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THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE U.S. MILITARY

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■ CONTENTS

● INTRODUCTION	8
● QUESTIONS RAISED AND CHALLENGES POSED	9
<i>Questions raised by the presence of women in the military</i>	9
Citizenship.....	9
The female relationship with violence	10
Military effectiveness	10
Recruitment criteria.....	11
Unit cohesion.....	11
<i>Challenges</i>	12
Finding the balance between career and family life	12
Symbolic presence and critical mass	13
● DEVELOPMENT IN SPURTS	15
<i>Real, but unofficial presence (1775-1948)</i>	15
War of Independence (1775-1783)	15
Civil War (1861-1865).....	15
Splendid Little War (1898).....	16
First World War: the number of women in administrative positions rises	16
World War II: widening the scope of possibilities	17
The Armed Service Integration Act (1948)	17
<i>Slow, but steady change (1948-1994)</i>	18
Evolving in spurts.....	18
The end of conscription and growth in the recruitment of women.....	18
<i>Breaking down the barriers</i>	20
● THE WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN: REMOVING THE FINAL OBSTACLES (2001-2016)	22
<i>Women in OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom) and OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom)</i>	22
<i>The Cultural Support Teams (CST) programme</i>	23
<i>The situation of women in the military in terms of numbers prior to the decision of January 2013</i>	24
<i>The decision of January 2013</i>	26
<i>The situation in the Army</i>	26
<i>Case study: the Marine Corps</i>	28
The Entry Level Training study.....	28
The Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force experiment	30
<i>The decision of December 2015</i>	31

- CONCLUSION 33
- APPENDIX 34
- INFORMATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY 37
 - Academic works and articles:37
 - News articles:.....38
 - Selection of websites that discuss the topic of women in the military:.....39
 - Documentaries/films/videos:39

■ INTRODUCTION

On 24 January 2013, then US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta declared that all final obstacles preventing women from being fully integrated in the US armed forces would be lifted, including those concerning combat units. This decision had to come into effect on 1st January 2016 at the latest, unless the military could bring before Congress reasons that justified where exceptions could be made. On 3 December 2015, Ash Carter, current Defense Secretary, made the announcement that all positions would be open to women, without exception.

These two announcements, in particular the first which took everyone by surprise, marked the end of a long period of integration for women in the US armed forces. This also meant the United States had now caught up with other Western countries which, like France, had already opened almost all military positions to women several years previously.

Female service members, who were present alongside US troops since the War of Independence, only obtained their official status after the Second World War. This slow process of integration, which has sped up in the past forty years, was conducted in successive phases. It was marked by periods of notable progress, when the presence of women was necessary, indeed essential during times of crisis, as well as attempts at regression. The first Gulf War, and especially recent conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, helped remove these final obstacles (both cultural and institutional) by showing everyone in the civilian and military spheres that women were an undeniable asset that the military could not do without, including in operations.

The purpose of this paper is to study the most important issues surrounding the integration of women in the US armed forces. However, US specificities must not prevent us from seeing the resonance of this debate in Europe. Research was carried out using the abundant documentation available on the subject. Interviews were also conducted in the United States in late October 2015. The results show that opinions on the integration of women in the US military, a politically sensitive subject, are often extremely divided between those for and against integration. The US military, on the contrary, seeks to move the debate away from the gender issue – to which it is often reduced – and towards the question of how skills are managed in the military. For the institution, the issue is not to establish quotas for women, but rather to improve skill management in order to appoint the soldier best suited to the task, irrespective of gender, skin colour or sexuality.

The paper is divided into three parts, and begins by looking at the basic questions raised by the presence of women in the military and the challenges they face when they decide to enlist and serve their country. The second part illustrates the major stages of integration for women in the US military, from the creation of the United States to the beginning of the 2000s. Finally, the third part focuses firstly on the conflict of the last fifteen years that contributed to the change of US mentalities, and secondly on the measures and decisions taken by the various forces following the announcement made in January 2013.

■ QUESTIONS RAISED AND CHALLENGES POSED

QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

The integration of women in the military raises a certain number of fundamental questions, which have been for many years the subject of recurring debates.

Citizenship

The integration of women in the military is intrinsically linked to women's status as citizens. Incidentally, this raises the question of their relationship with the state. Citizenship bestows the right to enjoy qualities associated with equality, as well as the right to sharing a common social heritage. This is what helps us be accepted as a fully-fledged member of society (Iskra, 2010: 55).

As a social structure, citizenship can be divided into three parts: the civil, the political and the social. Civic citizenship can be described as the rights necessary for a person to enjoy their individual freedoms, such as living freely, the power to express oneself, think and believe freely, the capacity to own land, sign contracts and enjoy equitable justice. Political citizenship implies the right to vote. Social citizenship is made up of the aspects of life that range from enjoying a minimum of security and economic prosperity and sharing the common heritage.

Nonetheless, there is a relationship between being a citizen and being empowered with enforcing a state's legitimate violence. While citizenship affords a person certain rights, for a long time one of the duties of being a citizen included completing military service and, if necessary, giving one's life to defend the nation. In the United States, for example, this long-established relationship between being a citizen and the right to carry arms can be seen in the possibility for non-citizens or second-class citizens to obtain full citizenship by completing military service (Iskra, 2010: 56). This remains true today for certain foreigners who earn US citizenship by enlisting in the military.

The underlying question is therefore to ask if women as citizens are duty-bound like men to serve their country in the event of serious crisis requiring conscription to be reinstated.¹ This issue gives rise to opposition between two visions: on one side, unsurprisingly, are the feminists and on the other the anti-feminists. For feminists, there are many schools of feminist thought on equality. However, two different approaches emerge when the integration of women in the military is discussed. Firstly, for egalitarian feminists, a woman has the right and even a duty to complete military service. It is the element that gives her full citizenship, according to her true equality. For these feminists, women have the capacities and the skills to compete with men. They therefore believe that all positions should be opened to women in the military according to the principle of "equal rights, equal duties". Anti-military feminists or critics do not share this viewpoint, believing it is counterproductive for a woman to join the armed forces, because she is contributing to the promotion of masculine values and thereby strengthening society's gender hierarchy. They see militarism as the basic expression of patriarchy (Carreiras, 2008: 66).

¹ In the United States, while the armed forces are a professional activity, men over age 18 must register on the Selected Service System. In France, women and men must register at age 16. The debate continues in the USA over the inclusion of women in the register.

Antifeminists hold an opposing view that it is perfectly normal for a woman to be exempt from military service, because she has other ways of fulfilling her citizen duty, namely through her role as a female and mother. They defend an old-fashioned view of how roles are distributed in society, based on gender criteria and supported by traditional family values. For antifeminists, women are socially inapt for the hardship of war, incapable of killing and physiologically unsuited to using the equipment. According to antifeminists, not only does the integration of women in the military destroy the family, but also reduces the efficiency of the forces.

The female relationship with violence

From the previous topic, and since a woman as a citizen may need to bear arms, follows that of the female relationship with violence. Until the end of the 19th century, as occupations were divided according to sex, it was commonplace to reduce men to warfare activities and women to procreation. Taking a life was placed in opposition to giving life. Further still, the ability to give life automatically corresponded to an inability to take life. The weak spot in this reasoning is that a biological reality – the ability to give birth – was placed opposite the aptitude to enter into combat.

This opinion has since been widely discredited in Western societies and the separation between these activities is becoming less distinct. Being a soldier is no longer perceived as specifically and intrinsically masculine, and this has enabled the military to be gradually feminised. The image of the female soldier has therefore gradually become more widespread in society.

Nonetheless, the fundamental occupation of warfare has not changed. For males and females, war continues to consist in killing and exposing oneself to death (Reynaud, 1988: 163). Concerning the act of killing, there are plenty of relatively recent examples that show that women are perfectly capable of combat and killing if necessary. As for being killed, those who wish to limit the integration of women in the military have consistently put forward the argument that public opinion has greater difficulty accepting the death of a woman as opposed to that of a man. In their view, her death does not have the same impact as that of a man.

Military effectiveness

Another major issue raised is the compatibility of maintaining effectiveness in military operations and the acceptance of a certain level of diversity, be it social, ethnical or sexual. On this particular issue, the debate generally opposes democratic values of equality and non-discrimination and the military necessity of effectiveness and readiness.

There are two opposing idealistic visions here. In the first, in a democratic society the armed forces should naturally reflect the society they are supposed to protect.² Inversely, the second perspective argues that service-members are different from the rest of society due to the specific nature of their job, and in particular due to the fact that they exercise the state's right to legitimate violence. Therefore, above all else they must be effective and as such it is normal that exceptions are made to the principles of equality and

² By the same reasoning, it is imperative that women are fully integrated in the US military, following the same logic that previously applied to minorities and more recently, homosexuals.

non-discrimination. For them, the armed forces should not be used as a social laboratory. The risk involved is too great.

