

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

## **Quarterly Meeting Minutes 6–7 December 2022**

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) held a quarterly business meeting 6–7 December 2022. The meeting took place at the Association of the United States Army Conference Center, 2425 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22201.

### **6 December 2022**

#### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The DACOWITS Military Director and Designated Federal Officer, Colonel Seana M. Jardin, Army, opened the December quarterly business (QBM) meeting by reviewing the Committee’s establishment and charter. COL Jardin reminded those in attendance that any comments made during the meeting by Committee members are their personal opinions and do not reflect a DACOWITS or Department of Defense (DoD) position. Panelist and speaker remarks are not checked or verified for accuracy. COL Jardin then turned the meeting over to the DACOWITS Chair, Ms. Shelly O’Neill Stoneman.

Before beginning the meeting agenda, Ms. Stoneman recognized the passing of former Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Ash Carter. As SecDef, he devoted a significant amount of time and energy leading the Defense Department’s progress in diversity, equity, and inclusion. In January 2016, he was responsible for opening all previously closed military roles to women. He also increased paid military maternity leave from 6 to 12 weeks. He dedicated his long and storied career to the advancement of all Service members by removing barriers to military service. Ms. Stoneman stated it is her honor to be a part of these contributions and continue championing the advancement of women in the military to facilitate greater opportunities for women to serve.

Ms. Stoneman asked all Committee members and meeting attendees to introduce themselves.

#### **Status of Requests for Information**

COL Jardin reviewed the status of the Committee’s requests for information (RFIs). The Committee received responses to all nine of its RFIs. Responses to the RFIs were published on the DACOWITS website.

#### **Briefing: Marine Corps’ Recruit Training (RFI 4)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Marine Corps on its gender integration efforts at recruit training since September 2020 and the current plan and timeline for meeting the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) mandate that each Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) no longer segregate training by gender. The Committee also requested an overview of how the Marine Corps is building capacity for training female recruits at MCRD San Diego, the challenges associated with this effort, and major findings from the University of Pittsburgh study on gender integration at recruit training. Colonel Howard Hall, Chief of Staff for the Marine

Corps Training and Education Command (TECOM), briefed the Committee for the Marine Corps.

Col Hall explained that the purpose of Marine Corps recruit training is to turn civilians into Marines and set the foundation Marines will follow for the rest of their military careers. For this reason, he stated too much is at stake to get it wrong, and the Marine Corps is deliberate in both its planning and execution. Col Hall noted his tenure at TECOM began in July 2020 as the Assistant Chief of Staff in G-3 and Operations. He was responsible for planning, coordinating, and executing actions to improve, refine, and develop all elements of the education and training continuum, from entry-level training through military occupational specialty (MOS) schools, professional military education (PME), and Service-level training exercises. Col Hall stated he has been directly involved with overseeing Marine Corps plans to meet the 2020 NDAA mandate on gender integration at the MCRDs and the University of Pittsburgh study on gender integration of Marine Corps recruit training.

Although these efforts were conducted simultaneously and were working toward the same goal of optimizing and standardizing recruit training, Col Hall aimed to keep the two activities separate to maintain the academic rigor and the integrity of the University of Pittsburgh study. The University of Pittsburgh's multidisciplinary study examined physiological, psychological, and sociological elements of recruit training to help the Marine Corps increase cohesion and reduce injury and attrition. Col Hall noted the Marine Corps was eager to receive findings and recommendations from the study to help develop, improve, and standardize recruit training for all recruits and to meet the Commandant's vision to maximize the strengths of every Marine regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or any other marker. Col Hall reviewed the organization of his briefing remarks, which address each component of the Committee's request for information: (1) a brief overview of recruit training, (2) a discussion the Marine Corps' progress integrating recruit training, (3) an overview of the University of Pittsburgh study, and (4) a discussion of next steps.

Marine Corps recruit training is one of the most rigorous and transformative experiences. More than 10,000 young women and men volunteer to undergo this transformation each year to become better versions of themselves as part of an elite fighting force to serve the United States of America and its citizens. Recruits undergo a set of intense training events to facilitate this transformation while under 24/7 supervision of Marine Corps drill instructors. The Marine Corps considers every moment in and outside the squad bay to be a training opportunity designed to reinforce the permanence of skills learned and the transformation itself. Recruits receive little privacy as their individual identity is removed in favor of teamwork, cohesion, shared hardship, discipline, and instant obedience to orders. Recruits must display physical endurance, mental fortitude, and emotional resilience during training to earn the title of Marine and fulfill their unique role as part of the joint force in defense of the country's national security interests.

Marine Corps recruit training is a 13-week process divided into four phases. During the 5-week phase one, recruits fight their first battles by being pushed to their physical and emotional limits to test their resilience and enable growth, while also learning the values of the Marine Corps and the foundational knowledge they will build on throughout the rest of their training and careers.

During the 3-week phase two, recruits face challenges requiring greater degrees of commitment and endurance as the intensity of activities increase to develop their resolve and build confidence to overcome all obstacles and enemies they encounter. During the 3-week phase three, recruits receive intense instruction on marksmanship and basic field skills, culminating in a 54-hour test of endurance with little sleep or food—called The Crucible. During The Crucible, recruits learn how to rely on other recruits and develop deep personal bonds as they react and respond to high-stress situations and simulated combat. Phase three ends with the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor Ceremony as recruits earn the title of Marine.

During the 2-week phase four, recruits prepare to serve as Marines through guided leadership discussions, and they participate in final physical and academic evaluations. Recruits are reunited with their families and friends on graduation day as part of the culmination of phase four. Col Hall explained that the transformative training process he outlined is essential to help recruits learn their role as Marines. Specifically, the exposure to shock and friction in the combat environment can be debilitating for an individual, but history has shown that teamwork, a sense of belonging, and enduring shared adversity improves combat effectiveness and resilience.

Col Hall explained that some of the Marine Corps' training methods can be described on paper, while other methods cannot. He noted the Marine Corps' former Commandant General Charles Krulak and the University of Pittsburgh study team described the Marine Corps process of uniformed socialization as a sort of "mystical alchemy" transforming recruits from different social, geographic, and demographic backgrounds into a cohesive and lethal force. Col Hall described gender integration as a key ingredient to this mystical alchemy, because it allows male and female recruits to see each other as equals during rigorous training events; see role models of both genders; and foster competition, shared hardship, and increased cohesion by highlighting diverse thoughts and ideas during training events. Male and female recruits are progressively integrated through each of the four phases of training to the point where male and female recruits are integrated into the same small teams during The Crucible. Only billeting is gender segregated as new Marines progress through the School of Infantry following recruit training in compliance with U.S. Code Title 10.

Col Hall transitioned to discuss recent progress the MCRDs have made with gender integration. The Marine Corps has leveraged the University of Pittsburgh study and other supports to identify next steps for meeting the 2020 NDAA mandate. For example, Col Hall convened a gender integration operational planning team (OPT) in April 2021, composed of subject matter experts (SMEs) from Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA), Marine Corps Recruiting Command, and the MCRDs. The OPT identified a variety of challenges associated with gender integration at MCRDs, including lack of appropriate MCRD buildings and facilities for female Marines. To address this challenge, MCRD Parris Island repurposed older and retired barracks as an interim step to meet the needs of female Marines until additional building projects can be completed.

Another challenge identified by the OPT was the need to increase and maintain the number of female drill instructors from 134 to 207 to meet the training needs of female Marines at both MCRDs. Col Hall noted that immediately reassigning half of the female drill instructors from MCRD Parris Island or other MOSs to MCRD San Diego would negatively impact their career progression, retention, quality of life, and volunteerism. To address this challenge, the Marine Corps developed a plan to increase the number of female drill instructors over time. The Marine

Corps selects only its most highly qualified Service members for drill instructor assignments through special duty assignments, but other special duty assignments also compete for highly qualified Marines. For example, other special duty assignments in the Marine Corps include recruiters, Marine Corps embassy security guards, and combat instructors. The OPT also noted female drill instructors should have the same duty experiences, billet progression at the MCRDs from junior drill instructor to senior drill instructor, workload, and quality of life as their male drill instructor counterparts.

Col Hall noted one personnel challenge that complicates future gender integration efforts for recruit training. As a result of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the associated social distancing requirements, the Marine Corps accessed fewer male and female Marines in fiscal year (FY) 2020 and 2021. Specifically, 3,239 fewer male and 1,243 fewer female Active Component Marines were accessed during these years than in the previous 2 years. Reduced accessions result in fewer E4 to E6 Marines being eligible to meet the requirement of 207 female drill instructors in FY24 through FY26. To address this challenge, the OPT developed a plan to sustainably increase female drill instructors without significantly impacting the assignment of Marines to other special duty assignments.

Col Hall noted that since 2017, both MCRDs have integrated their regiment, battalion, company, and support instructor staffs, allowing recruits to receive mentorship and training from both male and female staff and instructors throughout recruit training. The Marine Corps recognizes having strong leaders of both genders during recruit training is important for ensuring gender integration in the Marine Corps. In January 2019, MCRD Parris Island initiated a pilot of a gender-integrated company that graduated in March 2019. In July 2019, MCRD Parris Island adopted the company integration model, applying lessons learned from the pilot and incorporating recommendations from 2009 and 2017 Center for Naval Analysis studies. Under this model, recruits are billeted by platoon in gender-specific squad bays to maintain compliance with U.S. Code Title 10 requirements, but they execute the same program of instruction and training events in a company composed of five male platoons and one female platoon. MCRD Parris Island graduated 8 gender-integrated companies in FY20 and 10 gender-integrated companies in FY21. In FY22, MCRD Parris Island fully integrated 4th recruit training battalion, which previously trained only female recruits, and graduated 18 gender-integrated companies. MCRD Parris Island is on track to graduate 27 gender-integrated companies in FY23.

Col Hall noted the Marine Corps expanded gender-integrated recruit training to MCRD San Diego in FY21. The first female drill instructors graduated from MCRD San Diego's drill instructor school in December 2020. MCRD San Diego initiated their first gender-integrated company as a pilot in February 2021; those recruits graduated in May 2021. MCRD San Diego graduated 2 gender-integrated companies in FY22 and is projected to graduate 13 gender-integrated companies in FY23. Col Hall noted the Marine Corps continues to share lessons learned and best practices between both MCRDs after each phase of recruit training and graduation. The Marine Corps also facilitates multiple engagements between SMEs from each MCRD throughout the year to help each Depot apply lessons learned on the ground.

Col Hall confirmed that both MCRDs are on track to meet the 2020 NDAA mandate. Col Hall provided an overview of the University of Pittsburgh study and its findings, quoting the original performance of work statement, stating "while a number of studies have examined options of

gender integrated studies at MCRDs, none to date have been conducted by a public or private university with a published result. Examinations of this subject by entities within the DoD, while informative, have not benefited from an external review by a non-DoD related entity.” Col Hall noted the scope of work asked the University of Pittsburgh “to provide objective, data-driven recommendations for policy change to entry-level training models for Marine Corps recruits and to make recommendations for models that integrate genders to the greatest extent possible while continuing to train Marines to established standards. Specifically, the study should address the sociological effects of gender integration and consider training models which maintain the same levels of discipline, physical fitness, attention to detail, and camaraderie. This study should examine integrated training practices from other Services to determine if their methods are useful to the Marine Corps.”

Col Hall noted the University of Pittsburgh was awarded the study contract in September 2020, and the study was launched in October 2020. The study was structured by seven tasks: (1) a literature review of Marine Corps and other Service training, (2) an examination of entry-level training from the other Services, (3) the collection of data on physiological and sociological aspects of Marine Corps recruit training, (4) the determination of alternative training models and recommendations of pilot projects, (5) engagement with 10 civilian and 10 veteran SMEs with publications in the field, (6) the development of interim and final reports, and (7) the publication of manuscripts in professional journals. Col Hall confirmed 1 of 12 manuscripts is currently being developed, focused on study design considerations for the gender integration study.

The University of Pittsburgh study team identified three alternate models in its final report to the Marine Corps. The first alternate model was the implementation of mixed-gender drill instructor teams across all platoons in integrated companies. The second alternate model is the integrated company plus model, which builds on the current Marine Corps integrated recruit training model by expanding the number and types of training events that are integrated at or below the platoon level. The third alternate model is an integrated platoon model where recruits are housed in squad bays according to their gender but integrate in different platoons as they participate in training activities. Ultimately, the University of Pittsburgh study team recommended the Marine Corps pursue a combination of the first and second alternate models. The study team also made 18 secondary recommendations to the Marine Corps to address various topics, including strategic vision, evaluation and working groups, curriculum and education, culture and social norms, recruit experience, female population, and physical and human performance. Col Hall explained that the Marine Corps had completed or had begun implementing 12 of the 18 recommendations before even receiving the final report.

Col Hall noted that University of Pittsburgh’s final report reinforced various aspects of the Marine Corps recruit training methodologies, including the 24/7 immersive environment, where every moment is considered a valuable training opportunity to help aid the transition from recruit to Marine. He quoted the study report, “The Marine Corps’ use of the squad bay reinforces fundamental elements of the Marine Corps basic training and transformation process, including an unrelenting training environment, around the clock presence of drill instructors, stripping recruits of their individual identities in favor of the team mindset, and the instant and willing obedience to orders, making acceptance of the complete control of the drill instructor part of this cornerstone.” Col Hall highlighted another passage from the study report highlighting the central role drill instructors play in recruit training, noting “Drill instructors are a team of three to four

Marines who will be with them day-in and day-out to test and challenge them, apply unrelenting pressure and constant demands to develop their fortitude so they become part of the Service that is truly first to fight.” Marine Corps drill instructors reside in the squad bays within proximity to their recruits and officer candidates in order to provide constant supervision and respond to the emotional, physical, and personal needs of their recruits at any given time. Col Hall also highlighted the study team’s support for the Marine Corps’ current integrated company recruit training models from the report, quoting “recruits adapt to the challenges of acquiring military knowledge and skills during fully integrated classroom and field events. Further [gender] integration occurs at the platoon, squad, and fire team levels for targeted training events and to achieve specific integration goals. Specific [gender] integration goals include reducing biases, building cohesive units capable of diverse thought and intelligent action, perceiving each other as equals, sharing of ideas while accomplishing common goals, and overcoming common hardships.”

Col Hall noted the final study report also includes data on recruits’ cortisol and stress levels, kinetic energy output, and sleep and recovery practices during all phases of recruit training. These physiological data points are currently being analyzed by TECOM’s Human Performance branch and other entities to identify efficiencies in processes to reduce injury and reduce attrition, while building physical and mental resilience to improve the length and outcomes of Marine careers.

Col Hall noted that in addition to the annual assessment that ensures the Marine Corps is on track to meet the minimum number of requisite drill instructors necessary to meet the 2020 NDAA mandate, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps has chartered an entry-level training (ELT) Advisory Council chaired by the Commanding General of TECOM. The purpose of the ELT Advisory Council is to leverage collective subject matter expertise from across the Marine Corps to analyze each of the study team’s alternate model recommendations and secondary recommendations to develop appropriate and sustainable solutions for the Commandant’s consideration without introducing unintended consequences in billet progression or career progression or undoing other efforts outside TECOM.

Col Hall stated that the study team’s report also highlighted cultural challenges that could inhibit the integration of recruit training, including instances of drill instructors using degrading and demeaning language with recruits. This behavior violates established orders governing recruit training. To address this issue, the TECOM Commanding General and Sergeant Major traveled to both MCRDs and engaged with MCRD personnel and drill instructor school leadership to discuss strategies for compliance and enforcement of existing recruit training policies.

Col Hall noted the University of Pittsburgh’s study represents a unique examination of Marine Corps recruit training and referenced it as a valuable tool that can be used to continue informing recruit training methods, policies, and practices. The Marine Corps has been in a continuous state of improvement and refinement since its inception to enhance the lethality, cohesion, and effectiveness of its Service members. Col Hall confirmed that the Marine Corps’ efforts to integrate recruit training alongside those of the University of Pittsburgh study provide the Service with the tools to optimize and standardize recruit training for all men and women who attend training to become better versions of themselves, serve the United States of America, and become Marines. Col Hall encouraged each Committee member to visit one of the MCRDs to

witness the transformation of civilian men and women into a cohesive fighting force and to talk with drill instructors about their experiences.

Col Hall concluded his briefing.

### Discussion

Command Master Chief (Ret.) Octavia D. Harris thanked Col Hall for his briefing and asked whether female drill instructors directly train male recruits during platoon training activities. Col Hall noted that female drill instructors are not training male recruits during integrated training activities at this time. He explained that each integrated company includes five male platoons and one female platoon, and a member of each platoon's drill instructor team remains with the platoon at all times, including overnight in the squad bay. U.S. Code Title 10 requires that same-gender drill instructors supervise their platoons during overnight activities. However, support staff for activities such as marksmanship, swimming, martial arts, and academics are integrated, and a female support staff may engage with a male recruit during those activities.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked if female drill instructors will be responsible for training male recruits eventually under the integrated company model. Col Hall noted the University of Pittsburgh did recommend having female drill instructors train male recruits, and the ELT Advisory Council is currently considering this recommendation. Col Hall indicated one of the challenges of having female drill instructors train male recruits is the Marine Corps is still trying to increase the number of female drill instructors from 134 to 207 to facilitate the training of integrated companies at both MCRDs. Once the Marine Corps meets this goal, the ELT Advisory Council will discuss options for implementing the first alternate training model of mixed-gender drill instructor teams for consideration by the Commandant. However, Col Hall noted that implementing the first alternate training model would require 258 female drill instructors. He reiterated that the Marine Corps plans to first increase the number of female drill instructors to 207 to meet the needs of the current integrated training model without negatively impacting other special duty assignments such as recruiters, embassy security guards, and combat instructors. When the population of female drill instructors is stable, they will begin considering strategies for moving toward the mixed-gender drill instructor team model.

Colonel (Ret.) Nancy P. Anderson asked where the servicewomen will come from to increase the number of female drill instructors. Col Hall noted a working group is part of the ELT Advisory Council that meets biweekly with O6 and below SMEs focused on identifying areas where these servicewomen may come from and assessing the risk and the appropriate timeline for increasing the number of female drill instructors. The ELT Advisory Council will also consider findings from the Marine Corps' annual assessment of gender integrated recruit training to identify a sustainable strategy for increasing the number of female drill instructors. Col Hall noted that a misstep, such as increasing the number of female drill instructors too quickly in favor of female recruiters, could have secondary effects on recruiting and could take years to remedy.

Ms. Marquette J. Leveque noted that Col Hall highlighted cultural challenges associated with implementing the study team's recommendation of a combination of alternate integrated training models 1 and 2, but asked if other types of challenges affected this potential effort. Col Hall confirmed the study team's report highlighted other areas the Marine Corps overlooked related to

gender integrated training. For example, he highlighted the lack of female representation in the academic curriculum focused on the traditions of the Marine Corps and in artwork at MCRD San Diego.

Dr. (Colonel Ret.) Samantha A. Weeks asked for an overview of what day-to-day gender integrated recruit training looks like today versus what it will look like in FY25 as the Marine Corps progresses. Col Hall noted MCRD San Diego went from a pilot company to having 2 companies graduate the next year, to 13 companies graduating this year to build drill instructor capacity. He noted that M&RA has to identify E4-E6 first tour drill instructors from the fleet to volunteer or be assigned to drill instructor duty and complete drill instructor school before they train their first tour of recruits. There are second-tour drill instructors, but the Marine Corps needs to build the experience of first-tour drill instructors; the tiered approach to gender integration is helping the team meet that challenge. Col Hall explained that the Marine Corps plans to train 50 percent of female recruits at MCRD Parris Island and 50 percent of female recruits at MCRD San Diego by FY25, while also dividing the projected 207 female drill instructors across the 2 MCRDs. He explained that recruit training will look much different from how it does today in format and rigor as the ELT Advisory Council continues to discuss strategies for implementing recommendations from the University of Pittsburgh study.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks clarified her question by asking if female recruits currently train only with other female recruits at the MCRDs, and whether that will be different in FY25. Col Hall confirmed that female recruits check into the squad bay with a platoon composed of all females led by a team of female drill instructors. Recruit training becomes progressively more integrated as recruits move through the different phases of training. For example, phase one, where recruits are introduced to military life, is more heavily gender segregated, but training is integrated further in phase two. By the time recruits reach The Crucible in phase 3, they are integrated at the squad and sometimes fire team level. Col Hall also noted that throughout the progression from phase one through phase four, male and female recruits train together in many training exercises, such as obstacle courses, endurance courses, and academic courses.

Rear Admiral (Ret.) Mary P. O'Donnell asked if there have been consistent challenges related to the gender integration of recruit training that have arisen at both MCRDs. Col Hall explained that neither the University of Pittsburgh study nor the Marine Corps' after-action reports from either MCRD identify any serious challenges with integrating recruit training. However, some minor administrative and logistical challenges arose, such as a lack of female latrines in training areas and issues with obtaining female uniforms at MCRD San Diego. Col Hall stated none of the challenges identified affected the mission of the Marine Corps. RADM (Ret.) O'Donnell followed up to ask how male recruits have adjusted to gender integrated recruit training. Col Hall stated they are recruits and Marines, and they adjust and suggested no major issues have arisen thus far.

