

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: WOMEN IN SERVICE REVIEW (WISR) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

STATEMENT OF: BRIGADIER GENERAL GINA M. GROSSO
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The Air Force initiated gender integration efforts in 1993, when it lifted restrictions against women flying fighter aircraft and immediately began assigning them to front-line combat aviation units. Today, after more than twenty years of continuous progress, more than 99 percent of the nearly 500,000 active duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve positions are open to both men and women. We are working hard to open the few positions that remain closed due to their affiliation with special operations and long range reconnaissance ground combat units in accordance with Office of the Secretary of Defense guidance. The Air Force has approximately 4,600 positions closed to women in the following seven career fields: combat control, special operations weather (officer and enlisted), pararescue, special tactics, tactical air control, and combat rescue. In close coordination with our Army and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) counterparts, we have developed a comprehensive plan, complete with detailed tasks and timelines, that ensures we will complete the necessary steps to open all remaining positions by the January 1, 2016 deadline, while remaining consistent with guiding principles established by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense.

A necessary first step in removing gender barriers to our closed specialties, is validating performance standards for these physically demanding career fields to ensure that all associated physical tests and standards are both gender neutral (as required by Public Law 103-160) and occupationally relevant. To that end, we have directed our experts in Air Education and Training Command to accelerate work that has been underway for over a year to validate physical tests and standards for each of the closed specialties. This study is headed by the Air Force's Chief Exercise Physiologist, who is working in close cooperation with subject matter experts in our closed career fields, our Major Commands, U.S. Special Operations Command, RAND, and the U.S. Army to validate occupationally-relevant, operationally-specific, gender-neutral standards.

We fully expect these physical standard reviews, operational assessments, and all other prerequisites to be in place no-later-than January 2016.

In addition to a heavy emphasis on validating our occupational standards, we are also addressing a number of other critical issues that are important stepping stones to removing assignment restrictions for women seeking to join units engaged in direct ground combat such as health and welfare, training, assignment classification, and career development. Although these tasks are significant, in the end, we do not anticipate any major obstacles to opening all seven career fields by 2016, which we will in consultation with our USSOCOM and Army partners. Ultimately, the initiative to eliminate all remaining gender-based assignment restrictions will improve our readiness and the Air Force's ability to recruit and retain a qualified and diverse force.