

# **DEFENSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE SERVICES (DACOWITS)**

## **Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

**17–18 June 2015**

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) held a full committee meeting on June 17 and June 18, 2015. The meeting took place at the Hilton Alexandria–Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22311.

**17 June 2015**

### **Opening Remarks**

COL Betty Yarbrough, Designated Federal Officer and DACOWITS Military Director, opened the meeting by reviewing the Committee's establishment and charter. DACOWITS Chair LtGen (Ret) Frances Wilson thanked the day's briefers and acknowledged the upcoming retirement of COL Yarbrough and MSgt Tracey Stephens, who provide executive support to DACOWITS. She asked all Committee members and meeting attendees to introduce themselves, including COL Yarbrough's replacement, COL Aimee Kominiak.

COL Yarbrough reviewed the status of the Committee's Requests for Information (RFIs). Most responses were delivered through official briefings at the quarterly meeting. In a few instances, where requested by the Committee, the Military Services provided written responses. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) (OSD(HA)) requested a deferment for one RFI regarding pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding policies, and will provide its written response by July 15, 2015.

### **Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault Briefs**

In early 2014, at the request of the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), the RAND Corporation (RAND) National Defense Research Institute conducted an independent assessment of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination in the Military Services. The Committee requested briefings from the DoD Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODMEO) and DoD SAPRO on the findings of this study, with particular focus on the following: the number of active duty men and women who have experienced gender discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual assault in the past year; the differences in rates of these offenses by Military Service; Service members' experiences with support and prosecution; and a summary of actions SAPRO and the Military Services have taken as a result of these findings. The RAND study falls under SAPRO's jurisdiction, as such ODMEO only presented data its office collected on sexual harassment incidents in the Military Services.

Mr. James E. Love, Acting Director, ODMEQ

Mr. Love opened by differentiating sexual harassment—the topic of his briefing—from sexual assault. While sexual harassment is commonly monitored and tracked by equal opportunity advisors, including ODMEQ, sexual assault is considered a crime and handled by military and criminal investigative offices. Mr. Love stated the DoD directive that governs sexual harassment is being converted to a DoD Instruction (DODI) that should be released in fall of 2015. The current DoD directive on this topic was published in 1995. Updates in the new DODI will include strengthened requirements for addressing sexual harassment, policies that hold commanders and DoD responsible for developing and conducting training to combat sexual harassment, and procedures for filing formal and informal complaints as well as handling anonymous complaints.

ODMEQ has collected data on sexual harassment for two years. This data comes directly from the Military Services; ODMEQ has no access to data on individual cases. Many of the findings Mr. Love presented focused on substantiated cases of sexual harassment, meaning reported cases that have undergone a standard investigation or inquiry process, and contain at least one founded allegation. In the past year, ODMEQ tracked 1,422 formal and informal sexual harassment complaints. It found 57 percent of overall complaints were substantiated at similar rates across formal and informal reporting channels. Most offenders (83 percent) and complainants (94 percent) were enlisted Service members, with males more likely to be offenders and females more likely to be complainants. Other top-level findings involved the location, timing, and nature of complaints. Mr. Love noted the most common location for sexual harassment was on-duty, most complaints were made within 60 days, and the most frequent type of complaint involved crude and offensive behavior. He described each of these findings in further detail over the course of the briefing, and reported on the ways in which offenders are held accountable for their actions.

The Committee expressed concern about ODMEQ's capacity to monitor and track sexual harassment cases effectively. Members commented, for example, on the seemingly low number of reported cases as compared to estimated numbers of actual incidents, and the lack of detail on individual incidents. Mr. Love acknowledged there are likely more instances of sexual harassment than there are reported cases, since some cases are not reported and others may be resolved informally. ODMEQ has employed additional methods to get a better sense of the problem; this includes the annual administration, starting in 2013, of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute's Organizational Climate Survey. Some of the information captured in the Organizational Climate Survey is also captured by the RAND study, discussed by the next briefers. Nonetheless, many of the Committee's concerns about sexual harassment tracking are not being addressed under the current system.

A report on ODMEQ's role regarding sexual harassment cases was due to Congress on June 1, 2015, and may address some of these challenges. It included a review of ODMEQ's current capabilities, including any resource, personnel, and technological gaps (for example, Mr. Love noted the current process to collect sexual harassment data is laborious and not automated). It also examined the relationship between ODMEQ and SAPRO in developing initiatives to prevent sexual harassment.



Dr. Nathan Galbreath, Senior Executive Advisor, SAPRO, and Ms. Kayla Williams, Senior Project Associate, RAND

Since 2012, SAPRO has been moving forward on addressing more than 100 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provisions, 50 Secretary of Defense initiatives, and 132 Response Systems Panel (RSP) recommendations, including initiatives designed to prevent retaliation. In past years, DoD collected information on sexual harassment and sexual assault through the DoD Workplace and Gender Relations Survey. When results from the 2012 survey reflected an increase in incidents from previous years, SAPRO sought outside assistance to ensure the instrument captured accurate and useful information on sexual harassment and sexual assault. This led to the newly launched RAND Military Workplace Survey.

