

# U.S. Marine Corps

## Assignment of Women to Ground Combat Units

### Research Plan

#### INFORMATION PACKAGE

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##### **Additional information/references:**

1. DoD Report to Congress (9 Feb 12):  
[http://www.defense.gov/news/WISR\\_Report\\_to\\_Congress.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/WISR_Report_to_Congress.pdf)
2. All-Marine Message (ALMAR 012/12) released 23 Apr:  
<http://www.marines.mil/news/messages/Pages/ALMAR012-12.aspx/>
3. Marine Administrative Message (MARADMIN 288/12), Women in Combat Units Survey, released 29 May:  
<http://www.marines.mil/news/messages/Pages/MARADMIN288-12.aspx/>

[Note: the fact sheet is the most up to date information on the survey. Specifically the method of authentication changed after the message release due to the volume of traffic.]

*\* Indicates information for that specific information or fact sheet is provided as background information for additional context.*

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#### GENERAL INFORMATION

*The following information is provided on background as a snapshot on the mandates and directives as well as historical information.*

#### **Background:**

The Fiscal Year 2011 National Defense Authorization Act directed the Secretary of Defense and the service secretaries to “review laws, policies and regulations that may restrict the service of female members.”

The Military Leadership Diversity Commission recommended that all qualified service members should be afforded an opportunity to pursue any career track of their choosing. Also, the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services recommended elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule, which prohibits assignment of women to any unit below the brigade level when the unit’s primary mission is direct combat on the ground.

As a result of these recommendations and directions, the DoD established an executive committee, a senior leader steering committee, and the Women in the Service Review working group. Subsequently, the Marine Corps established a planning team in January 2011 to conduct a review of our policies.

#### **Report to Congress (USMC specific information):**

DoD’s report to Congress, “Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces,” was delivered to Congress on 9 February 2012. That same day, a Secretary of Defense memo was issued to the services and provided guidance on the next phase -- assessing the exception to policy, reporting, and continued efforts at “removing barriers to service.”

The Marine Corps, through OSD, requested Congress grant an exception to policy allowing for the assignment of females to select battalions, in job specialties already open to females Marines.

OSD released a memo announcing the expiration of the Congressional notification period on 26 April and that the effective date for the exception to policy assignments is 14 May.

#### **Way Ahead:**

The Secretary of Defense’s memo, signed 9 Feb 2012, stated he is committed to removing barriers that prevent service members from serving in any capacity based on their ability and qualifications, without being constrained by gender-restrictive policies. As such, he directed senior leader involvement and assessment/reporting that includes discussions of:

- Efforts to pursue gender-neutral physical standards
- Assessment of newly opened positions
- Identification of any further positions that can be opened

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#### EXCEPTION TO POLICY ASSIGNMENTS

*Assignment of females in “open” military occupational specialties, meaning jobs that women are already assigned to and serving in, to “closed” units, as in ground combat element battalions that are closed to the assignment of women due to policy.*

**Purpose:** To gather subjective information in order to inform future policy and assignment recommendations by Marine Corps leadership.

#### *Who:*

Company grade female officers (2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant thru captain), and female staff non-commissioned officers (staff sergeants and gunnery sergeants) who are available for assignment during calendar year 2012, in the following job fields:

- Administration
- Communication
- Motor Transport
- Logistics
- Supply

Additionally, 60 positions for Navy personnel (37 company grade officers, 23 E-6s and E-7s) will be open to women to serve as battalion staffs medical officers, chaplains, and Corpsmen. Initial assignments will be 4 officers and 12 corpsmen (E-6 and E-7).

#### *What:*

A total of 371 positions (97 officer, 274 SNCO), that were previously only assignable to men, will be opened to women as part of this exception to policy research. The initial assignments will include 45 females (15 officers and 30 SNCOs).

#### *When:*

These assignments will be made during CY12 as part of our normal assignment process (we are not required to assign volunteers). The first report date for these assignments was 1 June 2012.

#### *Where:*

The 45 Marines who are part of the ETP will be assigned across the Marine Corps to 19 battalion staffs among our three divisions (1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division). The types of battalions are: artillery, tank, amphibious assault, combat engineer, combat assault, and low altitude air defense.