Ms. Stoneman asked what feedback has been provided to the MCRDs regarding the cultural challenges of integrating recruit training that were highlighted in the University of Pittsburgh report and how the MCRDs plan to address these challenges moving forward. Col Hall noted the initial reaction to the cultural challenges from the Marine Corps is that the University of Pittsburgh study was overdue, and it served as a wake-up call and reckoning for the Service. The Marine Corps took the appropriate actions immediately after learning about drill instructors



using demeaning language with recruits by communicating these issues to the MCRDs to ensure even the smaller, under-the-radar practices were identified and addressed. Col Hall confirmed that the MCRDs did not provide negative pushback on these findings and instead recognized the importance of identifying these cultural challenges to support the gender integration of recruit training.

Brigadier General (Ret.) Jarisse Sanborn asked if Col Hall could elaborate on the six University of Pittsburgh secondary recommendations the Marine Corps has not yet begun to implement. Col Hall noted that the first, defining strategic vision, reaches beyond TECOM and involves the ELT Advisory Council because it affects both recruits and the Fleet Marine Force. He explained that defining a strategic vision for gender integration at recruit training goes beyond just gender integration, and it should focus on standardizing recruit training for all Marines. He quoted the second recommendation that has not been implemented as yet is, “Restrict those who teach key/milestone sexual harassment and sexual assault courses to full-time sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) personnel who are SMEs.” Col Hall confirmed the Marine Corps is in the process of hiring more SAPR professionals, but given 34,000 recruits complete recruit training across the Marine Corps each year, the Service is considering strategies to expand the reach of certified SAPR professionals through other Marine Corps personnel who can provide a similar level of support but may not be certified. The third recommendation that has not been implemented is, “Replace gendered identifiers (e.g., sir, ma’am) in the primary salutation or response to drill instructors with gender neutral language such as ‘drill instructor,’ ‘senior drill instructor,’ ‘senior,’ ‘DI,’ or ‘SDI.’” Col Hall explained that this recommendation will take much effort, and the ELT Advisory Council is considering whether these language changes would instill the appropriate values in recruits upon graduation and entry into the Fleet Marine Force. The fourth recommendation that has not been implemented is, “Build an additional competitive element for series or companies to work toward to facilitate drill instructor and recruit investment in a shared identity beyond the platoon.” Col Hall noted this recommendation is related to how the Marine Corps evaluates drill instructors, and right now, some of the key metrics used to evaluate drill instructors are scores. The Marine Corps is considering what additional metrics may be appropriate to measure cohesion and other training outcomes. The fifth recommendation that has not been implemented is examining the “potential relationship between attrition among female Marine Corps recruits and psychological resilience measures on the Connor-Davidson scale—further investigation recommended.” The sixth recommendation that has not been implemented is “association between previous quantity of strength training in female Marine Corps recruits, and attrition and preservation of neuromuscular function—further investigation recommended.” Col Hall noted that another branch of Marine Corps TECOM is considering these last two recommendations. Col Hall also explained TECOM is reviewing the second alternate model (the integrated company plus model) proposed by the University of Pittsburgh and considering expanding gender integration deeper at the platoon, squad, and firing squad level for more training events. However, deeper gender integration may be difficult to implement in training events focused on combat-related activities, such as body sparring and Marine Corps martial arts. He noted that both the University of Pittsburgh study team and other Marine Corps personnel agree that some guided discussions with drill instructors are better segregated by gender, while others are better integrated.

Dr. Trudi C. Ferguson asked what is done to discuss gender sensitivity and what difference this makes in an integrated group. Col Hall noted that recruits are provided formal instruction on

topics such as sexual assault and intervention in larger groups, but senior drill instructors also have drill instructor time with recruits, where they sit with recruits in the squad bay and have a person-to-person discussion about gender-sensitive topics.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked if there has been an increase in injuries among female recruits since the integration of recruit training. Col Hall responded there has not been a specific increase and explained the University of Pittsburgh report has much neuromuscular data, but the Marine Corps is examining the association between injuries and attrition and has not yet identified data that validate that connection. He noted a greater degree of motivation that male and female recruits put into training since integrating, but the types and frequency of injuries have remained relatively stable among both genders.

Ms. Stoneman noted the University of Pittsburgh report includes anecdotes about how male and female recruits training together in initial training exercises has demystified gender segregation from the past. She asked if that gap will be addressed in the plan to integrate recruit training over time. Col Hall noted the Marine Corps is working toward the goal that recruit training is just recruit training—where all recruits have a standardized experience. However, he noted the Marine Corps understands the importance of remaining vigilant to ensure deviation from policy is identified and addressed.

Ms. Stoneman followed up to ask how the Marine Corps plans to standardize recruit training following the gap period when male and female recruits are not fully training together at recruit training. Col Hall encouraged the Committee to visit the MCRDs to see the training events where male and female recruits participate side by side. He reiterated that gender integration increases as recruits move through the phases of recruit training because many of the phase one training events are focused on the individual to break them down and create a teamwork mindset. Progressively, gender integration increases during training as male and female platoons participate in physical fitness tests and obstacle course events side by side.

Vice Admiral (Ret.) Robin R. Braun asked what kinds of feedback TECOM has received from drill instructors since the company-level integration of recruit training. Col Hall noted he is not in the position to answer that question, but he confirmed he has heard overall positive feedback from subject matter expert working groups and has seen positive command climate surveys. He noted that most personnel recognize that recruit training is better when gender integrated after they get past the newness of the policy change.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked if someone is keeping track of the financial cost for the Marine Corps for implementing gender integrated recruit training. Col Hall explained that many of the costs were associated with facility improvements at MCRD San Diego, such as establishing female-specific latrines in the training area, adding door locks, and building a facility for female uniform issuance. MCRD Parris Island has mitigated some costs by repurposing retired buildings for now, but the construction of new buildings has been part of their plan since before they began integrating recruit training, so this was not an unexpected cost.

Ms. Leveque asked if the Marine Corps has a plan for assessing gender integrated recruit training to ensure it is working. Col Hall reiterated that the Marine Corps conducts an annual assessment of recruit training where specific measures of performance and effectiveness are considered,

such as the trends in the rate of injury, the rate of non-end-of-active Service attrition, and the number of drill instructor allegations. The Marine Corps is considering the quality of the recruits through engagement with them and trends in the attrition of female drill instructors through promotion and retention data from M&RA.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks noted it appears U.S. Code Title 10 is a constraint on housing recruits of different genders together and requires same-gender drill instructors supervise them overnight. She asked if U.S. Code Title 10 is the only constraint preventing mixed-gender drill instructor teams to provide overnight supervision in squad bays. Col Hall noted the Marine Corps believes functionally and practically that it makes sense to maintain a same-gender drill instructors overnight for reasons related to unit cohesion. This includes allowing them to constantly monitor and evaluate recruit performance, mental health, and behaviors that would otherwise be interrupted if different drill instructor teams supervised units during training and billeting. For example, if a female recruit trained with a specific unit during the day and began to exhibit behaviors of self-harm but then transitioned to another unit with a new set of drill instructors with no awareness of these self-harm behaviors, the drill instructors would lose the ability to understand the recruit's baseline behaviors. The constant 24/7 drill instructor team presence helps to address this issue by facilitating observation of recruits throughout training and billeting.

The briefing discussion concluded.

### **Briefing: Defense Department's Civil-Military Programs (RFI 1)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the DoD's Outreach, Policy & Programs (Civil-Military Programs) Office on the Defense Department's progress toward DACOWITS' 2020 recommendation to increase oversight and assess the effectiveness and scale of outreach programs to positively impact adolescent women's propensity for military service. Mr. Mike O'Toole, a program analyst for DoD Outreach, Policy, and Programs in the Civil-Military Programs Office, briefed the Committee.

Mr. O'Toole is the Director of the DoD Civil-Military Programs Office and works for Mr. Judd Lyons, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Integration. Mr. Lyons is the former Adjutant General for the State of Nebraska and former Acting Director of the Army National Guard. This Civil-Military Office works for the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for M&RA, Mr. Thomas Constable, and falls under both the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), Mr. Gilbert Cisneros Jr., and Deputy USD(P&R), Mr. Ashish Vazirani.

Mr. O'Toole thanked the Committee for the opportunity to share the work the Civil-Military Programs Office. Mr. O'Toole shared a personal story about his daughter graduating Coast Guard basic training in Cape May, New Jersey, to emphasize both his personal and professional investment in the recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of women in the Armed Forces.

For more than 30 years, the National Guard Youth Challenge Program has been a residential program administered by the National Guard Bureau (NGB) for children who cease to continually attend secondary education. Mr. O'Toole stated the children are not necessarily high

school dropouts, but those children who show up for a day and then are absent several weeks, and so on. At 39 locations, these students go through 22.5 weeks of quasi-military training for the purposes of credit recovery. Students must be 15.5 to 18 years old to be eligible for the program. They enter the program with an individual education plan; the distractions of home, many of which are causing the issues, are removed. Students can focus on credit recovery, and in most cases, the program is able to matriculate them back to high school and graduate on time. For those unable to return to the high school, the goal is to get them a GED or equivalent and get them into the workforce.

Mr. O'Toole stated there is a 12-month post-program designed for mentorship, and the children enter the program with a mentor. DoD has been running this program for 32 years. The program operates in 39 States as a Federal and State cost-share. In addition to the Youth Challenge Program, seven locations are in the Job Challenge phase of the Youth Challenge Program. Some students will not return to high school, but the program builds a foundation over 22.5 weeks. The program provides them with tangible job skills training and certificates for many trades to get them into the workforce. Mr. O'Toole described this program as making better citizens who are giving to, rather than taking from, their communities.

Mr. O'Toole highlighted another program featured in the Innovative Readiness Training program, in which communities provide applications to the Military Departments for projects in their community. The Military Departments review the applications and identify mission-essential task lists where their training mirrors the community's needs. The Civil-Military Programs Office brings those two needs together and provides resources. Mr. O'Toole provided examples such as physically relocating a village in Alaska as a result of cliff erosion; de-netting offshore piers; and medical, dental, optical, and veterinarian services for individuals in the community who are homeless.

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) is a Service program; however, the Civil-Military Programs office oversees the policy and administration of JROTC; however, three thousand, five hundred schools host a JROTC program, with 7,500 military retirees having been hired as faculty at these high schools to teach the tenets of good citizenship and the values of public service; 150,000 youth attend JROTC programs every year.

The last program is the DoD STARBASE program for fifth-graders. Mr. O'Toole stated research had identified fifth grade as a time when youth's minds are most malleable as they transition into middle school. This is an optimum time to introduce science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) concepts. DoD STARBASE currently has 83 participating locations. Holloman Air Force Base (AFB) was recognized recently and can influence more than 125,000 youth per year. DoD STARBASE program is designed as a 5-day course, typically with a 5-hour day. DoD partners with a host school that agrees to bring the youth to an installation. The DoD STARBASE program enhances what the school is already doing.

Mr. O'Toole said many youth never have an opportunity to go to a military installation or base, and this program allows fifth-graders aged 10–11 a 5-week program curriculum designed in partnership with the school district. This year, 434 different school districts taught different curriculums, so DoD STARBASE program has around 90 lesson plans. This is a year-round program, but when school is over in May or June, summer programs, outreach programs, and

opportunities are available to give back to host commands for their own military dependents. These programs are designed specifically for the underserved and Title I communities; for example, school districts that do not have the budget for 3D printers and coding. The curriculum is developed in partnership with the schools to help them work with these youth as they move into middle school.

The DoD STARBASE program started at Selfridge AFB in Michigan with a grant from the Kellogg Foundation. Mr. O'Toole described former Michigan Senator Carl Levin as the godfather of STARBASE, providing the Senate support and ensuring money for the program after the Kellogg grant expired. Title 10 U.S. Code § 2193 governs the DoD STARBASE program. The authority is for K through 12th grade, although it focuses primarily on 5th-grade level to boost the impact. This enables the program to design pathways for continuing to influence opportunities up to 12th grade. The DoD STARBASE program is hosted by the Army, Army National Guard, Air Force, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Space Force.

Mr. O'Toole stated Air Force programs were recently converted to Space Force at Patrick, Peterson, and Vandenberg Space Force Bases. The DoD STARBASE program is welcoming Navy back after a decade of absence, with locations in Orlando and Pensacola, Florida. Mr. O'Toole is meeting with Fort Worth next week for the Navy and with Anchorage, Alaska, to work with the Air Force. He stated 19 commands are actively asking to host a DoD STARBASE program. Mr. O'Toole reported he was in Aberdeen Proving Ground and New Castle, Delaware, last week. Commands are asking to host this program, and many commanders are seeking a chance to give back to the community where they reside. The average cost of program administration is \$450,000. A one-classroom program, ranging from 25 to 35 youth, requires 4 individuals: a director, deputy director, and 2 instructors. Two instructors are required per classroom. One classroom must host at least 30 classes per year.

The mission of the DoD STARBASE program is to bring an entire fifth-grade class, their teacher, and their bus driver outside the classroom to a laboratory environment for a hands-on, minds-on experience. Mr. O'Toole described 3D interactive sand tables and 3D printers. He gave the example of youth being able to code, program, and develop a lunar rover to be used in the culminating activity where they test it on a simulated Mars landscape or in mountains with volcanos. These activities are designed to spark their interest in future career opportunities by showing them different situations through the "hands-on, minds-on" experiences. The curriculum focuses on different aspects of STEM, and within the 25 hours, time is dedicated to career exploration within the military and the science behind what Service members do in uniform. Mr. O'Toole provided Goodfellow AFB in San Angelo, Texas, as an exemplary program where they bring students to the firefighting school to show them a mock aircraft on fire. They explain the science behind extinguishing a fire such as what is used and the arch and angles for extinguishing.

Mr. O'Toole extended an invitation to the Committee members to see a DoD STARBASE program where they reside, because it is an exciting program to see the youth interacting. For instance, he said youth do not realize they are doing physics as part of the program. Mr. O'Toole discussed the table on slide 8 that shows the crosswalk of categories; DoD STARBASE program approved lesson plans; and lesson length, objectives, key concepts, and how they fit the national standard. Mr. O'Toole reiterated 462 local education activities are available. Much thought and

effort go into the DoD STARBASE program, which has been running for three decades and has educators on the curriculum committee. Mr. O'Toole praised the program directors and stated many teachers find they too can learn through this program. The curriculum has aspects the teachers can implement throughout the week to prepare them for the next installation visit and prolong the opportunity to influence over the 5-week period.

The justification for why Congress continues to see this program as valuable is that STEM continues to be underrepresented in many elementary and grade schools. The DoD STARBASE program provides an opportunity for engagement and influence where youth can directly interact with Service members in uniform. Over the years, the average program participation is 49 percent girls and 51 percent boys; this can vary slightly by State. This program helps to bridge the civil-military divide, which is why it is better aligned as a DoD program than a Department of Education program.

Mr. O'Toole stated the DoD STARBASE program does pre- and post-tests to assess the program overall. The results are presented in a report, which is available online. The reports were previously required by Congress; however, a recent effort seeks to reduce the number of required annual reports. These reports show the gain in knowledge and awareness and improvements in attitudes toward the Defense Department of teachers, principals, and school administrators.

STARBASE 2.0 is composed of afterschool clubs for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students in themes such as robotics and drones and hosted at their middle school to continue their engagement throughout middle school. An annual rocketry challenge is the culminating event held in the plains of Virginia. Mr. O'Toole stated a DoD STARBASE program team is always represented at the event. The southern California group uses mentors from Space-X.

The DoD Civil-Military Program Office provides programs for prolonged exposure from kindergarten to 12th grade, extending influence over the course of their education.

Mr. O'Toole concluded his briefing.

### Discussion

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Kevin W. Mangum described recent Committee briefings from the Services and the Office of the SecDef (OSD), in which the decreasing propensity of youth to enter the military is presented as a serious challenge. He reviewed the 2020 DACOWITS recommendation for the SecDef to increase oversight and assess the effectiveness and scale of outreach programs with the objective of directing new programs and/or adjusting the purpose of existing programs to positively impact adolescent women's propensity for military service.

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked who the propensity enhancement officer in OSD is and whether propensity enhancement is built into the Civil-Military Office programs. Mr. O'Toole responded there is a fine line between accessions and recruiting 10-year-olds into the military, which is why it is exciting to provide youth the opportunity to see what is behind the barbed wire fence on an installation. Mr. O'Toole stated he would defer to his colleagues in DoD Accessions Policy to answer the question about looking at the propensity to serve from a young age. In the DoD STARBASE program, time is built in for the host command to share the STEM behind their careers and get youth excited about the possibilities. Mr. O'Toole shared an example from a

Coast Guard facility in Elizabethtown, North Carolina, where he saw an all-female crew performing aircraft maintenance. If the DoD STARBASE program can bring girls to see that all-female crew performing that type of work, it is reasonable to imagine that would contribute, in some way, to the propensity to serve. Mr. O'Toole again emphasized the line between accessions and youth outreach.

Ms. Ann Norris asked if the DoD STARBASE program takes the whole class. Mr. O'Toole responded affirmatively. With the participation demographic at 49 percent girls and 51 percent boys, Ms. Norris wondered if children opt-in or take the whole class. Mr. O'Toole responded they must obtain parental permission, and they do not use the term "field trip" because it is an extension of what the school districts do. The DoD STARBASE program works with school districts and the school principals, noting there are opportunity costs with taking 5 hours out of the day, but the schools work around them. Mr. O'Toole noted anecdotally the youth who attend tend to be on their best behavior because they want to go back. STARBASE is designed to take the whole class. Ms. Norris asked if the programs for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade are voluntary. Mr. O'Toole responded affirmatively, stating they are afterschool clubs. Ms. Norris asked if they are seeing as many women interested as men. Mr. O'Toole responded there is a high degree of female interest in those afterschool clubs. He stated all-girls STEM clubs are in place at St. Paul and Robins AFBs. In Minneapolis, an all-deaf girls STEM club was in place with resources and interpreters. Mr. O'Toole stated they go out of their way to make sure the underrepresented are represented in these afterschool activities. Mr. O'Toole stated they are facilitating the clubs and bringing together the resources and the mentors, and instructors get excited about running the clubs.

Ms. Stoneman clarified that JROTC is under the Civil-Military Program office's purview. Mr. O'Toole responded the JROTC policy is his office's responsibility. The Military Services budget for and execute the JROTC program, and the instructor falls under DoD's Personnel and Readiness Ms. Stoneman asked if the presence of JROTC programs translates into increased accessions in that area. She clarified she was not asking about those in JROTC who join Active Duty, but the overall effect of the program's presence on accessions in a local area. Mr. O'Toole responded affirmatively and noted JROTC was the responsibility of DoD Accessions Policy until 6 years ago, when it was moved to the Civil-Military Program Office. The acting SecDef evaluated whether JROTC was an accessions program or a youth outreach program. General McConville recently testified there is a causality of having the program, seeing youth go above and beyond and choosing this as one of their high school electives. This shows a propensity to do something bigger than oneself; rather than band or chorus, they are choosing something different.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked how the high school dropout outreach program, the National Guard Challenge Outreach Program, is correlated with establishing interest in pursuing military service. Mr. O'Toole responded it does generate interest in military service. DoD has been pursuing the authority from the government to be able to collect long-term data. Mr. O'Toole stated his authority under Title 32 only allows the collection of data 12 months past the residential portion of the program. The request for additional data would provide the ability to conduct a 5-, 7-, or 10-year look. There is a propensity-to-serve element; however, the main mission is to get the students back to high school so they can graduate on time. The NGB does a good job with the program and ensuring students are academically eligible to be recruited. Prior

to this program, they would have no high school degree or GED. The program numbers are down coming out of COVID-19. They are usually around 11,000 youth per year and currently the number is 8,500.

Mr. O'Toole emphasized the youth are now academically recruitable. Broadly speaking, the statistics remain the same, with one in four being eligible for military service, and those youth are determining their path of junior college, higher education, the workforce, or the military. Without the program, these students would not academically be eligible to be recruited. The Defense Manpower Data Center could probably create an estimate. Mr. O'Toole commented that recently they have tried to capture how many students at the Military Entry Processing Stations have participated in the Youth Challenge Program. Mr. O'Toole shared a story that one of the graduates from the West Virginia Mountaineer Youth Challenge Academy got accepted at West Point. This individual was not going to graduate high school before that program, and now he will be a cadet at West Point. Mr. O'Toole encouraged the Committee members to visit one of the 39 program locations to see the program in action. The youth who go through this program have a choice to make, and they make a choice to do something different.

The briefing discussion concluded.

### **Panel Briefing: Military Services' Personal Protective Equipment, Combat Gear, and Uniforms Update (RFI 5)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, National Guard, and Coast Guard on the status of gender-appropriate and properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) and gear for both training and operational use. The Committee is interested in learning how the uniform development and procurement process impacts servicewomen's ability to obtain properly fitting PPE, combat gear, and uniforms. The Space Force and National Guard provided written responses in lieu of a briefing. The Air Force provided a written response in addition to its briefing.