Ms. Williams described the methodology and results from RAND's study, which featured an improved survey instrument that more closely aligned with the sexual harassment and sexual assault language used in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Approximately 560,000 Service members were invited to complete the survey, including all female Service members, 25 percent of male Service members, and a random sample from the National Guard. The survey received 170,000 responses, for a roughly 33-percent response rate. From these responses, RAND estimated 20,300 Active Component Service members were sexually assaulted in the past year, 43,900 experienced gender discrimination, and 116,000 were sexually harassed. Rates of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault varied by Service.

Since the survey data was representative of both men and women, RAND was able to capture differences in sexual harassment and sexual assault between male and female Service members. For example, relative to women, men who were sexually assaulted were more likely to experience multiple incidents over the course of a year; be assaulted by multiple offenders at work or during duty hours; describe events as "hazing;" and experience physical injuries or threats of physical injuries during a penetrative sexual assault. Relative to men, women were more likely to experience a sexual assault that involves alcohol use and are more likely to tell someone else about the event or file a report. There were several other noteworthy findings from the study. For example, there was a close correlation between past-year sexual harassment and past-year sexual assault, meaning preventing sexual harassment might also help prevent sexual assault. Additionally, more than half of the Active Component women who officially reported a sexual assault perceived experiencing social retaliation. RAND made several policy and research recommendations based on its findings.

Dr. Galbreath described SAPRO's efforts related to sexual assault prevention and response, focusing on the justice and reporting process. He first described actions taken against offenders, noting DoD authorities had sufficient evidence to take disciplinary action on three out of four military suspects in FY 2014. For cases where DoD was able to take action, the majority of sexual assault allegations were addressed through court-martial. Dr. Galbreath also mentioned changes to the training for commanders and criminal investigators, and changes to the Article 32 process, including giving victims a choice to not testify at the hearing. Of the 12 metrics and six non-metrics SAPRO used to examine its progress in addressing the NDAA provisions, Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) initiatives, and RSP recommendations, perceived retaliation was the one metric that did not show improvement.

SAPRO also tracked sexual assault survivors' experiences throughout the reporting process. In the past year, a record number of victims chose to participate in the justice process and access

care—an estimated 25 percent, up from only 7 percent in 2006. To learn more about their experiences, DoD administered the Survivor Experience Survey, which is the first DoD-wide survey effort designed to assess the use and effectiveness of the sexual assault services and resources available to military survivors of sexual assault. The survey revealed survivors were largely satisfied with the level of support they received, and an increasing number of restricted reports were being converted to unrestricted, a potential sign of increased trust in the system. This year, SAPRO will continue this line of inquiry by conducting a new Victim Justice Experience Survey to examine victims' satisfaction and experiences with the legal process.

### **Marine Corps Infantry Officer Course Update**

DACOWITS continues to be interested in the Marine Corps' research assessments, which will assist SECDEF in determining whether women will integrate into Marine Corps combat roles beginning in 2016. The Committee is particularly interested in learning more about the Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course (IOC). Research on the course concluded in June 2015, and it is no longer open to female volunteers.

This RFI was a repeat request; previously, the Committee asked the Marine Corps to deliver a written response. It asked for details about the following: weight requirements for marches; the attrition rate for men and women; reasons for attrition and a description of any efforts to minimize risk of attrition due to injury; a description of any preconditioning efforts; and an explanation of when IOC requirements were established.

#### **Mr. Leon M. Pappa, Deputy Branch Head, Ground Combat Standards Branch, Training and Education Command**

Mr. Pappa described the Marine Corps' effort to recruit female officers for the study. Recruitment began in May 2012 and concluded in February 2015 to allow all recruits to complete the IOC before June 2015. Recruitment efforts targeted female second lieutenants who had recently graduated from their basic officer classes (BOC). In the summer of 2014, recruitment efforts were expanded to include captains.

The Marine Corps encouraged study participation in a few ways. Though the research guidelines for this study prevented the use of incentives, each BOC received two recruitment briefs encouraging them to participate. Officers were also able to participate in the Marines Awaiting Training (MAT) platoon prior to starting an IOC, if they desired advance conditioning and training. However, women knew that even if they passed the course, they would not be allowed to join the military occupational specialty. Completing the course would instead be a point of personal pride and accomplishment.

Total recruitment efforts yielded 29 female research participants, compared to 913 participating males. The vast majority of female participants (24) were new BOC graduates, representing 5 percent of the 454 women who graduated from BOC during the recruitment period. None of the female study participants graduated from IOC, compared to 69 percent of males. Most women (24 of 29) failed to finish the combat endurance test (CET), a challenging daylong test at the beginning of the training course. By comparison, 19 percent of men failed at this stage. Of the five women who completed the CET, four failed multiple hike or tactical movements during training, and one dropped out due to injury.



