



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

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

Background:

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that current Department of Defense and service policies regarding the assignment of women are out-of-date and inadequate to the demands of 21st century warfare. They do not provide on-the-scene commanders with the ability to best use all troops as constantly changing missions require. As stated in the August 2007 RAND Study, *Documenting the Assignment Policies for Army Women*: "Military effectiveness and flexibility entail adapting to changes in enemy strategy, tactics, and weapons, and this implies that commanders may need to employ military resources, including individual women and units with women in ways not initially envisioned in policy and possibly not well addressed in doctrine."

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

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

could not qualify under demonstrated, performance-based, job-related standards.

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

Recommendations:

1. DoD should open all military units and platforms to women. This will allow, for example, a woman medic or intelligence specialist to serve with Army, Marine Corps and special forces ground combat units, as needed, and it will allow women aviators to fly and crew all aircraft—including certain special forces helicopters currently closed to them.
2. DoD should open all military occupations, designators, ratings, Navy Enlisted Classification codes (NEC), Military Occupational Specialty codes (MOS), and Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) currently closed to women, unless the relevant service can substantiate continued closure based on accompanying detailed, itemized, job-related, performance-based standards that clearly justify the finding that only men could qualify based on the fair and reasonable application of such standards.
3. In those instances in which a service recommends that a particular occupation remain closed to women, the Office of the Secretary of Defense should commission an independent study to evaluate the necessity for the closure and, if the recommendation is not corroborated, OSD should open the occupation to women. If the recommendation for continued closure is corroborated, the study should address the circumstances or conditions under which the occupation can be opened to women in the future.
4. DoD should direct the Navy to provide an implementation plan to integrate women into the submarine service.

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