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Women in Combat: Issues for Congress

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Summary

Over the past two decades of conflict, women have served with valor and continue to serve on combat aircraft, naval vessels, and in support of ground combat operations. The expansion of roles for women in the Armed Forces has evolved since the early days of the military when women were restricted by law and policy from serving in certain occupations and units. Women have not been precluded by law from serving in any military unit or occupational specialty since 1993 when Congress repealed the remaining prohibitions on women serving on combatant aircraft and vessels. However, Department of Defense (DOD) policies have prevented women from being assigned to units below brigade level where the unit's primary mission was to engage directly in ground combat. This policy barred women from serving in infantry, artillery, armor, combat engineers, and special operations units of battalion size or smaller. On January 24, 2013, then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta rescinded the rule that restricted women from serving in combat units and directed the military departments and services to review their occupational standards and assignment policies and to make recommendations for opening all combat roles to women no later than January 1, 2016.

On December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter ordered the military to open all combat jobs to women with no exceptions. This most recent policy change followed extensive studies that were completed by the military departments and by the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) on issues such as unit cohesion, women's health, equipment, facilities modifications, propensity to serve, and international experiences with women in combat. These studies also included a review and validation of gender-neutral occupational standards for combat roles where such standards existed.

On March 10, 2016, Secretary Carter announced that the Services' and SOCOM's implementation plans for the integration of women into direct ground combat roles were approved. Some concerns about the implementation of the new policy remain, including the recruitment, assignment, and career management of women into the new roles, and the impact of integration on unit readiness. Congress has oversight authority in these matters, and may also consider issues such as equal opportunity, equal responsibility (such as selective service registration), and the overall manpower needs of the military.

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Issue

Laws prohibiting women from serving in air and naval combat units were repealed in the early 1990s. However, until recently, it has been Department of Defense (DOD) policy to restrict women from certain combat-related units and military occupations, especially ground combat units. Despite the official policies barring women from ground combat positions, many female servicemembers have served in combat environments for much of the recent history of the U.S. military. In the past two decades of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, the lines between combat and noncombat roles have become increasingly blurred and as a result DOD's combat exclusion policies have been called into question.

On January 24, 2013, then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta rescinded the rule that restricted women from serving in combat units and directed the military departments to review their occupational standards and assignment policies for implementation no later than January 1, 2016.[1] On December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter ordered the military to open all combat jobs to women with no exceptions.[2] This most recent policy change followed extensive studies that were completed by the military departments and by the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) on issues such as unit cohesion, women's health, equipment, facilities modifications, propensity to serve, and international experiences with women in combat.

This report starts with background on women's service in the United States Armed Forces and associated changes to law and policy regarding women's roles. The next section discusses more recent changes that have resulted in the removal of all restrictions on women's service in combat roles. Finally, this report will address oversight issues for Congress as DOD implements new policy changes.

Background

While DOD policy has only recently opened combat roles to female servicemembers, women have been recognized for military service in combat since the American Revolutionary War. In 1776, Margaret Cochran Corbin became the first woman to receive a military pension from Congress for an injury sustained while helping to defend Fort Washington against British troops.[3] However, for most of the history of the U.S. military, women's roles were primarily clerical in nature or in support of military medical services. Women did not serve formally in the military until Congress established the Army Nurse Corps as a permanent organization within the Medical Department under the Army Reorganization Act of 1901.[4] In 1908 Congress enacted language which led to the creation of the Navy Nurse Corps.[5]

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[1] Department of Defense, *Defense Department Rescinds Direct Combat Exclusion Rule; Services to Expand Integration of Women into Previously Restricted Occupations and Units*, Press Release, January 24, 2013.

[2] The Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Air Force, and the Secretary of the Navy, as well as the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command recommended no exceptions. The Marine Corps requested a partial exception in some areas such as infantry, machine gunner, fire support, reconnaissance, and others. Secretary of Defense Remarks on the Women-in-Service Review, December 3, 2015.

[3] James, Edward T., Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer, et al., *Notable American Women 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 385-386.

[4] 31 Stat. 753; February 2, 1901.

[5] P.L. 115; 35 Stat. 146; May 13, 1908.

World War II and the Women's Armed Services Integration Act

In the earlier part of the 20th century, the idea of enlisting women into the armed services was met with broad opposition from military commanders, Congress, and the public. However, the upsurge in manpower needs of World War II compelled Congress to open more service roles to women. In 1942, Congress opened the Naval Reserve to women[6] and also created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps for the purpose of

> Noncombatant service with the Army of the United States for the purpose of making available to the national defense when needed the knowledge, skill, and special training of the women of this Nation.[7]

In 1943, Congress established the Marine Corps Women's Reserve and made the Women's Army Corps (WAC) a part of the regular Army on a temporary basis.[8] By the end of the war nearly 400,000 women had served in armed services as members of the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, Women's Army Corps (WAC), Navy (WAVES), Coast Guard (SPARs) and Marine Corps Women's Reserves or with partner organizations like the American Red Cross, the United Services Organization (USO), and the Civil Air Patrol.[9] Approximately 543 military women died in the line of duty during World War II and 84 others were held as prisoners of war (POWs).[10]

Following World War II, Congress made women a permanent part of the military through the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.[11] This legislation included two exclusionary statutes prohibiting assignment of female members to duty in aircraft engaged in combat and to vessels engaged in, or likely to be engaged in combat missions.[12] The legislation also limited the proportion of women in the military to 2% of the enlisted force and 10% of officers.

The All-Volunteer Force and Social Change

In the 1960s and 1970s, two major factors led to the expansion of the role of women in the Armed Forces. First, after the end of the draft and the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force in December 1973, the armed services had difficulty in recruiting and retaining enough qualified males, thereby turning attention to recruiting women.[13] Second, the movement for equal rights for women led to demands for equal opportunity in all occupational fields, including national defense.

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[6] P.L. 689; 56 Stat. 730; July 30, 1942.

[7] P.L. 554, 56 Stat. 278, May 14, 1942.

[8] "That there is hereby established in the Army of the United States, for the period of the present war and for six months thereafter or for such shorter period as the Congress by concurrent resolution or the President by proclamation shall prescribe, a component to be known as the 'Women's Army Corps'." P.L. 110; 57 Stat. 371; July 1, 1943.

[9] Women in the Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc., see http://www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/History/wwii.html.

[10] Ibid.; Sixty-seven Army nurses and 11 Navy nurses were captured in the Philippines and held by the Japanese for nearly 3 years. Five Navy nurses were captured on the island of Guam were held as POWs for four months. One Army flight nurse was aboard an aircraft that was shot down behind enemy lines in Germany in 1944 and was held as a POW for four months.

[11] P.L. 625; 62 Stat. 356; June 12, 1948: "Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948."

[12] This legislation did not bar women from ground combat roles.

[13] Janowitz, Morris, and Charles C. Moskos, Five Years of the All-Volunteer Force: 1973-1978, *Armed Forces and Society*, V, February 1979: 171-218.

The limit on the percentage of women in the military was eventually repealed in 1967 and the number of women serving continued to grow through the next three decades.[14] While the number of women in the military increased, various pieces of legislation in the 1970s also broadened the opportunities for female servicemembers. In 1973, the Navy opened pilot training to women and in 1976, the Air Force followed suit.[15] In 1974, the age requirement for women enlisting without parental consent was made the same as for men.[16] In the next year, legislation was enacted that allowed women to be admitted to the three service academies, and the first women were admitted in the summer of 1976.[17] In 1977, Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a definition of the term "combat" and recommendations for expanding job classifications for female members of the Armed Forces.[18] By 1978, women were permitted to be assigned permanent duty on noncombatant Navy ships, and up to six months of temporary duty on other ships.[19]

As women became more integrated into the military, the question was raised as to whether women should be required to register for the Selective Service. In 1979, when considering the reinstitution of Selective Service registration, the Senate Armed Services Committee cited legal and policy restrictions on women in combat as one of the reasons for differential treatment of men and women by Selective Service. In addition, the committee stated

> The committee feels strongly that it is not in the best interest of our national defense to register women for the Military Selective Service Act, which would provide needed military personnel upon mobilization or in the event of a peacetime draft for the armed forces.[20]

The Women's Army Corps (WAC) had excluded women from combat positions by policy.[21] In 1978 the WAC was disestablished[22] after a 1977 Army policy change that opened previously closed occupations in the regular Army, but also formally closed combat positions to women.[23]

As the percentage of women in service increased and they became more integrated into units serving in combat zones, there was a general lack of clarity on what role women could play in support of combat units and combat operations. One early example of this was during Operation Urgent Fury on October 25, 1983, when U.S. service personnel were sent for an evacuation of

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[14] P.L. 90-130; 81 Stat. 374; November 8, 1967.

[15] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Women in the Military; More Military Jobs Can be Opened Under Current Statutes*, NSAID-88-222, September 1988, p. 2.

[16] P.L. 93-290; 88 Stat. 173; May 24, 1974. Prior to enacting this law, males who were not less than 17 years of age could enlist, while females were required to be at least 18 years of age.

[17] P.L. 94-106; 89 Stat. 537; October 7, 1975. Women had already been admitted to the Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Academies by administrative action. Women had also participated in the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Course (ROTC) as a source of commissioning between 1954 through 1958, but it was not until 1969 that women were again allowed into the Air Force Program, and in 1972 the Army and Navy opened ROTC as a commissioning source for women.

[18] P.L. 95-97; 91 Stat. 327; July 30, 1977.

[19] P.L. 95-485; 92 Stat. 1623; October 20, 1978.

[20] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Requiring Reinstitution of Registration for Certain Persons under the Military Selective Service Act, and For Other Reasons, Rept. 96-226, 96th Cong., 1st Sess., June 19, 1979.

[21] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Gender Issues: Information on DOD's Assignment Policy and Direct Ground Combat Definition*, GAO/NSAID-99-7, October 1988.

[22] P.L. 95-485

[23] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Gender Issues: Information on DOD's Assignment Policy and Direct Ground Combat Definition*, GAO/NSAID-99-7, October 1988.

noncombatant American citizens on the island nation of Grenada. Four U.S. military policewomen arrived in Grenada shortly after the invasion and were promptly sent back to Fort Bragg, NC.[24] At Fort Bragg, Major General Edward Trobaugh, then-commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, had removed all the females from the invasion Task Force. Following an intervention by Lieutenant General Jack Mackmull, then-commander of XVIII Airborne Corps, women were reattached to the unit and finally deployed to Barbados on November 2, 1983, to serve with the lead element of the Task Force while the rest of the Task Force deployed to Grenada the same day.[25]

The "Risk Rule" for Assignment of Women

In January 1988, the Department of Defense Task Force on Women in the Military noted that the varying definitions of a "combat mission" had led to inconsistencies between the military departments in the assignment of women.[26] In response to the task force findings, DOD adopted a "risk rule" in February 1988 that excluded women from noncombat units or missions if the risks of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture were equal to or greater than the risks in the combat units they supported.[27] In this regard, the policy prohibited the collocation of women with combat units. For example, a female medic could be assigned to a noncombat support unit; however, if that unit was called on to provided support to a combat unit, the risk to the medical support unit would have to be less than the risk to the combat unit for the female service member to be assigned.

Also in 1988, the General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office, GAO) noted a primary barrier to the expansion of the number of women in the armed services was that women were not allowed in most combat jobs, and were also barred from many combat-related jobs.[28] The GAO's report also noted that the primary rationale for excluding women from direct ground combat occupations included lack of public and congressional support, lack of support by servicewomen, and lack of need given that there were an adequate number of men available to fill those positions.

During Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm in Iraq and Kuwait, women played a more prominent role than in previous conflicts. Approximately 16 women were killed during the conflict and two women were taken prisoner, becoming the first female POWs since World War II.[29] Then-Major Rhonda Cornum, an Army flight surgeon, was captured when her helicopter was shot down during a search and rescue mission. During her captivity, she was sexually assaulted,

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[24] U.S. Army Women's Museum, available at http://www.history.army.mil/html/museums/showcase/women/awm_text.html.

