberate and well-thought-out approach to integration" with "progress checks." That women are capable of doing the job is clear, adds Jaster, whose favorite quote on the subject is from Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Talley, chief of the Army Reserve. He noted that the only reason 2015 saw the first three Ranger School graduates is that women weren't allowed the chance to do it in 2014.

The women had high praise for General Milley, who early in the hearing expressed his unequivocal support for lifting all restrictions on women in combat who meet the standards.

"I have absolutely no doubt in my mind, in my professional judgment, that some women can perform every single job in the US Army," he said.

Shelly Goode Burgoyne, an Army transportation officer who served two tours in Iraq as a convoy commander, flew from Mexico City to be there.

A longtime advocate for women in combat, she was "thankful" that Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D) of New York highlighted what she

considers to be a “fundamental flaw” in the controversial Marine Corps study – comparing inexperienced female Marines with experienced male Marines.

“To me, it’s glaringly apparent that you can’t take a Marine with four months’ experience and expect her to perform at the level of a male sergeant who’s had 10 years of experience,” she says.

There were also murmurs of appreciation when Sen. Tim Kaine (D) of Virginia noted that the current record for solo hiking the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail is held by a woman.

Neller, for his part, shared some personal moments. “I’ve got a daughter, and I’ve raised my daughter to be very competitive.”

He acknowledged, too, that in the Marine Corps study, units with women were better at problem solving than those without.

Jaster notes that some of the men in Ranger School adopted her method of packing her rucksack, putting the lighter items in the bottom and heavier weight on top. She found it was easier to carry weight this way, and many of the men agreed.

During her time at Ranger School, she says, she found her Ranger buddies to be supportive of integration, particularly as they got to know the women personally.

But at the hearing Tuesday, Neller repeatedly emphasized the physical differences between men and women. “The question is the extent to which we can mitigate that,” Neller said.

While the Marines’ Gender Integration Plan emphasized that those effects can be mitigated, the Marines appear to be putting a ceiling on the number of women in combat jobs, noting in their integration plan that “approximately 200 female Marines will access into ground combat arms” each year “and comprise fewer than 2 percent of steady state personnel in ground combat arms.”

Milley and Neller told lawmakers that they had submitted their gender integration plans to the secretary of Defense, and are awaiting approval.

“I really don’t know when,” Neller said, “but I expect it sometime in the relatively near future.”

After the hearing, Ms. Burgoyne said she was glad she made the trip. “I’ve been writing, screaming about this before it was even a possibility,” she says of lifting the ban on women in combat. She also endured some nasty comments and treatment. “It’s been a really long road, and we’re not at the end of it, but we’re close.”

For her, it was the chance to be part of a new chapter. “Meeting Jaster is amazing, and when I put a face to a name, it’s hard for me not to like Neller,” she says, even though she disagrees with him. “He’s decorated,” something a combat vet like Burgoyne says she admires and takes seriously.

Likewise, she adds, “It’s also important that they see us, too.”

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2016/0202/Exclusive-Report-shows-Marines-shifting-approach-to-women-in-combat>

19. Top Military Officials: Women Should be Required To Register for the Draft

(2 Feb) Jezebel, By Stassa Edwards

During today’s Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on women in combat two top generals said that women should be required to register for the Selective Service, along with men, as the branches begin to integrate women into combat roles.

“I think that all eligible and qualified men and women should register for the draft,” General Robert Neller, the commandant of the Marine Corps, told the Committee. Neller’s position was echoed by Army chief of staff General Mark Milley. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus and Acting Army Secretary Patrick Murphy were less willing to move quickly on requiring women to register, suggesting instead that there should be discussion of legislation that would eventually alter the current rules.

Reuters [reports](#):

It was the first time Neller and Milley had publicly backed requiring women to register for the draft. They spoke in response to a question from Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill, who said she also believes women should register.

The White House said the comments did not reflect a policy change. “I don’t know how seriously that is being considered,” press secretary Josh Earnest said.

In 2008, while still on the campaign trail, President Obama [said](#) that he [supported](#) expanding Selective Service registration to include women (his then opponent, Senator John McCain, did not). And, unsurprisingly, active service women and veterans both [have been vocal](#) about expanding the draft to include women. In 2013, a National Guard pilot who had served three tours in Afghanistan [told](#) the Associated Press:

Excluding women from a draft reinforces a stereotype that they are less capable than men and need to be protected.

That sentiment was echoed today by Representative Martha McSally (R-AZ), a retired Air Force Colonel who was the first woman to fly in combat. “Our country is about treating people as individuals and having a meritocratic approach. ... The debate is over. Women are in combat. Women have been in combat,” McSally [told](#) Reuters.

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She added, however, that changing the registration requirements could have a profound impact on the Selective Service, including eliminating it altogether. “I’m not sure how that will go,” McSally added.

Major General Laura Richardson during today’s hearing.

<http://jezebel.com/top-military-officials-women-should-be-required-to-reg-1756741469>

20. What mountaineers can teach the Marines about how to integrate women

(3 Feb) The Washington Post, By Joe Plenzler

I joined the Marine Corps in 1995 – after a failed winter attempt to summit the Grand Teton in Wyoming. Our team climbed to 11,000 feet before bad weather forced us to hunker down. Forty-eight hours later, we retreated in the face of extreme avalanche conditions. Our team belonged to the Ohio State University mountaineering club, where one-third of the members were women.

My early climbing heroes included Catherine Destevelle, the first woman to solo the Eiger’s north face, and Lynn Hill, who completed the first free ascent of the Nose on El Capitan in 1993. Hill’s accomplishment, in particular, cannot be overstated. Many thought the Nose was unclimbable, yet Hill completed the route in four days. Today, she is known as one of the world’s best climbers.

From an early age, I knew that women could “hack it” in the backcountry. Many of my female colleagues could climb harder routes than most men, and I respected them for it. These women built mental and physical toughness by challenging themselves in extreme conditions and willing themselves past perceived limits. Therefore, it was a shock when I arrived at my first infantry battalion in 1996, a unit that seemed to be fueled in part by snuff, pornography and a heavy dose of misogyny. It was clear that many of my brother Marines did not consider women as peers – and their pejorative view extended to women serving in the Corps.

The Marine Corps is the only service that trains men and women separately at boot camp and gender bias within the Corps is systemic – fostered by double standards. For decades, the Corps has recruited women under lower standards and trained them to lower expectations. These gender-normed standards undermine the achievements of all women – especially those who can outperform men. Male Marines are expected to do more pull ups and run faster than women to achieve maximum scores, and consequently many view the accomplishments of women pejoratively.

The Corps’ systemic gender bias is most visible in the initial rifle marksmanship training at boot camp. The Corps places a premium on marksmanship and holds Marines who achieve expert qualifications in higher regard. One of the Corps’ iconic mottos is, “every Marine is a rifleman.” Ironically, the Corps has deployed women to combat for the past 14 years while failing to train them as well as men. Women were first allowed to shoot the M-16 at boot camp in 1986, and women have underperformed men on their initial qualification pass rate by more than 20 percentage points for decades. The leadership simply expected women to underperform and accepted the status quo. There are no biological differences between men and women in marksmanship. The only reasons for female underperformance in marksmanship are inferior training and what’s known as the Golem Effect, in which lower expectations lead to lower performance.

There are many parallels between mountaineering and the infantry. While the goal of each endeavor is vastly different – summiting a mountain versus killing the enemy – similarities exist, including a premium on endurance and strength, heavy loads, austere conditions, constant risk management, strategic planning, tactical execution, small unit leadership, and courage in the face of severe

injury or death.

My wife, Lt. Col. Kate Germano, and I returned to the Grand Teton in August to finish the summit attempt I began in 1995. We hired a mountaineering guide to refresh our training and lead the route. During our time in the Tetons, we encountered many superb guides and found their culture to be inclusive. In fact, 20 percent of guides we encountered were women. We were impressed by the group dynamics and compared this with our experiences as Marines. Most notably, and in stark contrast to our military experiences, gender differences among the guides were trivial—secondary to a culture of ability, courage and respect. Each guide hauled the same load, shared the same risks, and led with confidence.

For nearly two centuries, mountaineering was an all-male bastion. Nineteenth century physicians warned that altitude and the vigorous nature of climbing could damage the uterus. Despite this, women began to climb and claim the title mountaineer. Today, it is common for women to summit major peaks – like expedition leader Melissa Arnot who has summited Everest five times. Fully 10 percent of the American Mountain Guide Association’s highest certified guides are women, and women comprise 25 percent of their total membership.

Today, the American military is experiencing a major cultural shift. In January 2013, the Secretary of Defense rescinded the rule restricting women from serving in direct combat units and jobs, and directed the military to develop an implementation plan. On Dec. 3, 2015, he directed the military to remove all barriers to service and open all jobs to women who can meet prescribed standards. His decision overrode the recommendation of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who advocated for the continued discrimination against women based on sex.

The Marine Corps, in particular, is struggling to implement this new policy.

So what could the Corps learn from the mountaineers? Quite a bit.

First, the Corps should significantly improve efforts to recruit women and strive to build a culture of greater inclusivity. Marine recruiters should focus on female athletes and women who are active in outdoor pursuits, then tailor their recruiting pitches to appeal to the motivations of women who like seeking out adventure. The current one-size fits all recruiting campaign is insufficient. Climbers self-select their affiliations based on goals and perceived values. Similarly, strong women will self-identify with the Corps’ elite nature if the Corps communicates that women are welcome to compete.

Second, the Corps should desegregate training at boot camp. Status in the mountaineering community is based on performance and achievement regardless of gender. The current practice of sequestering women during initial training imprints upon male recruits that their female counterparts are “the other” and are less capable and less worthy of membership in the organization. It is important for men to train alongside women and see women accomplishing the same physical challenges. Consequently, it is important for men and women to compete against each other. Men and women should be integrated during task-based aspects of recruit training to foster teamwork, build trust, and prepare recruits for the integrated environment of the operating forces.

Third, the Corps should eliminate all gender-normed standards. Double standards undercut the legitimacy of women – especially those who can outperform men. By establishing common standards of performance, all Marines could be evaluated by common criteria. With a physical fitness baseline and the establishment of science-based job standards, the Corps could then ensure its most physically fit Marines are assigned to its most physically demanding jobs. Evidence in mountaineering and the more ubiquitous Cross-Fit communities demonstrate that women can develop requisite upper body strength when properly trained.

Culture is a critical factor in team performance. A recent Marine Corps-commissioned RAND study stated that group cohesion is dependent upon the level of trust each member has in the other members of the team. Whether belaying a leader on a wickedly exposed face, or providing overwatch on a combat patrol, it is imperative that all members of a team are confident in each other’s abilities and motivations. The RAND study also determined that leadership is essential in building cohesion and that the key drivers are respect and fairness.

The Corps should fully embrace the opening of all combat jobs to women. Senior leadership should set the expectation that qualified women are welcome in every unit and every job throughout the force. Anything less than a fully committed leadership effort will lead to less than optimal results. The conditions are finally set for the military to leverage the full talent of both genders. The only question now is whether the Corps will seize this opportunity or begrudgingly and half-heartedly stumble into the future.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/02/03/what-mountaineers-can-teach-the-marines-about-how-to-integrate-women/>

21. Pentagon chief expects Congress to consider draft for women

(3 Feb) *The Hill*, By Kristina Wong

Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Wednesday that he expects Congress to take up the question of whether women should begin registering for the draft.

"I expect them to take this up," Carter said in response to a question from a female Marine.

"It stands to reason it'll be taken up by the Congress because of the decision we've made," he added, referring to his move to open all combat positions in the military to women.

Carter defended that decision, which opens jobs to women in the infantry and special operations forces.

Carter said it was important to be able to choose from the largest pool of people to maintain the best all-volunteer force possible in the future.

"It goes back to the need to think generations ahead," he said. "For us to have the best in the future, [we need to] reach into the largest pool of people.

"I want to be able to reach into all parts of our organization," he added.