#### *How:*

A combination of qualitative and quantitative information will be gathered during this exception to policy. Information will be gathered from the ETP female Marines and their commanders – include the following:

- Readiness – deployability, duty status, injuries
- Cohesion – review command climate surveys, round table discussions
- Effectiveness – performance during unit training, physical and field events
- Costs – facilities, associated with incorporation of females into GCE units

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#### WOMEN IN COMBAT UNITS SURVEY

##### **Purpose:**

A survey of the force has been conducted to gather input about potential changes to the current assignment policies related to female Marines. The results will assist the Commandant in making informed recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. The Center for Naval Analyses will also conduct a study to examine the possible effects on: recruiting, classification, entry-level training; assignments, promotions; implementation of gender-neutral tests, injury-associated costs; best practices of external organizations and occupations (foreign militaries, firefighters, athletes).

##### *Who:*

The survey was available to all active component and Selected Reserve Marines. (Selected Reserve includes Selected Marine Corps Reserve, Individual Mobilized Augmentee, Active Reserve, and Initial Active Duty Training.) The subpopulations for analysis include:

- Men
- Reserve (SelRes)
- Officer (company/field grade)
- Women
- Combat Arms
- Enlisted (non-commissioned officer and staff NCO)
- Active-duty
- Non-combat arms
- Females assigned as part of the exception to policy

##### *What:*

The survey was designed to gauge interest in opening positions to women in currently closed units and military occupational specialties, thoughts on potential changes, and opinions based on past experiences. It also examined topics such as: voluntary vs. involuntary ground combat element assignments; recruiting (willingness to join the Marine Corps); retention (willingness to continue to serve); and social, operational, and unit cohesion factors. The survey consisted of six sections and took about 20 minutes to complete. Now that the survey is closed, the information gathered has been provided to CNA for analysis. Senior Marine Corps leadership will be briefed on the results early in the Fall.

##### *When:*

The force survey was available to Marines from June 1 until Aug. 31. Approximately 53,000 Marines took the survey (a 23% response rate). Participation was voluntary.

##### *How:*

The survey was available online. Marines were able to access the survey from any computer and their input was anonymous. Only demographic data such as gender, component, occupational specialty, and rank, was gathered because it is important for analysis. Names, and other personally identifiable information, are not associated with the responses.

##### **Reference:**

Marine Administrative Message 288/12, published May 29,

<http://www.marines.mil/news/messages/Pages/MARADMIN288-12.aspx/>

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## QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – Process and Methodology

### Research Terms

#### *Institutional Review Board:*

The IRB is a committee established to review research to ensure protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects. The board reviews, in advance, all research proposals involving people as participants, and sets conditions for recruiting.

#### *Human Research Protection Program:*

The HRPP oversees research and development activities planned by institutions. It promotes policies and procedures for timely and effective reviews of research, and ensures that approved research is conducted according to applicable rules and ethical guidelines to protect the rights and welfare of the participants.

### Applicable Regulations

For military research, the HRPP is governed by the following:

1. [Department of Defense Instruction 3216.02](#)
2. [SecNav Instruction 3900.39D](#)
3. [Marine Corps Order 3900.18](#)
4. [Marine Administrative Message 522/08](#)
5. Data collection for this study is also subject to Marine Corps Combat Development Command HRPP Policy and Procedure Manual.

### IRB Projects/Protocols

1. Ground Combat Element Common Physical Performance Standards (GCPPS)

*IRB Project Title:* “Assessment of Ground Combat Element Physical Tasks”

*Objectives:* To collect physical performance data on Marines in the conduct of the GCPPS, and to correlate physical fitness and combat fitness test data to the GCPPS performance.

2. Infantry Officer Course Training

*IRB Project Title:* “Assessment of Training Performance Data at the Infantry Officer Course”

*Objective:* To collect performance data of female Marine officer volunteers assigned to the Infantry Officer Course, to assess their performance against the IOC standards.

