

ADVOCATE

First Female Four-Star Feted

In a first of its kind gathering, 67 active duty and retired women generals and admirals honored U.S. Army General Ann E. Dunwoody, who in November 2008 became the first female U.S. military officer to wear four stars.

Attending the lunch at the Women's Military Memorial (WIMSA) Feb 7, 2009 were other "firsts," including Maj. Gen. Jeanne M. Holm, USAF (Ret.), the first woman officer promoted to major general; Lt. Gen. Carol A. Mutter, USMC (Ret.), the first woman officer to be nominated for a third star; and Vice Adm. Patricia A. Tracey, USN (Ret.), the first woman officer to wear a third star.

The lunch was hosted by WIMSA President Brig. Gen. Wilma L. Vaught, USAF (Ret.), who said that female veterans who visit the memorial are proud of their service and are now proud to see a female officer promoted to the military's highest rank.

"I hear the excitement in their voices and in the words they wrote about (Dunwoody's) selection to four-star," General



Vaught stated. "It meant something to all of them -- almost like they were promoted too. And so it is something special for every one of them."

General Dunwoody credited those who led the way with giving a gift to all women who serve.

"Breaking barriers, shattering glass ceilings, brass ceilings, and rewriting history, is nothing new for the armed forces especially for pioneers like General Hays [the first woman general], General Holm, Admiral Tracey and General Mutter."

"We've all led the way, and in leading you've given all women who seek to serve their country, a gift beyond measure --

that's the gift of limitless opportunity. Your courage, your trailblazing, your devotion to our country stands out not just for women, but for all who are proud to wear the uniform.

"We are living proof that we are part of a joint fighting force that values consistent performance, willingness to learn, capacity for growth, and most importantly, potential to lead.

"And when the opportunity was there, everyone in this room responded," she said.

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The Alliance for National Defense (AND) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to being a positive voice for military women. Supporters included officer and enlisted military personnel from all Services (active, retired, reserve and guard) and civilians interested in military issues. Support comes from contributors and outside donors such as individuals and foundations.

A Letter from AND's Executive Vice President

Dear Supporters,

I hope you have had the opportunity to visit our web page recently www.4militarywomen.org and noticed the changes that have been made. It is all in our attempt to make the website more user-friendly. It is a good source of information about what we are doing and has extensive links to other organizations involved with military women.

We are updating the discussion board to have issue-based sections and welcome your input. There is also a section called "Where We Stand" which includes all of the latest position papers that the Alliance has issued. Check them out to see where we stand .

Those of you who have provided us with your email address will shortly be getting our newsletter, *The Advocate*, sent to you online. Those of you who wish to receive *The Advocate* electronically, but haven't sent us your email address can do so by accessing the website.

One of the issues that the Alliance is most concerned with is sexual assault of military women and men. Only about 20 per cent of women come forward to report their sexual assault. Based on sheer numbers, 60 per cent of all incidents of sexual assault occur to military men and they are much less likely than women to come forward. As you can see, this is not just a women's issue, it is a cultural issue. It is an insidious problem that must be addressed by making sexual assault a military priority. There have been recent Congressional hearings on sexual assault which are covered inside. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The Alliance is dedicated to making every month sexual assault awareness month until it is no longer necessary. We need your continued support to make this happen.

Sherry M. de Vries, LtCol, USMCR



Commander Iskra in the Spotlight

AND board member Commander Darlene Iskra, USN (Ret.), was featured in three different venues as part of Women's History Month for her history making assignment as the first woman to command a commissioned U.S. Navy



ship, the USS *Opportune*, a rescue and salvage vessel. She was subject of an article in the March 2009 issue of *All Hands*, an official Navy publication. She was one of the 19 women honored on the mil.com web site's Women at War feature for her ship's deployment during the Persian Gulf War. She also was a question on the quiz show *Jeopardy*. Apparently none of the contestants had read *All Hands* or seen mil.com's web site because none of them knew the answer.

Women Marines Conduct Missions in Afghanistan

In March 2009, an all-female Marine team was formed by the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment to obtain information from Afghan women in southern Afghanistan.

During their first mission, the women Marines wore brightly colored head and neck scarves as a sign of cultural respect to the Afghan women. "The scarves showed the Afghan women that we were women too, and we respect their culture," team leader 2nd Lt. Johanna Shaffer told the American Armed Forces Press Service. Shaffer went on to say that the women "automatically felt more comfortable with us. They showed us their homes, and even though they didn't have much, they were still very generous to us. They accepted us as sisters, and we're glad that we were here to help them."

She said the American women were also accepted by the male villagers and that both male and female Afghans provided valuable local information. The Afghans also discussed the acceptability of the Marines operating in the area.



Marine Lt. Johanna Shaffer reaches out to an Afghani child.



TO: John White, Michèle A. Flournoy

Re: Women in the Military

Dear Mr. White and Ms. Flournoy:

We are writing to urge you to focus your attention on policies that affect the service of women in the military as part of your important planning for the transition to the Administration of President-elect Obama. We represent three non-profit organizations that monitor and recommend improvements in Pentagon policies relating to women in the armed forces: the National Women's Law Center, the Women's Education and Research Institute and the Alliance for National Defense.