[25] Raines, Edgar F., Jr., The Rucksack War: U.S. Army Operational Logistics in Grenada, 1983, Center of Military History: Washington, DC, 2010: 494.

[26] Department of Defense, *Report of the Task Force on Women in the Military*, January 1988, p.10.

[27] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Gender Issues: Information on DOD's Assignment Policy and Direct Ground Combat Definition*, GAO/NSAID-99-7, October 1988, p. 45.

[28] Combat jobs include those that directly confront and engage the enemy, such as infantry; combat-related jobs include those that support combat units in the field, such as those in support positions with combat engineers, as well as infantry and tank support units, including units that transport fuel, ordinance and ammunition. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Women in the Military; More Military Jobs Can be Opened Under Current Statutes*, NSAID-88-222, September 1988, p. 2; and U.S. General Accounting Office, *Women in the Military Impact of Proposed Legislation to Open More Combat Support Position and Units to Women*, GAO/NSIAD-88-197BR, July 1988.

[29] Women in the Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc., see http://www.womensmemorial.org/H&C/History/wwii.html.

which again raised public concern about the roles of women in combat and the risks that they faced.[30]

Following Operation Desert Storm, efforts to expand the assignment of women were renewed by civil rights and women's advocacy groups. Legislation enacted in 1991 repealed statutory limitations on the assignment of women in the Armed Forces to combat aircraft and established a Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces.[31] On November 15, 1992, the commission issued its report. Some key recommendations related to women in combat were the following:

- DOD should establish a policy to ensure that no person who is best qualified is denied access on the basis of gender to an assignment that is open to both men and women. As far as it is compatible with the above policy, the Secretary of Defense should retain discretion to set goals that encourage the recruitment and optimize the utilization of women in the armed services, allowing for the requirements of each military department.
- Military readiness should be the driving concern regarding assignment policies; there are circumstances under which women might be assigned to combat positions.
- Women should be excluded from direct land combat units and positions. Furthermore the commission recommends that the existing service policies concerning the direct land combat exclusion be codified. Service Secretaries shall recommend to Congress which units and positions should fall under the land combat exclusions.
- Current DOD and service policies with regard to Army, Air Force and Navy aircraft on combat missions should be retained and codified.[32]
- Existing laws and service policies prohibiting servicewomen from service on combatant vessels should be repealed or modified, except for those applying to submarines and amphibious vessels.
- DOD should retain the risk rule [as explained above] as currently implemented. Navy policies which implement the risk rule should be modified to reflect the changes made [in the above recommendation].[33]

In addition, the commission recommended retaining the current policies prohibiting the assignment of women in special operations forces.[34]

[30] Sciolino, Elaine, "Female P.O.W. Is Abused, Kindling Debate," *New York Times*, June 29, 1992.

[31] P.L. 102-190; 105 Stat. 1365; December 5, 1991.

[32] Codified by means of the reenactment of Section 8549 of Title 10, U.S. Code which was repealed by P.L. 102-190, Section 531 for the Air Force, reenactment of the provisions of 10 U.S.C. Section 6015 prohibiting women from assignment to duty on aircraft engaged in combat missions, which was repealed by P.L. 102-190 for the Navy, and codification of Army policy.

[33] Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, Report to the President, November 15, 1992.

[34] For more information on special operations forces, please see CRS Report RS21048, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

Repeal of the "Risk Rule" and a New Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule

On April 28, 1993, then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin released a memorandum directing the military departments to open more positions to women and establishing an implementation committee to review and make recommendations on such implementation issues.

Several months later, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY1994 (P.L. 103-160), Congress enacted language that

- repealed the remaining prohibitions on women serving on combatant vessels and aircraft,
- required the Secretary of Defense to ensure occupational performance standards were gender-neutral, and
- required the Secretary of Defense to notify the House and Senate Armed Services Committees 90 days before any policy changes were to be made concerning the assignment of women to ground combat roles, and, required the Secretary of Defense to notify these committees 30 days prior to the opening of any "combatant unit, class of combatant vessel, or type of combat platform" to women.[35]

In 1994, Secretary Aspin officially rescinded the "risk rule" and approved a new Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, sometimes called the Direct Combat Exclusion Rule:

> A. Rule. Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade[36] level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground, as defined below.
>
> B. Definition. Direct ground combat is engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect.[37]

Secretary Aspin further specified that these assignment policies and regulations may include restrictions on the assignment of women:

- where the Service Secretary attests that the cost of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements is prohibitive;
- where units and positions doctrinally required to physically collocate and remain with direct combat units that are closed to women;
- where units are engaged in long-range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions; and
- where job-related physical requirements would necessarily exclude the vast majority of women servicemembers.[38]

[35] P.L. 103-160; 107 Stat. 1659 et seq.; November 30, 1993.

[36] A brigade or its equivalent is a unit of approximately 3,000-5,000 persons.

[37] Department of Defense, *Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule*, January 13, 1994.

[38] Department of Defense, *Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule*, January 13, 1994.

Supporters of these changes noted that they would open more opportunities for women in the armed services. Critics saw these changes as putting women at greater risk since they removed the "substantial risk" of being captured from the definition of ground combat.

Women in Combat Zones: Iraq and Afghanistan

In the first decade of the 21st century, several situations evolved that highlighted the disparity between the policy prohibiting women from assignment to direct ground combat units and the roles actually performed by women. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in 2001 and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003 were the first large-scale mobilizations of U.S. troops since Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in the early 1990s. The nonlinear battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan blurred the distinctions between forward and rear operating areas, often placing support units in the proximity of active engagements. The public debate over the assignment of women was reinvigorated when three Army women were captured by enemy forces in Iraq and sustained injuries following the ambush of their unit.[39] The women were assigned to Army's 507th Maintenance Company, which provided logistic support to ground units, and thus not to a unit whose primary mission was to engage in direct combat on the ground.

Also, in 2005 the Army started moving toward a "Modular Redesign" for rotation, training, and readiness reasons.[40] Under this concept, the Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) served as the basic large tactical combat unit of the Army. These BCTs were supported by Multi-Functional Support Brigades. These support brigades were often collocated with the BCTs and included noncombat personnel, many of whom were women. Such collocation appeared to some to be at odds with the 1994 policies on the assignment of women.

Because of the nonlinear and irregular nature of the battle in Iraq and Afghanistan, the definition of "direct ground combat" in the 1994 policy became less useful: what did "well forward" mean on a nonlinear battlefield, and how useful was the "primary mission" criterion when noncombat units regularly engage in direct combat to carry out their mission? In this environment, the Army and Marine Corps utilized women to search Iraqi females for weapons, and to patrol with foot soldiers, usually in door-to-door-type operations.[41] Also, women were increasingly involved in convoy escort missions that came under fire[42] and were embedded with special operations forces (SOF) in Cultural Support Teams that helped units deal with local Afghani females while operating in Afghan villages.[43] In 2005, Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester, an Army soldier, became the first female soldier to be awarded the Silver Star since World War II and the first to be cited for close combat action.[44]

[39] Specialist Lori Piestewa became the first woman to be killed in the 2003 invasion of Iraq from injuries sustained in the attack. However, much of the attention focused on PFC Jessica Lynch after various conflicting accounts of her actions were published and reports suggested that certain injuries she sustained were the result of sexual assault while in captivity. Some pointed to this as an argument against women in combat roles. See U.S. Congress, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Misleading Information From the Battlefield: The Tillman and Lynch Episodes*, First Report, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., September 16, 2008, H.Rept. 110-858 (Washington: GPO, 2008).

[40] For more information see CRS Report RL32476, *U.S. Army's Modular Redesign: Issues for Congress*, by Andrew Feickert.

[41] Perry, Tony, "Women on Iraq's Front Lines," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 2008.

[42] Wood, Sara, "Woman Soldier Receives Silver Star for Valor in Iraq," *DOD News*, June 16, 2005.

[43] Cronk, Terry M., "Cultural Support Team Women Serve with Distinction," *DOD News*, April 30, 2015.

[44] Fainaru, Steve, "Silver Stars Affirm One Unit's Mettle," *Washington Post*, June 26, 2005.

Concerns over the collocation and forward deployment of support units resulted in language being included in the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006. Under this law, if the Secretary of Defense proposed to make any change to the 1994 ground combat exclusion policy, or open or close military career fields that had been in effect since May 18, 2005, the Secretary must first notify Congress and then wait 30 days (while Congress is in session) before implementing any such change.[45] In addition, the Secretary of Defense was directed to submit a report concerning the Secretary's review of the current and future implementation of the policy regarding the assignment of women with particular attention to the Army's unit modularization efforts and associated assignment policies.

In a 2007 report, the RAND Corporation noted while the Army was complying with the DOD assignment policy, it may not have been complying with the separate Army assignment policy.[46] Further, the report stated

> [w]e find considerable evidence that support units are collocated with direct combat units if the definition of collocation is based purely on proximity. However, if the definition of collocation is based on interdependency *and* proximity, the evidence is inconclusive.[47]

The report noted that hundreds of female Army members had received a Combat Action Badge, suggesting that the Army has recognized the combat service of women regardless of whether the women had been assigned in compliance with policy.[48] While the RAND report stopped short of recommending that more assignments be open to women, the authors did recommend that assignment policies for women be redrafted to "conform—and clarify how it conforms—to the nature of warfare today and in the future."[49]

As of November 2016, 166 women had lost their lives and 1,033 had been wounded in action in combat operations since 2003 (see **Table 1**).[50] In addition, in modern combat operations, over 9,000 women have received Army Combat Action Badges for "actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy," and two have received Silver Stars for "gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States."[51]

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[45] P.L. 109-163; 119 Stat. 3251; January 6, 2006. As described in this law, "such a change may then be implemented only after the end of a period of 30 days of continuous session of Congress (excluding any day on which either House of Congress is not in session) following the date on which the report is received."

[46] The Army policy defines direct combat to include the closing with the enemy in order to "destroy or capture the enemy, *or while repelling the enemy's assault by fire, close combat, or counterattack*." [Emphasis added.] Headquarter, U.S. Department of the Army, 1992, p. 5.

[47] Harrell, Margaret C., et al., Assessing the Assignment Policy for Army Women, RAND, National Defense Research Institute, 2007: xvii.

[48] The Combat Action Badge recognizes soldiers who have engaged the enemy, or were engaged by the enemy during combat operation. See http://www.army.mil/symbols/CombatBadges/action.html.

[49] Harrell, Margaret C., et al., Assessing the Assignment Policy for Army Women, RAND, National Defense Research Institute, 2007: xxi.

[50] Defense Manpower Data Center, Defense Casualty Analysis System. GWOT includes Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn.

[51] Bensahel, Nora, David Barno, and Katherine Kidder, et al., *Battlefields and Boardrooms; Women's Leadership in the Military and the Private Sector*, Center for New American Security, January 2015, p. 9. The Silver Star Medal is the third-highest military decoration for valor to be awarded to members of the uniformed services.

Table 1. Female Casualties in Recent Operations

as of November 2016

Female Deaths					
Operation	**Army**	**Navy**	**Marine Corps**	**Air Force**	**Total**
OEF	36	4	2	8	**50**
OIF	89	10	8	3	**110**
OND	0	1	0	0	**1**
OIR	0	0	0	1	**1**
OFS	0	0	0	4	**4**
Total	**125**	**15**	**10**	**14**	**166**
Females Wounded in Action					
Wounded in Action	**Army**	**Navy**	**Marine Corps**	**Air Force**	**Total**
OEF	314	6	29	34	**383**
OIF	547	6	41	33	**627**
OND	11	0	0	1	**12**
OIR	0	0	0	0	**0**
OFS	8	0	0	3	**11**
Total	**873**	**12**	**70**	**63**	**1,033**

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Defense Casualty Analysis System.

