

## Statement for the Record – Executive Summary

**Elaine Donnelly, President, Center for Military Readiness  
Senate Armed Services Committee, February 2, 2016**

Missions of direct ground combat units, such as **Army** and **Marine infantry, artillery, armor, and Special Operations Forces**, are unlike any other job in the civilian world, including law enforcement and firefighting. These are the “point of the bayonet” units that attack the enemy with deliberate offensive action. Physically-demanding missions go far beyond the experience of being “in harm’s way” in war zones, where women have served with courage.

The **Executive Branch** has unilaterally decided to assign minimally-qualified young women to direct ground combat units, on an involuntary basis, and to send them to fight **ISIS** and other vicious enemies under conditions that involve higher risks for women than for men.

This is being done even though officials know that women’s physical capabilities are far less than men’s and their risks of injury are far greater. This is not a “pro-woman” policy; it is a cruel deception that is also unfair to men in the combat arms.

Pentagon officials keep insisting that training standards will not be lowered and there will be no quotas, even though Secretary of the Navy **Ray Mabus** repeatedly has called for gender diversity quotas of at least **25%**. Former Joint Chiefs Chairman **Gen. Martin Dempsey** also admitted that standards too high for women would be questioned.

Under the “**Dempsey Rule**,” gender quotas will be achieved by “validating” standards that are “gender-neutral” but lower than before. As a result, military men will be less prepared for the violence of combat, and women will be targets of resentment they do not deserve.

### ***USMC Findings Deserve Careful Review***

In December 2015 the Secretary of Defense ignored the **Marine Corps’** request for exceptions to women-in-combat mandates. That request, supported by three years of scientific research, reflected the Marines’ paramount concern: “**survivability and lethality**” in battle.

Instead of discussing implementation of harmful policies, I challenge this committee to take a thorough, objective look at the scientific research that supported the Marines’ request for exceptions. For example, in 2013, tests of individuals performing “**proxy**” **combat tests** revealed that in tank and artillery loading simulations, **18.68% - 28%** of women, respectively, could not lift heavy objects, compared to only **1%** of the men.

In 2014, the Marine Corps’ established a **Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force (GCEITF)** to conduct field tests at west-coast bases for nine months. **University of Pittsburgh** researchers

monitored individual and group performances by all-male and gender-integrated teams in tasks common in direct ground combat units such as the infantry.

The Task Force was designed to test a simple Research Study Hypothesis: ***“[A]n integrated unit under gender-neutral standards will perform equally as well as a gender-restricted unit.”***

Despite positive expectations, Task Force data and findings **disproved the hypothesis:**

- **All-male task force teams outperformed their mixed-gender counterparts in 69 percent (93 of 134) ground combat tasks.** Physical differences were more pronounced in **“specialties that carried the assault load plus the additional weight of crew-served weapons and ammunition.”**
- In gender-mixed units, physical deficiencies had negative effects on the unit’s **speed and effectiveness in simulated battle tasks**, including **marching under heavy loads, casualty evacuation, and marksmanship while fatigued.**
- Significant differences also were noted in the mixed-gender units’ ability to **negotiate obstacles and evacuate casualties.**
- The well-documented comparative disadvantage in upper and lower-body strength resulted in **higher fatigue levels** of most women, which contributed to **greater incidents of overuse injuries** such as stress fractures.”
- “During the GCEITF assessment, **musculoskeletal injury rates** were **40.5%** for females, compared to **18.8%** for men.”
- “Within the research at the **Infantry Training Battalion (ITB)**, enlisted females undergoing that entry-level training were injured at more than **six-times** the rate of their male counterparts.” (**13%** vs. **2%**)
- In some task force units, **“Numerous cases of compensation were observed”** in which male volunteers **compensated** for the women’s physical difficulties by taking over strenuous tasks.

As stated in the Marine report, “[An] infantry unit must be fully capable of regularly moving dismounted for extended distances with heavy loads. This has been the coin of the realm for Marine infantry throughout history, and [current land combat requirements] place even greater demands on the individual infantry Marine.”

## ***Circumventing Congress***

Congress has the constitutional responsibility – and duty – to make policy for the armed forces. The Executive Branch nevertheless acted unilaterally in overruling the Marine Corps’ well-justified request for exceptions to the administration’s across-the-board mandates.

Diligent congressional oversight should begin with a public review and objective analysis of the Marines’ request for exceptions that the Commandant submitted to the Secretary of Defense in the Fall of 2015. **The rationale and facts supporting that request always will remain true, even if the administration chose to ignore them.**

Congress also should compare empirical information that the Marines produced to substandard reports from Defense Department contractors such as **RAND** Corporation. RAND and like-minded consultants have recommended unrealistic “mitigation strategies” that will not work.