He encouraged females to "step forward," into the newly opened positions.

The comments come after the [chiefs of the Army and Marine Corps](#) expressed support on Tuesday to Congress for requiring women to register for the draft.

<http://thehill.com/policy/defense/268157-pentagon-chief-expects-congress-to-consider-draft-for-women>

22. Army to Let Women Apply for Infantry and Armor Jobs by This Spring

(3 Feb) *Military.com*, By Matthew Cox

The [U.S. Army's](#) chief of staff told Congress on Tuesday that female soldiers could begin their training to serve in direct combat arms jobs such as infantry and armor by this spring, but it could take up to three years to form gender-integrated units.

Gen. Mark Milley joined [Marine Corps](#) and [Navy](#) leaders at a Feb. 2 hearing to testify before a skeptical Senate Armed Services Committee about [future plans to merge women into ground combat units](#) across the services.

"Readiness is the Army's number-one priority, and I believe that full integration of women in all career fields will either maintain, sustain or improve the overall readiness of the United States Army ... if and only if we maintain and enforced rigorous combat readiness standards, we retain a merit-based results-oriented organization, and we apply no quotas," Milley said.

Currently, Defense Secretary Ash Carter is reviewing plans from each service that detail how female troops will be integrated into units that were closed to women until his decision in December that [all military occupational specialties would now be open](#) to women.

The first step for the Army, Milley said, will be to begin gender-neutral training for all officers, noncommissioned officers and junior enlisted.

"This spring, female cadets and officer candidates who meet the gender-neutral standard will be given the opportunity to request either infantry or armor branches," Milley said.

Currently, infantry and armor training for enlisted soldiers is not gender integrated at the Maneuver Center of Excellence at [Fort Benning, Georgia](#).

"We will probably enter women into infantry and armor basic training at the Maneuver Center down at Fort Benning sometime the early fall, probably September or October of this year," Milley said.

The Army intends to follow a "deliberate, methodical approach that begins with assessment, selection, training and assigning of

female infantry and armor leaders -- both officers and NCOs to units," Milley said. "Then we will assign female junior enlisted to those units.

"I estimate that effective female integration into infantry, armor and [Special Forces](#) will require no less than one to three years of deliberate effort to develop the individual skills and grow our leaders."

Navy and Marine Corps leaders were less detailed about their plan to move forward with the integration of women.

"The Corps has already notified 231 women who have successfully completed ground combat arms MOS [training] ... that they can switch to these previously closed jobs immediately if they chose to," Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said.

While the policy is already in place, lawmakers pressed Army and Marine Corps leaders to explain their decision to allow women to serve in direct combat roles such as infantry and special operations units.

"This hearing is not about whether women can serve in combat," said SASC Chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, listing many of the achievements of women serving in combat over the years. "Many women have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation."

McCain said he supported former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's 2013 decision to require all services to open direct combat jobs to women, but he also stressed that it is critical for the military to maintain high standards.

"We have the responsibility to do the right thing, but we also have an equal responsibility to do the right thing in the right way; that is what this hearing is about -- ensuring that as women move into more and more positions across our military, readiness, combat effectiveness and the safety and well-being of all service members -- both men and women -- remain our paramount priority."

Much of the hearing focused on the controversy surrounding the findings in a [1,000-page study that emerged last fall](#) from the Marine Corps Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, or GCEITF.

The effort showed that gender-integrated units made up of males and females did not perform as well as all-male units. The study also showed that gender-integrated units suffered a higher injury rate than all-male units.

The study's findings put Mabus at odds with the Marine Corps leadership. Many criticized Mabus for denying a request by Marine leaders to keep several combat arms jobs closed to women.

McCain and other senators openly doubted that Mabus read the report before publicly criticizing it.

"Secretary Mabus, this would have been a lot easier if you hadn't called in the press immediately and debunked what many of us view as a legitimate study without even reading it, and I don't believe you read a 1,000-page document in one day," McCain said.

"Your handling of this issue has really complicated [the] whole situation for those us who fully support integration of women in the military."

Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Alabama, read several findings from the Marine study to highlight how it found that women did not perform as well as men.

Once testing was complete, the study showed that all-male units demonstrated higher performance levels than gender-integrated units on 69 percent of tasks evaluated.

Gender-integrated teams performed better than their all-male counterparts on two of the 134 tasks, the study said. All-male squads also had a "noticeable difference in their performance of the basic combat tasks of negotiating obstacles and evacuating casualties."

But Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-New York, criticized the Marine study, calling it "fundamentally flawed."

"The design of this research was very flawed," she said. "First of all, female Marines were screened for the basic physical fitness test and were competing in a large part with male Marines who had years of experience and training and many had combat positions."

"All we really know from the study is that groups who had the right training and more training did better. We don't actually have data that can be used because these women did not have the same training and experiences as those who had been doing it for a long time."

The female Marines who participated in the effort were first sent to the MOS schools such as infantry and other combat arms jobs, said Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller.

They were then formed into the ground combat task force for four months of preparatory training, where they trained with men and developed the skills that they needed do this evaluation, he said.

Neller conceded that the men in the all-male units did have more experience in combat arms jobs such as infantry.

"It is fair to say -- I will agree with you -- that their experience in these MOSs was probably not up to the level of their male counterparts," Neller said.

The Marine test did, however, codify the standards that each individual Marine in a unit had to meet, Mabus said.

"If an individual meets the gender-neutral standard, then "that person should get to do the job," Mabus said.

McCain asked Neller to lay out his concerns about this effort.

"There are a lot of concerns we have talked about ... there are a lot of things we don't know," Neller said. "One of my biggest concerns is the perception that the Marine Corps doesn't value the service of females that serve in the Marine Corps.

"I have concerns about retention, I have concerns about injury rates, I have concerns about propensity to re-enlist and career progression; I have concerns about what is going to happen if the numbers low, which they probably will be in the beginning."

But Neller did say that his plan should address these concerns.

"We have been given an order to integrate, we have a fully detailed plan to integrate and we are going to give every Marine opportunity to compete and we have the standards that allow them to be successful," he said.

Milley also said the Army faces many hurdles in the days ahead.

"Make no mistake about, this process is going to have challenges, but if we proceed with a methodical, deliberate execution ... it is my belief that the Army will be successful.

"I have absolute no doubt in my mind -- in my professional judgment -- that women, some women -- can perform every single job in the United States Army to include infantry, armor and Special Forces."

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/02/03/army-to-let-women-apply-for-infantry-armor-jobs-by-this-spring.html>

23. Commandant Concedes Female Marines Lacked Infantry Experience in Study

(3 Feb) Military.com, By Matthew Cox

[Marine](#) Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller acknowledged to lawmakers on Tuesday that female Marines who fared poorly in recent gender-integration study did not have the infantry experience of the male Marines they competed against in the effort.

Senior military leaders testified at the Senate Armed Services Committee on the progress of bringing women into direct-action, combat-arms jobs such as the infantry.

Much of the hearing focused on the controversy surrounding the findings in a 1,000 page study that emerged last fall from the Marine Corps Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force.

The effort showed that gender-integrated units made up of men and women did not perform as well as all-male units. All-male units

demonstrated higher performance levels than gender-integrated units on 69 percent of tasks evaluated.

Gender-integrated teams performed better than their all-male counterparts on two of the 134 tasks, the study said. All-male squads also had a "noticeable difference in their performance of the basic combat tasks of negotiating obstacles and evacuating casualties."

But Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a Democrat from New York, criticized the Marine study, calling it "fundamentally flawed."

"The design of this research was very flawed," she said. "First of all, female Marines were screened for the basic physical fitness test and were competing in a large part with male Marines who had years of experience and training and many had combat positions.

"All we really know from the study is that groups who had the right training and more training did better," she added. "We don't actually have data that can be used because these women did not have the same training and experiences as those who had been doing it for a long time."

The effort compared the performance of units with inexperienced female Marines -- fresh out of training -- against units made up of experienced male infantrymen, while focusing on speed and accuracy when engaging targets with multiple weapons systems, [Military.com reported in October](#).

"I think it would be unfair to any of those Marines particularly those females who participated in the [GCEITF] to say they weren't trained," Neller said.

The female Marines that participated in the effort were first sent to the MOS schools for infantry, artillery and armor, he said.

The women were then formed into the ground combat task force for four months of preparatory training, where they trained with men and developed the skills that they needed do this evaluation, he said.

Gillibrand argued that "four months doesn't compare to the years that a lot of these units have been working together, doing this MOS."

None of the Marines had ever served in the test unit before, but Neller did concede that males in the all-male units did have more experience in combat arms jobs such as infantry.

"It is fair to say -- I will agree with you -- that their experience in these MOSs was probably not up to the level of their male counterparts," Neller said.

The first two female soldiers to graduate U.S. [Army Ranger](#) School experienced a similar challenge.

First Lt. Shaye Haver and Capt. Kristen Griest [completed the grueling, 62-day infantry course](#) in August. Haver, an [Apache](#) pilot, and Griest, a military police officer, struggled at first with passing the graded infantry patrols.

The female Ranger candidates did receive several days of training on how to lead patrols during the Ranger Training Assessment Course at the [Army National Guard's](#) Warrior Training Center at [Benning](#).

But Ranger School students who come from infantry, armor and [Special Operations](#) Command units have a higher graduation rate compared to other MOSs, Ranger School officials say.

The two largest groups that feed Ranger School are second lieutenants from the Infantry Officer Basic Leaders Course and members of the 75th Ranger Regiment, Benning officials said.

The lieutenants have just completed 17 weeks out of the Infantry Officer Basic Leaders Course, which is focused primarily on the tactics techniques that an infantry platoon leader is expected to know and understand and be able to execute when he gets to his first unit of assignment.

Similarly, Rangers from the Ranger Regiment serve 18 months to 24 months training on infantry tasks, even though they are a special-operations unit.

The senior leadership at Ranger School and the Maneuver Center of Excellence agree on one point: If male students had an advantage over females in this gender-integrated Ranger course, it had less to do with physical strength and toughness and more to do with the on-the-job experience that most male students have acquired serving in infantry roles.

Committee Chairman Sen. John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, asked if Neller thought this study was "fatally flawed."

"I do not," Neller answered. "We have had this study peer reviewed by numerous groups."

McCain asked "So you think it was a legitimate study?"

"Within the time we had, yes chairman," Neller said.

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/02/03/commandant-concedes-female-marines-lacked-infantry-experience.html>

24. Female Marines may be allowed to bulk up as service opens infantry to women

(3 Feb) The Washington Post, By Dan Lamothe

As the Pentagon grapples with how to integrate women into all jobs in combat, the Marine Corps is considering something new: Boosting how heavy it allows women to be so that they are able to bulk up in the gym to carry heavy loads more easily.

Commandant Gen. Robert B. Neller, the service's top officer, told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday that female Marines have told him recently that they are lifting weights to boost their strength. Doing so, however, has pushed some of them outside the service's limits for how much they are allowed to weigh, he said.

"Being big, strong, having a certain body mass, gives you an advantage," Neller testified. "One of the things I've heard as I've gone around and talked to female Marines is, 'Hey, I'm out working out. I'm lifting weights. I'm getting bigger. And now I'm outside the height-and-weight standards. Are you going to change the height-and-weight standards?'"

In a brief interview afterward, Neller told reporters that he called for a review of male and female standards that will be completed by July 1 and assess a variety of related criteria, including the service's height-and-weight standards and how it scores Marines on its two fitness tests. It's important, Neller said, to make sure that fit Marines are not penalized.

"I think people are just bigger" than they used to be, he said. "And I think part of it is the exercise, whether it be CrossFit or weight-lifting or just general fitness. I think people in this country are just bigger, and I think fortunately we've got big, strong Marines."

The comments came following Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter's decision in December to open all jobs to women. He did so despite the Marine Corps lobbying to keep closed some physically demanding jobs, such as machine gunner and reconnaissance man.