Recruitment criteria

The question of military effectiveness therefore brings us to an analysis of the standards of recruitment to be respected, and individual female characteristics, both physical and psychological. The lack of physical strength and unavailability due to the female menstrual cycle and maternal duties, together with the emotional capacity to function normally under stress, have always been presented by those opposing integration as elements that limit women's abilities to fulfil military duties, specifically in combat. As surprising as they sound, these received ideas are still present today and explain the strong reluctance of certain units to accept women into their ranks (Lamothe, 2015).

The issue of physical criteria continues to be a source of discord, even among those who are in favour of the integration of women. For some, equal does not necessarily mean identical and therefore there is no real need to provide equivalent physical tests in order to be equal (Carreiras, 2008: 90). Inversely, others consider that having different physical standards and tests may be problematic. If a woman passes a physical test with a score that is below the pass level for men, their physical performance is then seen as a source of inequality. Consequently, they request that specific physical tests be created that are not based on gender but rather the position that is to be filled. The physical and psychological challenges of an infantry grenadier in a combat unit are not the same as those encountered by an administrative secretary in a division headquarters. Impartial tests that do not distinguish between sexes would determine whether the person is apt for the position or not. For these tests, there is no lowering of recruitment standards, nor is the doctrine of the units compromised; rather, the appropriate recruitment standards are set out according to the tasks that must be fulfilled.

Preparing this type of impartial and non-gender-defined test will not be easy; today's physical standards in the military were established in order to measure soldiers' physical fitness and not their efficiency at work. Furthermore, these tests were originally designed for men: for example, there are no physical tests in fields where women would be stronger than men – flexibility, for instance. In any case, it goes against the extremely widespread notion – both among men and women, civilian and military – that women are physically inferior to men. This perception is in fact at the root of the opposition encountered on the topic.

Unit cohesion

The military is traditionally seen as a masculine institution built on a number of underlying myths. The image of the warrior has for a long time been, and despite the feminisation of the military, continues to be associated with males and masculine values.

One of the arguments used by those who challenge the role of women in the military is the risk that the presence of women in combat units would affect cohesion in those units.³ However, it is important to define this concept when it is put forth. There are indeed two types of cohesion: social cohesion and task

³ Interestingly, in the United States the same argument based on cohesion was used against the integration of African Americans in the military, and more recently against the integration of homosexuals.

cohesion. The first is formed from the personal and emotional ties that bind humans together; the second comes from a shared collective commitment to fulfilling an objective or given task.⁴

Furthermore, the predicate that efficiency is systematically the fruit of cohesion has never been proven. Quite the opposite: when group cohesion is too strong, this may be counterproductive.⁵ For example, sometimes group objectives oppose those of the higher echelon or the group develops its own culture, alienating anyone outside it. . While it is true that groups that are closely tied generally create a more pleasant working environment, this does not make them more efficient. Research has in fact shown that while task cohesion seems to have a positive effect on the group's efficiency, this is not necessarily true for social cohesion (Carreiras, 2008: 93).

CHALLENGES

Every service-member must face a certain number of challenges, due to the unique nature of the military profession. Female service-members do not escape this reality, especially as military society continues to be seen as a social structure mainly built by and for men.

Finding the balance between career and family life

For men and women, work and home lives are two potentially conflicting spheres. Generally, in most career fields, it is difficult today to reconcile work and family life. Most often, women must balance the two more than men. This can be explained by the fact that while large numbers of women have entered the workplace, men have not assumed their role *en masse* in the domestic sphere. While recent years have seen a more equitable distribution of chores between men and women at home, women continue to spend more time than men on household chores.⁶

As such, women who wish to reconcile work and family life often have to make choices. Research has shown that in certain cases, women in paid work generally delay having children due to the difficulty in combining the two (Carreiras, 2008: 56). As a result, they often have to limit their career ambitions, for example by working part-time.

This appears even more starkly evident in the military world. There is indeed conflict between life in the military, characterised by permanent mobility, the risk inherent to the job and the requirement to be available, and family life, which on the contrary requires a certain level of stability. Furthermore, this opposition is more pronounced because of the growing number of military couples, single parents, mothers in the military and couples where both parents work.

This disconnect is especially felt because both institutions – the military and the family – exact a high toll on their members in terms of time, energy and availability. For this reason, they are described as “total institutions” (Carreiras, 2008: 57). While the difficulty in reconciling family and professional life is not the

⁴ WIIS round table held on 27 April 2015.

⁵ On this topic, see *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* by Irving Janis.

⁶ In the United States, in 2014, men spent an average of one hour and twenty-two minutes on household chores while women spent two hours and nine minutes. Statistics taken from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics website](#), consulted on 14 December 2015.

preserve of the military sphere alone or of women alone, this issue does however particularly concern women in the military. For a female service member, having a child often results in the following decision: either leave the military after the birth of the first child, or choose a career in the slow lane, with a significant break after the first birth (Carreiras, 2008: 58). Therefore, as Moskos wrote in the 1980s, a woman in the military must often decide not to get married if she wants to pursue a career, or if she gets married, decide not to have children.

There is also the issue of marriage between two service-members, which creates a number of problems within the institution specifically in terms of transfers. The difficulty in reconciling two careers in the same institution often results in one sacrificing his/her career for the sake of the other.

Symbolic presence and critical mass

Women in the military generally have to face three main difficulties: high visibility, isolation and stereotypes.

Due to their low number, women in the military are extremely visible. Working in an environment where they often represent less than 15% of personnel, they are seen as symbols, and this places a heavy weight on their shoulders in terms of results. They are seen as representative of all women as a group. If a woman is good at her job, this is seen as normal, without coming to conclusions about all women. However, if she is incompetent, then this incompetence is applied to women across the board. This is not true for a man. The lower the number of women in a given environment, the greater the pressure and the higher their symbolic value will be. Consequently, some women make the mistake, either consciously or unconsciously, of always trying to do more, constantly seeking to prove that they deserve their place, and even trying to blend into the background by adopting ultra-masculine behaviour.

However, this behaviour often isolates them from the rest of their colleagues. Some men, even without being aware, then feel obliged to take on an excessively virile register (macho behaviour, jokes of a sexual nature, etc.). Whether deliberate or not, this exacerbated masculinity indicates to women that they are not part of the group. Negative attitudes towards women tend to drop off as they become more senior, however. Nonetheless, even in a position of authority, some women see their legitimacy challenged, either by their subordinates through passive-aggressive behaviour, or by their hierarchy, which denies them the support they deserve or does not include them fully in their circle. This isolation can also be created by other women, who are suspicious of someone that places themselves in a position of permanent competition. Some instinctively create a distinction between themselves and other women in order to be accepted by their male colleagues, with the notion that while they may be a woman, they are not like the others. They then join in the criticism of other women in order to be better accepted by the group.

Lastly, women must also deal with the stereotypes that some of their male colleagues tend to try and impose on them. These stereotypes reduce women to a few typical roles, which actually limit their capacities and skills. Rosabeth Moss Kanter described the four main stereotypes: the mother, the pet or mascot, the seductress and the battle-axe (Iskra, 2010: 109).

Integrating women into specialities formerly reserved for men also raises the question of critical mass, i.e. the number of women that will need to be transferred to these units initially so that they do not end up being purely symbolic, alone and isolated among men. Still, this notion of critical mass seems irrelevant

once command establishes a professional working climate in the unit and ensures it is respected, so that a person is judged above all by his or her skills.

The next section will take these analyses as a basis to better understand how the United States gradually integrated women in the military. We shall see that abrupt change occurs less frequently than adaptation in successive stages, and the negotiations between the various elements involved are more important than a revolutionised institution.

■ DEVELOPMENT IN SPURTS

In the United States, these questions have long contributed to the debate and continue to be a source of heated discussion in the political world, public opinion, the media and the academic world. They have had quite a significant impact on the decisions made over several decades concerning the integration of women in the military. Under the pretext of avoiding endangering the efficiency of the US armed forces, structured discrimination has long been in place in the military against women, through human resources policies. Since for many years they were prevented from obtaining certain posts, they were limited in their chances of being promoted to the next rank. The US military system is an “up or out” system, with age limits for each rank. Therefore, being limited in one’s promotion opportunities meant that at some point, resignation from the institution was imposed (Dichter, 2015). However, mentalities have changed in recent years and while some arguments continue to be used today, others seem irrelevant and outdated due to the reality of contemporary theatres of operations and the growing role of women in the military.

The integration process occurred over a long period, marked with significant progress followed by attempts at regression, which were often merely transitory. Whatever the degree of integration of women in the US armed forces today, they have always been present, even if they were for a long time restricted to support roles. Until recently, combat was the preserve of men – with a few extremely exceptional cases. It is also important to remember that for a long time, there was no common development in the US forces on the process of integration of women in their ranks. Each force – the Army, the Air Force, the Navy and the Marine Corps all developed at its own rhythm.