The word “mitigation,” which is never coupled with words like “benefits” or “advantages,” warns of problems ahead. Substitutes for sound policies rarely serve as well. Wouldn’t it be better to avoid life- and mission-threatening problems in the first place?

## ***Marine Corps Research & “Mitigation Myths”***

The Defense Department and military services invited a number of outside public policy contractors and academic consultants to participate in the **Women in Service Restriction Review (WISRR)** process. Some of the resulting reports or sections include inconsistent passages and unworkable ideas for “fixing” problems that, in truth, cannot be fixed.

RAND and other mostly-civilian contractors involved in WISRR projects produced voluminous reports and recommendations reflecting the opinions of mostly-civilian authors from academic fields such as sociology, behavioral science economics, political science and women’s studies.

Mitigation strategy proposals frequently rely on academic theories, best-case scenarios, overly-optimistic behavioral expectations, and wishful thinking dressed up with statistical jargon, color-coded graphs, and tables signifying next-to-nothing.

Members of this Committee should recognize the difference between empirical data and theoretical conjectures that are contradicted by actual experience. Defining insanity, the same socially liberal consultants whose recommendations have encouraged unresolved turmoil in the military for years keep promoting the same social science remedies over and over again, expecting different results.

The following topics represent only some of the major flaws in misguided proposals to mitigate problems that will occur in gender-mixed direct ground combat units. Mitigation proposals are paraphrased below, followed by responses that the Committee should consider. For more information, see the full-length version of this statement, which includes links to sources cited.

## **A. Training and “Gender-Neutral” Standards**

**1. *With Better Training, Women Will Become As Strong as Men.*** **Response:** Weight training and iron supplements can strengthen individuals, but there is no evidence to support the theory that significant numbers of average-sized women can be trained to meet minimal physical capabilities of average-sized men. **Dr. Hugh Scott**, a retired rear admiral and expert in military physiology, has said, “Because average men have ten times more androgenic hormones than women, giving the same extra training to men would make them even stronger. Weight-bearing exercise is important for healthy bone development, but excessive exercise can have the opposite effect by lowering estrogen levels, which in turn triggers bone loss. This is a contributing factor in the mechanism for stress fractures in females.”

**2. *Better Screening Will Improve Graduation Rates.*** **Response:** Screening standards that are unrealistically high would exclude great numbers of female prospects who want to serve their country and otherwise would become fine members of the military. The convoluted mitigation proposal in question relies upon questionable data correlations, speculations, and misplaced priorities. A 2013 test with female Marine Corps boot camp recruits had to be suspended because **55%** of the female trainees could not do three pull-ups, the male minimum.

**3. *The Public Would Support Restrictive Selection Processes.*** **Response:** Based on the fate of previous recruit screening plans, such a proposal would not survive criticism from recruiters and Pentagon feminists attacking “barriers” to women’s careers.

**4. *According to RAND calculations, significant numbers of women will seek infantry training and succeed in that MOS.*** **Response:** RAND’s estimates of female success in boot camp are unrealistically high, and costs would rob resources from training for Marines in general. The RAND report also glosses over additional costs for extra strength conditioning for female recruits in boot camp. Training investment losses due to disproportionate injuries that would end or shorten women’s careers in the infantry are not factored into estimates, except in a discussion of expensive personnel overages that would be needed to compensate for losses.

## **B. Mission Accomplishment in Direct Ground Combat**

**5. *Small numbers of women in the combat arms won’t affect readiness much.*** **Response:** This comment disregards administration pressures to achieve gender diversity quotas of **25%** or more. To achieve what **Army Gen. Martin Dempsey** called a “critical mass,” standards will be “validated” at levels that are “gender-neutral” but lower than before. RAND Corporation recommended experimentation with various gender mixes for infantry units. Minimally-qualified women ordered into close combat units would be involuntary subjects of a social experiment in which their health and lives will be put at greater risk than men.

**6. *Combat arms leaders should balance risks against the benefits of gender integration.*** **Response:** There are no benefits that would justify elevated risks in direct ground combat operations. Gender-related deficiencies in tasks such as casualty evacuation, surmounting rough

terrain obstacles, speed while carrying heavy loads, and marksmanship accuracy while fatigued would endanger lives, missions, and ultimately national security.

