

July 1988

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

Impact of Proposed Legislation to Open More Combat Support Positions and Units to Women



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**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-230552

July 15, 1988

The Honorable William S. Cohen
United States SenateThe Honorable Dennis DeConcini
United States SenateThe Honorable William Proxmire
United States Senate

This report responds to your request for information about the impact of recent changes in the military services' policies on jobs open to women. Specifically, you asked how those changes relate to S.581, a bill to amend title 10 U.S.C. to increase the combat support assignments open to women in the Armed Forces. We have summarized data from all services on the

- positions and units closed to women because of exclusionary laws and policies,
- ongoing service reviews of positions and units currently closed to women, and
- potential impact of S.581 on those positions and units.

Information on units, ships, and aircraft currently closed to women is included in appendix I. At the direction of the Secretary of Defense, each service is reviewing the positions and units to determine which ones can be opened to women. Until the services complete this effort, it is difficult to tell exactly how many additional positions and units S.581 will open. For example, the Army may close combat support positions when they pose a risk of hostile fire or capture equal to a combat unit. However, S.581 may open these support units because it would require evaluation of the position on the basis of the function to be performed, namely support, rather than the potential risk. S.581 could also open the 11 combat logistics force ships in the Navy's fast combat support and replenishment oiler class currently closed. It could also open Air Force reconnaissance, training, and transport aircraft to women.

Background

Since the advent of the All Volunteer Force, the total number of women in the military has increased from about 45,000 (1.5 percent) in 1972 to almost 222,000 (10.3 percent) in 1987. During this period, the services

have opened an increasing number of occupational fields to women. Current statutory and policy restrictions, however, limit the jobs that are available to women in various noncombat and combat positions. Title 10 U.S.C., sections 6015 and 8549 prohibit assignment of Air Force and Navy women to aircraft or naval vessels engaged in combat missions. The Army, although not covered by statute, prohibits women from jobs most likely to engage in direct combat.

On the basis of policy and their interpretation of the statutes, the services have closed both combat units and those noncombat jobs that have a high degree of risk of death or capture to women. Over time, the services have reviewed their policies and, as a result, have opened more jobs and career fields to women. In September 1987, the Secretary of Defense established a Task Force on Women in the Military, and it developed a standard "risk rule" for determining which noncombat positions and units to close to women. Under this rule, services can close noncombat positions or units on grounds of risk of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture. However, the type, degree, and duration of the risk must be equal to or greater than that experienced by combat units in the same theaters of operations.

The task force report, which the Department of Defense (DOD) issued in January 1988, recommended adoption of the risk rule by each of the services. The Secretary of Defense directed the services to (1) incorporate the risk rule when deciding which noncombat positions and units they would open to women and (2) review positions and units in light of the risk rule to see which currently closed positions and units can be opened.

Positions Currently Closed to Women

The services are currently reviewing many of the positions currently closed to women as part of the "risk" assessment directed by the task force (appendix I lists units closed by each service). The Secretary of Defense will be briefed on the results of these reviews in July 1988.

Army

The Army implements its policy on women in combat through the direct combat probability coding system. This system assigns each Army job a code ranging from P1 through P7. P1 represents the highest probability of engaging in direct combat and P7 the lowest. The Army only precludes women from being assigned to P1 jobs. Until adoption of the risk rule, geographical boundaries on the battlefield had the greatest impact

on the “P” rating of a position. For example, with the exception of some positions in forward support battalions that the Army had historically opened to women, the Army coded positions located forward of the brigade rear boundary on the battlefield as P1. With adoption of the risk rule, the Army is reviewing all positions closed to women to see which ones it can open. According to Army officials, noncombat positions within infantry and armor brigade headquarters are examples of positions that it may open to women as a result of the review.

Navy

The Navy, by law, excludes women from service on aircraft or naval vessels engaged in combat missions. The Navy’s definition of combat mission has included all ships that routinely travel with the combatant group. As a result, the Navy initially excluded women from combat logistics force ships that service the combatant group. However, a recent Navy policy review opened 26 of 37 combat logistics force ships to women on the grounds that the opened ships—oiler, ammunition, and store ships—move to and from the group with supplies but do not routinely travel with the group, as do the 11 that remain closed.

