



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service

RFI #5: Gender Integration

December 2022



Provide the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) with USMC responses to RFI 5.





- Our current equipment does meet the needs of female Marines
 - The population is appropriately covered with regard to:
 - Uniforms
 - Body Armor
 - Helmets
 - Individual Equipment
- Design products with adjustability, mobility, modularity, and scalability for a better form, fit, and function for the 2% female Marine to the 98% male Marine.
- Equipment is designed to be modular and to fit a range of body sizes
 - For example the hip belt and frame on the pack can be modified to fit a shorter torso
- Training is available at all major Marine Corps Bases and online through YouTube
- We work closely with the Army to leverage their efforts where appropriate
 - Protective Undergarment
 - Soldier Protective System



a. What process is currently being applied to evaluate the effectiveness of PPE and combat gear for women?

- The current process used to evaluate the effectiveness of PPE and combat gear for women is an iterative design approach to optimize the design prior to production. Considerations in design are applied early in the design process, and women are a major part of data captured in test and evaluation, to include surveys and focus groups on form, fit and function.

- PPE and combat gear is evaluated through the Marine Corps Load Effects Assessment Program (MC-LEAP) in order to quantify the burden to all Marines in terms of weight, stiffness and bulk. The MC-LEAP provides a mobility assessment through a standardized methodology. Mobility attributes are incorporated into capability documents affecting materiel solutions that are worn or carried by the individual Marine – both male and female. Results of mobility evaluations inform design iterations of equipment prior to production.





a.i. Provide date of last anthropometric study used to develop PPE and combat gear for women.

September 2009 – August 2010 data collected with published report in 2013. A new anthropometric study is in the planning stages, and will occur in FY23-FY24.

a.ii. Provide any additional technology/studies utilized to improve PPE and combat gear for women.

- Fit Attribute Policy, 2016 (2% female - 98% male Marine)

New policy resulted in accommodation of nearly 15,000 Marines.

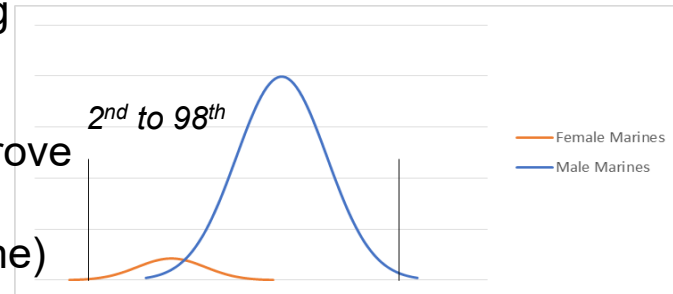
- In Service Reviews and Post Implementation Reviews, Interactions with Combined Operational Advisory Group, Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, Joint Trauma Analysis and Prevention of Injury in Combat, fit studies, and user evaluation surveys.

- USMC Senior Leader Engagement on Female Uniforms and Individual equipment - conducted in Oct 2020.

- Leveraging connections with other services and governmental agencies and research labs. For example:

- - USMC adopted the U.S. Army's Improved Retention System (IRS) for helmets.

- -The IRS is preferred over legacy helmet retention systems by all Marines and accommodates the bun hairstyle for female Marines.



Improved Retention System for helmets



b. What is the current timeline and process to procure equipment via existing supply channels?

The timelines and process for procuring equipment for all Marines via existing supply channels are as follows:

- Uniforms and uniform items for all Marines are stocked at MCCS and issue facilities for same day turnaround on requests or sales. When stocks hit reordering points, the procurement process is initiated at MCCS or issue facility, then transmitted to DLA via funded requisition, who fills order from existing stock. Timeline from request to delivery ranges from ten to 90 days.
- PPE and combat gear for all Marines are stocked at Individual Issue Facilities for same day issue.
- PPE and combat gear for all Marines are initially procured through Marine Corps Systems Command contracts and fielded to Individual Issue Facilities at all Marine Corps bases. Contracts are typically awarded within 9 months. Units and/or individual Marines make appointments for issue of PPE and combat gear that includes proper sizing/fit.
- PPE and combat equipment is initially ordered based on the size tariff identified through anthropometric data. Usage rates and stock levels are reviewed and future orders are adjusted if necessary to ensure right size/quantity at right locations.
- Sustainment of PPE and combat gear is conducted through Defense Logistics Agency contracts and delivered for same day issuance to Marines.
- Lead times for PPE and combat gear vary per item and range from 30 days to 6 months from the date the delivery order is placed to completion of production, testing, and delivery.



c. What is the current timeline and process to procure alternative equipment (e.g., unique fit) not obtainable via existing supply channels?