Notes: OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom), OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom), OND (Operation New Dawn), OIR (Operation Inherent Resolve), OFS (Operation Freedom's Sentinel).

Women on Submarines

While women have been allowed by law to serve on surface combatants in the Navy since the early 1990s, women have been barred by policy from assignments on submarines until just recently. The early arguments for not assigning women to submarine duty were not related to the dangers of combat, but instead related to privacy and habitability issues in cramped spaces and cost concerns for retrofitting submarines to accommodate both men and women.[52] As early as 2000, based on recommendations by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), efforts were made by the Pentagon to open up assignments for women on submarines.[53] However, these recommendations met with some opposition from senior Navy officials and Members of Congress who cited cost concerns for berthing modifications, privacy concerns, and the possibility of sexual misconduct affecting unit cohesion and effectiveness.[54]

[52] Lorber, Janie, "Quiet Resistance to Women on Subs," *New York Times*, May 12, 2010.

[53] "Pentagon Panel Says Women Should Serve on Subs," *CNN U.S.*, May 26, 2000.

[54] "Lawmaker moves to bar women from subs," *Washington Times*, May 5, 2000.

As a result, language was contained in the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (P.L. 106-398) that seemingly halted the Pentagon's efforts. Essentially, this language prohibited the Navy from assigning women to submarines from May 10, 2000, forward until the Secretary of Defense submits to Congress written notice of such a proposed change and following a period of 30 days of "continuous session of Congress (excluding any day on which either the House of Congress is not in session)…."[55]

It was not until February 23, 2010, that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates notified Congress of a decision by the Navy to allow women to serve on nuclear submarines.[56] In 2011, the Navy began assigning female officers to submarines. In 2015 the Navy began accepting applications for assignment of enlisted women to submarines, and on June 22, 2015, announced a list of 38 female enlisted sailors who will begin training to convert to a submarine rating.[57]

Military Leadership Diversity Commission

The Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009[58] contained language establishing the Military Leadership Diversity Commission. Among its duties, the commission was to conduct a study and file a report regarding diversity issues in the Armed Forces with attention to the "establishment and maintenance of fair promotion and command opportunities for ethnic- and gender-specific members of the Armed Forces at the O-5[59] grade level and above." In March 2011, the commission released its report, *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership and the 21st-Century Military*.[60] Three of its recommendations were particularly relevant to the issue of women and combat.

Recommendation 9:

> DOD and the Services should eliminate the "combat exclusion policies" (discussed later in this report) for women, including the removal of barriers and inconsistencies, to create a level playing field for all qualified service members. The Commission recommends a time-phased approach:
>
> - Women in career fields/specialties currently open to them should be immediately able to be assigned to any unit that requires that career field/specialty, consistent with current operational environment.
> - DOD and the Services should take deliberate steps in a phased approach to open additional career fields and units involved in "direct ground combat" to qualified women.
> - DOD and the Services should report to Congress the process and timeline for removing barriers that inhibit women from achieving senior leadership positions.

Recommendation 18:

> As part of the accountability reviews, the Services, in conjunction with the Chief Diversity Officer (established in Recommendation 15), should conduct annual "barrier analyses" to

[55] P.L. 106-398; 114 Stat. 1654 A-136; October 30, 2000.

[56] "Pentagon OKs Lifting the Ban on Women in Submarines," *Reuters*, February 23, 2010.

[57] Faram, Mark D., "First Enlisted Female Sub Selectees Announced," *Navy Times*, June 22, 2015.

[58] P.L. 110-417; 122 Stat. 4476; October 14, 2008; see §596.

[59] Lieutenant Colonel for Army, Marine Corps and Air Force, and Commander for Navy and Coast Guard.

[60] Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 1851 South Bell Street, Arlington, VA, 22202. Although the Final Report was issued on-line on March 7, 2011, the routing letter from the Chairman to the President and Congress was dated March 15, 2011.

> review demographic diversity patterns across the military life cycle, starting with accessions.…
>
> The annual analyses should include:
>
> - accession demographics;
> - retention, command selection, and promotion rates by race/ethnicity and gender;
> - analysis of assignment patterns by race/ethnicity and gender;
> - analysis of attitudinal survey data by race/ethnicity and gender;
> - identification of persistent, group-specific deviations from overall averages and plans to investigate underlying causes; and
> - summaries of progress made on previous actions.

Recommendation 20:

> … Congress should revise Title 10, Section 113, to require the Secretary of Defense to report annually an assessment of the available pool of qualified racial/ethnic minority and female candidates for the 3- and 4-star flag/general officer positions.
>
> The Secretary of Defense must ensure that all qualified candidates (including racial/ethnic minorities and women) have been considered for nomination of every 3- and 4-star position. If there were no qualified racial/ethnic minority and/or female candidates, then a statement of explanation should be made in the package submitted to the Senate for the confirmation hearings.[61]

This last recommendation flows from the commission's finding that the combat exclusion policy limits women's opportunities to attain the highest ranks in the military. Retired Air Force General Lester L. Lyles, who chaired the commission, stated, "We know that [the exclusion] hinders women from promotion. [...] they're not getting credit for being in combat arms, [and] that's important for their considerations for the most senior flag ranks."[62]

DOD Review of Combat Exclusion Policies

The concern for equal opportunities for women in military leadership motivated a further review of the DOD's combat exclusion policies. Section 535 of the Ike Skelton National Defense Act for Fiscal Year 2011[63] mandated this review, stating

> (a) REVIEW REQUIRED—The Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretaries of the military departments, shall conduct a review of laws, policies, and regulations, including the collocation policy,[64] that may restrict the service of female members of the Armed Forces to determine whether changes in such laws, policies, and regulations are needed to ensure that female members have equitable opportunities to compete and excel in the Armed Forces.

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[61] Military Leadership Diversity Commission, *Final Report*, pp. 127, 129 and 130.

[62] Daniel, Lisa, "Panel says Rescind Policy on Women in Combat," *American Forces Press Service*, March 8, 2011.

[63] P.L. 111-383; 214 Stat. 4217; January 7, 2011.

[64] "At present, DOD's Direct Combat assignment Rule (DGCAR) policy states that women can be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except within units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground. The Army collocation assignment restriction further states that women can serve in any officer or enlisted specialty or position, except in those specialties, positions or units (battalion size or smaller) which are assigned a routine mission to engage in direct combat, or which collocated routinely with units assigned a direct combat mission." http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/wita/.

> (b) SUBMISSION OF RESULTS—Not later than April 15, 2011, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report containing the results of the review.

In February 2012, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) released its report. Some of the findings were that there was no indication that females had "less than equitable opportunities to compete and excel under current assignment policy," and there were "serious practical barriers" to the full elimination of gender assignment policies. The report also acknowledged that, given the nature the modern battlespace, the collocation policy had become irrelevant.[65] In the conclusion, it stated

> The Department intends to:
>
> 1. Eliminate the collocation exclusion from the 1994 policy;
>
> 2. As an exception to policy, allow Military Department Secretaries to assign women in open occupational specialties to select units and positions at the battalion level (for Army, Navy, and Marine Corps) whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground;
>
> 3. Based on the exception to the policy, assess the suitability and relevance of the direct ground combat unit assignment prohibition to inform policy decisions; and
>
> 4. Pursue the development of gender-neutral physical standards for occupational specialties closed due to physical requirements.[66]

This statement served as the DOD's official notification to Congress of the removal of the collocation restriction and the intent to implement exceptions to the Direct Combat Exclusion Rule.[67] The revised policy allowed commanders to collocate support units with women assigned (i.e., in open occupational specialties) with ground combat units. The report suggested that these changes might have the benefit of expanding career opportunities for women, while increasing flexibility for field commanders to meet combat support mission requirements, and potentially reducing the operational tempo for men assigned to collocated support units by increasing the number of personnel available for assignment.

The Repeal of the Direct Combat Exclusion Rule and Recent Developments

By 2013, the military departments had opened 14,325 positions to women under the new exceptions to the exclusion rule.[68] In 2015, women accounted for 17.0% of the active duty officer corps and 15.2% of the enlisted corps across all DOD.[69] The percentage of women varies across services (see **Table 2**). The Marine Corps and Army have a lower percentage of women in the

[65] Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (P&R), *Report to Congress on the Reviews of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces*, February, 2012, p. 4.

[66] Department of Defense, *Report to Congress on the Reviews of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces*, February 2012, p. 4.

[67] The report also stated that DOD gave notice of the changes commencing the congressional review timeline required in 10 U.S.C.§652, which means these changes became policy since Congress did not act on them.

[68] Department of Defense, *Memo from the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense on Women in the Service Implementation Plan*, January 9, 2013.

[69] Defense Manpower Data Center as of January 2015.

service than the Navy and Air Force, but also have a higher number of combat arms positions that have historically been closed to women. For example, in 2013 the Army reported that approximately 237,000 positions were closed to women, with over 105,000 positions in artillery, infantry, and armor occupations. The Air Force, on the other hand, reported less than 5,000 closed positions.[70]

Table 2. Females as a Percentage of Active Duty Personnel

September 30, 2016

	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Total
Female Officers	17.0%	18.0%	7.4%	20.6%	**17.3%**
Female Enlisted	14.1%	18.8%	8.2%	19.1%	**15.5%**
Military Academy Cadets and Midshipmen	20.2%	25.7%		25.1%	**23.7%**
Total by Service (excluding cadets and midshipmen)	**14.6%**	**18.7%**	**8.1%**	**19.4%**	**15.9%**

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center.

Notes: Students at the United States Military Academy and United States Air Force Academy are called "cadets" and Students at the United States Naval Academy are called "midshipmen." The U.S. Naval Academy is an officer commissioning source for both the Navy and Marine Corps.

On January 24, 2013, then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced DOD was rescinding the Direct Combat Exclusion Rule on women serving in previously restricted occupations (i.e., combat). This policy change opened two categories of positions, previously closed combat arms occupational specialties and non-combat specialties assigned to combat units (e.g., a medic serving in an infantry company). The implementation of this policy change was to be guided by the following principles:[71]

> Ensure the success of our nation's warfighting forces by preserving unit readiness, cohesion, and morale.
>
> Ensure all service men and women are given the opportunity to succeed and are set up for success with viable career paths.
>
> Retain the trust and confidence of the American people to defend this nation by promoting policies that maintain the best quality and most qualified people.
>
> Validate occupational performance standards, both physical and mental, for all military occupational specialties (MOS), specifically those that remain closed to women. Eligibility for training and development within designated occupational fields should consist of qualitative and quantifiable standards reflecting the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for each occupation. For occupational specialties open to women, the occupational performance standards must be gender-neutral as required by P.L. 103-160, Section 542 (sic) (1993).
>
> Ensure that a sufficient cadre of midgrade/senior women enlisted and officers are assigned to commands at the point of introduction to ensure success in the long run. This may require an adjustment to recruiting efforts, assignment processes, and personnel policies.

[70] Roulo, Claudette, "Defense Department Expands Women's Combat Role," *DOD News*, January 2013.

[71] Department of Defense, *Memo from the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense on Women in the Service Implementation Plan*, January 9, 2013.

> Assimilation of women into heretofore "closed units" will be informed by continual in-stride assessments and pilot efforts.

As part of this announcement, the Secretary of Defense directed the military departments to conduct a "women in the service review" (WISR) of service-level policies and standards between 2013 and the end of 2015, and to expeditiously move forward in the integration of women into previously closed positions. On March 2, 2015, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments to

> […] certify that their occupational standards were occupationally specific, operationally relevant, and in accordance with federal law, pursuant to requirements set forth in FY2015 NDAA (P.L. 113-291). Additionally, the Secretaries of the Military Departments were directed to require his or her Inspector General to implement a compliance inspection program to assess whether the Services' occupational standards, together with their implementing methodologies, were legally compliant.[72]

In July 2015, GAO reported that the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the military departments had conducted 41 studies as part of their women in the services reviews.[73] The issue areas studied included:

- Unit cohesion
- Women's health
- Equipment, gear, and uniforms
- Facilities modification
- Interest in serving in combat roles (propensity)
- International issues[74]

On September 30, 2015, the Secretaries of the Military Departments submitted their final recommendations for all occupations and positions that remained closed to women along with the certifications of their occupational standards. The Commandant of the Marine Corps requested two exceptions to policy consisting of 48,779 positions in the Active and Reserve Components of the Marine Corps and Navy. These requested exceptions were for (1) specific occupational specialties,[75] and (2) types of units;[76] however, the Secretary of the Navy did not approve the Marine Corps' request for exceptions.