REAL, BUT UNOFFICIAL PRESENCE (1775-1948)

War of Independence (1775-1783)

Since the War of Independence, women have been present in the ranks of the Continental Army, where they traditionally worked as nurses, seamstresses and cooks, helping improve the soldiers’ living conditions. While they were not officially part of the army and wore no uniform, they were obliged to respect its rules. A few women did however sometimes fight, either in self-defence in the absence of their husbands who had gone to war, or by taking their husbands' place after his death. Ann Bailey (1742-1825), known as Mad Ann, worked as a messenger and scout for the Army. Some women, such as Deborah Samson (1760-1827), disguised themselves as men in order to take part in combat. Others were used as spies or messengers, like Ann Simpson Davis (1764-1851).

Civil War (1861-1865)

Women were first recruited by the government to serve in the armed forces during the American Civil War, although they were not granted military status. A number of female personalities played significant roles during this period. Dorothea Dix (1802-1887), for example, commanded a unit of civilian nurses set up by the Union Army (Iskra, 2010). Clara Barton (1821-1912), who took part in the Civil War as a nurse, specialised in humanitarian causes and later became the first president of the American Association of the

Red Cross. Dr Mary E. Walker (1832-1919) served as assistant surgeon in the Union forces. Today she remains the only woman to have received the Medal of Honor, the highest US military distinction. Almost 6,000 women served as nurses among the Union Army's ranks.

The Civil War was also the time of female spies. Harriet Tubman (1820-1913), who prior to the war took part in the Underground Railroad, which allowed fleeing slaves to travel to the free states and Canada, was head of a group of emancipated slaves who acted as scouts for General Saxton in North Carolina in 1863.

Although there weren't many of them, women were nonetheless already present.

Splendid Little War (1898)

It wasn't until the Spanish-American War in 1898 that things began to take shape. This conflict highlighted the need for readily available nurses at short notice. Almost 1,500 contract nurses were urgently recruited during this war. At the end of the war, on 2 February 1901, the Army Nurse Corps was founded and became a permanent component of the US Army (Army Reorganization Act - 31 Stat. 753). Nurses were from then on recruited for renewable three-year periods. A Reserve component was also established in order to deal with eventual emergencies. As each of the armed forces evolved at its own rhythm, it wasn't until seven years later, in 1908, that the US Navy established its own nurse corps (FY 1909 Naval Appropriations Act, PL-115).

World War I : the number of women in administrative positions rises

The First World War also contributed to changing women's status. With the United States declaring war on Germany in the spring of 1917, over 4.8 million American citizens served in the armed forces, with almost 2 million being sent to France. American society therefore had to adapt in order to tackle the shortage of male labourers. Women began to make their presence felt in key industries, previously reserved for men, and sometimes represented up to 20% of the workforce. They even began to take over in certain previously male-dominated fields, in particular administrative positions such as office workers, telephone operators, stenographers, etc. The same need for workers was also felt within the armed forces. Over 35,000 women served their country during the First World War. They were employed in non-combat and mainly administrative positions, such as the Yeomannettes in the Navy, which allowed more men to join in combat. Over half of these women – approximately 21,000 – served in the Army Nurse Corps. The Army Signal Corps, the US Army's transmissions branch, recruited 230 bilingual telephone operators, the "Hello Girls", to serve outside the USA.

At the end of the war, as demand waned, they were sent home with no acknowledgement of the time they had spent on duty. It was not until 1979 that they were retroactively granted military status. Progress was therefore made in rollercoaster fashion, with great leaps forward when women were needed, and several steps backwards when the need disappeared.

Nonetheless, things continued to change, step by step. As they were not part of the active army, the nurses in the Army Nurse Corps had no official status or rank, which regularly caused problems. Certain Army paramedics refused to recognise their authority. To resolve this issue, Congress granted nurses officer status in 1920, with an equivalent rank, although they were not entitled to the same prerogatives. An Army nurse was paid less than her similarly-ranked male colleagues.

World War II: widening the scope of possibilities

During the Second World War, women were needed once more to alleviate the labour shortage. Almost 330,000 women, almost ten times more than during the First World War, served in the US military (MacKenzie, 2015: 20). While they initially took on traditional administrative positions, other opportunities soon began to be opened to them. As men were sent *en masse* into combat, women were needed in particular to drive trucks, dig trenches and even pilot airplanes. They were employed in all support and rear functions that did not require them to be directly in combat. In 1942, the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) was set up, to deliver the planes from assembly plants to the ports and convoy the planes to US Army bases and training grounds.⁷ Around the same time the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) was created, merging with the WAFS in 1943 to form the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Over 1,000 female pilots completed almost 300,000 flight hours in three years, flying all types of planes, mostly in convoy missions (Reynaud, 1988: 16). The US Army and the Navy were not outdone, with the WAC-Women Army Corps and the WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Services) being established respectively.

Before 1941, women were mainly seen in American society through their roles as mothers and wives; periods of war gave them the possibility, for the first time, to take up positions considered essential and often physically demanding. (Iskra, 2015: 5).

With the end of the war, nurses once more saw their status evolve. In 1947, the US Congress passed the Army-Navy Nurse Act (PL-36-80C) which recognised the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps as permanent active elements of the United States Army and Navy. Furthermore, nurses were granted full officer status, with the highest possible rank of lieutenant-colonel or commander (O-5). Air Force nurses had to wait until 1949 for the Air Force Nurse Corps to be created.

The Armed Service Integration Act (1948)

The year 1948 was a turning point in the integration process of women in the military, because for the first time women were given an official status by the Armed Service Integration Act. Although they did become permanent members of the armed forces, significant limits were put in place and thereby reduced their career perspectives (MacKenzie, 2015). Before the age of 21, a woman could not enlist without the written consent of her parents; the same limitation applied to men but only up to age 18. In addition, female volunteers were limited in number. The number of women could not exceed 2% of all volunteers. Only 10% of those 2% could be officers. The ranks of major/navy captain (O-4) and lieutenant-colonel/commander (O-5) were submitted to quotas for women, and they could not be promoted higher than O-5.

Irrespective of the force in question, they could not be transferred to operational units that would mean the possibility of being in direct contact with combat. They were therefore confined to administrative or medical positions, which consequently limited their career opportunities and any possibility for promotion. Lastly, they could never have any command authority over a man, irrespective of his rank. They were also denied the same rights to family allowances that men received. They had to wait for a Supreme Court decision in 1973 (*Frontiero v. Richardson*) that removed this difference in rights between men and women. The case was argued by Sharron Frontiero, a female Air Force lieutenant, and her husband Joseph against

⁷ Before 1947, the US Air Force was a sub-division of the US Army, known as the US Army Air Corps.

then Secretary of Defence, Elliott Richardson. Before this case, the rule stated that a woman had to prove that her husband was dependent on her for over half their support in order to claim benefits. Inversely, this rule was never applied to men, who automatically received those benefits once married, irrespective of the level of dependence of their spouse. The Supreme Court decision ended this discriminatory treatment.

SLOW, BUT STEADY CHANGE (1948-1994)

Evolving in spurts

Change slowly continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s, in particular due to the Korean and Vietnam wars, but especially due to the change in mind-sets and the progress that women were making alongside the armed forces in civilian society. In 1951, the Department of Defense established an advisory body on matters concerning women, the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). Made up of civilian men and women appointed by the Defense Secretary, its purpose is to advise and issue recommendations on recruitment, retention, employment, treatment, integration and well-being of women in the armed forces. However, DACOWITS did not become a major force until the 1970s.

Progress in integrating women in the military still remained sporadic however. In 1951, President Truman signed Executive Order 10240 authorising the armed forces to return women to civilian life if they became pregnant or married a man that already had children. This executive order is a strong example of the determination of a segment of American society of the time to “get back to normal” after the Second World War. This setback on the path to integration did not prevent developments from being made, however.

While in 1950, only 22,000 women were on active duty in the US military, the Korean War brought the female workforce up to 49,000 at the height of the war, before dropping back to 30,600 in the early 1960s (Chapman, 2008: 5). In 1967, due to the extra need for staff generated by the Vietnam War, the 2% limit imposed on women and the quotas for senior officers put in place by the Armed Services Integration Act in 1948 were removed (PL-90-130). Women now were entitled to be promoted to all ranks, including general officers.

The end of conscription and growth in the recruitment of women

The year 1973 and the end of conscription were also turning points in the development of women’s roles in the US military. The end of military service and the newly created All Volunteer Force-AVF, as well as the strong opposition felt against the war in Vietnam created a shortage of male service-members, in quantity and in quality. Recruitment levels dropped; there were more conscientious objectors, and a growing disenchantment in public opinion for the military profession (Carreiras, 2008: 74).