#### *Army*

Lieutenant Colonels Naim Lee and Stephen Miller, Product Managers for Soldier Clothing and Individual Equipment for the Army Program Executive Office Soldier, briefed the Committee for the Army.

LTC Miller noted gender-appropriate and properly fitting PPE is a very important topic for the Army and something they have been addressing for a few years. In particular, the Army is working to ensure servicewomen are accounted for upfront in the design process of new clothing and equipment. LTC Miller outlined three study methods used by the Army to evaluate the efficacy and utility of PPE and combat gear. These methods include human factor evaluations (HFE) and human system integration factors, which use developmental tasks and operational tests to collect data on equipment performance, and Soldier Touch Points of their experience and attitudes using equipment. HFEs are multi-week, large Soldier population events where Soldiers are taken out to engage in mission-specific simulated tasks. Soldier Touch Points are similar but with a smaller population. The Army also uses body scanning and anthropomorphic studies.



These methods allow the Army to collect data on a large portion of the Soldier population, which results in a greater understanding of Soldiers' needs.

LTC Miller noted the Army does not create separate contracts for male and female PPE and gear. The contracts are developed by sizes and tariffs based on force projections. As clothing and PPE items are fielded, adjustments are made to future orders. This decision ensures all equipment is manufactured and procured on the same timeline.

The Army has made several modifications to the newest generation of PPE and the Soldier Protection System (SPS), which includes Soldiers' helmets, armor, and ballistic clothing. The newest helmet is the Integrated Head Protection System. The Modular Scalable Vest (MSV), Vital Torso Protection (VTP) system, Ballistic Combat Shirt (BCS), and Blast Pelvic Protector replaced or updated previous Army PPE. The Army has expanded its unisex sizes for the MSV and VTP after taking into consideration women's measurements, including the X-Small-Short, Small-Short, and Small-Long, and have found these expanded sizes also benefit small men. LTC Miller stated 20 percent of the force has better fit as a result of providing those three additional sizes. The BCS is provided in a female variant with shorter sleeves, wider hips, and ballistic protection on the bust.

LTC Lee described updates since 2018 to the female variant of the Army combat uniform. Mainly, the updates included revised patterns to provide better fit and a more professional appearance for female warfighters. Changes included narrowed shoulders, repositioned rank, adjusted sleeve length, lengthened jacket, and adjustment of the waist-to-hip ratio. Another uniform improved is the Hot Weather Combat Uniform, Female (IHWCU-F). LTC Lee noted the IHWCU-F is a very desirable uniform item at the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) and has been difficult to keep in stock. The IHWCU-F will become more widely available at the AAFES soon and is currently given to recruits at basic training. The Flame-Resistant Army Combat Uniform for females has undergone many of the same revisions. LTC Lee stated this is the same uniform but is flame resistant for warfighters who deploy overseas.

The Army has also altered the Garrison Culinary Uniform for females, designing the coat with a wider chest, wider sweep, and trousers with a shorter rise and narrower waist and thigh, which give female Soldiers a better appearance in the uniform. The Army also has a female variant of the Army Green Service Uniform (AGSU). LTC Lee stated the AGSU female variant is the result of an all-female Soldier Army Uniform Board (AUB). The AUB also has a female variant and is going to become a more formal uniform for the Army overall. The dress Mess Uniform is the Army's most formal uniform and has a female variant, which provides the option for a long and short skirt. For the Physical Fitness Uniform, the Army has added female jacket and pant sizes and revised pattern sizes to provide a more comfortable fit while female Soldiers are doing physical training.

Next, LTC Lee described updates to the Army physical fitness bras. The AUB addressed the female physical fitness bra provided in the clothing bag for Army recruits. The Army conducted a study on the bras and as a result increased the stipend for female Soldiers to increase the quality of their brassieres and purchase more brassieres than they were originally receiving. The Army also improved the selection of physical fitness bras available to Soldiers in the AAFES.

LTC Lee and LTC Miller were informed their allotted briefing time expired.

### Navy

Dr. Bethany Shivers, Branch Head of the Body Mounted Survival System for the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, briefed the Committee for the Navy.

Dr. Shivers stated her office is a subcommand of Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR). She noted that many of the products briefed to the Committee will be similar across the Services, because uniform and equipment development are frequently Joint efforts.

The Navy's equipment evaluation efforts are managed by Naval Seas Systems Command (NAVSEA), which manages PPE for ships and submarines; NAVAIR, which manages PPE for naval operations; and the Commander Navy Installations Command, which manages PPE for ashore Security Forces. Dr. Shivers reported NAVSEA is currently conducting an assessment of the planned body armor systems to identify areas of improvement for form, fit, and function.

The Navy uses human user evaluation techniques to evaluate the efficacy of uniforms and equipment, covering a broad spectrum of anthropometry, including the small female size developed from the Joint Force's principal component analysis Cases 1 and 7. Dr. Shivers stated when not enough job-specific personnel volunteer for the assessment, the Navy uses civilians who meet the study's anthropometric requirements.

The Navy also uses female anthropometry specific mannequins for qualification efforts, such as Humanetics' Hybrid III Anthropomorphic Case 1. This mannequin is used for ejection seat testing and fire-resistant materials. Dr. Shivers stated the Navy leverages the Army's capabilities and thermal test facilities, including female and pregnant female-specific test devices.

NAVAIR engineers are currently using internally developed modeling and simulation capabilities to incorporate specific anthropometries into the systems to qualify by simulation whenever possible. This process is used to evaluate specific dynamics particular to females for exposures and injury predictions. Dr. Shivers reported on an internal effort to develop a future type-model for buoyancy assessment once there is access to the female data. Another development reported by Dr. Shivers is Female-Specific Neutrally Buoyant Body Armor, focused on examining the effects of bullet ricochet on the armors of curved ballistic plates ensuring proper protective capabilities. Dr. Shivers reported this is in the early stages of evaluation and development.

The Navy is actively working with the Air Force and Space Force on in-flight bladder relief systems (IBRS). Dr. Shivers reported that female pilots and air crew have found it difficult to adequately relieve themselves during flight. Difficulties with the current IBRS have prompted some servicewomen to engage in tactical dehydration, which Dr. Shivers' noted has concerning second- and third-order effects.

Dr. Shivers stated the Navy's anthropometry studies currently used for programs of record are dated, citing back to 1997, and she noted there are pending efforts to update available data.

NAVSEA faces unique equipment and uniform challenges a result of the storage limitations aboard ships and submarines. The Navy accounts for these limitations by leveraging anthropometric data to generate size tariffs. Dr. Shivers stated efforts are ongoing to update the Navy's anthropometric data collection methods for the Maritime Armor System to account for female Sailors.

The Navy is making other updates to the data availability of anthropometric data, including the incorporation of emerging technology such as 3D scanning and range of motion measurements to increase the specificity and validity of its data. Dr. Shivers referenced slide 20 in her briefing materials on the neutrally buoyant female-specific body armor and the effect of protection based on different curvatures to accommodate various female anthropometry. Dr. Shivers also discussed a sports bra designed for psychological monitoring with sensors to maintain accurate assessment of an ongoing psychological status of the aircrew.

Dr. Shivers' concluded her briefing.

### Marine Corps

Lieutenant Colonel Mark Braithwaite, a program manager for Infantry Weapons for Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC); Mr. Joseph Augustine, a product manager of Clothing and Equipment for MCSC; and Major Conor Stewart, a team lead for Individual Armor for MCSC, briefed the Committee for the Marine Corps.

LtCol Braithwaite stated the Marine Corps designs uniforms and armor with adjustability, mobility, modularity, and scalability for a range of body sizes from the 2 percent female Marine to the 98 percent male Marine. The Marine Corps believes its current equipment meets the needs of its female Marines and continues to improve, working with the other Services as necessary.

The Marine Corps evaluates the efficacy of PPE and combat gear for males and females using the Marine Corps Load Effects Assessment program (MC-LEAP). MC-LEAP was established in 2010 and provides the ability to measure the effects of changing equipment in a Marine's load through multiple combat-related tasks. MC-LEAP collects data on combat load through movement mechanics, time to complete events, physical performance attributes, observed performance, and after-action reviews for each iteration of the event. MC-LEAP provides a repeatable evaluation standard for assessing the effects of different combat loads and integration designs of various equipment items in development and procurement. MC-LEAP mobility assessments are conducted prior to low-rate initial production to optimize the design of the equipment. Results of the mobility evaluations inform the next design iteration. An example of an adjustment LtCol Braithwaite shared was the shortening of the ballistic plate barrier of the Marine Corps tactical vest 3 by 1.5 inches to increase the mobility of Marines at the waist.

In 2013, the Marine Corps published a comprehensive anthropometric survey of Marines in the first large-scale survey completed on personnel since 1966. The survey incorporated 3D scans of 1,300 male and 620 female Marines and compiled a large body of data used to inform the design of PPE, load-bearing equipment, clothing, and individual warfighter equipment. LtCol Braithwaite stated the 2010 study reflects the current population of Marines for use in developing Marine Corps size tariffs and ensuring fit combat gear and PPE. Later this month, the Marine

Corps will award a contract for a new anthropomorphic study to be conducted next year which will update all Marine Corps data.

The Marine Corps relies on user feedback services and service use rates of specific equipment sizes inform further design iterations. LtCol Braithwaite provided an example that the Marine Corps has increased size options for Marine Corps Small Short, Enhanced Small Arms Protective Insert (E-SAPI) plates. The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) will release and award a contract to create these expanded plate sizes in 2023. In 2016, the capabilities development director at combat development integration released an updated implementation policy for fit attribute from the 5th through the 95th percentile Marine, to the 2nd percentile female, to the 98th percentile male. This change captured an additional population of 15,000 Marines. LtCol Braithwaite noted, while this is forward progress for guiding future development of PPE, MCSC has already been developing body armor with the objective of fitting all Marines. This goal is primarily being achieved with adjustable gear and size modifications to specific gear components to facilitate a more customizable fit, while providing the required protective coverage. The Marine Corps uses mobile training teams to train Marines and issue facility personnel the proper size for each body armor component and proper gear adjustments.

Marine Corps uniforms are stocked at Marine Corps Community Service (MCCS) stores and issue facilities for over-the-counter issue or purchase. LtCol Braithwaite stated that when stock is depleted, the reorder delivery period ranges between 10 and 90 days. The MCSC manages the initial procurement of PPE, and individual issue facilities are stocked for same-day issue. Size tariffs generated by the anthropomorphic data determine the size selection and quantity for orders. LtCol Braithwaite said lead times for PPE items range from 1 to 6 months. The Marine Corps' current timeline and process for procuring alternate uniforms not available in existing supply channels is 2–6 weeks. This process starts at MCCS or the issue facility with a special measurement or dataset sent to DLA, which makes arrangements to procure the unique item. For PPE, Marines are issued a best-fit set. If the Marine falls outside the 2nd to 98th percentile range, LtCol Braithwaite stated alternative solutions are explored and procured as necessary. An example is the Small Hip Belt and Short Shoulder Harness assemblies, which provide a greater size range, accommodating a more diverse population of Marines.

LtCol Braithwaite also described recent modifications to Marine Corps maternity uniforms. The modifications include tunics and long-sleeve, and short-sleeve khaki maternity shirts with adjustable side tabs that are being issued and available for purchase. The maternity olive drab undershirt is certified and available for purchase. Female enlisted Marines are receiving a cash allowance for the purchase of this item. Olive drab nursing shirts are also certified and authorized for optional wear. The Marine Corps' blue dress skirts and slacks are in development and will be tentatively available for issue or purchase in FY23. The Marine Corps is also participating in the DLA Maternity Uniform Issue Pilot.

The Marine Corps does not provide gender-specific PPE or combat gear. However, user feedback surveys and usage rates of specific equipment sizes inform further design iterations and identify additional sizing requirements. An example provided by LtCol Braithwaite is increased size options for the Marine Corps E-SAPI plates in Small Short, Small Long, and Extra Small Short. These were developed and DLA is currently working toward a contract to field and produce the additional size plates in 2023. The Marine Corps also is working on the Short

Shoulder Harness and Small Hip Belt. The current Marine Corps pack did not meet the fit attribute to accommodate the 2nd percentile female to the 98th percentile male. LtCol Braithwaite noted comfort issues resulting in potential decreased performance for long movements and increased injury resulting from improper fit.

The Marine Corps has recently published two administrative messages (MARDMIN) providing updated guidance on grooming standards from the Commandant. The Marine Corps Uniform Board provides recommendations directly to the Commandant for consideration and approval. MARDMIN 134/22 authorizes clear and nude nail polish, edging up the male hairline, and bulk of hair restrictions increased from 2 to 3 inches. LtCol Braithwaite also noted MARDMIN 615/22 published in November authorizing twists for short hair, ponytail, or two half-braids for medium hair length; and in the Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform, flight suit, or physical training (PT) uniform. MARDMIN 615/22 also directs long hair to be secured up, not to extend 2 inches below the base of the collar's lower edge.

LtCol Braithwaite was informed his allotted briefing time expired.

### Air Force

Major Andrea Gallegos, Deputy Branch Chief of Combat Ready Airmen with the Human Systems Division of the Agile Combat Support Directorate with the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center; and Mrs. Tracy Roan, Chief of the Air Force Uniform Office with the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center briefed the Committee for the Air Force.

Maj Gallegos opened by stating she included a slide on the Air Force's updates on grooming standards in response to the Committee's RFI, but clarified such standards were outside the scope of her department.

The Female Fitment initiative brings together functional SMEs to ensure the Air Force has updated and inclusive anthropometric data to inform decisions and sizing for uniforms. The Air Force has hosted nine female fitment events. Each event brings together different functional communities to capture hand measurements for incorporation in Air Force databases and provides an opportunity for dissemination of initiatives and uniform access information. These events also offer an opportunity for the Air Force to field questions and gather feedback on challenges and future changes to uniforms and gear.

The Air Force provides the GearFit app, available on the portal, for all aircrew to provide to feedback on uniforms or flight equipment. Maj Gallegos indicated the GearFit app was useful in gathering feedback from women about aircrew uniforms and the female IBRS. Maj Gallegos stated her office works closely with the requirements owners, both aircrew and other functional communities, to get feedback and requirements to make all necessary updates. The Air Force also has members embedded at the Combat Capabilities Development Command Soldier Center in the Army and with the Navy to consolidate work on common items. Additionally, the Air Force relies on the Airmen Accommodation Lab to collect data used to inform decisions. Maj Gallegos described monthly meetings with the Air Force Women's Initiative Team (WIT), the Female Fitment Leads, and the leaders of the Air Force's major commands to discuss initiatives and receive feedback.

The Airmen Accommodation Lab has conducted studies and is building a database for the Air Force. They use traditional hand measurements and technology such as body scanning to increase the fidelity of the system to increase applications. In 2019, the Air Force conducted a study for the female Security Forces Defenders. Maj Gallegos noted the study was conducted before the Army's MSV and the Air Force since adopted that system. Data from the 2019 study found body armor was causing pain and fatigue issues from improper pressure points for servicewomen. The results of this study were used to identify a solution before the MSV was available. In 2021, the Air Force conducted the first ever Career Enlisted Aviation study. Previously, data used to determine size requirements for aircrew were being used for enlisted aviators without verification and based on the 1967 measurements of a male pilot. This measurement standard excluded 90 percent of the female population and many minority groups from fulfilling roles as enlisted aviators. The 2021 study gathered anthropometric data and changed the Air Force's standards for enlisted aviators, so those nine career fields are open to more women and other individuals.

The Air Force is now equipped with a pregnant female burn mannequin and baby bump in Natick, Massachusetts, to ensure those female uniforms are meeting the safety requirements. Maj Gallegos reported the Air Force is currently comparing hand measurements with the 3D scanner technology to assess the fidelity of scanners. The hand measurement process takes 30–45 minutes, while some 3D scanners can do full body scans in 5 seconds to 1 minute. This type of scanning technology could be used in the future at Basic Military Training to identify uniform sizes or individual qualification for career fields.

The Air Force uniform procurement process runs through DLA and ranges from 25 to 39 months. Maj Gallegos noted the Air Force has identified opportunities to shorten this timeline, such as modifying existing uniform contracts, collaborating with the other Services, and implementing low-rate initial production orders. Maj Gallegos stated these alternate avenues were used to expedite changes to the Air Force's maternity flight uniforms. The Air Force has also implemented a Try-Decide-Buy contract with businesses to quickly obtain results. Maj Gallegos noted the Try-Decide-Buy contract was used to roll out changes to the Air Force's Security Forces Female Body Armor Program to equip female Defenders with a properly fitted body armor system. The time from contract award to fielding was 20 months.

Mrs. Roan noted new female Air Force uniforms on display in the lobby for the Committee's review following the briefing. The Air Force began design and production of maternity flight uniforms following a September 2019 policy change allowing female servicewomen to fly and perform aircrew duties during pregnancy without a medical waiver. At the time of this policy change, the Air Force did not have maternity flight suits. As a result, they individually modified more than 300 suits for female Airmen providing modifications within the design office. The next step in this process was to create the one-piece version because the two-piece uniform is more complex. The Air Force made modifications to the existing female flight suit designed to accommodate body changes and obtained a low-production contract to expedite the production and delivery of this item to female Service members. Next, the Air Force developed a two-piece uniform, which includes a flame-resistant stretch panel on the trouser portion ensuring the protruding coat provides adequate protection and can be secured underneath.

Mrs. Roan also stated the Air Force has developed a female-specific, two-piece flight suit. The development of this uniform was the result of feedback on the unisex Army product used by the Air Force. The Air Force collaborated with the Army and Navy for a female fit study of 95 female aircrew, which identified fit issues with the unisex uniforms. With approval from the Army, the Air Force took the lead on development for female fit. The Services worked together to develop a uniform better suited for the safety and comfort and the ability to perform duty for female Service members. Mrs. Roan stated the Air Force modified the existing unisex contract to expedite production and noted this uniform is currently available. The Air Force targeted 40 bases with the largest female populations.

The Air Force and Space Force developed a new physical training (PT) uniform, ensuring availability of female-specific sizes. Mrs. Roan noted the incorporation of feedback, including the addition of a boy short liner in the running shorts to provide for modesty during PT. The Space Force and Air Force have been able to leverage ongoing work in both Services.

Mrs. Roan stated the Air Force service dress maternity uniform has not been updated in more than 20 years, noting it was outdated and disliked. The Air Force has taken a new approach to updating this uniform item in working with the WIT, working toward a wrap dress and a long open tunic, marking a departure from the previous uniform items.

Mrs. Roan was informed her allotted briefing time expired.

### Coast Guard

Mr. Hayes Davis, a Program Manager for the Office of Military Uniforms and Awards, briefed the Committee for the Coast Guard.

Mr. Davis stated that the Coast Guard, similar to Marine Corps, does not have gender-specific PPE or combat uniforms. Coast Guardsman deployed in Patrol Forces Southwest Asia and deployable Surface personnel wear the Navy Type III expeditionary uniform. The Coast Guard purchases this uniform through the Director of Operational Logistics office from the large DoD contract.

The Coast Guard has not conducted an internal anthropomorphic study to evaluate PPE or combat equipment, but instead leverages collaboration with the other Services. For instance, Mr. Davis cited the Soldier Systems Center in Natick, Massachusetts, and work with Integrated Product Teams for cold-weather clothing, maternity uniforms, combat-related items, and an interagency agreement for the Army's E-SAPI plates.

In reference to the Committee's questions about timelines and procurement processes, Mr. Davis noted there are no specific Coast Guard contracts, because the Coast Guard uses DLA and Joint specification opportunities. Specifically, the Coast Guard purchases uniforms and equipment directly from DLA and Norfolk, which are then stocked and housed for distribution to those deploying or serving in capacities requiring additional ballistic protection systems or uniform specific items. Mr. Davis reiterated the uniforms are unisex and not female-specific for combat-related items. Mr. Davis stated when the Coast Guard initiates their own requests to DLA, the projected timeline is 18 months from development. However, when leveraging the other

Services' contracts, the time window shortens to 6 months. The Coast Guard's internal process for obtaining inventory on shelves is 1 to 3 months.

Mr. Davis stated the Coast Guard assessed modifications for female grooming standards and uniforms following recommendations from DACOWITS in 2018 and the Coast Guard's Uniform Board. The Coast Guard will be fielding a new operational utility uniform in 2023, a transition from the current Operational Dress Uniform (ODU) to a Navy Type III pattern and configuration in the Coast Guard color profile. Mr. Davis noted this change provides financial efficiencies for the Coast Guard. The current ODU maternity uniform, built from an Air Force uniform, is undergoing visual changes to appear as the new Coast Guard Working Utility Uniform. This new maternity uniform will have a similar appearance while maintaining functionality gained when the Coast Guard adopted the Air Force battle maternity uniform.