We ask your leadership in working to end policies that discriminate against military women and that undermine the readiness of our forces. We believe there are four areas in which policy changes can and should be made, and for which planning should start immediately. We have outlined those areas below and have enclosed more detailed position papers briefly addressing each of the issues:

1. Assignments—As explained in the enclosed position paper, current policies that restrict the assignment of women are out-of-date and inadequate to meet the demands of warfare in the 21st century. Military women should be allowed to serve in all units and occupations for which they qualify, giving commanders the ability to select the best person for the job as the mission dictates.
2. Sexual Assault—The sexual assault of women within the ranks is an ongoing, serious problem. It is a grave criminal offense that detrimentally affects the readiness of our forces in many ways. A report by a congressionally mandated Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services is expected later in 2009 but, as explained in the enclosed position paper, Department of Defense (DoD) leaders should act immediately to make elimination of sexual assault against military women an urgent DoD priority.
3. Reproductive Health Care—Military women's access to reproductive health services is severely restricted. With certain limited exceptions, federal law currently prohibits federal funding for abortion procedures and prevents military women (and female dependents of both military men and women) from obtaining abortion procedures in DoD facilities, even if the women pay the costs themselves. Compounding the problem, because of a Bush Administration directive, emergency contraceptive drugs are not reliably available at military health facilities in the U.S. or overseas. As set forth in the enclosed position paper, the Obama Administration should propose the repeal of laws restricting the access of military women and military dependents to reproductive health services and DoD should immediately act to place emergency contraception on the basic formulary of drugs available to service members and their families.
4. DACOWITS—The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was for over 50 years a source of credible, outside advice to the Secretary of Defense on important issues affecting the service of military women. The Bush Administration changed the charter of the Committee, diluting its focus and limiting its ability to research and highlight issues affecting military women and to advise the Secretary accordingly. Given the global challenges facing our fighting forces, the need for men and women in the military to work together for our nation's defense in the most effective way has never been more important. As explained in the enclosed position paper, DACOWITS should be revitalized to again aid in addressing the utilization of women, including by advising with respect to such critical matters as assignments, sexual assault and reproductive health care.

We would be pleased to have an opportunity to meet with you or others on your team. We are ready to help you in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Nancy Duff Campbell
Co-President
National Women's Law Center

Lory Manning
Captain, USN (ret.)
Director, Women in the Military Project
Women's Research & Education Institute

Pat Gormley
Captain, JAG, USN (ret.)
President

AND, WREI, NWLC Call for End of Policies That Discriminate Against Military Women

AND joined with the Women's Research and Education & Research Institute and the National Women's Law Center to urge the Obama administration to make important changes to DoD assignment, sexual assault and reproductive healthcare policies and to revitalize DACOWITS in a December 8, 2008, letter to the then president-elect's transition team. The letter is reproduced on Page 3. Papers and recommendations DACOWITS appear below and on Page 5; sexual assault material begins on Page 6; reproductive healthcare recommendations are on Page 7 and combat/assignment policies are discussed on Page 8.

DACOWITS Should Be Revitalized



For over 50 years, the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) served as a force for the successful integration of women into the military and steady expansion of women's roles in our armed forces. In the Bush Administration, the Committee's mission and responsibilities were downgraded. For the sake of overall readiness and effectiveness of our armed forces, DACOWITS should be restored as a meaningful advisory body with authority to independently advise the Secretary of Defense on issues concerning military women.

Background

DACOWITS was established in 1951 as a civilian board of individuals appointed by the Secretary of Defense to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary on matters and policies affecting women in the armed forces. The Committee served as a vital link between the civilian community

and the Department of Defense. The role of DACOWITS in initiating positive change for military women has been chronicled by Major General Jeanne Holm (USAF Ret.) in her definitive history, *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution*.

Through public meetings, conferences and installation visits, the Committee gathered information and analyzed issues concerning the utilization of women and formulated recommendations for consideration by the Secretary of Defense and the Services. Major General Holm observed that "[w]ithout the Committee the senior officials in the Pentagon would have remained oblivious to the women's needs and concerns that were not being addressed." Secretary of Defense William Perry stated that the Committee members were his "eyes and ears" in speaking directly to women service members. Over the years, the Committee gained a reputation

for doing serious analysis on integrating women into the military at little expense to the United States Government.

Soon after taking office, the Bush Administration cancelled all meetings, conferences and installation visits of DACOWITS, terminated the appointments of all current members, and failed to renew the Committee's charter.