On December 3, 2015, Secretary Carter ordered the military to open all combat jobs[77] to women who meet the validated occupational standards with no exceptions. The Secretary directed the Directors of Military Departments and the Chiefs of the Military Services to provide detailed plans and timelines for integrating newly opened positions and to begin executing these implementation plans not later than April 1, 2016. On March 10, 2016, Secretary Carter approved

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[72] Department of Defense, *Fact Sheet: Women in the Service Review (WISR) Implementation*, as of January 11, 2016.

[73] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *DOD Is Expanding Combat Service Opportunities for Women, but Should Monitor Long-Term Integration Progress*, GAO-15-589, July 2015.

[74] Ibid., p. 15.

[75] Occupational specialties included, Infantry Officer, Infantry Weapons Officer, Rifleman, Light Armored Vehicle Crewman, Reconnaissance Man, Machine Gunner, Mortarman, Infantry Assaultman, Antitank Missileman, Infantry Squad Leader, Infantry Unit Leader, Special Operations Officer, Critical Skills Operator, and Fire Support Man.

[76] Units included, Infantry Regiments and below, Reconnaissance Battalions, Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalions, Force Reconnaissance Battalions, Marine Raider Companies, Combat Engineer/Assault Companies.

[77] This included approximately 52 closed military occupational specialties and 213,600 closed positions.

the final implementation plans.[78] The opening of these positions will likely have the largest impact on the Army, Marine Corps, and the Special Operations community, where infantry, armor, artillery, and other specialized combat positions were previously closed to women under the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule.

Status of Integration

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) has been tracking integration implementation.[79] The number of women in ground combat units and career fields has grown since 2015 when the first positions were opened. Women continue to fill these positions through new accessions as well as lateral transfers from other occupational specialties. The number of women entering the training pipeline for Infantry and Special Operations career fields has been low relative to the other ground combat career fields that have been open longer. As of September 2016, there were no reported women who graduated from the Special Operations training pipeline (see **Table 3** for the status of integration in Special Operations Career Fields).

Table 3. Integration of Women into Special Operations Career Fields

as of September 2016

Component	Occupation	Applied	Accepted	In-progress	Failed	Graduated
Army Special Operations Command (USASOC)	Special Forces Officer	4	2	0	0	0
	Special Forces NCO	1	1	0	0	0
Naval Special Warfare	SEAL Officer	0	0	0	0	0
	SEAL Enlisted	0	0	0	0	0
	SWCC (Special Boat)	3	1	0	0	0
Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC)	Special Operations Officer	0	0	0	0	0
	Critical Skills Operator	3	2	1	1	0
Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC)	Special Tactics Officer	3	3	0	0	0
	Combat Control Technician	0	0	0	0	0
	Special Ops Weather Tech	0	0	0	0	0

Source: United States Special Operations Command, Memorandum for Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), SOCOM Response to Requests for Information (RFI) in Advance of September 2016 Meeting, August 31, 2016.

[78] Department of Defense, "Statement from Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook on Secretary Carter's Approval of Women in Service Review Implementation Plans," March 10, 2016.

[79] Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was established in 1951 to serve as a board of civilian advisors to DOD on matters relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of women in the Armed Forces. The committee meets on a quarterly basis. Meeting minutes and associated documentation can be found at: http://dacowits.defense.gov/Reports-Meetings/.

Army

During part of the WISR evaluation period, the Army opened its Ranger School to female volunteers for the first time in a one-time integrated assessment of female performance in the school. The Army did not change the existing entry or completion standards for the purpose of this assessment. Of the cohort of women who tried to qualify for the school, 20 qualified, and 19 started the course.[80] Of all those (men and women) who start the course, the historical graduation rate at Ranger School is about 40%.[81] On August 17, 2015, the Army announced the first two women to graduate from the Ranger School. In September 2015, the Army opened the Ranger School to all female soldiers.[82] A third female graduated from the Ranger School in October 2015. As of September 2016, the Army had three applicants (one enlisted and two officers) accepted into the Special Forces Assessment Selection, and two officers selected for the November 2016 Ranger Assessment and Selection II.[83]

Since 2015, the Army has brought over 640 women into previously closed specialties in the Field Artillery, Ordnance, and Combat Engineer career fields. As of September 2016 the Army had 93 contracts for new accessions into Infantryman (enlisted) positions, and there were 28 Lieutenants and one Captain entering the pipeline for Infantry Officer positions.[84] The first 10 women graduated from the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course in October 2016 and are slated to report to operational units in 2017.[85] In December 2016, thirteen women graduated from the first integrated Armor Basic Officer Leader Course.[86]

Marine Corps

In 2012, as part of the WISR implementation, the U.S. Marine Corps temporarily opened its Infantry Training Battalion (ITB) and Infantry Officer Course (IOC) to female volunteers. At the end of the Marine Corps experiment, 29 female officers had attempted the course but none had graduated.[87] The Marine Corps reported that 98% of the women dropped from the IOC were due to physical performance failures and one woman dropped due to injury.[88] The pass rate for women in the enlisted Marine Corps Infantry Training Battalion (ITB), which is regarded as a less strenuous course than the IOC, had been 35.9% over the testing period compared with a 98% pass rate for males entering the course.[89] As of the Secretary of Defense decision to open all combat roles to women, the IOC and ITB are open to all men and women who meet the MOS classification standards.

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[80] Mulrine, Anna, "Breaking Military's Ultimate Glass Ceiling? Women Start Ranger Training.," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 30, 2015.

[81] Lamothe, Dan, "Will the Army Open its Elite Ranger Regiment to Women? A Controversial Decision Awaits," *Washington Post*, August 11, 2015.

[82] Tan, Michelle, "Army Officially Opens Ranger School to Female Soldiers," *Army Times*, September 2, 2015.

[83] "Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course", U.S. Army Briefing to DACOWITS, September 2016.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Myers, Meghann et al., "13 women graduate from the Army's first integrated armor officer course," *Army Times*, December 1, 2016.

[87] Seck, Hope H., "Last IOC in Marine Infantry Experiment Drops Female Officers," *Marine Corps Times*, April 8, 2015.

[88] United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Force Integration Plan Line of Effort 2, Expanded Entry-Level Training Research Studies*, September 11, 2015, p. ii.

[89] Data provided to CRS by the U.S. Marine Corps in March 2015.

As of September 2016, the Marine Corps had integrated 18 women into load-bearing combat units and 156 into non-load bearing combat units (total 174).[90] The first three enlisted women to transfer into operational infantry positions are slated to report to their units in January 2017.[91] The Marine Corps Special Operations Command Individual Training Course (ITC) is the core course for the Marine Corps' special operations pipeline. Although two women have participated in the assessment and screening process for the Marine Corps Special Operations Command Individual Training Course, none have attended or graduated from this course.[92]

Navy

Career fields and units that were previously closed to women in the Navy included those in the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) community. These positions include the Navy SEALS and Special Warfare Combatant Craft (SWCC) occupational specialties. During the WISR assessment phase the Navy did not conduct any integrated training assessments in their Special Warfare courses. As of September 2016, the Navy had not received any female applications for the FY2017 Navy SEAL Officer assessment and selection or lateral transfer boards. Of the 16 enlisted women who took the physical screening test (PST) for SEAL or SWCC, three enlisted women passed the SWCC PST, and none passed the SEAL PST. No women have yet been selected for these career fields.[93]

Air Force

Previously closed career fields in the Air Force included Special Tactics Officer, Combat Rescue Officer, Combat Controller, Pararescueman, Special Operations Weather, and Tactical Air Control Party. As of September 2016, no female applicants had graduated from the training pipeline of these career fields. However, six of 11 females who attempted to qualify for these jobs passed the requisite Physical Ability and Stamina Test (PAST) and began initial development and training.[94] Three of these Air Force officers have been accepted into the pipeline for Special Tactics Officers.

Key Issues for Congress

DOD's decision to open all combat roles to women and the subsequent implementation is subject to congressional oversight, and has been an area of some controversy. There are some in Congress, the military, and advocacy organizations who are opposed to women serving in combat or would like to reinstate the restrictions on women in close ground combat roles.[95] Others in the military and outside advocacy groups have praised the new policy, and some argue that even more can be done to push forward DOD's integration efforts. Both those in favor of and opposed

[90] Marine Corps Information Paper in Response to DACOWITS RFI, Gender Status of the 200 Enlisted Servicewomen who have Trained in the Infantry Battalion and Passed, 23 Aug 2016. Load-bearing jobs are those in infantry, reconnaissance, force reconnaissance, combat engineer fields, and critical skills operators. Non-load bearing combat arms jobs are artillerymen, tankers, amphibious assault vehicle crewmen, Marines with air naval gunfire liaison companies or ANGLICO, light armored reconnaissance, and Marines in low altitude air defense jobs.

[91] Ibid. These three enlisted females had participated in the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, volunteered, and were approved to change their Primary Military Occupational Specialty (PMOS) to infantry.

[92] Ibid.

[93] LCDR Sarah Turse (NSWC), Navy Response to DACOWITS RFI #1, September 2016 Meeting.

[94] Those that passed the physical screening were applicants for Special Tactics Office (3), Combat Rescue Officer (1), and Tactical Air Control Party (2). Air Force Response to DACOWITS RFI #1, September 2016 Meeting.

[95] See for example, Center for Military Readiness, *Military and Civilian Leaders Press Congress for Oversight on Women in Direct Ground Combat*, June 5, 2015.

to women in combat acknowledge that there are likely social, cultural, and administrative barriers that need to be overcome for integration to be successful.

Two key legislative issues that may arise are the implementation of gender-neutral occupational standards, and laws requiring registration for Selective Service. Other issues that may be of concern to Congress during implementation are the impacts of the policy change on readiness and career management for women in combat roles.

"Gender-Neutral" Performance Standards

One of the issues for Congress to consider with the opening of combat roles to women is how gender-neutral standards are validated and applied. The military departments, as part of their WISR studies, have made efforts to validate the physical standards for all combat-related occupations. Congress has the authority to review changes, provide oversight for implementation, and amend the definition of gender-neutral occupational performance standards as needed

In the National Defense Authorization Act for FY1994 (P.L. 103-160 Section 543, as amended by P.L. 113-66 Section 523), Congress established requirements for gender-neutral occupational performance standards:

> (1) GENDER-NEUTRAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARD. The term "gender-neutral occupational standard", with respect to a military career designator, means that all members of the Armed Forces serving in or assigned to the military career designator must meet the same performance outcome-based standards for the successful accomplishment of the necessary and required specific tasks associated with the qualifications and duties performed while serving in or assigned to the military career designator.
>
> SEC. 543. GENDER-NEUTRAL OCCUPATIONAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS.
>
> (a) GENDER NEUTRALITY REQUIREMENT. In the case of any military career designator that is open to both male and female members of the Armed Forces, the Secretary of Defense
>
> > (1) shall ensure that qualification of members of the Armed Forces for, and continuance of members of the Armed Forces in, that occupational career field is evaluated on the basis of an occupational standard, without differential standards of evaluation on the basis of gender;
> >
> > (2) may not use any gender quota, goal, or ceiling except as specifically authorized by law; and
> >
> > (3) may not change an occupational performance standard for the purpose of increasing or decreasing the number of women in that occupational career field.
>
> (b) REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO USE OF SPECIFIC PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS.
>
> > (1) For any military career designator for which the Secretary of Defense determines that specific physical requirements for muscular strength and endurance and cardiovascular capacity are essential to the performance of duties, the Secretary shall prescribe specific physical requirements as part of the gender-neutral occupational standard for members in that career designator and shall ensure (in the case of a career designator that is open to both male and female members of the Armed Forces) that those requirements are applied on a gender-neutral basis.
> >
> > (2) Whenever the Secretary establishes or revises a physical requirement for a military career designator, a member serving in that military career designator when the new requirement becomes effective, who is otherwise considered to be a satisfactory performer, shall be provided a reasonable period, as determined under regulations

> prescribed by the Secretary, to meet the standard established by the new requirement. During that period, the new physical requirement may not be used to disqualify the member from continued service in that military career designator.