The Coast Guard has modified grooming standards, increasing the bulk hair authorization up to 3.5 inches, measured straight from the skull to the top of the hair. The width of the bun in the back has increased up to 4 inches, but not to exceed coming out the side of the head as viewed from the front. The Coast Guard also allows single- or double-braided ponytails, authorized to swing freely through the open center of the back of the ball cap and not to cross the line parallel to the member's shoulder blades. Mr. Davis noted the excitement of Coast Guard personnel about these changes and new authorizations. The Coast Guard also increased color allowances for fingernail polish, and Mr. Davis noted these changes are only for servicewomen. The Coast Guard now authorizes servicewomen to wear the standard necktie when wearing the men's dress shirt. Mr. Davis stated this was feedback garnered by the Coast Guard Uniform Board. The Coast Guard is in the process of transitioning the male and female dress shirt to the Air Force light blue dress shirts in style and cut rather than the Coast Guard specific shirt previously used.

Mr. Davis stated the Coast Guard is in the process of fielding a new aviation dry coverall. The Coast Guard adopted and has deployed the women's two-piece aviation flight suit. Mr. Davis does not have specific feedback yet from the field on that uniform item. In 2022, the Coast Guard has returned to the anti-exposure suit to make female-specific entry points for relief and using the restroom.

Mr. Davis concluded his briefing.

### Discussion

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris referenced the need for size tariffs aboard Navy ships and submarines and asked if these tariffs applied to the PPE needed to conduct Navy antiterrorism and Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) activities. CMDCM (Ret.) Harris voiced concerns about whether space limitations and limited sizing options are prohibiting women from joining VBSS teams. Dr. Shivers responded that the Navy leverages size tariffs based on anthropometric data to ensure the PPE aboard ships and submarines is available in a spectrum of sizes to accommodate as many Sailors as possible. Mr. David Gwaltney, the Assistant Program Manager for Naval Antiterrorism Afloat Equipment affirmed Dr. Shivers response and noted there is an allowance for an additional 10 percent for variation in crew composition. CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked if that includes all worn uniform items, from the boots up. Mr. Gwaltney did not know; he noted he is



responsible for ballistic PPE. Dr. Shivers responded that size tariffs aboard ships and submarines only apply to ballistic PPE and vests, noting uniforms and boots are direct personnel issue items.

Col (Ret.) Anderson asked whether the Berry Amendment which requires items to be produced in the United States has made it difficult for the Services to acquire uniform materials or hampered timelines for developing new uniforms. Dr. Shivers from the Navy responded this Amendment has been a blessing and a curse. She noted there have been some challenges, including supply chain issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and also stated it depends on the product line and material. Mrs. Roan from the Air Force agreed with Dr. Shivers' characterization. Mrs. Roan noted her appreciation for the Amendment's support of the U.S. textile market but stated this industry was experiencing difficulties before the pandemic, which have been exacerbated. Mrs. Roan described profitability challenges for small U.S. companies in meeting the development and innovation requirements of the Services' high-level uniform and equipment needs. Mrs. Roan noted there could be ways to improve industries and provide incentives, and stated the flexibility, if needed, to work with North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners for production would be helpful.

Ms. Leveque asked all the Services how they ensure commands have the PPE sizes they need, and if they do not have the sizes readily available, how long it takes to get the sizes an individual Service member may need. Dr. Shivers responded that the Navy has a unique fit capability if they are unable to meet the fitment requirement to accommodate fit issues. Dr. Shivers stated the size tariffs depends on the item, the contract, and whether it is still in developmental phase. Mrs. Roan from the Air Force responded DLA builds a safety stock to include every size available with additional stock levels for combat-required items. The Air Force has the ability to make a special order if an Airmen's size is not available in the AAFES store. Mrs. Roan stated the timeframe is usually 4–6 weeks. Mrs. Roan noted the Air Force also has a program for Airmen outside the 95th percentile to receive custom-made items, with the delivery timeline depending on the item and alterations to provide something more properly fitted. LTC Miller responded the Army only does individual issue, not command issue. The Army's challenge is ensuring these items are available in the overall inventory. With the SPS offering new sizes, the Army found more Soldiers wore those additional sizes than expected.

In projections, the Army has pulled those sizes forward and increased their expected demand to try to keep up with current demand. LtCol Braithwaite responded the process is similar for the Marine Corps, noting the frequent communication among the program offices, DLA, and the individual in need. The Marine Corps timeframe from MCCA for procurement of a unique uniform sizing, including the measurement process, is typically 2–6 weeks. LtCol Braithwaite characterized PPE has a more complicated problem, noting there are always one-off situations. He provided an example of a Marine stationed in Hawaii who needed an XXL helmet where the Marine Corps was able to obtain the necessary item from the Army. LTC Miller agreed that is a valuable example of inter-Service collaboration, noting it can be difficult to anticipate the need for outlier unique fit items.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks noted many of the Services collaborate on gear and uniform item updates and asked if there are any mandates or directives from DoD for the Services to work together on these efforts. She elaborated that many Services are working on similar efforts and have noted challenges with addressing the upper and lower percentiles of personnel needs. LTC Miller

stated he was not aware of a DoD mandate, but noted Army leadership encourages finding every efficiency. LTC Miller noted that while the Services have unique needs, they streamline whenever possible to reduce costs and expedite production. The Services meet twice a year to discuss body armor and conduct a joint industry brief. LTC Miller emphasized several connection and collaboration points over the course of a year. Dr. Shivers added collaboration on chemical biological gear is mandated by the Office of the SecDef. Dr. Shivers from the Navy also noted anecdotally the anthropometric PPE community within the Services is extremely cohesive and collaborative.

Mrs. Roan added DLA is required to chair a joint textiles governance board, which meets quarterly in conjunction with cross-Service warfighter enterprise board. These boards provide opportunities for the Services to discuss new developments and ongoing challenges, and Mrs. Roan feels they have led to increased cross-Service work and fiscal efficiencies. Mrs. Roan also mentioned all the Services are part of the new joint clothing and textiles modernization initiative. She described some goals of this initiative including utilization of a cloud-based system to store all specifications for equipment and clothing and standardized sizing to enable sharing across Services. Mr. Davis responded the Coast Guard exclusively relies on inter-Service collaboration and data sharing to create their own size tariffs and generate economies of scale. Mr. Davis stated that inter-Service agreements have enabled DLA to reduce lead times and increase inventory. LtCol Braithwaite concurred with the other panelists' remarks characterizing collaboration as not mandated but highly encouraged. The Marine Corps frequently collaborates with the Army and Navy to reduce the workload and simplify the process when possible. LtCol Braithwaite also highlighted the ongoing challenges of the industry, noting single or streamlined contracts can present challenges because the industry desires more competition.

VADM (Ret.) Braun referenced the Navy's briefing slide 7, asking for additional clarification and explanation on Principal Components Analysis (PCA) Cases 1 and 7. Dr. Shivers deferred to Ms. Wendy Todd, a physical scientist with the Body Mounted and Survival Systems Branch of the Aircrew Protection and Survivability Division of the Naval Air Warfare Center's Human Systems Engineering Department. Ms. Todd stated PCA is a statistical technical to collapse length and girth attributes for the purposes of explaining variance in a scatter plot to simplify ability to identify extremes within a population. Case 1 is a very small female and Case 7 is a very small male that sometimes also represents female body size and shape.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn referenced an earlier mention of biological chemical gear, asking for clarification on the size requirements for obtaining a good seal on the mask and shelf life limitations. LTC Lee from the Army stated that the biological and chemical PPE, like other equipment, is sized using anthropometric data. If a Service member does not fit a chemical biological mask or suit, it is treated as a select-made item. LTC Lee commented this is a rare occurrence because the chemical biological sizes are sufficient for fitting the population, unlike greater variance seen in body armor and other gear. General Sanborn noted this type of gear is usually issued when needed or at the last minute with little time for sizing or fitting.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked the Services to identify the biggest challenges with IBRS, noting women have been flying for many years, but it seems there are still issues with this type of equipment for female aircrew and pilots. Maj Gallegos from the Air Force stated the first female IBRS, the SKYDRATE, was released in 2005 and remains the only system available. Maj

Gallegos stated the Air Force and the Navy have been testing four separate systems with different interfaces to meet the varying preferences and needs for female aircrew. They hope to have a new system available within 1–2 years. Dr. Shivers from the Navy responded comfort and leakage resulting from poor fit have been the biggest challenges with the existing IBRS, noting female personnel report shame associated with leakage. These challenges are the driving force behind the tactical dehydration Dr. Shivers discussed earlier, which is not an optimal approach for female aviators. She noted obtaining the best fit to prevent leakage and maximize optimal performance is key.

Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox referenced the Air Force’s new female mess dress slacks and asked if the other Services are planning to adopt a similar uniform option. LtCol Braithwaite responded that the Commandant of the Marine Corps has encouraged the development of such an option for female Marines. LTC Lee stated not many requests have been made for slacks for the mess dress within the Army. LTC Lee stated the Army’s female daily service uniform was initially designed with slacks at the request of an all-female uniform board. However, since the issue of the daily uniform, the Army has received requests from the field for a skirt option. LTC Lee stated the skirt option was currently in development and will be in the field soon.

Ms. Stoneman referenced some Services adopting a wrap dress to replace the maternity tunic. Ms. Stoneman asked Services using the tunic for their thoughts on these new designs and if they are receiving feedback from servicewomen on the existing tunics. LTC Lee stated the Army wants to move away from the “mu mu” tunic and is waiting on results from the other Services to leverage their new designs. LTC Lee confirmed they will be moving in a different direction than the current tunic. Mr. Augustine reported the Marine Corps is collaborating with the Air Force to adopt the 360-degree stomach panel design for the service and dress slacks, but also the utility uniforms. The cross-Service collaboration enables the Marine Corps to use similar patterns and materials. Mr. Augustine shared female Marines are not fond of the “mu mu”, but the small population of women in the Marine Corps presents challenges for producing these dress uniforms on scale.

The Commandant is still considering a female dress blue coat, used once or twice a year, but other options are in development. Mr. Davis stated the Coast Guard shares many of its uniforms with the Air Force, including the maternity uniform designs. Mr. Davis stated the Coast Guard has considered developing a maternity dress jacket, but this has been difficult because of the limited number of items needed for production and the temporary wear period servicewomen require maternity items. The Coast Guard does not have a mess dress but has a full dress and dinner dress uniform.

Mr. Davis reported that outside maternity uniforms, servicewomen have expressed interest in wearing the Coast Guard’s choker white dress uniform rather than the current female design and cut. This proposal is currently being reviewed by the Service Chief of the Coast Guard. It is unclear if approved if the Coast Guard will move to one uniform or continue to authorize servicewomen wearing the female uniform, if desired. Dr. Shivers clarified that maternity dress uniforms were out of scope for her work. However, she referenced the maternity uniform changes on slide 13 of the Navy’s briefing deck and stated the Navy is also adjusting its maternity dress uniforms similar to the other Services.

Col (Ret.) Anderson referenced the Marine Corps' maternity uniform sharing program and asked if this type of program had ever been discussed during the Services quarterly collaboration meetings and if the other Services have instituted similar programs. Mr. Davis reported this type of sharing and donation system happens unofficially in the Coast Guard through social media platforms. Mr. Davis also noted DLA has been charged with developing a joint maternity uniform program, and the Services are working together to determine the logistical structure, centralized DoD office or Service-specific offices, and the process for reissuance of uniforms.

RADM (Ret.) O'Donnell referenced CMDCM (Ret.) Harris' comment that women have been serving as pilots and aircrew personnel for many years. She asked whether the Services have demanded specific timelines from manufacturers or whether the same issues will exist a year from now. Maj Gallegos stated the female IBRS was the number one priority for the Air Force's female aircrews. The GearFit app kept the conversation going and opened the door for female Airmen to voice their concerns. Maj Gallegos believes the conversation has elevated to a point where it will continue to be a priority.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked Maj Gallegos how many female aircrew are permanently assigned to these initiatives. Maj Gallegos responded the Air Force works closely with the Female Fitment Major Command leads who are aircrew to develop and execute uniform initiatives. Maj Gallegos stated two female pilots were present at the Air Force's latest bench test. Female aircrew will be part of the aircrew ground testing in January at Seymour Johnson AFB. The Air Force is using women's voices and experiences to ensure the Service gets it right.

The panel discussion concluded.

### **Conclusion of Public Meeting Portion**

COL Jardin concluded the public portion of the meeting for the day.

7 December 2022

### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The DACOWITS Military Director and Designated Federal Officer, COL Jardin, began the second day of the December quarterly business meeting. COL Jardin reminded attendees that any comments made during the meeting by Committee members are their personal opinions and do not reflect a DACOWITS or DoD position. Panelist and speaker remarks are not checked or verified for accuracy. COL Jardin then turned the meeting over to the DACOWITS Chair, Ms. Stoneman.

Ms. Stoneman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked all Committee members and meeting attendees to introduce themselves.

### **Panel Briefing: Military Services' Physical Fitness Standards (RFI 7)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on modifications to each of the Services' physical fitness instructions since March 2019, including updates to body composition measurements and justifications for each modification. The Committee also requested an overview of what modifications each Service has made or is planning to make in response to revised DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1308.3 and associated timelines for those modifications. The Space Force did not provide a response, as the instruction is still under development.

#### Army

Major General John Kline, Commanding General for the Army Center for Initial Military Training, briefed the Committee for the Army. MG Kline explained that the Army's Holistic Health and Fitness system (H2F) marks a cultural shift in how the Service trains Soldiers and is considered the primary investment in Soldier readiness. H2F optimizes physical and nonphysical performance to reduce injuries and improve rehabilitation efforts across the Service. H2F is grounded in science and best practices that professional and collegiate athletic organizations have been using for nearly 20 years. H2F is the Army's approach to holistic health. The foundation for the Army's approach to health is documented in its doctrine. The Army published an update to FM7-22 *Holistic Health and Fitness* in October 2020. This activity resulted in the Army revising its health and fitness manual, frequently not read, into a more sought after document for H2F. The Army also published two additional documents, *Holistic Health and Fitness Testing* and *Holistic Health and Fitness Drills and Exercises*, which provide pictorial representations of how Soldiers should perform certain exercises. H2F doctrine explains the why and the how of the Army's approach to developing Soldier readiness using health science and the role of coaching and mentorship in improving team building and motivation among Soldiers.

MG Kline noted that after the H2F documents were published and the doctrine was established, the Army created resource units composed of SMEs to help Brigade Commanders execute H2F. The Army resourced 28 Brigades with H2F performance teams in FY 21 across 5 installations. The H2F performance teams are interdisciplinary and composed of physical therapists, registered dietitians, occupational therapists, certified athletic trainers, cognitive performance specialists, and strength and conditioning coaches. These teams will help Brigade Commanders proactively

prevent injuries. An additional 12 Brigades are fielding H2F performance teams in FY23, and the Army plans to field additional teams at a rate of 10 Brigades each year to meet the goal of 110 Brigades with H2F performance teams by FY30.

MG Kline outlined the five domains of H2F: physical, mental, nutritional, spiritual, and sleep. The Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) is the test component of the physical domain. The Army considers all five H2F domains to be equally important. The Army began full implementation of the ACFT as the official assessment of the H2F physical domain in April 2022. The decision to adjust the ACFT and implement it across the Army total force was based on multiple independent reviews, nearly 630,000 ACFT scores, and 3 years of feedback from Soldiers. The revised ACFT maintains the Army's commitment to physical fitness while ensuring fairness in the transition to a new fitness test of record.

MG Kline highlighted key revisions made to the ACFT 3.0 test, including the establishment of gender- and age-normed scoring scales and the elimination of the leg tuck for the plank as the required core strength component of the test. The Army added a 2.5-mile walk as an alternate aerobic event. All Army and Active Guard Reserve Soldiers began taking the revised ACFT on October 1, 2022, and the Army has received about 230,000 scores thus far. MG Kline stated the aggregated pass rate for the test is currently 96 percent, both male and female Soldiers in aggregate were within 2 percentage points of the passing rate. MG Kline noted the ACFT is a better test than the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) because it examines 10 components of physical fitness (muscular strength, muscular endurance, power, speed, agility, coordination, flexibility, balance, reaction time, and aerobic capacity), while the previous test of record, the APFT, primarily assessed muscular endurance.

MG Kline explained that the Army has established a governance structure to oversee the implementation of the ACFT and examine ACFT scores, pass rates, injury rates, and environmental considerations to develop tweaks to test components and methodology. The governance structure will report any findings from this analysis to Army leaders regularly, with the first comprehensive report due in April 2023.

MG Kline explained the Army also conducted initial data collection from the largest ever sample of Active Duty and Reserve Soldiers from different backgrounds and demographic groups, such as age, race, gender, and ethnicity, to examine the association between body composition and the physical performance of Soldiers. The study examined body size by measuring height, weight, circumference, and body composition and compared those measurements with their most recent physical fitness score and their types and dates of injury profile. The team oversampled the study population for women and other select demographics that make up less than 10 percent of the Army.

The study used four methods to assess Soldiers' body composition: the standard tape test, dual energy x-ray absorptiometry test (DEXA), 3D total body scanning, and the bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA). The study also looked at the number and dates of pregnancies, delivery methods, and first postpartum physical fitness score and body composition program record. The examination of data from this study is still underway, but the Army expects the study to be completed in March 2023. The study team conducted activities at Fort Stewart between

December 5 and December 9, 2022, to validate its findings from the body composition review study.

MG Kline highlighted a few preliminary key findings from the body composition study that indicate ways in which Army Regulation (AR) 600-9, the instruction that governs the Army's body composition program, can be modernized. The study determined that the height and weight screening tables are valid, and the taping method is highly accurate and often the most lenient body composition test compared with other methods. The study found Soldiers with body fat percentages over the threshold allowed by the Army have a 50 percent increase in rates of injury and identified a clear relationship between lean muscle mass and ACFT scores. The findings from this study and the newly revised DoDI associated with body composition testing will help policymakers inform potential changes to the Army body composition program moving forward. MG Kline noted the Army is also considering exempting Soldiers who score a 540 out of 600 on the ACFT from the Army's body composition standards.

MG Kline was informed his allotted briefing time expired.

### Navy

Mr. Tom Yavorski, Branch Head in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Sailor and Family Programs, briefed the Committee for the Navy. Mr. Yavorski highlighted a variety of changes the Navy has made to its physical fitness training programs since March 2019. In May 2019, the Navy implemented universal training precautions to recognize early signs of distress and permit prompt termination of exertional activity when signs of distress are present. Mr. Yavorski explained that sometimes Sailors might feel distressed during a physical readiness test (PRT) and stop participating in an activity, so they can now retake the test if this type of distress arises. In January 2021, the Navy replaced the curl-up component of the PRT with a plank component because research showed it was a better test of core strength and reduced the likelihood of injury. The Navy also added a 2,000-meter row as an alternate cardio component to the PRT. The purpose of this alteration was to introduce a non-weight-bearing, low-impact exercise option to reduce impact on Sailors' legs.

In June 2021, the Navy extended the pregnancy and postpartum physical fitness assessment (PFA) exemption from 9 months to 12 months after a qualifying birth event. The purpose of this update was to allow postpartum servicewomen extra time to prepare for the PRT based on research examined by the Navy. In June 2021, the Navy implemented an unofficial postpartum wellness PFA for Sailors between 6 and 9 months postpartum, providing the Navy an opportunity to monitor Sailors' physical fitness progress after pregnancy.

In February 2022, the Navy revised the forearm plank to be gender and age specific based on evidence from a sample of 26,000 Sailors' test results. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Navy canceled calendar year 2020 and 2021 PFAs and implemented a single PFA requirement in 2022. The Navy plans to continue the single PFA requirement in 2023 to meet the minimum DoD requirement and mitigate Physical Readiness Management Information System development issues.

Mr. Yavorski explained that, similar to the Army, the Navy is conducting a body composition assessment (BCA) study with volunteer servicewomen in the San Diego area to review its body composition standards and measurement methods. The Navy used three methods other than taping to measure body composition: DEXA, 3D body scanning, and BIA. The Navy is conducting blood marker and blood pressure tests on Sailors to assess how body composition affects the overall health of Sailors. The body composition study commenced in September 2022, and the Navy expects preliminary findings to be reported in September 2023 and a final report of findings by September 2024.

Mr. Yavorski concluded his briefing.

### Marine Corps

Colonel Eric Quehl, Director of the Policy and Standards Division for TECOM, briefed the Committee for the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps conducted a body composition study in Quantico, Virginia; Camp Pendleton, California; and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; between March 2021 and March 2022 with support from the Army's Research Institute of Environmental Medicine. The study included more than 2,200 volunteers; 66 percent of the study sample were male, while the other 33 percent were female, and about 200 study members were postpartum servicewomen.