Instead, the Administration introduced a new, more restrictive charter to water down the ability of the Committee to research and highlight issues affecting women in the military and advise the Secretary accordingly. The Bush Administration (1) cut the number of members of the group from 25-40 to a maximum of 15 and significantly reduced its funding, staff support and access to military advisers; (2) revoked the group's ability to set its agenda and call meetings; (3) shifted the focus from mili-

Continued Page 5

tary women to a primary emphasis on issues of concern to military families; (4) drastically reduced the number of military installation visits; and (5) reduced the diversity of the membership. This new group has recently met with as few as six members in attendance. Its recommendations have not addressed critical issues such as war zone assignments of women and sexual assault.

As confirmed in a 2004 report prepared by the Office of Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney, *The Downgrading of DACOWITS: How President Bush Has Failed America's Women in Uniform*, the result of these Bush Administration changes has been the weakening of a source of credible, outside advice on important issues effecting the service of military women.

The next Secretary of Defense will inherit a daunting set of national security challenges, including two ongoing wars, the global campaign against terrorism, with concomitant strain on our fighting men and women. The need to recruit qualified people—men and women—for military service and need for

“The Committee's focus should again be on military women's issues (and issues concerning military families should be dealt by a separate advisory group dedicated to that subject).”

men and women in the military to work together for our nation's defense in the most effective way have never been more important. Policies regarding the assignment of women in combat situations need to be reexamined in light of today's wartime realities, and the need to eliminate sexual assault within the ranks must be addressed. DACOWITS should be revitalized to aid in these efforts.



Recommendations on Revitalizing DACOWITS

1. DoD should re-establish DACOWITS under the Federal Advisory Committee Act with the mission to advise the Secretary of Defense on a full range of matters and policies relating to women in the armed forces.
2. The Committee should again serve as a vital link between the civilian community and the Department of Defense. Accordingly, the membership should number at least 25 and be chosen from diverse backgrounds and geographic areas.
3. The Committee's focus should again be on military women's issues (and issues concerning military

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- Postal rates are rising. You can receive *The Advocate* by e-mail and help save precious resources. To change from a postal to an electronic subscription, please e-mail and webmaster@4militarywomen.org with the message 'subscribe electronic.'

Thank you!

4. Because the work of the Committee directly impacts force readiness, the Committee should report to the Secretary of Defense through the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.
5. The Committee should be supported with adequate staffing and budget and senior military representatives from each of the Services should be designated to provide the Committee necessary technical advice.

Eliminating Sexual Assault Should Be A Top DoD Priority

Despite the attention given to the issue in recent years, the sexual assault of military women is an *ongoing, serious* problem within our armed forces. Sexual assault is a grave criminal offense with detrimental effects on readiness, and preventing it should be an urgent priority of the Department of Defense. While the focus of this paper is on sexual assault against women, men, too, can be victims of sexual assault. Both women and men must be able to serve in the military without fear of sexual assault.

Background

According to the FY07 Department of Defense Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, there were 2688 reported sexual assaults against military women in 2007. Unfortunately, the Government Accountability Office in its July 2008 report, *Preliminary Observations on DOD's and the Coast Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Programs*, found that occurrences of sexual assault may be exceeding the rates reported. GAO noted, among other things, that a recent survey of active duty members by the Defense Manpower Data Center showed

that the majority of those surveyed did not report unwanted sexual contact. At the military academies, more than 15 percent of female respondents said they had been sexually assaulted, according to a 2004 survey by the DoD Office of Inspector General. While DoD has taken some positive steps aimed at better preventing and responding to sexual assaults, both the number of reported cases and official surveys point to a significant, continuing problem.

Sexual assault is not only criminal; it directly and indirectly impedes military readiness. It negatively affects women's physical and mental health, restricting their ability to perform their missions and, too often, their ability to lead productive civilian lives after their military service as well. It undermines efforts to recruit and retain women, when they see that commanders do not treat complaints of sexual assault seriously and are not held accountable for the presence of criminal activity in their units.

Congresswoman Jane Harman, in testimony for the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the House Committee on Oversight

and Government Reform, stated another reason that sexual assault should not be tolerated: "Most of our servicewomen and men are patriotic, courageous and hard-working people who embody the best of what it means to be an American. The failure to stem sexual assault and rape in the military runs counter to those ideals and shames us all." As part of the Defense Authorization Act for 2005, Congress established the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services.

The Task Force is charged with examining matters relating to sexual assault and giving an independent assessment of DoD policies and programs to combat sexual assault.

The Task Force will report its findings and recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and the secretaries of the military services. This report, which may provide useful insights and strategies, is expected later in 2009.

But DoD leaders should immediately take a strong position against sexual assault, with policy statements and actions in accordance with the following recommendations:

Recommendations on Eliminating Sexual Assault

DoD should:

1. Make clear that prevention of sexual assault a top priority across the Department of Defense (including to the military academies) with a focus on both individual and command responsibility.
2. Ensure that sexual assault prevention efforts are an integral part of regular military training at all levels and improve data collection efforts to better measure the effectiveness of this training.
3. Ensure that an individual who has been assaulted receives confidential, expeditious, and respectful treatment and that perpetrators of sexual assault are subjected to appropriate criminal processes.
4. Include in performance reviews the extent to which commanders are successful in fostering an environment in which individuals can serve without fear of sexual assault. Commanders who succeed should be recognized and commanders who fail should be penalized.

