

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE SERVICES (DACOWITS) MEETING REPORT

September 4-5, 2003

DACOWITS held a meeting September 4-5, 2003 at the DoubleTree Hotel, Crystal City-National Airport, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA. Members and other attendees are listed in enclosures (1) and (2), respectively. The general purpose of the meeting was for the Committee members to create/review the annual report. The meeting was open to the public.

On Thursday, September 4, 2003, LtGen Carol Mutter, USMC, Retired, Chair, DACOWITS, opened the meeting at 8:35 a.m. She welcomed everyone, including Her Royal Highness Colonel Princess Aisha Bint al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Director, Directorate of Women's Affairs, Jordanian Armed Forces and Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, Director, Center for Women Veterans, Department of Veterans Affairs, Ex-Officio to DACOWITS.

LtGen Mutter started business by announcing that effective October 1, 2003, the functions, personnel, and fiscal resources associated with the DACOWITS Office will transfer from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), USD (P&R), to the Department of Defense Human Resources Activity (DHRA), a field activity of the Department of Defense (DoD) headed by Dr. David Chu, USD (P&R). DHRA will provide logistical and administrative support to the DACOWITS Office. However, the Committee will continue to work directly with the Principal Deputy USD (P&R). The Director of DACOWITS has no change in her reporting chain. There is no change in who receives the DACOWITS annual report. DHRA will NOT be involved in the substance of the work of the Committee.

The Chair then informed Committee members that the DoD is performing an annual comprehensive review of all federal advisory committees this fall. Each committee must complete the required report on the General Services Administration's website by October; this is standard procedure. Additionally, the DACOWITS charter will be up for review in April 2004. By law, federal advisory committee charters are valid for only two years at a time.

The Chair also announced that the nomination process for new members is moving forward. Two current members have stated they will not continue after this year's report is complete: Ms. Julie Hamre and Mrs. Constance Horner. The Office of the Secretary of Defense will likely select two reliefs for these members and possibly two additional personnel, bringing the total number of members to fifteen. One member asked if she could nominate someone; General Mutter said that that was not a possibility this year, but perhaps it will be next year.

COL Denise Dailey, Military Director, DACOWITS, then made several administrative remarks. She introduced two new staff members: CPT Kimberly Venable, USA, Plans and Logistics Officer, and MSgt Gerald Posey, USAF, Information Manager. She indicated that all members would be receiving renewal paperwork that needed to be filled out in order to continue working on the Committee in the new fiscal year. COL Dailey then noted that the Points of Contact (POCs) were sitting along the sides of the room, closer to the members, to encourage greater communication with the members. She subsequently introduced several of the new POCs: CAPT Katherine Surman, USN, representing Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs); LTC Lorelei Coplen, USA, representing the Army; and Maj Melissa Flattery, USAF, representing the Air Force. COL Dailey also introduced Kay Carbery from Meetingworks who was there to help facilitate parts of the meeting through the use of a wireless network of computers.

Dr. Bradford Booth, Senior Associate, Caliber Associates, Inc., made an oral presentation on Caliber's interim reports, with the main emphasis on the third report – [retention](#). Dr. Booth cautioned that the Committee should not read too much into the focus group quantitative data accompanying the reports. That data was made available because the Committee expressed an interest in it at the last meeting. However, the beauty of focus groups (qualitative data) is the richness of the details. That cannot be seen in the numbers and charts; it is seen in the words of the report itself. Therefore, Dr. Booth asked the members to not concentrate on the numbers, but instead to focus on the write-up. Additionally, Dr. Booth discouraged use of the data from the surveys distributed to focus group participants as it reflects only very small numbers and is not from a truly representative sample. Valid and robust data on the same survey topics is available from other sources.

The Chair then led Committee time, which occupied the rest of the day. The members first discussed the installation visits, with a particular emphasis on the focus group content. Those members who traveled in June and July spoke of their experiences. The following is a summary of the discussion by topic:

Retention

Some young officers only in Service for one tour – decision already made

OCONUS housing not what you'd expect in CONUS

Number of military personnel not being used in their MOS, feel underutilized – includes many reservists. “If you're going to keep me here, give me something substantial to do.”

Female officer groups spoke of a glass ceiling as an impediment to retention.

Effects of Deployment

Leadership at one command doing a lot to reduce problems associated with deployment

Lot of construction at Ramstein

Military members and family members feel safer in Europe than in US.

Info not getting to families; too much reliance on informal channels of communication

Immediate communications, such as e-mail, cell phones, and CNN, bring positive results at times (e.g. picture of newborn sent to dad in the field) but can bring negative results also (e.g. notification of death or injury before official notification).

Best source of information on deployment is the pre-deployment brief.

Health Care

Females at one installation pretty happy with health care

OCONUS clinic more like a warehouse

Discrepancy between official health care survey results (satisfaction) and focus groups (dissatisfaction)

In ob/gyn, some females feel like guinea pigs; concern over quality of doctors

Often job-related reason for not telling boss about pregnancy

Junior enlisted women expressed fear as a reason to not tell command about pregnancy or seek care: fear of being unmarried, fear of not knowing what they wanted to do with the baby, and general fear of the unknown.

