

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

## **Quarterly Meeting Minutes March 21-22, 2023**

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) held a quarterly business meeting 21–22 March 2023. The meeting took place at the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Conference Center, 2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia, 22201.

**March 21, 2023**

### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The DACOWITS Military Director and Designated Federal Officer, Colonel Seana M. Jardin, Army, opened the March 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 Women’s History Month and the 75th anniversary of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.

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 14 of its RFIs. Responses to the RFIs were published on the DACOWITS website.

### **Briefing: Workplace and Gender Relations Survey Overview (RFI 13)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the DoD Office of People Analytics (OPA) on the 2021 Workplace and Gender Relations (WGR) survey findings related to gender discrimination. Specifically, the Committee requested the briefing to discuss a comparison of current rates of gender discrimination with historical rates, the types of behaviors that compose gender discrimination, and any identified reasons for the increase in reporting. Dr. Ashlea Klahr, the Director of Health & Resilience Research at OPA, briefed the Committee.

Dr. Klahr opened the briefing by stating she will review results from the 2021 WGR survey on gender discrimination as requested by the Committee. She reviewed her agenda for the briefing, which included providing background information on the survey, discussing gender discrimination findings, reviewing gender discrimination prevalence rates, and discussing key differences among subgroups for gender discrimination prevalence rates. Dr. Klahr noted her presentation will report only on Active Duty populations, but she emphasized OPA collects data from Active and Reserve components. Dr. Klahr mentioned she will review common gender

discrimination situations identified by the survey, including when and where incidents are occurring, what behaviors are involved, who the alleged offenders are, whether victims choose to make a complaint, and what their experiences are like after they make a complaint. To provide additional context, Dr. Klahr will share information related to climate and culture from the WGR survey related to gender discrimination. Lastly, she will describe data examining potential impacts of gender discrimination on the Force.

OPA is congressionally required to conduct the WGR survey every 2 years; participation for Service members is voluntary. Historically, the office alternated with the Active Duty and Reserve survey components every other year, but the schedule changed due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In March 2020, the regular survey schedule was delayed, and OPA did not release the Active Duty WGR survey that year. OPA fielded a combined Active Duty and Reserve WGR survey in 2021. OPA found this method successful and efficient, and plans to field the surveys simultaneously moving forward on an every-other-year schedule. OPA is preparing to field the WGR survey again in August 2023.

Dr. Klahr shared another change that affected OPA's survey process in 2021. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) decided to enforce a regulation under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) that DoD was previously exempt from. This regulation requires OMB to review and license surveys conducted by the Federal Government. Typically, Federal Government surveys of their own workforce are exempt from this process, but military members fall into a gray zone because of public interest in this work. With the new administration, OMB told DoD it would enforce PRA moving forward for surveys of great public interest. Dr. Klahr stated the WGR was one of the first DoD surveys OMB reviewed in 2021. As a result of that review, OPA made changes to the survey. The Committee will not see the impact of those changes in the briefing because much of it was around the measurement of sexual assault.

Dr. Klahr discussed the methods OPA uses to conduct the survey. OMB review delayed the survey fielding period in 2021. As a result, OPA fielded the survey from December 2021 through March 2022. OPA normally does not field surveys around the holidays, but the schedule was impacted by the delays. OPA surveyed Active Duty and Reserve components below flag rank. OPA uses standard statistical methods to conduct the survey. OPA is sampling individuals initially and inviting them to participate in the survey; therefore, the survey is not open to everyone. This minimizes burden on the Force and ensures the recruited sample population is representative. OPA weights data using known demographic information to ensure findings are representative. For example, if 50 percent of women in the Navy have dependents but only 30 percent of women who responded have dependents, OPA will weight data more heavily for those who have dependents to ensure representativeness. Dr. Klahr noted OPA constructs weights for 20 demographic variables, enabling OPA to approximate the demographic composition of the Force. OPA has access to personnel information and record data, so the office can more accurately construct weights for years of education, number of dependents, place of accession, race and ethnicity, pay grade, gender, and other factors. Dr. Klahr emphasized the statistics, including margins of error, the Committee received from the WGR are representative of the Force.

In 2021, more than 700,000 Active Duty members and more than 250,000 Reservists were invited to participate in the WGR. About 13 percent of Active Duty members sampled, and about 14 percent of Reservists sampled, took the survey. Dr. Klahr noted this is not where OPA would like the response rates to be; response rates have been on a steady decline for the past decade.

When these results were rolled out last fall, Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Austin issued a memorandum with actions to address sexual assault in the Force, and one action was providing additional support to commanders to make sure personnel have time and space to complete the survey this summer. Dr. Klahr said this is the first time OPA had top-down direction about the survey, and she is hopeful this will increase response rates for the 2023 survey.

Dr. Klahr shifted to discuss how WGR measures gender discrimination. She noted, though, she is going to focus on the DoD Active Duty component data, but OPA also surveys the Coast Guard and publishes a specific report with Coast Guard data. Dr. Klahr described the gender discrimination metric as a simple WGR metric, because only a few questions are measuring it. The first part of this metric asks individuals if they have experienced two kinds of behaviors in the past 12 months from someone in their workplace. The first question is “Did you hear someone from work say that your gender is not as good at your particular job, or that your gender should be prevented from having your job?” The second question is “Do you think someone from work mistreated, ignored, excluded, or insulted you because of your gender?” If respondents answer “yes” to either question, they are asked follow-up criteria questions about whether they believe this treatment harmed or limited their career and whether the person involved was in a position of authority. To be counted as having experienced gender discrimination, respondents must answer “yes” to one of the two behavior questions and indicate they felt this behavior harmed or limited their career, and the person involved was in a position of authority or leadership. Aside from the official prevalence rate metric, OPA can analyze who answered “yes” to each aspect, even if the responses do not meet the gender discrimination metric criteria. The RAND Corporation originally designed this gender discrimination metric in 2014 when it was first used on the survey; therefore, OPA does not have trend data prior to 2014. Beginning in 2019, the WGR added the question of whether the person who did the unwanted behavior was in a position of authority or leadership over the respondent. This addition was the result of an Office of General Council (OGC) review to align the definition more closely to existing policy. For this reason, the 2021 survey results feature two estimated rates of gender discrimination: one is the official estimate using the updated authority figure criteria, and one excludes this factor to compare rates with 2018 rates.

Dr. Klahr presented a briefing slide of estimated past-year gender discrimination prevalence rates for 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2021, with the adjusted and official rates. The 2021 official rate demonstrates that, when the survey asks female respondents if the behavior was from someone in leadership, the gender discrimination rate is slightly lower than the rate without that criteria. There is a statistically significant increase in gender discrimination experienced by women since 2018, when compared with the 2021 adjusted rate, and the prevalence rate has increased since 2014. For men in the Active Component, there was a decrease in the prevalence of gender discrimination in 2021. Dr. Klahr noted the remainder of the briefing will focus on WGR results for women, and the Committee can find additional information on gender discrimination experiences of men in OPA’s reports.

Dr. Klahr walked the Committee through a briefing slide presenting results on the two behavior questions over time. The graphs included gender discrimination prevalence for experiencing the behavior and women who experienced the behavior, and also met the criteria for the gender discrimination official metric. Dr. Klahr noted these graphs demonstrate more individuals are experiencing or hearing about gender discrimination, but fewer indicate they feel it has harmed their career, distinguishing the impact of these behaviors. Nearly one-quarter of women reported

they have heard someone say their gender is not as good at the job or should be prevented from having the job within the past 12 months. Responses to this particular question have remained relatively stable over time. In contrast, reports of being mistreated, ignored, excluded, or insulted because of gender have increased over time for women. The increase in responses to this question is driving increases in the prevalence of gender discrimination overall.

Next, Dr. Klahr discussed gender discrimination rates by pay grade and age. The results shown are from 2018 and 2021, including both the adjusted and official 2021 rates. The increase in overall gender discrimination from 2018 to 2021 is driven by the experiences of junior enlisted women; Dr. Klahr noted this group had a statistically significant increase. The highest rates of gender discrimination are experienced by women in pay grades E-5 to E-9 and junior officers. Dr. Klahr noted the results presented by age are correlated with pay grade information. The increases in overall gender discrimination were driven by the experiences of younger women, those who are 24 or younger. Dr. Klahr emphasized the youngest women are not the most at-risk group given the higher levels of gender discrimination reported by women in the middle tier.

Gender discrimination rates can also be examined by race or ethnicity and sexual orientation. The prevalence of gender discrimination is highest among women identifying as non-Hispanic White and Hispanic. These two groups show a statistically significant increase from 2018. Those whose race was categorized as other also experienced higher rates of gender discrimination. The other category includes those who identify as multi-racial, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander. Women who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are at higher risk for experiencing gender discrimination. Dr. Klahr noted these findings are consistent with broader patterns in the data showing individuals who are sexual minorities are at higher risk for experiencing a range of negative outcomes measured on the WGR.

Individuals who met the official criteria for gender discrimination are asked several follow-up questions on the WGR to understand who the alleged offenders were and gather more information about the event, such as where, when, and how many times it happened and whether the respondent made a complaint. The survey questions ask the respondent to think about the one event that was most serious when answering these follow-up questions. Dr. Klahr noted this question approach is because gender discrimination is not a one-time event; it is typically a pervasive experience. OPA does not want to burden the respondent by asking about details for every event occurrence.

When asked about the worst event, women most often experienced being mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender. Dr. Klahr noted findings reveal the length of the event is typically over a few months, similar to sexual harassment and other issues in that it is not typically a one-time event; it is a repeated experience. Alleged offenders are most often men, although some respondents report a mix of men and women. Typically, these worst situations involved more than one person who is offending against the survey respondent. Dr. Klahr noted this group dynamic is different than reports on other types of harmful experiences. Findings on rank in relation to the responder are mixed, but more often the offender or offending group is higher ranking in their unit.

For those who have experienced gender discrimination, the WGR asks if they choose to make a complaint. More than half of female respondents chose to make a complaint of some type, which Dr. Klahr noted is an increase from 2018. There are many different ways Service members can make a complaint; response options included formal, informal, anonymous, and not sure. Dr.

Klahr noted a sizable proportion of respondents who made a complaint were not sure the type of complaint, which may be indicative of the many complaint options there are available. Most people are making complaints to an authority in their unit or the offender's chain of command as opposed to the Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) channels. WGR asks respondents what resulted after they made a complaint, and respondents can select more than one option from a range of options. Many respondents reported they were encouraged to drop the issue after they made a complaint. Dr. Klahr noted the progress made in getting individuals to make complaints, but this finding indicates more work needs to be done after the complaint is made.

Dr. Klahr reviewed a slide with findings on satisfaction in the complaint process, noting this information can be used to identify areas for improvement. Overall satisfaction findings were low, with less than half of respondents saying they were satisfied with various aspects of the complaint process. Dr. Klahr noted there has been little change in satisfaction measures since 2018. Only 15 percent of female respondents were satisfied with the complaint process overall.

For those who reported they did not make the complaint, OPA wants to understand barriers to coming forward. Respondents can select more than one reason as an option. The most frequently selected reason for not filing a complaint was respondents feeling that nothing would be done about their complaint. Dr. Klahr referred to the earlier satisfaction findings, noting the expectation nothing would be done may be logical given what those who have complained are reporting when they do take action.

Next, Dr. Klahr presented findings on women's experience with racial and ethnic discrimination to provide further context on gender discrimination for women who are racial and ethnic minorities, broadening the scope to various forms of harm women may experience. In 2021, a new question was added to the WGR asking whether respondents believed they experienced discrimination based on their race or ethnicity. OPA has a separate survey, the Workplace and Equal Opportunity (WEO) survey, focused on the experiences of racial and ethnic harassment and discrimination. Dr. Klahr noted, with separate surveys, it is difficult to assess individuals who are experiencing multiple forms of harm. OPA added a question on racial and ethnic discrimination to the WGR to better understand intersecting experiences of harm. OPA is beginning a new project that will examine the multiple forms of harm servicewomen who are racial and ethnic minorities experience. This new effort is in response to a recommendation from the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on sexual assault. Dr. Klahr stated this research will use WGR data in addition to other OPA survey data to understand the compounding effect of these harmful experiences. From the 2021 WGR, Black women are more likely to say they experience discrimination and harm on the basis of their race or ethnicity.

Dr. Klahr turned to findings related to climate factors associated with gender discrimination. She noted that, when gender discrimination rates are increasing, there is always a desire to understand the reasons behind an increase. While survey results may not be able to identify a root cause of an increase, it can be helpful to identify other factors correlated with experiencing gender discrimination. Between 2018 and 2021, there were increases in other forms of counterproductive workplace behaviors, indicating the climate might not be favorable. Dr. Klahr noted the survey results showed increases in sexual harassment between 2018 and 2021. Dr. Klahr noted findings on the slide showing results for measures of responsibility and intervention climates, and leaders modeling bystander intervention, indicating there have been declines in these metrics between 2018 and 2021. Dr. Klahr stated the WGR's measure of workplace hostility is another climate factor associated with gender discrimination. Workplace hostility is

correlated with other metrics for harm, such as sexual assault. WGR results showed increases in workplace hostility between 2018 and 2021.

The WGR can be used to understand how women's experiences with gender discrimination in the military affect key readiness and retention outcomes. Dr. Klahr highlighted the retention intention question, which assesses whether a Service member would choose to stay in when provided the opportunity. She noted this question is correlated with actual retention outcomes. Servicewomen who experienced gender discrimination have lower retention intentions than those who did not. Dr. Klahr cautioned the relationship between gender discrimination and retention intentions is not causal; it represents cross-sectional data at a specific point in time, indicating individuals who have experienced gender discrimination may be less likely to stay in the military. Experiences with gender discrimination may also impact trust in the military system. The WGR focuses heavily on sexual assault and trust in the system if an individual were to be sexually assaulted. Servicewomen who experienced gender discrimination are less likely to trust the system if they experienced a sexual assault. Dr. Klahr noted this finding may indicate those who experience gender discrimination may be more reluctant to report sexual assault or other issues because their previous experiences have degraded their trust in the system.

Dr. Klahr shared OPA has several additional volumes focused on specific topic areas from the WGR that will be publicly released in the future. One volume focuses on experiences by sexual orientation and gender identity, and another volume focuses on results by race and ethnicity.

Dr. Klahr concluded her briefing.

### Discussion

Brigadier General (Ret.) Jarisse J. Sanborn asked how, with a 13.3 percent response rate, OPA accounts for bias with those who choose to answer the survey. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn wondered if individuals who choose to respond to the survey may be more likely to have negative experiences and therefore a desire to complete the survey. Dr. Klahr responded noting it is a tough question because there will always be immeasurable factors that may or may not affect whether someone chooses to take a survey. OPA can assess the constellation of clues to best understand what might be going on. OPA weights the results to match demographic groups to ensure no single group is systematically over- or underrepresented. There is no true number for how many personnel experience gender discrimination, which is why the goal of the WGR survey is to create an estimate. Dr. Klahr noted prevalence rates have not dramatically shifted based on response rates. Some might fear that, as response rates go down, the prevalence rates for gender discrimination would go up, signaling Service members who have these experiences are more likely to complete the survey. Dr. Klahr stated fear is not realized in the evidence OPA has seen. Response rates and prevalence rates do not neatly align in a pattern over time. Dr. Klahr provided the recent example from the Military Service Academies (MSAs), noting that, in 2022, 81 percent of cadets and midshipmen responded to the survey, but the prevalence rates for unwanted sexual contact and other forms of harm increased compared with past surveys. Dr. Klahr stated the constellation of clues indicates there is no concern prevalence rates are increasing based on lower response rates. Response rates become a challenge with narrow or granular analyses, such as senior women in the Marine Corps, because the margin of error increases and the confidence in the accuracy of findings decreases. One reason OPA seeks to increase the survey response rates is to increase capacity to analyze more granular data to produce targeted insights into specific subpopulations.

Dr. (Captain Ret.) Catherine W. Cox asked if a limitation of the WGR survey is nonresponse or self-section bias. Dr. Klahr responded OPA conducts a nonresponse bias analysis and has found a low risk of nonresponse bias on items the survey measures. Dr. Klahr said OPA has not found different demographic groups responding to the survey differently have introduced bias in the survey results. Some factors cannot be known because they cannot be measured. OPA works to improve response rates and encourages as many people to take the survey as possible.

Dr. Trudi C. Ferguson asked why the WGR survey is not mandatory. Dr. Klahr responded one concern for mandatory surveys relates to data quality issues. With a mandatory survey, more respondents may click through the survey for rapid completion or not answer the questions carefully, making it difficult to assess truthful responses from click-through responders. OPA currently examines data for straight-lining, which Dr. Klahr characterized as a respondent clicking through and responding to all questions in the same way. There are very low rates of respondents straight-lining currently, which might be due to the voluntary nature of the survey. Dr. Klahr also noted the WGR is a sensitive survey, and it may not be helpful for some personnel to take this survey, emphasizing it is important for them to make the choice whether they want to take the survey or not. Dr. Ferguson asked if the WGR is correlated with exit surveys. Dr. Klahr responded OPA examines patterns across various surveys DoD conducts. Dr. Klahr noted a decline in overall retention intentions among personnel measured by the 2021 WGR and other DoD surveys. OPA assesses across its surveys to identify if there are similar topline findings, with retention intentions being one of them. OPA can connect survey data, like the WGR, to administrative record data to examine outcomes after completing the survey. OPA welcomes questions or lines of inquiry for future exploration.

Colonel (Ret.) Many-Bears Grinder asked if the WGR survey is sent to everyone who is eligible within rank and years of service. Dr. Klahr responded surveys are sent to everyone in the sample. The sample is based on how many people are needed within subcategories and response rates from prior years. Dr. Klahr provided the example that, if 100 senior officer women are needed, OPA would send the survey to those 100. Personnel from underrepresented groups, such as senior women, are much more likely to get selected in the sample because there are fewer of them as opposed to junior enlisted men who may get selected for the sample less often. COL (Ret.) Grinder asked if race is considered in sampling. Dr. Klahr confirmed race is a factor for sampling and noted there are more than 20 different demographic characteristics considered as part of the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) data files. Dr. Klahr provided other examples, such as pay grade, years of education, dependents, and accessions information. OPA has a comprehensive approach to approximating demographic considerations that may influence someone's responses on the survey.