The Committee requested answers to two additional questions concerning 1) weight requirements for the IOC march, and 2) when the IOC requirements were established (including requirement for Marines to carry their rucksacks up a rope). For the first question, Mr. Pappa explained all foot movements are executed as tactical movements, each with a prescribed load and equipment list. Though the total weight varies by movement, the maximum amount a Marine is expected to carry is 150 total pounds of equipment (including weapons, ammunition, food, and water). In response to the second question, Mr. Pappa noted every training event at IOC is listed in an approved program of instruction (POI). The POI is reviewed periodically through a Course Content Review Board, most recently conducted in December 2014.

While the Committee does not support lowering standards and believes valid gender-neutral requirements should apply to all, Committee members were concerned with the qualitative (subjective) vice quantitative (objective) method employed on the performance or tactical movements at the IOC. Specifically, one Committee member cited a performance movement in which none of the unit could keep up with the pace that was set and finish in the allotted three hours, noting most of the group took four hours. While the whole unit failed to meet the time requirement, only six people were dropped from IOC, to include the two female participants. Since six Marines were stopped during the movement, the two female participants were not able to complete it.

### **USSOCOM Studies Update**

Recently, a survey conducted for the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) by RAND received national media attention, prompting the Committee to request a briefing from USSOCOM. Topics addressed were as follows: the plans and studies being conducted for integration of women into special operations (e.g., analysis on training, facilities, education and other policies); ways officials are examining the social and cultural challenges of integrating females into male-only jobs; efforts to resolve misinformation among personnel (e.g., “educate the force”); the methodology used to analyze job requirements, to best ensure standards are accurate and gender neutral; and updates on the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) study of elite team performance as well as the University of Kansas study of cohesion and impacts.

Mr. Jeffrey Resko, USSOCOM Force Management and Development Directorate Liaison to the National Capital Region, and Ms. Alden Burley, Contractor, USSOCOM Force Management and Development Directorate

Mr. Resko provided a current snapshot of the number and types of special operations positions that have been integrated or are still closed since the rescindment of the direct ground combat definition and assignment rule: 7,041 positions have been integrated (including more than two-thirds of Special Operations Forces battalions) and 25,750 remain closed.

USSOCOM has completed several studies designed to identify challenges related to unit readiness, mitigate risks, and facilitate integration. These include a study on unit cohesion, led by RAND, which involved a literature review, surveys, and focus groups with male special operations forces. Another, led by JSOU, studied elite team performance through literature reviews and interviews with Service members from recently integrated teams and units. A University of Kansas study of cohesion and impacts examined Army Special Operations



commands, and included surveys and focus groups with women in open positions in Special Operations units.

A comprehensive standards validation process also supported integration efforts and ensured all standards were related to critical occupational duties. The process was based on job analyses and included external research, training observations, and data analysis. RAND assisted with this effort by developing a six-step process, administered with support from the Naval Health Research Center and the Office of Personnel Management. Mr. Resko commented on the thorough nature of this review and extensive consultation with experts in the field. USSOCOM estimated the standards validation process would be completed in summer 2015.

Finally, efforts to inform and educate the Military Services about integration and standards validation are underway, at the direction of General Joseph Votel. USSOCOM has sent electronic and written communication to all commanders. Commanders' decisions have been discussed at roundtables and other meetings. More-detailed plans for communications to the Military Services are being developed.

### **Increasing Female Marine Corps Accessions**

On September 10, 2014, at the Rutgers Aerospace and Defense Summit, U.S. Navy Secretary Mabus said, "We don't have enough women in either the Navy or Marine Corps." Secretary Mabus went on to cite the importance of a diverse force as a reason for bringing more women into the Military Services. The Committee requested a briefing on ways the Marine Corps plans to expand the number of women in the Service and the methodology it will use to determine recruitment goals. This was a repeat request; the Navy presented its briefing at the March 2015 quarterly meeting.

#### **LtCol Jonathan S. Swope, Branch Head, Enlisted Recruiting Operations for Marine Corps Recruiting Command**

LtCol Swope began by stating the Marine Corps recognizes the need to recruit more high-quality female candidates. With support from three members of his team, he reviewed his Service's efforts to reach this population. The Marine Corps faces several obstacles to female recruitment. Overall, female propensity to serve in the Military Services (including all branches) is relatively low; among youth ages 16 to 21, only 8 percent of women said they were likely to serve. Research on the female market shows a career in the Military Services is largely outside the area of consideration for women, and they may lack knowledge about the mission of the different branches. Of those young women who were interested in military careers, most were considering the Air Force, Navy or Army; only 17 percent named the Marine Corps as their Service of choice. This may be due in part to the narrower scope of jobs available to Marines; propensed women may also be less likely to see themselves fitting as traditional Marine "warriors." Through their recruitment efforts, the Marine Corps hopes to provide women with better information and recognition of what it means to be a Marine.