Col Quehl explained that, similar to the Army and Navy, the Marine Corps used various methods to measure body composition, including DEXA, BIA, 3D scanners, and the tape test, by comparing the results of the body composition tests with results of volunteers' physical fitness test scores. In response to the findings from this study, the Commandant decided to increase female body composition standards by 1 percent and to use the BIA machines as a final check before any Marine is assigned to the body composition program or discharged from the Service for unsatisfactory performance. Col Quehl noted the Marine Corps plans to continue the body composition program in Okinawa, Japan, in the next 6 months to validate the results of the body composition study completed in the United States and to consider the impact of other factors on body composition and physical performance, such as the hot environment in Okinawa, Japan.

The Marine Corps also plans to conduct blood tests with study participants to detect prediabetic conditions and better understand the link between diabetes and body composition and examine self-reported destructive health behaviors such as eating disorders. One-hundred fifty-seven BIA machines are being delivered to Marine Corps installations across the country over the next month. These BIA machines support the Marine Corps' new process for assessing body composition before assigning Service members to the body composition program or discharging them from the Service. This new policy goes into effect January 1, 2023. Col Quehl described these activities as an initial step the Marine Corps is taking to improve the body composition program. He confirmed the study showed the height and weight tables are a decent performance indicator for the general population of the United States, but for Marines, body fat is the best predictor of performance.

Col Quehl also highlighted that the Marine Corps updated its physical fitness test 3 years ago to allow Service members to complete the plank event rather than crunches, if they preferred. The plank tests more muscles than the crunch and correlates better to combat task performance, but



the Service found Marines were still choosing to complete the crunch event more often. Therefore, beginning this year the Marine Corps has removed the crunch as an option for the physical fitness test. Col Quehl also clarified that the Marine Corps' physical fitness scores are gender and age neutral.

The Marine Corps expanded postpartum exemptions from the physical fitness test and body composition standards from 6 to 9 months in 2019 and 9 to 12 months in 2021. This change was informed by scientific evidence, primarily based on an article written by a Marine Corps Major on the effects of pregnancy and the evidence for expanding the postpartum exemption from 6 to 9 months, including higher rates of abdominal injuries in postpartum servicewomen and challenges associated with breastfeeding. Similarly, the Marine Corps developed pregnancy and postpartum physical training guidelines and learning materials that are accessible online. The Service plans to turn these materials into a Marine Corps Reference Publication within the next few months.

Col Quehl confirmed the Marine Corps is in compliance with DoDI 1308.3, and the Service is open to adjusting its standards if scientific evidence supports that change. He noted the only reason the Marine Corps conducts the physical fitness test and body composition test is to enable Marines to succeed in combat circumstances, no matter their age or gender.

Col Quehl concluded his briefing.

### Air Force

Mr. Jason Ham, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel & Services in Directorate of Force Management Policy; Mr. E. Lindsay Buckalew, Chief of Integrated Operations Support Program Office in the 711th Human Performance Wing; and Ms. Victoria Bylsma from the Epidemiologist Integrated Operations Support Program Office in the 711th Human Performance Wing briefed the Committee for the Air Force. Mr. Ham explained he is currently assigned to Air Force A1 on loan from the Air Force Reserve Command, and he is a trained exercise physiologist.

The Air Force's body composition program is currently in development, and the Service expects its release in early 2023. Mr. Ham explained that the revised physical fitness program launched in January 2022 was the first change to the Air Force's physical fitness program in 16 years. The revisions to the physical fitness test were informed by data collected from Airmen in December 2020, when they were asked about their perspectives on the current physical fitness program, including ways they thought it could be improved and their perspectives on separating the body composition test from the physical fitness test.

Airmen made three primary recommendations. First, Airmen recommended adding more points for the strength components of the physical fitness test if the body composition component was going to be removed. Second, Airmen recommended their physical fitness test scores be more closely compared with their peer groups, because standards were aligned by 10-year age groups, and there are difficulties comparing standards for a 39-year-old versus a 30-year-old, for example. Third, Airmen recommended alternate physical fitness testing events be made available in all three components of the physical fitness test (strength, cardio, and endurance).

Mr. Ham noted the Air Force confirmed various changes to the physical fitness test starting July 21, 2022, including changing fitness charts from 10-year to 5-year age brackets; removing the abdominal circumference test from the PFA; increasing the push-up and sit-up scoring components from 10 points to 20 points; and proposing five alternate PFA components, four of which were approved. Since the implementation of the revised physical fitness test, the Air Force released alternate component charts, instructions, and videos; piloted the alternate events with Airmen at 15 installations across the country; and collected data from nearly 2,000 assessments and 9,000 total data points. The data was analyzed by the Integrated Operations Support Program Office in the 711th Human Performance Wing.

The Air Force published Department of the Air Force Manual (DAFMAN) 36-2905 as the new physical fitness program policy in April 2022, and the new policy includes three key updates: the addition of four new physical fitness components, the change of age categories from 10- to 5-year ranges, and the change of points distribution for the physical fitness test to 60-20-20. The four alternate components were the 20-meter High Aerobic Multi-Shuttle (HAMR) run, the hand-release push-up instead of the regular push-up, and the cross-reverse leg crunch or a timed-forearm plank instead of the regular sit-up.

The alternate component standards were immediately adjusted for gender and age. The study team compared the alternate component data with existing component data to create reliable standards for each new physical fitness test component. The team also studied the Service's current standards and found the standards prior to revision for older age groups were falling below the standards set by the American College of Sports Medicine percentiles, so the Air Force increased those standards to ensure there was parity across the components and age groups.

Mr. Ham shared a table highlighting the Air Force fitness assessment scoring standards and point assignments for cardio events for male Airmen between ages 40 and 44. This table also includes a column that indicates an Airmen's health risk category from low to moderate to high risk based on scores on specific cardio events. Mr. Ham also shared a table highlighting fitness assessment scoring standards and point assignments for strength events for male Airmen between 40 and 44. However, the Service does not include a health risk category for the strength components because there is a lack of literature on the connection between strength and health risk. Mr. Ham also shared the same tables for female Airmen aged 40 to 44.

Mr. Ham noted he has not received any major negative feedback to any of the revisions made to the Air Force physical fitness test. The Air Force provided much education and training to Airmen related to the new alternate component options available under the physical fitness test, so Airmen knew what they were choosing. The biggest learning curve of the alternate components was the hand-release push-up, because the event requires more effort to complete a rep, and Airmen were becoming fatigued quicker than they would with regular push-ups. However, Mr. Ham noted Airmen have learned how to address this challenge through training. The plank and cross-reverse leg crunch has been a positive alternative for Airmen with back pain, while the 20-meter HAMR run addressed a variety of challenges, including training limitations for Airmen who did not have access to an indoor track during inclement weather or winter months.

Mr. Ham was informed his allotted briefing time expired.

### Coast Guard

Lieutenant Commander Robert Espenship, Division Chief for the Office of Military Personnel Policy, briefed the Committee for the Coast Guard. LCDR Espenship noted the Coast Guard's briefing would be shorter than the other Services, because DoDI 1308.3 is not applicable to the Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard does not have a tier one physical fitness test that all its Service members participate in. Rather, the Coast Guard's physical fitness program for the majority of Service members is a requirement to participate in 180 minutes of exercise per week. No test is associated with this activity. Only deployable members, boat crew, and other Service members may be required to complete tier two physical fitness tests based on the requirements of their job.

LCDR Espenship noted the Coast Guard also does not align with the DoD's body composition program requirements. The Coast Guard uses the height and weight table for initial screening, then different taping methods for male and female Service members. If a Service member is unable to meet compliance with the first three body composition methods, the member can complete the tier two boat crew physical fitness test to achieve compliance.

LCDR Espenship highlighted a variety of recent changes to the Coast Guard's body composition program, including removing the requirement that members on suspension or with exemptions participate in body composition screenings. The Coast Guard has also removed the requirement for members to be compliant with the body composition program before they can receive an exemption for sexual assault recovery or infertility treatment. The biggest recent change to the program has been the addition of the abdominal circumference test as a valid compliance measure to address gender inequities that exist between male and female Service members. This change has resulted in the number of body composition-related probations for male and female Service members. LCDR Espenship reported the probation rate for male and female Service members is similar.

The Coast Guard also now allows abdominal circumference to be used for accession screenings. The boat crew tier two physical fitness test was added as a method of body composition compliance, and the Service added a 30-day waiting period from body composition probation start date to initial probation body composition screening. The purpose of this policy change was to encourage safe weight loss among Service members who fail the body composition program.

LCDR Espenship concluded his briefing.

### Discussion

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris thanked the briefers for their briefings and referenced Marine Corps plans to place BIA machines at installations across the country. She asked if the Navy will also have BIA machines on installations. Mr. Yavorski responded that a decision has not yet been made, and the Navy will consider next steps following the conclusion of the body composition study. MG Kline noted that adding BIA machines to installations is just a recommendation to the Army at this point. Col Quehl reiterated that the Marine Corps new BIA machine policy will begin January 1, 2023.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked why the Air Force is still allowing Airmen to do crunches or sit-ups as part of their physical fitness tests if those exercises have been found to be bad for Service member's musculoskeletal systems. Mr. Ham noted the Air Force did collect data from Airmen, and they reported these exercises do not cause injuries to their backs. However, the exercises can be difficult to complete for Airmen with a history of back pain or injuries. The alternate components allow the Air Force to assess Airmen that may have not been able to complete the crunch event previously.

Col (Ret.) Anderson noted that open-source literature has mentioned concerns about the rate of type 2 diabetes among Airmen increasing in the Air Force. She asked Mr. Ham whether he concurs, and whether he has seen similar trends. Mr. Ham noted he was unable to speak to that data.

Ms. Leveque asked MG Kline if all Soldiers have access to the Army's H2F program and whether they must seek out information about the program. She also asked whether the other Services are taking a holistic approach toward the health of their Service members. MG Kline confirmed that Soldiers do not need to seek out the H2F program. Education about the H2F program and a holistic approach to health is provided throughout various training opportunities across their Army careers. Mr. Yavorski confirmed that the Navy is looking at Total Force fitness, including how physical, social, and mental health of Sailors all tie together. Sailors also have access to resources, including fitness coaches, while on ship duty. Col Quehl confirmed that the Marine Corps considers the physical, mental, and spiritual health of Marines and a Joint M&RA committee is looking at the most important and frequently requested health-related service offerings at each base and within each unit to determine what services are most necessary to support Marines holistic health. Col Quehl noted it will take time for the Marine Corps to determine which services are core needs for Marines, which services are discretionary, and whether those service needs vary by environmental factors. Mr. Buckalew explained he oversees an Air Force program establishing five-person teams on multiple installations. These teams are focused on addressing the highest acuity medical problems across the Air Force, which are currently musculoskeletal and mental health. Mental health and musculoskeletal care providers provide imbedded care directly at the installations, and the teams identify units in most need of support across installations. LCDR Espenship noted the Coast Guard examines aspects of well-being outside of physical health, but those aspects are not included in the body composition screening or the annual screening.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked Mr. Ham whether the Space Force will have a physical assessment, body composition program, or other types of health and wellness assessments. Mr. Ham noted the Space Force maintains its own health and fitness policies, but Ms. Ruth Afiesimama, Director of Policy and Management, USSF Office of the Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Human Capital, in the audience might be able to respond to the question. Ms. Afiesimama responded that the Space Force is still developing its fitness program, and more information will be available at a later date.

Ms. Stoneman asked MG Kline to describe what it looks like for a Soldier to access H2F service, including how occupational therapists are accessed and deployed. MG Kline explained when a Soldier arrives at their unit for the first time, they will likely meet their squad leader and their master fitness trainer shortly thereafter; the latter is an individual who serves as a conduit

between Soldiers and the larger H2F system. The master fitness trainer takes the Soldier to a gym lined by offices around the exterior, where a variety of H2F personnel work, including athletic trainers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and other H2F specialists. The Soldier would then see personnel who are most aligned with their needs, and through conversations with that person, could be referred to other H2F staff that might help address other needs identified during the conversation. MG Kline noted not all units will have access to such an extensive H2F team.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked to what degree unit training time is built into Service members' duty days, or whether they are required to train on their own time. Col Quehl responded training is part of Marine Corps culture, and unit commanders are expected to allocate time for training. However, he noted there is no Service-level direction requiring commanders to build in training time. Mr. Yavorski stated that commanding officers are directed to give Sailors time to train based on mission requirements. Mr. Ham responded that Airmen's training time is also primarily mission and commander driven. MG Kline said it is a commander responsibility to maintain Service members' physical fitness, and training is usually completed between 6:30 and 7:30 a.m. at the unit level. LCDR Espenship noted commanders are told to allow Coast Guard members to have time for at least 180 minutes of training per week. Coast Guard members required to complete the tier two physical fitness test will train with their unit as part of their jobs.

Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox asked LCDR Espenship whether there is a timeframe in which pregnant and postpartum Coast Guard members have to complete their tier two physical fitness test if required by their job. LCDR Espenship noted that members receive a 12-month postpartum operational deferment for deployments and physical fitness tests; however, servicewomen can both deploy and complete physical fitness tests before 12 months after they give birth if they desire and their medical doctor approves.

RADM (Ret.) O'Donnell noted all Services are having trouble recruiting and asked each of the briefers if their Service has a program where individuals who pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery and have no criminal record can be supported if they need help meeting the physical fitness requirements. MG Kline noted the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course at Fort Jackson in South Carolina, and is considering expanding the pilot program. The pilot program is intended to help individuals with academic or body weight barriers joining the Army to overcome those barriers. Individuals can participate in the program to address body weight issues or academic issues, but they cannot address both barriers simultaneously through the program. Individuals who were unable to meet either the academic or physical fitness requirements of the Army can enlist in the program under 09M delayed training contracts and attend their first 3-week window of training. For individuals attending the program for academic barriers, they will take an assessment to determine if they have met the academic threshold to enlist in the military after the end of their 3-week training window. If the individual passes the assessment, they ship directly to basic training, and if they do not pass the assessment, they attend another 3-week training window for up to four 3-week training windows. MG Kline noted about 70 percent of recruits are moving on to basic training after their first 3-week training window, while nearly 90 percent of individuals are moving onto basic training by their fourth tour of 3-week trainings. Individuals attending the preparatory course for body weight barriers are introduced to all five domains of H2F, and they can move on to basic training as soon as they meet tape measurement requirements. Most individuals attending the preparatory course for body

weight barriers are meeting tape requirements within the first 2 weeks of their attendance, and program staff ensure individuals are losing weight healthily and safely.

RADM (Ret.) O'Donnell followed up and asked if a Soldier fails a physical fitness exam while in the Army, how much time they are allocated to become compliant. MG Kline said a Soldier who wants to pass basic training needs to score 50 on at least 5 of the events and 60 on the 6th event of the ACFT. However, Army Infantry Training Soldiers must pass all six components of the ACFT. MG Kline noted the pass rate for the ACFT is about 96 percent across the Army. Mr. Yavorski noted the Navy has a phase one pilot program where they are using an application to engage recruits in the Delayed Entry Program around physical fitness and nutrition. The Navy has extended boot camp from 6 to 8 weeks to ensure recruits are able to pass the PFA, and the Navy introduced the stationary bike as an alternate event in the physical fitness test during boot camp. The Navy is also considering options similar to the Army's Future Soldier Prep Course. Mr. Yavorski noted the Navy does not separate people from the Service for failure on a physical fitness test, but they may not recommend them for retention. Sailors can regain eligibility for retention by passing a physical fitness test at any time during their assignment to a fitness enhancement program. Col Quehl noted the Marine Corps recruiters provide training and education to recruits before they enlist in the Service. For remediation of body composition or physical fitness test failure, Marines would be assigned to the remedial fitness program where physical fitness instructors help them meet the standard. Mr. Ham confirmed the Air Force has been exploring studies to establish a preparatory course for Basic Military Training similar to the Future Soldiers Preparatory Course pilot program established by the Army. The Air Force Reserve Command put together a developmental training flight for individuals waiting to attend Basic Military Training. Airmen who fail the physical fitness test are put on a 90-day fitness improvement program that can look different by installation or unit mission. Sometimes this is an organized fitness program, and other times it is directed at the unit level. LCDR Espenship noted the Coast Guard does not have a remediation program for individuals prior to accession, but recruiters do work with recruits to help them meet Coast Guard standards. Coast Guard members who do not meet the body composition standard are placed on a probation period after a consultation with the medical team. The medical team determines if there is a reason beyond the Service member's control impacting their ability to meet the body composition standards. If no influencing factors are apparent, they are put on probation for up to 35 weeks. Service members are encouraged to lose 1 percent of body fat per month or 1 pound per week. The Coast Guard would recommend a Service member for separation if they were deemed unable to meet the body composition standards within the 35-week probation timeframe.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks referenced the Air Force program brought up by Mr. Buckalew currently in its fifth year of operation where care providers meet the mental health and musculoskeletal needs of Service members on one installation. She asked Mr. Buckalew to describe the Air Force's plan to grow this program beyond a single installation. Mr. Buckalew clarified that the Air Force has a 5-year plan where the program will be implemented at 15 bases per year. The program currently runs at 26 operational bases, and the goal is to cover the entire Air Force by the end of 2027. Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks also asked when the Air Force plans to roll out its revised body composition program. Mr. Ham noted he expects Air Force leaders to announce the revised body composition program in January 2023.

Ms. Leveque referenced the Coast Guard's policy about safe weight loss and asked if other Services have considered implementing a probation period to ensure Service members lose weight safely. Mr. Yavorski noted the Navy has a time period before Sailors can complete a physical fitness test after they failed a PFA. Ms. Leveque clarified her question, asking if a Service member fails a body composition test, whether they have a wait time before they can request another test. Mr. Yavorski noted there is no wait time in the Navy. Col Quehl noted that once a Marine is put on the body composition program after failing a test, fitness instructors will work with medical personnel to establish body fat or weight loss goals. MG Kline confirmed the Army has a policy similar to the Marine Corps, and Mr. Yavorski clarified that the Navy does have a program that works with Sailors to help them lose weight safely.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked each of the Service briefers how the physical fitness program works for their Reserve Component Service members. Mr. Yavorski for the Navy and Col Quehl for the Marine Corps confirmed that Reservists are held to the same standard as Active Duty personnel in their Services. Mr. Ham noted the only difference for Air National Guard is the timing of physical fitness tests because they are only required to complete an annual assessment, whereas Active Duty Airmen may be required to complete two assessments per year, depending on their performance on their first test. The Coast Guard confirmed their policy is similar to the Air Force. MG Kline noted Reservists have an additional 6 months to prepare before they begin taking the ACFT as the test of record.

Captain (Ret.) Kenneth J. Barrett referenced the Navy's single PFA schedule for 2023 and asked Mr. Yavorski whether the Navy plans to maintain the single physical fitness test in future years. Mr. Yavorski noted the Navy's policy is to announce the physical fitness test cycles annually in October. CAPT (Ret.) Barrett asked why the Navy is considering doing a single PFA per year. Mr. Yavorski noted the Navy examined test results from Service members and found the results from doing one test per year versus two tests per year did not vary significantly. The Navy also had a program where Sailors who received a score of excellent or above on their first PFA of the year did not have to do a test in the second cycle, and this program was successful in increasing the number of excellent or above scores Sailors received.

Honorable (Colonel Ret.) Dawn E.B. Scholz asked Mr. Yavorski to clarify whether the Navy has a pre-accessions program to help recruits meeting the eligibility standards for the Service. Mr. Yavorski confirmed the Navy does not have a pre-accessions program, but noted recruiters do support recruits issues related to physical fitness. However, he noted the Navy is considering establishing a formal pre-accessions program. Col Quehl noted his belief that the Marine Corps does not have a formal pre-accessions program either. Mr. Ham responded a pre-accessions program is related to the Air Force Reserve Component, and the Air Force is considering the possibility of a pre-accessions program for Active Duty Airmen.

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked whether MG Kline could provide data on success rates of participants in the Future Soldiers Preparatory Program. MG Kline noted the pilot program is not advanced enough to answer that question, because it was launched in August 2022. The Army plans to compare how graduates of the Future Soldier Preparatory Program compare with recruits who enlist without the support of the program, and preliminarily, he noted a high percentage of graduates of the Future Soldiers Preparatory Program have ended up serving in

leadership roles during basic training because they have been part of the militarization process longer.

Colonel (Ret.) Many-Bears Grinder referenced sleep as an important aspect of a Service member's health profile and noted sleep deprivation has been shown to impact weight and physical health. She asked if the Services are doing anything to support Service members' sleep habits. Mr. Yavorski confirmed that for the Navy, Surface Forces has examined research regarding circadian sleep rhythms for 24/7 operations on ships. MG Kline confirmed that sleep is one of the domains of the H2F program because of the other harmful behaviors it creates, such as domestic violence. Research shows that individuals who get 4 hours of sleep per night perform at 15 percent capacity the next day. Col Quehl noted the Marine Corps is focused on basic training and education regarding sleep because many Marines do not understand the detrimental effects sleep deprivation can have on their ability to perform dangerous activities, such as operating heavy machinery. Mr. Ham noted that sleep is the one-size-fits-all solution to help improve human performance and confirmed the Air Force's holistic healthcare team addresses sleep when they visit installations. LCDR Espenship noted sleep requirements are in place for operators in the Coast Guard, but he was unsure about formal programs currently focused on sleep or planned for the future.