Dr. Ferguson asked if OPA has more information about any differences between women who reported they experienced gender discrimination and women who reported they experienced an impact of that discrimination. Dr. Klahr responded this is a great question and something she will take back for further analysis.

Dr. (Colonel Ret.) Samantha A. Weeks asked how DoD is marketing the survey to increase response rates and obtain better data. Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks noted Dr. Klahr's previous example about sampling, where it was stated OPA sends 100 surveys when 100 people from that category are needed, is problematic given the declining response rates over time. Dr. Klahr clarified the response rate reflects the percentage of the sample that responds. It is commonly thought that increasing the number of people who are invited to take the survey will increase the response

rate; however, that only increases the denominator and not the numerator. Dr. Klahr stated she believes OPA would have a similar response rate if it opened the survey for everyone to take. There are some populations where more individuals respond from the sample than are needed. Another reason OPA takes a sampling approach is to not overburden the Force with survey requests; however, individuals in underrepresented groups may get more survey requests more often. In response to Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks' question on marketing, Dr. Klahr stated there is room for improvement. OPA works closely with DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) and its Service counterparts to get the word out about the WGR. The Services did social media pushes, and OPA puts together sample social media posts that can be used or modified. The lowest responding and hardest group to reach is junior enlisted. They are on social media but reaching them remains a challenge because they are not as connected with formal public affairs channels. Dr. Klahr noted, for military surveys, people take them when they hear about the importance of doing so from their commanders and local units, but she acknowledged DoD is saturated with surveys, making it difficult for commanders to endorse taking every survey. Dr. Klahr said it remains a challenge how DoD communicates which surveys are most important. Response rates for the Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) have held steady over time because that survey is local and has significant commander investment. Even with social media efforts, if personnel are not hearing about the WGR within their local environments, then it becomes another survey, one of many.

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Kevin W. Mangum asked if OPA does or can correlate retention intentions with prevalence of sexual harassment. Dr. Klahr confirmed OPA can correlate these two factors at the individual level. Individuals who experience sexual harassment indicate they are less likely to retain, which remains true when examining their outcomes over time. At the Force level, it is harder to make the connection between harassment rates going up and retention going down because many other factors influence retention.

Command Master Chief (Ret.) Octavia D. Harris asked what commanders do with these survey results and whether they result in policy changes. Dr. Klahr responded results from the WGR are disseminated broadly within DoD. The 2021 WGR was published in September, making it difficult to point to recent policy changes resulting from the survey findings. However, the 2018 WGR results were incorporated into changes the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) made to the harassment policy and MEO complaint process. Dr. Klahr reported an increase in the percentage of individuals making complaints between 2018 and 2021, which could relate to the policy change, but it is difficult to identify a direct line of correlation from the policy to the data.

The briefing discussion concluded.

### **Panel Briefing: Military Services' Frontline Recruiting Perspectives (RFI 1)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the frontline perspectives of challenges in recruiting young women into the Services. Specifically, the Committee was interested in hearing from recruiting Chiefs (enlisted personnel) on the barriers, inhibitors, challenges, and concerns recruiters encounter when engaging with potential female applicants; specific strategies used to address or mitigate these barriers and challenges; training recruiters receive to stay informed on current benefits of military service that appeal to female applicants; and identification of any additional challenges that affect the ability to recruit women.



## Army

Command Sergeant Major Scott Wolfe of the 1st Recruiting Brigade, Army Recruiting Command, briefed the Committee for the Army.

CSM Wolfe opened his brief stating he is presenting to the Committee on behalf of Major General Johnny K. Davis and Command Sergeant Major Shade Munday of the Army Recruiting Command. The Army is committed to providing a ready All-Volunteer Force (AVF) by selecting the best qualified Soldiers for each job in the Army. The Army embraces the importance of diversity as a key to developing a Force ready to face the challenges of tomorrow.

The Army does not design a gender recruiting mission. To recruit noncommissioned officers (NCOs), they receive quarterly training on current initiatives and benefits of Army service. Tools such as social media, live question and answer sessions, and local grassroot events are designed to appeal to target markets. The Army also relies on community partners, sponsors, and outreach opportunities to connect with influencers and potential recruits about careers in the Army. Female Soldiers in uniform are highlighted in these resources and events to promote the Army's diversity and cultural awareness.

All Army jobs are open to women, and the Service is working to improve diversity at all levels. CSM Wolfe stated nearly half of new recruits each year are from minority populations. The percentage of women who enlist in the Army has increased each year. The implementation of gender-neutral requirements for all Army occupations resulted in increased female enlistments and increased the population of female minorities in the Army. This year, the Army has enlisted 7,182 women into the Army, with 13 percent, or 921 women, into combat military occupational specialties (MOSs).

CSM Wolfe stated diversity is an Army strength that enhances the Service's capabilities. The Army's research and evaluation of its accessions and recruiting methods prepared it to react to market changes, specifically increasing its ability to represent how the Army embodies diversity of the nation it serves. CSM Wolfe characterized the current recruiting marketing as the most challenging the Army has faced since the establishment of the AVF in 1973. He attributed challenges to the post-COVID-19 labor market, intense competition with the private sector, and the declining number of young Americans interested in military service.

CSM Wolfe stated the Army story is not reaching enough potential recruits, citing the following statistics: 75 percent of individuals who are 16 to 28 years old reported they have little to no knowledge of the Army, 49 percent think life would be worse if they joined the Army, and 32 percent believe they would be sexually harassed or assaulted in the Army. Only 23 percent of American youth are qualified to serve without waivers; the top disqualifying reasons for Army prospects are obesity, addiction, medical, and behavioral health.

CSM Wolfe reviewed the Army's current initiatives and activities. The Army's diversity outreach and inclusion team is a diverse mix of recruiting NCOs and officers who are present at live and virtual events. The diversity outreach and inclusion team engaged potential recruits and helped educate them on careers in the Army, including highlighting female Soldier accomplishments, their journeys, and the benefits of Army service. The Army is increasing the number of female recruiters and ensuring strategic placement. It is also creating programs to maximize the impact of female Army recruiters, such as female mentorship programs for

potential recruits and organizing monthly events with female Soldiers. CSM Wolfe noted the Army is also expanding outreach through key influencers via social media platforms while continuing to create traditional advertising and promotional materials highlighting the variety of roles women fill in the Army to counter stereotypes and misperceptions about Army service.

CSM Wolfe concluded his briefing.

### Navy

Navy Counselor Master Chief Gerald K. Allchin, National Chief Recruiter from the Navy Recruiting Command, briefed the Committee for the Navy.

NCCM Allchin stated 23.5 percent of Navy accessions this fiscal year (FY) are female, which is down 1 percent from FY18 and FY19. Recent changes in the recruiting environment have led to a drop in propensity as fewer people are joining the military. NCCM Allchin said the Navy's research shows women are 8 percent less knowledgeable about the Navy and 8 percent less propensed to join than men, and influencers are 7 percent less likely to support women joining the Navy than men.

Research from the Navy's marketing and advertising agency and DoD's Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) has identified three workplace attributes young Americans seek and care about. The first is safety and balance, which NCCM Allchin described as physical safety, emotional safety, work-life balance, and a variety of interesting jobs. The second is self-fulfillment, which includes feeling like the workplace fits them and is somewhere they can be proud of and become a better version of themselves. The last category is job support, which includes job security and stability and is a workplace that cares about its people and offers paid time off. NCCM Allchin said only job security and stability were identified by individuals polled as being associated with the Navy. He stated this finding indicates a need for the Service to do a better job of showing the public what it has to offer and undo public misconceptions about the military, specifically in the female market.

NCCM Allchin stated some inhibitors to female accessions were in the Service's control, which included adjustments to grooming standards for hair, nails, and jewelry. Navy Recruiting Command has also opened policies in Navy recruiting, such as increasing the maximum age to join; starting a single parent pilot program, which was only available to Reservists in the past; opening a Tier 2 non-high school diploma General Education Diploma (GED) graduate program; and expanding waivers for tattoos and positive drug and alcohol tests. NCCM Allchin noted all the policy expansions he described were taken advantage of by women at a higher rate than what was expected. The Navy will also be starting its Future Sailor prep course physical fitness track, for applicants who fall outside height and weight body fat standards, to engage in a physical fitness training program before boot camp. Once future Sailors are within standards, they can enter boot camp.

The Navy uses specific targeting and content strategies to address women, showing what a career in the Navy can do while acknowledging the challenges women face. NCCM Allchin pointed to video series exemplars such as "Make Your Name" and "Faces of the Fleet." The Navy also has partnerships with Reddit, Snapchat, Google, YouTube, Handshake, and other social media platforms. On March 8, International Women's Day, the Navy did a masthead takeover on YouTube targeting women. NCCM Allchin reported it was the Navy's most successful social

media masthead it has ever done, reaching 19.7 million women, which is 12 percent of the female population in the United States.

NCCM Allchin said the Navy wants to talk openly about internal Service initiatives being implemented to address women's issues to embrace transparency with these topics, noting greater transparency with what is happening behind the scenes could help build trust between the Navy and women. NCCM Allchin stated this level of transparency should not only be embraced by Navy leadership but also by other Services, DoD, and government leadership.

The Navy recently launched its "Every Sailor is a Recruiter" campaign, recognizing propensity is linked with knowing someone who has or is currently serving. The Navy has provided training on opportunities and advantages to all Sailors to share their Navy experience. Incentives are provided for those who refer individuals who join.

At the Navy Recruiting Orientation unit in Pensacola, all recruiters must graduate from the basic recruiter course, where they are taught values-oriented recruiting methodology. NCCM Allchin described how recruiters are taught to align prospects' needs and wants with specific and unique advantages offered by the Navy. The Recruiter E-Toolbox app is on every recruiter's phone and has up-to-date information and resources for the Navy, including female-specific resources. All-hands emails and operations notes from the operations department also keep recruiters abreast of new changes or initiatives. The Navy also provides monthly training for all recruiters to build upon skills learned at the Navy Recruiting Orientation unit in Pensacola. NCCM Allchin cited females are 29.8 percent of the current recruiting force, which is up 5 percent from FY18. The Navy strategically places female recruiters across the United States to provide a women's perspective to as many prospects and applicants as possible.

NCCM Allchin stated the recruiting environment has changed drastically over the last 3 to 5 years. The Navy is facing misconceptions and a lack of overall knowledge about military service, and youth who see a value in service or want to serve. The civilian population perceives a lack of physical or emotional safety in the Navy, including a lack of knowledge on Navy-specific topics, such as being oneself while serving and having a work-life balance. NCCM Allchin also described shifts in market conditions as a prominent factor in the difficult recruiting market, stating there is a war on talent with intense competition for talent. The entry-level civilian market is now providing benefit packages equal to or sometimes better than what the Navy offers. Ongoing geopolitical issues also affect propensity to join. Over the last 10 years, there has been an increase in college enrollment, which impacts the Navy's primary market. During COVID-19, educational levels dropped, with fewer people taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and lower ASVAB scores overall. To address these challenges, DoD has introduced 12-week parental leave policy and has made continual improvements to child care and quality-of-life issues on bases across the country. The Navy is heavily emphasizing diversity and outreach efforts, teaming up with other organizations within the Navy to accomplish this. The Navy is also engaging in female messaging campaigns, while leveraging Navy ambassadors and social media influencers to educate the market about life in the Navy.

NCCM Allchin concluded his briefing.

## Marine Corps

Sergeant Major Adan F. Moreno from the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) briefed the Committee for the Marine Corps.

MCRC utilizes youth pools and propensity data from JAMRS to better understand the youth market and identify challenges and concerns youth aged 16–21 have regarding potentially serving in the military and specifically the Marine Corps. SgtMaj Moreno referenced JAMRS' most recent "Youth Propensity Update," which identified the most common barriers and challenges reported by youth: possibility of physical injury or death, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other emotional/psychological issues, leaving family and friends, other career interests, and dislike of the military lifestyle.

To overcome these barriers, in the continuous mission of recruiting a diverse and talented force, MCRC continues to provide more information and resources to potential applicants, promote positive in-person recruiter interactions, and ensure diverse representation in its professional recruiting force. SgtMaj Moreno stated MCRC is committed to portraying the Marine Corps as a civic institution of tough, elite warriors with a common purpose regardless of gender, race, creed, or socioeconomic background.

SgtMaj Moreno said the Marine Corps remains committed to assigning its best Marines to recruiting duty, ensuring they reflect the face of the nation. The makeup of the Marine Corps recruiting force is aligned with the diverse demographics of the country. SgtMaj Moreno noted the Marine Corps recruitment of women is a good news story and is the result of the recruiting force's hard work. The Marine Corps diverse accessions success is reflected in recruitment from every ZIP Code and has benefited from inclusive marketing, robust research, and partnership efforts with diverse communities and organizations. SgtMaj Moreno stated studies indicate the Marine Corps' female enlisted accessions should range between 4 and 8 percent. In recent years, the Marine Corps has hovered at around 10 percent female enlisted accessions. In FY22, the Marine Corps achieved 11 percent female enlisted accessions. Officer female accessions have doubled in recent years from 8 to 15 percent.

SgtMaj Moreno stated the Marine Corps remains committed to providing the best resources and the highest caliber Marine recruiters to meet the accessions mission while sustaining quality. Marines serving on recruiting duty are taught the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively perform the duties of a recruiter at the Basic Recruiters Course (BRC). BRC is conducted across 37 training days, providing recruiters with the most current, relevant, and effective training possible to ensure they are prepared for their assigned roles and responsibilities. Recruiting Station Instructors also conduct Refresher and Reinforcement training for their commands to maintain and improve recruiting knowledge and skills. SgtMaj Moreno noted, while there is no gender-specific training, recruiters are briefed and kept up to date on current policies and standards that affect all Marines, including women. Marine recruiters are focused on the whole-person concept and screening process to ensure the highest quality applicants who meet all standards are selected. The Marine Corps uses the tangible and intangible benefits to uncover the needs and motivations of potential applicants. SgtMaj Moreno noted the tangible benefits include educational opportunities, financial security, technical skills, travel and adventure, and physical fitness. Intangible benefits include challenge, courage, poise, self-confidence, leadership, discipline, professional development, pride, and belonging in pursuit of a common cause.

SgtMaj Moreno suggested misperceptions associated with military service often lead youth to view service as an option of last resort. The growing disconnects between the U.S. population and the military, the labor market, high inflation, and a population of youth who do not see the value of military service continue to hinder recruiting efforts. SgtMaj Moreno stated the nation is facing an unparalleled recruiting strain in the AVF era where all the Services are affected, noting this phenomenon requires a whole-nation dialogue.

SgtMaj Moreno concluded his briefing.

### Department of the Air Force

Senior Master Sergeant Cindy M. Taylor, Superintendent for the Enlisted Accessions Branch at Headquarters Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS), briefed the Committee for the Department of the Air Force (DAF).

SMSgt Taylor opened by stating she will brief the Committee on recruitment initiatives to increase women's propensity to serve in the Air Force and Space Force. She characterized the current recruiting landscape as an unprecedented challenge that has not been seen since 1999 or predating the AVF, noting the barriers to service are profoundly felt. As the DAF works to remove service barriers across the institution, SMSgt Taylor noted recruiting female Airmen and Guardians is both similar to and different from the broader population.

Per JAMRS' research, 65 percent of females between ages 17 and 35 were identified as not knowledgeable at all about military service, and 8 percent of parents are less supportive of their daughters serving as opposed to their sons. SMSgt Taylor described how youth propensity, awareness of service, influencer support, the vastness of geography, and limitations of force size and structure present recruiting challenges. SMSgt Taylor noted women who are considering service often need trailblazers in front of them to see a clear pathway to serve in the Air and Space Forces. The DAF continues to tackle the public reporting of sexual assault, harassment, and racial discrimination that has previously taken place within DoD because this has been a factor that has dissuaded women from serving. As of 7 February 2023, the DAF had obtained only 22 percent of females as the total Air Force accessions mission and 21 percent of Space Force mission. SMSgt Taylor reported the delayed enlistment pool is down 50 percent from last year.

To overcome these barriers, the DAF's digital marketing and advertising highlights female Airmen and Guardians through digital, print, and linear advertising and targeted partnerships, such as Women in Aviation and Supergirl Pro. SMSgt Taylor said the DAF uses a small and dynamic force in Detachment 1 with a focus on rated diversity, broadly addressing areas of the country in minority demographic-focused cities, schools, and institutions of higher learning using Guardians and Airmen as institutional mentors across many specialties predominately rated and aviation-focused. The DAF also has digital tools and capabilities such as the Aim High mobile application to support these teams and connect future Service members to their recruiter. SMSgt Taylor characterized the Aim High application as vital toward Service members' development in the DAF.

In addressing female diversity specifically, SMSgt Taylor stated the DAF works to remove barriers for women's service through initiatives across the DAF and local base communities. Changes from these initiatives, such as the new female hair standards, serve as an avenue to

attract female applicants. Recruiters work to attract all potential Service members with an impact sales model by including benefits that appeal to a future Service member's desires, such as career interest, alignment tools, and benefit identifications. For recruiters, AFRS holds an annual women's symposium specifically focused on professional development. SMSgt Taylor stated the recent symposium had an increase in male attendance and focused on the role of men in developing women as leaders, peers, and support mentors.

SMSgt Taylor noted, although some career fields are known to be male-dominated, recruiters and DAF advertising, marketing initiatives, and partnerships continue to highlight service options across all spectrums and show these opportunities in action. Special Warfare recruiting is a recruiter initiative with additional support from a squadron dedicated to recruiting and developing future Special Warfare Airmen. This unit is hyper focused on places, events, and institutions where these physically elite future Service members live, work, and excel and includes marketing and partnerships with Super Girl Surf Pro and 4H to help open these opportunities. The DAF also has a contract to develop and prepare Airmen for physical and mental challenges. Recruiting women into these specialties remains a challenge. Specific to Space Force, SMSgt Taylor noted recruiters continue to align the message that these science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-focused career fields are obtainable and open to women.