House Holds Sexual Assault Hearing

The House Military Personnel Subcommittee held a hearing on sexual assault in the military Jan. 29, 2009.

Former Air Force Captain Laura Watterson testified that a fellow airman had subjected her to "military sexual trauma," a term used by the Veterans Administration that can mean either sexual harassment or sexual assault. She expected punitive action to be taken against the perpetrator, but instead was told "to get over it" and the offender was promoted to be her supervisor.

Committee Chairwoman Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA), said the Congress hoped to develop better rules on victim advocacy, offender prosecution and command attitudes towards the crimes. She acknowledged that improvements had been made, but still questioned whether enough had been done.

Watterson, who became a sexual assault counselor, believes more does need to be done. She said that military victims she deals with still report the same intimidation in reporting attacks to fellow service members, even those assigned to defend them. She advocated for more outside counselors who are trained professionals completely independent of military influence.

"The Alliance is dedicated to making every month sexual assault awareness month until it is no longer necessary. We need your continued support to make this happen."

**Sherry M. de Vries
AND Executive
Vice President**

DoD: Sexual Assaults Up in 2008

Sexual assaults by military personnel were up eight percent in 2008, according to the Defense Department's *Fiscal 2008 Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* that was released on Mar 17, 2009. The congressionally mandated report was prepared by the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevention Office and provides an overview of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program and data on alleged sexual assaults involving members of the armed forces.

In FY 2008, DoD received a total of 2,908 reports of sexual assault involving service members. Of those, 753 were restricted reports that allow a military member to obtain care confidentially without initiating an investigation. Later 110 victims converted their report from restricted to unrestricted. The report also showed that court-martial actions rose by eight percent, from 30 percent in FY 2007 to 38 percent in FY 2008. At 924, rape was the number one offense, while an additional 498 cases involved aggravated assault. About half of sexual assault perpetrators were in the youngest part of the military population of pay-grades E-4 and below. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the military recorded 163 reports of sexual assault, up from 131 the previous fiscal year.

Gail McGinn, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Plans) said that DoD believes "the increased number in reporting means service members feel more comfortable reporting the crime and are getting the care

they need."

However, some members of Congress are skeptical about the progress being made. Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), who originated the legislation requiring the report, said that the statistics are "alarming" not only because sexual assault persists, but because it has gotten worse. She is also concerned that "while the DoD has made efforts to improve its prevention and response to domestic and sexual violence, services remain incomplete and inconsistent among the various branches."

Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA) said that "while the report shows modest improvement, we're far from 'Mission Accomplished.' DOD, she said, needs to provide "better training, vigorous prosecution, and retooling a military culture that for too long has let boys be boys."

AND also remains very concerned about this issue. On Aug 13, 2008, President Pat Gormley and Executive Vice President Sherry de Vries presented a statement and discussed the issue at a meeting of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services. AND was the only non-government entity to do so. The statement was published in the last issue of *The Advocate*.

The complete *Fiscal 2008 Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* report is available at: [http:// www.sapr.mil](http://www.sapr.mil).

Military Women Should Have Full Access to Reproductive Health Care

Military women's access to reproductive health services has been severely restricted under current law and Department of Defense policy. Although the focus of this position paper is on the effect of the restrictions on military women, the restrictions also apply to the detriment of dependents of both military men and women. These restrictions are ones not faced by women in most private health insurance plans and should be changed as soon as possible.

Background

The access of women in the military to federal funding for abortion procedures has been restricted by annual DoD funding bills since 1978, with qualifications for funding changing over time, until 1984 when the DoD authorization bill made the ban permanent, unless the woman's life is in danger. 10 U.S.C. § 1093(a). Pregnancies resulting from rape or incest do not qualify.

Prior to 1988, DoD had an informal policy that allowed abortion procedures to be per-

formed at overseas military facilities if women paid for the procedures themselves. In 1988, DoD policy banned all abortions in military facilities, even if paid for by the patient. This ban was lifted in 1993 by President Clinton but reinstated in 1996 when Congress barred privately funded abortion procedures at DoD facilities, with certain limited exceptions. 10 U.S.C. § 1093(b).

Thus, under current law, women are not permitted to pay for their own abortion procedures at DoD facilities unless their life is endangered or the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

Moreover, DoD does not include emergency contraception—a time-sensitive medication that prevents pregnancy—on its basic formulary of drugs that must be available at military treatment facilities. The Executive Council of the DoD Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee voted in 2002 to add Plan B®, a dedicated emergency contraceptive pill, to the basic formulary based on

its clinical and cost effectiveness. However, the inclusion on the formulary was rescinded a few months later without stated reasons. Because Plan B® is not part of the basic formulary, emergency contraception is not reliably available at military health facilities stateside or overseas. This gap in availability leaves women at risk of unintended/unwanted pregnancy, with all concomitant costs and effects both to them and to the military services.

“Decisions about medical care provided to, or made available for, service members and their families should be based on clinical and cost effectiveness, not on political considerations.”