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**FACT SHEET (Page 2 of 2, Quantitative Research – Process and Methodology, cont'd)**

#### **Subjects/Volunteers**

The use of human subjects is integral to the nature of our quantitative research plan, and could not be conducted without the Marines. The DoD instruction mandates that all research using human subjects require volunteers; therefore, the IRB mandates volunteers for our studies.

#### **1. Informed Consent**

Voluntary informed consent is fundamental to ethical research with humans and cannot be obtained simply by reading or signing a document. It is a process that begins with subject recruitment, includes a thorough discussion with prospective subjects, and continues over the duration of the research and after the original informed consent was provided.

#### **2. Volunteers**

All volunteers must be free from real or perceived coercion or undue command influence. Volunteers must be determined as “fit for full duty,” and are required to sign a consent form.

*GCPPS Potential Volunteers:*

- Infantry battalion: Marines (officer and enlisted) assigned to the battalion (all-male unit).
- Entry-Level Training: Officers (male and female) from the Basic Officer Course, and enlisted Marines (male and female) attending Marine Combat Training at School of Infantry - East.

*IOC Potential Volunteers:*

- Female officers upon graduation from the Basic Officer Course.

#### **3. Recruitment**

TECOM provides "informed consent" briefings to schools and units to solicit volunteers for both the GCPPS and IOC training. The brief details the research purpose, protocol, benefits, risks, volunteers' rights, command support, and confidentiality. The staff members for the participating units will be briefed in advance so that they socialize and informally brief the research plan to prospective volunteers.

A research monitor will be present during selected training and evaluated events at IOC. For both GCPPS and IOC, appropriate precautions will be taken to minimize risks to the subjects and safeguard the collected data.

*GCPPS Recruitment:* For Marines at the infantry battalion and the entry-level schools, the “informed consent” process for GCPPS testing requests that they volunteer their physical performance data from the events, which are being conducted as unit training. Prior to testing, TECOM provides an “informed consent” brief to the unit soliciting those Marines who will volunteer that information.

*IOC Recruitment:* Volunteers for assignment to IOC will be formally solicited and briefed on two occasions -- initial recruitment occurring early in BOC, and reconfirmation prior to BOC graduation. Interested officers are required to sign a consent form on both occasions.

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#### **QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – GCE Common Physical Performance Standards**

The quantitative research plan consists of three parts: assessment of ground combat element common physical performance standards, training of female Marines at Infantry Officer Course, and analysis of military occupational specialties currently closed to women.

#### **Purpose:**

Training and Education Command will conduct quantitative research to measure physical performance of volunteers to provide fact-based analytical data. The data is necessary for Marine Corps leadership to formulate and provide recommendations regarding the potential assignment of female Marines to positions within the GCE, and to closed MOSs.

#### **GCE Common Physical Performance Standards:**

*Who:* Male Marines (officer and enlisted) assigned to a selected infantry battalion; male and female Marines at The Basic School (officers attending the basic officer course) and School of Infantry – East (enlisted Marines attending Marine combat training). All Marines in these identified units will participate in the physical testing events, but performance data will only be collected and analyzed from informed and consenting volunteers.

*What:* The performance of the volunteers from the operational unit will establish the baseline, and the performance of entry-level participants will help validate the common standards.

Participants will be tested in three events:

Heavy machine gun lift – Marines, wearing an average assault load of 71 pounds, will lift a replica MK-19 (72.5 pounds) from the ground to overhead, one repetition. This event simulates mounting the weapon onto a tactical vehicle, and tests muscular strength.

Casualty evacuation – Participants, wearing a fighting load of 43 pounds, will evacuate a casualty for a distance of 25 meters. The casualty's total weight will be approximately 208 pounds (rescue mannequin of 165 pounds plus a 43-pound fighting load). This event will include an individual movement element where the participant will sprint 25 meters to the casualty. This event tests muscular endurance and anaerobic power.

March under load – Participants, will conduct a “march under load” consisting of an average assault load of 71 pounds. The 20 km march must be completed in five hours or less, and it tests load-bearing capacity as well as aerobic power.