One of the largest challenges in recruiting is overcoming the perception that, if you serve, you will be broken—a message perpetuated by Hollywood and well-intended support agencies and initiatives with advertising on different platforms. The vast majority of Service members, approximately 97 percent, serve with these significant injuries, and getting that message out to recruits and influencers is key to this challenge. SMSgt Taylor stated the DAF will never be able to outspend these organizations.

SMSgt Taylor concluded her briefing.

### Coast Guard

Senior Chief Petty Officer Rodney N. Pearson, a regional supervisor for the Coast Guard Recruiting Command, briefed the Committee for the Coast Guard.

SCPO Pearson opened by stating he is speaking on behalf of his Command Officer Captain Tipton. He will focus his briefing on how the Coast Guard is mitigating barriers, inhibitors, and challenges for recruitment rather than explicating the challenges themselves, given there is broad familiarity with today's recruitment challenges.

The Coast Guard is reinstating its pre-pandemic playbook centered on increasing community outreach, such as high school and Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) visits. SCPO Pearson stated the Coast Guard has committed to put money and resources into the JROTC program. Currently, there are six specific JROTC programs, and four more will be opening this and next fiscal year. Previously there were no Coast Guard JROTC programs. The Coast Guard is also working to increase awareness that retired Coast Guard personnel can be JROTC instructors in the Navy JROTC program.

The Coast Guard is increasing caretaking, which SCPO Pearson defined as action recruiters perform after an applicant is fully qualified but prior to shipping to boot camp. The Coast Guard

is the only branch of Service with a physical fitness standard you must meet prior to shipping to boot camp. SCPO Pearson stated, if you arrive at boot camp and you do not meet the physical standard, the Coast Guard will send you home, which is why it emphasizes the physical fitness program. The Coast Guard has revamped its hometown recruiter program, which allows boot camp graduates 30 days at home prior to their next duty station to speak with students in their hometown about opportunities in the Coast Guard. SCPO Pearson characterized the personal touch of this program as having an impact because these students see someone who is their peer and has joined the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard has also revamped its Everyone is a Recruiter program and renamed it the Scout Talent and Refer (STAR) program. For this program, current Active Duty Coast Guard personnel, Reservists, or civilians who refer someone to a recruiter who ships to boot camp receive a monetary incentive of \$1K for the successful referral. SCPO Pearson characterized this program as successfully bringing leads to recruiters' offices.

During the pandemic, recruiter schools were forced to move away from in-person engagement, and SCPO Pearson characterized this as being distant from activities at Cape May, such as first days and nights at boot camp, forming activities, and interactions with recruits who were about to graduate to learn about their recruiting experience. He noted many personnel had not been to Cape May since their boot camp experience.

The Coast Guard has increased the number of recruiting offices. Since the Coast Guard is the smallest branch of the military, it has fewer recruiters. When recruiting was ample, it shut down offices and cut down on personnel at the recruiting command. The Coast Guard is now working to increase its production.

Regarding diversity and women, the Coast Guard is increasing the number of female recruiters in the office. SCPO Pearson stated this positively affects female applicants when they can see someone who looks like them that they can talk to about female-specific evolutions and issues, such as hair products. He noted male recruiters are not able to explain things from a female perspective.

SCPO Pearson concluded his briefing.

### Discussion

LTG (Ret.) Mangum noted with the challenges of the current recruiting environment, the Military Services may not be taking advantage of attracting more women into the ranks. He cited only the Marine Corps provided specific targets for recruiting women, 4 to 8 percent of their accessions mission, which LTG (Ret.) Mangum noted was low. LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked the briefers if the Military Services are adequately focused on the availability of potential female recruits in their efforts. CSM Wolfe affirmed the Army is currently focused on recruiting women but noted there are areas for improvement. The Army's diversity outreach and inclusion team has women placed in areas with a higher propensity of women. CSM Wolfe noted females make up 50 percent of the population, and the Army is only capturing 17 percent of that. The Army has studied differences in issues and disqualifiers and found women do not have as high of risk for service disqualifiers as males. CSM Wolfe acknowledged the Army is not where it needs to be, but the Army is continuously pursuing it and aggressively trying to recruit women. NCCM Allchin stated 23.5 percent of the Navy's new accessions are female; however, he noted that number is lower than it was pre-pandemic, when the Navy was closer to 24.5 percent of accessions were female. The Navy has made progress in increasing the number of women

servicing on recruiting duty, which NCCM Allchin reported is up 5 percent over the last 5 years. The Navy has leaned forward in social media and digital marketing and leveraged ambassadors and social media influencers to penetrate the market. NCCM Allchin responded that the Navy is making progress with its ongoing female marketing and advertising messaging and initiatives to target the female market. The Navy recently integrated women into the Submarine Force and has been successful at recruiting women for submarines from within the Navy population, in addition to junior personnel, to build the longevity and the future of the force. NCCM Allchin noted there is also a larger presence and knowledge of special warfare, such as Search and Rescue (SAR) swimmers, Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman (SWCC), Navy Divers (ND), Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), and Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL), now available to women, and he feels the Navy has done a good job of advertising and putting itself in a position to recruit women. NCCM Allchin also noted the U.S. female population is 50 percent and stated the Navy is not recruiting that level of women into the Navy but feels confident in the initiatives currently in place to be successful in the female market. SMSgt Taylor responded citing the DAF's Detachment 1, an elite team assisting recruiters with supplementing diversity, including females. When the fleet does not have a diverse force in certain locations, Detachment 1 assists and supplements in attending and finding events to bring in the female talent pool. SMSgt said she is not aware of a female target, but the marketing and advertising naturally are showcasing female Airmen and Guardians. SgtMaj Moreno responded for the Marine Corps that none of the Services are trying to waste talent, and they understand a pool of talent is available. The Marine Corps uses senior leader engagements; SgtMaj Moreno cited a Brigadier General on the west coast visiting high schools to motivate and mentor the female recruitable population. The Marine Corps believes it is very important to put senior leaders, officer and enlisted, in high schools and colleges so young women can see an example of how they can be just as successful as the Brigadier General he referenced earlier. SCPO Pearson responded each recruiting office in the Coast Guard has an accessions goal, and within that there are aims for diversity. SCPO Pearson stated the Coast Guard female accessions goal is 25 percent. This past year, the Coast Guard fell short, with around 19 percent of accessions being female. The Coast Guard marketing has targeted advertisements and lifestyle videos where current Coast Guard members on Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube, speak about what they do in and outside the Coast Guard. SCPO Pearson also said there are different forums and groups females can join and get answers to frequently asked questions, like "How is the Coast Guard going for you?" and "Would this be right for me?" and "Where do you get stationed?"

Brigadier General (Ret.) Allyson R. Solomon asked about the three biggest challenges recruiters in the field report. SCPO Pearson from the Coast Guard responded the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) is the biggest complaint. MEPS has changed its process for reviewing applicants' medical disqualifications; SCPO Pearson noted this has led to a longer review process when applicants get discouraged. SMSgt Taylor from the DAF agreed medical has been a hindrance, characterizing it as a deeper review of the medical records. She provided the example of a female with irregular periods whose record is flagged for more attention, ultimately lengthening the review process. SMSgt Taylor noted this may present a challenge for applicants working with a male recruiter who may find it harder to be open about past medical issues. SMSgt Taylor noted the qualification process and medical paperwork have been taking longer, which leads applicants to lose interest or obtain other employment. SgtMaj Moreno from the Marine Corps concurred with the other briefers and noted medical modernization has hindered contracting power and production. He also added access to the target market has been a challenge, citing the example of community college programs. SgtMaj Moreno stated access to



the target population is not the same across the nation. NCCM Allchin from the Navy responded the number one complaint is the MEPS process with the implementation of the Military Health System (MHS) GENESIS portal. The second complaint is access to high schools and community colleges. The third complaint is transition out of the pandemic recruiting force. During the pandemic, recruiters were recruiting virtually, and now they must get trained on the face-to-face interactions and processes on the job. CSM Wolfe from the Army agreed with the other briefers in saying the medical processing and procedures, mental screenings, and moral screenings are the three biggest challenges in processing. For prospecting recruits, he noted potential recruits often do not want to leave home or encounter the risk of death, injury, or psychological trauma.

Honorable (Colonel Ret.) Dawn E. B. Scholz asked how frontline recruiters are countering prospective recruit concerns about physical, mental, and emotional safety, such as sexual assault and other concerns raised during the briefing. CSM Wolfe from the Army responded leaders owe it to Service members to provide an environment built on trust, respect, and safety and ensure those who do not adhere to those values face consequences. NCCM Allchin stated the Navy is prioritizing transparency from its leaders down the chain. Any incident in the military impacts all the Services because the civilian population views the military as one entity. The Navy is transparent about policies, and recruiters are well versed about current policies and initiatives. NCCM Allchin also noted it is vital to have women in recruiting to talk to other women about the female perspective and address specific concerns. Social media and Navy ambassador presence are also other ways the Navy addresses these concerns to show prospective recruits the day in the life of a Sailor. This enables women to see successful women in the Navy and how they talk about hard topics. NCCM Allchin summarized his response as transparency, recruiter training, and ensuring women have access to other women to ask those questions. SgtMaj Moreno responded the Marine Corps has a group of professional staff NCOs serving as Marine recruiters who are responsible for mentoring, training, and preparing those who have made the commitment to earn the title of Marine. The Delayed Entry Program (DEP) helps prepares poolees for the rigors as they transition to training. The Marine Corps expects recruiters to set the example and educate poolees on policies and procedures to create the environment for young Americans to succeed. SMSgt Taylor responded the DAF has a program for applicants to report if they have felt uncomfortable in any interactions with recruiters or MEPS; recruiters provide a card with contact information. SMSgt Taylor also described a video about professional environment from the AFRS Commander and Command Chief and the Aim High app, which provides sexual assault training and tools for applicants. Lastly, SMSgt Taylor noted prior to basic training, each recruit has a discussion with their recruiter's supervisor about the recruitment experience and interactions with their recruiters. This brief also serves as a reminder about what is and is not appropriate for recruits as they continue to serve in the DAF. SCPO Pearson responded most Coast Guard applicants do not have many questions or concerns about safety due to the different mission of homeland security. He also described ensuring recruiters know the policies and can inform recruits of current policies about issues like sexual assault.

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked what policy changes, from the briefers' perspective, would increase propensity or the size of proposed, qualified applicants. LTG (Ret.) Mangum provided the example of MEPS or disqualifying medical conditions. NCCM Allchin responded Navy recruiting has excelled at expanding the market with factors in its control but stated MEPS and medically disqualifying factors are a persistent issue. NCCM Allchin felt there are Service members who have entered the military with medical issues and have been successful in their Service, but now with MHS GENESIS, medical issues are flagged, and people are being

disqualified earlier in the process. For the conditions that are not disqualifying, NCCM Allchin stated there is an extensive waiver and consultation process he believes could be streamlined. NCCM Allchin provided an example that the length of time from interview to new contract went from 25 days to 90 days. The Navy has worked to get it down to 65 days. Within this time period, NCCM Allchin stated applicants attrite because it is difficult to maintain the motivation levels of 17- to 19-year-olds to join the Navy. Vice Admiral (Ret.) Robin R. Braun asked NCCM Allchin to clarify if it was medical waivers or other waivers. NCCM Allchin indicated his response was about medical waivers. SgtMaj Moreno from the Marine Corps responded during this transition period to medical modernization, MHS GENESIS has taken the Services' input for removing barriers for people to join the military and noted an appreciation for the support. SgtMaj Moreno noted however, there is more to be done, and there may be additional recommendations as the medical modernization process continues. LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked SgtMaj Moreno if he stated earlier his production is down 20 percent as a result of the market. SgtMaj Moreno responded Marine Corps contracting power is down 20 percent compared with what it used to contract. SMSgt Taylor from the DAF responded what she would want to see in policy change is already happening. The DAF has a cross-functional team sprint, where all relevant parties meet to eliminate barriers and review and approve policy changes. SMSgt Taylor stated the DAF is working to remove barriers due to policies that have existed for quite some time but need updating. With recent recruitment struggles, the DAF created a medical working group in December, bringing together staff from all branches and U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM). This working group was convened to discuss approval processes, develop better timelines, and work toward a way forward. SMSgt Taylor characterized the DAF's progress as not complete yet, but the Service is taking action and working to eliminate barriers to broaden the pool of applicants. SCPO Pearson from the Coast Guard responded he does not have a policy change proposal. He stated he has traveled around to different MEPS and noticed inconsistencies in the number of personnel working at MEPS stations, noting some are understaffed. SCPO Pearson stated the only consistency in personnel is the senior medical officers. SCPO Pearson recommended increasing funding for MEPS or adjusting General Service grade levels for personnel. CSM Wolfe from the Army responded initial medical procurements are a central issue. The Army uses Army Regulation 40-501, Chapter 3, to determine who can and cannot be granted waivers in the Army. CSM Wolfe stated the Army needs to overhaul this regulation due to the MHS GENESIS system uncovering past medical records that were not considered previously. Another recommendation from CSM Wolfe was expanding the Army's Future Soldier Prep Course, which provides individuals struggling with aptitude or their weight resources to increase their aptitude, lower their weight, or improve their physical fitness.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked what recruiters in the field are expressing about recruiting in a difficult market. SCPO Pearson from the Coast Guard responded that it is challenging, with some areas more challenging than others. SCPO Pearson characterized areas with greater Coast Guard presence as less challenging to recruit. He provided the example of Florida, where there is a larger Coast Guard presence. Coast Guard responders often gain media attention for hurricane response support and drug busts, which makes it easier to recruit than as compared to Jackson, Mississippi. SCPO Pearson said recruiters' opinions are dependent upon their location and whether they are successful. If they are not successful in recruiting, they enjoy it less. SMSgt Taylor from the DAF responded recruiters are frustrated. She stated, after recruiting, school recruiters realize there are disparities across MEPS' doctors and their requirements for waivers. SMSgt Taylor also noted the DAF has lost a lot of recruiting talent with retirements and

personnel who know how to recruit in a pre-pandemic environment. She stated many supervisors are not well equipped to advise on in-person recruiting. This talent and experience issue is leading to the DAF overhauling the instruction on how to recruit with a focus on recruiting today and the new generations coming into the force. SMSgt Taylor hopes a new instruction will provide clearer guidance and better continuity for recruiters. SgtMaj Moreno responded recruiting is a tough and demanding job, but the Marine Corps has a professional cadre up to the challenge. Marine Corps recruiters are working long hours, making the effort to make mission; however, SgtMaj Moreno noted Marines are looking for a challenge and opportunity to thrive. In response to the contracting issue raised earlier, SgtMaj Moreno stated the Marine Corps is trying to get recruiters to extend their duty to assist with putting more applicants at MEPS and noted more Marines are choosing to become professional recruiters and making this job their career. In the face of a tough recruiting market, SgtMaj Moreno reemphasized recruiters are up for the challenge; they are volunteering to extend their tours of duty and to make recruiting their career. NCCM Allchin from the Navy responded his recruiters are reporting similar issues described by other panelists. The Navy is experiencing retention issues in its career recruiting force. NCCM Allchin stated, over the past 3 years, the Navy has lost 40 percent of its recruiting Master Chiefs and 30 percent of its Senior Chiefs. This has led to individuals getting prematurely put into leadership positions combined with recruiters who do not have pre-pandemic recruiting experience in tough market conditions. NCCM Allchin noted stress levels among recruiters are elevated. The Navy prefers to have an all-volunteer recruiting force, but areas that are harder to recruit are harder to staff with personnel. NCCM Allchin stated success in recruiting increases recruiter morale, and in this difficult market, there are many stressed and overworked recruiters. NCCM Allchin said he sees increases in mental health issues from the stress, including depression and anxiety, and he has concerns about how it is affecting recruiters' quality of life and their families. The Navy is continuously working to address how to support recruiters in making mission while balancing quality of life to keep them healthy. CSM Wolfe from the Army responded recruiting is very difficult right now; only 23 percent of American youth are qualified to enlist. Army recruiters understand the importance of their role in sustaining the AVF. CSM Wolfe said the Army knows there is a war for talent, and it believes it will win.

HON (Col Ret.) Scholz asked about single parents joining the military. She noted the Navy has a single parent pilot program set to terminate in October 2023, and the Air Force is not turning away single parents from joining. HON (Col Ret.) Scholz asked if the Services have a way to keep track of how many single custodial parents the Services turn away from joining due to their status as single parents. NCCM Allchin responded the Navy does not track single parents it turns away from joining. NCCM Allchin stated, within the current FY, the Navy has contracted 159 single parents who are Active Duty; 83 of those single parents are women. HON (Col Ret.) Scholz asked NCCM Allchin to confirm whether the Navy is planning to terminate the program. NCCM Allchin stated the program will run through October; the Navy is constantly evaluating its accessions rates. In particular, the Navy will examine first-term attrition rates, performance, and reenlistment as data points. NCCM Allchin stated the goal of pilot programs is to find quality individuals who bring value to the Navy and can have a successful career, with similar attrition rates as other groups. If that is the case, the Navy will make this a permanent policy moving forward. NCCM Allchin noted there are no indications this policy is having a negative impact at Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) or Navy "A" School or in the fleet. HON (Col Ret.) Scholz asked who is tracking the progress of who entered through the Navy's single parent pilot program. NCCM Allchin responded the N-2 analytics department at Navy Recruiting Command is tracking performance and progress of the applicants and obtaining information from

other Navy commands. CSM Wolfe from the Army responded he would need to obtain data from the G-2 and G-3, but stated the Army has single parents who enlist in the Army Reserves. HON (Col Ret.) Scholz asked if there are plans to open the Active Component to single parents. CSM Wolfe responded the Army has been in discussions on this topic for the past 6 months, noting it is on the Army Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC) desk. SgtMaj Moreno from the Marine Corps responded he could obtain the data on this but did not have it presently.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked what the Services are doing to increase the pool of eligible candidates and build an understanding of military service for those aged 17 to 35, given the ongoing war on talent referenced by the briefers. Specifically, she asked what the Services are doing beyond social media and influencers. SCPO Pearson responded the Coast Guard engages in community outreach at all levels, including high schools, community colleges, and 4-year schools. The Coast Guard has mobilized Reservists on 6-month contracts at every recruiting office to engage in community outreach. Coast Guard recruiters are inundated with helping applicants get through the qualification process. Coast Guard recruiting offices are small, and SCPO Pearson noted the supplemented Reservists help with increasing community engagement efforts. SMSgt Taylor responded the DAF has engagement from wing commanders on every base characterizing it as an "all hands on deck" effort. Some Air Force bases are holding events on their bases to attract individuals from the community and educate them on the options the Air Force provides. SMSgt Taylor noted there is a sentiment that the DAF is not hiring; she is unsure where this incorrect message comes from. The DAF also has a General Officer (GO) Inspire program organized by recruiters, which hosts GOs at local community events. SgtMaj Moreno from the Marine Corps responded the Marine Corps is implementing the following measures for outreach: senior leader engagement, veteran engagement, community engagement, efforts to improve systematic recruiting processes, and support from the fleet bringing home Active Duty Marines to go back to their hometown high school. SgtMaj Moreno said the Marine Corps is receiving positive support from Marine Corps leadership. NCCM Allchin responded the Navy has recently launched the Every Sailor is a Recruiter program to increase propensity by knowing someone who serves. Navy outreach includes hometown recruiting and is working to bring Flag Officer-level leaders back to their home or college towns for engagement through Navy Weeks and other activities. In addition to social media campaigns, NCCM Allchin said the Navy has dedicated more money to marketing and advertising to expand messaging and key targets. Historically the Navy has targeted lower funnel, or proposed, applicants; however, recently the Service has been able to target upper funnel and get more impressions. The Navy has also been targeting centers of influence in recent advertising campaigns and has moved from digital to connected television (TV), such as Hulu and YouTube TV. The Navy still advertises through traditional channels, such as TV and mailing campaigns, to increase awareness. NCCM Allchin stated high school canvassing is also key to the Navy's success. The Navy is working to rebuild relationships with administrators and teachers in high schools following the pandemic and staff turnover. Another strategy for the Navy is recruiter training. NCCM Allchin noted the military's benefit package relative to the civilian labor market has lagged since civilian entry-level jobs now offer similar benefit packages. The Navy is working on growing recruiter sales expertise and focusing on selling intangible benefits of Naval service. CSM Wolfe responded the Army is focused on key leadership engagement events throughout the community, noting widespread support from Army bases. The Army is focused on engaging its core-based statistical areas through "city surges," where the Army places a high population of Soldiers within highly populated areas for an extended period of time ranging from 30 to 60 days. The Army is also

working with community partners, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, to get back into the community.