Gender-Neutral v. Gender-Normed Standards[96]

All of the military departments establish testable minimum physical fitness standards for their personnel regardless of the military occupational specialty or career designator.[97] These physical fitness tests are administered upon entry and annually thereafter and are intended to encourage a minimum standard of physical fitness and health across the military forces. The standards and scoring table vary by both age and gender to account for physiological differences—a process sometimes referred to as "gender-norming" and "age-norming". For example, a 22-year-old male is required to run 2 miles in a maximum time of 17:30 in order to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test (PFT). The maximum time for a 22-year-old female is 20:36. In both instances, the individuals who achieve a passing time on the run receive the same score. The scoring tables differ under the principle that a woman who is able to run two miles in 17:30 is, on average, more physically fit (in terms of muscular strength and endurance, and cardiovascular capacity) than a man of the same age who is able to complete the run in the same time.

While all servicemembers must maintain basic physical fitness standards, the military departments have also established additional standards for screening or entry into certain occupational fields based on the capabilities needed to complete tasks associated with that occupation. Whereas basic physical fitness standards described above reflect gender-normed inputs in terms of effort, occupational standards are used to measure the ability to meet job requirements and are outcome-based. These standards must be gender-neutral, meaning that men and women are required to meet the same physical standards in order to be similarly assigned. It follows, for example, that if the occupation requires the service member to run two miles in 17:30 minutes, both men and women must meet that standard regardless of relative fitness levels or the level of effort expended.

Criteria for Validating Occupational Standards

Some have expressed concerns that the physical occupational standards and testing for certain career fields may not accurately reflect the actual job requirements and may be set unnecessarily high, creating artificial barriers to women's entry into some career fields. In the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (P.L. 113-291 Section 524), Congress gave further direction to the Secretaries of the military departments regarding the development and validation of gender-neutral occupational standards, requiring that the standards

> (1) accurately predict performance of actual, regular, and recurring duties of a military occupation; and
>
> (2) are applied equitably to measure individual capabilities.[98]

---

[96] This report uses the term "gender" as this is the term used in current statute. "Sex" is typically used to refer to biological differences between males and females, while "gender" is typically used to refer to characteristics deemed by society to be either masculine or feminine. Gender-norming is actually referring to setting standards based on physiological differences between men and women. See for example, Newman, Tim, "Sex And Gender: What Is The Difference?," *Medical News Today*, March 24, 2016.

[97] Some occupational specialties require servicemembers to meet additional physical standards.

[98] P.L. 113-291; 128 Stat. 1919; September 19, 2014.

The first validation criteria would require evidence that the tested standard is predictive of the actual task required to serve in that occupational field. For example, one occupational requirement might be the ability to rappel down a rope from a helicopter in a certain amount of time. For practical reasons (i.e., cost, risk of injury, resource availability) it may not be in the military's best interest to test servicemembers in a live environment. However, the number of pull-ups a service member can achieve may be predictive of their performance in rappelling. On the other hand, the second criterion speaks to individual capabilities. While the number of pull-ups a man can do might be predictive of his ability to conduct the operational task, a woman who is unable to do a certain number of pull-ups may also be able to successfully rappel out of the helicopter using different techniques or muscle groups. In this case the pull-up test might be predictive for a man, but another test, such as a rope climb, might be more predictive for a woman. Under the two criteria above, the services would be required to demonstrate both that rappelling from a helicopter is a regular requirement for the occupational specialty, and that the pull-up standard is an accurate measure of a service member's ability to achieve that task regardless of gender.

In the National Defense Authorization Act for 2016, an additional criterion was added that requires that occupational standards

> (3) measure the combat readiness of combat units, including special operations forces.[99]

This criterion might require DOD to undertake reviews or validation of occupational standards with regard to unit performance.

DOD's Review and Validation of Physical Standards

In December 2015, following the Secretary of Defense's announcement opening all combat roles to women, DOD publicly released a series of WISR studies that had informed the final decision. These studies included discussion of the methodology for validating occupational standards and recommendations for maintaining, modifying, or developing new occupational standards.[100] Each military service branch and SOCOM conducted independent validation efforts for occupational standards, thus the applied methodology differs by service within the statutory framework discussed previously. The Army and Marine Corps also provided results of experiments in combat arms training courses that measured individual and unit-level performance in an integrated environment.

In general, for all of the services, the validation processes included the physical standards for initial screening into career fields and for screening and completion of specialty training pipelines. Some combat-related career fields can be selected at the point of commissioning or enlistment (e.g., Infantry, Armor, Navy SEALs). Other specialties do not allow direct commissioning, but draw from those servicemembers in existing communities using competitive selection processes. For example, an individual might be commissioned as an Army Infantry Officer, and then later apply and be selected for the training pipeline to be a Special Operations Officer. The following sections present an overview of the research and experimental findings and recommendations on initial screening standards.

[99] P.L. 114-92, §525

[100] While not all entry standards are physical standards, the main focus of these research efforts appeared to be on the physical entry standards for combat-related specialties.

Army

Prior to the WISR directive, soldiers enlisting or being commissioned in the Army were not selected for their military occupational specialty based on their ability to perform the physical tasks necessary for that MOS.[101] However, some specialty schools like the Army Ranger Course had physical screening components for applicants and specific requirements for completing the course and earning the qualification.

Between 2013 and 2015, the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine (USARIEM) conducted research to develop an optimized physical screening test for initial entry into seven combat arms military occupational specialties.[102] The Army Training and Doctrine Command first identified the most physically demanding tasks in these seven combat MOSs.[103] Then the research team measured the physiological requirements for each task. The researchers developed a set of proxy tests[104] that would meet the physiological demands of all the actual MOS-related tasks. Finally, the researchers developed physical tests that would meet the criterion within cost, space, and time constraints. As a result of these studies, USARIEM proposed three options for predictive gender-neutral Occupational Physical Assessment Tests (OPATS) that could be used to screen for entry into seven combat MOSs.

The Army announced that implementation of gender neutral OPATS would begin in June 2016.[105] The test includes a standing long jump, seated medicine-ball throw, strength deadlift, and interval aerobic run.[106] The OPAT scores are divided into categories based on level of physical demand. All Soldiers must meet the moderate (gold) standard; however, those who would like to select more physically demanding MOSs (e.g., infantry, armor, and combat engineer) would be required to meet the heavy (black) OPAT standard (see **Table 4**). The OPAT standards are only the initial standards required to contract for/select an occupational specialty. Individuals who successfully screen into combat MOSs must still successfully complete all of the training requirements for these career pipelines.

Table 4. Army Occupational Entry Standards

	Moderate (gold)	Significant (gray)	Heavy (black)
Standing long jump	120 cm	140 cm	160 cm
Seated power throw (4.4 lbs medicine ball)	350 cm	400 cm	450 cm
Strength deadlift	120 lbs	140 lbs	160 lbs
Interval run (20-meter course)	36 shuttles	40 shuttles	43 shuttles

[101] Army MEDCOM USARIEM Task Assessment.

[102] These combat specialties with associated designators in parentheses are Combat Engineer (12B), Cannon Crewmember, (13B), Fire Support (13F), Infantryman (11B) Infantryman-Indirect Fire (11C), Calvary Scout (19D), and Armor Crewman (19K).

[103] Researchers identified 32 physically demanding tasks across the relevant MOSs.

[104] The researchers called these tests criterion simulation tasks (CSTs). The requirements for valid proxy tasks were: assess individuals vice teams, allow for a range of scores, measure unique physical capabilities, minimal skill or learning, reliability in repeated testing.

[105] Department of the Army, *HQDA Execution Order 097-16 to the Army Implementation Plan 2016-01 (Army Gender Integration,* March 9, 2016, p. 6.

[106] U.S. Army, Testing Instructions; Occupational Physical Assessment Test (OPAT), at http://www.usarec.army.mil/downloads/armypa/opat_testing_instructions.pdf.

Source: Tan, Michelle, "Army rolls out new fitness test for soldiers who want to switch MOSs," *Army Times*, September 18, 2016.

Marine Corps

Prior to the 2015 policy change integrating women into ground combat roles, every prospective enlisted Marine was screened for entry into the Marine Corps using a standard initial strength test (IST).[107] Enlisted Marines and officers were also required to successfully meet all of the training requirements in their selected MOS. The U.S. Marine Corps Training and Education Command (TECOM) and the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC) conducted analysis on the validity of initial entry physical standards for closed combat positions.[108] The NHRC study recommended that the minimum readiness standards for the IST remain the same for non-combat MOSs but be enhanced (IST+) for entry into combat MOSs.[109]

The Marine Corps implementation plan includes new classification standards based on the IST+ recommendations for officers and enlisted recruits seeking to be assigned to ground combat arms MOSs.[110] All enlisted applicants desiring a ground combat arms MOS will be screened using a gender-neutral Ground Combat Arms IST (GCA IST) in order to contract and ship to recruit training for that MOS. All other candidates will be screened using a gender-normed standard IST as shown in **Table 5**. Enlisted Marines will then be tested again between 55 and 60 days into their training using ground combat arms MOS Classification Standards (MCS) that are more rigorous than the initial GCA IST screening standard. Officers will be required to meet the minimum MCS scores during the Basic Officer Course to qualify for a ground combat arms MOS.

Table 5. Marine Corps Initial Qualification Standards

Minimum Standards for Non-Combat and Combat MOSs

	Pull-ups	Timed run	Crunches	30-lbs ammo-can lifts	Timed 880-yard sprint	Timed 300-yard shuttle run
Standard IST	2 (men) 12 second flexed arm hang (women)	1.5 miles in 13:30 (men) 15:00 (women)	44 (both men and women)	N/A	N/A	N/A

[107] All Marines must also annually complete a gender-normed Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test (CFT). While the PFT is intended to serve as a test of overall fitness with varying requirements by sex, the CFT was developed with the intent to estimate combat readiness over a range of physically demanding combat-related tasks.

[108] U.S. Marine Corps Training and Education Command and the Naval Health Research Center, *Analysis in Support of the Women in Service Restriction Review Study*, 2015. In validating the standards, researchers first identified essential physical capabilities for combat as derived from existing training and readiness task requirements. For these essential capabilities they developed a series of combat proxy tests (CPTs).[108] They then tested approximately 409 male and 379 female Marine volunteers on their ability to successfully complete the CPTs. The next step of the research was to determine whether the existing tests (PFT and CFT) were predictive of success in the combat proxy tests. The researchers determined that both existing tests were valid predictors of success in combat-related tasks; however, the CFT was a better predictor.

[109] U.S. Marine Corps Training and Education Command and the Naval Health Research Center, *Analysis in Support of the Women in Service Restriction Review Study*, 2015, p. 21.

[110] United States Marine Corps, *Fragmentary Order 4 (Implementation) to Marine Corps Force Integration Campaign Plan*, Manpower Plans Integration, Quantico, VA, December, 15, 2016.

	Pull-ups	Timed run	Crunches	30-lbs ammo-can lifts	Timed 880-yard sprint	Timed 300-yard shuttle run
Ground Combat Arms IST	3	1.5 miles in 13:30	44	45	N/A	N/A
MOS Classification Standard (MCS)	6	3 miles in 24:51	N/A	60	3:26	3:12

Source: United States Marine Corps, *Fragmentary Order 4 (Implementation) to Marine Corps Force Integration Campaign Plan,* Manpower Plans Integration, Quantico, VA, December, 15, 2016.