Recommendations on Reproductive Healthcare

Decisions about medical care provided to, or made available for, service members and their families should be based on clinical and cost effectiveness, not on political considerations.

1. Decisions about medical care provided to, or made available for, service members and their families should be based on clinical and cost effectiveness, not on political considerations.
2. The Obama Administration should propose legislation to repeal laws that restrict the access of military women and military dependents to reproductive health services.
3. DoD should immediately order Plan B® emergency contraception to be placed on the basic formulary of drugs available to service members and their families.

Military Women Should Be Allowed to Serve in All Units and Occupations for Which They Qualify

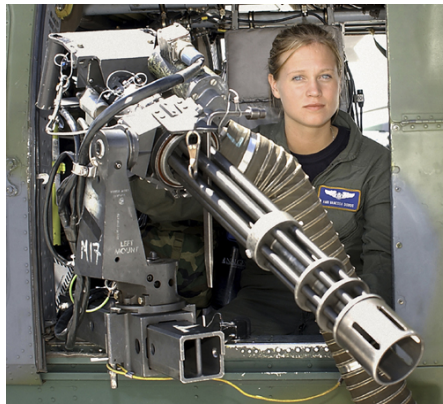
Service women have proven their value and valor under fire in our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is time to update the policies governing women's military utilization so that they, as with the policies governing men's utilization, are based on national security needs and women's field-proven capabilities. This will allow current and future commanders the widest possible latitude to employ all their personnel as the mission dictates without artificial limitations.

Background

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that current Department of Defense and service policies regarding the



assignment of women are out-of-date and inadequate to the demands of 21st century warfare. They do not provide on-the-scene commanders with the ability to best use all troops as constantly changing missions require. As stated in the August 2007 RAND Study, *Documenting the Assignment Policies for Army Women*: "Military effectiveness and flexibility entail adapting to changes in enemy strategy, tactics, and weapons, and this implies that commanders may need to em-



ploy military resources, including individual women and units with women in ways not initially envisioned in policy and possibly not well addressed in doctrine."

Additionally, the need for crew privacy is the only reason the Navy provides for prohibiting women from permanent assignment aboard submarines. This needlessly cuts the pool of candidates for submarine service and lessens the quality of our force. The experiences of our allies in Australia and Canada who operate their submarines on long deployments with both sexes in their crews demonstrate that demands for privacy between the sexes can be met while fully integrating women into submarine crews. There is no reason why the United States Navy cannot do



the same.

In its concluding section, the RAND Study, cited above, states "The critical first issue is whether there should be an assignment policy for military women." It then goes on to say that if such a policy is needed, those crafting it must also determine whether it should exclude women from both units and occupations or only from occupations. The experiences of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and of our allies' submarine services support a policy that opens all



units and platforms to women and that closes to women only those occupations for which it is shown that women could not qualify under demonstrated, performance-based, job-related standards.

During the campaign, a national security spokeswoman for Senator Obama was quoted as saying that women are already serving in combat and that current policy on the

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Allow Women to Serve in All Units

Continued from page 9



assignment of military women “should be updated to reflect realities on the ground.” The President-elect during the campaign compared limitations on women’s roles to the time when African-Americans were not allowed to serve in combat: “And yet, when they did, not only did they perform brilliantly, but ... they helped to change America, and they helped to underscore that we’re equal.” He said expanded roles for women (speaking of draft registration) would “send a message to my two daughters that they’ve got obligations to this great country as well as boys do.”

“...women are already serving in combat ...and the current policy on the assignment of military women should be updated to reflect realities on the ground.”

—President Obama on the campaign trail in 2008

Recommendations on Assignments and Combat

1. DoD should open all military units and platforms to women. This will allow, for example, a woman medic or intelligence specialist to serve with Army, Marine Corps and special forces ground combat units, as needed, and it will allow women aviators to fly and crew all aircraft—including certain special forces helicopters currently closed to them.
2. DoD should open all military occupations, designators, ratings, Navy Enlisted Classification codes (NEC), Military Occupational Specialty codes (MOS), and Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) currently closed to women, unless the relevant service can substantiate continued closure based on accompanying detailed, itemized, job-related, performance-based

standards that clearly justify the finding that only men could qualify based on the fair and reasonable application of such standards.

3. In those instances in which a service recommends that a particular occupation remain closed to women, the Office of the Secretary of Defense should commission an independent study to evaluate the necessity for the closure and, if the recommendation is not corroborated, OSD should open the occupation to women. If the recommendation for continued closure is corroborated, the study should address the circumstances or conditions under which the occupation can be opened to women in the future.
4. DoD should direct the Navy to provide an implementation plan to integrate women into the submarine service.



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Band of Sisters: American Women at War in Iraq **By Kirsten Holmstedt**

Reviewed by Ben Lemming

Women in combat? How can that be? Currently, U.S. policy dictates that women are prohibited from serving in ground combat units, a policy intended to keep women off the front line, away from the “real” danger.