The review also resulted in a change in the Secretary of the Navy’s definition of combat mission. The Navy now defines a combat mission as “a mission of an individual unit, ship, or aircraft that individually, or collectively as a naval task organization, has as one of its primary objectives to seek out, reconnoiter, and engage the enemy. The normal defensive posture of all operating units is not included within the definition.” Prior to this change the definition was to “seek out, reconnoiter, or engage the enemy.” This change will result in the assignment of women to the aircrews of shore-based fleet air reconnaissance squadrons (EP-3 aircraft) since “reconnoiter” is no longer a sole criteria for exclusion.

Naval mobile construction teams and underwater construction teams are noncombat units closed to women. Although these units have no offensive role to engage in direct combat, the Navy restricted women from such units because the units could engage in combat in a defensive posture and the Navy believed their missions could be close to combat missions. However, as directed by the Secretary of Defense, the Navy is currently reviewing them in light of the risk rule. Eleven combat logistics force ships of the fast combat support and replenishment oiler class may remain closed to women on the grounds that they meet the Navy definition of combat ships because the Navy considers them to have a combat mission as part of the task organization. However, the Navy is

also reviewing these ships under the risk rule pursuant to the Secretary of Defense's direction.

Marine Corps

Presently the Marine Corps classification, assignment, and deployment policy for women precludes their assignment to any unit that could engage in direct combat.

The Marine Corps has excluded women from (1) the Marine security guard program, which involves duty protecting the physical security of U.S. embassies and consulates, and (2) Marine security forces, which provide physical security for designated naval installations. The Marine Corps also excludes women by law from serving in security force units assigned as part of the crew of a combatant ship.

The task force recommended opening guard positions to women because (1) the primary missions of Marine security guards and Marine Corps security forces at naval bases are guard rather than combat duty and (2) all the other services open similar guard duty positions to women. The Secretary of Defense has approved opening guard positions to women and the first women volunteers for the Marine security guard program commenced their training on May 17, 1988. The Marine Corps is reviewing the assignment of women to security forces as part of the risk assessment directed by the Secretary of Defense.

Air Force

Air Force policies implementing the combat exclusion law preclude the assignment of women to (1) aircraft whose principal mission involves aerial combat, (2) duties or units where there is a high probability of exposure to hostile fire and substantial risk of capture, and (3) positions where training or experience in combat aircraft is a prerequisite. Specifically, under current rules, in addition to combat aircraft, the Air Force may not assign women to reconnaissance aircraft that overfly hostile territory (for example, SR-71, U/TU-2, and RF-4), tactical airlift aircraft that fly into unprotected forward airstrips, airdrop missions that overfly hostile territory, or observation aircraft that operate over combat areas.

Positions, units, and aircraft the Air Force is reviewing as part of the risk assessment are the Red Horse squadrons, which are self-sustaining heavy engineering and repair units; mobile aerial port squadrons, which provide mobile aerial port teams that receive, download, and rotate

transport aircraft to deploy troops and equipment into forward operating locations; and Air Force aircraft, such as the SR-71, U/TU-2, TR-1, EF-111, C-141, HH-3, MH/HH-53, UH/HH-60, C/EC/HC-130, RF-4, O-2, OV-10, C-140, and T-39, which do not have missions to engage the enemy.

Red Horse and mobile aerial port squadrons are noncombat units. The closure of these squadrons to women stems from Air Force policy that precludes assigning women to units where there is a high probability of exposure to hostile fire and substantial risk of capture. The task force has recommended opening these noncombat units to women on the grounds that the risk of exposure to enemy fire or capture is lower than the combat units with which noncombat units are currently associated.

The existing closure to women of the Air Force aircraft listed above comes from Air Force policy that precludes assigning women to "aerial activity over hostile territory where enemy fire is expected and where risk of capture is substantial." The task force did not believe that the hostile territory condition should be deleted entirely, because such a change would open some reconnaissance aircraft where the risk of hostile fire or capture would be the same or greater than combat aircraft. However, the task force recommended that the Air Force review closed aircraft as part of the risk assessment. The task force believed the review might result in opening some reconnaissance aircraft, such as SR-71, U/TU-2, and TR-1.

Potential Impact of Senate Bill 581

Passage of S.581 would probably result in opening some jobs that are currently closed and that might remain closed after the review required by the Secretary of Defense is finished. The review will consider jobs in light of the risk rule. The bill would require that certain jobs be evaluated on the basis of the function to be performed rather than risk. Since it is uncertain what positions will remain closed after the DOD risk review is completed, the full impact of S.581 is unclear.