Despite these challenges, LtCol Swope reported positive momentum in recent years. For example, Marine Corps female officer accessions have increased, and more women have started to accept Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarships. He described Marine Corps leadership's commitment to female recruitment, and his team's research-based efforts to effectively market to women. For example, research has shown prospective female Service

members want to see examples of women leading men and working alongside men, and they want to know Service members can have work-life balance and a family. These findings have been incorporated into recent Marine Corps recruitment projects targeting women. The briefing included several promotional videos, including a video for the “Women on a Mission” campaign. In contrast to the old concept of “A Few Good Men,” this campaign emphasizes on recruiting talented women and allows current female Marines to share their stories across various social media platforms.

In addition to advertising, the Marine Corps has developed a range of outreach efforts. In 2014, the Marine Corps conducted more than 15 events specifically targeting women. These allow in-depth educational experiences for prospective female Marines, as well as their key influencers. Events include the Women in Aviation symposium, where Marines can share their stories with women interested in a range of aviation careers, and an immersion experience for women’s basketball coaches at Marine Corps bases, so they can inform their players of opportunities in the Military Services.

The Committee inquired about the Marine Corps’ target for recruiting and retaining women. Currently, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command has not been given a gender-specific requirement for active component accessions and increasing accessions will be based on propensity, throughput, and operational requirements.. However, if the Marine Corps were suddenly to recruit large numbers of women, LtCol Swope did not anticipate any logistical challenges that would prevent them from being trained and put to work.

### **Marine Corps Personal Protective Equipment Presentation**

At the Marine Corps request, an update on the latest efforts for Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing for female Marines was provided to the Committee.

*Col Daryl Crane, Product Manager, Infantry Combat Equipment, Marine Corps System Command*

Properly fitting combat equipment is imperative for all Marines to accomplish their missions. In recent years, the Marine Corps has recognized the need for combat equipment that fits smaller-stature Marines, including women. Combat equipment is designed to be modular and to fit a range of body sizes. They have also identified the need to modify their inventory to better accommodate the female population. The previous combat gear inventory was based on and designed to fit the 5th to 95th percentile of male Marines. The new inventory will be expanded to cover the 5th percentile females to the 95th percentile of Marines. However, while there is a small amount of funding to conduct equipment research and development, the current budget for new equipment is very limited.

Body armor systems were covered in additional detail. There are two primary systems: Plate Carriers (PCs) and Improved Modular Tactical Vests (IMTVs). PCs are smaller and designed to allow for more mobility, which is a particular concern for the Marine Corps. The IMTV provides additional neck, groin, and lower back protection against direct fire and fragmentation, but weighs roughly four pounds more than an equivalently sized PC.

Col Crane said current equipment meets the needs of female Marines. However, the current gender integration effort could potentially lead to the development of gender specific equipment.



Training on combat equipment is available at all major Marine Corps Bases and online through YouTube. He also indicated that the Marine Corps works with the Army to leverage their efforts where appropriate for example, protective undergarment and the Soldier Protective System.

### **OSD(HA) Briefing**

The Committee is concerned with policies/practices that may potentially violate the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), adversely affecting servicewomen. To examine this, the Committee requested a briefing from OSD(HA) on the OB MultiID Discharge Summary, which is a form designed to communicate the patient's care plan after their discharge from a hospital setting. Committee members raised concerns about the content and use of the current form, noting potential Privacy Act and HIPAA violation issues, the provision of information outside a commander's "need to know," potential inaccuracies on the form concerning a woman's pregnancy history, and the possible withholding of information from an obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN). Several women have made this complaint.

*Dr. Kathleen Charters, Nurse Consultant to the Defense Health Agency, Healthcare Operations Directorate, Clinical Support Division*

The OB MultiID Discharge Summary is handled through a routine DoD process intended to engage the patient in her medical care, but not governed by a specific DoD policy. According to hospital joint commission and accreditation processes, patients should receive written summaries of their hospitalizations, along with a description of next steps—for example, the recommended timing of a follow-up appointment. Printed discharge summaries belong to patients, and should allow them to better understand and manage their health care.

Patients do not have to provide their discharge summaries to commanding officers when requesting convalescent leave (CONLV). Under HIPAA, they have the right to access their own medical information as well as to restrict access to it by others; however, the discharge summary is only designed to inform the patient's clinician as well as the patient. Expectant mothers and others requiring maternity-related leave submit a separate CONLV request form to commanding officers, which ideally is accompanied by a prescription for CONLV from a clinician.