Ms. Stoneman asked the briefers how their Services enforce sleep requirements associated with operating machinery and vehicles. Col Quehl noted in some fields in the Marine Corps, Marines may not operate machinery if they did not sleep the night before, although the Service must teach operators maturity to ensure they are truthful about lack of sleep. MG Kline noted the commanders involved in the composite risk management process represent the most powerful tool the Army has to mitigate risks, which involves the commander making a decision on whether to allow pilots to fly, for example, if they have elevated risks from lack of sleep.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked whether military dining facilities menus adhere to recommended nutritional values and who has access to dining facility meals. Mr. Ham noted the Air Force's dining facilities have multiple nutritional programs and recipes they are required to follow, and a tool can be used to evaluate the options available through dining facilities. The Air Force dining halls are open to almost everyone on the installation, although some individuals may need to pay for their meals. Col Quehl noted he is unsure who is allowed access to the Marine Corps' dining facilities but noted Marines receiving basic subsistence allowance may have to pay for their meals. The variety of nutritious foods available at Marine Corps dining halls has grown over the last few years, but it is still a challenge to keep Marines away from high-sugar and high-carbohydrate foods. Mr. Yavorski responded every Sailor on a ship may eat in the galley, but he was unsure about enlisted dining facilities on shore. However, he confirmed the Navy is focused on nutrition and financial literacy related to issues of food insecurity. MG Kline confirmed that anyone may eat at the Army dining facility, but the challenge is getting Service members to eat affordable nutritious meals at the dining facility instead of ordering unhealthy meals from Grubhub. MG Kline noted some dining facilities are cooking good food, especially those where cooks are assigned to them from the Army, and have good programs, including those where one can order lunch and dinner to pick up for later while buying food to eat. LCDR Espenship noted not all the Coast Guard is covered by dining facilities, but all Coast Guard members may eat at them.



Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox asked the briefers to clarify the physical fitness test cycles for their Services Active Duty and Reserve Service members. MG Kline noted Active Duty Soldiers complete two physical fitness tests a year, while Reserve Component Soldiers complete one per year. Col Quehl noted the Marine Corps uses seasons: January to June is the physical fitness test season and July to December is the combat fitness test season for the Marine Corps. Mr. Yavorski noted the Navy's PFA consists of the BCA combined with the PRT, and those tests will be conducted from February through November in 2023. Mr. Ham noted the Air Force physical fitness test cycle is based on Airmen's scores on their first physical fitness test. The minimum score to pass the Air Force physical fitness test is 75, and Airmen who score between 75 and 89.9 are required to test every 180 days, while Airmen who test over 90 on the first test only have to test once per year. LCDR Espenship noted the Coast Guard tests once a year, but if a member does not meet the standard, they are tested every 90 days until they pass the physical fitness test. The BCA is conducted with Coast Guard members twice a year in October and April for both Active Duty and Reserve members.

VADM (Ret.) Braun asked if ACFT training equipment and deployable training lockers are available to the Army National Guard and Reserve Component Service members and recruiters in the field. MG Kline confirmed that ACFT equipment was provided to all Active Duty components, recruiting stations, Reserve Officers' Training Corps detachments, and all National Guard and Reserve units. However, he noted some challenges have been associated with State-level distribution of some training equipment. The Army also has a national stock number at this point, so the training equipment can be ordered and delivered easily if necessary.

Dr. Ferguson noted that each of the briefers had mentioned their Service's physical fitness test failure rate and discharge rate for failed physical fitness tests are very low. She asked for specific percentages and whether those numbers vary by gender. Dr. Ferguson asked if the Services identify dysfunctional behaviors in advance of body composition or physical fitness testing, such as the use of performance enhancing substances or eating disorders. MG Kline noted he is unaware of dysfunction behaviors being identified before physical fitness testing in the Army, at least partially because no screenings take place before the ACFT is conducted. Regarding the pass/fail rate of the ACFT, MG Kline noted the Army has only 1.5 months of data currently, but the pass rate is about 96 percent. Army Soldiers are not accountable for their scores until April 2023, so those who fail will not be discharged at this time. Male and female Soldiers are within 2 percentage points of each other in the passing rate on the ACFT. Mr. Yavorski noted the Navy cannot discharge Sailors because of failure of the PFA, and the passing rate is trending over 99 percent for the PRT, while the pass rate for the BCA is about 97 percent. Mr. Yavorski was unsure of the gender breakdown for these statistics. Col Quehl responded he does not have data on the number of Marine Corps discharges resulting from failure on the physical fitness test. However, he confirmed about 70 percent of male and female Marines are achieving first-class scores on the physical fitness test, and the overall failure rate for the test is very low. For the body composition test, the passing rate is about 99 percent and has the same rates for male and female Marines. Mr. Ham responded the Air Force had a physical fitness test passing rate of 99 percent in 2019 and 98 percent in 2020. He confirmed the Air Force has a policy that four physical fitness test failures in 24 months may result in commanders not recommending retention. However, discharge for physical fitness tests is still very low.

LCDR Espenship noted that discharge separations are skewed because the Coast Guard halted the physical fitness test as a result of COVID-19 and removed some strikes from Service members who may not have passed the test or the BCA. About .5 percent of Coast Guard members are put on probation for failing the BCA, and a handful of Coast Guardsman might be separated each year out of a population of 60,000. Mr. Ham noted one of the primary reasons the Air Force decoupled the body composition test from the physical fitness test was because the Coast Guard noticed Service members employing unsafe practices, such as starvation, before tests. Mr. Yavorski noted Navy Commands are required to give a 10-week notice before a PFA, and Sailors are required to have a current medical assessment stating they are able to test safely.

The panel discussion concluded.

### **Panel Briefing: Overview in the Military Services' Promotion Process (RFI 9)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the policies and procedures in place to prevent conscious and unconscious gender bias within the promotion process, including the removal of gender-specific demographic information from promotion packages. The Committee requested briefers provide data on how these bias prevention policies and practices have impacted selection results since implementation. The Department of the Air Force (DAF), Navy, and Space Force also provided a written response.

#### *Army*

Lieutenant Colonel Samantha Frazier, a Program Manager for the Command Policy and Programs Division in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, briefed the Committee for the Army. LTC Frazier referenced two 2020 memorandums from the Secretary of the Army and the Assistant Secretary of the Army and a Department of the Army policy on the removal of the Department of the Army photo (DA photo) and gendered data from the selection board process. LTC Frazier showed the Committee an example of a DA photo, which board members would have viewed during the selection process prior to the removal of photos from selection boards. The removal of the DA photo from the selection board review process went into effect August 1, 2020. LTC Frazier also provided the Committee with a link to a 30-second video on the removal of pictures and other practices that could inadvertently lead to discrimination.

A variety of other data markers, including gender, race, ethnicity, and marital status, are masked in a Soldier's one-page record brief that summarizes their career history, education, and qualifications. LTC Frazier noted that although gender is masked within the record brief, it is not masked in the Soldier's overall file. Documents such as evaluations, awards, and school records may include gendered pronouns such as he/she or him/her. To alleviate this issue, the Army's computerized selection board system (ASBS), which allows board members to view and access files during the boards, is being revised. ASBS 2.0 is under development, and the revised system will display information tailored to remove gender-specific references without breaking continuity in the system. LTC Frazier shared that the system is funded for development and is being tested in FY 2023, but it will not be implemented for a few years.

LTC Frazier showed an example of an officer record brief used by the board with race, gender, and ethnicity redacted. In addition to the removal of the DA photo and the masking of race, gender, and ethnicity from record briefs, the Army provides all promotion selection board members with a bias training module. This training covers what biases are and how biases can impact the selection board review process. Prior to the board convening, all promotion selection board members also receive a memorandum of instruction (MOI), which includes a reinforcement statement of inclusiveness.

LTC Frazier explained that research, data collection, and data analysis have been conducted over the last 2 years to discern any difference within promotion selection behaviors because the implementation of the bias prevention changes to the Army's selection board process. She stated this research is still ongoing. Therefore, the Army does not have any findings to report at this time. LTC Frazier noted findings from the study will be released in the near future.

LTC Frazier showed a portion of an MOI given to board members prior to the board. This document reinforces the importance of the selection of individuals and demonstrates a service of inclusion during board review processes.

LTC Frazier concluded her briefing.

### Navy

Captain Andrew Klosterman, Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel Command for Career Progression and Commander, and Commander Shaletha Moran, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Special Assistant for the Navy Personnel Command, briefed the Committee for the Navy. CAPT Kolsterman is a naval aviator by trade and currently oversees all the Navy's statutory promotion boards for officers and senior enlisted advancement boards for E-7 through E-9 Sailors. CAPT Kolsterman noted although he does not oversee milestone or job assignment boards, he would answer any questions regarding those boards during the discussion to the best of his ability or direct the Committee to the appropriate resource.

CAPT Kolsterman shared that the Navy addresses diversity holistically with a few exceptions covered later in the brief. The Navy collects race, ethnicity, and gender data from each individual officer promotion board and enlisted advancement board. Officer promotion board data are shared with the SecDef, while enlisted advancement board data are shared up to the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP). These data are also posted on the MyNavy HR website for Service members and are publicly accessible.

CAPT Kolsterman explained that the Navy operates under convening orders from the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) and the CNP. Under convening orders, SECNAV or the CNP provides direction and instructions for convening a board. The Navy recently included equal opportunity and diversity guidance documents to each board member prior to the board convening. These documents articulate that diversity is a strength of this Nation and directs members to choose the best and most fully qualified Sailor without regard to any specific demographic markers, including gender and gender identity. CAPT Kolsterman stated the Navy also provides a video describing potential areas where bias can occur during boards and how to recognize bias in other board members and themselves. SECNAV also provides a brief that all board members are

required to view prior the board convening. A prerecorded SECNAV brief is also provided to all board members prior to the convening of each board about the importance of selecting the right board members and emphasizing the importance of diversity in the Navy. CAPT Kolsterman indicated the Navy often receives positive feedback on both videos mentioned above.

The only gender-specific information the Navy removed from promotion boards is the official photo, which was directed by SecDef in 2020. The Navy removed all photos from all selection boards over the last 2 years. However, because of how the Navy's systems pull records for display, gender-specific information is not displayed for Navy officer boards, but it is displayed for enlisted boards. CAPT Kolsterman noted the only other gender-specific information that may be provided to board members is a candidate's pronouns or names if the briefer uses them because the Navy does not redact names for the boards.

CAPT Kolsterman explained that SecDef ordered the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA) to conduct a holistic study of bias in the Navy, including bias beyond gender. The Navy has been working with IDA for 12 months and has provided data from boards conducted over many years. The Navy is expecting to receive IDA's recommendations based on the findings of the study in the next 3–6 months.

CAPT Kolsterman stated Task Force One Navy (TF1N) was implemented a few years ago to address diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in the Navy and noted CDR Moran's position was created based on recommendations from the TF1N report, which is available online. Another recommendation from the TF1N report was the development of bias training. The Navy addressed this recommendation by creating a 10-minute video shown to board members prior to the convening of each board. The video describes different types of bias and how to recognize it in oneself and other board members. CAPT Kolsterman acknowledged the Navy understands board members have their own biases, but these processes are implemented to try to control these biases to a manageable level. All boards are required to review both briefs, including the bias training video, prior to convening.

Promotion and selection to board membership are supposed to match the diversity of the Navy to the extent possible. The Navy currently is composed of 21 percent females and 46 percent racial or ethnic minorities. These percentages are read aloud as part of the reading of the convening orders before every board, and if the composition of the candidates does not meet these percentages, the board is required to document why they were not able to meet those diversity thresholds. The Navy also recognizes the importance of adding diverse junior officer members to the board, whether added as a member, recorder, or an assistant so they understand the board process for when they sit on the board as O4 to O6s themselves. The Navy has altered how it assigns recorders and assistants to increase diversity levels so it can gain experience observing the boards.

CAPT Kolsterman explained that official photos have been added and removed from the Navy's records for board processes frequently over the last 8 years. This inconsistency has made it difficult to identify trends or improvements to the board selection process. CAPT Kolsterman noted selection results have remained relatively stable by gender over the last 8 years.

CAPT Kolsterman then noted that documents provided to the Committee are used in board executions for both officer promotion and senior enlisted advancement boards. These documents are also available online.

CAPT Kolsterman concluded the briefing.

### Marine Corps

Lieutenant Colonel Kerrissa Torres, Branch Head of Promotions Branch, Manpower & Reserve Affairs, briefed the Committee for the Marine Corps. LtCol Torres stated the Marine Corps takes gender bias seriously. The Marine Corps performance evaluation systems manual states professional ethics constitute one of the foundations of the performance evaluation system. Reporting officials must observe the highest standards of integrity and moral courage; personal biases have no place in this process. The manual also indicates leaders must foster a climate of equal opportunity by optimally integrating all members of Marine Corps regardless of age, race, religion, ethnic background, or gender to accomplish the Service's mission.

LtCol Torres also highlighted the importance of mentorship in the Marine Corps to cultivate professional and personal development in all subordinates, develop team players, and promote esprit de corps. Marine Corps policy for performance evaluations makes clear the necessity of combining teaching and coaching while creating an atmosphere that is tolerant of mistakes while Marines are learning. LtCol Torres stated that in coordination with the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps places the strongest emphasis on the equal opportunity of all those eligible for promotion within staff noncommissioned officer (NCO) and officer ranks without regard for race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or other demographic markers. This equal opportunity guidance is echoed in the Marine Corps staff NCO and officer precepts that convene these promotion selection boards. It is also highlighted in the administration guidance brief the board receives from LtCol Torres and her staff prior to and throughout the board's convening and deliberations.

Similarly to the Navy, in compliance with SecDef's guidance for equal opportunity for all, the Marine Corps removed all photos from promotion boards beginning September 1, 2020. The Marine Corps concurrently continues to assess the cost, means, and timelines for redacting other identifying information such as first and last names, gender, and race and ethnicity. LtCol Torres stated that the M&RA is also participating in a study with Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA) to assess the direct and indirect impacts of removing identifiers from promotion selection boards. She stated there is no estimated timeline on the completion of this study.

The Marine Corps Promotions Branch takes additional measures to ensure integrity of board's deliberations regarding equal opportunity. The branch provides all board members the precepts for these deliberations in advance for their review prior to their arrival for the board. LtCol Torres noted the branch also provides a pre-board brief emphasizing the board should comply with equal opportunity guidance and highlighting repercussions the board might face if equal opportunity guidance is violated. Upon convening the board, Promotions Branch staff read precepts with special emphasis added regarding equal opportunity. The branch also trains the recorder to be vigilant in providing integrity of the proceedings in accordance with the respected precepts. A video featuring the SECNAV is also shown to board members, recorders, and

administrative support staff prior to the convening of each board, reiterating the equal opportunity guidance provided in the precepts.

LtCol Torres noted that because the Marine Corps took these actions to reduce conscious and unconscious gender bias on promotion boards, female Marines have been promoted at higher rates over the last 5 years than their male counterparts for the grades of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel. For staff NCO grades, female Marines have also been promoted at higher rates for gunnery sergeant, master sergeant, master gunnery sergeant, and sergeant major. For first sergeant, male Marines were promoted at higher rates than their female counterparts over the last 5 years. LtCol Torres stated there is not enough data to determine if the change in rates correlate with the photo removal.

The Marine Corps provided the Committee all its policies and precepts for officers and staff NCOs promotion and selection boards. These documents and all precepts are available on the Promotion Branch's website, which was also shared with the Committee. LtCol Torres concluded her briefing.

### *Air Force*

Lieutenant Colonel Naomi Henigin, Chief of the Air Force Officer Promotions, Evaluations, and Recognition Policy Branch at the Directorate of Military Force Management Policy (AF/A1P), briefed the Committee for the Air Force. Lt Col Henigin explained the Air Force has been targeting the removal of demographic markers from promotion boards for nearly 30 years. In 1995, the Air Force removed photos from promotion boards, and in 2002, the Service removed race, ethnicity, and gender identifiers from officer selection briefs. Since then, the Air Force has added language that strengthens the commitment to a bias-free environment in promotion and evaluation systems. Lt Col Henigin noted this includes the memorandum and precepts other Services discussed. The Air Force also removed marital and dependent status from officer selection briefs to increase gender equity and parity. Since Lt Col Henigin's briefing slides were submitted, the Air Force updated policy to increase the size of promotion boards from 5 to 7 members for all promotion boards considering 100 or more eligible Airmen. This change allows two women to participate in every board to better match the demographic makeup of the force.

Lt Col Henigin shared that the Air Force has numerous DAF instructions on both promotions and evaluations, which reinforce the Air Force's commitment to evaluating the whole person concept and performance while ensuring a fair and equitable promotion process. Lt Col Henigin also noted these instructions will become familiar to the Committee when Ms. Afiesimama briefs for the Space Force because it is the same parent document for both Services.

Lt Col Henigin explained the promotion board's "first day slides" are a direct communication from the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) to the board members reinforcing a fair and equitable promotion process. Similar to what the other Services shared, the Air Force continues to review how best to ensure gender parity in the evaluation process. For example, the Air Force is focused on investigating pronoun use at this moment. Lt Col Henigin stated that, at this time, the Air Force still includes first and last names in the promotion boards and authorizes the use of pronouns in evaluations and promotion documents. However, it is not mandated to use pronouns or gender-specific pronouns. The Air Force is also exploring the inclusion of unconscious and

conscious bias training in the promotion board, which is under legal review. Lt Col Henigin concluded her briefing.

### Space Force

Ms. Ruth Afiesimama, Director of Military Policy and Management, and Master Sergeant Donnell L. Fulton, Superintendent of Space Force Evaluations and Promotions, Space Force Policy Division (USSF/S1P), briefed the Committee for the Space Force. Ms. Afiesimama stated ensuring equity in the evaluation process and taking action to prevent unconscious and conscious bias is critical. Ms. Afiesimama noted Guardian evaluation and promotion processes are governed by various department-level instructions as Lt Col Henigin mentioned. Those instructions encompass policies for both Airmen and Guardians. For officer and enlisted evaluations, this is DAF Instruction 36-2406; for enlisted promotions, it is DAF Instruction 36-2502. The Space Force also has the DAF's program directive covering the establishment of the Space Force and the Chief Human Capital Officer's section.

Ms. Afiesimama explained that the Space Force has various policies and procedures in place to prevent conscious and unconscious gender bias within the promotion process. In accordance with the DAF's Instruction 26-2406, the enlisted performance reports serve as the main evaluation tool used to record annual performance of enlisted Guardians. In evaluating Guardians, evaluators are only authorized to use performance and duty-related information in their assessments. Ms. Afiesimama noted the major factors influencing evaluations are the performance and potential of the Guardian. Consideration of information encompassing other identifying information such as gender, age, race and ethnicity, religion, and family status is prohibited for consideration. The Space Force currently uses first and last names when reviewing records for continuity only. There is no requirement or need to use gender pronouns for evaluations and promotions. Ms. Afiesimama stated Space Force does not currently use photos in the promotion process and has no intention to use photos in the future.

The Chief Human Capital Officer approves and releases a board promotion charge for enlisted promotion boards. Within that charge, board members take an oath to serve without prejudice or partiality. Board members are explicitly charged to act in the best interest of the Service and avoid any consideration that would interfere with the fair evaluation of every Guardian. Equal opportunity and unbiased evaluations are emphasized as essential elements of the Space Force's promotion system, and diversity is highlighted as a critical strength. Board members are also charged with reviewing all Guardians fairly and are cautioned to avoid any preferential treatment.

Ms. Afiesimama noted the Space Force has not identified any data trends since the Service took these actions to reduce conscious and unconscious bias. Given that the Space Force is a new Service, its data are limited. However, it will continue to monitor bias and impacts where possible. The Space Force does not release demographic statistics but releases promotion statistics based on their specialty codes or the career field of members being considered. Following the conclusion of the board, results and statistics are released to Guardians through the DAF personnel website.

Ms. Afiesimama then reviewed officer promotion processes, which are governed by specific DAF instructions. In accordance with DAF's instruction, officer performance reports are the evaluation tools used when assessing officers' annual performance. Policies and procedures are in place that prevent conscious and unconscious bias including the specific prohibition of gender, race, ethnicity, or other identifiers similar to enlisted promotions. Evaluators are prohibited from using those identifiers in any way that could be interpreted as favorably or unfavorably impacting the member. Similarly to enlisted boards, the Space Force uses first and last names for continuity only and the use of gender pronouns are not required or prohibited.

Ms. Afiesimama noted that, as some of the Services mentioned, the Space Force also has a secretary memorandum of instructions for officers. The memorandum is directed to board members to let them know what their duties and responsibilities are, and to let them know what they may consider as part of the promotion. Every board president is required to read those instructions aloud to board members, and board members are directed to apply the whole-person concept to their assessment. Factors that can be considered include leadership, competence, and job performance. Board members are prohibited from considering gender, marital status, religion, age, and family status. The memorandum also highlights the importance of diversity of officers and having members from the entire spectrum of talent for the Space Force to maintain its competitive edge.