**7. Gender-mixed units performed better in some tasks. Response:** These results occurred because men did the heavy work. In **16 of 18** casualty evacuation tests, for example, men in gender-integrated groups performed single-man fireman's carries. Other men moved more quickly to lift heavy artillery rounds. These reported "**male compensations**" masked female deficiencies that could cost lives in battle. It would be unwise to rely upon similar male compensations under battlefield conditions – particularly in ground combat missions where there are no extra personnel to replace casualties.

**8. Injury Risks and Non-Deployability Problems Can Be Mitigated. Response:** There is no evidence to support assurances about proper training substantially mitigating risks of debilitating injury. Over a four year period (FY08-12), female Marines became **medically non-deployable (MND)** at rates four times greater than men's. Disproportionate rates of MND losses among women would increase even more in the physically demanding combat arms. Personnel losses would be more disruptive to others in small infantry squads and tank crews than they would be in larger combat support groups.

**9. Some gender-mixed groups were better at problem solving. Response:** The tests in question were completed with non-fatigued Marines. Fatigue matters. A recent **British Ministry of Defense** report found that even "physically elite" women were more susceptible to injuries and early onset of fatigue that affected marksmanship. These factors increased with heavier loads, resulting in a "distinct cohort with lower survivability in combat."

### **C. Cohesion & Discipline**

**10. Training and leadership can mitigate harmful effects on unit cohesion. Response:** Military cohesion is not about liking others or working on tasks. It is properly defined as mutual trust for *survival* and mission accomplishment in battle. Horizontal cohesion exists between members of a combat team. Vertical cohesion is mutual trust between the Commander-in-Chief, the chain of command, and troops that they lead. Policies that disregard physical differences would degrade both horizontal (unit) and vertical (leadership) cohesion.

**11. Good Leadership Can Maintain Cohesion. Response:** The comment inaccurately describes cohesion in civilian terms, such as getting along socially or working together on tasks -- not mutual trust for survival in combat. Surveys of Task Force personnel that were conducted throughout the research period found that male and female volunteers began with good levels of cohesion, but unit bonds declined over time. Analysis suggests that lowered standards or preferential treatment for women would be detrimental to cohesion and morale.

**12. Men's Attitudes are the primary barrier to successful gender integration. Response:** RAND's report for the Marine Corps identified "**hyper-masculinity**" as the primary cause of resistance to gender integration. Concerted efforts to promote this prejudiced definition of masculinity would

be demoralizing, divisive, and inconsistent with the honorable “brand” and masculine image of the Marine Corps. Defense Department appointees and contractors want to establish a small army of “gender advisors” and “gender integration oversight boards” to mitigate problems that the same “experts” helped to create. This would be an expensive jobs program designed by social engineers who believe that “hyper-masculine” attitudes must be systematically eliminated, while simultaneously forcing women to act like and compete with men. This a recipe for social incoherence, resentment and division – the opposite of cohesion.

**13. Gender Integration might improve discipline. Response:** The statement ignores the consequences of inappropriate male-female relationships, both voluntary and involuntary. Disciplinary issues that would have a profound effect on small unit morale and unit cohesion would include sexual misconduct, accusations of same, distractions that weaken concentration, weakening of mutual trust, personnel losses associated with pregnancy/maternity leave, absences during legal proceedings, and other types of turbulence that affect readiness.

- According to the Defense Department’s 2015 **Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Office (SAPRO)** report, actual sexual misconduct cases keep escalating. There were **2,828** completed cases in 2012 and **4,608** in 2014 – a **63% increase** in only two years.
- In gender-neutral terms, human beings are not perfect, and combat arms personnel are no more perfect than anyone else. There is no compelling reason to extend male-female disciplinary issues into small combat arms.

**14. Detrimental effects on cohesion can be mitigated with good leadership. Response:** If “training and leadership” could eliminate gender-related problems, male/female disciplinary issues would have declined decades ago. Instead, predictions like this have been proven wrong. Despite countless hours devoted to sensitivity and leadership training, various types of misconduct, both voluntary and involuntary, persist in all gender-mixed units, and keep increasing. In an official 2012 survey about moving women into combat units, many male Marines listed being falsely accused of sexual harassment or assault as a top concern.

#### **D. RECRUITING and RETENTION**

**15. Effects on Recruiting Likely Would be Neutral or Positive. Response:** This claim fails to mention an important caveat – the assumption that direct ground combat assignments would be voluntary. The Marine analysis concluded: “However, this presumes a voluntary assignment process, if females were to be involuntarily ordered into combat arms units, this could actually lower propensity and female enlistments.” Youth propensity surveys have not inquired about reactions to involuntary assignments of women to direct ground combat units.