The service did so citing a nine-month study it carried out last year at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Twentynine Palms, Calif., to assess how women perform when integrated into units that are typically all men. It found that, on average, women who participated were injured twice as often as men, less accurate with infantry weapons and not as good at removing wounded troops from the battlefield.

The newly opened jobs, like infantryman, regularly call for Marines to carry in excess of 100 pounds on their back. Other jobs, such as tank crewman, require them to load rounds of ammunition or weapons that can weigh dozens of pounds each.

The research, which included about 300 men and 100 women, has been criticized by Navy Secretary Ray Mabus and other advocates of full gender integration for not specifying how the top women performed. But it did offer specifics on the women involved, noting that they weighed on average 142 pounds with 24 percent body fat. Men in the group weighed 178 pounds on average with 20 percent body fat.

According to height-and-weight standards [published by the Marine Corps in 2008](#), the maximum weight for women who are 5-foot-3 is 141 pounds. Taller women are allowed to weigh more, with the weight limit set at 164 pounds for a woman who is 5-foot-8 and 184 for a woman who is 6 feet tall.

By comparison, male Marines are allowed to weigh more but must maintain a lower body fat composition. A man in the service is allowed to weigh up to 180 pounds at 5 foot 8, and up to 202 pounds at 6 feet tall. Waivers can be granted to men and women who are over those limits if their commander approves a waiver, but it's a process that has long left some Marines uneasy.

The service also has specific criteria for body fat composition. For example, a woman who is 26 or under is allowed to have up to 26 percent, while a man that age is allowed to have up to 18.

Neller said he already sees male Marines who fall outside of weight regulations, but have body fat rivaling that of professional athletes.

“These guys are big,” he said. “I ask, ‘Are you within weight for your height, and they just laugh at me. They say, ‘No.’ And I say, ‘What’s your body fat?’ And they say, ‘Fifteen.’ That’s like NFL-caliber.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/02/03/female-marines-may-be-allowed-to-bulk-up-as-service-opens-infantry-to-women/>

25. Navy Secretary Promises Not To Lower Standards For Gender Integration

(3 Feb) Task & Purpose

In an exclusive interview with Marine veteran and Task & Purpose CEO Zach Iscol, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus discussed the criticisms he faces from Marine Corps leadership for leading the charge on gender integration.

“A more diverse force is just a stronger force,” Mabus said. “I mean we’ve seen it over and over, again. We saw it when 70 years ago when the military was integrated. That was a stronger force than it was before. We saw it in the 80s when women were first recruited in larger numbers across the services. They became stronger because of the diversity of backgrounds.”

<http://taskandpurpose.com/podcasts/navy-secretary-promises-not-lower-standards-gender-integration/>

26. Women’s integration in the Marine Corps will only succeed if top leaders fully commit

(4 Feb) Stars and Stripes, By Dianna Cahn

The Marine Corps and Special Operations Command are on the threshold of integrating women into combat roles, but unless leadership in those resistant units is fully committed to changing the cultures regarding women, the efforts will fail, a panel of experts advocating for integration warned Thursday.

“If your leaders don’t back a change, it won’t happen,” said Ellen Haring, a retired Army colonel who is a senior fellow at Women in International Security and on the board of directors of the Service Women’s Action Network, which spearheaded the push for women’s integration into combat roles.

“Any leadership that refuses to get on board has to be moved out,” she said, “and there doesn’t seem to be any willingness to move out leaders who are not getting behind this change.”

The Marine Corps and special operations have been fighting integration of their most physically demanding combat units but have reluctantly come on board after Defense Secretary Ash Carter decided in December to open all units to women.

That integration begins April 1.

To prepare, the services have drawn up implementation plans and the Senate Armed Services Committee this week called the service chiefs to a hearing for updates. Top Army Gen. Mark Milley testified that he had no doubt that there were women capable of performing any job in the Army, while Marine Commandant Gen. Robert Neller said that the corps has accepted the need to integrate women and was moving forward.

Panel member Kate Germano said it appeared to be more lip service than full support.

“This is about more than just on paper saying that women have the ability to go into the infantry or ground combat roles that were previously closed to them,” Germano said. “This is essentially about giving them the opportunities they need to be able to be successful.”

Germano, a Marine lieutenant colonel who brought up the performance rates of women as commander of the corps’ only female recruit training unit, was fired last year after her superiors said she’d created a poor command climate. Germano and her supporters

insist she was just demanding the same standards from women as their male colleagues. She will be retiring in July.

“This is kind of like being a drug addict or an alcoholic - I mean the first thing you have to do is acknowledge you have a problem,” she said, drawing laughter from the audience.

Every organization, no matter how high performing, has problems “except for the Marine Corps,” she said to more laughter. “So I would say the first step of trying to challenge the culture in the Marine Corps is acknowledging it has a problem.”

Haring said she was frustrated with the Special Operations Command integration plan, which was just two pages long and offered no commander’s vision, no intent and no end state. She found it particularly troubling that there did not appear to be a gender component for career progression.

Haring and Germano referred to a Rand Corporation study of integrating women into the Marine Corps infantry. The study, which looked at the experiences of foreign militaries as well as police and fire departments, found that leadership commitment, sustained monitoring and a detailed yet flexible plan were critical to the success of that integration. It also noted that while recruitment and initial integration were critical, long-term success would depend on monitoring, accountability and helping women stay on career tracks after serving in combat units.

One of the key takeaways from the study: The message must come down from the top that the intent is success, said Agnes Schaefer, the lead author on the study. “This is not going to work unless there is leadership commitment from the top,” Schaefer said.

Senior leaders set the command climate and enforce good order and discipline, she added. “Without that, this is not going to succeed.”

Germano noted that in the current Marine Corps culture, women are expected to underperform and if women’s performance is going to change, that culture of expectation has to change. She said the corps has to look at the way it recruits and trains women and should be seeking out top athletes and giving them the training they need to succeed.

“If we maintain the status quo all we are going to do is maintain the perception that physical weakness is the natural condition of women,” Germano said. “If we expect women to fail, they will fail.”

“Physical weakness is not the reality of women,” she added. “I think everyone knows here that cultural change is necessary in the Marine Corps.”

<http://www.stripes.com/news/us/women-s-integration-in-the-marine-corps-will-only-succeed-if-top-leaders-fully-commit-1.392305>

27. Carter urges Congress to reconsider draft registration

(4 Feb) The San Diego Union Tribune, By Joshua Stewart

On Tuesday on Capitol Hill, Gen. Mark Milley, the Army’s chief of staff, and Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing on women in combat that they believe women, like men, should be required to register for the Selective Service.

“Senator, it’s my personal view that based on this lifting of restrictions for assignment to a unit (military occupation specialty), that every American who’s physically qualified should register for the draft,” Neller said in response to a question from Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo.

Milley offered a similar perspective.

“Senator, I think that all eligible and qualified men and women should register for the draft,” he said.

McCaskill said she agrees.

The top officers’ comments came after Carter decided last year to open all combat positions to women, including elite units such as the Navy SEALs and Army Special Forces. The services now face an April deadline to establish their procedures for making that happen.

While the Selective Service is not currently used to conscript Americans for military service, signing up is a rite of passage — if only commemorated by government paperwork — for men 18 through 25.

The United States had a draft during the Civil War and World War I. In the 1940s, prior to entry into World War II, there was a

peacetime draft in response to emerging global tensions. Draftees have supplemented the volunteer Army between 1948 and 1973, and then registration was suspended in 1975. Registration resumed about five years later.

Through its various forms, the Selective Service System has never permitted women to register for the draft.

“Almost all other male non-citizens are required to register, including undocumented immigrants, legal permanent residents, those seeking asylum, and refugees,” the system says on its website.

Registering for the Selective Service does not mean a person will serve in the military, but rather gives the military a massive list of potential draftees in the event of a national crisis.

Before anyone is required to serve, Congress and the president must authorize a draft, and then there would be a lottery based on birthdays to determine the order of selection. There are subsequent physical, psychiatric and moral screenings to determine if those called up are fit for military service. And there are exemption, postponement, deferral and appeal processes.

Men who fail to register can face a series of consequences.

They cannot receive federal and some state student loans, may become disqualified from federal jobs, may become ineligible for a security clearance in the private sector and lose other benefits. They can also be charged with a felony and be fined as much as \$250,000 and sentenced to as many as five years imprisonment.

The Selective Service System said it has the names and addresses of nearly 16 million men ages 18 to 25 on file, and 93 percent of men who are required to sign up have.

On Wednesday while at the airfield, Carter met with a squadron that is training to fly the F-35B Lightning II, held a town hall-style with Marines, reviewed a variety of the Corps' tactical aircraft, and met with the media.

He also told Marines — members of a branch that prides itself in its ability to quickly respond to conflicts and humanitarian crises — that the budget that the Pentagon will unveil this month will emphasize readiness.

Speaking inside a hangar while standing in front of an attack helicopter, Carter said the budget will help the Corps have a more deployable air wing by putting a larger emphasis on maintenance and parts. Additionally, as older aircraft become more difficult and expensive to maintain, he plans to speed up the rate that the military buys carrier and jump-jet variants of the F-35.

“Another way (to increase readiness) is to hasten the arrival of the new,” he said.

Carter did not provide details on how many of the next-generation fighters he wants to purchase in the next several years.

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2016/feb/04/ash-carter-miramar-san-diego-draft-women-selective/>

28. Combat roles open to women, Alabama has its first

(5 Feb) Montgomery Advertiser, By Rebecca Burylo

Army Private Kelly Elizabeth Wilson, 18, left her home in Selma, for basic training last week and by doing so, she became a part of history.

Wilson is Alabama's first female to sign up for an Army military combat role – something that has been barred to women for centuries. That's all in the past now, after U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter announced at the end of last year that women could now serve in all combat positions.

Carter's announcement reverses a 1994 rule that restricted women from artillery, armor, infantry and other combat roles and who will now be allowed to serve in more than 200,000 new roles, including, Army Rangers, Green Berets, Navy SEALs, Marine Corps and Air Force parajumpers.

It has been a topic of controversy among officials with parties of equal opportunity facing arguments on compromised standards, unit cooperation and safety.

“When I became secretary of defense, I made a commitment to building America's force of the future,” Carter told reporters. “In the 21st century that requires drawing strength from the broadest possible pool of talent. This includes women.”

Hundreds of Military Operation Specialties (MOSs) were opened to women in January and by April, the rest will become available.

The team at the U.S. Army Recruiting Battalion stationed at Gunter in Montgomery, helped Wilson renegotiate her military contract in January after she found out she could serve in a combat role.

She didn't realize she was the first. Wilson simply yearned for a challenge.

"I like things like that because they challenge me both mentally and physically," Wilson said. "I want something to engage me as much as I engage it ... it was definitely God's hand directing me."

Wilson enlisted as a combat engineer and shipped out for active duty on Jan. 23.

Before she did, the Recruiting Battalion commander Lt. Col. Keisha R. Douglass had to speak with her.

"She was just so excited about it, that she got me excited for her," Douglass said. "She was very pleased with the change, because it was something that interested her ... immediately when it became open, she wanted to change her contract."

Douglass and her team are responsible for recruitment for the Alabama and Florida panhandle area. She is helping get the word out to families and interested women that more options are available to them.

It has been a long time coming, she said.

"In the years that I've been in the military, women have expressed wishing that they could choose other jobs," Douglass said. "It's been a stigma and perception that women can't do the same jobs as men, but I would say, well look at the women who have already made it through Ranger School recently. It isn't something that's impossible, but do you want it and how bad do you want it?"

Wilson wants it badly. There's no going back, only forward and she's trusting in her Christian faith to get her there.

"There's no other option," Wilson said. "I'm relying on God, because if you don't draw your strength from him, you're going to fail in every task you do,"

Wilson is looking at eventually pursuing a career in the combat Sapper program. Sapper is an elite course similar to Ranger School for infantry, but Sapper is for army engineers. It's physically demanding and trains small teams to move through water and tough terrain in order to blow up obstacles or clear mines.