Notes: The timed sprint is also called movement to contact and the shuttle run is also called movement under fire. In addition to these screening tests, Marines must meet continue to meet minimum gender-normed standards for the PFT.

Following successful screening into a ground combat arms MOS, Marines then must successfully complete the course requirements and meet the MOS-specific physical standards (MSPS).[111] For Marine Corps infantry MOSs this training occurs in the Infantry Training Battalion (ITB) for enlisted members and the Infantry Officer Course (IOC) for officers.

Navy

With the exception of enlisted submarine occupations, the Navy's closed specialties and units were in the Special Warfare community. As such, SOCOM led many of the integration assessments related to these positions. Navy's closed combat positions included the Navy SEAL (Sea, Air, and Land) and Special Warfare Combatant Craft Crewmen (SWCC) occupational specialties. Unlike other special operations specialties in the Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force, individuals may directly select Navy SEAL and SWCC occupations at the time of enlistment or commissioning.[112] During the review period, SOCOM did not open its elite SEAL/SWCC course, the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) for participation by female volunteers.

The Naval Health Research Center Warfighter Performance Department in San Diego California, conducted the physical standards validation for the Naval Special Warfare Command.[113] Existing physical standards included the initial Physical Screening Test (PST) and physical test gates during the different phases of training.[114] In order to evaluate whether these standards were related to job performance, the researchers scrutinized three key assumptions:

[111] A list of MSPS requirements for associated MOSs can be found here: http://dacowits.defense.gov/Portals/48/Documents/General%20Documents/RFI%20Docs/Sept2016/USMC%20RFI%206.pdf?ver=2016-09-09-163519-080.

[112] Individuals may also laterally transfer from other career fields on a competitive basis.

[113] Kelly, Karen and Jason Jameson, *Navy Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman (SWCC) Physical Standards Validation Report*, Naval Health Research Center, Warfighter Performance Department, San Diego, CA, 2015.

[114] Candidates are also required to meet other non-physical standards for entry into BUD/S training. The test results for the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and the Computerized-Special Operations Resilience Test (C-SORT) are combined with PST results to build a single composite score. The PST includes a timed 1.5 mile run, 500-yard swim, pull-ups, push-ups, and sit-ups. Specific pass/fail test gates include, for example, timed completion of an obstacle course, beach run, and ocean swim, and some untimed requirements that evaluate skills specific to the occupation or other unobservable attributes like resiliency.

1. Selection tests (e.g., PST) are predictive of the physical capabilities needed to be successful in the initial phase[115] of training;
2. Training evolutions are related to training assessments and prepare candidates for success in physical training assessments; and
3. The physical abilities selected for, cultivated, and assessed during training are required for successful operational performance.[116]

The researchers found that, with regards to the first assumption, those candidates who performed better on the PST swim and run components performed better in the most difficult parts of training. They also found that performance on the PST pull-up and sit-up components were not predictive of training success.

To validate the second two assumptions, researchers relied on interviews and surveys with subject matter experts (SMEs).[117] Based on the data from SME surveys, the researchers determined that successful operators should exhibit certain whole-body physical fitness attributes. They also concluded that physical screening and training assessments reflect that actual intensity of occupational demands. Researchers noted that while the PST has some predictive capability, it is not sufficient on its own to predict success in the SEAL/SWCC training pipeline or to predict mission success. For example, SMEs rated "mental toughness" and "situational awareness" as the two most important attributes for mission success. Given these findings, researchers also suggested that the practice of using other non-physical screening tests for special warfare candidates should be continued.

Table 6. Special Warfare Physical Screening Test (PST)

Exercise	SEAL (minimum)	SEAL (optimum)	SWCC (minimum)	SWCC (optimum)
Swim 500 yards (side stroke/breast stroke)	12:30 min.	8:50 min.	13:00 min.	10:00 min.
Push-ups (2 min.)	50	100	50	80
Sit-ups (2 min.)	50	100	50	80
Pull-ups (no time limit)	10	20	6	15
1.5 mile run	11:00	8:50	12:30	10:00

Source: MILPERSMAN 1220-410, *SEAL/EOD/SWCC/Diver/AIRR Physical Screening Testing Standards and Procedures,* January 2013; and Navy Seal General Requirements at http://www.sealswcc.com/navy-seal-general-requirements.html.

Notes: All candidates must meet minimum scores; however, to be *competitive*, candidates will typically have to score significantly higher.

The Special Warfare Community has maintained the same PST standards that were in place prior to the WISR studies. In a January 2016 memo to the Secretary of Defense, SOCOM reported that the third party review process had validated "existing assessment, training, and occupational

[115] The first phase of training is considered to be the most difficult and has an average attrition rate of 75% with most attrition due to drops on request and 7% due to inadequate physical performance. Kelly, Karen and Jason Jameson, *Navy Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman (SWCC) Physical Standards Validation Report*, Naval Health Research Center, Warfighter Performance Department, San Diego, CA, 2015, p. 36.

[116] Ibid., p.5.

[117] SMEs included 176 officer and enlisted special operators ranked E-6 and above with an average of 6 deployments and 12 years of experience on special warfare teams.

standards as operationally relevant and gender-neutral."[118] SOCOM further stated that "adherence to these rigorous standards is crucial to our combat effectiveness and the preservation of unit readiness, cohesion, and morale."

Air Force

As in the Navy, a majority of Air Force occupations were previously open to women with the exception of certain special operations-related specialties.[119] As part of the WISR process, the Air Force validated mental[120] and physical standards for initial accession screening of new recruits and the training, and assessment standards for closed specialties.[121] As a result of these studies the Air Force did not raise, lower or change any accession, training or operational standards that were in existence prior to the policy change opening career fields to women.[122]

The Air Force uses a weight-lifting test called the Strength Aptitude Test (SAT) to screen and classify new enlisted recruits for Air Force career fields.[123] A majority of career fields require a minimum SAT score of 40 lbs., while a score of 80 lbs. is required for previously closed "Battlefield Airmen" positions.[124] A review of the SAT standards during the WISR process found "strong evidence for the validity of the SAT."[125] However, this review, and a previous study of the SAT standards completed in 2014, suggested that improvements could be made to the development and administration of standards and testing.[126]

Individuals initially screened for certain special operations and combat-related training pipelines must also pass an additional physical screening called a Physical Ability Stamina Test (PAST). This test is administered over a 3-hour period and includes two 25m underwater swims, a timed surface swim (500m or 200m), a timed 1.5 mile run, and two minutes each of pull-ups, push-ups and sit-ups.[127] Although minimum standards are in place for all of these evolutions, the Air Force encourages participants to exceed these physical standards to ensure successful completion of the training pipeline.

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[118] Votel, General Joseph, L. U.S. Army, *Memorandum for Secretary of Defense: US Special Operations Command Implementation Plan for the Integration of Women*, United States Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, January 13, 2016.

[119] Only 4,099 SOF-related positions were closed to women as of December 2015. Memorandum from Secretary of the Air Force to the Acting Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Air Force Final Implementation Plan for Full Integration of Women in the Air Force, December 29, 2015.

[120] Manley, Gregory G., John D. Trent, and Laura G. Barron, et al., *Recommended ASVAB Standards for Battlefield Airmen*, U.S. Air Force Personnel Center, Strategic Research and Assessment, Randolph AFB, TX, September 1, 2015.

[121] The closed specialties included, Combat Rescue Officer (CRO), Special Tactics Officer (STO), Combat Control Team, Pararescue, and Special Operations Weather Team (SOWT).

[122] Memorandum from Secretary of the Air Force to the Acting Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Air Force Final Implementation Plan for Full Integration of Women in the Air Force, December 29, 2015.

[123] Officers cannot directly select special operations specialties upon commissioning.

[124] Sims, Carra S., Chaitra Hardison, and Maria Lytell, et al., *Strength Testing in the Air Force: Current Processes and Suggestions for Improvements*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2014, p. 10.

[125] RAND Project Air Force and Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), *Development and Validation of Physical Performance Tests for Selection into USAF Occupational Specialties*, Santa Monica, CA, September 2015.

[126] Ibid., and Sims, Carra S., Chaitra Hardison, and Maria Lytell, et al., *Strength Testing in the Air Force: Current Processes and Suggestions for Improvements*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2014, p. 10.

[127] Swimming events are not required for entry into all specialties. An additional PAST event, a 3-mile, 50lbs.-load ruck march in 45 minutes, is required for entering the Combat Control Team and Special Operations course.

Combat Rescue Officers and Special Tactics Officers candidates and Combat Control and Special Operations Weather enlisted candidates must also successfully complete a one-week assessment program.[128] This program requires members to conduct a series of events that include, for example, job-related simulations, physical training and leadership exercises. The Air Force's findings from this review also supported the existing physical assessment standards for these career fields.[129]

Options for Congress

Some in the military, Congress, and outside groups have expressed concern that there will be pressure from advocacy groups to lower standards in order to increase the number of women eligible for combat roles.[130] Senior military leaders have emphasized the importance of maintaining standards. For example, as stated by Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, in 2016 testimony in response to congressional concerns about lowering standards to meet quotas, "It's unacceptable under the law, to me, [and] to every other senior leader in the Pentagon because it would endanger not only the safety of Marines, but the safety of our nation. Standards can never be lowered for any group or any job. Standards will evolve as threats evolve, but they will evolve for everyone equally."[131]

Women's advocacy groups and other military and veterans' groups are likely to closely monitor any future changes to standards for entry into combat MOSs. By law (P.L. 103-160 Section 543), DOD must notify Congress of changes to occupational standards that would either increase or decrease the number of women in any career designator:

> (c) NOTICE TO CONGRESS OF CHANGES- Whenever the Secretary of Defense proposes to implement changes to the gender-neutral occupational standards for a military career designator that are expected to result in an increase, or in a decrease, of at least 10 percent in the number of female members of the Armed Forces who enter, or are assigned to, that military career designator, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report providing notice of the change and the justification and rationale for the change. Such changes may then be implemented only after the end of the 60-day period beginning on the date on which such report is submitted.[132]

Following notification, congress may act to postpone implementation; request further studies, reviews, or justification; or allow the changes go into effect.

[128] These four MOSs are controlled by SOCOM.

[129] Rose, Mark R. and Laura G. Barron, *Validation Review and Documentation for CRO, STO, CCT, and SOWT Assessment Programs*, U.S. Air Force Personnel Center, Strategic Research and Assessment, Randolph AFB, TX, August 14, 2015.

[130] See, for example, comments by General James Mattis at the Marines' Memorial Club & Hotel, April 16, 2015 (minute 40:25) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSjEc-aM8Dg; or, "Hunter: Why We Must Give Careful Consideration to a 'Gender Neutral' Military," *Fox News*, January 8, 2016, at https://hunter.house.gov/rep-hunter-why-we-must-give-careful-consideration-gender-neutral-military.

[131] Cronk, Terri Moon, "Officials Describe Plans to Integrate Women into Combat Roles," *DOD News, Defense Media Activity*, February 2, 2016.

[132] Given that there are currently only a few women in some of the newly opened career designators, a decrease of one woman could be a decrease of over 10%.

Unit Readiness

Some military leaders, Members of Congress, and other commentators have been concerned about how the new policy changes might affect readiness.[133] Readiness is typically described as the capability of a military force to accomplish specified missions or goals.[134] Total force readiness depends on unit readiness which is affected, in part, by personnel readiness. Personnel readiness is often measured by the qualifications, experience, and availability of personnel assigned to a unit.[135] Other, less quantifiable measures include the stability and morale of individuals within a unit and overall cohesiveness of the unit.