OSD(HA) recognizes the need to educate medical personnel and patients about these processes (which forms to use and what backup documentation is needed). OSD(HA) offers medical professionals web-based training through its online learning resource center and is building up its cadre of trainers to provide individual training if desired. For future parents, OSD(HA) staff explain how to request a prescription for CONLV in childcare classes.

OSD(HA) also recognizes the need to improve the forms patients receive and is working to make changes by the end of FY 2015. Some of the terminology on discharge summaries can be problematic for patients; for example, the use of "abortion" to indicate a pregnancy has been terminated, regardless of how (e.g., miscarriage (spontaneous abortion)). To address this issue, OSD(HA) is developing a new discharge summary in lay-friendly language and outlining new processes to deliver this and other appropriate forms to servicewomen requesting CONLV.

While the Committee understands the intended discharge summary and CONLV request process, it believes some medical personnel and Service members remain unaware of proper procedures. For example, the Committee heard of numerous instances where discharge summaries were stapled to orders



that Service members were instructed to give to their commanding officers (these are not isolated cases we are addressing). The OSD(HA) team agreed this should never happen and suggested that in addition to providing additional training and composing a memo on the topic, a reminder could be added to the top of each discharge form stating that the form is for the patient's use only. OSD(HA) will also revisit the issue to determine if additional changes to standard procedures should be made.

### **Review of Installation Visits and Focus Group Findings**

Between March and May of 2015, Committee members conducted 67 focus groups at 12 military installations. These discussions targeted military personnel across all ranks and Services, centering on four areas of interest: gender integration; career progression of servicewomen; impact of social media on military Service members; and facilitators and barriers to reporting sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The Committee requested a briefing on the focus group findings.

#### **Gender Integration (Ms. Ashley Schaad, Senior Research Associate, ICF International)**

Focus group participant perceptions of the Military Services' gender integration preparation activities varied widely. Some focus group participants felt preparation was not occurring or was not needed. Preparation activities mentioned consisted of modifications to physical spaces (such as female berthing space onboard ships), ongoing testing to determine appropriate gender-neutral standards, training and discussions with men prior to integration, and increased monitoring for sexual harassment and sexual assault once integration had occurred. Most men reported gender integration was going smoothly, while women's opinions were more mixed.

Military culture contributed to gender integration in both positive and negative ways. A benefit cited by focus groups participants was the perceived acceptance of integration among younger Service members. Challenges included many issues raised by focus groups in previous years, such as stereotypical perceptions of women, the belief that women must work harder than men do to earn respect, challenges associated with pregnancy, logistical barriers, and disruption to unit cohesion in male-only units.

Participants provided several recommendations for improving gender integration. Many were similar to participants' suggestions from previous years—for example, men and women should have the same job requirements and occupational standards. Other recommendations included additional training for men and women and including female leaders in units undergoing integration.

Finally, groups were asked to share their thoughts on whether gender integration should carry over to Selective Service registration (i.e., whether all women should be required to register, as men are). Though focus group participants were provided with a definition of the Selective Service, many were confused by it and several confused it with the military draft. Views on whether women should be required to register were mixed. Most felt women should have to register, while a few disagreed and thought women should be exempt; others believed the requirement should be eliminated for men and women alike.

#### **Career Progression of Servicewomen (Ms. Ashley Schaad, Senior Research Associate, ICF International)**

Most Service members who participated in the focus groups perceived men and women as having similar career goals and aspirations, and most felt men and women had the same opportunities in the Military Services to succeed and take on leadership positions. However, a number of participants felt that women's goals might change over time and that they might choose to separate from the Military Services early to have a family.

The military was generally seen as being better for women's career progression than the civilian career sector because of equality of pay and career progression tracks for men and women, better awareness of sexual harassment and equal opportunity issues, paid maternity leave, and job security. However, some participants felt servicewomen and civilian women faced similar challenges, while others believed the civilian sector was better for women.

Participants also discussed their experiences with gender discrimination. Older males were perceived to be the most common perpetrators of gender discrimination, though participants noted improvements in recent years. Some felt that discrimination came from other women. While some participants described blatant discrimination, most mentioned incidents that were subtle; for example, women being given stereotypically female job tasks like office work.

To improve women's career progression, participants recommended the Military Services focus on preventing women from separating from the Service. They also suggested increasing female mentorship and extending maternity leave and the length of time new mothers have prior to deployment (also known as postpartum operational deferment).

*Impact of Social Media on Military Service Members (Ms. Rachel Gaddes, Senior Research Associate, Insight Policy Research)*

Social media was a new topic for DACOWITS in 2015, and the briefing began with a description of the current landscape of social media usage in the Military Services. Service members have used social media for both personal and professional purposes; focus group participants have seen a notable increase in its use over time, particularly among younger Service members who are social media "natives." Its growing presence is considered a continuing challenge for the Military Services in terms of management and regulation.