The 1970s were a period of increased social pressure for change to take place in the military structure. First of all, there was a change in how the military profession was perceived, and it became a job like any other, though without losing its unique characteristics, such as the monopoly on legitimate violence. This change was explained by Moskos in 1977 as the shift from an institutional model to an occupational model. The

profession of arms was no longer considered as a calling or a vocation for men alone, but as a professional occupation. It is at this point that the civilian and military spheres began to converge. The change in mindsets thereby gave women more opportunities to participate and be employed in the military (King, 2013).

As such, there was a gradual and significant rise in the number of women recruited into the US Armed Forces. While representing only 1.6% of the force in 1973, the figure rose to 8.4% in 1980 (Iskra, 2010). The increase in female recruitment in the US military was reflected by a simultaneous rise in the level of training of new recruits. There is a clear relationship between the degree of specialisation in the armed forces, which need increasingly qualified personnel, and the rise in the number of women. Women joining the military were often of a higher educational background than their male colleagues.

The 1970s was a period of definitive split with the traditional manner in which women were employed in the military. On top of their growing numbers, their status also progressed from simple aids and assistants to fully fledged members of the armed forces. Certain women also made use of the justice system to further their cause, most often successfully.

In 1975, President Ford authorised women to enter the military academies. Law 94-106 (PL-94-106) was passed by Congress a few months later, allowing the first women to join the military academies of West Point, Annapolis and Colorado Springs in the summer of 1976. They graduated as officers with the class of 1980. At the end of the 1970s, the presence of women in military academies and the Reserve Officer Training Course was however still largely seen as an anomaly.

In 1972, the Chief of Naval Operations, Elmo Zumwalt, published directive Z-116 which authorised a limited number of women to be employed in every military position. The Navy then set up a pilot programme to enable women to fill positions at sea on the hospital ship USS Sanctuary. A certain number of fields previously restricted to men then opened up to women: intelligence, encryption, public affairs, maintenance and the Chaplain Corps.

In 1976, six women (*Owens v. Brown*) brought a trial against the federal government arguing that Section 6015 of the US code (USC) Title 10, which forbade women from serving on a ship other than a hospital or support ship, was unconstitutional. While they won their case in July 1978, they had to wait another fifteen years before the law was eventually changed.

Events moved much more quickly for the Coast Guards, who opened all positions to women, including seagoing positions, in 1977. As the Coast Guards are a much smaller branch, they could not afford to dismiss the pool of qualified workers that women provided. For the same reason, neither could they offer a career trajectory that varied according to gender. The first female commander took the helm in 1978, whereas this did not happen in the Navy until 1990.

The combination of the successful trial, a shortage of male service-members and the growing number of women joining the Navy resulted in the gradual increase in positions opened to women.

In 1973, the Navy was the first to select eight women to enrol in a pilot training course. Six of them obtained their licence and became pilots of the US Naval Air Force, although they could not take part in combat operations. The Army was not far behind, authorising women in 1974 to become helicopter pilots,

with the same restrictions as applied by the Navy. The US Air Force joined the movement in 1975, allowing women to become pilots while simultaneously developing different career paths for men and women.

While doors continued to be opened to women, they were still limited in their career opportunities compared to those offered to men. The law, which excluded them from any possibility of becoming involved in combat, and the human resources policies that stemmed from the law automatically generated a systematic handicap for women to be promoted.

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

In 1980, Congress passed the Defense Officer Manpower Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) which put an end to different career paths for women and which, for the first time, authorised them to command men. From this date on, women were therefore in competition with their male peers, and no longer segregated by service administration.

In 1988, the Department of Defense sought to establish a rule that codified the positions that women could fill and promulgated the Risk Rule. This set out the risk involved as criteria that would authorise a woman to serve in a unit or not. While this rule was largely criticised due to the subjective aspect of the notion of risk (MacKenzie, 2015: 25), it did however enable 30,000 new positions to be opened to women. While they were still forbidden from serving in “combat” units, they did get closer to the action and to combat. During Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989, 770 women were deployed to the area.

The First Gulf War (1990-1991) was a significant turning point for how the role of women was perceived in the US military. Almost 41,000 women, some of whom were reservists called to duty, participated in Operations Desert Shield (August-December 1990) and Desert Storm (December 1990-March 1991). While positions in combat units were still closed to them, all other positions were open. The First Gulf War was the first modern war in which such a large number of women served alongside men in the theatre of operations. This enabled them to become more visible, which helped change mindsets on the topic. During these operations, fifteen women died and two were captured, including Major Rondha Cornum, who finished her career as Brigadier General.

As in previous conflicts in which women participated, a number of developments took place after the operations ended. The Kennedy-Roth amendment in the FY 1992-1993 Defense Authorization Act authorised women to serve onboard planes engaged in combat missions. At the end of 1991, President H. Bush established a committee on the topic of women’s careers in the armed forces. Its purpose was to produce a number of recommendations with the aim of facilitating and promoting equality for women in all ranks and for all specialties. The committee’s recommendations (Herres, 1992), were largely ignored, however, due to the defeat of President H. Bush in November 1992.

In January 1993, the Clinton administration took over and Les Aspin became Secretary of Defense. He quickly took a number of decisions concerning women in the military. From April 1993 on, the various forces were authorised to allow women to apply for on-board crew positions, including on aircraft engaged in combat missions. As a result, the first time women took part in combat missions was during the air campaign of the Kosovo War in 1998.

In addition, he requested that the Navy propose a modification to its law (Title 10 USC 6015), so that women could serve on warships, and the Army and the Marine Corps to study the possibility of opening more positions to women.

Following these studies, on 13 January 1994, the Secretary of Defence announced in a memorandum the end of the Risk Rule established since 1988, which had the effect of opening a large number of positions to women: 32,700 and 48,000 for the US Army and the Marine Corps respectively. This memorandum, entitled "Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule",⁸ which remained in force until January 2013, specified however that women should be excluded from positions in units below brigade level where the primary mission is to be engaged in combat operations. It also authorised the military to define further restrictions, when the cost incurred by mixed gender is too high (for example on submarines), when the doctrine requires staff to be colocated with combat units (for example, multiple rocket-launcher crew, maintenance worker on M1A1 Abrams tanks, etc.), when said units are engaged in long-term intelligence missions or missions for the special forces, and lastly when the physical requirements automatically exclude the majority of women.

While it distinctly advanced the integration of women, the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule would however be rapidly confronted with the realities of operations in the Iraqi and Afghan conflicts.

⁸ "Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground as defined below."

■ THE WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN: REMOVING THE FINAL OBSTACLES (2001-2016)

WOMEN IN OEF (OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM) AND OIF (OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM)

The US military was rapidly confronted with the reality of Afghan and Iraqi theatres of operation. The Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule is almost impossible to respect due to the very nature of these conflicts, likened to counter-insurrection as there is no frontline, or secure rear zone. It is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the combat units. All soldiers, male or female, whether in close combat, support, sustainment units or in staff headquarters, may at any time be confronted with a combat situation where the use of a weapon is necessary. “The battlefield makes no distinction between genders (Harding, 2008: 3)”.

Moreover, the regional cultural factor separating men and women in the social sphere must also be taken into account. Combat units made up solely of men can in no way communicate or interact with the half of the population that are women; this complicates the task and reduces the efficiency of intelligence gathering in operations that are conducted in the heart of populations.

In 2003, in order to find a solution to the problem, the Army and the Marines established the Team Lioness and Lioness programmes in Iraq. Whenever they needed to communicate with women or children, they called on female staff from their own force or other forces. This presence of women in combat units went practically unnoticed until the documentary film *Lioness* was released in 2008. The film told the story of one of the first female teams set up in Iraq in Ramadi in 2004. The problem was that these women were employed to support a combat mission for which they had received no training. Their only qualification was that they were women, not to mention the interoperability issues between the Army and the Marines, which often employ different procedures. There was a therefore significant difference between what the women were authorised to do and what they actually did in the field every day. In May 2005, the US Congress tried to take over the issue to force the Department of Defense to apply the Direct Combat Definition and Assignment Rule of 1994. In the end, the matter was quickly buried, because if they wanted to apply the rule to the letter, they would have undoubtedly had to repatriate all of the female staff from Iraq and Afghanistan.⁹

In any case, this experiment proved its utility and a few years later, in Afghanistan in 2009, the Marines of Task Force Leatherneck set up the FETs (Female Engagement Teams). These teams, made up exclusively of women volunteers, worked, lived and trained with the units they were detached to. In order to respect the law – which still forbade women from being transferred to combat posts – they were detached as temporary support staff and not transferred. This “institutional hypocrisy” would occasionally have humiliating consequences, for example being refused the right to wear a Combat badge, or even more damaging, denial of access to certain treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These FETs achieved excellent results.

⁹ Interview with Captain Lory Manning in the film *Lioness* (2008).