However, as Captain Amy McGrath states about Iraq, “There are no front lines out there. Let me repeat. There are no front lines out there.”

Band of Sisters: American Women at War in Iraq by Kirsten Holmstedt excellently demonstrates that not only are women exposed to the “real” danger, but they are valiantly fighting and dying along side their fellow band of brothers and earning their respect and admiration.

The book is a collection of 11 stories about diverse military women who have served in Iraq since Operation Iraqi Freedom began in 2003. The women span the military ranks from E-3 to O-5 across all four branches of service and military specialties.

From kicking in doors, to flying combat missions, to commanding a combat unit, these individuals prove that women are just as capable as their male counterparts at being effective and efficient warriors.

Of the 11 stories, three get to the heart of women in combat. The first chapter details the account of two female Marines, Lance Corporals Carrie Blais and Priscilla Kispetik, as they patrol the streets of Haditha embedded with an infantry unit.

These Marines volunteered to embed with the grunts in order to assuage cultural sensitivities by searching homes that may have Iraqi women or children. At first, the male Marines were skeptical of their new “prohibited” team mates’ abilities and fortitude. Knowing that they were highlighted because of gender and would have to prove themselves, Blais and Kispetik relied on their training, determination and professionalism to demonstrate that they were the same as the men: Marines. After the first few days, each was accepted as “one of the guys.”

The second story tells of Captain Amy McGrath, USMC. In March 2002 in Afghanistan, Capt McGrath became the first woman to fly in an F/A-18 fighter jet in combat. Holmstedt detailed McGrath’s upbringing from childhood to the U.S. Naval Academy, the rigors of flight training that McGrath endured in order to not only reach her qualifications as a Weapons System Operator (WSO), but to gain acceptance within her squadron as a capable member of a male dominated profession.

The third account details the story of Lt. Col. Polly Montgomery, USAF, the first woman to command a combat squadron in the Air Force in Iraq. It includes the difficult transition that Montgomery faced as a woman seeking acceptance by her mainly male subordinates to gain their trust and confidence as commander. Last but not least, she was also the mother of three children be-

tween the ages of one and five.

She was accepted and respected by her officers and airmen, loved and admired for her professionalism, sense of humor and heart.

Throughout the rest of the book, Holmstedt detailed the stories of other “firsts,” the first female pilot shot down and the first African-American female combat pilot. Through all of these stories, Holmstedt managed to show the role of women in combat from nearly every conceivable angle.

As I read this book, I came to



realize that I can identify with many of these stories and, in fact, have met some of the women described in this book. I

was a combat helicopter pilot in Iraq. I have lost friends in the war, including a good female friend who was shot down by enemy fire. I know these women. I have attended school with them, served with them, and commanded them. They are not unique or special. When it comes to the mission, they are not viewed as women. In my branch of service, they are simply Marines. These warriors are few and proud — and have earned every right to be.

Capt. Ben Lemming, USMC. is a student at the University of Maryland. His review has been edited to meet space requirements.

Two Military Women Pioneers Mourned

Captain Ruth A. Erickson, Nurse Corps, USN, 95, a survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor and former Director of the Navy Nurse Corps, died Nov 25, 2008 in Rochester, MN.

On Dec 7, 1941, she was



having breakfast when, as she told the Navy Historical Center, "suddenly we heard planes roaring overhead," one of which flew directly over her one-story quarters. She went on to say that her "heart was racing, the telephone was ringing, the chief nurse was saying, 'girls, get into you uniforms at once. This is the real thing!'" She assisted in the operation on the first patient brought to the ward. Ten days later she was one of three Navy nurses who accompanied the evacuation of the first war casualties from Hawaii to San Francisco. Later, as chief of nursing service aboard the hospital ship *Haven*, she returned to Pearl Harbor on the day hostilities with Japan ended and was aboard when the ship brought home U.S. prisoners of war from Japan in 1945.

After the war, she had assign-

ments on the hospital ship *Relief* and at naval hospitals throughout the United States. She was personnel officer for the Nurse Corps at the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington DC and served as Chief Nurse at three major naval hospitals. From 1962 to 1966, she served as the twelfth Director of the Navy Nurse Corps.

Dr. Martha S. Putney, PhD, 92, historian, author and a pioneer for women and blacks, died Dec 11, 2008 in Washington, DC.

Despite having a bachelor and master's degree in history, in the early 1940s she was not allowed to teach in the Washington, DC schools so she joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1943. She attended the Officer Candidate School in Des Moines, IA and was one of five African American women in the class. She was commissioned a 3rd Officer (2nd lieutenant equivalent) on July 7, 1943 and then remained at the training command where she was a training officer with the newly established Women's Army Corps (WAC), the successor organization to the WAAC. Later she was as-



signed to Gardiner General Hospital, Chicago, IL where she was in charge of an all-Black unit of WAC medical and surgical technicians. Though she wore the uniform of her country, she faced many injustices on and off the military installations where she was assigned, but seldom retreated from addressing such injustices with dignity, professionalism and determination. She was discharged from the Army in 1946 as a 1st Lieutenant. As a result of her unique history she was one of the military women profiled by Tom Brokaw in his 1998 book *The Greatest Generation*.