**17. Previous gender-integration efforts in the military were successful. Response:** The claim primarily relates to military women’s careers and lack of bias against them. This is nothing new. For decades, according to Defense Department reports, military women have been promoted at rates equal to or faster than men. Women’s service in logistics and aviation MOSs, and in **Female**

**Engagement Teams (FETs)** and **Cultural Support Teams (CFTs)**, were dangerous and worthy of respect, but they were not comparable to combat arms units that seek out and attack the enemy with deliberate offensive action.

#### **E. History, Other Countries, Selective Service and Future Evaluations**

##### **18. *Gender diversity will be successfully accomplished in the same way as racial diversity.***

**Response:** Unity of purpose in war is far more important than gender diversity, a quality that has little or nothing to do with combat effectiveness. **President Harry Truman** *strengthened* the armed forces when he confronted irrational prejudice in the military with his 1948 Executive Order outlawing racial discrimination. The Order advanced equal opportunity, but its primary purpose was military necessity.

- The Pentagon has enthusiastically embraced recommendations of the **Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC)**, which instigated the drive for women in land combat and recommended “gender diversity metrics,” another name for quotas, and a “**Chief Diversity Officer**” (**CDO**) to enforce diversity quotas through the promotion process.
- The MLDC report admitted that the new “diversity management” would *not* be about “treating everyone the same;” it would be a radical departure from the military’s honorable tradition of recognizing individual merit.

**19. *In other allied nations, harmful consequences have not materialized.*** **Response:** Allies such as **Great Britain, Israel, Canada, and Australia** do not use women in direct ground combat units comparable to fighting units in the **United States**, and none of them have militaries that engage in direct ground combat to the extent that America’s armed forces do. Women-in-combat proponents rarely discuss the gender-integration policies of potential adversaries, such as **North Korea, Iran**, and jihadist forces such as **ISIS and Al Qaeda**.

**20. *Selective Service Registration on an equal basis is only “fair.”*** **Response:** When the U.S. Supreme Court decided the 1981 *Rostker v. Goldberg* case, which upheld women’s exemption from Selective Service obligations, the court recognized and deferred to the diligent oversight that Congress had given to the issue in 1979. At the present time, however, Congress has not determined what the policy should be on Selective Service registration, and the administration is not likely to retain or defend women’s exemption in court.

- Ordering women to register for Selective Service is not necessary; there is no need to draft women to be what the Senate described as “combat replacements.” If there is no need for such a draft, there is no need to register women.
- Young people should not be conscripted when there is no compelling national reason to deprive them of their freedom. In all wars in American history, women have volunteered to support the war effort and will do so again.

- Military conscription would be especially unfair to women, who do not have an equal opportunity to survive, or help fellow soldiers survive, in a direct ground combat environment. Nor is there a need to burden the Selective Service system to register great numbers of individuals who are not qualified for military service.

**21. Gender-integration policies will be monitored and assessed. Response:** In July 2015 the **General Accountability Office (GAO)** reported that the Defense Department has no plans to evaluate results of this social experiment. Pentagon reports have since announced that policy changes will be monitored by mostly-civilian contractors such as RAND, which will be in a position to evaluate the results of their own recommendations in terms of sociology, behavioral science, women’s studies, and similar academic pursuits – not combat effectiveness. Lucrative contracts will continue for 20 years or more.

**Conclusion:** The Executive Branch’s unilateral plans to order military women into the combat arms rely upon best-case scenarios and unsupported assumptions that are not the basis for sound policy. This remains a social experiment with known and unknown high risks to individual lives, missions, and national security.

Current military leaders must follow orders, but the next president will have the power to change existing directives in the same way that the current president imposed them. The next Commander-in-Chief must take the initiative, starting with orders to all appointees and military officials to provide complete and candid information on what has been done to our military during eight years of social experimentation since 2009.

Leaders of the next Congress and administration should be prepared to restore sound priorities, putting the needs of the military first. As Brig. General George Smith stated in his August 2015 Memorandum:

***“Those who choose to turn a blind eye to . . . immutable realities do so at the expense of our Corps’ warfighting capability and, in turn, the security of our nation.”***

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*The Center for Military Readiness, founded in 1993, is an independent, non-partisan public policy organization that reports on and analyzes military/social issues. The full Statement for the Record summarized above, and more information, is posted on the CMR website, [www.cmrlink.org](http://www.cmrlink.org).*