THE CULTURAL SUPPORT TEAMS (CST) PROGRAMME

In 2010, the US Army Special Operations Command in turn followed the Marines' example and established the CST-Cultural Support Team pilot programme. Following a six-week training programme in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the women were then temporarily detached to Special Forces units (Tzemach Lemmon, 2015). The CST programme came once more from the idea that the ability to communicate with the local women is essential to have access to useful intelligence. This is especially true in community-based societies in Afghanistan, where women hold a key position within the complex network of family relationships. The Army enlisted a former Marines lieutenant, Claire Russo, to set up the programme (Pottinger, 2010). She rapidly came to the conclusion that many Army units in Afghanistan already employed a number of women in various roles as part of their mission, although they had not undergone the minimum level of tactical training that would allow them to deal with the challenges they would encounter in the field. It was in fact a vast form of organised improvisation. The final barriers were eventually removed and the programme was officially launched when Admiral McRaven, commander of the Joint Special Operations Command, asked for these women to be authorised to accompany the Special Forces in their tasks. The US Army Special Operations Command launched the campaign to select and train volunteers.

The selection and training process for the first CST class was organised in two phases.¹⁰ First of all, the women volunteers had to undergo a week-long evaluation and selection phase,¹¹ which took place in March 2011 for the volunteers from the National Guard and the Reserve and two months later for those in the Regular army. The selection was made with no consideration for rank, as everyone – officers and NCOs – was given the same rank. The sixty women selected started their training in May 2011 for duration of six weeks.¹² At the end of the course, the CSTs were divided among the Green Berets and a few appointed to Ranger units. There is a significant difference in terms of risk. For the first, the main task is to undertake counter-insurrection activities (Village Stability Operations), i.e. create ties with the populations in the interest of better understanding the local customs, power relationships and the communities' needs, in order to "win hearts and minds". Inversely, the Rangers carry out counterterrorist activities, with Direct Action raids at night in enemy territory.

Deployed at the end of summer 2011 for one year, the first CSTs rapidly showed their usefulness by gathering exploitable intelligence from women and children. Just like in Iraq, the US servicewomen were often considered by the Afghan population as peacemakers that help restore calm. They were a "third gender", neither male nor female (Tzemach Lemmon, 2015). Eight CST classes, CST 1 to 8, were selected and trained. They became a "band of sisters". Two were killed in combat, lieutenants Ashley White on 22 October 2011, and Jennifer Moreno on 6 October 2013.

¹⁰ Video of the round table held during the conference organised on 27 April 2015 by *Women In International Security* (See bibliography).

¹¹ The first phase involved a week of tests in order to check the physical and psychological capacities of the volunteer women. They were tested in simulated situations through roleplay in the Soldier Urban Reaction Facility in Fort Bragg. Among almost 400 volunteers, sixty were chosen at the end of this selection week.

¹² This consisted in theory and practical classes: Afghan languages, culture and history, the art of negotiation and mediation, interrogation and search methods, mind strategies to deal with stress, weapons handling. All classes were tested in a final exercise.

Several lessons can be learned from this experiment (Haring, 2015: 2). To begin, although they were only detached and not transferred to the Green Berets or Rangers units, the CSTs participated in combat and had to face the same harsh conditions as their male colleagues. The CSTs deployed to Rangers units took part in several raids during their deployment.

Indeed, the presence of the CSTs quickly proved to be advantageous, facilitating intelligence gathering and relationships with NGOs in the zone, as well as contributing to de-escalation in situations that may otherwise have degenerated. So, despite initial reluctance, varying in degree depending on the special units they were detached to, these units quickly realised the value of their presence and asked to have more CST teams readily available. It is worthy of note that, unsurprisingly, the CSTs were more quickly integrated into detached units when the unit commander was in favour of their presence.

Furthermore, while return to normal life can often be difficult to manage after this type of mission in general, it was even more so for the CSTs. The programme was little known in the military and the participants received no career bonus for the services accomplished, not to mention simple recognition of their combatant status. Inversely, for many, the operations had negative consequences since they had been out of the normal career path for more than a year.

Operations OEF and OIF did, in reality and quite empirically, put an end to a number of myths about the inability of women in the military to survive harsh living conditions in the field with no bathrooms or hot water or even about the physical capacities of women. The main arguments, regularly used until then by those who opposed the full integration of women in the military, were the following: the presence of women in the ranks would soften their male colleagues; there was a risk they would destroy the units' esprit de corps; women would never have the physical strength to bring an injured colleague to a safe place; female losses in the ranks would cause excessive reactions among their male colleagues: US public opinion would never accept seeing women die in combat. This was all revealed to be false in Iraq and Afghanistan, and contributed greatly to the change in mentalities among senior civilian and military officials on the topic, as well as in American public opinion.

Meanwhile, things were also continuing to change in the Navy. While in 2000, the US Navy was strongly opposed to the presence of women on submarines, not just because of the cost of separating living quarters, but also due to physical criteria and harsh living conditions, the Chief of Naval Operations, supported by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Navy secretary, announced in 2009 that they would be in favour of women on submarines. A year later, the Navy officially allowed women the possibility of serving on certain types of submarines, with the exception of nuclear attack submarines, because of their small size.

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE MILITARY IN TERMS OF NUMBERS PRIOR TO THE DECISION OF JANUARY 2013

Since the end of conscription in 1973, the percentage of female staff in the active component of the US military has not ceased to advance, rising from 1.6% in 1973 to 14.6% in 2012. In September 2012, almost 203,000 were serving (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force) out of a total of 1.2 million service members. There are another approximately 6,000 women serving in the Coast Guards, who in peacetime are under the remit of the Department of *Homeland Security* (De Vries, 2014). Feminisation is taking place to varying

degrees depending on the force. The most feminised is the Air Force, where women represent 18.9% of personnel, followed closely by the Navy (16.9%) and the US Army (13.4%) and lastly the Marine Corps, far behind with only 6.9%. The Marine Corps is seen, rightly or wrongly, as the least willing to integrate women into its ranks (Philipps, 2015).

The data available for the period between 2002 and 2012 shows that in the past ten years, progress has been different in each service. As for the US Army, there is a definite decline in the percentage of women serving. They represented 15.3% of the force in 2002, which dropped to 14% in 2012. For the Air Force, the drop is less noticeable (19.4% in 2002 to 19% in 2012). However, the percentage of women in the ranks of the three other services rose. Between 2002 and 2012, the Navy female personnel rose from 14.4% to 16.9%, the Marine Corps from 6% to 6.9% and the Coast Guards from 10.3% to 14%.

Globally speaking, 16.2% of women serving in the US military are officers. This figure is at 16.6% for men.

There are two major patterns emerging among the female personnel. The first is the regular increase in the number of women reaching higher ranks, both among officers and NCOs. This can be explained quite simply by the time required for the first women who joined the forces in the 1970s and 1980s to climb the ladder and progress in the hierarchy. While women only represented 2% of colonels and navy captains in the 1980s, the figures in 2012 rose to 10.7% for the Army, 13.2% for the Navy and 13.7% for the Air Force. The Marine Corps has not yet caught up. Only 2.2% of Marine Corps colonels (O-6) are women. Nonetheless, we must mention that most of the women at O-6 level in other three forces are either doctors or chaplains. The Marine Corps does not have its own doctors or chaplains, as it depends on the Navy for these occupational specialties (De Vries, 2014).

As for women rising to the rank of general, there were 72 women of admiral or general rank in the US military, including the Coast Guards, a clear rise from the year 2000 when there were just 30.

In 2008, the Army was the first of the armed forces to appoint a woman to the highest rank of general officer, General Ann Dunwoody, who finished her career at the head of the Army Materiel Command. The Air Force followed in 2012 with the appointment of General Janet C. Wolfenbarger, director of the Air Force Materiel Command, and the Navy in 2014, with Admiral Michelle Howard appointed to the position of Vice-Chief of Naval Operations.

For the NCO personnel, while women overall represented less than 4% of the three highest ranks of NCO (E-7 to E-9), these figures rose in 2012 to 10.9% for the Army, 18.2% for the Air Force, 8.8% for the Navy, 6.7% for the *Marine Corps* and 7.8% for the Coast Guards, with a marked progression since the end of the 1980s (De Vries, 2014).

The second pattern, which should become an increasingly established reality with the removal of the final obstacles on 1 January 2016, is the growing numbers of women in high profile positions previously reserved for men. This therefore opens up new career and promotion perspectives for women, which should eventually lay the groundwork for a military hierarchy that is representative of American society. Before the end of his second term, President Obama is to nominate the first woman for the prestigious position as head of a Combatant Command (Bowman, 2015), which will be a major step forward.

THE DECISION OF JANUARY 2013

In January 2013, 7.3% of positions remained inaccessible to women, in particular in the combat units (infantry, armour, etc.) in the US Army and Marine Corps and across all of the special forces components in the various services (MacKenzie, 2013).