Participants discussed both the benefits and the disadvantages of Service members using social media. Benefits included how social media could support military communications, such as announcements to Service members or postings that can boost morale and update families on a unit's current status. It could also be used to promote positive military efforts to the public, facilitate supportive online communities for Service members who might be unable to find support in person, and help Service members stay in touch with friends and family.

Disadvantages included how social media could negatively represent the Military Services to the public, interfere with formal channels of communication, distract from work duties, and bias first impressions of Service members entering new units. Higher ranking participants also reported that it could promote fraternization.

Focus group participants had mixed perceptions of social media policies and guidelines. Some felt behavior on social media was governed by broader general conduct policies, such as the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Although participants cited many gray areas concerning proper conduct on social media, most agreed on what constituted unacceptable use, such as misrepresenting a Military Services' uniform or expressing political views. Participants held varying opinions on whether and how the Military Services should control and monitor



social media use; while social media allowed leaders to monitor subordinates in new ways, some participants felt the Military Services were limited in their ability to censor or control its use.

Participant opinions varied on whether online bullying and harassment was a problem. While “behind-the-keyboard bravery” sometimes encouraged Service members to make comments they might not make in person, and Service members cited examples of bullying or harassment, some felt it was the responsibility of the harassed party to prevent and combat bullying (for example, by cutting off online contact with the bully). On the other hand, some said that the Military Services should regulate this kind of inappropriate behavior on social media, and it was noted that social media could be used as evidence in cases of bullying or harassment.

Finally, participants discussed social media’s perceived impact on gender integration. Feelings were mixed; some felt social media could be used to promote integration success stories and raise awareness, while others felt social media would lead to backlash against integration or provide a way for opponents to voice their opinions.

*Facilitators and Barriers to Reporting Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault (Ms. Rachel Gaddes, Senior Research Associate, Insight Policy Research)*

While DACOWITS focus groups have covered sexual harassment and sexual assault in the past, this year’s groups focused on reporting in particular. Focus group participants discussed ways military culture affects reporting. On the positive side, many Service members noted military culture and values had changed for the better in support of reporting; reporting has been more common and encouraged now than in the past, and there were resources available to Service members who wish to report. Conversely, participants mentioned several negative consequences to reporting sexual harassment or sexual assault. For example, sexual harassment victims and sexual assault survivors might never know the outcomes of their reports, they might fear being stigmatized, or they might have privacy concerns—particularly if part of a small or remotely located unit.

Though participants were not asked about sexual harassment and sexual assault training specifically, many mentioned it during the discussions. The increased training Service members have received in recent years was perceived to have improved culture and facilitate reporting; however, some felt it was excessive. Participants also criticized computer-based trainings, preferring more-interactive in-person sessions instead. Other suggestions to improve training included increasing focus on sexual harassment, and sexual harassment and sexual assault incidents against men. Some participants, especially women, warned the training could cause victims or survivors to relive the trauma of what happened to them.

Groups discussed several trends and patterns in reporting. Generally, participants felt sexual assault was easier to identify and therefore more likely to be reported as compared to sexual harassment. Despite an increased focus on bystander reporting in training, and perceived repercussions for failing to report an incident, there were no clear trends suggesting bystanders were more or less likely to report than victims or survivors. Similarly, peers can both encourage and discourage reporting; participants perceived a lack of privacy when reporting incidents, and felt the restricted reporting was helpful (though flawed) in this regard. Command climate was perceived to have an impact on reporting, with victims or survivors more likely to report when they knew the issue was a priority for their leadership. The rank of the offender was also thought to have an impact; most participants felt it was more difficult to report a superior and higher ranking individuals who are viewed as being more credible than lower ranking ones. Finally,



focus group participants were asked about social media's impact on reporting. Most said it was more likely to discourage reporting, but a few felt it was a place for victims and survivors to share their stories and inspire others.

*General Comments (Ms. Ashley Schaad, Senior Research Associate, ICF International)*

At the end of most focus groups, time permitting, DACOWITS asked participants to share the biggest challenges women in the Military Services face and recommendations for the SECDEF. Challenges discussed during these sessions included perceptions of men's attitudes toward women; pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding policy issues; and maintaining work/life balance. Recommendations to the SECDEF included adjusting physical fitness standards (women, in particular, felt the height/weight standards were problematic) and uniforms; improvements to training on sexual harassment and sexual assault; increasing mentorship opportunities, and adjusting policies related to deployments and transfers, as well as postpartum maternity leave.

**18 June 2015**

**Opening Remarks**

COL Yarbrough provided a brief overview of the day's agenda, and LtGen (Ret) Wilson welcomed attendees and requested introductions from all.

**Services' Pregnancy and Postpartum Policies Review**

The Committee requested briefings from each of the Military Services on pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding policies, all of which potentially affect the retention of servicewomen. It requested the following details: the frequency of policy updates; the methodology used to design the policies; programs that exist to support the policies and resources for servicewomen; and a comparison of the Military Services' policies to broader DoD policies.

