

PREPARED STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department's plan to implement the recent decision to rescind the 1994 Direct Ground Combat definition and Assignment Rule (DGCAR) and continue our efforts to eliminate all remaining gender-based barriers to military service.

Following the submission of the Department's February 2012 report to Congress on the Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces, former Secretary of Defense Panetta, in a memorandum to the Services, reiterated his commitment to remove all barriers preventing Service members from rising to the highest level of responsibility that their talents and capabilities warrant. This memorandum directed the Services to report in six months on their progress toward further reduction of gender-restrictive policies and to provide their assessment of the remaining barriers to full implementation of the Secretary's vision of allowing all Service members to serve in any capacity, based solely on their ability and qualifications.

Throughout 2012, the Services conducted studies, surveys, and interviews to determine the impact of the recent policy changes and the potential impacts of lifting the remaining gender-restrictive policies. The Services made their review of occupational standards a priority, dedicating resources toward the revalidation of job related occupational tasks and the development of physical assessment tests to guide the classification and retention of personnel into occupations and positions for which their ability and qualifications warrant. This work informed the Services regarding the best "way forward" for full implementation of the Secretary's vision.

RESCISSION OF THE DIRECT GROUND COMBAT RULE

In late 2012, after nearly two years of review and assessment, the Joint Chiefs determined the time had come to rescind the remaining elements of the 1994 DGCAR which prohibited the assignment of women into direct ground combat units below the brigade level and permitted further restrictions:

- where the Service Secretary attests that the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive;
- where units are engaged in long range reconnaissance operations and Special Operations Forces missions; and

- where job-related physical requirements would necessarily exclude the vast majority of women Service members.

On January 9, 2013, the Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the Department move forward with the full intent to integrate women into occupational fields to the maximum extent possible. Understanding that successful implementation would take time, the Joint Chiefs recommended several interim goals and milestones and developed five guiding principles to drive implementation. The guiding principles are:

- Ensure the success of our Nation's warfighting forces by preserving unit readiness, cohesion, and morale;
- Ensure all Service men and women are given the opportunity to succeed and are setup for success with viable career paths;
- Retain the trust and confidence of the American people to defend this Nation by promoting policies that maintain the best quality and most qualified people;
- Validate occupational performance standards, both physical and mental, for all military occupational specialties; and,
- Ensure that a sufficient cadre of midgrade/senior women enlisted and officers are assigned to commands at the point of introduction to ensure success in the long run.

On January 24, 2013, former Secretary of Defense Panetta and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) eliminated the 1994 DGCDAR.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

In May 2013, each Military Department Secretary and the Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) submitted their plans detailing how they would achieve full implementation by January 1, 2016. Those plans were reviewed by both the Secretary of Defense and the CJCS. Each plan is as unique as the Services themselves; however, the implementation plans have several main items in common. Each plan describes how the Services and USSOCOM will:

- Manage the incremental opening of their positions in two general categories:
 - Currently open occupations which were previously restricted based on the unit of assignment (e.g. supply sergeant in an infantry company) and
 - Currently closed occupations (e.g. infantryman, tank crewman).

- Work with scientific and research agencies to review and validate occupational standards to ensure they are current, operationally valid, and applied on a gender-neutral basis.
- Conduct thorough doctrine, training, education, facilities, and policy analyses to ensure deliberate and responsible implementation.

Each Service and USSOCOM has identified decision points by which they will make final determinations to open occupations and positions, *or* to request an exception to policy to keep a position or occupation closed. Requests for exceptions to policy must be narrowly tailored and based on rigorous analysis of factual data regarding the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for the position. Further, any exception must be personally approved by both the Secretary of Defense and the CJCS.

The Department will continue to integrate women into positions and occupations within the Armed Forces, to the fullest extent possible, over the next 2½ years. By January 1, 2016, the Services and USSOCOM will be on a path to opening all positions to women, or will have requested an exception to policy to keep specific occupations or positions closed. The Department will continue to inform Congress of incremental changes to Service assignment policy, and will implement changes only after the required congressional notification period has expired.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES

The Department is proceeding in a measured, deliberate, and responsible manner to implement changes that enable Service members to serve in any capacity based on their ability and qualifications, unconstrained by gender-restrictive policies. Over time, these incremental changes will enhance the readiness and combat effectiveness of our forces. The standards will be uncompromising, established for the task of defending our Nation, and rooted in carefully analyzed requirements. Secretary Hagel is committed to this process and to creating an environment across the Department that will allow for full implementation consistent with the Joint Chiefs' guiding principles. He will continue to work closely with the CJCS to monitor and guide this effort.

We fully recognize there are, and will be, formidable obstacles to the full integration of women into traditionally closed military units and occupations – be they cultural, physical, or psychological; but, overcoming obstacles is nothing new to our military. Today's challenge is

historic in both scope and effort; and we are determined to meet that challenge, opening positions and occupations when and how it makes sense while continuing to preserve unit readiness, cohesion, and the quality of the All-Volunteer Force. As the Joint Chiefs' stated in their January 9, 2013 memorandum, "to implement these initiatives successfully and without sacrificing our warfighting capability or the trust of the American people, we will need time to get it right." Implementation over the next several years, through 2016, will be an evolutionary process. There is no doubt that we will learn much with each new step. However, by addressing issues head-on, capitalizing on lessons learned across the Department, and through open communication with Congress, we will institutionalize these important changes, integrating women into occupational fields and units in a climate where they can succeed and flourish – while ensuring our total military force remains at the peak of readiness.

CONCLUSION

The Department greatly appreciates the interest and assistance of the Armed Services Committees in achieving this vision to the benefit of all the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines in the service of our great Nation. The Department will continue to provide Congress with the requisite notification prior to opening additional positions or units of assignment in accordance with Title 10 U.S.C., Sec. 652, and will continue to provide the Committees with additional information and notifications as requested. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on these important matters, and I look forward to your questions.