On 24 January 2013, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dempsey, announced that the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule would be lifted. They called on the different services to develop an integration scheme to allow women to access positions that were previously closed to them. The Army, the *Marine Corps*, the *Air Force* and the Navy were obliged to assess and validate their recruitment standards so that they would be coherent with the positions offered, conform to the reality of operations and applicable in a neutral manner, irrespective of gender. The various experiments and studies were expected to be finished for September 2015, so that they could be applied from January 2016. They also announced that 91,000 positions that were previously male-only would from that date be open to women. This was a historic turning point, and it made sense. The basic idea was that every position should be now open to women, unless there was a good reason not to. This follows an inverse logic to the rules practiced until now. The few exceptions should be analysed on a case-by-case basis and must be duly justified before Congress. In 2013, 10,192 positions were opened to women in the Army, in the Marines, in the Navy and the Special Forces, followed in 2014-2015 by 81,555 further positions. By 27 April 2015, 91,747 positions had been opened to women. As of that date, combat branches and a number of positions in special operations remained to be opened. 240,000 positions remained closed to women.¹³

First of all, this decision, which may have come as a surprise, was partly the result of acknowledging lessons learned in the Iraqi and Afghan conflicts and the substantial contribution of women to these operations, as well as the progression in public opinion on the topic. This was shown in a public poll carried out by ABC News and the Washington Post in March 2011, which showed that 73% of Americans supported the integration of women in combat (MacKenzie, 2013). In addition, the decision was the result of more practical consideration (Bowman, 2013). The US military need to recruit qualified personnel, which is becoming increasingly difficult to do within the male population alone. Today, less than 25% of any age group – of both men and women – are apt to serve in the US military, due to their criminal records, insufficient education levels, addiction problems, not to mention obesity. The US military cannot overlook the recruitment pool that women represent if it wants to achieve its goals. Finally, this decision can also be seen as the final step in the development of the post-modern military model; this transformation leads to greater permeability with civilian society, leading to a rise in civilian personnel in the military, the gradual acceptance of homosexuals,¹⁴ and increasing integration of women (Moskos, 2000).

THE SITUATION IN THE ARMY

Following the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in August 2012 the US Army launched the Soldiers 2020 project. The aim is to restore balance to the force and find the best soldier possible for the job, irrespective of

¹³ Juliet Beyer, *Director of Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management, Office of the Secretary of Defense* during the conference held by *Women In International Studies* on 27 April 2015.

¹⁴ This occurred in September 2011 in the United States with the abolition of the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* policy.

gender. The Army wants to manage its employees' talent, and so it must have the specific, precise standards to do so (Williams, 2015).

More generally, the US Army had already begun to study the opening of certain positions to women, before the decision was announced in January 2013. This concerned in particular six specialist fields and 13,000 MOS (*Military Occupational Specialty*). In May 2012, the US Army authorised the detachment of female officers and NCOs to the infantry, armour and artillery branches, as well as to nine *Brigade Combat Teams* for certain job categories (Military Intelligence, Chaplains, Legal, Signal, Adjutant General and Supplies). These were mainly administrative and support functions within the combat units. 740 positions were concerned; 359 women took this opportunity and were transferred to these units on an experimental basis. The experiment was generally positive, depending on the climate in the unit, and the atmosphere created by command.

Setting the deadline for 1 January 2016, the decision of January 2013 forced the US Army to speed up its schedule. In order to fulfil the request of the Defense Secretary, the US Army designed a scheme with three main focus areas. The first was to speed up the transfer of women to positions that were already open to them, but not necessarily occupied by women. The second involved firstly pursuing the Gender Integration Study, commenced in 2012 by the Army Research Institute in partnership with Rand Corporation, and secondly launching the Rangers School Assessment. Lastly, the third area was to begin a study on the issue of physical tests and how to train in order to avoid injury. This study was carried out by the US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine on 14 of the US Army's 455 specialty fields. The aim here was not to compare men and women, but to see what criteria were necessary for the job in question to be done.

In September 2014, the US Army launched the Army Rangers Assessment, a trial where volunteer women followed the Rangers School course. Before being accepted on the course, the volunteers took part in a preselection programme over two weeks, organised by the Army National Guard. Of the 20 women who completed the Ranger Training Assessment course, 19 wanted to continue the experience. Of those 19, only eight passed the weeklong selection phase, the Rangers Assessment Phase, which usually eliminates 60% of candidates. Of those eight women, only three made it to the end. Captain Kristen Griest and Lieutenant Shaye Haver, two active officers from West Point, were the first women to receive the Rangers badge in August 2015. They were followed in October by a reserve officer, Major Lisa Jaster.

The fact that women could complete a course previously reserved for men immediately sparked a controversy. Some even accused the military of making the course easier so that women would pass. This was namely the case of a member of Congress and former Ranger, Steve Russell, who, in September 2015, wrote to John McHugh, Army Secretary, in order to request proof of the results of the women that passed the course. Others expressed disapproval that women could attempt the tests several times (Cox, 2015).¹⁵ In response, the US Army explained that the women did not receive any preferential treatment, as occasionally candidates are given the possibility of repeating a phase they have not succeeded. On average, 34% of course participants repeat at least one of the course phases. However, it is rare that each phase is repeated, but this happens on average to fifteen participants per year. The decision is taken in any event on

¹⁵ The course is divided into three phases: Darby, Mountain and Swamp. Each phase must be passed to go on to the next. However, the first two female Rangers repeated phase 1 three times before going on to the two other phases. Major Jaster, aged 37, repeated phase 1 three times, phase 2 twice and succeeded at phase 3 in one try.

a case-by-case basis by the course directors.¹⁶ The opening of one of the last male bastions to women was not without a certain number of controversies.

In October 2015, at the end of the trial phase, the Army had opened almost 75,000 positions to women in all three components: Active, Reserve and the National Guard. This did not take place all at once, but gradually, beginning with officers, followed by NCOs and then soldiers, in particular in those units that were opening to women for the first time.

While waiting for the final decisions to be taken by the Defense Secretary, only three specialty fields remained inaccessible to women in infantry, armour, artillery and the special forces. However, we must not forget that even the special forces had already opened many positions to women, with the exception of team level units. Women could already become helicopter pilots to serve in the special forces. While the specialty had just recently opened, it would take time for the first women to be qualified. The training lasts for one year and is highly demanding, with fierce competition between pilots.

CASE STUDY: THE MARINE CORPS

After the decision to lift the ban in January 2013, the Marine Corps established the *Marine Corps Force Integration Plan*, which also tackles three key areas. Just like the US Army, the first involves increasing the number of women in units that were already open to them. The two other focus areas provide for a study to be carried out on Entry Level Training and the trial of a mixed unit, the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force.

94% of MOS (Military Occupational Specialties) upon entering the Marine Corps are open to women (315 out of 336 MOS). The study and trial were therefore carried out on the remaining 6% (21 of the 336 MOS), which are mainly specialties required for frontline combat.

The Entry Level Training study

The objective of the study was to better understand the physical demands generated by these twenty-one specialties and the performance standards associated with them, while taking into account the fact that the nature of ground combat has not changed and there are patent physiological differences between men and women. This study revealed that until then, the Marine Corps placed the focus on the unit's standards collectively, based on the notion that the Marines appointed to a specific specialty must be capable of fulfilling all of the physical tasks required by this specialty. The *National Defense Authorization Acts*, passed by Congress in 2014 and 2015, required the forces to revise, approve and develop individual standards that would be gender-neutral. The Marine Corps therefore had to analyse those units' collective responsibilities, deconstructing them in order to identify what a Marine in one of these units must be capable of accomplishing individually.

As for entry level training, we must remember that until the decision of December 2015, the Marine Corps was the only force that still practiced male-female segregation at that level, while all later training was mixed. How could this be explained? Regularly criticised on this matter, the Marine Corps justified this initial segregation by the difference in physical, emotional and physiological maturity between young male

¹⁶ Marine Corps article in Time magazine, 12 October 2015.

and female recruits. Furthermore, for them, the Marine Corps did not separate them, since the young recruits were technically not yet Marines; they only become Marines at the end of their entry level training. There was therefore a women-only battalion in the Parris Island recruitment centre (Philipps, 2015). This is now planned for closure.

For those who criticised this male-female segregation in the beginning of their career, this practice presented a number of disadvantages. Firstly, it did not prepare male Marines for the mixed environment they would encounter later in the Marine Corps. For them, the Entry Level Training was limited to interaction between men and deprived them of any socialising with female officers or NCOs of the Marine Corps. According to those same critics, this gave young recruits a biased image of the reality of their future unit, which could also generate a certain number of received ideas on women serving in the Marine Corps (Collins, 2014).