Ms. Afiesimama noted that at the conclusion of each officer board, similarly as for enlisted promotions, the information is packaged and briefed up the chain of command. The Space Force's officer promotion results are briefed to the Assistant SecAF. During that out brief, demographics and statistic are discussed. That information is also provided to the Assistant SecAF for M&RA. The Space Force's general counsel is also involved in that discussion. Ms. Afiesimama shared that the Space Force conducted one field grade officer promotion board in 2021.

In monitoring statistics, the Space Force has not seen anything concerning but will continue to examine those statistics. From that field grade officer promotion board, women were selected for promotion to major at 95.0 percent. The overall promotion rate for that board was 92.3 percent. For lieutenant colonel, women were selected for promotion at 100 percent, and the overall promotion rate for that board was 77.8 percent. For colonel, women were selected for promotion at 80 percent, and the overall promotion rate was 61.2 percent. Ms. Afiesimama restated that the statistics she shared are posted on DAF's website following every promotion board.

Ms. Afiesimama concluded her briefing.

### Coast Guard

Commander Evelyn Samms, Office Chief of Enlisted Personnel Management, and Commander David Ratner, Office Chief of Officer Personnel Management, briefed the Committee for the Coast Guard. CDR Samms stated that all advancement panels and promotion boards executed by the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center are governed by Coast Guard policy and applicable precepts. Accordingly, all panel members must retain an impartial, unbiased, unprejudiced attitude. Prior to the convening of a promotion board or panel, CDR Samms or CDR Ratner will provide a brief and charge to the panel members to ensure all applicable policies and guidance



are adhered to. In November 2018, for enlisted personnel and officers, gender-specific pronouns were prohibited from inclusion in member's evaluations.

To ensure alignment between officer and enlisted boards, CDR Samms shared that the Coast Guard stood up the Enlisted Evaluations Branch (EPM-3). EPM-3 screens and vets 100 percent of enlisted personnel management evaluations once board reports are finalized for every enlisted promotional board and panel. The Coast Guard posts applicable precepts on its internal Coast Guard website. CDR Samms noted the Coast Guard uses different terminology regarding promotions as officers are promoted and enlisted members are advanced.

CDR Samms stated both officer promotion boards and enlisted advancement panels consist of a mix of high-performing officers and enlisted members. The Coast Guard aims to represent different specialties and different ethnicities and genders. Board and panel members are sworn to perform their duties without any prejudice and partiality. For every promotion board or panel convening, a member of the Coast Guard's Office of Personnel Service Center is staffed to ensure all deliberations and conversations pertain to matters of the record.

CDR Samms noted the Coast Guard does not require photos for advancement or promotion packages. The Coast Guard policy also began prohibiting the inclusion of a member's first or middle name in 2018. For full transparency, promotion boards do have access to Coast Guardsmen's full record including their records of professional development. Currently, no policy prohibits the use of personal pronouns or Coast Guardsmen's full name on these documents. Board members are, however, prohibited from using gendered pronouns to address candidates during board proceedings. CDR Samms reiterated that there is a member of the Office of Personnel Service present during every promotion board convening and noted they are responsible for correcting the conversation if this does occur. CDR Samms concluded her presentation on the Coast Guard's enlisted advancement process and CDR Ratner began discussing the officer promotion process.

CDR Ratner explained that, in addition to gender-specific pronouns being removed from evaluations, gender has been masked in data fields that contain an officer's specialty, training, and career history. As of last year, the Coast Guard also removed first names from data fields. CDR Ratner then summarized the Coast Guard's officer promotion data since they implemented the policy to remove gender pronouns in 2018. Promotion rates for enlisted specialties were generally equitable. Control rates presented to the Committee span from commander, lieutenant commander, to captain from promotion year 2018 to 2022, held in calendar year 2021. For lieutenant commander, female selection rates were nearly equal over those years and slightly more favorable toward females compared with males. The Coast Guard saw the same thing with the commander selection rate. CDR Ratner noted the Coast Guard does not have data to share prior to 2018.

With the captain selection board, the Coast Guard started to see a change in the trend in promotions starting in 2019. Selection rates for servicewomen increased and overtook the overall selection rate for male Coast Guardsman. CDR Ratner believes this was the result of a rapid increase in the number of servicewomen being eligible for promotion boards. Regarding officer specialty acquisitions, starting around 2014, officers were characterized according to specialties. Coast Guard officers, unlike DoD Services, do not compete in competitive categories. They are

all general officers and compete against one another. Officer specialty codes have helped promotion boards tag officers according to their career, background, and specialties. Across the board, the Coast Guard generally sees equal acquisition of specialty codes with the exception of aviation, where it sees a much higher rate for servicemen acquiring that specialty.

CDR Ratner explained that the Coast Guard's policies to combat conscious and unconscious bias in the promotion processes consist of a series of instructions that are publicly available. Each policy prohibits the use of gendered pronouns in evaluations and the data fields presented to the board. These policies and the Coast Guard's statutory authority convening the boards ensure every board member evaluates the candidates without prejudice or parity. CDR Ratner reiterated that the Coast Guard staffs facilitators in the room for every deliberation and board proceeding to ensure gender pronouns or any speculation of records are strictly prohibited and not discussed in the board room.

CDR Ratner and CDR Samms concluded their briefing.

### Discussion

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn noted photos have been removed from promotion boards in the Coast Guard and Army, and asked about the existence of other gender markers in those specific promotion boards where evaluators could decipher the gender. CDR Ratner confirmed that gender markers are not included in Coast Guard evaluations. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked if other records in the total file board members see show first names, pronouns, or any other information that would identify gender. CDR Ratner confirmed it is possible for Coast Guard board members to see pronouns in other records on a candidate's file on awards or other items. There is no specific prohibition in current regulations for the use of gender pronouns in personal awards, which is a type of record considered by promotion boards. CDR Ratner said the Coast Guard does not have the capability to remove those for consideration at this time. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn noted it seems board members could easily figure out a candidate's gender in another part of their record. CDR Ratner confirmed it is possible for them get that information if they are looking for it, but he noted this is one of the reasons the Coast Guard staffs facilitators on every promotion board, so this type of information is not discussed in the evaluation of record, even if board members read it in the evaluation record. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked if the Coast Guard is considering removing the use of pronouns in the records seen by board members, so it is a truly blind process as related to gender. CDR Ratner said he and CDR Samms are not aware of any policy initiatives specifically addressing that concern. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn referenced the Army's work on software to remove gender identifiers ASBS and asked LTC Frazier where the Army stands with this. LTC Frazier said the software has been funded this year and is being tested. The file is an accumulation of the Soldier's work throughout their career, and the Army has not had a policy stating pronouns should not be used. The Army recognizes this is a problem and still has to mask gendered information. LTC Frazier said the Army hopes the 2.0 version of the ASBS software will mask that information throughout the file. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked if specifications for the software will remove all gender-specific information from the record or just from the evaluations. LTC Frazier said the software is supposed to extract gender specific information throughout the file.

Col (Ret.) Grinder directed her question to the Marine Corps. She noted that LtCol Torres provided the promotion rates for female Marines, which look favorable, and asked how those rates compare with previous rates before the gender masking changes. LtCol Torres said she does not have promotion rates prior to the last 5 years on hand.

CAPT (Ret.) Barrett said he is impressed by the Navy board diversity goals of 46 percent racial or ethnic diversity and 21 percent gender diversity. He asked if the other Services have similar goals on board composition. LtCol Torres noted the Marine Corps is similar to the Navy, seeking 40 percent racial or ethnic diversity and 10 percent gender diversity for board composition to mirror Marine Corps demographics. As for the Navy, if the Marine Corps does not meet those percentages, they are required to document why. LtCol Torres said the Marine Corps also looks across different specialties or any subspecialty MOSs being considered on the board and to ensure a Service member from that MOS is on the board. Ms. Afiesimama said the Space Force uses a similar approach to ensure the boards reflect the eligible population in gender and MOS. CDR Ratner shared that while race and gender are not specific criteria for the Coast Guard's board membership, they primarily focus on representing the specialties of the officers being considered. He said the Coast Guard believes it is in the Service's best interest to have a board representative of the officers being considered. LTC Frazier said the Army also aims to include specific branches depending on who is being considered on the board. Starting in 2020, along with a preposition list that goes out to all Soldiers, once the board convened, a copy of the board's demographic makeup is released.

Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox asked if there is a directive to not use pronouns in fitness reports for commanding officers and to instead use titles because pronouns are not needed in these reports until proprietary software developments can remove them. CAPT Kolsterman said this is a solvable issue right now, but it has not been directed or implemented by the Navy. If the Navy decides not to use pronouns and puts out that directive, it will screen to see if there are pronouns that should not be in fitness reports or enlisted evaluation that are submitted. LTC Frazier said, similarly, there is no directive for the Army that states that pronouns will not be used in fitness reports. However, the Army recognizes this is an issue when it comes to promotion boards, and this is one of the reasons it is developing ASBS software 2.0. Army leadership is trying to scale back on use of pronouns, but that may be difficult for leadership accustomed to certain writing styles. CDR Samms shared that when the use of gender pronouns was prohibited in 2018 for the Coast Guard, guidance was pushed out to the field. As part of this guidance, the Coast Guard also shared alternate words leaders could use rather than he or she, including "member," "MBR," "Service member," and "SVM." Lt Col Henigin shared that the Air Force is moving to a new evaluation system and noted evaluations of the last 10 years were almost incomprehensible in the way they wrote bullets without names or pronouns. To address this challenge, the Air Force is moving to a narrative writing style that will be more grammatically correct. Lt Col Henigin said the emphasis is also to make sure Airmen have the ability to write in the way we communicate, because each section will have places where board members can combine different performance statements. However, as the Air Force rolled out the new evaluation system, it was determined the Air Force could allow the use of pronouns if the rater chooses to use them. The Air Force has considered and continues to ponder this issue. The Office of the SecDef's study conducted by IDA is looking into pronoun use specifically, and the Air Force looks forward to receiving the study results. Lt Col Henigin believes the results will be informative as the Air Force takes these next steps. Ms. Afiesimama said the use of pronouns is not explicitly prohibited in Space Force

policy. The Space Force is also awaiting the results of the study at the department level. The Space Force is also looking into the creation of a new evaluation system for Guardians.

Dr. Ferguson noted that LTC Frazier from the Army mentioned other practices that could discriminate based on gender are highlighted in the video shown to promotion board members. Dr. Ferguson said this sounds wonderful for the selection process, but noted leadership is an ill-defined, subjective concept. She asked if the Services have a sense of issues women raise, either anecdotally or through reports that may be discriminatory in their work experience and in experiences preparing them for leadership roles or helping them to demonstrate leadership potential. CAPT Kolsterman from the Navy recalled one instance when a female pilot, one of his junior officers, reached out to him and said she was getting out of the Navy and going to the Reserves. CAPT Kolsterman said she was a phenomenal pilot, and he tried to talk her into staying on Active Duty, but she did not share the reasons she decided to leave the Navy, other than it being an uphill battle as a woman in the naval aviation community. LTC Frazier said that is not an issue reflected in promotions in the Army. LTC Frazier feels strides have been made around pregnancy in the Army to ensure having children is not a hindrance to someone's career. LTC Frazier shared that the conversation has shifted to, "It is okay to get pregnant" and has given servicewomen greater propensity to stay in the Army.

Dr. Ferguson asked LTC Frazier to elaborate on practices or factors that are potentially discriminatory that are addressed in the video shown to promotion board members. LTC Frazier said promotion board members could discriminate based on marital status, because some leaders could be negatively influenced by that; a candidate's number of dependents; or even their birthplace. All those factors could lead to unconscious or conscious bias that board members do not even know they have. Lt Col Henigin said DAF has a number of Barrier Analysis Working Groups and the WIT who are experts in issues related to gender bias in promotion boards and would be better equipped to answer this question from the Air Force perspective. Ms. Afiesimama believes the Space Force's leadership at the DAF level has a good connection to, and relationship with, WIT and confirmed the WIT is working on these issues. CDR Samms said the Coast Guard has a civil rights directorate that typically holds group study analysis to discuss any potential barriers or discriminators for the Coast Guard's female workforce. CDR Samms believes the Coast Guard has made significant strides related to pregnancy too because they prohibited the mention of anything regarding health status in both officer and enlisted evaluations. Over the last 2 years, the Coast Guard created the parental augmentation program that affords a member 12 weeks off after childbirth, while another Coast Guard member transitions into their job. CDR Samms shared that as a mother of two children, she has seen a big change in how pregnancy is handled in the Coast Guard since enlisting. She had only 6 weeks off when she gave birth to her first child while in the Coast Guard. CDR Samms said the Coast Guard is steadily evolving because they realized they must transition to keep up with the competitive workforce. CDR Ratner added to CDR Samms' statement and said, regarding promotion boards and panels, the Coast Guard's Commandant made sure to add guidance that instructs boards to value factors such as command equivalence to ensure other jobs officers may have held, even if they did not have the opportunity to take command, are equally valued depending on those positions.

COL (Ret.) Grinder said everyone is studying the effects of the removal of official photos on promotion and selection rates. She asked if the Services have received any feedback, positive or

negative, on the removal of the official photo. She asked CAPT Kolsterman directly to address why the official photo has been added to and removed from Service member's records numerous times over the last 8 years. CAPT Kolsterman said the Navy has not received feedback on the photo's removal, positive or negative, but noted his belief that board members do not care what the person looks like, especially after receiving the bias training. He believes that including the photo or not does not affect the board's decision. He explained the Navy recognized the issue of gender bias in the promotion process a few years ago and decided to remove photos from a Service member's record to address this issue. However, he suggested the Navy may have thought the removal of photos took away from the board's ability to see who the members are, so the Navy put the photo back 2 or 3 years after it was initially removed. CAPT Kolsterman speculated there may have been pressure to remove the photo again after it was added back in as the result of other Services removing photos from the records. However, former-SecDef Esper's 2020 direction that all Military Services should remove the photo from records solidified the Navy's decision to ultimately remove the photo. COL (Ret.) Grinder thanked CAPT Kolsterman for his response and reiterated her question to the other Services about whether they had received negative or positive feedback on the removal of the photo. Lt Col Henigin restated that the Air Force has not had photos in promotion board materials since 1995.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn stated she believes she read in a written response that photos or gender may or may not come up in other selection boards, such as for command selection or special duty assignments. She asked if the Services could provide an update on how gender identifiers are handled on other selection boards where gender may be apparent, and share if actions have been taken to address the issue. CDR Ratner said, to his knowledge, photos have never been incorporated in promotion boards, command screens, or any assignment panels in the Coast Guard. The one instance where photos are used is in interviews for service at the White House's Military Office, which is the White House's standard. CAPT Kolsterman said the Navy's statutory officer promotion board is the standard all other boards are compared against. This standard is applied to enlisted advancement boards and the milestone and advancement boards for specific community milestone jobs such as taking command, major command, and department head.

CAPT Kolsterman reiterated that the statutory board process operates at the highest level and is propagated and executed in that manner for all the other boards. LTC Frazier noted the Army does not use the photo in selection or promotion boards for commanding billets, Reserve Officer Training Corps, and acquisition. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked if gender would still be apparent in these promotion boards. LTC Frazier said no because gender is masked within the reports. Ms. Afiesimama said other Space Force offices that would be better suited to answer her question. However, she restated that photos are not included in promotions, and the Space Force has no intentions to do so. Lt Col Henigin said the Air Force does not use photos for any position with the exception of the White House, which requires a photo as part of the candidate's nomination package. However, the Air Force does use pronouns and first names in evaluations, which the board is privy to. LtCol Torres said she cannot speak to selection or command-slanted boards.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn referenced Ms. Afiesimama's statement that the Space Force prohibits publishing demographic data, but she noted she saw slides discussing female promotion data and asked Ms. Afiesimama to clarify this discrepancy. Ms. Afiesimama said that on the enlisted Guardian side, the Space Force does not release full demographic information, but the Space

Force is still examines it. The Space Force wants to make sure the data coming for Guardians, particularly for inter-Service transfers from other Services, is holistic and reflects the population accurately. The Space Force is trying to work through system issues for enlisted personnel related to Service member demographics. The Space Force is also exploring strategies for releasing demographic data to the public. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked Ms. Afiesimama where the prohibition originates on the enlisted side. Ms. Afiesimama said the Space Force does not releases that information to the public, but conducts internal reviews to analyze it. Ms. Afiesimama also shared one data point from the Space Force, noting that for the Service's 2021 S6 enlisted board, promotion rates for women were 42.9 percent and only 21.0 percent for men.

Col (Ret.) Anderson applauded the diversity of the Services' selection boards and asked the Services to briefly talk about how records are briefed and describe the voting process, whether it is collaborative or automated. LTC Frazier said the Army has a selection system where files are uploaded and board members have their own screen to review the files. Col (Ret.) Anderson asked LTC Frazier if the voting process is numbered, individually briefed, or automated. LTC Frazier said it is automated and individual board members do not share their remarks nor rankings. LtCol Torres described the Marine Corps' board process and noted that promotion boards typically consists of 21 members. Board members are assigned packages for review and are given a standard briefing guide. This guide is public, so eligible candidates can see what the board is being briefed, which includes awards, deployments, key billets, and whether they completed PME. The Marine Corps' voting process is also individual based, but board members have the opportunity to recommend a rating between 1 and 6 for each Marine being considered for promotion. Board members can change their individual ratings, and these ratings are hidden from other board members. Lt Col Henigin said the Air Force's promotion boards take place at the Air Force Personnel Center in San Antonio, Texas. She noted she is not an expert on this subject but offered to share what she is currently aware of, including her belief the voting process is automated because board members have electronic versions of the records and rate the record between 6 and 9 on a half-point scale. The system does not share those numbers with other board members on that panel unless there is a split, and two board members score a record 2 or more points apart. For example, Lt Col Henigin said if one board member scored a record as a 6, and another member scored it an 8, the two board members would discuss what they see in the record among all the board members, and one or both board members would have to change their score after the conversation. Ms. Afiesimama said that Space Force boards are also supported by the Air Force's Personnel Center. CDR Ratner said the Coast Guard runs officer promotion boards slightly differently than DoD. The Coast Guard is required to have a minimum of five officers on all boards. There are normally nine board members for lieutenant through commander boards, while the makeup of flag boards are a bit more unique. To select an officer, CDR Ratner said boards with more than five members require a two-thirds majority vote, and voting is a parliamentary procedure. If a Coast Guard board member would like to propose a decision, the officer would make a motion, and the board would vote by hand. Whether two-thirds select the member that is the decision that will carry. CDR Ratner also shared that before deliberations occur, all records are read by the entire board or a subset of the board. Those records are then scored, but those scores do not determine the decision; decisions are made by a hand vote based on the board's deliberations. CDR Ratner said this is a detailed process, but an advantage is a smaller pool of officers is considered. CDR Samms noted the Coast Guard follows that same process on the enlisted side. She noted the Coast Guard Commandant and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard publish guidance every year to officer promotion boards

and enlisted advancement panels. Prior to convening every selection board, promotion board, or advancement panel, board members are asked to review. The categories the Coast Guard scores members on are pulled from that guidance. CAPT Kolsterman said the Navy's process is similar to the Coast Guard. He said the Navy probably has the most complicated processes. The Navy has a YouTube video that walks through the board process and a board brief on their website that describes the process from the beginning, explaining how a convening order is made, to the Navy releasing promotion results. Those materials are available for the Navy fleet to watch and read to better understand the promotion board process. CAPT Kolsterman said the Navy typically has 5 board members, but larger boards could have between 13 and 19 members. The Navy tries to have an odd number of members for voting advantages. A single board member is randomly assigned a number of records in the board, and they are able to mark up and comment on records on review. When they send a record, it gets transferred to a board room the Navy calls "the tank." Every time a person's records come up, the board member assigned that record gives a briefing. Board members are not allowed to say anything negative about the member. If they do not speak about a part of the record, that is fine. CAPT Kolsterman noted that board members are the Sailor's advocate. When the board votes, scores are averaged. An interesting part of the Navy's process, which CAPT Kolsterman compared to churning butter, occurs when the board "shakes up" the scores, selects the top members for promotion, and removes members at the bottom, and different board members review the records scored in the middle. The board will then shake the remaining batch of records and repeat that process until the Navy meets its promotion quota for officers and enlisted members. Full information in the record is only available to board members assigned to brief those records. CAPT Kolsterman noted a board member will randomly be assigned to brief records for the second round of review except for officers. Someone from their community would brief their record, noting an example that, if an aviator's record is before the board, an aviator will give that brief.