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked whether the activities to increase the propensity of young people to serve, writ large, have been adequately coordinated and synchronized and if there has been an impact of the activities to inform, educate, and inspire service. NCCM Allchin from the Navy responded he believes there has been an impact based on the increased number of contracts, shipping, and rebuilding the DEP pool for recruits compared with last FY. NCCM Allchin stated he feels there should be a broader coordinated government- and DoD-level effort to educate and create awareness for the public on benefits of military service. NCCM Allchin noted each Service has its own marketing campaigns to meet its specific needs, but he feels the federal government would benefit from coordinating recruiting efforts and addressing it in a holistic way. CSM Wolfe from the Army feels that national, regional, and local efforts for recruiting are synchronized with consistent communications. CSM Wolfe felt the Army's coordinated programs, such as the Soldier referral program, Future Soldier Prep Course, recruiter incentive pay, seasonal bonuses, and quick ship bonuses for priority MOS, are having a significant impact. SCPO Pearson responded noting Coast Guard efforts are synchronized. Every Coast Guard unit has an outreach liaison who is directly connected with recruiting personnel and can coordinate open houses and public visits on base to see ships and speak with personnel. The Coast Guard has seen an increase in the number of leads outreach events are generating in addition to the search, talent, and referral programs. SCPO Pearson clarified the leads have seen increases in applicants sent to MEPS as opposed to a direct increase in qualified applicants. SMSgt Taylor responded the DAF has a marketing event tool to assist in synchronizing across the DAF to ensure a holistic approach to every event. The DAF recently started mission engagement teams to bolster support for recruiting areas with community engagement challenges. SMSgt Taylor noted she attended recent visits with this team in St. Louis, where she provided additional perspectives on how to approach talent. She attested to the immediate success of this program, seeing positive changes in engagement from talent being attracted to the Air Force and wanting to apply. The DAF plans to kick off a new referral program for DEP members, Airmen, and Guardians to refer applicants. Successful referrals will convert to an increase in rank for DEP members and a medal for Airmen or Guardians. SgtMaj Moreno responded the MCRC is synchronized from top to bottom on recruiting efforts and agreed with earlier remarks that recruiting is a national battle to increase propensity and access. SgtMaj Moreno noted access, in particular, getting Marines in front of audiences in their dress blue uniform, makes a difference in being able to increase someone's propensity.

The briefing discussion concluded.

## **Panel Briefing: Update on Women’s Integration Into Special Operations Forces (RFI 6)**

The Committee requested a briefing from Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and Special Operations Service Components (United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), United States Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM), United States Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC)) in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)), on efforts to recruit more women into Special Operations Forces (SOF) and programs that have been implemented or are being developed to support women through the SOF assessment and section process.

### SOCOM

Ms. Deadrea J. Sampson, a program analyst for Diversity and Inclusion at SOCOM, briefed the Committee for SOCOM.

Ms. Sampson opened by stating Special Operations Service components will provide the responses to RFI 6. SOCOM comprises more than 70,000 people with 12 subordinate commands across 4 Service components. General Bryan B. Fenton, Army, took command of SOCOM in August 2022. Within 120 days of taking command, GEN Fenton established new priorities. Ms. Sampson stated people are the enterprise priority for SOCOM and characterized them as the center of gravity. In support of current and future mission success, SOCOM supports Service outreach efforts to assess, select, educate, train, diversify, equip, and transform innovative and groundbreaking teams. In describing the type of work SOCOM is responsible for executing, Ms. Sampson described the “SOF way” as unconventional, irregular, asymmetric, and one that relies on partnerships with other Federal agencies and allied partners. Service assessment and selection programs share best practices within the SOF enterprise. Service components are updating practical applications to foster DoD gender integration efforts. Ms. Sampson noted women within SOCOM achieved major milestones in FY22 and stated the Service components will review the progress of Special Operations gender integration and initiatives.

Ms. Sampson concluded her briefing.

### USASOC

Lieutenant Colonel Rachel M. Cepis, Lead for the Women in Army Special Operation Forces (ARSOF) Initiative at USASOC, briefed the Committee for USASOC.

LTC Cepis provided an overview of her career in the special forces and stated her office, ARSOF, is responsible for generating and overseeing initiatives regarding women’s service in USASOC. USASOC comprises three career management fields: special forces (18 series), psychological operations (37 series), and civil affairs (38 series). Each of these components includes its own career fields that are managed within each component. LTC Cepis stated each component has different recruiting initiatives and noted there are no established lines of efforts (LOEs) focused on recruiting women specifically. ARSOF has initiatives to increase the number of women recruited to USASOC. LTC Cepis noted these initiatives are focused on fostering a “see it and you can be it” attitude and dispelling myths about SOF. Examples of such initiatives include education on the different roles women hold in USASOC and bringing women from USASOC with different military operational specialties to recruiting engagements.

The women in ARSOF initiative has an LOE for mentorship and sponsorship. This effort includes senior-ranking women in USASOC engaging with junior Soldiers. They communicate lessons learned and best practices and share life stories and experiences to offer guidance and assist with career navigation. The women in ARSOF mentorship and sponsorship initiative also includes a low-density slating board, which affords Soldiers who support USASOC efforts an opportunity to submit a packet to formally join special operations. LTC Cepis noted the women in ARSOF initiative also works with Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB) to demystify the assessment and selection process. This effort includes creating recruiting material and media exemplifying real-life experiences of special operators. There are also grassroots women in ARSOF initiatives at the unit level, which include quarterly events, unit onboarding, and outreach programs. LTC Cepis provided an example of a recent quarterly event at the 528th Sustainment Brigade honoring Women's History Month, which featured a leadership panel discussion.

The ARSOF selection process has been validated by third-party review, which determined ARSOF selection activities are gender neutral. LTC Cepis noted training standards are based on the criteria needed to perform SOF jobs, and the standards for these jobs are the same for men and women. LTC Cepis stated gender-neutral standards are maintained for initial entry recruits and existing Soldiers applying for a special operations career field. The selection preparation process for the three ARSOF career fields is the same for men and women. Men and women are afforded the same information and opportunities at their respective career schools. LTC Cepis explained for new recruits, recruiters offer opportunities to attend a Special Operations Preparation Course (SOPC) before attending assessment and selection.

LTC Cepis provided an overview of ARSOF assessment and selection data from FY16 to FY23. LTC Cepis noted most females in ARSOF serve in civil affairs and psychological operations. Because of this, LTC Cepis stated women serving in these fields serve as the benchmark for Women in ARSOF programs and initiatives. As of FY23, five women have completed the special forces assessment and selection and are currently serving in the special operations force as operators. A total of 110 women completed the assessment and selection course for psychological operations, and 270 completed the assessment and selection course for civilian affairs.

LTC Cepis provided an overview of ARSOF talent management data and noted, while each career field has unique requirements for job execution, the standards for job performance were the same for men and women. Due to the Army's transition to the Integrated Personnel and Pay System (IPPS-A), data on USASOC's briefing slides was as of 10 November 2022. Since this time, 5 female Soldiers have served in special forces, more than 108 are serving in psychological operations, and more than 154 are serving in civil affairs. LTC Cepis noted that because this data was as of November 2022, the data did not account for recently graduated classes.

ARSOF is conducting longitudinal assessments of male and female candidates. These assessments capture mental, emotional, and physical health and wellness from selection through accession into the operational field for male and female candidates. The assessment is also designed to identify barriers and generate mitigating strategies. LTC Cepis noted there are programs in place to assess differences in physical ailments between men and women. These programs provide modifications to reduce injury.

LTC Cepis concluded her briefing.

## NAVSPECWARCOM

Dr. Ramona J. Armijo, a Force Officer for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) for NAVSPECWARCOM, briefed the Committee for NAVSPECWARCOM.

Dr. Armijo provided an overview of her experience with DEI and noted she previously served as the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) National Chair of DEI under Vice Admiral Thomas J. Moore. Dr. Armijo also provided an overview of the Navy's DEI program and noted the program's commitment to gender integration. There are four LOEs for the Navy's DEI program: climate and culture, talent management, education and training, and sustainment.

The first LOE, on climate and culture, is important for leadership support of gender integration. Within the past year, the Navy has examined, revised, and authored policies regarding gender integration. Dr. Armijo stated she would revisit talent management later in the presentation and noted the importance of policies regarding the ability to educate all Sailors, including those in leadership, on gender integration.

In 2015, Naval Special Warfare (NSW) hired a Force Integration Officer. This officer works with Dr. Armijo, command leadership, and all basic training commands to encourage integration. The Navy has also hired female NSW instructors who make up the Women in Special Operations (WISOF) cadre. Dr. Armijo stated there are currently no female "pins" within the Navy SEAL or SWCC pipeline; however, there is currently one female SWCC who reported to her boat team last year.

NSW does not recruit because it is a SOF community. Instead, NSW conducts outreach and provides opportunities for assessment. However, Dr. Armijo stated the Naval Special Warfare Assessment Command (NSWAC) recently partnered with Naval Recruiting Command (NRC). This partnership resulted in an increase in the number of NSW outreach events from 3 events per year to 28 events in 1 year. Dr. Armijo stated the creation of the WISOF cadre has generated a diverse outreach team that currently participates in outreach events. NSW also partners with 26 Navy Talent Acquisition Groups (NTAGs) across the United States. NSW has also partnered with recruiters to implement the Warrior Challenge Program. The Warrior Challenge Program provides swim training, mental toughness, and physical readiness to potential candidates before they report to boot camp. Dr. Armijo noted the demanding nature of SOF selection requires extraordinary preparation and stated all training standards are operationally relevant to all NSW occupations.

Dr. Armijo stated NSW helps prepare women and all candidates for SOF selection. NSW offers public training programs and educational training videos on the Navy SEAL and SWCC outreach websites. NSW also provides swim training to Active Duty candidates at the east coast detachment. Dr. Armijo stated the Navy does not have a swim training contract for the west coast detachment at this time.

Referencing a table on the briefing slide 4, featuring NSW selection data, Dr. Armijo noted female candidate selection numbers for Navy SEALs and SWCCs remain small. However, in 2020, the Navy established four permanent WISOF cadre billets, which has led to four female high-risk training instructors stationed within NSW basic training command. In 2023, Admiral Hugh W. Howard III increased the number of WISOF billets from 4 to 11. Dr. Armijo stated these instructors support both female and male candidates but noted these instructors also go the



extra mile to mentor female candidates through the selection process. NSW also continues to provide facility and supply upgrades to meet female requirements and support readiness and mix-gender use of all facilities.

NSW support systems for women SOF candidates include working with public affairs and partner agencies to produce print and social media releases to increase fleet visibility regarding candidate and cadre outreach opportunities. In October 2022, NSW partnered with MyNavy HR and released social media posts to recruit candidates for the WISOF cadre. Dr. Armijo noted this campaign was tremendously successful. Dr. Armijo stated before partnering with MyNavy HR, NSW had been asking individuals within NSW if they knew individuals who would be interested. The MyNavy HR campaign expanded the potential candidate pool to the entire Navy. Dr. Armijo stated this campaign resulted in more than 100 inquiries and led to the selection of 5 candidates within the past week. Dr. Armijo noted those interested in more information on the requirements for WISOF candidate selection could reference the handout provided to the Committee.

The Navy has been writing new policies, such as the WISOF cadre instructor military personnel manual (MILPERSMAN), to support and protect women. Dr. Armijo stated this manual was created to help overcome career progression challenges regarding out-of-rating assignments. Learning and development roadmaps are also being updated for NSW instructors to offer career milestones for Sailors outside the SEALS/SWCC ratings.

In reference to support systems for women to enter SOF, Dr. Armijo stated the career detailer symposium occurs regularly in fleet-concentrated areas and features tradeshow booths, townhalls, and breakout sessions. NSW also exchanges best practices as a result of visits with the Army and Air Force.

Dr. Armijo concluded her briefing.

### MARSOC

Lieutenant Colonel Veronica L. Kaltrider, a Diversity and Inclusion Officer for MARSOC, briefed the Committee for MARSOC.

LtCol Kaltrider described her career in special forces. LtCol Kaltrider stated she has been with MARSOC since 2019, first as a G-4 operations officer and now as a Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

LtCol Kaltrider provided an overview of the MARSOC accessions process. MARSOC's primary unit of action is the Marine Special Operations Company. This company comprises special operations officers (SOOs), critical skills operators (CSOs), and special operations capability specialists (SOCS), which form to deploy. LtCol Kaltrider stated she wanted to highlight the SOCS because people forget MARSOC deploys Marines with special skills such as intel officers and logisticians. LtCol Kaltrider stated, similar to USASOC with individuals in civil affairs, MARSOC has special individuals who deploy with SOOs and CSOs.

In reference to the training pipeline diagram on slide 3 of the briefing, LtCol Kaltrider stated the training pipeline for the SOO and CSO population consists of the assessment and selection phases one and two and the individual training course. The assessment and selection phases

focus on the cognitive learning ability and application of basic military skills. Training for SOCS consists of three separate training processes, including the SOF fundamentals course; survival, evasion, resistance, and escape (SERE) training; and specific MOS training pipelines.

LtCol Kaltrider stated MARSOC is not a “street to fleet” organization, meaning MARSOC personnel are recruited from within the Marine Corps. LtCol Kaltrider stated the SOO and CSO populations are typically recruited at the ranks of sergeant, lieutenant, and captain, and SOCS are recruited at the ranks of corporal, sergeant, and staff sergeant.

After SOO and CSO candidates complete phases one and two of the assessment and selection, candidate packets are subjected to a three-phase review process to designate candidates as selected or non-selected. To reduce bias in the selection process, MARSOC has implemented a blind review in which the training cadre reviews candidate packages and makes recommendations. This review encompasses the training candidates have completed and the attributes candidates demonstrated during their training. Following cadre review, candidate packets are reviewed by assessment and selection leadership. Candidate packages approved by assessment and selection leadership are then submitted for a command screening process. The command screening process consists of commanders and senior enlisted leadership within MARSOC and ultimately determines if candidates are designated as selected or non-select. Selected SOO and CSO candidates are awarded the O370X MOS. LtCol Kaltrider stated the SOCS selection process was similarly rigorous, and selected SOCS become part of MARSOC. LtCol Kaltrider noted, while the SOOs and CSOs are in a “closed loop” MOS, meaning they do not return to the fleet, SOCS are assigned to MARSOC on 60-month orders. However, once SOCS have been selected, they can be reassigned to MARSOC after returning to the fleet.

Recruiting for MARSOC includes a direct and an indirect approach that engages Marines internal and external to MARSOC. The indirect recruiting approach includes social media and visual content. LtCol Kaltrider stated the visual content used in the indirect recruiting approach has become more diverse and noted the image on slide four of the briefing materials is currently visible in airports. LtCol Kaltrider stated MARSOC has been doing a lot with visual content to ensure individuals see themselves in the images and feel welcome. MARSOC has also been changing the visual imagery within the MARSOC compound to change individual perceptions.

Regarding direct engagement, MARSOC has been engaging monitors and detailers in other Services. MARSOC partnered with Headquarters Marine Corps to create a MARSOC support team that engages with all the eligible Marines in the Marine Corps. LtCol Kaltrider stated the eligible population is unique, and there are 16,000 eligible Marines within a 3-year span. Of that 16,000, there are only 150 females approximately. LtCol Kaltrider stated, when MARSOC receives the eligibility list, eligible female Marines are invited to the MARSOC compound to better understand the MARSOC requirements.

MARSOC does not have a specific preparation process for women. Male and female candidates are provided the same information about the selection process. However, LtCol Kaltrider stated there is an effort to ensure women are aware of the information and have access to information. MARSOC has found that many eligible individuals generally do not know about the selection process. MARSOC supplies all applicants with a training schedule and provides access to recruiters. LtCol Kaltrider stated MARSOC ensures female applicants have access to women who work at MARSOC.

MARSOC provides outreach and mentorship to eligible female Marines by directly communicating with them. MARSOC also uses townhalls and is currently preparing for a symposium in April titled “A Greater Pulse.” This symposium will engage Marines in and outside MARSOC and is designed to dispel myths about MARSOC.