Personnel Qualifications

Supporters argue that by opening more roles to women there is potentially a bigger pool of eligible recruits to compete for occupational assignments. This could facilitate the selection of more qualified personnel for combat assignments and allow the Services to harness additional "skills and perspectives."[136] For example, surveys conducted with Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel found that about four in 10 respondents thought that opening SOF units to women could be helpful for sensitive operations where it was important to be able to communicate with the local female population.[137] In addition, a Marine Corps study on the effectiveness of integrated units found that gender-integrated teams performed better than all-male teams on problem sets that were the most cognitively challenging.[138]

Others contend that military readiness has been and would be further weakened due to physiological differences between men and women. They argue that, on average, an all-male unit would always be higher-performing in close combat engagements due to average physical differences between men and women.[139] In response, some have argued that decisions about whether or not women should be allowed to serve in combat should not be based on *average* capabilities, but instead on *individual* capabilities. For example, under previous ground combat restrictions, a female Marine who was capable of meeting or exceeding all occupational standards would be prohibited from serving in a combat occupation only because she was female.[140]

To better understand the execution of individual and collective tasks in an operational environment, the Marine Corps conducted an assessment of integrated units that included both

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[133] See for example, Fredenburg, Mike, "Putting Women in Combat Is an Even Worse Idea Than You'd Think," *National Review*, July 15, 2015.

[134] Schank, John F., Margaret C. Harrell, et al., *Relating Resources to Personnel Readiness; Use of Army Strength Management Models*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 1997.

[135] Other components of unit readiness include materiel readiness, and training.

[136] Pellerin, Cheryl, "Carter Opens All Military Occupations to Women," *DOD News, Defense Media Activity*, December 3, 2015.

[137] Szayna, Thomas S., Eric V. Larson, et al., *Considerations for Integrating Women into Closed Occupations in U.S. Special Operations Forces*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2016

[138] Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Analysis of the Integration of Female Marines Into Ground Combat Arms and Units*, Quantico, VA, August 27, 2015, p. iv.

[139] See for example, quote by retired Army Major General Robert Dees in an interview with CNN, "There are just certain realities where men can do certain things better, women can do certain things better," cited at: http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/10/us/women-combat-us-military/index.html.

[140] See for example, comments by Reserve Army Colonel Ellen Haring in, Lamonthe, Dan, "Marine Experiment Find Women Get Injured More Frequently, Shoot Less Accurately Then Men," *Washington Post*, September 10, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/09/10/marine-experiment-finds-women-get-injured-more-frequently-shoot-less-accurately-than-men/.

male and female volunteers. The study found that females and female-integrated units excelled in some areas (e.g., .50 caliber marksmenship); however, all-male groups performed significantly better in a majority of the tasks—particularly in the most physically demanding tasks. The final report of the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force (GCEITF) concluded that, "Integrated units, compared with all-male units, showed degradations in the time to complete tasks, move under load, and achieve timely effects on target."[141]

Availability

Non-availability of servicemembers—particularly medical non-availability—has a negative impact on unit readiness. Medical absences can lead individuals to miss critical training and can lead to undermanned or underskilled units for military exercises, operations, or deployments. In the Army, an estimated 10% of all active duty servicemembers are non-available each month due to temporary or permanent musculoskeletal profiles.[142]

Although there are women who can meet and exceed the existing physical standards for men, forcing all women to meet these standards has been found in some cases to increase their injury and attrition rates.[143] In the Canadian experience, in which women were recruited for a 16-week infantry training course that was identical to the men's course, the outcome was described as the "high cost of recruiting women that yielded poor results."[144] Additionally, a recent study of women in close ground combat from the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence (MoD) found that in initial military training, women have twice as much risk of musculoskeletal injury as men, and 15% to 20% higher rates of non-battle injuries in recent operations.[145] However, the MoD report also acknowledged that women who would be capable of passing the close ground combat training might be more physically fit and less prone to injury than a cohort of women entering initial basic training.

The U.S. Army and Marine Corps examined these concerns as part of their WISR studies. The Army found that musculoskeletal injury rates (e.g., shin splints, sprained ankles) are higher for women than men during Basic Combat Training and slightly higher in a deployed environment; however, injury rates are similar for men and women in the operational Army.[146] The Army also found that incidence rates of some behavioral health disorders (adjustment, depression, anxiety) are higher among female than male solders, while men had higher rates of alcohol disorders. Both men and women had similar rates of PTSD. The Army studies concluded that (1) the appropriate use of physical standards should reduce injuries and medical attrition, and (2) there is no medical basis to prohibit any MOS opening to females.[147]

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[141] Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity, *Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force Experimental Assessment Report*, Quantico, VA, August 2015.

[142] USAMEDCOM, Soldier 2020: Injury Rates/Attrition Rates Working Group; Medical Recommendations. Briefing by LTG Patricia Horoho, Surgeon General and Commanding General, USAMEDCOM, June 24, 2015.

[143] Scarborough, Rowan, "Army may Train Women for Rigor of Front Lines, Studies Predict Injury, Attrition," *Washington Times*, July 30, 2012.

[144] Moore, Molly, Canada Puts Women on Front Line, *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 1989.

[145] United Kingdom Ministry of Defense, *Women in ground close combat (GCC) review paper*, December 1, 2014, p. B1, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/women-in-ground-close-combat-gcc-review-paper.

[146] The Army noted that there is a small subset of females that perform at the same fitness level as males resulting in similar injury rates in Basic Combat Training. Females in the operational Army are generally more fit than those in basic training.

[147] USAMEDCOM, Soldier 2020: Injury Rates/Attrition Rates Working Group; Medical Recommendations. Briefing by LTG Patricia Horoho, Surgeon General and Commanding General, USAMEDCOM, June 24, 2015.

The Marine Corps gender-integrated unit assessment found that 40.5% of the women participating suffered a musculoskeletal injury relative to 18.8% of the men. While females in the experiment were more likely to be unavailable for training, those that were unavailable were out for fewer days than their male counterparts.[148] The study also found that males were more likely to be unavailable for non-occupational injuries. Over the course of the experiment, males were available 98.4% of the time and females were available 96.8% of the time.[149] Both the Army and Marine Corps studies found that higher musculoskeletal injury rates were associated with load-bearing activities.

Unit Cohesion

Teams with high levels of cohesion generally have less conflict and stronger support networks that may help individuals to better cope with stress.[150] There is behavioral research that supports the notion that interpersonal relationships—an element of social cohesion—are established more readily between individuals with similar backgrounds, experiences and demographic characteristics.[151] Nevertheless, research also indicates that other factors, beyond unit homogeneity, contribute to positive unit cohesion such as shared experiences, leadership, and command climate. For example, some studies have found that "task cohesion," developed through shared experiences within a group, is a stronger predictor of group performance than interpersonal relationships.[152] Research on cohesion and performance in mixed-gender groups is inconsistent, with some studies finding higher levels of conflict and tension, and some studies showing no effects from gender diversity. Nevertheless, other studies have shown that women in predominantly male settings are "treated with hostility and less socially integrated by their male co-workers."[153]

Based on past experience, this integration research, and prevailing attitudes within the military, some have expressed concerns that the integration of women into traditionally male units could be detrimental to unit cohesion and morale. For example, one of the main concerns cited by SOF personnel was that integrating women would erode unit cohesion. Surveys and focus groups administered to U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) found that,

> [T]here is strong, deep-seated, and intensely felt opposition to opening SOF specialties that have been closed to women. Overall, 85 percent of survey participants opposed letting women into their specialties, and 71 percent opposed women in their units.[154]

In particular, those surveyed were concerned that the lack of privacy and close physical contact could lead to problematic male-female relationships.[155] In response to these concerns, some have

[148] Ibid., Annex O., p. O-6.

[149] Ibid., p. O-2

[150] Ibid., p. 181.

[151] Reagans, Ray, "Demographic Diversity as Network Connections: Homophily and the Diversity-Performance Debate" in The Oxford Handbook of Diversity and Work, ed. Quinetta M. Roberson (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 181.

[152] P.L. 113-291.

[153] Michigan State University, "Gender Diversity in Traditionally Male-dominated Teams: The Impact of Alternative Compositional Configurations Over Time," Project Narrative in support of United States Marine Corps WISR Studies.

[154] Szayna, Thomas S., Eric V. Larson, et al., *Considerations for Integrating Women into Closed Occupations in U.S. Special Operations Forces*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2016.

[155] Mullen, Brian and Carolyn Copper, "The Relationship between Group Cohesiveness and Performance," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 115, no. 2 (March 1994).

noted that women have been integrated into military units for extended deployment periods with close-quarter environments for much of the recent history of the military. A review of the literature by the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) found that, "considerable research has been done of gender-integrated military groups in noncombat roles. In general, the research found no negative impact on cohesion."[156] Although prior research on cohesion in integrated *combat* units is limited, the integrated experiments conducted during the WISR evaluation period did not raise serious concerns about cohesion in gender-integrated combat units. Accordingly, the Army's assessment of the integrated Ranger course did not uncover "any overt incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or concerns about incidental physical contact due to the close proximity of Soldiers in light infantry operations."[157]

An overarching finding of the studies done across the Marine Corps, Army, and SOCOM, was that positive unit cohesion was more likely when and if physical standards and professional standards of conduct were applied equally to men and women. Any differential treatment of women was seen as reinforcing negative perceptions about women in combat roles.[158] This finding seems to support adherence to valid and transparent gender-neutral standards.

Options for Congress

As the Services implement gender integration, Congress may continue to monitor unit readiness through regular hearings or reports. In the FY2014 NDAA, Congress directed the Secretaries of each military department to ensure that combat equipment distributed to female members of the Armed Forces is "properly designed and fitted," and meets "required standards for wear and survivability."[159] Congress may consider the extent to which it could provide funding for additional research, development, and acquisition of equipment adaptations that reduce injury rates, enhance safety, increase survivability, and reduce other barriers to performance of physically demanding tasks for all servicemembers. Some examples include light-weight body armor and helmets, or adjustable pack systems to improve mobility and assist in load-bearing activities.[160]

Career Management for Women in Combat Occupations

One of the arguments for opening combat roles to women was that without the ability to serve in combat occupations, women would not have equal career leadership opportunities. Some have argued that a lack of combat experience does not adversely affect career advancement and promotions for women. Although combat roles are now open to women, it may still be many years before women have senior leadership positions in combat occupations. This is because, while some women may be allowed to lateral transfer from other military communities, most women will fill positions at the entry level.

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[156] Joint Special Operations University Center for Special Operations & Research, *Special Operations Forces Mixed-Gender Elite Teams (SOFMET): Examining socio-cultural dynamics of SOFMET*, June 2014, p. viii.

[157] United States Army, TRADOC Analysis Center, *Ranger Assessment Study: Executive Report*, August 10, 2015.

[158] Joint Special Operations University Center for Special Operations & Research, *Special Operations Forces Mixed-Gender Elite Teams (SOFMET): Examining socio-cultural dynamics of SOFMET*, June 2014, pp. 91-93.

[159] P.L. 113-291 §524.

[160] Marine Corps Force Innovation Office (MCFIO), *Smart Adaptations for the Gender-Integrated Marine Corps: Final Report*, July 2015.