Army

The bill directs the Secretary of the Army to "provide for the more efficient utilization of female members of the Army by permitting the permanent assignment of such members to all units of the Army which have as their mission the direct support of combat units."

S.581 could permit, for example, the assignment of women to ground surveillance radar platoons (and other elements similarly situated).

These platoons are often collocated with the Army's elements that will be the first to be engaged by the enemy. Currently, the Army closes these assignments to women because the units are expected to have a high probability of routine engagement in direct combat. Similarly, combat support and service support positions within combat engineer units, infantry and tank system support teams in forward support battalions, and trauma treatment teams would probably remain closed after the Army review. They appear to be units that share a risk equal to the units with which they collocate, according to Army officials. Passage of S.581 would open all Army combat support and combat service support units (see categories II and III in appendix I).

Navy

Although section 6015 of title 10 prohibits the assignment of Navy women to ships that have a combat mission, S.581 would amend section 6015 by allowing assignment of women to "combat support vessels including vessels which have the capability to provide underway replenishment to fleet units, and vessels of a similar classification." The Navy now defines fast combat support and replenishment oiler class ships as having the same combat missions as the task organization with which they serve; however, S.581 could allow the assignment of women. Marines are not assigned to combat support vessels; therefore, S.581 would not change the Marine Corps existing classification, assignment, and deployment policy for women Marines.

Air Force

Although section 8549 of title 10 prohibits the assignment of Air Force women to "duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions," S.581 would allow the Air Force to assign women to all reconnaissance, training, or transport aircraft missions in the Air Force. This would mean that Air Force reconnaissance aircraft, such as SR-71, U/TU-2, TR-1, RF-4, T-33, T-39, C/EC/HC-130, O-2, OV-10, C-140, EF-111, and C-141, would probably be opened to women. All these aircraft are currently closed to women, but the Air Force may decide to open some as a result of its review. In addition, Red Horse and mobile aerial port squadrons, which are combat support units, could also be opened.

Air Force aircraft and activities that would still remain closed to women after enactment of S.581 would be those aircraft and activities related to direct combat. That would include, for example, fighter, bomber, attack, and gunship aircraft, and special operations aircraft, such as combat search/rescue helicopters, as well as combat control, tactical air command and control, pararescue and recovery, and aerial gunnery aircraft.

Conclusions

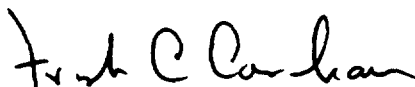
Using the DOD Task Force on Women in the Military recommended risk rule, the military services are currently evaluating positions to determine whether they should be open to women or remain closed. Although S.581 would open additional combat support positions to women, the actual impact of the bill cannot be determined until after the military services complete their ongoing evaluations.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of our review were to assess the impact of recent changes in the military services' policies on jobs open to women and determine how those changes relate to S.581, a bill to increase combat support assignments open to women. We performed our work at Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps headquarters. We interviewed service and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials responsible for implementing the policy on women in the military and examined related documentation. We conducted our work from January 1988 through May 1988 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

As agreed with your Offices, we did not obtain official comments on this report. However, we discussed the report with representatives of each of the services and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and they generally agreed with our findings. We have incorporated their specific comments as appropriate.

We plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the date of this letter, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier. At that time, we will send copies to the Chairmen, House and Senate Committees on Armed Services; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, Navy, and Air Force; and other interested parties.



Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office

Summary of Units, Ships, and Aircraft Now Closed to Women

Army

Combat Units

Infantry (all units brigade level and below)

Armor (all units brigade level and below)

Field artillery

- Cannon artillery battalions
- Multiple launch rocket system battalions
- Firing batteries of Lance missile battalions
- Target acquisition batteries

Air defense artillery

- Short range air defense battalions
 - Air defense artillery battalions, Roland missile
-

Combat Support Units

Engineer

- Combat engineer units
- Ribbon bridge companies
- Light equipment companies
- Ribbon, panel, girded, and float bridge companies

Signal

- Signal company in special forces group
- Forward-deployed platoons within battalions

Military police platoons in division military police companies

Military intelligence

- Special forces military intelligence companies
- Collection and jamming companies and ground surveillance radar platoons
- Chemical
- Chemical companies in armored cavalry regiment
- Smoke, reconnaissance, and decontamination platoons in division chemical companies

Appendix I
Summary of Units, Ships, and Aircraft Now
Closed to Women

Combat Service Support Units

Infantry and tank system support teams in forward support battalions

Trauma treatment teams and ambulance squads indigenous to infantry/armor maneuver units