For the majority of Marines, this male-female segregation was soon forgotten when they entered the next phase of specialty training, which was mixed. This was not the case, however, for Marines serving in combat specialties, since women were until then banned from joining. A study carried out by Susan Dooley showed that the Marines who were trained in the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego followed by the Marine Combat Training in Camp Pendleton, two men-only training centres, had greater difficulty accepting the presence of women in the Marines (Collins, 2014).

For some, this male-female segregation during Entry Level Training perpetuated the notion that their training was different and therefore easier for women. There was therefore a case of double standards: presumably regular standards for men and more flexible standards for women. This would therefore send the message that women were not subject to the same criteria as men, which would also cause women to perceive themselves as weaker and less capable. As a result, some, such as Second Lieutenant Santangelo, who failed the entry tests to the Infantry Officer Course (IOC), came to the conclusion that female Marines were not as well prepared as their male counterparts for the tough selection procedure for programmes such as the Infantry Officer Course (IOC) and the Enlisted Infantry Course (EIC) (Santangelo, 2014). While women were not permitted at that date to serve in infantry units, in the summer of 2014 the Marine Corps authorised women who so wished to enrol in the IOC and EIC courses. While no female officer passed the IOC course, 34% of the women enlisted that enrolled in the Basic Infantry Training EIC course completed it successfully. This success did not allow them to serve in an infantry unit, however.

According to this Second Lieutenant, female Marines were trained to different standards. She therefore suggested developing a training programme that accounted for the biological differences between women and men in order to compensate for them and strengthen those areas where women are at a biological disadvantage. This, she said, would require shifting from an approach where the female standard was passively assessed to a proactive approach that prepared women to succeed. This was what Lieutenant Colonel Kate Germano, commander of the female battalion at Parris Island, had set out to do before she was relieved of her duties in June 2015, for a command style that was judged too aggressive and for issues of personality incompatibility with her superior. (Philipps, 2015). She had – apparently successfully – managed to change the training for her recruits so that their results were closer to the men's, in particular for shooting drills and sports tests.

The Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force experiment

The Marine Corps meanwhile launched a simultaneous experiment, the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force. The Marine Corps called on a number of services outside the defense, such as the Universities of Pittsburgh and George Mason, to carry out the test. They also set up a Red Team outside of the Marine Corps in liaison with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), whose role was to verify the method used.

The Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force was designed on a battalion model, minus a few units and strengthened with detached elements. The unit was formed in July 2014 and remained active until July 2015. The aim was to compare the results of a mixed unit to those of a non-mixed unit. The unit was tested collectively in California in different environments, in the desert environment at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twenty-Nine Palms, in mountainous environment at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center at Bridgeport and in an amphibious environment on the coast at Camp Pendleton. The women and men participating in this experiment were all volunteers. At any time they could choose to stop.

In late September 2015, the Marine Corps handed in a report that soon sparked a controversy, because of a few pages that were leaked to the press.¹⁷ The overall conclusion of the study was that female Marines had proven their ability to fulfil the same demanding physical tasks as men, but to a lower level in terms of overall performance, exhaustion, work capacity and cohesion. The study concluded that for all the specialties under analysis, the mixed units – irrespective of level – apart from a few rare exceptions, achieved poorer results than the units composed solely of men, in terms of rapidity of execution, movement under load on the terrain and obtaining the desired effects in a given timeframe for a specific objective. The overall result showed that the higher the percentage of women in a unit, the lower the scores achieved.

The report also stresses the fact that the women who volunteered for this study were those who were above the average, with something to prove, whereas the men were of average level with nothing to prove. It also highlights the difference between infantry practices in the US Army and that of the Marines, as the Army infantry use vehicles for transport while the Marines are on foot. According to the writer of the report, a Marines infantry unit must therefore be capable of travelling on foot for very long distances with very heavy loads.

Lastly, the report stresses the physiological differences between men and women to explain the difference in results between the two units, male and mixed. It focuses on two criteria in particular: the VO2 Max capacities and the body mass index. The report mentions that women physiologically have more body fat than men, which means they have more dead weight to carry. This, together with their often smaller frames, could have an impact on the length and frequency of female strides, resulting in lower VO2 Max and anaerobic capacities. The report stresses the cumulative aspect of these physiological disadvantages, with a higher propensity for injury as a consequence. Women are therefore closer to their maximum capacity and grow tired quicker than their male colleagues.

¹⁷ BG Smith, *United States Marine Corps Assessment of women in service assignments, Memorandum for the commandant of the Marine Corps*, Quantico, Departement of the Navy.

The document caused an instant controversy, amplified by the response of Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, who harshly criticised the conclusions. The controversy eventually prevented the Marine Corps from unveiling its communication plan that it had prepared to explain the conclusions brought by two years of study and experimentation. This may be due to a lack of caution and political savvy of the authors of the report. While the arguments it puts forth may or may not be well-founded, its direct style was inevitably going to create a controversy on this most sensitive of topics.

It is also of note that within the Marines, the separation between the pro- and anti-integration camps is not necessarily determined by gender. Certain female Marines are in fact outspoken in their disagreement with the opening of combat units to women, arguing for example that the women pushing for this opening are careerist and solely motivated by selfish considerations (Serrano, 2014). Inversely, some male Marine officers advocate the opening of all positions to women (Hovey, 2015).

THE DECISION OF DECEMBER 2015

The last three years have been marked by visible acceleration in the rhythm of integration of women in the last male-majority units in the Army and the Marine Corps. The Navy and the US Air Force are not far behind, although it occurred more discreetly and without controversy. In July 2014, the Navy announced that it would be opening three nuclear-powered Seawolf class attack submarines to female officers, and it was planning to open to female officers and those of lower rank the new Virginia class attack submarines being built. In summer 2015, it also announced that women could now sit the entrance tests for the SEALs-Sea Air Land courses (Larter, 2015). For the US Air Force, in autumn 2015, only units of the special forces component remained off-limits to women.

On 3 December 2015,¹⁸ Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that after learning of the recommendations made by the chiefs of staff of the various services in late October 2015, he had decided to open every existing position to women, irrespective of the specialty and including in the Marines, which were the only service to request the right to exemption. Women could now serve in the Rangers, the Green Berets, the Navy Seals, the Marines infantry and the US Air Force special forces. This decision would come into effect thirty days later in accordance with the legal deadline provided by the law. The military would be given until 1 April 2016 at the latest to respect the new rules. This announcement was followed by a certain number of recommendations to the services on how to implement this decision.

In accordance with the meritocratic nature of the military, which he mentions, the main selection criteria to hold a given position must be based on a person's skill set and in no circumstances based on gender. This therefore raised the question of the selection criteria. On this topic, a distinction would have to be made between the Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and the Combat Fitness Test (CFT) criteria which are essential for a service member to take up a given position. The first take place each year and provide scores according to scales that are different for men and women. These tests are one of the elements considered during assessments when deciding if a service member will be promoted to the higher rank. Inversely, the criteria associated with holding a particular position do not take into account the person's gender and are not scored. There are only two possible options: either the criteria are fulfilled or they are not. Furthermore,

¹⁸ See Appendix.

simply fulfilling the criteria does not necessarily give access to the position concerned. It simply provides the possibility of applying and competing with the other hopefuls for the job. The difficulty for the US military now will be acquiring the resources necessary to find the person most suited to fulfilling the given task, irrespective of his/her gender. Enforcing such criteria could thereby force a number of men who had held positions previously closed to women to leave their jobs, if they do not fulfil the minimum criteria. A heavy task therefore awaits the US military to set out these criteria, because until now, while they existed collectively, they were not applied to each individual. The military must therefore deconstruct the collective responsibilities to identify each individual task, which requires serious effort given the number of specialties that exist, for example, in the US Army.

As such, the defense secretary specified that there would be no quotas for the number of women in the US military, even though there must be a greater effort on the part of the latter to take into consideration the differences, namely physical, that exist between men and women and that were reaffirmed by the studies carried out by the various forces since 2013.

Lastly, Ash Carter called for improved communication and education that would help the announcement be better accepted, and to acknowledge the reluctance or fears that may arise with the complete integration of women in the military, in particular in terms of force efficiency. Women can only be fully integrated if the command supports and facilitates it. The recent experiment of the Cultural Support Teams is another striking example. Wherever the command supported the arrival of women to support their missions, they were rapidly integrated with no major complications. In units where the command was unsupportive, integration took longer. It is important not to underestimate the impact a commanding officer's attitude can have on his/her subordinates. It is therefore essential that staff are educated and informed, especially in units newly opened to women.¹⁹

¹⁹ The Marine Corps responded to this request by establishing the Marine Corps Force Integration Plan, creating a website and providing discussion guides to units that would be opening to women for the first time. These non-obligatory, though highly recommended informative modules tackled the issue of unconscious bias, giving advice on how to welcome the newly appointed female staff. The feedback for these modules from the targeted units was extremely positive.