After the war she used the GI Bill to get a PhD in history. In 1955 she began teaching at Bowie State College, MD, and later served as the chairman of the history and geography department until 1974. Next, she taught for nine years at Howard University, Washington, DC, after which she retired. She published a number of scholarly articles on African American history and edited the book *Blacks in the United States Army: Portraits Through History* (2003). She wrote two books: *Black Sailors* (1987), a study of black merchant seamen and whalers before the Civil War and *When the Nation Was in Need: Blacks in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (1992).

In the News

Navy Launches Mentoring Web Site for Women



On Oct 1, 2008, the Navy launched a web site, www.academywomen.org/ementors/navywomen, designed to help women find a female mentor.

"It's an attempt to answer a continuing request from women in the fleet for more access to female role models, counselors and experienced women," said Lieutenant Hope Brill, who is managing the pilot program.

Although the Navy does believe that women and men can mentor each other, Brill said that the Navy also "sees better retention, promotion and career success when women are offered a female mentor."

The program is open to all Navy women regardless of pay grade.

Special Tribute to Women at Vietnam Wall



On Veterans Day 2008, the program at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, paid tribute to the often overlooked role of women in the Vietnam War. Almost 8,500 women, 84% of whom were nurses, served in Vietnam. Four active duty women and 59 civilian women died there. The day also marked the 15th anniversary of the dedication of Vietnam Women's Memorial.

"We were the ones who went where we were needed and when we were needed," said Diane Carlson Evans, a former Army nurse who is founder and president of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation.

Pioneer Woman Aviator Honored



On Mar 26, 2009, Colonel Sally Murphy, USA was honored as an Army aviation pioneer in a ceremony at Fort Myer, VA. She was the first woman to graduate from the Army's flight school at Fort Rucker. She became a legend flying both helicopters and fixed-winged aircraft. It was not an easy path. When it was announced at her first day at flight training that she would be the first woman student, the male students booed. A civilian contract flight instructor refused to fly with her. Nonetheless, she persevered, raising to the rank of Colonel. She was praised at the ceremony as a groundbreaker who made progress in the Army easier for the women who followed her. One of those women was Colonel Laura Richardson, USA who, as the current Fort Myer garrison commander, lead the ceremony. Richardson is a Blackhawk helicopter pilot and served as Commander of the 5th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment while deployed to Iraq.

Moving Up

Rear Admiral (lower half) Kathleen M. Dussault, Supply Corps, USN, has been nominated for appointment to the rank of Rear Admiral and is serving as Commander, Joint Contracting Command, Multi-National Force, Iraq in Baghdad, Iraq.



On the Move

Brigadier General Lyn D. Sherlock, U.S. Air Force, to Director, Regional Affairs, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force (International Affairs), Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, DC., where she manages the Air Force's direct liaison with foreign government officials, Washington agency counterparts, and representatives of the aerospace industry to implement Air Force security cooperation programs.



Ultimate Sacrifice

Staff Sergeant Renee A. Deville, USAR, 44, died Sep 1,



2008 at Walter Reed Army Hospital, Washington, D C

from wounds suffered in a mortar attack in Iraq in Aug 2006. At the time she was assigned to the 401st Civil Affairs Battalion, Webster, NY. While at Walter Reed, Deville was assigned to the Chosen Battery, Warrior Transition Brigade, and was among three graduates of the Army's first Basic Noncommissioned Officers Stand Alone Common Core Course offered to transitioning wounded soldiers. Deville, who successfully completed every aspect of the course from a wheelchair, was lauded by Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston as exemplifying the Army's 'Warrior Ethos' at the graduation ceremony for the course on March 28, 2008. Deville, who had two young children, was also the impetus for a new playground being built in 2007 behind the Mologne House, a hotel for outpatients and their families. She was featured in a *Washington Post* article about the project.

Lance Corporal Stacy A. Dryden, USMC, 22, of North Canton, OH died Oct 19, 2008 from



injuries sustained in a non-hostile incident in Anbar Province, Iraq. She was assigned to the 1st Supply Battalion, 1st

Marine Logistics Group, Camp Pendleton, CA. She graduated in 2004 from Stark County Glen Oak High School where she was a cheerleader and sang in the choir. She joined the Marines in 2007 because, according to a cousin, she thought it was the most challenging of the services and she always wanted to try new things. After completion of Recruit Training, she reported to Camp Johnson, North Carolina for Marine Combat Training and then the Defense Basic Packing School. Her family said the Marines with whom she served named her the "Fiery Angel" because "she came off as sweet and innocent, but she was tough as nails." Her great uncle said she "always took a big bite out of life."