Douglass assured that standards for these elite courses and other combat positions will remain unchanged, and that women must meet the same physical requirements as their male counterparts.

Everyone must pass the basic standards for entry into the military, including the ASVAB and the medical screening. The 28-day Sapper course requires more, including a 500-yard swim in 35 minutes, with full gear and running while carrying a rubber boat weighing several hundred pounds over their heads, as examples.

All that is done in extreme weather conditions, limited food, supply and sleep.

It might hard, but Douglass encourages everyone to follow their dreams.

"Work hard and don't be intimidated by the hard stuff," Douglass said. "If it's really what you want to do, then you will succeed and that's with anything in life."

According to USA Today data, 9,000 women have already earned the Combat Action Badge for actions in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 1,000 women have been killed or wounded in that fighting.

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2016/02/03/combat-roles-open-women-alabama-has-its-first/79645644/>

29. U.S. Military to Standardize Maternity Leave at 12 Weeks

(28 Jan) *Time*, By Julia Zorthian

The Defense Department [will announce](#) it will allow 12 weeks of maternity leave for military moms — cutting the policy for the Navy and Marine Corps by six weeks, while doubling the current policy for the Army and Air Force.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter is ready to announce the new policy on Thursday afternoon, the *Navy Times* reports. The policy is intended to increase female retention throughout the military.

Carter will announce a number of other force-wide alterations to current policy or new initiatives, including expanded paternity leave and access to daycare on military installations.

<http://time.com/4198629/pentagon-maternity-leave-12-weeks/>

30. Military Fertility: It's Complicated

(28 Jan) *US News*, By Anna Medaris Miller

Melissa Price remembers the exact moment her third child was conceived.

She and her husband, both members of the U.S. Army, were stationed in Iraq and living together when their birth control method failed. "I can actually go to high schools and say, 'It only takes one time [to get pregnant]," laughs Price, 40, whose name has been changed to protect her privacy.

But she wasn't laughing then. Getting [pregnant](#) in theater – the military term for a war zone – is forbidden and socially taboo. "That's the one thing you don't want to do: You don't want to get pregnant in theater," says Price, who left her tour two months early due to the pregnancy. "I was mortified."

While all couples can struggle to [balance careers and kids](#), family planning for women in the military can be more complicated because they're frequently deployed during their most fertile years.

That can mean becoming pregnant at the wrong time – or missing a [fertility](#) window altogether. "There are just some things that maybe [military moms] have to think about and deal with that maybe others don't," says Price, who now lives in Virginia and is in the U.S. Army Reserve. "But we put ourselves in that position."

Deployed and Pregnant

A large majority of servicewomen are in their reproductive primes. Of the 2.2 million active duty members and ready reserve personnel in 2013, 16 percent were women and about 40 percent were under age 26, according to an [article](#) published this month in the journal *Military Medicine*. While [birth control](#) pills and some other forms of contraception are covered by the military (women are allowed a 180-day supply prior to deployment), access can be spotty, according to a 2013 [study](#) in the journal *Contraception* that found one-third of the 281 active duty servicewomen surveyed couldn't get the type of birth control they wanted before deploying, and 41 percent had trouble refilling prescriptions on duty.

"[Contraception] may be a handful of condoms at the front desk," says Dr. Elspeth Cameron Ritchie, a retired colonel and forensic psychiatrist who specializes in military, veterans and women's health issues.

In effect, rates of unintended pregnancies among active duty servicewomen range between 50 percent and 62 percent – the same as the civilian population, the *Military Medicine* article reports. "When you've got young men and women together, sex happens," consensual or not, says Ritchie, who urges the military to take birth control "much more seriously" by better educating service members during basic training and counseling women on [long-term birth control options like IUDs](#). (Terminating the pregnancy isn't a very accessible option: The military only covers [abortion](#) in cases of rape, incest and if the mother's life is at risk. Women who want to pay for it themselves might have to return to the U.S. anyway to receive treatment safely and legally.)

Being pregnant while on active duty has consequences. For one, military medical personnel may not have the training or tools to treat [pregnancy complications](#) or emergencies. Price, for instance, was treated by a pediatrician before returning to the United States.

Pregnancy during deployment can also have a significant impact on women's careers. If pregnant women are in a war zone, they must be "immediately evacuated," Price says. In addition to time away, it can also cause "a lot of resentment" on the part of their fellow troops, who may assume the women get pregnant to get out, Ritchie says.

Fortunately for Price, who kept her pregnancy a secret for about one month until she was required to urinate in a cup, most comrades were supportive. "There were lots of people I never would have thought would have been OK [with me being pregnant], and they were writing me cards and saying, 'Congrats,'" she remembers. "These people came out of the woodwork."

Infertility After the Military

Dr. Wilma Larsen had been married about a year and a half before she was deployed to Bosnia in 1996 at age 33. Fertility – or the potential loss of it – was the last thing on her mind. "I never even thought about it," says Larsen, a retired colonel who's now an OB-GYN and assistant chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Scott & White Memorial Hospital in Temple, Texas.

But it's a worthwhile consideration for young service members, says Larsen, who got pregnant post-deployment and now has 16-year-old twins. "There isn't any data that would say you'll be less fertile after deployment than you would be beforehand," she says, "but if you think about some of the environmental issues that could occur, it makes sense that there could be an effect on fertility."

What's more, women can age out of their most fertile years while serving, and the increasing number in combat roles risk injuries that could compromise their ability to reproduce, says Dr. Gilbert L. Mottla, a reproductive endocrinologist and infertility specialist at Shady Grove Fertility, a fertility clinic with offices in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania. "In a perfect world, we would counsel both men and women to consider fertility preservation before deployment," he says.

But that doesn't happen, Larsen says, in part because the physicians who work with military members pre-deployment aren't typically OB-GYNs or infertility experts. The military also doesn't cover [egg freezing](#) under most conditions, although that may change if recommendations from the Department of Defense's [Force of the Future](#) program – an initiative to attract and keep military talent – are implemented, Larsen says.

"That will really improve women's mental well-being [if] they don't have to worry so much about trying to time their pregnancy perfectly," Larsen says.

In the meantime, veterans who have trouble conceiving are out of luck if they want coverage from the Department of Veterans Affairs for [in vitro fertilization](#) – even if their infertility is due to a combat injury – thanks to an over-20-year-old law that Mottla and lawmakers are advocating to change. "IVF is a completely [different] treatment today – it's highly successful, highly safe, the technology has rapidly increased since way back in the early 90s," he says. Especially frustrating for veterans, Mottla adds, is the fact that military health care covers IVF for active duty members with certain injuries that compromise fertility, but once they phase into the VA system, that coverage is lost.

Until the VA catches up with the military health care system, Mottla says over 100 fertility clinics, including his, are providing "deeply discounted" care to veterans whose service-related injuries impaired their fertility. The program, offered by some clinics affiliated with the American Society for Reproductive Medicine and the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology, is called [Serving Our Veterans](#). "We have great success helping these young couples start their families," says Mottla, noting that interested couples can find a participating clinic near them on an online [database](#).

Ellen Smith hopes to become one like them. As a member of the U.S. Army, she always wanted to be a mom, but hadn't found the right partner to make it a reality. (Dating in the military is a different story, she says.) When she turned 37 and really started to worry about her fertility declining, Operation Iraqi Freedom hit its high point. "It became a steady series of deployments," says Smith, now a commander of a large Army organization whose name has been changed to protect her privacy. "I blinked my eyes, and then I was 41."

So Smith froze her eggs – 80 of them – although she had to go outside of the military health care services to do so. She encourages other servicewomen to consider the option before deployment and the military to cover it in order to retain more female talent. "It's kind of consistent with everything else we do before we deploy – you're supposed to come up with plans, you're supposed to work on your will and you're supposed to talk to your family," she says. "Cryopreservation is just good insurance."

Military Motherhood

For Price and her husband, who now have four kids including their 7-year-old "Iraqi-made" son, the biggest challenge wasn't getting pregnant – but [raising kids throughout deployments](#) and relocations. "Because we're very transient, we don't have as long an opportunity to build those roots [in the community]," which are even more important for single moms and dads, she says. Some military parents also have to deal with lifelong mental and physical [wounds of war](#).

But often, military service can make moms more resilient, a phenomenon called post-traumatic growth, Ritchie says. "It used to be that you join the military to 'make a man out of you,' she says, but women now also reap the "growing and maturing" benefits of serving. "There's a balance between 'It's difficult to be in the military and be a mother' and overblowing that and providing fodder for 'This is why women shouldn't be in the military,'" she adds.

Price, for one, doesn't regret anything. "I have lost something in terms of my relationship with my two oldest [kids]," because she was deployed at the time, she says. But, she adds, "I wouldn't change it because I've led by example and shown my kids the importance of serving your country."

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/health-wellness/articles/2016-01-28/military-fertility-its-complicated>

31. Carter Announces 12 Weeks Paid Military Maternity Leave, Other Benefits

(28 Jan) DoD News, By Lisa Ferdinando

The Defense Department is increasing military maternity leave and instituting other changes in an effort to support military families, improve retention and strengthen the force of the future, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said today.

Women across the joint force can now take 12 weeks of fully paid maternity leave, Carter told reporters at the Pentagon. The 12-week benefit is double the amount of time for paid maternity leave from when he became defense chief nearly a year ago, he noted.

"This puts DoD in the top tier of institutions nationwide and will have significant influence on decision-making for our military family members," Carter said.

While being an incentive for attracting and retaining talent, the secretary said, the benefit also promotes the health and wellness of mothers through facilitating recovery and promoting feeding and bonding with the infant.

"Our calculation is quite simple -- we want our people to be able to balance two of the most solemn commitments they can ever make: a commitment to serve their country and a commitment to start and support a family," he said.

The announcement builds on previously announced initiatives on strengthening the force of the future, he said. Those previous reforms, he added, included opening all remaining combat occupations to women.

Parental Leave, Support for New Parents

The maternity leave decision applies to all service members in the active duty component and to reserve-component members serving in a full-time status or on definite active duty recall or mobilization orders in excess of 12 months.

The 12 weeks is less than the Navy's decision last year to institute 18 weeks of fully paid maternity leave, Carter noted. Sailors and Marines who are currently pregnant or who become pregnant within 30 days of the enactment of the policy can still take the full 18 weeks of paid leave, he said.

To better support new mothers when they return to work, Carter said, he is requiring that a mothers' room be made available in every DoD facility with more than 50 women. In addition, the Defense Department is seeking legislation to expand military paternity leave from the current 10-day leave benefit to a 14-day noncontinuous leave benefit, he said.

Increasing Hours of Military Child Care

The Defense Department subsidizes child care on military installations to ensure its affordability, Carter said. However, he added, military families often have to use outside providers because the hours at military child care facilities do not align with the work schedules of service members.

With those challenges in mind, the Defense Department is increasing child care access to 14 hours of the day across the force, he said.

"By providing our troops with child care they can rely on from before reveille until after taps, we provide one more reason for them to stay on board," he said. "We show them that supporting a family and serving our country are by no means incompatible goals."

Remain at Current Location With Additional Obligation

Carter noted that military members might want to stay at their current location for a variety of family-related reasons, such as wanting

to remain near relatives, be close to a medical facility that specializes in care needed for a child with a medical condition, or have a child finish out the same high school.

When the needs of the force permit, the secretary said, commanders will be empowered to make reasonable accommodations to allow service members to remain, in exchange for an additional service obligation.

Greater Flexibility in Family Planning

The military asks its men and women to make incomparable sacrifices, Carter said, potentially putting them in situations where they could suffer injuries that would prevent them from having children in the future.

Taking into account the tremendous sacrifices military members make, the Defense Department will cover the cost of freezing sperm or eggs through a pilot program for active duty service members, Carter said.

The department also is looking at how it can provide reproductive technologies like IVF to a wider population, he said. Currently, DoD provides reduced-cost treatment at six locations.

These benefits provide the force greater confidence about their future, and they allow greater flexibility for starting a family, Carter said.