*Army: COL Cheryl L. Martinez, Chief, Distribution and Readiness; Director, Military Personnel Management*

COL Martinez described the Army's pregnancy and postpartum policies. The intent of Army policies is to protect the mother and baby, while ensuring productive use of the soldier, and to provide regulations that are in accordance with clinical practice guidelines. Most guidelines can be found under AR 40-501, last updated in 2007, but currently undergoing revisions (expected to be published in late 2015), which outlines duty limitation guidelines (such as rules governing exposure to hazardous material on the job); and AR 614-30, last updated in February 2015, which outlines commanders' assignment limitations. The Army is developing a formal breastfeeding policy, which is expected to be completed in January 2016. Despite the current lack of policy on the topic, lactation support programs are found on many Army installations.

Several leave and operational deferment policies serve expectant and new parents. The Army provides six weeks of convalescent leave (CONLV) for new mothers and one week of leave for new fathers. Additionally, mothers are given a six-month operational deferment from the date of the child's birth (compared to the four-month operational deferment required by DoD). These



timelines apply regardless of the conditions of the birth (vaginal versus caesarian section, miscarriage, or stillbirth). A commander may further extend the deferment period if it is deemed operationally feasible; conversely, soldiers may waive their deferments and deploy before six months if they wish to do so.

The Army also has policies and procedures covering pregnant women and new mothers in the workplace. Several formal programs exist to prevent pregnancy-related discrimination and help military women balance their careers with parenthood. COL Martinez noted pregnancy does not affect promotion, although it does limit certain assignments such as deployments. Women who have given birth have up to 12 months to complete a physical fitness test, and pregnancy is not named as the reason for deferring the test (it could be any medical condition).

*Navy: CDR Christine J. Caston, Branch Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Women's Policy (OPNAV N134)*

CDR Caston reviewed the instructions and guidelines pertaining to expectant and new mothers. Current policies are based on civilian health care community practices and strive to balance three central areas: a sailor's health, career development, and the operational needs of the ship during deployment. These policies are covered under a range of instructions, updated at varying points in time. A primary policy governing these issues is OPNAVINST 6000.1C, Navy Guidelines Concerning Pregnancy and Parenthood, which was last updated June 14, 2007, and is undergoing revision.

The Navy has leave and operational deferment policies for expectant and new mothers. Like Army mothers, Navy mothers receive 42 days, or six weeks, of CONLV. Additionally, the Navy's postpartum operational deferment is up to 12 months—three times the required DoD period of four months. Like the Army, these leave periods are the same regardless of birth circumstances. Pregnant servicewomen may remain on board a ship until the 20th week of pregnancy (if obstetric care is accessible within six hours) and aviators may continue flying until the 3rd trimester of pregnancy; however, no servicewomen may be assigned overseas or travel overseas after the 28th week of pregnancy. The Navy was also one of the first Services to pilot the career intermission program, with roughly 91 sailors participating to date.

In the workplace, policies and practices support new parents and pregnant sailors. Pregnant sailors should not be subject to harassment or discrimination, and they have access to a range of services and resources to help them both prepare to start a family and return to the workforce postpartum. These include budgeting programs, lactation specialists, parental support groups, quality health care services, and daycare. Pregnant servicewomen who meet the criteria can advance and be promoted; pregnancy cannot be cited on fitness reports. Women who give birth have six months to meet physical requirements. Breastfeeding policies protect the rights of new mothers; for example, ensuring breaks and access to facilities to breastfeed or pump.

*Marine Corps: Col Brendan Reilly, Branch Head, Manpower Military Policy, Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs*

The Marine Corps governing directive for pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding policies fall under Marine Corps Order 5000.12E (Marine Corps Policy Concerning Pregnancy and Parenthood), which was published December 8, 2004, updated in 2007, and is currently undergoing revision. The policy aims to balance the medical and safety needs of the pregnant or postpartum Marine and her unborn child or baby with the needs of the Marine Corps, while



maintaining optimum job and career performance. Policies were formulated in consultation with the Marine Corps Director of Health Services, among others.

Marine leave and operational deferment policies align with the other Services. The operational deferment period is six months (compared to the required DoD four-month period), though the Marine may choose to waive this deferment period.

Pregnant or postpartum Marines at work are protected and supported by several policies and practices. Like other Service members, pregnant Marines are protected from discrimination, and pregnancy cannot have an effect on advancement or retention (although assignments may be limited in order to protect the health of the Marine and her unborn child—for example, travel restrictions and avoidance of hazardous duties). Marines are provided with a number of career and family balancing resources once they return to work. They are initially exempt from physical training and have up to six months after returning to full duty to complete a physical fitness test. Unlike the other Services, Marines document pregnancy on performance evaluations to explain fitness report outcomes. Current policies ensure breastfeeding mothers are not separated from their infants for at least six months, and are exempt from training requirements that may be hazardous to lactation.