Referencing the selection data on slide 7 of the briefing materials, LtCol Kaltrider noted MARSOC’s numbers are generally small for women. LtCol Kaltrider stated the numbers presented in the table on slide 7 were the numbers of male and female candidates combined across the SOO, CSO, and SOC populations. LtCol Kaltrider noted, of the 150 females included in the 16,000 eligible Marines, there are only 3 females who enter the training pipeline in any given FY. Data has shown women who enter the training pipeline have the same, or lower, attrition rates than men; however, no females have passed the assessment and selection course. LtCol Kaltrider stated the biggest challenge has been finding individuals who are propensed to serve. Due to this, MARSOC has been focusing efforts on outreach.

LtCol Kaltrider concluded her briefing.

### AFSOC

Mr. Eric Ray, A30 Division Chief with AFSOC, briefed the Committee for AFSOC.

Mr. Ray noted he spent his military career in AFSOC and has served as the Division Chief at AFSOC headquarters for the past 7 years. The AFSOC standards are gender neutral and operationally relevant. Mr. Ray stated AFSOC does not own its training pipeline. The Air Education Training Command (AETC) and AFRS recruit, assess, and select special warfare specialties that are shared between Air Combatant Command (ACC) and AFSOC. Mr. Ray stated the information presented in the RFI and presentation reflects information from AETC and AFRS.

The 330th Recruiting Squadron was created to recruit for special warfare and combat support. Mr. Ray stated the squadron does not focus on any specific gender; rather, it focuses on gaining the largest demographic possible to acquire personnel who have the greatest chance, physically and mentally, to make it through the special warfare training pipeline. However, there is a current focus on outreach and marketing for more diverse groups. Mr. Ray provided examples of recent outreach and marketing efforts, including CrossFit Games, Tough Mudder events, Spartan Races, and events focused on other skill sets, such as swimming and climbing. Mr. Ray stated these events draw a broader group of males and females, who have the baseline physical fitness required to complete special forces training. Mr. Ray also noted the individuals who attend these events tend to have individual traits and propensities that lend themselves to a career in special warfare.

AETC has created an integration branch at Second Air Force to increase female outreach. This branch has recently hired a female Tactical Air Control Party Officer. This officer has partnered with AFRS to conduct grassroots outreach. Mr. Ray noted having a woman who has been successful in their career to provide outreach and mentorship enables other women to feel they can accomplish similar goals.

The AFSOC selection process begins with the candidate going to the recruiter. If a candidate goes to a recruiter outside of the 330th Recruiting Squadron and is interested in SOF, the

candidate is transferred to the 330th. Candidates are then put in contact with a skills developer who provides oversight and guidance on different AFSOC programs. The skills developer also helps candidates meet physical standards. Once the physical standards have been met, candidates enter Basic Military Training (BMT). Following BMT, candidates begin the 7-week special warfare candidate course. Mr. Ray stated the special warfare candidate course is designed to make candidates physically stronger and more resilient and to provide instruction on the history and culture of special warfare. The special warfare candidate course also provides information on the different jobs and mission sets available in AFSOC and information on nutrition and physical recovery. Once candidates complete the special warfare candidate course, they enter a 3-week assessment and select period. Mr. Ray stated this period is physically demanding; however, the focus is on individual attributes that define a successful operator. Mr. Ray stated the methodology used to identify the behavioral attributes that define a successful operator is equitable, constant, and inclusive.

Referencing the previous discussion on the pre-accessions process, Mr. Ray noted SOF skill developers are experts in their fields with more than 6 years of experience in special warfare communities. Skill developers also assist with the AFRS outreach programs. Mr. Ray stated the post-accessions period, which includes the 7-week special warfare candidate course, is focused on coaching, mentoring, and education. The special warfare candidate course is staffed with experts in physiology, nutrition, aquatics, running, and strength conditioning. Mr. Ray stated these staff members help design a recruit who is fitter, faster, and stronger on day one of the assessment program. Technology is also used to monitor special warfare candidates' progress over the 7-week course to mitigate risk and to provide data to the operations research team. Mr. Ray stated these data were used to uncover biases and as a continuous improvement process.

Mr. Ray stated there are female-specific aspects of the AFSOC selection period. The special warfare human support group, designed to support candidates writ large, includes female physical therapists, swim coaches, strength and conditioning coaches, and operational psychologists. AETC has also implemented an integration support cadre. This program identified, trains, and assigns female Airmen to the training unit. Mr. Ray clarified these women are not a part of the instructor cadre; however, because female candidates typically go through training alone, the assigned female Airman serves as another woman for female candidates to talk to. Mr. Ray stated female candidates can also bring up issues of equipment fit to these female Airmen.

AFSOC has coordinated with NSW and USASOC to implement similar integration programs. Mr. Ray stated AFSOC is looking at NSW's female subject matter experts (SMEs) who are inserted into the cadre and noted that having females in the training pipeline is beneficial. Mr. Ray also noted AFSOC has been integrating females into the operations branch for the last 20 years. AFSOC has been training and developing female aviators, both officer and enlisted, since women were approved to fly combat aircraft. AFSOC also has female leaders in all echelons of command from squadron, group, and wing and at AFSOC headquarters.

Mr. Ray concluded his brief.

### Discussion

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked if the AFSOC had data on the number of women in its pipeline. Mr. Ray from AFSOC responded he could not address data from 2015 when the pipeline initially

opened; however, there are currently three females in the 7-week special warfare candidate course. Mr. Ray also stated, within AFSOC, there is one female technical officer who will graduate in June and one special reconnaissance enlisted servicewoman who will graduate in December. VADM (Ret.) Braun asked Mr. Ray if these women were the only women in the AFSOC pipeline. Mr. Ray responded he could not speak for the ACC.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris referenced the Navy's previous comments regarding the 28 outreach and recruiting events and asked for clarification on which events females attend. Dr. Armijo from NAVSPECWARCOM stated NSW has four dedicated female cadre members within the basic training command. Of these female cadre members, one member exclusively attends all the outreach and recruiting events. Dr. Armijo stated NSW also commissioned a special assessment command in August of 2022. The sole purpose of this command is to conduct NSW outreach assessments and selections. Dr. Armijo noted this command includes more than 100 staff members, including female staff, who attend recruitment and outreach events. CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked Dr. Armijo to clarify the roles of the female training cadre. Dr. Armijo responded the cadre's roles are to be present at basic training command. CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked if females in the training cadre are SEALs. Dr. Armijo stated the training cadre members are not SEALs, but promote integration by ensuring there is a female presence at basic training command and within all phases of SEAL training. Dr. Armijo also noted that the female training cadre members complete high-risk instructor training and that having females present during recruit training has been very successful. CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked how many females were currently in the NSW training pipeline. Dr. Armijo stated there are currently two female SWCC candidates and no female SEAL candidates in the training pipeline.

Ms. Marquette Leveque referenced the Navy's efforts to increase the number of female instructor billets from 4 to 11 and the Air Force's plan to incorporate female instructors. Ms. Leveque asked the Services to provide the current number of female instructors in their respective training pipeline, their plans for increasing the number of female instructors, details as to what female instructors are responsible for teaching, and their daily role in training. LTC Cepis responded for USASOC that female instructors are in civil affairs and psychological operations, because women are already serving in those forces. LTC Cepis added she had been an instructor and instructed the course based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the MOS. LTC Cepis stated she did not have the exact number of female training cadre members but noted the number is typically reflective of the number of females serving in the force, which would suggest there are more female training cadre members for civil affairs and psychological operations. LTC Cepis also noted only five women are serving in special forces for USASOC. Because these women have recently graduated or only served for a short time, they are not currently instructors. However, if they wanted to become instructors, they would go through the same instructor selection course as all other instructors. Mr. Ray from AFSOC stated female integration support cadre are not instructors, but they have other roles at the unit. He noted these individuals are trained to provide support to female candidates. Mr. Ray stated AFSOC is looking to convert some instructor billets to female SMEs to incorporate females throughout the training pipeline. Mr. Ray reiterated the special warfare human performance support has female SMEs. LtCol Kaltrider responded MARSOC does not have a permanent female cadre within the SOO and CSO assessment and selection pipeline. To reduce bias, every assessment and selection class has a new training cadre. If a female candidate enters the pipeline, a female is included in the training cadre. LtCol Kaltrider noted MARSOC has a female Navy Corpsman who is a permanent assessment and selection staff member. Dr. Armijo from NAVSPECWARCOM

referenced a flier provided to the Committee and highlighted the list of MOSs that could apply to become a master training specialist.

Colonel (Ret.) Nancy P. Anderson referenced Mr. Ray's presentation on AFSOC recruiting, in which he stated the Air Force recruits for SOF at the entry level. Col (Ret.) Anderson also referenced the other Services' minimum service requirements, which denote that new SOF recruits must serve 60 months before attempting SOF training. Col (Ret.) Anderson asked Mr. Ray to clarify whether recruits who enlisted or commissioned in another MOS could laterally move into an AFSOC specialty, and, if so, if there was a minimum service requirement similar to the other Services. Mr. Ray stated AFSOC career fields, such as special tactics officers, combat controllers, and special reconnaissance personnel, are "SOF for life" and remain in AFSOC for the duration of their careers. However, approximately 60 percent of pararescuemen and 100 percent of tactical air control and combat rescue personnel go to Air Combat Command (ACC). The other 40 percent of pararescue personnel go to AFSOC. Mr. Ray stated there is crossflow between AFSOC and ACC with pararescuemen, combat rescue officers, and tactical air control personnel.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked the panelists if they had statistics on the number of applicants who come in every year and the number of applicants who are and are not assessed and selected. Dr. Weeks also asked if their Service collected data on the reasons applicants are not assessed or selected, such as illness or injury, requests to drop, or failure to complete due to their own capabilities. Dr. Armijo responded the Navy provides this information in an annual report to the SecDef. She also noted the Navy has recently added statistics to this report on injury rates for male and female NSW candidates. LTC Cepis responded the Army conducts exit surveys when individuals drop on request or fail to complete the course. Exit surveys are also conducted when Soldiers request to laterally move out of SOF. LtCol Kaltrider responded MARSOC started collecting this type of demographic data 2 years ago. Data is currently collected for each part of the course and are broken down by activities, such as swim qualification, ruck runs, and education training. LtCol Kaltrider stated this data collection enables MARSOC to identify the most challenging aspects of the course and when individuals are most likely to drop on request or fall out. LtCol Kaltrider noted MARSOC does not yet have conclusions from the data, but high-level results indicate individuals are most likely to leave the course due to a drop on request. LtCol Kaltrider also stated the injury rates for the course are relatively low, especially for females. Mr. Ray responded the Air Force has a congressional report but that he did not have that data in front of him. Mr. Ray noted the technology AETC has embedded in the special warfare candidate course generates data for individual candidates as they go through the pipeline. These data support risk mitigation and are also sent to the operational research team, which uses the data to make the training process more successful.

Ms. Stoneman asked the panelists if there was something to be gained from exit survey data, such as further insight into injuries, reasons for requests to drop, or identification of characteristics related to propensity to serve in SOF. Ms. Stoneman also asked if there was a potential to provide individuals who do not complete the course with additional training for future success in the course because these candidates have already displayed a propensity to serve. LTC Cepis stated USASOC is a learning organization, and the exit surveys enable them to identify issues. These surveys are designed to understand the real reasons individuals are dropping out of the course. LTC Cepis noted these reasons are likely different for individuals in civil affairs or psychological operations as opposed to special forces, because the recruiting

processes for these career fields are different. LTC Cepis also noted Soldiers who are dropped from SOF training return to “big Army,” and their exit survey data can be used to ensure they are retained when they return to their former MOS. Dr. Armijo stated NSW candidates who become injured in the pipeline can be paused to participate in physical therapy and strength conditioning and then reenter the training pipeline. She noted some candidates who become injured do not wish to reenter the pipeline. LtCol Kaltrider stated, when a Marine falls out of the course, there is an informal interview with the instructors. If a candidate falls out due to a failure to meet standards or due to injury, instructors provide feedback on how candidates can improve and come back to the course. LtCol Kaltrider stated a female is returning to the course in April after falling out due to injury. If a candidate drops on request, instructors attempt to recruit them to become SOCs, because MARSOC wants to recruit any individual who is qualified to serve. Mr. Ray stated most of the AFSOC attrition is due to self-elimination over the course of special warfare training. Self-elimination disqualifies candidates from returning to the course. However, if there is a medical issue or injury, candidates can return to the course once they have healed. Mr. Ray stated the impetus to having a human performance team involved early in training is to reduce injuries during training and thereby increase success and retention. LtCol Kaltrider clarified, for MARSOC, if a candidate fails to meet standards, they are not immediately disqualified from returning to the course; rather, qualification for return depends on the standard the candidate failed to meet and by how much they failed to meet the standard. Mr. Ray followed up by clarifying that self-elimination disqualifies candidates from returning, but that a failure to meet standards will result in a pause in training with time to work to meet the standard and resume at a later time.

Ms. Robin S. Kelleher noted the Air Force’s focus on human performance and asked where physical fitness test standards and body composition fit into AFSOC’s human performance efforts. Mr. Ray stated he could not speak to body composition other than to say that it is part of the human performance team’s data collection efforts. However, Mr. Ray stated fitness and body composition standards have become a significant component of reducing pipeline issues and maintaining the Total Force. Mr. Ray referenced his own service experience and stated the focus on human performance is enabling individuals to stay operational longer and to have a better quality of life after they retire.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked LTC Cepis if she could provide any information on Army Rangers or Delta Force. LTC Cepis responded these organizations are managed by a different body, but women are in their forces. LTC Cepis stated USASOC communicates regularly with the Army Rangers and Delta force. Recently, USASOC included both forces in their anthropometric sizing event to better tailor uniforms and gear to optimize women’s performance. CMDCM (Ret.) Harris stated she understood why LTC Cepis would not have information on Delta Force but is curious how many women were in the Army Ranger pipeline. LTC Cepis responded she did not have any data on the number of women in the training pipeline; however, she noted, as of FY22, 10 women were serving in the 75th Ranger Regiment. LTC Cepis clarified she did not know if these women had a Ranger MOS or if they were females serving in the regiment.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn referenced ARSOF’s assessment and selection course data, which suggest the female completion rate is considerably less than the male completion rate. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked LTC Cepis from USASOC if she had information on the primary or secondary reasons candidates fail to complete training. LTC Cepis responded she did not have

that information. LTC Cepis noted assessment and selection attrition is high overall, but she did not have information as to why the female rate was higher than males.

COL (Ret.) Grinder asked if females are required to take a pregnancy test before they enter the pipeline and what would happen if a servicewoman became pregnant during training. LTC Cepis from USASOC responded she assumed a pregnancy test is part of the required medical examination that occurs before candidates enter the schoolhouse. LTC Cepis stated there would be different scenarios for candidates who became pregnant during training, and these scenarios would depend on where candidates are in the pipeline. If candidates became pregnant at the end of the pipeline, LTC Cepis stated they would most likely continue to graduation. If a candidate became pregnant at another point and could not complete the physical requirements, they would most likely get pushed back until they could safely complete the course. LTC Cepis added the outcomes for a pregnant candidate would also depend on their individual career timeline and trajectory.

VADM (Ret.) Braun asked MARSOC to clarify if the presented SOO and CSO selection data was for candidates who had completed the course or reflected the number of candidates who had been selected to train. LtCol Kaltrider clarified the data were for individuals who had been selected to enter the pipeline, not necessarily those who had completed the pipeline. LtCol Kaltrider noted, while women have served as SOCs, none of the females who have been selected for the SOO and CSO have made it through the pipeline thus far. LtCol Kaltrider stated, since the SOO and CSO pipeline was opened to females, 13 women have entered the pipeline, and none have completed the course. However, one woman is returning to the course after being injured, and three women are currently attempting assessment and selection.

Dr. Ferguson referenced ARSOF's presentation on current outreach and mentoring efforts and highlighted the recent all-female panel discussion. Dr. Ferguson asked LTC Cepis to discuss lessons learned shared by the panelists. LTC Cepis responded the women's ARSOF initiative has hosted several forums. The first forum focused on equipment fit and function, and included women in special operations and women from across the force. LTC Cepis noted these forums were conducted in coordination with the Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM). The forum overviewed testing uniforms and gear to reduce the feedback gap between what women say they need, the changes DEVCOM has made to accommodate these needs, and the performance of these changes in the field. LTC Cepis stated the ARSOF women's initiative has also hosted panels on health and wellness, single parenthood, dual-military life, and egg freezing. LTC Cepis noted that having women on the panel, including herself, who have been through these situations shows other women what is possible. LTC Cepis stated there have also been panels on career progression and family planning, as well as issues like pelvic floor health and contraception during deployment. LTC Cepis stated the ARSOF initiative tries to keep up with current policies and issues to ensure this information is disseminated at the lowest level. The women's ARSOF initiative forums are designed to ensure women understand these policies and can advocate for themselves and inform leadership that may be unaware.

The briefing discussion concluded.



## **Conclusion of Public Meeting Portion**

Prior to the meeting being adjourned, the Diversity Management Operations Center (DMOC) Director, Mr. Clarence A. Johnson, presented the DACOWITS Superintendent, Master Sergeant (MSgt) Kristen M. Pitlock, with a Defense Meritorious Service Medal (DMSM). MSgt Pitlock has been selected to transfer into the Space Force and will be departing the DACOWITS Staff later this summer.

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

\*\*\*\*\*

**March 22, 2023**

## **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The DACOWITS Military Director and Designated Federal Officer, COL Jardin, began the second day of the March 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.

## **Briefing: DoD Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care (RFI 10)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Office of Military Personnel Policy and Health Affairs overviewing the Defense Department's response to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, including policy initiatives in place to preserve the privacy of Service members and ensure access to noncovered reproductive health services, steps taken to protect healthcare providers' concerns about the outcome of the decision and to improve awareness of resources about reproductive healthcare, and key findings from the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey.

Ms. Lindsay E. Reiner, Assistant Director for Women in Service and Total Force Integration Policy in Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management, and Ms. Kimberly R. Lahm, the Program Director for Patient Advocacy and Experience in Women's Child and Family Health Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, briefed the Committee.