The timelines and process for procuring alternative equipment for all Marines via existing supply channels are as follows:

- For uniforms, the special measurement process is initiated at MCCS or issue facility, transmitted to DLA, who then makes arrangements for production of the unique item.

Timeline from request to delivery ranges from two to six weeks.

- For PPE and combat gear, Marines outside the 2nd percent female to the 98th percentile male are identified as soon as possible, provided an initial issue for best fit, and alternate solutions are immediately explored.

- Examples of alternate solutions for unique fit items include:

- Development of additional sizes for ballistic plates (Small Short, Small Long, and Extra Small Short E-SAPI plates); 18 month development and testing, currently pending Defense Logistics Agency contract award in Summer 2023.

- Current fielding of Short Shoulder Harness and Small Hip Belt for the USMC Pack; 8 month development and testing, initial fielding ongoing (September 2022-March 2023).

- Helmets: A Marine was identified as requiring an XXL helmet. USMC helmets do not come larger than XL. The Program Office worked with PEO Soldier to send an Army XXL helmet to the Marine within 2 weeks of identifying the requirement.



d. Provide an update on modifications to or the development of gender specific PPE, combat gear, and uniforms since June 2018, to include:

- Ballistic Armor – Summer 2023: Increased sizing of ballistic hard armor plates (Small Short, Small Long, and Extra Small Short E-SAPI plates)
- Short Shoulder Harness and Small Hip Belt: Fielding Ongoing (September 2022-March 2023): Developed new pack components to accommodate fit and properly distribute the weight of a loaded pack on Marines.

d.i. Updates/modifications to maternity uniforms.

- Added tabs to tunics, long sleeve, and short sleeve khaki maternity shirts (FY21)
- Maternity olive drab undershirt certified and available for purchase (FY21)
- Olive drab nursing shirts certified and authorized for optional wear (FY21).
- Blue dress skirts and slacks are in production and available for issue in August 2023
- Maternity physical training shorts in certification, projected availability 4QFY23
- Participating in the Maternity Uniform Pilot Program - DLA and Services are examining the feasibility of issue and recovery of maternity uniforms
- USMC Physical Training Uniform includes maternity upgrade. Adding 360° belly panels for all trouser, skirts, and slacks. Estimated availability FY26





d.ii. Updates/modifications to grooming standards.

Uniform Board 219/220 (MARDMIN 134/22) decisions rendered and published include:

- **FEMALE FINGERNAIL POLISH REGULATIONS.** Female fingernail polish regulations updated to authorize clear and nude polish that resembles the wearer's skin tone and manicures that resemble the natural nail (e.g. French/American and ombre manicures) are authorized for wear in all uniforms (fingernail polish colors in the red spectrum are limited to the service and dress uniforms).

- **"EDGING UP" THE MALE HAIRLINE.** Edging up undesirable hair that extends beyond/below the natural hairline is authorized (e.g., remove a "widow's peak," or remove excessive hair on forehead so it provides a neat line), as long as it provides a neat, professional, and natural appearance.

- **BULK OF HAIR RESTRICTIONS.** The maximum bulk of hair (depth of the hair as it lays on the head) limitations for all Marines increased from 2 to 3 inches.

Uniform Board 220 (MARDMIN pending) decisions rendered but not published yet include:

- Minimum hair length for female Marines
- Half ponytails/braids for medium length hair in Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniforms (MCCUUs)
- Hairstyles for long hair
- Short twists

d.iii. USMC does not oversee any flight suit programs. USMC follows the lead of NAVAIR regarding improvements to flight suits to maintain commonality in Safe-to-Fly requirements.