*Air Force: Maj David C. Miller, Chief, Physical Standards Development, Air Force Medical Support Agency, Pentagon*

The Air Force's policies pertaining to pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding are governed by several different instructions, all of which have been updated within the past two years (2013 or later). These policies were driven by operational requirements and advised by a consensus of experts, and policies are regularly reviewed or changed to reflect the latest medical evidence. While the overriding goal is to win the Nation's conflicts, policies related to pregnancy and parenthood are given high priority. Leave policies in the Air Force have been newly modified (as of the morning of the briefing); members who sign on after March 6, 2016 will receive 12 months of postpartum operational deferment, as compared to the current six-month policy.

Air Force women have access to programs and are protected from adverse treatment in several ways. They can use programs designed to help balance a career and parenthood, through resources such as the Airman Family and Readiness Center and family advocacy programs. Proactive discrimination prevention is provided through Human Resources Education, and guidelines preventing discrimination are enforced. Like the other Services, pregnancy is not a consideration for promotion, assignment, or retention; however, starting in 2015, developmental teams for each career field will conduct barrier analyses to determine whether there are any artificial limitations. Female airmen are also protected from reproductive hazards.

Regarding fitness tests, any woman who carries a pregnancy for 20 weeks or greater is exempt from fitness assessments for 180 days after completion of a pregnancy (e.g., live birth, miscarriage, or stillbirth). Fitness requirements for pregnancies of 20 weeks or less are determined on a case-by-case basis in collaboration with a health care provider. Unlike the other Services (except the Marine Corps), neither pregnancy nor unspecified medical reasons are noted on PT forms; there is only a checkbox to indicate whether Service members have met their requirements or not (if they are pregnant and have not taken the test, they are considered exempt; thus, it will be indicated that they have met their requirements). The various pregnancy and postpartum policies have been designed to encourage and support breastfeeding, and members of the Air Force have access to lactation consultants and other resources.



Coast Guard: LCDR Russell Mayer, Team-Leader, Policy and Standards Division, Office of Military Personnel

LCDR Mayer reviewed the Coast Guard's pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding policies. These policies are governed by COMDTINST 1000.9. The instruction, "Pregnancy in the Coast Guard," is under revision with a target publication date of early 2016. The instruction will be retitled, "Pregnancy and Parenthood," to better represent the updated range of pregnancy and postpartum issues it will cover. Other revisions underway include better coverage of breastfeeding and postpartum policies, along with coverage for non-traditional pregnancies such as surrogacies.

Leave and deferment policies in the Coast Guard are comparable to the other Services. The postpartum operational deferment period is six months, as in the Army, Marine Corps, and (until 2016) Air Force.

Like the other branches, the Coast Guard has policies to protect the rights of pregnant servicewomen and support new mothers. It has robust civil rights and affinity groups and provides a range of support programs, including a temporary separation program. Pregnancy should have no effect on retention and advancement, and the Coast Guard does not have a fitness testing policy for all Service members (while fitness testing is required for certain assignments, postpartum servicewomen are exempt for six to 12 months). Service members in the Coast Guard are able to breastfeed or pump at work, and are protected by policies concerning safety and health instruction.

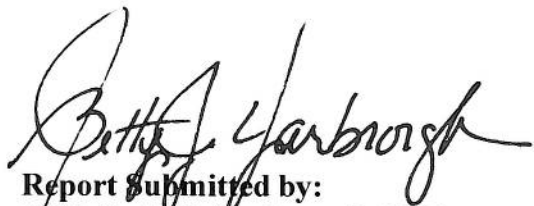
**Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments.

**Final Remarks**

Designated Federal Officer and DACOWITS Military Director, COL Betty Yarbrough, thanked the remaining attendees and closed the public meeting.

**Meeting was adjourned.**



**Report Submitted by:**  
**COL Betty J. Yarbrough, USA**  
**Director, DACOWITS**



**Report Certified by:**  
**LtGen (Ret) Frances Wilson**  
**DACOWITS Chair**

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

LtGen (Ret) Frances Wilson (Chair)

CMSgt (Ret) Bernise F. Belcer (Vice Chair)

Dr. Kristy E. Anderson

FLTCM (Ret.) Jacqueline DiRosa

Rev. Dr. Cynthia R. Lindenmeyer

Ms. Donna M. McAleer

Mr. Brian Morrison

MG (Ret) Gale S. Pollock

SMA (Ret) Kenneth Preston

Ms. Teresa Christenson

CAPT (Ret) Beverly G. Kelley

MG (Ret) John Macdonald

Ms. Monica Medina

LTC (Ret) Hae-Sue Park

VADM (Ret) Carol M. Pottenger

Dr. Jackie Young