In a recent survey of military women and women veterans, 43% of the respondents cited job and assignment opportunities as a personal challenge.[161] For women who are now entering previously closed occupations, there are concerns about the Service's assignment policies and developing a "critical mass" of women in combat units. Critical mass theory suggests that satisfaction and resilience of a minority group shifts in response to the level of minority representation in a group.[162] Developing this "critical mass" in combat roles may be challenging as the number of women able to qualify under existing physical standards (particularly for infantry and SOF) may be very small as a percentage of the total force. For example, in the Marine Corps, where women account for only about 8% of the total force, an infantry squad might consist of only one or two women out of 12 Marines, while other squads might have no women at all.[163] However, while theory suggests that a lack of critical mass may be detrimental to minority groups, a survey of female volunteers for the Marine Corps' Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force found that respondents "tended to be *unconcerned* about being the only woman in a unit."[164]

In past gender integration efforts, the services have sought to assign senior female officers and noncommissioned officers to units prior to the assignment of more junior enlisted women and attempted to avoid assigning only one woman to a unit.[165] These actions were taken in part to ensure that more junior women had mentorship and support and that individuals did not feel isolated. Nevertheless, a recent study by the RAND Corporation found that previously, critical mass concepts were not generally included in military personnel assignment policies across the Services.[166] Assignment policies are considered the Services' implementation plans for integrating women into combat units and occupations. For example, the Army has stated that female officers or noncommissioned officers (NCOS) will be placed in infantry and armor units prior to assignment of more junior soldiers.[167]

Options for Congress

Current law precludes DOD from establishing "any gender quota, goal, or ceiling" for any career designator.[168] Congress could amend this law to allow DOD to set targets for female participation in various MOSs. However, DOD officials have not shown particular interest in establishing a quota system, and many in the military and in outside advocacy groups have suggested that such a system would call into legitimacy the existing standards and criteria for entry.

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[161] Service Women's Action Network, *SSWAN Releases 1st Annual Survey of Service Women & Women Veterans*, November 14, 2016.

[162] For a broader discussion of critical mass theory and its application to military integration see, Schaefer, Agnes Gereben and Jennie W. Wenger, *Implications of Integrating Women into the Marine Corps Infantry*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2015.

[163] Seck, Hope Hodge, "All-Female Marine Grunt Team Gets Innovative During Combat Tests," *Marine Corps Times*, May 2015.

[164] CNA, *A Quick-Look Analysis of the GCE ITF Baseline Climate Survey*, January 2015, p. v.

[165] See, for example, the Navy's policy on assignment of women to surface vessels (OPNAVINST 1300.17B, May 27, 2001), which requires a minimum of two female officers to be assigned (when no female enlisted are assigned) and a minimum of one female officer and one female Chief Petty Officer to be assigned to all gender-integrated ships.

[166] Schaefer, Agnes Gereben and Jennie W. Wenger, *Implications of Integrating Women into the Marine Corps Infantry*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2015, p. 35.

[167] Hare, LTC Diana, USA, Chief, CPPD, "Information Paper: DACOWITS RFI for June 2016 Quarterly Business Meeting," May 26, 2016.

[168] P.L. 103-160 Section 543, as amended by P.L. 113-66 Section 523.

As the Services move forward with implementation, Congress could continue to rely on DACOWITS for oversight and periodic requests for information on the number of women assigned to various combat specialties, their retention and promotion rates, and other talent management issues. Congress could also impose formal reporting requirements on DOD for information on these issues. Section 597 of the FY2017 NDAA (S. 2943) would require the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress on the career progression track for all entry-level women (officers and enlisted) entering a combat arms unit or those women laterally transferring into a combat arms unit.[169]

Selective Service

Many of those who emphasize equal rights say it is more difficult for servicemembers to advance to top-ranking positions in the armed services without combat experience. The inability of women to serve in combat roles is thus seen as a barrier to equal opportunity for promotion and selection for leadership roles.[170] Some carry the argument further to say women cannot be equal in society as long as they are barred from full participation in all levels of the national security system.[171] In their view, modern weapons have equalized the potential for women in combat since wars are less likely to be fought on a hand-to-hand basis. In this regard, properly trained women would be able to perform successfully in combat and exempting them from serving in combat is unfair to men.

This leads some to argue that equal access to combat jobs also obliges women to take equal responsibility for registering for selective service and being subject to the draft.[172] Women are divided on this issue with some saying they should be allowed in combat but many saying they should not be forced into combat.[173] Critics contend it would be unfair to permit women a choice that is not available to men and to make the choice available to both men and women would make it difficult for the services to function, especially in the event of war or national emergency. Given this argument, Congress may consider not only whether women who *want* to serve in combat roles are allowed to, but if women should be *required* to serve in combat roles.

Options for Congress

The question of whether women should be required to register for Selective Service under current law was previously decided in 1981 by the Supreme Court in *Rostker v. Goldberg*. In the majority opinion, Justice William Rehnquist wrote:

> [t]he existence of the combat restrictions clearly indicates the basis for Congress' decision to exempt women from registration. The purpose of registration was to prepare for a draft of combat troops. Since women are excluded from combat, Congress concluded that they would not be needed in the event of a draft, and therefore decided not to register them.[174]

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[169] S. 2943.

[170] Bacon, Lance M., "We Need Their Talent," *Army Times*, October 24, 2011. Odierno: "This is about managing talent. We have incredibly talented females who should be in those positions. We have work to do within the [Department of Defense] to get them to recognize and change."

[171] In July 2015 a teenage girl from New Jersey brought a federal class action suit against the Selective Service claiming the refusal to allow women to register is discriminatory now that women are eligible for combat roles.

[172] Mulrine, Anna, "With U.S. Women Soon Eligible for Combat, the Draft Could be Next," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 28, 2014.

[173] Lafond, Nicole, "Poll: Most Women Believe They Should Not Be Forced Into Combat," *The Daily Caller*, February 7, 2013.

[174] *Rostker v. Goldberg*, 453 U.S. 57 (1981).

Congress has a number of options in addressing this issue. Congress has the authority to change draft registration laws (that currently pertain only to males) to include women.[175] The Senate version FY2017 NDAA (Section 591 of S. 2943) included a provision that would have required women to register for the draft. This provision was not adopted in conference. It has also been suggested that this issue can be made moot by terminating Selective Service registration.[176] The FY2017 NDAA includes provisions (Sections 551-557) that will required DOD to provide a preliminary report on the purpose and utility of the registration system and would also establish a National Commission on Military National, and Public Service to review these questions and others.

Outlook for Congress

The military services are still in the early phases of implementing the new policy. Hundreds of women have entered some previously closed occupational specialties within the Armor, Field Artillery, Ordnance and Combat Engineer career fields, and women are beginning to enter the operational infantry and training pipelines for special operations careers across the services.[177] Both women and men who apply for combat-related occupations must meet all of the validated standards for those occupations, and military leaders have emphasized the importance of maintaining and adhering to the standards.

Section 593 of the FY2017 NDAA (S. 2943) would require the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Commander of the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to each submit to the armed services committees an annual report on the status of the each department's implementation of the Secretary of Defense's policy to open to women the military occupational specialties/units that were previously closed to women. This first report would be required no later than April 1, 2017 with annual reports through 2020 and would include the following elements:

> (1) The status of gender-neutral standards throughout the Entry Level Training continuum.
>
> (2) The propensity of applicants to apply for and access into newly-opened ground combat programs, by gender and program.
>
> (3) Success rates in Initial Screening Tests and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Classification Standards for newly-opened ground combat military occupational specialties, by gender.
>
> (4) Attrition rates and the top three causes of attrition throughout the Entry Level Training continuum, by gender and military occupational specialty.
>
> (5) Reclassification rates and the top three causes of reclassification throughout the Entry Level Training continuum, by gender and military occupational specialty.
>
> (6) Injury rates and the top five causes of injury throughout the Entry Level Training continuum, by gender and military occupational specialty.
>
> (7) Injury rates and non-deployability rates in newly-opened ground combat military occupational specialties, by gender and military occupational specialty.

[175] 50 U.S.C. §453.

[176] For additional information on the Selective Service see, CRS Report R44452, *The Selective Service System and Draft Registration: Issues for Congress*, by Kristy N. Kamarck.

[177] See for example, Dickstein, Corey, "22 Women to Join Army's Infantry, Armor Branches as Officers," *Stars and Stripes*, April 15, 2016; and, Koren, Marina, "The First Infantry Women of the U.S. Marines," *The Atlantic*, May 12, 2016.

(8) Lateral move approval rates into newly-opened military occupational specialties, by gender and military occupational specialty.

(9) Reenlistment and retention rates in newly-opened ground combat military occupational specialties, by gender and military occupational specialty.

(10) Promotion rates in newly-opened ground combat military occupational specialties, by grade and gender.

(11) Actions taken to address matters relating to equipment sizing and supply, and facilities, in connection with the implementation by such Armed Force of the policy referred to in paragraph (1).

As the new policy is implemented, Congress may continue to monitor the impact of change on recruitment, retention, assignments, and force readiness.

Appendix. Key Legislative and Policy Actions

Table A-1. Timeline of Key Legislative and Policy Actions for Integration of Women in the Armed Services

1901-2015

Year	Key Legislative and Policy Actions	Law
1901	Army Nurse Corps is established under the Army Reorganization Act of 1901.	31 Stat. 753; February 2, 1901
1908	Navy Nurse Corps is established.	P.L. 115; 35 Stat. 146; May 13, 1908
1942	Naval Reserve is opened to Women and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps is created.	P.L. 689; 56 Stat. 730; July 30, 1942; P.L. 554, 56 Stat. 278, May 14, 1942
1943	Marine Corps Women's Reserve is established and the Women's Army Corps is established as part of the regular Army on a temporary basis.	P.L. 110; 57 Stat. 371; July 1, 1943
1948	Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 makes women a permanent part of the military, but prohibits their assignment to combatant aircraft and naval vessels and limits the proportion of women in the military to 2% of enlisted and 10% of officers.	P.L. 625; 62 Stat. 356; June 12, 1948
1967	Limits on the percent of women in the military are repealed.	P.L. 90-130; 81 Stat. 374; November 8, 1967
1974	Minimum age requirement for women enlisting without parental consent is reduced from 18 to 17 to be consistent with age of consent for men.	P.L. 93-290; 88 Stat. 173; May 24, 1974
1975	Women are allowed to be admitted to service academies.	P.L. 94-106; 89 Stat. 537; October 7, 1975
1978	Women are permitted to be assigned permanent duty on noncombatant Navy ships and up to six months of temporary duty on other ships.	P.L. 95-485; 92 Stat. 1623; October 20, 1978
1988	DOD implements "risk rule" which excludes women form noncombat units or missions if the risk of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture were equal to or greater than the risks in the combat units they support.	NA
1991	The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces is established.	P.L. 102-190; 105 Stat. 1365; December 5, 1991
1993	Congress establishes requirements for gender-neutral occupational standards and repeals remaining prohibitions on women serving on combatant aircraft and vessels.	P.L. 103-160; 107 Stat. 1659 et seq.; November 30, 1993
1994	The "risk rule" is rescinded and DOD issues the Direct Ground Combat and Assignment Rule which limits women from being assigned to units below brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground.	NA
2000	Congress mandates 30-day (in-session) notice of any change that would open assignment of women to Navy submarines.	P.L. 106-398; 114 Stat. 1654A-136; October 30, 2000

2006	Congress mandates 30-day (in-session) notification for any change to the 1994 ground combat exclusion policy, or the opening or closing of military career fields to women.	P.L. 109-163; 119 Stat. 3251; January 6, 2006
2008	The Military Leadership Diversity Commission is established with mandate to review promotion and command opportunities in the Armed Services by ethnicity and gender.	P.L. 110-417; 122 Stat. 4476; October 14, 2008
2010	DOD notifies Congress of intent to allow women to serve on submarines.	NA
2011	Congress mandates review of the Direct Ground Combat and Assignment Rule.	P.L. 111-383; 214 Stat. 4217; January 7, 2011
2012	DOD eliminates the colocation restriction from the Direct Ground Combat and Assignment Rule.	NA
2013	DOD repeals the Direct Ground Combat and Assignment Rule, removing barriers to the assignment of women to combat units and occupations and directs implementation by January 1, 2016.	NA
2014	Congress issues validation criteria for the development of gender-neutral occupational standards.	P.L. 113-291; 128 Stat. 1919; September 19, 2014
2015	Congress issues an additional validation criterion for the development of gender-neutral occupational standards and reduces the notify-and-wait period for congressional review to 30 calendar days.	P.L. 114-92, November 25, 2015.
2015	Secretary of Defense announces all combat roles and units open to women.	NA

Source: Compiled by CRS from multiple sources.

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