Civilian Paula Loyd, 36, died Jan 7, 2009 at Brooke Army



Medical Center, San Antonio, TX from burns she received Nov 4, 2008 during an attack on her by an Afghan

civilian who doused her with fuel and set her afire. At the time, she was working for BAE Systems as a social scientist and was part of the Army's Human Terrain Initiative helping soldiers understand local culture. She was a graduate of Wellesley College with degrees in cultural anthropology and Spanish. She then joined the Army and served as a tank mechanic in South Korea and at Fort Bragg, earning

three Army Commendation Medals and four Army Achievement Medals. While pursuing a Masters Degree at Georgetown University in Foreign Policy and International Security, she joined the Army Reserves and served in Bosnia and then Afghanistan. When her unit returned to the US, she stayed in Afghanistan as a civilian, working for the International Organization for Migration, the UN and USAID. She then joined BAE and after stateside training, returned to Afghanistan where she was attacked. Her niece said Loyd "spent her life helping people. I know that sounds ironic to say about a military woman, but her goal in the military was to rebuild, both lives and services."

Private First Class Cwislyn K. Walter, ANG, 19, of Honolulu, HI died Feb 19, 2009 of

injuries sustained in a vehicle accident in Kuwait City, Kuwait. She was assigned to the 29th Special Troops Battalion, 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Hawaii National Guard. She was qualified as a signal

support systems specialist and a human resources specialist. Born in Chuuk, Micronesia and raised on Guam, she had lived in Hawaii for two years. In high school she excelled at softball, even though she was short, because she was fast and could hit. She also was a member of a Polynesian





dance group and liked reggae music. At a memorial service, her Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Moses Kaiwi said in his "26 years of service, Spc. Walter ranks among the best that I have had the honor to have known and worked with. She was young and motivated. She had initiative and produced quality work. She really had a positive impact on everyone in the battalion and brought the best out of everyone."

Sergeant Simone A. Robinson, ANG, 21, of Dixmoor, IL



died Mar 1, 2009 at Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, TX from wounds sustained when an IED detonated near her security post on Jan 17, 2009 in Kabul, Afghanistan. She was assigned to the 634th Brigade Support Battalion of the Illinois Army National Guard. Simone was just outside the gate of Camp Eggers providing security for a base fuel truck when a suicide bomber attacked. The explosion trapped her between a burning vehicle and the wall of the compound, resulting in severe burns, an amputated leg and a skull fracture. Her commanding officer said she was an athlete who endured intense physical workouts, yet had a happy disposition, a bubbly personality and an always-smiling face. Her Command Sergeant Major described her as "that rare soldier you hope to have assigned to your unit,

Ultimate Sacrifice

one who lifted everyone's spirits and others could turn to when they were down and one of the most inspirational soldiers in the unit." Her family told NBC Chicago that she was devoted to her friends, family, country and most importantly to her daughter. "Simone had a smile that could easily light up a room and an angelic voice heard by so many."

Specialist Jessica Y. Sarandrea, USA, 22, of Miami, FL

died Mar 3, 2009 in Mosul, Iraq of wounds suffered when enemy forces attacked her forward operating base with mortar fire. She was assigned to the 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. She was stationed in Mosul, performing logistical support for her battalion. She was hit by shrapnel from incoming mortar while walking from her office. She was a graduate of Coral Gables High School. She had been in the Army about four years and previously had served in Kuwait. She had re-enlisted to be with her husband whom she had met in Kuwait. Those who knew her consistently described her as always upbeat. One NCO for whom she worked said on legacy.com that "her attitude was one of the most amazing that you could ever meet. She could come in and smile and turn a bad day into one of the best you could ever experience."



Lieutenant Florence B. Choe, Medical Service Corps, USN, 35, of El Cajon, CA

died Mar 27 2009 when an insurgent posing as an Afghan soldier opened fire on personnel assigned to Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan at Camp Shaheen, Mazar-E-Sharif, Afghanistan. She was shot, along with two others, while outside conducting physical training. She was serving as a medical administration and logistics mentor to the Afghan National Army. Her regular assignment was at the Naval Medical Center San Diego, CA. Born and educated in San Diego, she earned an associate's degree from Cuyamaca Community College in 1994. In 1997 she was awarded a bachelor's degree in biology by the University of California San Diego and in 2001 a master's degree in public health and health care administration by San Diego State University. She was commissioned as a member of the Navy's Medical Service Corps on Feb. 21, 2002. "She was a professional naval officer who was extremely smart and extremely pleasant," said a hospital spokeswoman who knew her. "She always had a smile on her face, and everyone admired her. All of us at the Naval Medical Center are proud of her, and we are grieving for her."



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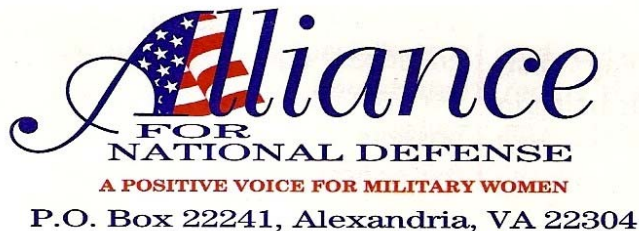
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