Initiatives to educate personnel about health care programs only partially successful; more communications required.

The Committee members went on to speak about the installation visit process. Most members found it easier *not* to use the computers provided for note taking. Some were not familiar with

the laptops provided, while others simply felt they could take notes more quickly and thoroughly by hand. Several members expressed a major distaste for the tape recorders. The recorders would shut off when they should not have, and the quality of the recordings was good only if the tape was right next to the person speaking. Another member stated that she relied on the tape recorder to improve/fill in her notes.

Members offered the following additional comments without coming to any group consensus:

- Communicate what's expected of the action officers at the installations to the action officers and the Committee members traveling.
- Provide an opportunity to attend a family support group meeting, town hall meeting, basketball game, or other gathering to get a better sense of the culture.
- In focus groups, keep reserves separate from the active duty.
- Hold the family focus group at 6 p.m. or later rather than during the day.
- Eating at Burger King provided an opportunity to learn a lot of information.
- Spend more time in the facilities. Perhaps one member could tour while the other member does focus groups.
- Maintain the timeline wherein the tour comes before the focus groups. The tour helps to put the focus groups into context.
- Staying on base/post is a great experience.

The Chair then briefly reviewed the information paper that the Army provided on its rotation policy for Iraq. Next, Kay Carbery provided an introduction to Meetingworks and how the software works. Members completed a hands-on practice session before breaking for lunch between 12:00 p.m. and 1:15 p.m.

After lunch, the Chair again led Committee time. LtGen Mutter started by reviewing the draft outline of the annual report. The Committee may add a miscellaneous section. The Chair then quickly threw out some options about who the report should go to and how the Committee would disseminate and brief it: the members could present it to Dr. Chu at the next meeting, perhaps members could give briefs at installations near their hometowns, OSD Public Affairs could do a press release, and staff could add it to the DACOWITS website. Members will finalize decisions in this area at a later date.

The Chair then expressed her desire to come up with a product (annual report) that was 80-85% complete by the end of this two-day meeting. She continued with a short discussion on the assumptions page. These facts may or may not be added to the report. Finally, the Chair stated that she would like the Committee to come up with themes that will go into the Executive Summary.

The next topic of discussion was the Summary of [Visits to Service Academies](#). Committee members provided input for changes to this section of the report using Meetingworks. They also talked about where the best place for this summary was in the report

and generally felt it should be in an appendix, since those visits were not conducted in the same manner (e.g. with focus groups) as the other installation visits.

The Chair proceeded to the review of the body of the annual report. She stated that since the Committee had already given feedback on the first report on [deployment](#), there was no need to review this interim report again. Members who had additional input provided that to LCDR Thaeler (staff).

The Chair then moved on to the review of the second interim report, [health care](#). Members used Meetingworks to provide their feedback of this report. They also briefly discussed several of their comments.

The meeting adjourned for the day at approximately 6:57 p.m.

On Friday, September 5, 2003, the meeting convened at 8:30 a.m. Members used the first ten minutes of the meeting to complete renewal paperwork and ask questions of MSgt Gerald Posey about this paperwork.

Her Royal Highness Colonel Princess Aisha Bint Al Hussein then briefed the Committee on [the role of women in the Jordanian Armed Forces and the Directorate of Military Women's Affairs](#). Her Royal Highness stated that DACOWITS has provided some lessons learned for the Directorate, and Committee members are always welcome to visit Jordan.

The Chair then led the review of the third interim report, retention. Again, using Meetingworks, the Committee members typed in their feedback and also briefly discussed some of their comments.

The members broke for lunch from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Committee members returned to

critique the draft conclusions section of the report and to add some recommendations. They did this using Meetingworks and limited discussion.

At 4:45 p.m., the Chair opened the floor for an open public forum. No members of the public spoke. Ms. Julie Hamre, a DACOWITS member, did express her concern over the fact that the staff was moving from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to a field agency and the signal that that sends. Senator J.P. Duniphan, another DACOWITS member, seconded that concern. The Chair stated that she had already spoken with Dr. Chu about this issue, resulting in the information paper each member received.

Several Committee members then volunteered to help edit the report. Mrs. Catherine Aspy volunteered to write the executive summary. Ms. Julie Hamre volunteered to edit the conclusions and recommendations for the deployment section. Dr. Lynda Davis and COL Ladd Pattillo agreed to edit the conclusions and recommendations for the health care and retention sections. The Chair will ask Ms. Ricky Silberman to edit the introduction. The goal is to have all edits back to the DACOWITS Office two weeks after receiving the feedback from Meetingworks (expected by September 12). The DACOWITS staff will then review and send out the report in early October, giving members time to review the report once again before the next meeting.

Committee members agreed to October 27-28, 2003 as dates for the next meeting. They will finalize the report and hope to brief it to Dr. Chu then. Members selected November 20-21 as dates for the follow-on meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Report submitted by

LCDR Shannon E. M. Thaeler, USN

Operations Officer, DACOWITS

Attachments:

As stated

Report certified by

LtGen Carol Mutter, USMC (Ret)

FY 2003 DACOWITS Chair