They are one more tool, he said, to make the military a family-friendly employer that honors the desires of those who want to commit fully to their careers or serve courageously in combat, while preserving their ability to have children in the future.

<http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/645958/carter-announces-12-weeks-paid-military-maternity-leave-other-benefits?source=GovDelivery>

32. Report: Breast-feeding increase could save more than 800,000 lives annually

(29 Jan) CNN, By Kelly Wallace

I've written before about how I simply don't get how we in the United States [remain so squeamish about breast-feeding](#) -- and how despite all the research that 'breast is best,' [many U.S. hospitals are still not providing women with breast-feeding support](#).

If we know -- based on actual scientific studies -- that breast-feeding can provide health benefits to mother and baby, why aren't we doing everything we possibly can to make it easier and more socially acceptable for women who choose to breast-feed?

Maybe a new two-part comprehensive report [published Thursday in the medical journal The Lancet](#) and billed as the largest and most detailed analysis of the existing research on breast-feeding around the world will help bring about change in the United States and globally. More than 1,300 studies were reviewed, including some commissioned specifically for this report, which focused on the levels, trends and benefits of breast-feeding.

Think of the health implications alone. Based on new estimates produced for the report, dramatically scaling up breast-feeding to near-universal levels for infants and young children could save 820,000 children's lives a year around the world, preventing 13% of all deaths of children under five.

"Breast milk acts as a baby's first vaccine to help fight disease and illness," said [Dr. Cesar Victora](#), emeritus professor of epidemiology at the Federal University of Pelotas in Brazil, one of the co-authors of the report, in response to questions via email.

One third of respiratory infections and about half of all diarrhea episodes could be avoided in low- and middle-income countries through breast-feeding, according to the report. In high-income countries, breast-feeding cuts the risk of sudden infant deaths by more than one-third.

Children who are breast-fed longer have been found to have higher intelligence than those who are breast-fed for shorter periods, the report said.

"So both for ensuring kids' survival and then ensuring their future health and development, it's a huge intervention," said [Shawn Baker](#), director of nutrition for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which provided a \$650,000 grant to the World Health Organization to fund the report.

"I always characterize it that this is not some second-rate intervention we're trying to push on developed worlds, but this is really state

of the art, the gold standard intervention that's relevant anywhere in the world."

Mom benefits, too

The health benefits extend to the mother as well, with reductions in risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Based on all the existing research and according to new estimates created for this report, hikes in breast-feeding could prevent an extra 20,000 deaths from breast cancer each year.

And yet, the rate of breast-feeding has been relatively stagnant for the past two decades, and the wealthier the country, the less likely mothers are to breast-feed. Currently, just one in five children in high-income countries are breast-fed to 12 months while one in three children are breast-fed exclusively for the first six months in low- to middle-income countries.

"Breast-feeding is one of the few health and nutrition indicators for which poor countries are closer to international recommendations than rich ones," said Victora, who also coordinates the International Center for Equity in Health at the Federal University of Pelotas. For each doubling of a country's gross domestic product per capita, the prevalence of breast-feeding at 12 months drops by 10 percentage points, he said.

"What one is seeing in a number of countries, as they've emerged economically, is that ... perception, 'Well to be modern, one should move from breast-feeding to formula feeding,' and that can have a real knock-on effect of undermining the social norms around breast-feeding," said Baker of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Extensive marketing by formula makers remains a big barrier to increase the number of children who are breast-fed, the report said.

While there is an international code that was adopted in 1981 to protect the public from inappropriate marketing strategies, it has not been vigorously enforced, implemented and monitored, the report said. Plus, the report estimates enormous growth in the formula market, with sales projected to reach more than \$70 billion in 2019, far more than countries spend to promote and support breast-feeding.

"The fact is that marketing by the infant-feeding industry and the availability of formula, including through the distribution of free samples, result in increased bottle-feeding," said Victora, the report's author. "Formula advertisements portray it as good as or better than breast milk, or present it as a lifestyle choice rather than a decision with health and economic consequences."

How to change social norms?

It is incredibly important to note right here that some people can't breast-feed for medical reasons, or they physically can't do it or don't feel comfortable breast-feeding. But for the people who are choosing to bottle feed over breast-feeding -- and who might reverse course if they knew more about the benefits -- could anything be done to help influence them to choose breast over bottle?

The report found it is possible to change social norms and behavior, even in emerging economies. For instance, the average duration of breast-feeding in Brazil jumped from 2.5 months in 1974, one of the shortest in any low- or middle-income country, to 14 months by 2006 to 2007.

Brazil rigorously monitored marketing by formula makers and set up a process to certify and recertify hospitals as "baby friendly," meaning they provided breast-feeding supports to new moms, said Victora, one of the lead researchers behind the report. The country also added leave time for parents, he noted -- 120 days for moms and five days for dads, according to the [United Nations International Labour Organization](#).

"I do think that if you can see countries like Brazil that can make, with high-level political support, fundamental changes in the social norms throughout the whole system, I think it's probably possible anywhere," said Baker of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "It's creating the right conditions and I think that's what's also very important. You can't say, 'OK, we're just going to focus on the mom' without understanding what context that mom lives in."

Baker was recently in the field in Bangladesh and says one of the great innovations to change behaviors there are home visits, which include not just the mom, but also the dad and the mother-in-law. A mother's behavior, in any part of the world, can be extremely influenced by what her mother-in-law or her mother says when it comes to child feeding. I'm sure any mother reading this understands that statement immensely.

"So, just speaking to her without trying to address the neighboring environment around her is going to ... not give good results and in fact, sometimes put her in a situation where she'll feel very frustrated because she will want to practice the better feeding behavior, but her mother-in-law or her husband will give contrary advice," said Baker.

"I think that looking at the whole system, the environment in which the mom lives and addressing that is really quite important" in any part of the world, he added.

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/28/health/breast-feeding-global-rates-health-impact-lancet/>

33. Military's new fertility benefit will let troops freeze their sperm and eggs

(29 Jan) Military Times, By Patricia Kime

Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced Thursday that the Pentagon will start covering sperm and egg freezing for troops who want to preserve their gametes for future use.

In a speech on "Force of the Future" initiatives that addressed changes to maternity and paternity leave as well as improved child care services, Carter said the Defense Department will launch the pilot preservation program and promised to explore widening the department's coverage of fertility services.

"We can help our men and women preserve their ability to start a family, even if they suffer certain combat injuries," Carter said. "That's why we will cover the cost of freezing sperm or eggs through a pilot program for active-duty service members."

According to Carter, the benefit will be offered to any service member who requests it as well as troops anticipating a deployment.

He added that the egg- and sperm-freezing program not only will give troops who deploy "peace of mind," it also will provide "greater flexibility" for service members to decide when they want to start a family.

"For women who are midgrade officers and enlisted personnel, this benefit will demonstrate that we understand the demands upon them and want to help them balance commitments to force and family. We want to retain them in the military," Carter said.

The majority of military personnel are in the prime of their child-bearing or fathering years: Nearly half of all enlisted personnel are under age 26, with the next largest group, 22 percent, being ages 26 to 30. More than 42 percent of officers are between the ages of 26 and 35, according to Defense Department data.

Women made up 15 percent of the active-duty force of 1.3 million in 2014.

More than 1,300 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan suffered injuries to their groin regions and genitalia that would require advanced reproductive surgeries.

Some advocacy groups and military spouses have pressed for improved fertility services for service members, saying the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments should cover advanced reproductive technologies for troops whose infertility is related to their military service as well as egg and sperm freezing prior to a combat deployment.

Seven military treatment facilities offer IVF and artificial insemination to active-duty personnel and their spouses at cost if they meet eligibility criteria.

Those services and others, including sperm extraction and embryo preservation, are available at no charge to severely wounded personnel on active-duty and their spouses.

Tricare, the military's civilian health benefits program, covers diagnoses of illnesses that can cause infertility and correction of any medical issues that might be the source of the problem but does not cover IVF or artificial insemination.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, which provides health care to former service members with service-connected conditions, offers diagnostic services and treatment for some conditions but does not provide IVF or other advanced fertility services.

Carter said the initiatives are among a larger effort to make the military a more “family-friendly employer.”

“By providing this additional peace of mind for our young service members, we provide our force greater confidence about their future,” Carter said.

According to a Defense Department fact sheet, the two-year pilot will cover the cost of freezing sperm or eggs through Tricare. After the test program is complete, DoD will assess its impact, including cost and recruiting and retention benefits, and either renew the program or allow service members to pay out of pocket for continued storage.

Carter did not provide details about the estimated cost of the initiatives.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/health-care/2016/01/29/militarys-new-fertility-benefit-let-troops-freeze-their-sperm-and-eggs/79511918/>

34. Overseas servicemembers say parenting benefits 'long time coming'

(29 Jan) Stars and Stripes, By Steven Beardsley

Servicemembers overseas largely welcomed a new Pentagon plan to boost benefits for military parents, many saying the changes were long overdue and some arguing they still fell short of what military families need.

“It’s a long time coming, and it’s expected,” said retired Navy Lt. Cmdr. Melody Fugazzotto, who now lives in Wiesbaden, Germany. “You have more women in the military, in general, and in higher positions than they were before.”

Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Thursday he would set maternity leave at 12 weeks for all services and ask Congress to raise paternity leave to 14 days from 10. The Army and Air Force currently offer six weeks of maternity leave.

Katy Elrod, an Army veteran and mother of two who works for Naval Facilities Engineering Command in Naples said six weeks of maternity leave was never enough for new mothers, physically or emotionally.

“This is the minimum, and I’m really, really happy they’re doing it,” she said.

Female sailors and Marines now receive 18 weeks of maternity leave since Navy Secretary Ray Mabus tripled the benefit in July; they’ll lose six of those weeks when the change goes into effect.

Carter also said he’d increase hours at military day care centers and expand health coverage to include fertility treatment. He plans to ask Congress to increase leave for dual-military families adopting a child and allow some families to postpone a military move due to family reasons.

The changes are part of a broader Pentagon effort to make the services more competitive with the private sector, especially major tech companies that tend to attract top talent by emphasizing work-life balance. Juggling parenthood with a military career has long been a challenge for servicemembers, who, unlike their civilian counterparts, cannot take unpaid leave.

The Navy will honor the 18-week leave for sailors and Marines who are already pregnant or become pregnant within 30 days of the service enacting Carter’s new policy, said a spokesman for the service’s personnel command.

Some sailors now say 12 weeks is insufficient.

“I don’t think it’s enough time to come to an emotional place where you can take your child to the (Childcare Development Center) and leave them there while you go to work,” said Seaman Jessica Spradley, a hospital corpsman with the Yokosuka Naval Hospital’s OB/GYN Section. “Only 12 weeks of maternity leave is not emotionally easy for moms.”

Capt. Juan Pratts, with the Army’s 266th Financial Management Support Center in Kaiserslautern, Germany, said Carter’s plan to expand daycare hours — from 12 hours a day to a minimum of 14 — might help him juggle his morning schedule. He takes his year-old son to child care on one base when it opens at 6 a.m. and then races to another base for physical training at 6:30. Under the new changes, the center would open at 5 a.m.

Others wonder if longer CDC hours could result in extended work days for parents, as commands realize they can keep them longer.

Servicemembers welcomed Carter's plan to expand paternity leave, a benefit that has received more attention from servicemembers in the past year.

"Right now, we're only getting 10 days, and those first few days are really hard for the moms to be by themselves with the kid," said Sgt. Jean Paul Ramos, with the 21st Theater Sustainment Command in Kaiserslautern. "So I would say, yes, it would definitely benefit the couple."

Other servicemembers supported Carter's proposal to allow postponement of a duty station move for family reasons, such as sickness or school. Congress would need to approve that scheme, which would require an additional service obligation not spelled out in Carter's plan.

Proponents of the changes, like Elrod, say they push the military in the right direction — and make it a trailblazer for the rest of the country, where maternity and paternity leave are still rare for many jobs.