Ms. Reiner co-chairs the Women in Service Working Group (WISWG) with Ms. Lahm and co-lead DoD's efforts to ensure access to noncovered reproductive healthcare for Service members. On October 20, 2022, the SecDef signed a memorandum directing DoD to take action to ensure Service members and their families could access reproductive healthcare services, and DoD healthcare providers can operate effectively and within Federal law. A DoD team composed of civilians, military personnel, healthcare providers, chaplains, and legal experts reviewed current DoD policies and feedback from Service members associated with access to reproductive healthcare services. The team gathered feedback directly from Service members in various

environments, including the House of Representatives hearing from summer 2022 and listening sessions with male and female Service members from all grades, ranks, and components. Reproductive healthcare came up frequently as a concern during these sessions, both before and after the *Dobbs* decision.

On February 16, 2023, DoD released its policies on command notification of pregnancy, administrative absence for noncovered reproductive healthcare, and travel allowances for noncovered reproductive healthcare. Ms. Reiner explained Service members are often required to travel or move to new areas to meet the operational requirements of the Military Services; however, they often have limited influence on where they are stationed, which could limit their access to reproductive healthcare services. DoD's new policies reinforce the SecDef's commitment to take care of Service members and their families and to maintain readiness of the Total Force.

Ms. Lahm explained the *Dobbs* decision did not change the services covered by DoD. Therefore, some abortions are still covered, including those where the life of the mother may be at risk if the fetus is carried to term or if pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. These services are offered at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). Noncovered reproductive healthcare services include abortions for reasons other than those authorized by DoD and assisted reproductive technology (ART), such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), for reasons other than those authorized by DoD.

Ms. Reiner noted the policy on command notification of pregnancy standardizes and extends the timeframe allowed for Service members to inform their commanders about their pregnancy. Service members can now delay command notification of pregnancy until the 20th week of pregnancy at the latest, except under certain circumstances where proper execution of the mission outweighs the interests served by delaying notification. This policy provides Service members time and flexibility to make private healthcare decisions while accounting for the responsibility placed on commanders to meet operational requirements and protect the health and safety of Service members under their care. Service members are encouraged to access prenatal care as soon as they learn of their pregnancy to promote the well-being of themselves and their pregnancy. Service members who delay command notification will be placed on a limited duty status, but their pregnancy will not be disclosed to commanders unless certain circumstances apply, such as upcoming deployments or unit hazards.

Ms. Reiner reiterated DoD only covers abortions when the life of the mother would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term or in cases where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. She also reiterated Service members are required to travel and live in areas they do not choose to meet the operational needs of the Military Services, and this may impact their access to noncovered reproductive healthcare services. DoD established two additional policies in February 2023 to ensure the location where a Service member is stationed has less of an impact on their access to noncovered reproductive healthcare services. The policy for administrative absence for noncovered reproductive healthcare allows Service members to request an administrative absence of up to 21 days from their normal duty station to access noncovered reproductive healthcare for themselves or to accompany a dual-military spouse or dependent to services without being charged leave.

Ms. Reiner explained travel and transportation allowances may also be authorized for Service members and dependents who travel to access noncovered reproductive healthcare and would otherwise have to pay for travel expenses themselves. Allowances may be accessed when timely

access to noncovered reproductive services is not available within the local area of the Service member's normal or temporary duty station. As with the administrative absence policy, Service members will still be responsible for the costs of the noncovered reproductive healthcare services they access.

The administrative absence and travel allowance policies provide Service members a wide range of options to access noncovered care, but Service members may instead request regular leave or special liberty to support their access to noncovered reproductive healthcare if they choose, and under these circumstances, they would only be required to provide enough information to their command to approve this request. If the Service member chooses to pursue the administrative absence for noncovered reproductive healthcare option instead, they would need to inform command that the purpose of the absence is for noncovered reproductive healthcare, but they would not need to inform command of the specific service they are pursuing. However, for the travel allowance policy, Service members are required to provide more information before requests can be authorized, including the location of the closest available capable medical facility for the noncovered reproductive healthcare services. Commanders are expected to display objectivity, compassion, and discretion when addressing healthcare matters and have the duty to enforce policies against discrimination and retaliation toward the Service member seeking reproductive healthcare services. Commanders are also required to protect the privacy and protected health information of Service members, and all information shall be restricted to only personnel who need to know about it. If commanders are uncomfortable approving requests for noncovered reproductive healthcare, they may discuss with their chain of command whether they can refer those requests to a higher echelon of command for approval. DoD will continue to evaluate its policies to ensure continuous access to reproductive healthcare as permitted by Federal law.

Ms. Lahm explained DoD is promoting the services available to Service members in general and their families. DoD recognizes ensuring awareness and availability of resources helps facilitate informed decision making about family planning goals. For example, following the *Dobbs* decision, DoD released a Q&A document for Service members, their families, commanders, and DoD providers focused on the impact of the Supreme Court decision and what resources are available to Service members through their Tricare benefits. The Q&A has been updated since being published and is posted on a specific DoD reproductive health website, alongside other factsheets and materials to inform Service members about the new noncovered reproductive health policies and other related policies. DoD also updated the women's health website to be more robust by adding resources, such as a link to communicate with a Defense Health Agency (DHA) representative if a Service member is having difficulty accessing reproductive healthcare. The updated women's health website also provides information on Tricare coverage for reproductive healthcare services and two mobile applications: (1) The Decide and Be Ready mobile app and (2) The Deployment Readiness Education for Service Women mobile app. The Decide and Be Ready mobile app is free and available for Android and Apple phones to help Service members make decisions about contraception. The Deployment Readiness Education for Service Women mobile app also helps servicewomen make decisions about contraception, reproductive health, and other topics.

Ms. Lahm noted DoD also standardized walk-in contraception services at 135 MTFs as of January 31, 2023. This effort was highlighted as a best practice implemented by the Navy's Process Improvement for Non-Delayed Contraception (PINK) Clinics in a Defense Health Board

(DHB) report from November 2020 on Active Duty servicewomen's health and the results of the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey. The designated MTFs are required to have at least weekly walk-in contraception hours based on the population being served at each facility. The MTFs must offer comprehensive contraceptive counseling, where providers discuss the full scope of contraceptive methods available to Service members, including topics such as fertility awareness and barrier methods, to ensure they can make informed decisions. The MTFs must also offer access to same-day surgical contraceptive methods without referral and a follow-up appointment if medically appropriate. The walk-in contraception services help address barriers to accessing long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) because these procedures normally require scheduling in advance and follow-up appointments. Servicewomen who access contraception services during walk-in hours can still access contraceptive care through other traditional avenues, such as their primary care physician or obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN).

Ms. Lahm noted that the *Dobbs* decision also created concerns among DoD healthcare providers related to what services they are authorized to provide to Service members and their families. The federally authorized care within MTFs has not changed since the *Dobbs* decision, so providers are still authorized to conduct covered abortions. However, providers practicing in States where abortion laws are more restrictive than DoD policies have voiced concerns about whether they are allowed to continue providing these services. DoD wants its providers to make healthcare decisions based on the health and well-being of the beneficiaries they are serving rather than make decisions based on the fear of adverse actions that may be made against them for providing services. DoD established policies to address this challenge, including the alternate licensure program. This program is available to all civilian and military providers stationed at MTFs who have licenses in good standing in States with more restrictive State laws than the federally authorized care they can provide. Under this program, providers can request to be reimbursed for pursuing a medical license in a State with less restrictive laws, enabling them to be less concerned about the possibility of adverse actions being taken against them from their licensing board for providing federally authorized care.

Ms. Lahm noted the results of the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey are driving DoD policy updates related to women's reproductive healthcare. The survey is the first survey administered in more than 30 years, targeted specifically toward Active Duty servicewomen. The survey had a response rate of 17 percent. The majority of survey respondents reported having access to the reproductive healthcare services they need, including access to their contraception method of choice. However, some respondents indicated they are uncomfortable receiving contraceptive care from DoD providers. DoD is working on a follow-up survey focused on healthcare providers to assess their knowledge, skills, and understanding of the provision of reproductive healthcare services. DoD has contracted with the RAND Corporation to conduct family planning focus groups in late 2023 or early 2024 to learn more about the results of the Women's Reproductive Health Survey.

Ms. Reiner and Ms. Lahm concluded their briefing.

### Discussion

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn noted the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey provided the Committee with a lot of information about challenges servicewomen have been facing for a long time. She asked if any Federal agencies are working on legislation to cover DoD providers who

perform abortions. Ms. Lahm noted she is unsure if other agencies are working on legislation to protect DoD providers.

Dr. Ferguson referenced the discretion commanders have to grant administrative absences to pursue noncovered reproductive healthcare services. She asked for clarification on how the moral judgment of the authorizing commander might influence the approval of these requests. Ms. Reiner explained the policy states commanders should make every effort to approve administrative absence requests, and if a commander does not feel comfortable approving a request, the request should be routed to a higher echelon. Each Military Service has its own detailed policy on the approval process for administrative absence requests.

Captain (Ret.) Kenneth J. Barrett asked how many Service members are using the Decide and Be Ready mobile app or the Deployment Readiness Education for Service Women mobile app. Ms. Lahm noted she is unsure, but she can communicate with personnel in charge of developing the apps for more information. She noted it would be interesting to know if there has been an uptick in use since the establishment of the new DoD reproductive health policies.

COL (Ret.) Grinder referenced the alternate licensure program for DoD providers and asked how being licensed in a State other than where their MTF is located helps them ensure they will not receive adverse actions for performing federally authorized procedures. Ms. Lahm explained providers can hold a license in any State to practice at an MTF. For example, civilian or military providers can be licensed in any State, even if they are practicing at an MTF in Texas. The program allows providers to pursue a license in a less restrictive State and relinquish their license from the more restrictive State to reduce concerns about adverse action being taken against them by licensing boards for providing federally authorized services. To participate in the program, providers must already have a medical license in good standing.

Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox noted she is concerned about the 25 percent of servicewomen who are deployed with a urinary tract infection or vaginal infection and that 64 percent of those servicewomen indicated that these health issues interfered with their duties. She asked if there are mechanisms in place to allow servicewomen to self-treat while deployed. Ms. Lahm confirmed most of those servicewomen were able to receive treatment for their health issues, but DoD is considering mechanisms to standardize self-treatment of these types of issues.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks referenced the processes each Service has in place to approve administrative absence requests for the pursuit of noncovered reproductive healthcare services. She asked if DoD has specified how quickly approvals should be made by commanders. Ms. Reiner noted DoD has not specified a time limit, and these decisions are up to each Service's policy and culture.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked if DoD authorizes IVF for same-sex couples. Ms. Lahm noted DoD is statutorily required to provide reproductive technology services for Service members who are severely ill or injured and therefore unable to conceive a child through coital means. These Service members must also have a lawful spouse and apply for a supplemental healthcare plan waiver. Therefore, statutorily, same-sex couples do not qualify for these services, and DoD is not authorized to change this congressional statute. DoD also offers graduate medical education programs at six MTFs across the country, and these programs offer IVF services at a significantly reduced cost to Service members, though the services are still fee-for-service. Same-sex couples are authorized to participate in these programs.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked if DoD has information on utilization rates for walk-in contraception services. Ms. Lahm noted the DoD does not have this data yet. MTFs were instructed to begin providing walk-in contraceptive services by January 31, 2023, so the first report of data for those services will be provided to DHA in July 2023, and annually after the first report. Ms. Stoneman asked if this report will cover only walk-in contraceptive services or other policy updates. Ms. Lahm responded there are no metrics addressing noncovered reproductive healthcare services, but the report will cover utilization of contraception in the Military Services, where those services are being provided, and whether utilizations of contraception increased with the implementation of the walk-in contraception services. Ms. Reiner clarified DoD is working with the Military Services to develop tracking mechanisms for the use of administrative absence and travel allowance requests for the pursuit of noncovered reproductive healthcare services.

Dr. Ferguson asked whether servicewomen have the opportunity to appeal if their commander denies their request for administrative absence or travel allowance for noncovered reproductive healthcare services. Ms. Reiner confirmed the Military Services have routine processes for when any type of leave is denied.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked what contraceptive services are available to servicemen at the 135 MTFs offering walk-in contraceptive services. Ms. Lahm responded comprehensive contraceptive counseling is available to servicemen where they can learn about contraception, including surgical options. However, these surgeries are not provided as a walk-in service. Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked if they can access condoms at MTFs. Ms. Lahm noted condoms are not covered by Tricare, but many clinics have them available.

Col (Ret.) Anderson noted the 17 percent response rate on the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey seems low. She asked for a demographic breakdown of the survey respondents and asked whether DoD has studied the survey itself to determine if there were barriers to higher response rates. Ms. Lahm noted 17 percent is a much higher response rate than most DoD surveys receive, so DoD has not reviewed the survey itself to determine if there were barriers to responding. However, the survey was fielded during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have impacted the response rate. It is also difficult to know whether junior Service members had access to the survey. The survey was fielded with a sampling of servicewomen in the Military Services under the flag level, and it was a census survey of women in the Coast Guard.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn noted issues related to unintended pregnancies, maternal depression, and negative pregnancy outcomes were highlighted by respondents in the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey. She asked whether DoD is considering any follow-up studies or actions in response to these results. Ms. Lahm noted the survey results related to unintended pregnancies were aligned with other studies on Active Duty servicewomen, showing a higher rate of unintended pregnancies compared with their civilian counterparts. Around 50 percent of respondents who reported unintended pregnancies also reported they did not use contraception prior to their pregnancies, possibly due to lack of access to or awareness of contraceptive options. DoD has implemented efforts to improve access to contraceptive services, such as the walk-in contraceptive service offerings and the removal of MHS copays for medical appointments related to long-acting contraceptive methods. Ms. Lahm noted DoD needs more information to address the maternal depression issues, because only two questions on the survey addressed this topic and the questions were not detailed enough to support a clinical diagnosis of depression. Since respondents took the survey in August 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic,

this could have impacted their responses to depression-related questions. Ms. Lahm noted DoD also needs to examine pregnancy loss further, because servicewomen have access to healthcare providers to confirm pregnancies sooner than many civilians. Therefore, DoD is unsure whether pregnancy loss among servicewomen is comparable with similar civilian data. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked about the potential negative impacts of menstrual suppression. Ms. Lahm noted she would need to investigate that internally.

Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox asked whether egg freezing is a covered reproductive healthcare service under DoD. Ms. Lahm noted oocyte cryopreservation (egg freezing) is available for Service members diagnosed with cancer or with a severe injury. However, Service members could request an administrative absence or travel support to pursue oocyte cryopreservation as a noncovered reproductive healthcare service. Ms. Lahm explained same-sex couples could also request administrative absence and transportation support to pursue ART services.

Dr. Ferguson asked whether DoD knows how many servicewomen require the use of IVF. Ms. Lahm noted about 15 percent of respondents to the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey reported experiencing infertility, and the percentage of servicewomen who would use IVF services if they were required to pay for it themselves was lower than 15 percent. IVF services outside the graduate medical education programs cost up to \$30,000 for one cycle, while IVF services within the graduate medical education program cost between \$10K and \$15K. Ms. Reiner noted the RAND study estimated between 800 and 1,400 ART procedures per year would be eligible for transportation allowance.

Ms. Leveque asked how the travel allowance policy accounts for follow-up appointments to noncovered reproductive healthcare services. Ms. Reiner noted Service members can discuss how many doctor appointments they will need and associated travel allowances with their commanders, and Service members will request leave and allowance for each appointment. Ms. Lahm noted that follow-up care from complications related to noncovered reproductive healthcare services may be able to be treated at MTFs, and DoD encourages Service members to receive follow-up care at the MTFs if possible. Mental healthcare related to family planning and reproductive challenges is a covered service, but Service members are not required to participate.

Ms. Stoneman asked how privacy is maintained for Service members when they follow-up on noncovered reproductive healthcare services at an MTF. Ms. Lahm noted MTFs have access to Service member's medical records, including noncovered reproductive healthcare services provided outside the MTF, but providers are bound by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 and personal health information protections. Service members can choose to receive follow-up care with the provider where they received the initial noncovered healthcare services, but it may be advantageous to them to receive follow-up care at the MTF, where complications can be followed more closely.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked if MTFs could provide Service members with a list of reproductive healthcare services covered by the DoD. Ms. Lahm indicated MTF staff could refer Service members to the DoD website that provides a list of covered reproductive healthcare services. The DoD website also contains resources, and Service members can call or email Tricare customer service to ask questions about covered services. Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked whether there is a list of noncovered reproductive healthcare services on the DoD's reproductive healthcare website. Ms. Lahm said, no, a list of noncovered reproductive healthcare services is not provided on the site.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked whether DoD is tracking the number of cases when State medical boards take adverse actions toward providers for providing federally authorized healthcare services. Ms. Lahm noted she is unaware of any cases at this time.

The briefing discussion concluded.

#### **Briefing: Overview of the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course (RFI 4)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Army on the Future Soldier Preparation Course, including a detailed description of the program and how it was developed, clarification on what authorities oversee the implementation of the program, and a discussion of obstacles and challenges encountered during the implementation of the program.

Brigadier General Jason E. Kelly, Commanding General at Fort Jackson; Lieutenant Colonel Ricarlos Caldwell, G3 in the Army Training Center Fort Jackson and Army Center for Initial Military Training; and Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Hayes, 1-61 IN Battalion Commander in Army Training Center Fort Jackson and Army Center for Initial Military Training, briefed the Committee.

BG Kelly explained Fort Jackson trains more than half of the Army's Soldiers every year. Fort Jackson creates highly trained, disciplined, fit, resilient, morally grounded Soldiers and leaders. The Future Soldier Preparatory Course innovates accessions, provides opportunities for volunteers, keeps standards high, and helps meet the needs of the AVF. BG Kelly noted the course is a vehicle to transport fully qualified recruits into basic combat training, and it should be considered an investment in those individuals desiring to serve in the Army. The course is at the forefront of innovating to meet the demands of the AVF. Course trainees are recruited and accessed into the program and paid and governed under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

The Future Soldier Preparatory Course has two tracks, one focused on academic improvement and the other focused on physical improvement. For the academic track, trainees are qualified to serve in the Army upon arrival to the course, but the course aims to raise their scores by at least 10 points. A score of 31 or more on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) is required to graduate from the course. So far, 96 percent of trainees participating in the course have graduated within two test attempts. For the physical track, individuals with a body fat percentage between 2 to 6 percent are invited to participate in the Future Soldier Preparatory Course. The physical track is closely monitored by BG Kelly and medical professionals to ensure weight is lost safely, and the program has been assessed by the Army TRADOC Command and the Army Offices of the Surgeon General to ensure its compliance with medical policies. Eighty-four percent of physical track participants graduate from the program within 4 weeks.