■ CONCLUSION

The decision of 3 December 2015 marked the end of a long process of development that began at the end of the Second World War, when women obtained official status for the first time in the US armed forces. This development, which occurred in jumps and starts due to the cultural and institutional obstacles, was made possible partly due to the progress made by women in civilian society, but also due to the military's need to recruit, which was even more difficult when conscription in the United States ended. This was a crucial step in the integration process, because it gave women a real opportunity to integrate the military, with initial limitations that were heavily imposed in terms of career advancement, but which rapidly disappeared in the early 1980s with the end of the gender difference in human resources policies. The first Gulf War and especially the recent conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq removed the final obstacles to the full integration of women, proving the inanity of arguments previously used to prevent women from serving in combat units.

When the issue of integrating women in the military is raised, there is a risk that sides must always be picked between two diametrically opposed and sometimes exaggerated positions, with on one side the supporters that want all units opened to women, because woman is man's equal, and on the other, the inveterate opponents, claiming war is a man's affair. It is therefore important that we move away from these ideological postures and put the issue into perspective, which the US military is attempting to do, even the often criticised Marines. All those encountered for the purposes of this study, coming from the various services, generally insisted on the fact that their main concern was not one of gender, but that of skills management. They want to find the means and tools necessary to choosing the best soldier to fulfil the mission given, irrespective of gender, sexuality or colour of skin. The forces in charge of defending the nation cannot afford to be anything other than efficient faced with an enemy that pays no heed to questions of gender. Ash Carter stressed these different issues when he made his announcement on 3 December. In reality, this announcement brings us to question the impact of this decision in terms of recruitment and namely on the possible influx of women in "combat" unit positions. While the possibility is now available to them, nothing proves today that there will be a radical increase in the number of women interested in those units. It is not simply down to the women or men. It is especially an institutional and possibly also cultural matter. It may be necessary, in order for these developments to lead to new female vocations, to initiate a long-term informative effort, requiring the acceptance and adaptation of the military institution to the growing diversity of profiles that it attracts and shapes, for the benefit of national defense.


APPENDIX


SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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DEC 03 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
ACTING UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL
AND READINESS
CHIEFS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES
COMMANDER, U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

SUBJECT: Implementation Guidance for the Full Integration of Women in the Armed Forces

In January 2013, the Department of Defense eliminated the “1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule,” effectively removing the remaining barrier to the integration of women into all military occupational specialties and career fields within the U.S. military. At that time, the Military Services and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) were directed to develop plans to implement the change in policy. Specifically, the Military Services and USSOCOM were instructed to prepare for full implementation by January 1, 2016, or submit an exception to policy if they recommended that an occupation or position remain closed to women.

Over the last three years, the Military Services have opened over 111,000 positions to women and have independently studied, developed, and verified operationally relevant standards for them. After careful review of this work, and informed by the counsel and judgment of the Secretaries of the Military Departments, Chiefs of the Military Services, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I have now determined that no exceptions are warranted to the full implementation of the rescission of the “1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule.” Anyone, who can meet operationally relevant and gender neutral standards, regardless of gender, should have the opportunity to serve in any position.

This simple declaration that opens all career fields to women is, by itself, not sufficient for their full integration. Rather, this is the continuation of a deliberate, methodical, evidence-based, and iterative process that ensures combat effectiveness and protects the welfare of the force. Indeed, the military occupational specialties and positions that were previously closed to women will likely present the most challenging cases to full integration.

Recognizing this, I direct the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Chiefs of the Military Services to provide their final, detailed implementation plans to the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness not later than January 1, 2016. The services will begin to execute the implementation of their approved plans to open all military occupational specialties, career fields, and branches for accession by women as soon as practicable following January 2, 2016 and not later than April 1, 2016. The Deputy Secretary of Defense and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will co-chair an Implementation Group to oversee the short-term implementation of this decision and ensure that there are no unintended consequences to the Joint Force following this decision. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I will receive periodic updates from them. I have confidence in our ability as a learning



organization to leverage the same thoughtful and professional determination we brought to implementing the Don't Ask, Don't Tell repeal and our extensive integration of women into other combat arms positions over the last two decades.

As the Military Departments implement this decision, they should be mindful of the work that has already been done. The Military Services and USSOCOM conducted extensive examinations of the opportunities, impacts, and implementation issues inherent in achieving successful integration of women into previously closed occupational fields. These studies yielded insights far beyond gender integration. The research and analysis conducted over the last two years have increased our understanding of the physical and physiological demands on Service members and the cultural currents that influence unit cohesion and morale. The studies conducted by the Military Services and USSOCOM highlighted several concerns that will need to be adequately considered as Military Departments finalize their implementation plans. These concerns can be broadly characterized in the following ways, and must be addressed in the detailed implementation of this decision:

Transparent Standards. The Services will continue to apply previously developed and validated operationally relevant and objective standards for all career fields to ensure that leaders assign tasks and career fields throughout the force based on ability, not gender. This approach is integral to preserving unit readiness, cohesion, and morale, and it will continue to form the foundation for full integration.

Population Size. Equal opportunity may not always equate to equal participation by men and women. Small numbers of women in demanding career fields pose challenges that will vary by occupation and Services and will impact the entire Joint Force. Throughout this process, implications for equipment sizing, supply, and facilities have been thoroughly studied and need to continue to be addressed.

Physical Demands and Physiological Differences. Both the Army and Marine Corps studies found that women participating in ground combat training sustained injuries at higher rates than men, particularly in occupational fields requiring load-bearing. These studies also revealed concrete ways to help mitigate this injury rate and the impact to individuals and the teams in which they operate. The sustainability of our combat readiness and our obligation to the welfare of the force means these findings must be addressed in the implementation of the full integration of women in the Armed Forces.

Conduct and Culture. The integration of women may require a cultural shift in previously all-male career fields. We are prepared to meet this challenge. The military assimilates change by relying upon the enduring values of the profession of arms. Concerns about possible reductions in combat effectiveness can be addressed by effective leadership and gender-neutral standards. This has been demonstrated over the past 14 years in combat operations, during which women have played a critical role. The primary factor in developing cohesion is the ability of all members of the team to perform assigned mission essential tasks effectively. To that end, attitudes toward team performance are important and must be addressed through education and training. Sexual assault or harassment, hazing, and unprofessional behaviors are never

acceptable. Our core beliefs in good order, discipline, leadership, and accountability are foundational to our success in gender integration.

Talent Management. The issue of small numbers is closely coupled with the challenge of maintaining viable career paths for women in fields where physical performance is often not only a baseline entry requirement but also a differentiating factor in promoting leaders. Recruiting, retaining, and advancing talented women in highly physical fields will demand careful consideration – but adherence to a merit-based system must continue to be paramount. As the Military Services and USSOCOM move forward with implementation, leaders must not use special preferences or undue pressure to increase numbers at the expense of merit. Integration provides equal opportunity for men and women who can perform the tasks required; it does not guarantee women will fill these roles in any specific number or at any set rate.

Operating Abroad. The United States is a nation committed to equality and using the talents of its entire population to the fullest. Some areas of the world do not share the same principles. The Military Services and USSOCOM acknowledge that the presence of women in some units may complicate cooperation with allies and partners who are culturally opposed to working with women. We have dealt with this in Iraq and Afghanistan with success, and we will continue to use the best practices learned in those countries and elsewhere, in the future.

Assessment and Adjustment. It is absolutely critical to our warfighting ability and the welfare of our people that we embark on integration with a commitment to the monitoring, assessment, and in-stride adjustment that enables sustainable success. This commitment is not an impediment to integration; rather, it is essential to its long-term success.

The opportunities inherent in full integration can only be realized if the implementation plans from the Military Departments, Services, and USSOCOM are sound. The responsibility for implementation is not borne solely on the shoulders of women, nor by the forces within the newly integrated career fields; it is borne in equal measure by the entire force and the military and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense. We all share the imperative to preserve and improve the finest fighting force the world has ever known.



cc:
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE US MILITARY

On 24 January 2013, the Pentagon announced that all final obstacles preventing women from being fully integrated in the US armed forces would be lifted, including those concerning combat units. This decision had to come into effect on 1st January 2016 at the latest, unless the military could bring before Congress reasons that justified where exceptions could be made. On 3 December 2015, Defense Secretary Ash Carter made the announcement that all positions would be open to women, without exception. These two announcements marked the end of a long period of integration for women in the US armed forces. This also meant the United States had now caught up with other Western countries which, like France, had already opened almost all military positions to women several years previously.

This study takes a look at the most important issues surrounding the integration of women in the US military, while indirectly evoking the resonance of this debate in Europe. It appears that the question of the integration of women in the US military, a politically sensitive topic, can result in stark opposition between the pro- and anti-integration camps. The US military, meanwhile, seeks to move the debate away from the gender issue – to which it is often reduced – and towards the question of how skills are managed in the military. For each of the services, the main issue is finding the best soldier there is to fulfil the task, irrespective of gender.

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