*When:* The three events will be conducted on two separate days, beginning in June.

*Where:* The tests will be conducted at units aboard Camp Lejeune, NC, and Quantico, VA.

*Why:* To collect physical performance data on three events that are based on existing training and readiness standards by Marines from entry-level training schools and the operational force.

*How:* The GCE common standards testing will abide by policies set by the Human Research Protection Program and will be conducted and monitored by appropriate personnel.



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#### QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – Infantry Officer Course

*The quantitative research plan consists of three parts: assessment of ground combat element common physical performance standards, training of female Marine volunteers at Infantry Officer Course, and analysis of military occupational specialties currently closed to women.*

**Purpose:** Training and Education Command will conduct quantitative research to measure physical performance of volunteers to provide fact-based analytical data. The data is necessary for Marine Corps leadership to formulate and provide recommendations regarding the potential assignment of female Marines to positions within the GCE, and to closed MOSs.

**IOC Mission:** To train and educate newly selected infantry and ground intelligence officers in the knowledge, skills, and leadership required to serve as infantry platoon commanders in the rifle company and to provide advanced employment and training considerations of the weapons company platoons. The course also provides the core infantry knowledge, skills, and leadership required for those officers selected to serve with reconnaissance, sniper and light armored reconnaissance units.

#### **Research:**

*Who:* Female lieutenants assigned to The Basic School (upon graduation from the basic officer course) may volunteer to attend the Infantry Officer Course and participate in the training. IOC, as the school that produces infantry officers, is currently attended by only male officers. Female volunteers will be informed of the testing and must consent to participate.

*What:* Volunteers will train according to the current 86-day program of instruction, as part of a standard class of approximately 100-110 students. The course consists of leadership evaluations in addition to various performance events that test a student's ability to perform under combat conditions, including: combat endurance tests, forced marches, field firing exercises, close combat exercises, and a culminating field exercise. The measurable performance categories plus the intangible leadership evaluations are used to assess the student's ability to make decisions, communicate, and act in an uncertain and chaotic environment.

*When:* Two female officers have volunteered attend the course beginning Sept. 24.

*Where:* The IOC school house is located aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA.

*Why:* Because the performance capabilities of females at IOC is unknown, Training and Education Command will collect data in order to assess female participants and their performance against the IOC program of instruction standards.

*How:* The training of female officers at IOC will abide by policies set by the Human Research Protection Program and will be conducted and monitored by appropriate personnel.

*MOS:* Female Marines who complete IOC will not be assigned the Infantry Officer MOS (0302). The infantry occupational field remains closed to the assignment of women. The female participants will proceed to their previously assigned open MOS school for training.



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#### QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH – Closed MOS Analysis

**Purpose:** Training and Education Command will conduct a review of existing physical performance tasks and graduation requirements for the military occupations courses in order to validate the training and readiness manuals. The data is necessary for Marine Corps leadership to formulate and provide recommendations regarding the potential assignment of female Marines to positions within the GCE in closed MOSs (those jobs currently closed to females).

*Who:* Training and Education Command will conduct the review, in conjunction with the Marine Corps' Ground Combat Element Branch, and will collaborate with U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) for review of consolidated MOS schools.

*What:* A review of the programs of instruction for the infantry (03), artillery (08), and tank/amphibious assault vehicle (18) occupational fields which are closed to women as well as other specific MOSs that are also closed to women. Those MOSs are:

- 0203, ground intelligence officer
- 2110, ordnance vehicle maintenance officer
- 2141, assault amphibious vehicle repairer/technician
- 2145, ordnance vehicle maintenance chief
- 2146/2147, main battle tank/light armored reconnaissance vehicle repairer/technician
- 2131, towed artillery systems technician
- 8152/8154, Marine Corps Security Force guard, and MCSF close quarters battle
- 7212, low altitude air defense gunner
- 7502, forward air controller

*When:* The review is already underway and will continue until completed.

*Why:* This review will validate standards at those closed MOS schools and will provide information to inform future recommendations by Marine Corps leadership.