CAPT (Ret.) Barrett shared that he is familiar with the Navy's promotion system and said CAPT Kolsterman did an excellent job explaining it. CAPT (Ret.) Barrett asked if the other Services have briefers like the Navy who brief records during promotion boards. CAPT Kolsterman noted one could imagine how much scores change in the Navy's process from "shake" to "shake." A briefer could give someone an excellent score, and as the board compares records and gets an overall picture of the member, the briefer could say, "What I thought was a fantastic record is not as strong as the other records I hear getting briefed." That is the main reason the Navy uses that process. LtCol Torres said the Marine Corps does not have a process like the Navy's, but as previously noted, the Marine Corps tries to have at least one member from a specific community in the board room. LtCol Torres noted that does not mean a board member will be assigned all records from those in their community. Enlisted board members also asked for the implementation of MOS smart cards, which give the board an objective view from the MOS manual and from the operational field sponsors from that MOS to say, "These are the requirements or desired courses you have to take to be eligible." That gives the board an objective view of the MOS. LtCol Torres stated the smart cards are updated post-board if there is feedback given to the board by staff who could share that a course has changed. CDR Ratner shared that he facilitated every officer promotion board for the past 3 years, and while the Coast Guard does not have a formal process for briefers, that process organically happens because a subset of board members read each record. When a record comes up for deliberation, a board member who read the record will brief it, and the board then decides if they are ready to move forward with a decision. If not, the record is "put on ice," and more board members are assigned

to read it. CDR Samms said the enlisted side also has the same process in the Coast Guard. LTC Frazier said Army board members will not initiate or participate in any form of communication among one another. Their review is strictly based on their perception of the Service member's record.

Dr. Ferguson asked the Services if they have a sense of why servicewomen were promoted at higher rates than servicemen in certain categories. Ms. Afiesimama said the Space Force has data for 1-year officer promotions, and the Service is continuing to collect and analyze promotion data. LtCol Torres said she does not have that information readily available and referenced her earlier statement about female officers being promoted at a higher rate. She noted that majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels are briefed as one cohort. Marine Corps enlisted promotion boards are briefed by specific subcategories or specific MOSs. CAPT Kolsterman said he does not have information on why servicewomen were promoted at higher rates than servicemen in certain categories for the Navy. CAPT Kolsterman explained that he just executes boards and delivers board results, but he does not know the reasons why servicewomen were promoted at higher rates. He knows the issue is being examined by the Navy. LTC Frazier noted that after every Army board, race, gender, and ethnicity data are compiled. However, since the Army made recent changes to the promotion process, they do not want to make comparisons and share information prematurely. CDR Ratner said he is not familiar with any work the Coast Guard officer analytics team is doing on this topic. Based on a notional view of the data, the Coast Guard noticed that as the sample size of women in each grade rose, those in zone selection rates became closer to the overall in zone selection rate. CDR Samms shared that, starting 2020, enlisted members in the Coast Guard were advanced via the Service-wide exam, a quantitative exam the members take annually. The exam was the biggest change to enlisted advancements, with the master chief advancement panel the Coast Guard modeled after the Navy. CDR Samms said she does not have that data because the promotion board changes are a work in progress, and the Coast Guard is only 2 years in with that advancement panel.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks stated all the Services talked about bias training for boards. She asked the Services what bias training exists below the board level such as at the command level where annual performance evaluations originate. LTC Frazier said the Army has an initiative called "project inclusion," where it receives feedback from Service members. Along with this feedback, leadership received training from commanders and first sergeants, down to the platoon and squad levels, so as individuals come up within rank, they continue to get that training and become more aware of the issues in the Army. CAPT Kolsterman said he does not recall the Navy having specific, formal bias training. CAPT Kolsterman knows it is a leadership topic but is not formalized. LtCol Torres said the Marine Corps has annual equal opportunity training and other training may exist in other forums. Lt Col Henigin said she will have to defer to the Air Force's diversity and inclusion office to answer this question. Ms. Afiesimama said the Space Force will also defer to the Air Force's diversity and inclusion office. Ms. Afiesimama did note the Space Force also has the unconscious bias training and the DAF training on their education portals. Guardians are encouraged to take that training annually. CDR Ratner shared that the Coast Guard has Service-wide equal opportunity and civil rights training that all members are required to take.

RADM (Ret.) O'Donnell noted the Services have many statistics on officers up to O-6 but not O-7, O-8, or O-9. RADM (Ret.) O'Donnell asked the Services to speak to women's promotion rates



for those levels. LTC Frazier said she does not have that data for the Army. CAPT Kolsterman does not have that data for the Navy. LtCol Torres said the Marine Corps conducts boards for O-7 and O-8, but does not have that data. Lt Col Henigin said she only works on Air Force policy for O-6 and below and does not have that data. Ms. Afiesimama said the Space Force did not have that data at this time. CDR Ratner said in promotion year 2021, which convened in calendar year 2020, one in seven officers selected for flag were women for the Coast Guard. In promotion year 2022, which convened in 2021, two of eight officers selected for O-7 were women. For promotion year 2023, which convened this year, one of eight were women; O-8 and O-9 promotions are not convened by boards in the Coast Guard. CDR Ratner shared that after 2 years of service, the Coast Guard normally forwards a nomination to the senate for O-8 confirmations; O-9s are selected by the Service Secretary and President and also forwarded to the Senate for confirmation.

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked the Services if their members have the opportunity to be considered for non-statutory boards such as school, command, and senior enlisted advisor billets. If so, LTG Mangum asked if the Services track the percentage of servicewomen who opt-out of consideration by the board. LTC Frazier said the Army does have the opt-in or opt-out consideration if the Service member is eligible. However, LTC Frazier could not answer what percentage of women and men opt-out. CAPT Kolsterman said enlisted Navy members do not have the option to opt-out of non-statutory boards. They could submit a letter before the board asking not to be considered for promotion, but the Navy does not consider that opt-out in the statutory sense. LtCol Torres said enlisted Marines could also submit letters to the board for non-selection consideration. For officers, it has been statutory, but this is the first year officers were afforded the opportunity to opt-out. For command, the Marine Corps calls it “remove by request (RBR)” and not opt out. LtCol Torres did not know the percentage of women and men who opt-out of consideration.

Lt Col Henigin deferred the question and said she will get back to LTG Mangum for the Air Force. Ms. Afiesimama deferred to the Space Force’s talent management personnel. CDR Samms said for the Coast Guard’s enlisted non-statutory panels, whether for advancement or special assignments, members are eligible to apply, so there is no opt-out option. The Coast Guard does not track that information regarding gender. For officers, the Coast Guard will implement an opt-out option for promotion in year 2024. LTG (Ret.) Mangum said he brought up this topic because, as a former president of an Army colonel command board, he saw servicewomen opt-out at a much higher rate than their male counterparts. If the Services are not tracking, LTG (Ret.) Mangum recommended they do and figure out why.

The panel discussion concluded.

### **Overview of Public Written Comments**

COL Jardin reviewed the Committee’s receipt of written public comments. DACOWITS received one public comment submission for this quarterly business meeting. The comment was provided by Dr. Kyleanne Hunter and Dr. Sarah Meadows of the RAND Corporation on the scope of the impact of the Dobbs versus Jackson Women’s Health Organization Supreme Court decision on Active Duty servicewomen and areas for future research.

Dr. Hunter commented she was pleased to see the Committee focus on pregnancy in the military again and will be reviewing work from her and Dr. Meadows about the quantitative scope and size of how the Dobbs decision may impact women in the military. The Dobbs decision impacts women, including servicewomen, across the country. However, there was not a good understanding of how many women it affects and what the repercussions may be. Dr. Hunter and Dr. Meadows used existing data sources, such as RAND's Health-Related Behaviors Survey, Women's Reproductive Healthcare Survey, and demographic data on the Active Duty force to estimate the size and scope and provide additional context to this Supreme Court decision.

Dr. Hunter stated approximately 80,000 servicewomen live in a State with fully or severely restricted access to abortion services and other reproductive health care services. A greater proportion of junior enlisted personnel are affected because of the types of bases and States where they are located, including initial entry training bases, large infantry and combat arms bases for the Army, and large shipyards for the Navy. These junior enlisted personnel are at highest risk for needing these services.

Dr. Meadows stated there is no official estimate for Active Duty servicewomen who seek abortion services outside the military medical system. To generate an estimate, two methods and existing forms of data were used; first was the Women's Reproductive Healthcare Survey conducted 2 years ago for the Defense Health Agency. The data were used to estimate the number of pregnancies that ended in something other than a live birth or miscarriage in the prior year. Dr. Meadows stated they estimate 5,000 to 7,400 Active Duty servicewomen and DoD-employed civilian women have had an abortion in any given year. Separating out Active Duty servicewomen, the estimated number is 2,500 to 4,100 of the 5,000 to 7,400. The second way to estimate potential demand for abortion services among women employed by DoD was to use the Women's Reproductive Healthcare Survey and data from the Health-Related Behaviors Survey to estimate the number of Active Duty servicewomen who may need such care as a result of an unintended pregnancy.

Dr. Meadows defined the term unintended pregnancy to mean a pregnancy that occurred earlier than a woman wanted or was unwanted. Using these data, Dr. Meadows estimated between 17,600 and 17,900 Active Duty servicewomen and DoD-employed civilian women have an unintended pregnancy each year. For Active Duty servicewomen, the estimate is 11,000 to 12,000. Dr. Meadows emphasized not every one of these women will seek such care. However, this conceptualizes an upper boundary on the demand potential for abortion or other reproductive healthcare services. An estimated 40 percent of these women live in an area where their access to abortion does not exist or is severely restricted.

Dr. Hunter began to outline the reasons why these estimates matter. First, she noted pregnancy carries a significant stigma in the military, and as was briefed in the previous panel, it brings barriers to promotion, advancement, and career progression for servicewomen. Women in the military may now be living in a State without the option to terminate a pregnancy if they choose to or have fewer options. As a result, they may end up leaving the military earlier than intended or suffer discrimination as a result.

The lack of access to abortion care and other reproductive healthcare services has a tremendous financial impact on Service members. Dr. Hunter and Dr. Meadows estimated the costs for a

junior enlisted servicewoman to obtain a legal abortion when stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. The estimate totals \$1,200 to \$1,500, which includes travel to and from Kansas, the closest location with legal abortion, and accommodation and procedure costs. This is more than half a typical junior enlisted servicewoman's pretax take-home pay per month and two-thirds of their pay per month after taxes. Dr. Hunter shared anecdotal stories that junior enlisted servicewomen described taking 6–8 months to pay back friends for gas money to get the care they needed. Another concern is privacy issues because of DoD policies on reporting pregnancies. Many Services have incredibly short windows for women to report their pregnancy. As a result of the increased travel time to obtain legal abortion services, many servicewomen may need to report their pregnancy to their chain of command, even if they choose not to keep the pregnancy. Dr. Hunter stated this opens the door for additional stigma, bias, and privacy concerns for these servicewomen.

Dr. Meadows noted additional costs for DoD related to medical care, child care, and education services for military women and their additional dependents. There is also an operational impact on force readiness because there are certain things pregnant women cannot do as Service members. It is unknown how these issues will impact the recruitment and retention of women in the future. Dr. Hunter summarized their initial recommendations—first, continuing efforts to ensure the privacy and security of Service members. Dr. Hunter noted this was also addressed in the SecDef's memo on this topic. Second, training commanders to be able to provide the full range of options available to servicewomen. Lastly, lowering the rate of unintended pregnancies by ensuring access to contraceptive care and continued access to obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN) care, particularly for junior enlisted servicewomen.

Dr. Hunter's and Dr. Meadow's public comment and briefing slides are available on the DACOWITS website.

### **Final Remarks**

COL Jardin, DACOWITS Military Director and Designated Federal Officer, stated the next meeting would be held 21–22 March 2022, at the AUSA Conference Center in Arlington. Details will be published in the Federal Register. She thanked the attendees and concluded the public portion of the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

## Summary of Written Responses Received for December 2022 QBM

RFIs 2 and 3
<p><b>RECRUITMENT INITATIVES TO INCREASE WOMEN’S PROPENSITY TO SERVE</b></p> <p>In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the Recruitment and Retention (R&amp;R) Subcommittee will assess the scale and effectiveness of the Military Services’ recruitment programs with the goal of providing actionable recommendations on how to best increase adolescent women’s propensity to serve. In addition, the R&amp;R Subcommittee will examine existing policies and procedures to determine whether current practices inhibit the recruitment of women, specifically assessing the inclusivity of existing marketing strategies; current recruitment goals for women; improvements in the representation of female recruiters; virtual recruiting capabilities; and potential innovative best practices gleaned from the establishment of the Space Force.</p>

RFI 2	
<p>In September 2022, the Committee received a briefing from the Air Force, which mentioned that the Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) Detachment (Det) 1’s mission is to <i>“inform, influence, and inspire tomorrow’s leader through innovative outreach opportunities.”</i> The Committee is interested in identifying best practices to increase young women’s propensity to serve in the military and how AFRS Det 1’s innovative approaches might be applied in a broader context.</p> <p>The Committee requests a <b>written response</b> from the <b>Air Force</b> on the methods and effectiveness of AFRS Det 1 in increasing propensity to serve among America’s youth, particularly among adolescent women, to pursue careers in aerospace and the Air Force.</p>	
Organization	Description
Air Force	The Air Force provided the Committee with a response.

RFI 3	
<p>The Committee remains interested in the recruiting and accessions enterprise related to identifying, assessing and recruiting qualified candidates.</p> <p>The Committee requests a <b>written response</b> from the <b>Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard</b> on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide accession targets/goals and actual accession numbers, separated by gender, for the last five years (FY18-22).</li> <li>b. Provide data related to whether female recruiters, compared to male recruiters, are more successful at accessing women into the military.</li> <li>c. What innovative methods or approaches (other than engagement with current affinity groups) are recruiters using to attract women into the military (to include racially and ethnically diverse women)?</li> </ol>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Provide plans for partnering with unofficial &amp; non-traditional partners (i.e. trade associations, etc.).</li> <li>ii. How do you measure the effectiveness of these partnerships?</li> </ul>	
Organization	Description
Army	The Army provided the Committee with a response.
Navy	The Navy provided the Committee with a response.
Marine Corps	The Marine Corps provided the Committee with a response.
Air Force	The Air Force provided the Committee with a response.
Space Force	The Space Force provided the Committee with a response.
Coast Guard	The Coast Guard provided the Committee with a response.
National Guard	The National Guard provided the Committee with a response.

RFI 6
<p><b>WOMEN IN AVIATION</b></p> <p>In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the E&amp;I Subcommittee will assess the number and percentage of female aviators, as well as factors and policies that may influence female aviator retention and promotion potential, such as recruiting, aircraft/duty assignments, mentoring, pregnancy, healthcare, operations tempo, aircraft design, and flight equipment. In addition, the E&amp;I Subcommittee will examine trends in, and policies related to female aviation accession and identify actionable solutions, as required.</p>
<p>For over 45 years, the Committee has studied and provided recommendations to the Secretary of Defense regarding women in aviation. The Committee remains concerned that overall percentage of women in aviation remains low, despite the opening of many aviation career fields to women in the 1970s and combat aircraft in the 1990s.</p> <p>The Committee requests a <b>written response</b> from the <b>Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard</b> on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In <a href="#">September 2020</a>, DACOWITS RFI 3, asked the Military Services for the total number of Service members selected for pilot training annually from FY09-19, separated by gender and accession source. The Committee requests an update to this 2020 RFI, which includes FY20-22 data.</li> <li>b. In <a href="#">September 2020</a>, DACOWITS RFI 3, asked the Military Services to provide data on student attrition during undergraduate pilot training separated by gender, along with reasons for attrition. The Committee requests an update to this 2020 RFI, which includes FY20-22 data. In addition, has your Service identified any attrition trends? If so, what are they and how are they being addressed?</li> </ul>

- c. Does your Service have a mentoring program to help retain female aviators? If so, please describe.
- d. Does your Service provide exit interviews to aviators separating from Active Duty? If yes, the Committee is interested in the top five reasons aviators leave the military, over the last five years (FY18-22), separated by gender. In addition, please provide separation trends and courses of action the Service has or will be implementing to help retain female aviators.
- e. What number and percentage of pilots depart Active Duty and transition to the Reserves or Guard? Provide data for the last five years (FY18-22), separated by gender, depicting these transition rates. Additionally, provide retention data for pilots, separated by gender, serving in the Reserves or Guard over the last five years (FY18-22).

Organization	Description
Army	The Army provided the Committee with a response.
Air Force	The Air Force provided the Committee with a response.
Navy	The Navy provided the Committee with a response.
Marine Corps	The Marine Corps provided the Committee with a response.
Coast Guard	The Coast Guard provided the Committee with a response.

RFI 8
<p><b>PREGNANCY IN THE MILITARY</b></p> <p>In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&amp;T) Subcommittee will determine if there are gaps in institutional policies and procedures that obstruct pregnant servicewomen from progressing in their military career and recommend policy changes.</p>
<p>In 2020, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs in coordination with Defense Health Agency sponsored a <a href="#">Women’s Reproductive Health Survey (WRHS)</a>. The purpose of the study was to assess the reproductive health of servicewomen. Survey findings indicate that 15 percent of Active duty servicewomen and 11 percent of Coast Guard Active duty servicewomen were unable to conceive after 12 months of trying, a common definition of self-reported infertility. In addition, 12 percent of active-duty servicewomen (and 8 percent of Coast Guard Active Duty servicewomen) reported an unmet need for fertility services since joining the military.</p> <p>The Committee requests a <b>written response</b> from the <b>Defense Health Agency (DHA)</b> on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What directives regulate the utilization of Assisted Reproductive Services?</li> <li>b. How many MTFs provide Assisted Reproductive Services?</li> <li>c. Who is authorized to utilize Assisted Reproductive Services (e.g., married couples, non-traditional families, single members, etc.)?</li> </ul>

- d. What outreach or marketing strategies have been implemented to ensure Service members are aware that Assisted Reproductive Services exist?
- e. During annual well-women exams, are servicewomen made aware that Assisted Reproductive Services are available (e.g., egg freezing)?
- f. With the merger of DoD/DHA:
  - i. Have Assisted Reproductive Services been standardized?
  - ii. Will Assisted Reproductive Services continue to be provided? If so, where (e.g., MTFs, civilian providers, etc.)?
- g. What accommodations are afforded to servicewomen receiving Assisted Reproductive Services (e.g., suspension of fitness testing)?
- h. Does any data exist that suggests the servicewomen’s career progression (retention and advancement) is positively impacted by having access to Assisted Reproductive Services?
- i. Over the last five years, how many servicewomen and servicemen have utilized Assisted Reproductive Services?
- j. At what point in their careers are servicewomen and servicemen using these Assisted Reproductive Services?

Organization	Description
Defense Health Agency	The Defense Health Agency provided the Committee with a response.

**Report Submitted by:**



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**COL Seana M. Jardin, USA**  
DACOWITS Military Director &  
Designated Federal Officer

**Report Certified by:**



**Ms. Shelly O'Neill Stoneman**  
DACOWITS Chair

**DACOWITS' Members in Attendance**

Col (Ret.) Nancy P. Anderson, USMC  
CAPT (Ret.) Kenneth J. Barrett, USN  
VADM (Ret.) Robin R. Braun, USNR  
Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Catherine W. Cox, USNR  
Dr. Trudi C. Ferguson  
COL (Ret.) Many-Bears Grinder, AGR  
CMDM (Ret.) Octavia D. Harris, USN  
Ms. Marquette J. Leveque, USN Vet.  
LTG (Ret.) Kevin W. Mangum, USA

SGM (Ret.) Caprecia A. Miller, USA  
Ms. Ann M. Norris  
RADM (Ret.) Mary P. O'Donnell, USCGR  
Brig Gen (Ret.) Jarrisse J. Sanborn, USAF  
HON (Col Ret.) Dawn E.B. Scholz, J.D., USAF  
Brig Gen (Ret.) Allyson R. Solomon, ANG  
Ms. Shelly O'Neill Stoneman  
Dr. (Col Ret.) Samantha A. Weeks, USA

**DACOWITS' Members Absent**

Ms. Robin S. Kelleher

**DACOWITS' Executive Staff in Attendance**

COL Seana M. Jardin, USA  
Ms. Jessica C. Myers, USN Ret.

Mr. Robert D. Bowling, USAF Ret.  
MSgt Kristen M. Pitlock, USAF (virtual)

**DACOWITS' Liaisons in Attendance**

Ms. Angela G. Love, USA  
Ms. Laura M. Massey, USA  
Chaplain (CAPT) Judy T. Malana, USN  
Ms. Wendy D. Boler, USN  
Col Scott Gondek, USMC  
Maj Ricardo Steele, USMC  
Col Jenise Carroll, USAF  
Col Xaviera Slocum, USSF  
LTJG Molly E. Sternberg, USCG

Col Monica Brouse, NGB  
Ms. Andrea S. Browne-Phillips, NGB  
Ms. Deadrea Sampson, SOCOM (virtual)  
Ms. Theresa A. Hart, DHA (virtual)  
Ms. Kimberly R. Lahm, HA (virtual)  
Ms. Lindsay E. Reiner, MPP  
LTC Jacqueline S. Ralston, MPP  
Mr. Vesen L. Thompson, MC&FP