"The military doing this is incredibly important because we're setting the standard," Elrod said.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/overseas-servicemembers-say-parenting-benefits-long-time-coming-1.391274>

35. Soldier 'Filled with Gratitude' at New Family Policies

(1 Feb) DoD News, By Karen Parrish

One Army officer scheduled to give birth by cesarean section said recently that the new 12-week maternity leave period and other family focused policies announced last week by Defense Secretary Ash Carter have left her "shocked."

"I am filled with gratitude," Capt. Eileen Hernandez wrote in an email interview with DoD News. "I feel respected as a worker and feel hopeful about my future with the Army. That feeling of hope for my future career is the first time I felt this way since becoming a mother in September 2011."

Easing Heavy Stresses

During his announcement, the secretary said it is absolutely essential to demonstrate "that we're a family-friendly force."

"We want our people to be able to balance two of the most solemn commitments they can ever make: a commitment to serve their country and a commitment to start and support a family," Carter said.

A Defense Department fact sheet released with the announcement said "the stresses of military service on our families are heavy and well known, and it is one of the top reasons people transition out of the military ... [These policies will] enable the Department to attract, incentivize, and retain the best talent today and in the future while improving overall mission effectiveness and the strength and health of our teams."

The new initiatives are:

- Establish a departmentwide standard for paid maternity leave of 12 weeks;
- Expand spousal leave to 14 days, with legislative approval;
- Expand adoption leave, with legislative approval;
- Extend DoD-subsidized childcare development center hours to a 14-hour minimum;
- Require installation or modification of private "mothers' rooms" in every DoD facility with more than 50 women regularly assigned;
- Conduct long-range strategic planning and assessments for childcare options to improve access and usability;
- Allow service members to remain at a station of choice for family reasons, in exchange for an additional commensurate active-duty service obligation; and
- Provide egg and sperm cryopreservation through a pilot mechanism within the current governing rules of TRICARE, the military medical care network.

'No One Knows'

Hernandez is currently assigned as a public affairs officer with 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team at Fort Hood, Texas. She said she struggled to feel effective when she returned to work just six weeks after the births of her other three children -- all delivered by C-section.

"You do not feel strong or confident, and that is what being an Army leader is all about," she said. "You walk around post, and no one knows you are six weeks postpartum; you just look like an overweight captain who doesn't care about physical fitness. It's not a good feeling, and it's not good for the Army."

Hernandez said balancing the Army's expectations and her own physical and emotional health was a challenge with six-week maternity leave.

She said she battled postpartum depression after her last two children were born. "It's not something that I can prevent, but it is something that I can get treated for," she said. "But after being gone from work for six weeks already, there is so much pressure to return to work and feel like you are contributing to the mission and feel and look great."

A lot of women go untreated for postpartum depression, Hernandez said, "because they barely have time to even recognize the symptoms because they are so busy trying to be all things to everyone."

A 12-week leave will, she said, allow her to "be ready to return to work as the officer the Army needs me to be. I will feel my child is ready for day care. I will have an opportunity to actually have my body return to more presentable state. I will feel and look my best and be ready to contribute to the mission fully."

Linking to the Force of the Future

The family focused reforms announced last week are what Carter and department officials call the "second link" to the future force they seek to shape.

The first link, announced in November, was a series of reforms "to increase permeability of personnel and ideas between the public and private sector and improve recruiting, talent management and retention," as stated in a department fact sheet.

<http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/647907/soldier-filled-with-gratitude-at-new-family-policies?source=GovDelivery>

36. The Pentagon's New Parental Leave

(2 Feb) The New York Times, By The Editorial Board

Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced last week that women in the military would get 12 paid weeks of maternity leave in all the services, twice the amount most were previously entitled to. (The Navy last year changed its policy to give women 18 weeks of paid leave.) In addition to the change announced by Mr. Carter, which does not require legislative approval, the Pentagon intends to ask Congress to increase paid paternity leave to 14 days from 10 days.

Mr. Carter's thinking on this issue was informed by talking with private businesses about their parental leave policies in an effort to make the Pentagon, which employs roughly 1.3 million troops on active duty, more family-friendly.

The changes to Pentagon policy make it more generous than the policy that applies to civilian federal workers — including those employed at the Defense Department — who are allowed to take up to six weeks of paid sick leave after the birth of a child but are not entitled to paid parental leave. That, unfortunately, is the norm for American workers. According to the Department of Labor, [only 12 percent of workers](#) in the private sector get paid parental leave.

"While you recruit a service member, you retain a family," Mr. Carter [told reporters at the Pentagon last week](#). "So what we do to strengthen quality of life for military families today, and what we do to demonstrate that we're a family-friendly force to those we want to recruit, is absolutely essential to our future strength."

Historically, the American military has struggled to recruit top talent during periods of low unemployment. Defense officials said that was an impetus for expanding parental leave. But Mr. Carter also wanted to move the Pentagon closer to private-sector companies with more generous parental leave policies to encourage service members to stay in the military longer. The Pentagon determined that female troops leave the military after a decade at a rate that is 30 percent higher than that of men.

Beyond expanded leave, Mr. Carter announced that the Pentagon would increase child care services and establish some 3,600 rooms where new mothers could breast-feed at military installations worldwide. The Defense Department will also aim to be more flexible

with employees who have compelling, family-related reasons, like medical treatment of a relative, to extend a particular assignment.

Mr. Carter said that the department's research of parental leave showed that more flexible policies made good business sense. Several technology companies with which the Pentagon competes for talent, including Facebook, have recently adopted more generous leave policies.

The Pentagon's move could have the positive effect of [galvanizing efforts in Congress](#) to allow civilian federal employees to take paid parental leave. The Obama administration asked Congress last year to give federal workers up to six weeks of paid parental leave and has sought to persuade states and private employers to take steps to give workers paid sick and parental leave. Those steps would benefit American workers, their families and their employers.

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/02/opinion/the-pentagons-new-parental-leave.html?_r=0

37. Military leaders promise to extend child care hours, shorten wait lists at child development centers

(3 Feb) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

Military families will see more flexibility in child care as defense officials move to extend the operating hours of child development centers to 14 hours a day.

Long-term, the military services are developing plans to expand child care capacity in areas where wait times exceed 90 days, among other things.

The hours of operation at CDCs will be extended so that they overlap the normal working shifts of service members by at least two hours. The hours will be consistent with the work patterns of a majority of service members at each specific installation, according to a DoD fact sheet. For example, if the normal workday is 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., the child development center would be open continuously from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m.

While the centers would be open 14 hours, each child would receive up to 12 hours a day of subsidized child care. Service members would have to pay the full cost of any child care provided in excess of 12 hours in a single day, said DoD spokesman Matthew Allen.

DoD subsidizes the cost of child care. Fees are on a sliding scale based on total family income; families with a lower income pay less for child care.

The centers are generally open 12 hours a day. The additional child care hours provided by DoD are expected to cost DoD an additional \$230 million over the next five years, Allen said.

Information was not immediately available about the timeline for the start of the extended hours.

The military services will submit their implementation plans to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. "Once all the plans are approved, the services will begin implementing the new hours based on approved plans," Allen said.

Hours of operation at some DoD child development centers have long been an issue for some service members because of their work schedules, their workout schedules, and a variety of other factors.

"Whether for single parents, for families where both parents work outside the home or for every mother or father in our military, child care hours should be as responsive as possible to work demands," said Secretary of Defense Ash Carter in an announcement of this and other new DoD initiatives to ease military family life.

"Nearly half of all military families have to rely on an additional child care provider to meet their needs, in part because the hours we provide don't match their demanding schedules," Carter said.

These child care initiatives were part of the Force of the Future reforms Carter announced Jan. 28 and were not part of earlier drafts for reform that were being considered.

But they were good news to military family advocates. "We are very pleased that the Secretary recognized the importance of child care to military families with young children. Extending CDC hours so they line up with service members' working hours will make a

significant difference to a number of families," said Eileen Huck, government relations deputy director for the National Military Family Association.

The military services also will examine options for child care to increase "access and usability." That report is due by June 1, including:

- **More care to meet demand.** Services will develop a plan to increase child care capacity in critical areas where wait-list times for child development centers exceed 90 days.
- **Get on the list sooner.** The services will also ensure that troops can get on CDC waiting lists as soon as they have orders, rather than having to wait until they arrive at the next duty station. One new initiative already being rolled out, MilitaryChildCare.com, allows service members to get placed on waiting lists.
- **One application covers a hub.** Service members will also be able to apply only once for multiple child development center waiting lists in areas of major military concentration.
- **And more on the way.** Other initiatives include developing training for child care center directors on how to connect parents to other regional care resources, new parent mentor networks local forums for home-based child care, and parent advisory boards.

Military child care has been long been praised by many parents, but there is also the continuous complaint that it's difficult to get care at child development centers. A number of options are available, such as family day care homes, where installations are allowed to subsidize the cost of child care, and child care fee assistance programs in the civilian community.

Fees are on a sliding scale based on total family income. Families with a lower income pay less for child care.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/family/2016/02/01/military-leaders-promise-extended-child-care-hours-shorter-wait-lists-child-development-centers/79654946/>

38. Coast Guard Increases Maternity Leave to 12 Weeks

(3 Feb) Military.Com, By Amy Bushatz

Female Coasties will be given 12 weeks of maternity leave effective immediately under a new policy announced this week by the Department of Homeland Security.

"Our service members' success cannot depend on a choice between their children and their mission," Jeh Johnson, head of the Department of Homeland Security, said in a statement. "Ensuring new mothers have the flexibility they need to care for their families reflects our deep commitment to our workforce and strengthens this Department as a whole."

A similar policy change was [announced late last month](#) for the [Air Force](#), [Army](#), [Navy](#) and [Marine Corps](#) by Defense Secretary Ashton Carter. That change, which is likely to go into effect this spring, will not impact currently pregnant sailors and Marines. Those service members will still be permitted to take 18 weeks of leave under a now-defunct maternity policy announced by Navy officials in August.

Carter also announced a series of other family friendly policy changes as part of his "Force of the Future" initiative, including expanding childcare hours at DoD care centers, making breastfeeding easier by opening "mothers rooms" in every facility with more than 50 women, extending paternity leave from 10 to 14 days and paying to freeze some troops' sperm and eggs prior to deployment.

The DoD announcements are meant to bring consistency to those policies across the DoD. Over the last year, the individual services have announced their own breastfeeding and maternity policy changes, often with wide discrepancies. For example, the Navy last August increased maternity leave to 18 weeks for sailors and Marines, while the Army's maternity leave remained at six weeks.

DHS officials said in a statement that they are looking at implementing the other Force of the Future initiatives as well.

"In addition to the maternity leave policy, the [U.S. Coast Guard](#) is continuing to examine the other Force of the Future workforce initiatives ... to further enhance readiness as well as personal and family well-being," they said. "No specific timelines for additional policy changes are available at this time."

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/02/03/coast-guard-increases-maternity-leave-to-12-weeks.html>

39. Military child care website to reach more locations. D.C. region is next

(3 Feb) Military Times, By Karen Jowers

By the time moving season starts, parents will be able to research child care options and get their children on waiting lists at 36 more military installations. Since MilitaryChildCare.com launched a year ago, 84 installations — about a third — have come online, and by the end of March, the number is expected to grow to 120.

The number of installations participating in MilitaryChildCare.com is ramping up this quarter, especially as the Army starts bringing on more of its installations.

It's a single gateway to make it easier for parents to find and research options for military-operated and military-subsidized child care and get placed on waiting lists, whether it's at their current installation or before they move to a new installation. The website has a search function that allows parents to find participating installations, which have completed procedures in preparation for making the transition to the online system.

The only Army installations involved were the six in Hawaii that participated in the pilot phase, but that will change by the end of March. An additional 20 Air Force bases and 12 Army installations are expected to come on board, including larger Army posts such as Fort Drum, New York; Fort Campbell and Fort Knox, Kentucky; and Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

The Navy and Marine Corps are further along in implementation — 45 Navy and 13 Marine Corps locations are online.