#### **Additional Data Collection:**

Additional data that will be gathered as part of the overall research plan includes: general military skills performance data (marksmanship, water survival training, physical fitness tests, combat fitness tests, martial arts training, height, and weight). This data will be collected Corps-wide, by gender. This information will be analyzed as appropriate and applicable to each element of the quantitative research plan.

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#### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

*The following are common misconceptions by people inside and outside of the Marine Corps. Clarification is provided for each, on background, to increase understanding.*

#### **1. “Women in Combat”**

Misconception: *This topic is an examination of whether or not women have or will continue to serve on the battlefield and in combat roles.*

Clarification: This is not an issue of “women in combat,” but of assignment policies related to the assignment of women to combat units.

- Women have been on the battlefield throughout history and the same holds true in Iraq and Afghanistan. Female Marines have performed superbly in combat in a variety of roles.
- The nature of today’s conflicts is evolving; there are no front lines in Iraq or Afghanistan. While women are not assigned to ground combat element units below the division level, whose primary mission is direct combat on the ground, this doesn’t mean females are not assigned to positions in combat zones that could place them in danger.
- Women will continue to be assigned to units and positions that may necessitate defensive combat actions/situations for which they are fully trained and equipped to respond.
- Instead of “women in combat,” the topic can be accurately described as “assignment of women to combat units,” or simply, “women in combat units.”

#### **2. Female Engagement Teams**

Misconception: *The success of Female Engagement Teams working alongside combat units proves that women can serve in the infantry.*

Clarification: While women have been members of FETs for quite some time and have performed superbly, we are talking about new opportunities. The exception to policy will allow women to be assigned in billets at units that have never been available to them.

- When directed, FET Marines are employed by infantry commanders in direct support of infantry units, but this mission is not the same as the infantry unit’s combat mission.
- A FET is not permanently assigned to an infantry unit.
- No recommendations to open up currently closed MOSs to female Marines will be made until further research is completed.

#### **3. Women are now allowed in the infantry**

Misconception: *We are opening up Infantry to women or women will be assigned to the Infantry.*

Clarification: This is not true. Per policy, the 03XX occupational field is still closed to women.

- Female lieutenants assigned to The Basic School may volunteer to attend Infantry Officer Course (currently only open to male officers), upon Basic Officer Course graduation.

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#### FACT SHEET (Page 2 of 2, Common Misconceptions, “on background”, cont’d)

- Data will be collected in order to assess the performance of the female participants against the IOC standards.
- Female Marines who complete IOC will not be assigned the Infantry Officer MOS (0302). The infantry occupational field remains closed to the assignment of women. The female participants will proceed to their previously assigned MOS school for training.

#### 4. Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal

Misconception: *This is very similar to the debate over DADT repeal.*

Clarification: This policy review varies greatly from the implementation of DADT repeal.

- While these policy issues share issues of debate, such as unit cohesion and privacy, DADT repeal dealt with accessions and separations; this is about assignment policy.
- Our work on DADT repeal did not include the examination of physically demanding tasks or combat unit/MOS specific policies because gender was not applicable to the change in law.

#### 5. Promotion Opportunity

Misconception: *Women will not be able to compete with men for promotions as long as they are not able to be assigned to all of these competitive GCE-related billets.*

Clarification: Outside and internal research shows that this is not the case.

- A recent RAND Corp. study (cited in the DoD Report to Congress), found no statistical differences in the career progression of female officers in open MOSs (with closed positions) as compared to women in fully open occupations; both groups of women shared the same likelihood of reaching pay grade of O-6.
- The DoD reviewed all available information from the services and did not find any indication of females having less than equitable opportunities to compete and excel under current assignment policy.

#### 6. Individual Opportunity

Misconception: *If a female can make it through training, and wants to be in the infantry, she should be given the choice or the chance.*

Clarification: Assignment policy will apply across the Marine Corps (all ranks – and genders, if the policy changes).

- Job and unit assignments are based not only on a Marine’s qualifications, but also on the needs of the Marine Corps. Currently, general assignments are not solely voluntary.
- The Marine Corps must responsibly determine what is best for the Marine Corps and what is best for the women who are integral members of our team.