

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT
OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROBERT E. MILSTEAD, JR.
DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER & RESERVE AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
WOMEN IN SERVICE RESTRICTIONS REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION PLANS
ON
JULY 24, 2013

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Introduction

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of your Marine Corps, I would like to thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the issue of women in the service. We are grateful for your continued, active engagement in ensuring all Marines have equal opportunity to excel to their fullest potential.

Your Marines are our most precious commodity. We strive to treat all equally, without preference to one's gender, race, religious beliefs, or national origin. Previous policies restricted one segment of our Marine Corps, the female Marines. Those policies have been rescinded by the Secretary of Defense. As tempting as it may sound to some, opening all military occupational specialties and positions across the Marine Corps immediately could have harmful unintended consequences. We must carefully review the requirements for each specialty and position.

If we assign Marines, either male or female, where they are not capable of performing the required tasks, the unit's readiness could suffer. Similarly, the Marine would not be set up for success and may succumb to physical injuries or may face administrative repercussions due to inability to perform. None of these scenarios would enhance our Nation's security. We must place our Marines in positions where they can succeed and contribute to the common goal.

Our Implementation Plan takes a deliberate, measured, and responsible approach. We will validate our occupational performance standards and develop a screening mechanism to assist in determining which occupational specialties are best suited for individual Marines desiring to serve in the Ground Combat Element. As our Corps moves forward with this two pillar process, our focus will remain on combat readiness and generating combat-ready units.

Pillar One: Opening Closed Military Occupational Specialties

The Marine Corps has 335 Primary Military Occupational Specialties, of which 31 are closed to female Marines. We have validated the occupational standards for each primary MOS, ensuring that the standards are task-based without regard to gender. Although the Physical Fitness Test, Combat Fitness Test, and Obstacle Course have gender-normed scoring, they are not tied to occupational standards.

As you may be aware, we opened our Infantry Officer Course to volunteer female officers graduating from The Basic School. Since April 2012, 194 female student lieutenants have been afforded the opportunity to voluntarily participate in this research effort and six have participated. None of the six have successfully completed the course.

We will review all available data, both internal and external to the Marine Corps. Lessons learned from other nations conducting similar efforts to integrate females into combat arms will be incorporated when formulating our recommendations. Based on decision rendered from our recommendations, we will set the conditions for successful integration as warranted.

We will ensure there is mid to senior level female leadership at those units which were previously closed to females. This female cadre will serve in their open military occupational specialties. We will also provide education to the female Marines as well as to the members of the newly opened units where female Marines will be assigned. Recruiters will be trained on how to administer the physical screening test. Additionally we will ensure there are appropriate facilities at any newly opened MOS schools and units to ensure adequate privacy for all Marines.

When conditions are set for opening military occupational specialties, we will then open those approved specialties in a sequence that continues to enhance combat readiness and

generate combat-ready units. Although it is too early to determine which additional specialties may be opened, our implementation plan lays out a proposed sequence.

Pillar Two: Opening Closed Units

We began this effort last year with an “Exception to Policy” under the now rescinded 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule. We opened 371 positions to female officers and staff noncommissioned officers in 19 units associated with the ground combat element. We recently opened another 36 positions in three additional units. Our implementation plan lays out a proposed timeline to open more positions in these units as well as open additional closed units. Currently, we have 48 female Marines assigned to these positions. Periodically, we receive assessments from these Marines on challenges faced as well as assessments from the Commanders and Senior Enlisted Advisors from these units.

Conclusion

The Commandant and the entire Marine Corps are dedicated to maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness and capitalizing upon every opportunity to enhance our warfighting capabilities and the contributions of every Marine; it’s simply the right thing to do. Taking care of Marines is fundamental to our ethos and serves as the foundation of our resolve to do whatever it takes to provide the opportunity for every Marine to realize his or her potential. The talent pool from which we select our finest warfighters will consist of all qualified individuals, regardless of gender.

Thank you again for your concern on this very important issue.