The program's rollout is expected to be complete, with 230 installations participating, by the end of December. Officials said they planned the phased-in approach to ensure a smooth transition.

DoD serves about 200,000 children in child care through various options, to include child development centers and family child care homes.

As of November, there were 31,609 households registered with MilitaryChildCare.com, and 30,611 active requests for child care for those sites. Families can submit multiple requests for child care at any time, including for care offered through other branches of service — for example, soldiers can request care at Navy facilities.

The program allows military child care officials to showcase all the military and approved community programs that are available, with details and contact information online that can help families make decisions and get child care more quickly.

MilitaryChildCare.com already offers features that may meet some new requirements defense officials have outlined in their recent Force of the Future initiatives related to child care.

For example, defense officials have ordered the services to conduct long-range planning and assessments for child care options to improve access, and ensure all service members can get on child development center waiting lists when they receive orders, rather than waiting until they arrive at their next duty station.

The site allows parents to visit one location for their child care needs, rather than contacting the child care program offices of each installation. They can view information on every child development center and family child care home, and see the current anticipated placement time estimates. Parents place their child on waiting lists, and they'll be notified by email as well as by a follow-up phone call when a space becomes available.

Installations scheduled to come online with MilitaryChildCare.com by the end of March:

Air Force

- Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma
- Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana
- Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi
- Dyess Air Force Base, Texas
- Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota

- Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas
- Grand Forks Air Force base, North Dakota
- Joint Base Andrews, Maryland
- Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi
- Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas
- Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas
- McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas
- Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota
- Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska
- Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas
- Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma
- Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri

Army

- Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland
- Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, Maryland
- Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Fort Campbell, Kentucky
- Fort Detrick, Maryland (Forest Glen)
- Fort Detrick, Maryland (Frederick)
- Fort Drum, New York
- Fort Knox, Kentucky
- Fort Lee, Virginia
- Fort Meade, Maryland
- Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia
- Watervliet Arsenal, New York

Marine Corps

- Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia

Navy

- Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Washington, D.C.
- Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland
- Naval Support Activity Annapolis, Maryland
- Naval Support Activity Bethesda, Maryland
- Naval Construction Battalion Center Gulfport, Mississippi
- Naval Support Facility Indian Head, Maryland

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/benefits/2016/02/03/military-child-care-website-reach-more-locations-dc-region-next/79757794/>

40. Presentation Highlights Importance of Sexual Assault Prevention

(3 Feb) Navy News, By Zach Mott

Eliminating sexual assault in the ranks is a top priority for military leaders. For the more than 5,000 new accession Sailors in Training Support Center (TSC) Great Lakes, learning skills and tactics to reach that goal were the focus of a presentation Feb. 3 to a packed Ross Theater crowd.

"It helps emphasize the importance of sexual assault prevention and that there are people out there who do bad things," said Chief Damage Controlman Jeremy Hardnack, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response command liaison for TSC. "This program is another tool to help us use in order to help get the information out there to the students."

During the hour-long, interactive presentation, students were instructed on the harm of retaliation and reprisal, the role of each

individual in the prevention of sexual assault, how to be a good bystander, the connection between harassment and sexist remarks, creating a culture that does not tolerate sex offenders and reinforce Navy core values.

The scenario depicted Sailors reacting to a reported sexual assault between shipmates. Sailors are first observers then take on more involved roles as the scenario dives deeper into the issue of sexual assault and the reprisal thereafter.

"It really makes you think," said Seaman Elizabeth Jones, a student at TSC. "Going through these scenarios it helps to get an idea of how to deal with a real situation like this."

The production is researched and put on by Peer Praxis, a group based out of Long Beach, California, that stages productions for Navy and Marine Corps groups throughout the world.

"This show specifically deals with retaliation because we've seen a lot of that," said Alfredo Avila, a member of the Peer Praxis group who cited 2014 statistics on retaliation to reported sexual assaults.

This scenario is designed to give Sailors a toolkit of responses if they encounter similar issues.

"Sexual assault is a difficult issue with how do you curb it," Avila said. "When presented with an opportunity when you can do something about it and do an action. That's how you train for combat, you practice. That's how we feel people should train to prevent these kinds of things."

This presentation is a continuation of an education that began in student indoctrination during their first week at TSC as bystander intervention is introduced. That training continues through instruction from Navy Military Training Instructors (NMTI) and programs taught by outside agencies, such as this one.

"The CO (commanding officer), XO (executive officer) and CMC (command master chief) are very adamant about having this training because it's one of the top programs for the CNO and the SECNAV to make sure we're talking about sexual assault prevention," Hardnack said.

http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=92930

41. Navy Medicine Hosts Inaugural Women's Health Summit

(3 Feb) Navy News, By Steve Van Der Werff

U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) hosted its first Women's Health Summit, Jan. 25-28.

The summit gave stakeholders an opportunity to understand and discuss critical topics regarding women's health and health care; as well as contribute to the development of a comprehensive, strategic plan to shape and guide the future of the Navy and Marine Corps women's health community.

Vice Adm. Nora W. Tyson, commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet was the featured guest speaker and emphasized the importance and value of the summit with regards to readiness.

"As the Third Fleet Commander, I'm in the readiness business. I owe the Pacific Fleet Commander the ready forces he needs to carry out their mission in the region," said Tyson. "The health of our force has a very real impact on my ability."

Topics addressed during the summit included:

- *Women's health challenges and opportunities in the Navy Medicine community.
- *Population health management throughout the continuum of care.
- *A community vision and goals for the future of women's health and health care delivery.

"Our goal is to develop a strategic plan for the Navy and Marine Corps women's health community to guide the delivery of health care and optimize the health of female beneficiaries," said Cmdr. Eva Domotorffy, BUMED Office of Women's Health. "This plan will be evidence-based, driven by stakeholder input and aligned with SECNAV and BUMED priorities. "During our breakout sessions we discussed existing and anticipated challenges to the delivery of care and achieving optimal health for female beneficiaries."

Cmdr. Gregory Freitag, BUMED Office of Women's Health, emphasized that the number of women serving in the military is increasing and their roles in the military and civilian sector are changing, which means health requirements need to change as well.

"Attendees discussed women's health issues, challenges and opportunities from the provider perspective and the patient perspective," said Freitag. "This summit allowed us to address key findings, trends and themes that will influence women's health care across the Navy and Marine Corps."

Navy Medicine is a global health care network of 63,000 Navy medical personnel around the world who provide high quality health care to more than one million eligible beneficiaries. Navy Medicine personnel deploy with Sailors and Marines worldwide, providing critical mission support aboard ship, in the air, under the sea and on the battlefield.

http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=92929

42. For sailors, Marines who want 18 weeks of maternity leave, the clock is ticking

(4 Feb) The Virginian-Pilot, By Brock Vergakis

The clock is ticking for sailors to become pregnant if they want 18 weeks of maternity leave with little doubt they conceived before the most generous leave policy in the military expires later this month.

The Navy hasn't issued guidance on how sailors will prove they were pregnant before the end of February, the cutoff point for a Defense Department policy issued last week that reduces maternity leave from 18 weeks to 12 for sailors and Marines in an effort to create a uniform leave policy across the services.

But typically, Navy doctors estimate a conception date during the first trimester, said Rebecca Perron, a Portsmouth Naval Medical Center spokeswoman. She said that estimate usually covers a week, with pregnancy possible three days before or after the date doctors estimate.

The new Defense Department policy could provide an incentive for couples to be more intimate this Valentine's Day and creates the possibility of a surge in births in Navy communities this fall. That's something the Portsmouth Naval Medical Center is prepared for – and used to – if it happens. The hospital routinely adjusts staffing for a surge in births, such as nine months following the return of an aircraft carrier strike group from deployment, Perron said.

Under Defense Secretary Ash Carter's order, all branches of the military will be granted 12 weeks of maternity leave. That's double what the Army and Air Force had offered but six weeks less than what the Navy and Marines had been providing since July. On Tuesday, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson also doubled the Coast Guard's maternity leave from six weeks to 12 to keep in step with the Defense Department.

Carter said during a news conference announcing the changes that sailors and Marines who were already pregnant or those who become pregnant within 30 days of the policy's enactment will still be entitled to 18 weeks, although he didn't specify when that enactment will be.

Defense Department spokesman Matthew Allen said in an email to The Virginian-Pilot this week that Carter signed the policy Jan. 29 and the "maternity leave window is 18 weeks for 30 days after that date."

Figures weren't readily available for how many women have taken advantage of the 18 weeks of maternity leave since Navy Secretary Ray Mabus announced the policy change for the Navy and Marines in July. There are more than 60,000 women in the Navy, comprising about 16 percent of the force.

Mabus said at the time that anyone who had given birth in 2015 would be entitled to 18 weeks of leave, even if they had already returned to work. Mabus extended maternity leave for women from six weeks to 18 weeks as a way to retain top performers.

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

Carter also said retention was a motivation for the maternity leave changes, noting that research shows that work and family conflict is one of the primary reasons women leave the military. Carter said women are retained at a rate 30 percent lower than men across the military when they reach 10 years of service, a peak time for starting a family. Carter said he recognizes that sailors and Marines will end up with less maternity leave than was previously offered, but he said it was important to have the same standard across all branches.

"I don't take lightly that 12 weeks of maternity leave represents a downshift from what the Navy pursued last summer, but I believe that we will be at the forefront in terms of competition, especially as part of the comprehensive basket of family benefits we're providing across the joint force," he said during the announcement.

43. Sex for career advancement: Navy says commander propositioned subordinate

(5 Feb) Navy Times, By David Larter

The commander of a multi-billion dollar American warship was fired on the eve of its Middle East deployment last year after a drunken night out with his subordinates led to allegations of sexual harassment, Navy Times has learned.

Capt. Brian Sorenson's 25-year military career began to unravel Aug. 30, when he and several junior officers assigned to the cruiser Anzio attended a "wetting down" party at a bar in Yorktown, Virginia. He is accused of engaging in a highly inappropriate conversation with a woman who worked for him, allegedly propositioning her for sex in exchange for career advancement, according to a Navy investigation report obtained Thursday via the Freedom of Information Act.

The report also includes allegations from a female officer who told investigators that Sorenson grabbed her buttocks while they were in the bar. It is unclear if the complaint was made by the same woman or another, as the Navy's report is heavily redacted.

Last month, Sorenson was found guilty of violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice. An admiral has recommended the captain be separated from the service.

Reached by email, Sorenson declined to comment on the Navy's report. His attorney, Greg McCormack, provided a brief statement to Navy Times indicating the captain intends to appeal his case.

"Capt. Sorenson has an exemplary service record and has provided 25 years of outstanding naval service to our country," McCormack said. "We look forward to this legal process, which will provide a forum for the truth to prevail."

The Navy's investigation was conducted by Carrier Strike Group 8, Anzio's parent command. The ship and its crew of about 350 are in the Middle East currently as part of the Truman carrier strike group. They are tasked with providing air defense for the aircraft carrier.

According to the Navy's report, the woman with whom Sorenson allegedly sought to have sex was nearing the deadline to receive her surface warfare officer qualification. She told investigators that the day after their group outing in Yorktown, Sorenson sat her down in his cabin and asked her if she would sleep with him in exchange for her SWO pin, a Navy uniform device that denotes an officer has achieved all basic qualifications required of the service's surface warfare community.

The woman's name is redacted in the report. As a rule, Navy Times does not identify the alleged victims of sexual assault or harassment.

Word of the alleged encounter in Sorenson's cabin spread among his crew, prompting the ship's executive officer and top enlisted sailor to initiate a command investigation that ultimately ended with Sorenson's firing in mid-September. On Jan. 4, Sorenson was found guilty of violating the service's sexual harassment guidelines, of committing sexual misconduct and of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, said Lt. Cmdr. Myers Vasquez, a spokesman for Naval Surface Force Atlantic.

Sorenson was given a punitive letter of reprimand, Vasquez said.

