

## 2015 Interim Fact Sheet -- Women in Direct Ground Combat (DGC)

The Marine Corps and Army have been conducting extensive research and experiments to test prospects for women in direct ground combat (DGC) units such as the infantry. Complete findings remain undisclosed, but interim results indicate that such policies would harm military women and erode readiness in combat arms units. Reality-based evidence that is summarized here explains why Congress should intervene and support sound priorities for our military.

### USMC Tests and Experiments

- Since 2012, 29 spirited female Marine officers attempted but did not succeed on the Infantry Officer Course (IOC), which involves extraordinarily tough challenges that prepare men to lead others into battle.
- More than 90 female volunteers did succeed on the less-demanding infantry course for enlisted personnel, but the Marines had to suspend a requirement of three pull-ups in boot camp because 55% of the female enlistees could not meet that minimum standard.
- Marine proxy strength test results in 2013 confirmed serious gender-related disparities. In a test simulating artillery ordnance stowing, for example, 28% of females, compared to less than 1% of men, were unable to lift and move a 95 lb. round in the allotted time.
- Experimental Task Forces are using technology to measure human performance and occupational requirements in simulated deployments, but distribution of physical burdens among men and women will make it difficult to compare individual performance.

### British Ministry of Defence Report

In December 2014 the British Ministry of Defence released a 29-page analysis of the impact of gender integration on 21 factors affecting combat effectiveness. Ten factors, with the exception of "courage," were inconsequential, unknown, or "multi-directional."

- Of 11 factors expected to have "negative" effects on combat effectiveness, three "*cannot be mitigated by changes to structure or training.*" The three show-stoppers were "*Survivability & Lethality, Deployability, and Morbidity*" (injury or illness).
- Physiological differences disadvantage women by "*20 to 40%; so for the same output women have to work harder than men.*" The word "*output*" means "*survivability and lethality*" - staying alive and killing the enemy.
- Deficiencies in strength and endurance lead to an "*early onset of fatigue,*" which leads to "*lower survivability in combat,*" and reduced lethality when "*marksmanship degrades as a result of fatigue.*" These factors would put all troops and missions at greater risk.
- Disproportionate rates of musculoskeletal injury, including hip and pelvic stress fractures that are ten-fold higher in women, are a major concern that cannot be mitigated. A women's risk of injury increases five-fold if the weight carried is >25% of body weight.

- Strong women in the *"physical elite"* may succeed in entry-level tests for ground close combat roles, but these will be more susceptible to musculoskeletal injury; roles that require weight carriage for prolonged periods are *"likely to be the most damaging."*
- The risk of musculoskeletal injury is even greater during the first twelve months after giving birth. And in the more extreme combat roles, *"potential chronic risks may include irreversible bone fragility and infertility."*
- Some female athletes can outrun men, but not with combat march loads of 80 lbs. or more. Female athletes do not compete against men, and sports figures are not required to meet requirements of constant high readiness for contingent operations.
- *"[T]eam cohesion is of such significance that the employment of women in this environment would represent a risk to combat effectiveness [and] no gains to offset it."*

### **Association of Military Surgeons of the US**

The March 2015 edition of the AMSUS *Military Medicine Journal* published findings similar to those in the 2014 British report and in USMC 2013 proxy strength tests. For example:

- *"Marksmanship is compromised as a function of fatigue and load. These data suggest that loads of 45% body weight (BW) increase time to cover distance and reduce the ability to precisely hit a target."*
- *"In summary, our data suggest that carrying greater than 30% BW while conducting short-term, combat-related tasks decreases performance capability. Further, our data show that, in a rested condition, a 45% BW load degrades shooting precision which may put our troops at greater risk in a combat-environment."*

### **Surveys and Recruiting**

- AP reported that in an official survey, more than 92.5% of Army women said they did not want to be assigned to units such as the infantry, armor, artillery, and combat engineers.
- According to recent Joint Advertising, Market Research, and Studies (JAMRS) surveys of youth propensity to serve, 12% of male and 20% of female respondents said they would be less likely to join the military if women become eligible for the combat arms.
- JAMRS also reported that 19% of male and 17% of female "influencers" said they would be less likely to recommend military service for potential recruits.

### **Conclusion:**

Nothing in the research done so far justifies policies that would order women into the combat arms on the same involuntary basis as men. Members of Congress should assert their constitutional power and responsibility to make policy for the military, taking action to retain sound policies until all research results can be examined in extensive public hearings.

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*Prepared by the Center for Military Readiness, an independent public policy organization that reports on and analyzes military/social issues. For more information, go to: [www.cmrlink.org](http://www.cmrlink.org).*