BG Kelly noted expansion of the Future Soldier Preparatory Course was approved in December 2022 at Fort Jackson and Fort Benning. Fort Jackson executed its first expanded class on January 23, 2023, and the program continues to provide positive results after expansion. BG Kelly confirmed the Army is currently investigating a dual-track option to be conducted sequentially for individuals with both body fat and academic challenges. The Army is also investigating the possibility of allowing individuals with an AFQT score of 16 to enroll in the Future Soldier Preparatory Course based on the success of the pilot program.



BG Kelly noted the Future Soldier Preparatory Course was developed quickly, but with the support of SMEs, to ensure the physical track was implemented safely and the academic track was rigorous and valid. Fort Jackson has experienced no obstacles or challenges implementing the program, and BG Kelly is hopeful expansion will be approved and quickly implemented.

BG Kelly concluded his briefing.

### Discussion

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked for clarification on the statement that individuals who join the Future Soldiers Preparatory Course are qualified to serve in the Army on arrival. BG Kelly confirmed individuals are currently required to score a 21 on the AFQT to be eligible to join the Future Soldiers Preparatory Course. A score of 21 qualifies them to serve at Cat 4, but the goal of the program is to have them qualify at a level higher than Cat 4.

HON (COL Ret.) Scholz asked whether this program could be conducted jointly with other Military Services. BG Kelly noted he lacks an understanding of the other Services' qualification requirements to ensure academic curriculum and body fat percentage requirements were aligned to each Service, but there is likely enough space and opportunity to conduct the course jointly. HON (COL Ret.) Scholz asked about the most recent graduation rates from the course. BG Kelly noted 3,985 students graduated from the course between August 2022 and March 2023 for a graduation rate of 97 percent. Ninety-six students, or 2.4 percent, have been discharged from the course, and only 0.2 percent of participants were retained for not achieving the 10-point score increase. However, retained trainees were still deemed fit to serve. Regarding category improvements from the academic track, the Future Soldier Preparatory Course helps create space for other Cat 4 recruits to join the Army by improving participants from Cat 4 scores to higher category scores. BG Kelly explained 1,810 participants improved to Cat 3 Bravos (54.5 percent), 970 participants improved to Cat 3 Alpha (29.2 percent), 536 participants improved to Cat 2 (16.2 percent), and 3 participants improved to Cat 1 (0.1 percent). For the physical track, 1,427 participants graduated from the program (97.5 percent), and 36 participants were discharged (2.46 percent). Thirty-eight percent of participants graduated in the first week, 27 percent within 2 weeks, and 13 percent within 3 weeks, and, cumulatively, 84 percent of participants graduated by week 4.

Ms. Stoneman asked whether the Army has projected these outcomes moving forward and how impactful his program will be in meeting Army recruiting goals. BG Kelly noted the course has helped alleviate the recruitment of Cat 4 recruits, which is capped at 4 percent, and he believes lowering the requirement for participation in the course from a score of 21 to a score of 16 on the AFQT will help recruit propensed individuals who would otherwise not be eligible to join the Army as Cat 4 recruits.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked for clarification on the 4 percent recruiting goal for Cat 4 recruits. LTC Caldwell confirmed the Army is capped at recruiting 4 percent of Cat 4 recruits and 36 percent for Cat 3 Bravos. Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked how participants who graduate from the Future Soldier Preparatory Course compare with recruits in basic training who did not graduate from the course. BG Kelly confirmed his command has assessed this closely and found the course acts as a warm start for recruits, and many graduates end up in leadership positions and perform better than nonparticipants in basic training. BG Kelly explained LTC Hayes' battalion was the first one taken offline to start the Future Soldier Prep Course, and early in the

implementation of the program, individuals were trained in a looser setting where drill sergeants wore baseball caps instead of campaign hats. Since that time, the program has been adjusted to make participants better Soldiers, while also improving their academic and physical skills. LTC Caldwell noted between 85 and 95 percent of recruits do not participate in the Future Soldiers Preparatory Course graduate basic training, while about 91 percent of course participants graduate.

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked whether Fort Jackson has projected the impact of enrollment in the Future Soldiers Preparatory Course after lowering the AFQT score from 21 to 16. BG Kelly noted his command is watching for success within the course, but Fort Jackson has already taken two battalions offline from basic combat training. However, if this course continues to be successful, BG Kelly will strategize how to best share the training workload across other Army Training Centers. LTC Caldwell noted an 18.5 percent increase, on average, in test scores across the program. He indicated many of the individuals who are recruited into the course as Cat 4 recruits are actually at a higher academic level than true Cat 4 recruits, but that is easier to show when they do not have to worry about food and housing insecurity.

HON (COL Ret.) Scholz asked how many females have enrolled in the course and whether they have similar success rates to males. BG Kelly confirmed 913 females have graduated from the academic skills course (97.6 percent) and 20 females have been discharged (2.1 percent). Eighty percent of females have passed their first test, and the average test score increase for females is 25.5 points. For the physical track, 403 females have graduated (97.8 percent), and 9 have been discharged (2 percent). The average weekly body fat loss for females has been 1.75 percent.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked whether other Services have reached out to the Army to discuss the outcomes of the Future Soldier Preparatory Course. LTC Caldwell confirmed the Navy and Coast Guard have conducted onsite visits to Fort Jackson and are most interested in the physical track, while the Air Force has sent email correspondence to help it introduce efficiencies into its programs. Brig Gen (Ret.) Solomon asked about the Marine Corps, and LTC Caldwell responded the Marine Corps has not communicated with the Army about the Future Soldier Preparatory Course.

LTG (Ret.) Mangum asked if all participants in the Future Soldier Preparatory Course are categorized as 09M. LTC Caldwell noted the participants in the academic track are 09M, but the participants in the physical track arrive with an MOS. Participants recruited into the physical track are recruited with an MOS and meet all other Army requirements at that time. LTC Caldwell explained the ARMS 2.0 program has been in place over the last 5 years to allow trainees to enter the Army with a body fat percentage 2 percent higher than the accessions standard. Participants in the physical track of the course enter through the ARMS 2.0 program.

Ms. Kelleher asked how the Army is marketing the Future Soldier Preparatory Course. BG Kelly noted marketing is one place where the course could be improved. BG Kelly wants to identify participants who have graduated from the course to travel back to their hometown to talk to other potential recruits about the course. However, currently recruiters are marketing the program to potential recruits.

COL (Ret.) Grinder asked if Cat 4 recruits need a waiver to join the Army after graduating from the Future Soldier Preparatory Course and whether they are still shown as a Cat 4 at enlistment after graduating. LTC Caldwell confirmed Cat 4 recruits do not need a waiver to join the Army

after graduating from the course. However, if they elevate their test scores to another category, their record is amended to show that new score.

CMDCM (Ret.) Harris asked whether the Future Soldier Preparatory Course battalions are gender integrated and how many female drill instructors are present. BG Kelly confirmed the battalions are gender integrated. LTC Hayes noted the battalions have about 20 female drill sergeants, and he requires at least one of the senior drill sergeants per company to be female. LTC Hayes' battalion is composed of about 40 percent females.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked whether there are plans to track Future Soldier Preparatory Course graduates' careers in the Army. LTC Caldwell confirmed a longitudinal study is being conducted by the Army Research Institute (ARI).

The briefing discussion concluded.

### **Panel Briefing: Update on the Services' Family Care Plan Policies (RFI 11)**

The Committee requested a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Force on a variety of topics related to the Services' family care plans (FCPs), including DoD and Service policies and regulations about FCP requirements, what categories of Service members are affected by FCP policies, when FCPs require Service members to surrender custody of a dependent child, what documents Service members are required to submit as part of their FCP package, and the consequences of failure to submit an FCP plan on time or appropriately.

#### Army

Lieutenant Colonel Samantha J. Frazier, a Program Manager for Command Policy and Programs Division at Headquarters Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff G, briefed the Committee for the Army.

LTC Frazier explained an FCP is required when Service members will be absent from family members due to military requirements, such as deployments, unaccompanied tours, and temporary duty. Army Reserve and National Guard Service members may also require an FCP for deployments, annual training, or other mobilizations. Commanders also have the authority to require any Service member to complete an FCP, if parenthood interferes with their military responsibilities.

LTC Frazier indicated Army Regulation 600-20, Chapter 5-3, outlines the procedures involved in establishing an FCP. Army Directive 2022-06 is the Army's most recent policy update to FCP requirements and allows a longer timeframe for Service members to establish an FCP. In general, all Service members who have dependents, are pregnant, or are in a dual-military couple are required to have an FCP. An FCP is also required of divorced Service members with joint custody who will have more than 30 days per year of visitation rights, and Service members with a spouse or adult family member who is incapable of self-care.

LTC Frazier confirmed various documents are required to create an FCP. Department of the Army (DA) Form 5841, power of attorney form, and DA Form 5840, certificate of acceptance as guardian or escort form, are required for all FCP packets and must be notarized. DA Form 5304, FCP counseling checklist, is used to discuss and determine which documents are needed for each

Service member's FCP and provides a timeline in which they are required to complete the FCP. Active Duty Service members normally have 30 days from the date of counseling to complete their FCP, while Reserve and National Guard Service members normally have 60 days. FCPs are recertified annually, and pregnant Service members should have an FCP in place no later than 60 days prior to the birth of their child, and the FCP must be recertified following the birth. Commanders have the authority to extend any FCP completion timelines by 30 days, and they are the sole approving authority for FCPs.

LTC Frazier shared a table summarizing parenthood separation trends by gender between FY18 and FY22. Separations due to convenience of government (Army Regulation 600-20 Chapter 5-8) are the involuntary separations for parenthood, which cover most FCP chapter separations. Service members can also be separated for separation because of dependency or hardship (Chapter 6). The inability to establish an approved FCP does not qualify the Service member for separation under Chapter 6. LTC Frazier indicated the greatest increase in parenthood separations over the last 5 years occurred between FY21 and FY22, with an increase of 217 Chapter 5 and 3 Chapter 6 separations during these years. This increase may be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. Service members separated due to Chapter 5 or Chapter 6 are discharged under honorable or general under honorable conditions.

LTC Frazier confirmed there is no policy that requires a Service member to surrender custody or guardianship of a child.

LTC Frazier concluded her briefing.

### Navy

Mr. Perry R. Christiansen, a Supervisory Program Manager for the Chief of Naval Personnel, briefed the Committee for the Navy.

Mr. Christiansen explained DoD and Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) policies govern FCP processes in the Navy. Service members are required to complete at least two forms, Navy Personnel (NAVPERS) 1740/6 and NAVPERS 1740/7, as part of their FCPs. These forms outline all Navy FCP requirements. FCPs are required of single Service members with minor or adult dependents who are unable to care for themselves, Service members part of a dual-military couple with sole or shared custody of a minor child, Service members in a blended family who have custody of a child from a prior relationship, and Service members whose family circumstances change as a result of becoming legally responsible for the care of another person.

Mr. Christiansen explained an FCP is a tool used to ensure a Service member's dependents' needs are taken care of while the Service member is deployed or away from home for other reasons. One major aspect of the FCP is identification of a primary caregiver for dependents during the Service member's absence; however, FCP requirements vary by Service member depending on the custody status of their dependent. Service members work with FCP coordinators who are assigned to every command, and they are referred out to family support services if necessary for the development of legal documents, such as powers of attorney or custody orders.

Mr. Christiansen noted Navy policy does not specify timelines for the development of an FCP, but commanders normally allow Service members between 30 and 60 days from when

dependents are enrolled in Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) to complete the FCP checklist and submit forms to the FCP coordinator. FCPs are required to cover three major areas: long-term absences and deployments, short-term absences for temporary assigned duties, and potentially extended hours work schedules, such as weekend work.

Mr. Christiansen explained an FCP is a planning document, not a legal document, and would never require a Service member to give up custody of their child. The commanding officer has approval authority of FCPs, and this responsibility can be designated to O-4 and above officers if necessary. The amount of additional documentation Service members are required to submit on top of their NAVPERS 1740/6 and 1740/7 forms varies by Service member. For example, a Service member who has secondary custody of a child would likely have less additional documentation to submit compared with a Service member with primary custody of a child. The FCP should include any documentation a new caregiver might require to care for a dependent when the Service member is away from home, including school information and transportation arrangements for children who will be moving to live with another caregiver. If a Service member cannot complete or refuses to submit an FCP, they can face disciplinary action up to administrative separation.

Mr. Christiansen noted 273 Service members have been separated in the last 5 years for failure to submit or maintain an FCP. The Navy was unable to provide data by gender.

### Marine Corps

Mr. John A. Hartmann, the Family Readiness Services Section Head for Marine and Family Programs Division, briefed the Committee for the Marine Corps.

Mr. Hartmann explained an FCP is used when a Service member or other primary caregiver is unable to care for a dependent family member due to deployment, incapacitation, additional duty, or other reasons until another parent or legal guardian can take custody of the dependent. DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1342.19 and Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1740.13D direct the requirements and implementation of FCPs.

Mr. Hartmann noted all Service members with dependents registered in DEERS are required to have an FCP. Spouses who are not Service members are considered to be dependents; however, dual-military couples with no dependent family members are not required to complete an FCP. DoD civilian expeditionary workforce employees are also required to have an FCP in accordance with DoDI 1342.19. FCPs are required as part of the check-in process at their first permanent duty station, check-in at a new command, and at the gain or loss of a dependent.

Mr. Hartmann noted there are not many elements required in an FCP. The required elements are intended to ensure reliable care for dependents, while recommended elements supplement the plan to provide the command and caregiver with information pertinent to the Service member and their dependent. FCPs are required to be created or updated within 60 days of a qualifying event for Active Duty Service members and 90 days for Reserve Component Service members. FCPs are validated for completion and accuracy at the battalion or squadron command level by a designated validator who has received training on the adjudication of FCPs. FCPs do not require Service members to surrender custody or guardianship of dependents, and all FCPs are completed through the Marine Corps' online portal.

Mr. Hartmann noted any recommended documentation for FCPs requiring notarization must be notarized prior to the documents' inclusion in the FCP. The Marine Corps does not specify disciplinary actions for failure to submit or update an FCP. Individual commands are authorized to determine whether disciplinary action should be taken in these situations. The Marine Corps did not separate any Service members between FY18 and FY22 for failure to submit or maintain an FCP.

### Department of the Air Force

Colonel Christopher Harris, Deputy Director for Air Force Services, briefed the Committee for the Air Force and Space Force.

Col Harris explained DAF Instruction (DAFI) 36-2908 governs FCP requirements and mirrors the language in DoDI 1342.19 while providing additional Service-level guidance. The DAFI 36-2908 was revised and republished March 10, 2023 to incorporate the Space Force into the instruction and clarify specific program elements.

Col Harris confirmed an FCP is required for Active Duty and Reserve Component Service members and civilian expeditionary workforce members who are single parents, dual-military families with dependents, or married with custody of a child whose custodial parent is not the Service member's current spouse and who have primary responsibility for dependents. Contractors in designated contingency operations can choose to participate in FCP requirements. The DAF encourages all Service members and civilians with dependent family members to establish FCP arrangements to cover situations that may require separation from their family, such as severe weather, contingency operations, evacuations, operational requirements, and overseas assignments.

The DAF uses Form 357 to establish an FCP, which Col Harris showed on briefing slide 2. The FCP should document names, contact information of the caregiver, an alternate caregiver, provisions for short- and long-term absences, financial arrangements, powers of attorney, and others to ensure the self-sufficiency and security of dependents and their caregiver. Logistical arrangements for the transportation of dependents and family members to a new location should also be documented in the FCP, along with the names of any biological nonadoptive parent not named as the caregiver and the name of the person the Service member designates to assume responsibilities of dependents if the Service member becomes incapacitated until a legal guardian can provide care. The FCP includes signed member statements certifying the caregiver has accepted the responsibility to care for the Service member's dependent and information about medical needs.

The required timeline for FCP submissions is established in DAFI 36-2908. Active Duty Service members and civilian expeditionary workforce employees must submit their initial FCP within 60 days of having an initial FCP discussion with their commander. They must submit updates to their FCPs no later than 30 days after changes in family circumstances or personal status where a Service member becomes responsible for the logistical, financial, or medical support of another person. Reserve Component Service members must submit their initial FCP within 90 days of having an initial FCP discussion with their commander and must submit updates no later than 60 days after changes in family circumstances or personal status. The FCP is certified annually.

Col Harris stated the DAF does not require Service members to surrender guardianship or custody of dependents. However, there may be times when a Service member is expected to enforce their FCP and entrust the care and guardianship of a dependent to another designated caregiver. Unit commanders are the approval authority for FCPs, and they are required to take a proactive and hands-on approach to ensuring Service members understand the importance and purpose of an FCP. Service members who fail to produce an FCP may be subjected to administrative or disciplinary action. Commanders are encouraged to treat noncompliance with progressive administrative or disciplinary action, and persistent noncompliance may result in the Service member's separation from the Air Force or Space Force as a last resort. Commanders are obligated to conduct counseling with Service members before separation is considered to inform them about the purpose of the FCP. Col Harris noted the DAF is unable to provide data on the number of Service members who were separated from the Air Force or Space Force for noncompliance with FCP requirements.

### Discussion

COL (Ret.) Grinder asked why the Marine Corps requires Service members with a spouse but no dependents to have an FCP. Mr. Hartmann responded the Marine Corps considers the spouse to be a dependent in DEERS. He noted, if something were to happen to the spouse while the Service member is deployed or away from home for another reason, there would be a plan for providing care to the spouse.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked why the DAF cannot provide data on the number of Service members separated due to FCP noncompliance. Col Harris explained the DAF considered the Committee's RFI to be focused specifically on separations due to FCP circumstances. He noted, although the DAF could generate data on Service members who were separated for failure to obey, these data would not be specific to noncompliance with FCP requirements. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn confirmed the data described by Col Harris would be most helpful.