Sorenson elected not to submit a statement to investigators, according to a Navy attorney familiar with the case, but a synopsis of the investigators' interview with him was included in the report provided to Navy Times. Investigators noted that while Sorenson admitted drinking too much, he declined to answer questions about the allegations he made sexual advances.

Sorenson, a 1991 Naval Academy graduate, will likely face an administrative board to determine if he should be retained in the service, and he'll be allowed to argue his side of the story.

Sorenson, who assumed command of Anzio in November 2014, was reassigned to SURFLANT. Earlier in 2015, he led a relatively junior Anzio crew in the multi-national Joint Warrior exercise — the largest of its kind in Europe. Prior to taking Anzio's helm, he had served as commodore of Afloat Training Group Atlantic; commanding officer of destroyer Mitscher; and deputy commodore for Destroyer Squadron 26. Sorenson is a 1991 Naval Academy graduate.

'Wetting down'

The night at the bar in Yorktown began as a promotion party. The so-called "wetting down" was held while Anzio was being loaded with ammunition ahead of its November deployment.

The wardroom — a naval term for the ship's officers — hopped in a government van at 6 p.m. When they arrived at the bar, several enlisted crew members were there drinking as well, the report says. The officers, including Sorenson, began quizzing the woman about the responsibilities expected of an officer of the deck, a position of significance among the ship's crew.

During the evening, many of the officers became intoxicated, according to the Navy's report. At one point, Sorenson allegedly approached the woman and asked her to meet him on a bench outside the bar, the report says.

The two shared a cigarette, and Sorenson allegedly asked if she would have sex with him, according the report. The woman thought it was a joke, and said she would in exchange for her surface warfare officer pin, the report says.

A crew member who was outside the bar on his phone, talking to his grandmother, overheard the commander making explicit remarks to the woman and asking her about specific sexual acts, according to the report. Other sailors told investigators that they were uncomfortable seeing Sorenson and the junior officer sitting so close together. One sailor remarked that the scene looked like an example from one of the Navy's sexual assault prevention training videos, the investigation says.

As the night wore on, the officers' behavior grew sloppier, one sailor told investigators.

"The whole night the officers were acting like hooligans," the sailor said in his statement to investigators. "I used to be a [bartender] and could tell that the get-together of the officers was turning into a sludge-fest. And if I was serving the officers, I would have cut them off."

Sorenson was intoxicated when he got into the van to go back to the ship, according to the report. Witnesses told investigators that the captain kept repeating two phrases: "The crew is all that matters" and "f-- the crew," the report says.

'Privacy Please'

The next morning, as rumors of the officers' behavior circulated, Sorenson allegedly summoned the woman to his stateroom to discuss her surface warfare qualifications, the report states. When she entered the room, Sorenson allegedly asked her to hang a "Privacy Please" sign on the outside of the door. The officer told investigators that that's when Sorenson propositioned her, according to the Navy's report.

"If I give you your SWO pin, will you sleep with me?" her statement reads.

When she refused, Sorenson allegedly made more suggestive remarks, before finally turning to questions about navigation rules and other knowledge required of the officer of the deck, the report states. He then signed her OOD letter and she left the room distraught, the woman told investigators.

The allegations are "he said, she said," investigators wrote in the report, adding that the third-party witness testimony about Sorenson's alleged behavior the night before made the woman's statement more credible. Additionally, the investigator concluded in the report, the officer had little if nothing to gain by making unfounded allegations, especially with her qualifications deadline looming.

When investigators interviewed others on the ship, they heard from multiple female officers who reported having been made to feel uncomfortable by Sorenson. One even kept a logbook detailing interactions with Sorenson that she deemed creepy, the report says.

"Capt. Brian Sorenson should not return to command of USS Anzio or any other command, at sea or at shore," the investigating officer wrote in the report's opinions. "Strong consideration should be given to charging Sorenson with violations of the UCMJ."

Rear Adm. Bret Batchelder, the strike group commander, largely agreed with the recommendations and opinions and signed the letter

of endorsement Oct. 15.

<http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2016/02/05/brian-sorenson-uss-anzio-skipper-fired-sexual-harassment/79816600/>

44. Moms And Deployment

(8 Feb) *Navy Times*, By Patricia Kime

Conventional wisdom and some research suggests that deployments affect military moms more than other female troops – that stress, worry and concern for kids can carry long-term consequences for family life.

But new research from the Centre for Traumatic Stress Studies at the University of Adelaide, Australia, turns those conclusions on their heads, finding that the majority of moms who deployed in the Australian Defence Forces view their overseas assignments as an important part of their jobs, and resilient women navigate the challenges of deployment successfully.

University researcher Ellie Lawrence-Wood and an investigative team that included female veterans reviewed responses to a 2010 survey of female troops who had deployed to the Middle East, including 235 women with children and 686 without. The researchers combed through the women's responses to key health questions, examined psychological health indicators and interviewed 76 female veterans by phone. They found that, for the most part, the moms "were at no greater risk of negative psychological or self-reported physical health impacts following deployment compared to female veterans without children."

Senior Reporter Patricia Kime corresponded with Lawrence-Wood via email to further discuss her findings and what they mean for troops.

Patricia Kime: Why did you do this study?

Lawrence Wood: This study was actually originally proposed by Susan Neuhaus, an associate professor and ex- Australian Defence Force surgeon, who has deployed numerous times and has two children. We had just completed several other studies that included nearly 1,000 women, 25 percent of whom were mothers at the time of their deployment. There was a recognized gap in understanding, as well as data, of the potential impact of active military service on women with dependent children.

Kime: What were the most significant findings?

Wood: The quantitative component demonstrated no increased risk for negative psychological impacts of deployment for women with – versus without – dependent children. This is in contrast to research from other allied nations indicating that motherhood may increase psychological burdens. Women with dependent children in the ADF are particularly resilient – we didn't find any worse psychological health outcomes for those women ... at the time of their deployment, a "healthy mother effect." This is important, because it highlights that despite additional challenges they face, they are not more adversely impacted. It challenges the belief that mothers are not suited to deployment and combat.

Kime: What was your most surprising finding?

Despite all the challenges and difficulties, every woman we interviewed was highly protective of her role as an ADF member and her military career. I think this is extremely important, as it shows that this career is important and rewarding and, contrary to what some people might expect, the sometimes extreme challenges mothers face doesn't undermine this.

Kime: The least surprising?

Wood: It is extremely important to have a supportive family network to enable deployment for mothers or any primary caregiver. Where it worked well, there was a highly supportive spouse or family. Where there was less support, things were much more difficult. Are there any steps the military services need to take to help mothers be more resilient or adjust to deployment? As above, it's about knowledge and understanding. Many of the women we spoke to had no clear idea of what the challenges would be and how to manage these. It was only through experience and conversations with others that they developed strategies to manage. For example, several women spoke about their family seeing them off at the airport as being quite traumatic and, in hindsight, they would choose to do things differently. Similarly, a number of women spoke about the regular contact from home being disruptive and often difficult, especially when they were mediating child arguments via email from Afghanistan. Finally, the transition back to home life was often the most challenging, and many women talked about being unprepared for this. While much relevant information is available, many women were unaware of it, and not sure where to access it.

Kime: What about the impact on the children?

Wood: Deployment is challenging and some challenges are unique to mothers. These must be acknowledged. Understanding them upfront is important for mothers and their families, to include preparing the family and new primary caregiver for the challenges,

maintaining a maternal connection and understanding the narratives – and guilt – around motherhood. The mothers we spoke with showed exceptional resilience and positivity in the face of challenge, and found that creativity and [willingness to take action] were critical to navigating systems and circumstances that can be incompatible with family life.

Kime: You are a mom of small children. Did you worry that you brought biases into the research?

Wood: The use of a semi-structured interview format and interviews being performed primarily by a research officer who, incidentally, isn't a mother, as well as our structure hopefully addressed any bias. As a mother myself I did go into the study with thoughts about the difficulty of being away from my children for a long period of time and what that would mean for my family ... But it was actually really interesting to hear the positives for these women. To be honest, while it would be hard for me to be away from my kids for months, I'm pretty sure I could get used to only having to be responsible for me!

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

45. Osteoporosis and soft-tissue damage affecting female veterans

(27 Jan) WCYB.com, By Olivia Bailey

When you hear the term Agent Orange, you probably automatically think of Vietnam.

Now there are different problems facing the next generations of those who serve. We discovered one problem that can become a real issue if left untreated among current-era veterans.

There are a few things that stick out for female veterans specifically: osteoporosis and soft-tissue damage from carrying gear of nearly equal body weight.

"We used to laugh that our when we're carrying all of this stuff," Persian Gulf Veteran Rene Keplinger said. "We're bent over that our knuckles were dragging in the sand that you could see our footsteps. Then there would be knuckle prints because our arms were so long that we carried all of this stuff."

Keplinger was deployed to the Persian Gulf with the 912th MASH Unit out of Johnson City in January of 1991. The unit was made up of more than 250 men and women treating casualties and providing humanitarian aid.

She said, "Our first patient was actually like seven or eight years old. It was a child that had shrapnel in his foot."

Now many of the women who served during that time are receiving treatment themselves.

Keplinger showed us a lasting injury from her time in the military. Her shoulder pops with movement.

Dr. Catherine Tanner is Director for Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn at the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center in Johnson City. She told us many women who come back from deployments suffer osteoporosis and soft tissue damage.

"Usually that's their prime bone-building peak years," she said. She told us this is largely due to a poor water supply and nutrition overseas.

"To make a new cell, make a new cell in the bone or the skin, you have to have Vitamin D, you have to have Calcium, Magnesium, Zinc, Phosphorous, and Boron," Tanner said.

Those nutrients are easy to sweat out in the 120-130 degree temperatures in the desert.

Keplinger said, "It's kind of a tricky heat because here when you sweat because of the humidity and stuff, you're like oh my shirt is wet, I'm sweating. Over there, the sweat dries so fast you don't realize how much you've sweat."

"I see very frequently an 80-year-old radiograph on a 25-year-old," Dr. Tanner added.

Dr. Tanner said treatment is most effective when the problems are found early. Doctors are usually able to control bone deterioration and tissue damage with diet, exercise, and vitamins.

The next generation this is affecting is military personnel overseas now. We checked in with the Department of Defense. They told us

334,814 women have been deployed overseas since 9/11.

When it comes to other health issues this generation is seeing Dr. Tanner said Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a big issue both genders are facing. She says another big problem is Military Sexual Trauma, or MST.

<http://www.wcyb.com/news/Osteoporosis-and-soft-tissue-damage-affecting-female-veterans/37671266>

46. Alarming rate of female veteran suicides addressed in Brown bill

(4 Feb) Cleveland.com, By Brian Albrecht

A bill aimed at stemming a disproportionate rate of suicides among female veterans has been introduced by Ohio [Sen. Sherrod Brown](#), a senior member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

The "Female Veterans Suicide Prevention Act" would expand the [Department of Veterans Affairs'](#) (VA) annual evaluation of mental health and suicide-prevention programs to include data regarding female veterans.

The act also would require the VA to determine which programs are the most effective for female veterans.

The measure was prompted by a VA study from 2000-2010, tracking 174,00 veterans and non-veterans.

The study, published in May 2015, found that female veterans, representing 10 percent of the veteran population, commit suicide at nearly six times the rate of civilian women, and are five times more likely to commit suicide than male veterans.

The study also noted that from 2000-2010, the rate of suicide among female veterans increased 40 percent. A 2014 update to the study found that the suicide rate of female veterans utilizing the VA health care system has also increased.

According to Brown's office, an average of 18 to 22 veterans take their lives each day — a statistic that has largely remained unchanged for more than a decade.

"Improving access to quality mental health care programs and professionals is a critical part of supporting our veterans when they return home," Brown said in a news release. "This bill will ensure that the VA tailors mental health programs to more effectively serve female veterans."

The House companion bill passed out of the House Veterans Affairs Committee last September and has the support of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), National Military Family Association and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PAV).

http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2016/02/female_veteran_suicides_adress.html