CAPT (Ret.) Barrett referenced the wide variance of separations for FCP noncompliance reasons across the Military Services, including 24 Marine Corps separations since 2008 compared with thousands of Army separations. He asked if the process for gathering documentation and developing an FCP is cumbersome for Service members. LTC Frazier explained the FCP development process is not cumbersome in the Army, because Service members receive a checklist covering all requirements and associated timeframes. If a Soldier decides they can no longer maintain an FCP due to the birth of a child or the loss of a caregiver, they can discuss these challenges with their commander, who can coordinate with the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps to verify the challenging circumstances and begin Chapter 6 separation proceedings if no other options are available. Mr. Christiansen asked CAPT (Ret.) Barrett to clarify whether this question is about how cumbersome separation from the Navy is or how cumbersome the assembly of information is for Sailors developing an FCP. CAPT (Ret.) Barrett confirmed he is interested in how cumbersome the assembly of information is for each Military Service. Mr. Christiansen noted the Navy still uses a paper verification form. Service members need to be able to share various notarized legal documents, such as power of attorney, wills, and child custody documents, so this process can be cumbersome. However, the command only verifies legal documents exist and does not keep them on record. Only Forms 1740/6 and 1740/7 are kept by the command. Mr. Hartmann noted an online system is used to submit and maintain the FCP within the Marine Corps. He confirmed gathering legal documents and consent forms from proposed caregivers for the initial FCP submission can be cumbersome, but updates can be made

quickly online, if personal status changes. Col Harris confirmed the DAF currently uses a paper process but has interest in implementing a computer-based process.

Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox highlighted that the DAF and Marine Corps briefer stated civilian expeditionary workforce employees are required to have FCPs. She asked whether the other Services require civilian expeditionary workforce employees to have FCPs. LTC Frazier confirmed civilian expeditionary workforce employees in the Army are required to have FCPs. Mr. Christiansen noted OPNAV Instruction (OPNAVINST) 1740.4E requires Active Duty and Reserve Component Service members to have FCPs, but not the civilian expeditionary workforce. However, Service members married to civilian workers who travel a lot for work may also be required to have an FCP.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked the Army and Marine Corps briefers to explain the differences in processes that enabled the Marine Corps to not separate any Service members due to FCP noncompliance over the last 5 years, while the Army separated hundreds of individuals for FCP noncompliance. LTC Frazier from the Army responded she cannot provide an exact reason for the discrepancy, but highlighted the Army has a larger pool of Service members. She noted most commanders encourage pregnant Service members to separate from the Army due to FCP-related reasons if they choose. Mr. Hartmann explained the Marine Corps does not have a policy that requires commanders to separate Service members for FCP noncompliance; however, commanders can take that action if they deem it necessary. Service members who are noncompliant with FCP requirements are often marked as undeployable and required to stay home when their unit is deployed. Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn asked if the Marine Corps could be separating people for FCP noncompliance under another provision. Mr. Hartmann confirmed it is possible, but he could not confirm.

Ms. Stoneman asked the Services if there are discussions about the unintended impact of retention rates, if Service members are being separated for FCP noncompliance. Col Harris responded the DAF has not developed a policy related to FCPs and its impact on retention. However, he confirmed unique circumstances arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The DAF provided guidance to commanders to emphasize that FCPs are just one tool to balance mission and family planning, but commanders should also consider maximizing telework, temporary reassignments, and adjusting work shifts. LTC Frazier noted the FCP is a tool, but if a Soldier is noncompliant when their unit ships out and they are undeployable, a commander may decide to start the Chapter 6 procedures to separate them from the Army. A command is required to give Soldiers at least 6 weeks' notice before they are placed on a temporary duty assignment to ensure they can identify child care. Mr. Christiansen noted all FCP separations are adjudicated through Navy personnel, and strength planners could ask commanders to hold separation processes if the Navy is not meeting end strength or for another reason. Mr. Hartmann explained commanders can and have sent feedback on the FCP policy to Marine Corps headquarters. The Marine Corps FCP policy is due for renewal in the next 18 months, so it will be reviewed thoroughly then.

COL (Ret.) Grinder noted a fear by Service members that they will have to give up custody of their child during mobilizations or deployments. She asked if Service members and recruiters are aware they will not need to surrender custody or guardianship during these times and how this information is shared. LTC Frazier said some policies prevent single parents from joining the Army. However, Service members who become pregnant while in the Army are provided a checklist that summarizes FCP requirements and options for remaining in the military. Service members are not briefed on FCPs when they join the Army, but FCP discussions are had with



them if a change in personal status or family obligations occurs. Mr. Christiansen said Navy policy tells commanders to ensure Service members are aware of FCP requirements, but it does not direct them how or when to provide this information. Mr. Hartmann noted Marine Corps commanders are responsible for knowing the FCP policy and ensuring Service members are also aware of it. For deploying commands, deploying readiness coordinators often work with Service members to inform them of FCP requirements and if updates are required to their forms. Similarly, commanders at recruiting stations are responsible for knowing FCP policies and ensuring their staff understand and can communicate that information to Service members. Col Harris noted DAF recruiting organizations are led by commanders, and commanders and first officers receive training on the FCP program when they take command.

Brig Gen (Ret.) Sanborn noted Col Harris' claim that the DAF is incorporating Women's Initiative Team (WIT) feedback into FCP policies. She asked what feedback the DAF has received from the team and how it has been incorporated. Col Harris confirmed the WIT informed the DAF that some Service members were feeling pressure to enact FCPs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This feedback helped the DAF develop guidance for commanders to clarify the confusion and inform updates to the policy in March 2023, including the addition of a maximum amount of notification time for a Service member if an FCP will be enacted and language indicating Service members will not be required to use longer guardianship provisions of the FCP to meet short-term unforeseen child care requirements.

Dr. (CAPT Ret.) Cox asked whether failure to comply with FCP requirements can result in Service members being dishonorably discharged. Mr. Christiansen explained dishonorable discharge is typically used as a punitive discharge for felonious offenses, whereas noncompliance with FCP requirements is an administrative offense. He explained his belief that other than honorable discharge is the lowest type of discharge given for administrative offenses. Mr. Hartmann noted Article 92 could be invoked in the Marine Corps, but the likelihood of that happening for an administrative offense is low. LTC Frazier from the Army confirmed there would have to be other circumstances that led to the discharge other than FCP noncompliance for it to be done under dishonorable terms. Col Harris noted DAF instructions indicate FCP noncompliance should result in administrative separation, which would not be dishonorable.

Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks asked if the number of separations provided by the briefers is specific to separations due to FCP noncompliance. LTC Frazier from the Army and Mr. Christiansen from the Navy confirmed the separations could be due to other family planning or parental matters. Dr. (Col Ret.) Weeks noted Col Harris indicated noncompliance with FCP requirements could be a reason for separation in the DAF, but the DAF does not have the data to support this question, while Mr. Hartmann indicated punishment for noncompliance with FCP requirements is up to the commander. Mr. Hartmann confirmed the Marine Corps data do not specify failure to comply with FCP requirements specifically.

The briefing discussion concluded.

## **Overview of Public Written Comments**

COL Jardin noted the staff did not receive any written comments prior to the suspense date.

## **Final Remarks**

Prior to the meeting being adjourned, the DACOWITS Chair presented the Marine Corps' Liaison, Major Ricardo Steele Jr., and the Coast Guard Liaisons, Chief Lana T. Port, Lieutenant Junior Grade Molly E. Sternberg, and Commander Carrie A. S. Wolfe, with a DACOWITS coin and thanked them for their support to the Committee.

COL Jardin, DACOWITS Military Director and Designated Federal Officer, stated the next meeting would be held June 27-28, 2023, at the AUSA Conference Center in Arlington, Virginia. Details will be published in the Federal Register. She thanked attendees and concluded the public portion of the meeting.

**The meeting was adjourned.**

**Summary of Written Responses Received for March 2023 QBM**

RFIs 2, 3, and 5	
<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 2020, the Committee made the following recommendation: “<i>The Secretary of Defense should 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.</i>” In December 2022, via RFI 1, the Committee received a briefing from the Defense Department’s Outreach, Policy &amp; Programs (Civil-Military Programs) Office on youth outreach programs (e.g., DoD STARBASE); however, the Civil-Military Programs Office is not responsible for improving the propensity of adolescent women to serve.</p> <p>The Committee requests a <b>written response</b> from the <b>Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&amp;R))</b> which identifies the office with primary responsibility to promote adolescent women’s propensity to serve in the military.</p>	
Organization	Description
USD(P&R)	USD(P&R) provided the Committee with a response.
RFI 3	
<p>The Committee is concerned about the inability of the Military Services to meet their annual recruiting goals and the continued underrepresentation of women in the Armed Forces. In March 2020, the Congressional National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service published a report, <i>Inspired to Serve</i>, which included a number of recommendations to help encourage a new generation of Americans to serve.</p> <p>The Committee requests a <b>written response</b> from <b>USD(P&amp;R)</b> on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Has the Defense Department taken steps to implement any of the military specific recommendations contained in the "Military Service" section of the Commission’s report (pages 8-9)?</li> <li>b. Please describe the steps taken to specifically inspire young women to serve, based on the Commission’s military recommendations.</li> </ol>	
Organization	Description
USD(P&R)	USD(P&R) provided the Committee with a response.

RFI 5

In 2016, Committee made the following recommendation: *The Secretary of Defense should require each of the Military Services to adopt a policy regarding accession of single custodial parents into the military to allow such accessions when facts, circumstances, and occupational requirements would allow, and when the Military Services would benefit.* At the time, the Air Force allowed single parent applicants (both male and female) to join via a waiver with up to three dependents whereas the other Services only allowed male applicants to join with a waiver. Female applicants were required to sign over custody of any minor children for the duration of their first enlistment to join the military.

The Committee requests an update via a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard** on the following:

- a. The status of your Services' single parent policies regarding male and female applicant's ability to join via a waiver and the details of these policies.
- b. The status of your Services' single parent policies regarding male and female applicant's ability to commission via Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), Officer Candidate School (OCS), Direct Commission Officer (DCO) programs, etc.
- c. The status of the Military Service Academies implementation of the CADET Act outlined in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY22, which ensures cadets and midshipmen preserve parental guardianship rights and can become commissioned officers while raising a family.
- d. Provide copies of these policies and instructions for both officer and enlisted applicants.

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.
Department of the Air Force	The Department of the Air Force provided the Committee with a response.
Coast Guard	The Coast Guard provided the Committee with a response.

RFI 7

**WOMEN IN AVIATION**

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the E&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&I Subcommittee will examine trends in, and policies related to female aviation accession and identify actionable solutions, as required.

In December 2022, via RFI 5, the Military Services briefed DACOWITS on the updates to properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) and combat equipment for women. As a follow-up, the Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard** to provide more information on female in-flight bladder relief systems (IBRS) and/or female urinary devices, to include the following:

- a. Current IBRS or female urinary devices available to servicewomen, as well as options being evaluated. Provide pictures with detailed explanations.
- b. Provide the roadmap for implementation by FY23, broken down by quarter, annotating major milestones (e.g., initial production, final mass production, availability across the Services, and expert training).
- c. What is the planned funding and who is the specific Office of Primary responsibility (OPR)?
- d. What is your Service’s plan to disseminate IBRS or female urinary devices (e.g., supply chain)?
- e. What training is provided once IBRS or female urinary devices are sent to installations?

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.
Coast Guard	The Coast Guard provided the Committee with a response.

RFIs 8 and 9

**PHYSICAL FITNESS STANDARDS**

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the E&I Subcommittee will examine the components of the Military Services’ physical fitness tests, to include body fat specifications, height/weight measurements and scales, and physical ability requirements deemed necessary for adequate occupational performance. In addition, the E&I Subcommittee will assess whether the Military Services’ physical fitness standards disproportionately affect women’s career progression and identify solutions, as required.

RFI 8

The Space Force was established three years ago under the Department of the Air Force. In December 2022, via RFI 7, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide updates to their physical fitness training programs. The Space Force was unable to provide a response at that time, due to the information being pre-decisional. The Committee requests a **written response** from **Space Force** on the status of their physical fitness training program (include a copy of the physical fitness assessment plan and body composition measurements). Additionally, provide justifications for each event/objective contained within the Space Force fitness assessment plan, to include body composition measurements.

Organization	Description
Space Force	The Space Force provided the Committee with a response.

RFI 9

In December 2022, via RFI 7, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide updates to their physical fitness training programs. In 2020, the Navy shifted to planks vice sit-ups. Starting in 2023, the Marine Corps will mandate planks, which were added as an option to sit-ups in 2019. The Army’s revised Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) requires planks in lieu of sit-ups. According to the Army, utilizing the plank as a sole core assessment allows the Service to properly measure soldiers’ core strength consistently and equally, as well as reduce injury rates. The Air Force is the only Service that still allows Airmen to do sit-ups as part of their physical fitness assessment. The Committee requests a **written response** from the **Air Force** which provides the scientific and medical justification to keep sit-ups as part of the physical fitness assessment.

Organization	Description
Air Force	The Air Force provided the Committee with a response.

**PREGNANCY IN THE MILITARY**

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&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.

In 2017, 2018, and 2020, the Committee made multiple recommendations related to parental leave policies. Committee recommendations urged the Defense Department and the Military Services to implement flexible (non-continuous) parental leave options, to ensure primary and secondary caregivers have maximum flexibility in making caregiving arrangements best suited to their family and service circumstances. Similarly, in 2020, the Committee recommended that action be taken to ensure women serving in the National Guard and Reserves receive full creditable military service, similar to their Active Component counterparts, for unavoidable absences resulting from a pregnancy and/or a birth event. The Committee is interested in receiving an update on the Military Services

implementation of the MOMS Leave Act, as well as the Services projected implementation of new parental leave requirements outlined by the Defense Department's memorandum (dated Jan. 2, 2023), which expands the Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP).

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard** on the following:

- a. Provide a list and copies of (or links to) DoD and Service policies/regulations that detail MPLP requirements to include any pending changes to policies/revisions. If different policies are in effect for the National Guard and/or Reserve Components, please provide that information as well.
- b. Has your Service updated parental leave policies to authorize flexible (non-continuous) leave options for or must parental leave be taken all at once?
- c. Do servicewomen in the National Guard and Reserve Components receive full creditable military service (e.g., pay and retirement points) for absences related to pregnancy or birth events, and for follow-on caregiver leave absences (e.g., postpartum)? Are servicewomen afforded the same amount of parental leave time as their Active-Duty counterparts? Are there any pending changes/revisions to these policies? If so, what is the status?

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.

RFIs13 and 14

**GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the WB&T Subcommittee will examine existing Defense Department and Military Services’ institutional policies and procedures to identify gaps that enable gender discrimination to occur unconstrained and recommended necessary policy changes.

RFI 13

The Defense Department’s Office of People Analytics’ (OPA) 2021 Workplace and Gender Relations (WGR) Survey reported that 16 percent of Active-Duty servicewomen experienced gender discrimination (ranging from 12 percent in the Air Force to 22 percent in the Marine Corps), a degree that has steadily increased over the last four surveys conducted since 2014.

The Committee requests a **briefing** from the **Office of People Analytics (OPA)** on their 2021 WGR Survey findings related to gender discrimination rates and complaints. Ensure the briefing discusses a comparison to historical rates, what types of behaviors comprise gender discrimination, and any identified reasons for the increase in reporting. In addition, the Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard** on the following:

- a. What is your Service doing or plans to do with the data provided by the 2021 WGR Survey and/or prior year WGR Surveys, to include any additional research or studies on gender discrimination comparing or contrasting to the WGR findings?
- b. Have all Service regulations/policies been updated to include DoD’s most recent definition of prohibited discrimination?
- c. Provide an update on your Service’s position or considerations regarding the use or revision of gendered language in written materials, displays, and field use (e.g., Marine Corps’ consideration of using non-gendered identifiers for drill instructors).

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.

RFI 14

In December 2022, via RFI 9, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide varied sets of information regarding promotion trends and rates, broken down by gender. As the Committee continues to examine institutional policies and procedures to identify potential gaps that may unintentionally enable gender discrimination to occur, it will be useful to identify and analyze the reasons why servicewomen opt not to compete for promotion.




RFI 14

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard** on the following:

- a. The number of “opt outs” (e.g., requests for withdrawal from promotion consideration), submitted by Service members for promotion to the grades of O-4 through O-6 and to the grades of E-7 through E-9, broken out by gender and the percentage of the total number of men and women being considered in their peer group.
- b. The top 5 reasons provided for these opt out requests, broken out by gender, if available.

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.

**Report Submitted by:**

  
Digitally signed by  
JARDIN.SEANA.MICHELLE.11441  
16018  
Date: 2023.05.17 16:49:21 -04'00'

**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  
CMDCM (Ret.) Octavia D. Harris, USN  
Ms. Robin S. Kelleher

Ms. Marquette J. Leveque, USN Vet.  
LTG (Ret.) Kevin W. Mangum, USA  
Brig Gen (Ret.) Jariisse 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, USAF

**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

**DACOWITS' Liaisons in Attendance**

Ms. Laura M. Massey, USA  
LTC Samantha J. Frazier, USA  
SCPO Candence L. Esquivel, USN  
Col Scott A. Gondek, USMC  
Maj Ricardo Steele Jr., USMC  
Dr. (Col) Jenise M. Carroll, DAF  
Lt Col Shari D. Perkins, DAF  
CDR Carrie A. S. Wolfe, USCG  
LTJG Molly E. Sternberg, USCG  
CPO Lana T. Port, USCG

Col Monica M. Brouse, NGB  
Lt Col Daniel R. Rodarte, NGB  
Ms. Deadrea J. Sampson, SOCOM  
Dr. Yuko K. Whitestone, ASD(SO/LIC)  
Ms. Theresa A. Hart, DHA (virtual)  
Ms. Kimberly R. Lahm, HA  
Ms. Lindsay E. Reiner, MPP  
LTC Jacqueline S. Ralston, MPP  
Mr. Vesen L. Thompson, MC&FP