Division air defense artillery missile support companies

Other Combat Units (With Special Functions)

- Aviation
- Air cavalry squadrons
 - Reconnaissance squadrons
 - Division cavalry squadrons
 - Combat aviation squadrons
 - Attack helicopter companies in attack helicopter battalions
- Ranger battalions
- Special forces battalions
- Headquarters companies of
- Armored cavalry regiments
 - Ranger regiments

Navy

Naval mobile construction battalions

Underwater construction teams

Combat logistics force ships

- Fast combat support ships (AOE-1)
- Replenishment oilers (AOR-1)

Combat ships and submarines

Aviation squadrons

Marines Corps

Marine Corps security forces

Infantry regiments

Artillery battalions

Appendix I
Summary of Units, Ships, and Aircraft Now
Closed to Women

Reconnaissance battalions

Force reconnaissance companies

Tank battalions

Assault amphibian battalions

LAV battalions

LAAM battalions

FAAD battery/platoons

Air/naval gunfire liaison companies

Combat engineer battalions

Marine air support squadrons

Counter-intelligence teams

Interrogation-translation teams

Helicopter squadrons (tactical)

AV-8 squadrons (tactical)

Air Force

Mobile aerial port squadrons

Red Horse squadrons

Combat control

Tactical air command and control

Aerial gunner

Pararescue and recovery

**Appendix I
Summary of Units, Ships, and Aircraft Now
Closed to Women**

- Air force aircraft
 - Strategic reconnaissance
 - SR-71
 - U/TU-2
 - Tactical reconnaissance and search/rescue
 - EF-111
 - C-141 (airdrop)
 - HH-3
 - MH/HH-53
 - UH/HH-60
 - C/EC/HC-130 (some EC-130 and C-130)
 - RF-4
 - O-2
 - OV-10
 - C-140 (flight check)
 - T-39 (flight check)
 - T-33
 - TR-1
 - Fighters
 - F-4
 - F-5
 - F-15
 - F-16
 - F-106
 - F-111
 - Bombers
 - B-1
 - B-52
 - FB-111
 - Attack aircraft
 - AT-38
 - A-10
 - A-7
 - MC/AC-130 (gunship)
 - OA-37

Senate Bill 581, "To Amend Title 10 United States Code, to Increase the Combat Support Assignments Open to Women in the Armed Forces."

100TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 581

To amend title 10, United States Code, to increase the combat support assignments open to women in the Armed Forces.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 26, 1987

Mr. PROXMIRE (for himself and Mr. COHEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To amend title 10, United States Code, to increase the combat support assignments open to women in the Armed Forces.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. ASSIGNMENT OF FEMALE MEMBERS OF THE**
4 **ARMY TO COMBAT SUPPORT UNITS.**

5 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Chapter 343 of title 10, United
6 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following
7 new section:

Appendix II
Senate Bill 581, "To Amend Title 10 United
States Code, to Increase the Combat Support
Assignments Open to Women in the
Armed Forces."

1 **"§ 3549. Female members: assignment to combat service**
2 **support units and combat support units**

3 "The Secretary of the Army shall provide for the more
4 efficient utilization of female members of the Army by per-
5 mitting the permanent assignment of such members to all
6 units of the Army which have as their mission the direct
7 support of combat units."

8 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
9 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the
10 end the following new item:

3549. Female members: assignment to combat service support units and combat
support units."

11 **SEC. 2. CLARIFICATION OF TYPES OF VESSELS ON WHICH**
12 **WOMEN MAY BE ASSIGNED TO DUTY.**

13 The last sentence of section 6015 of title 10, United
14 States Code, is amended by striking out "and vessels of a
15 similar classification not expected to be assigned combat mis-
16 sions" and inserting in lieu thereof "combat support vessels
17 (including vessels which have the capability to provide under-
18 way replenishment to fleet units), and vessels of a similar
19 classification".

20 **SEC. 3. AIRCRAFT TO WHICH WOMEN MAY BE ASSIGNED.**

21 The text of section 8549 of title 10, United States
22 Code, is amended to read as follows:

23 "(a) Female members of the Air Force may not be as-
24 signed to duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions.

●S 581 IS

**Appendix II
Senate Bill 581, "To Amend Title 10 United
States Code, to Increase the Combat Support
Assignments Open to Women in the
Armed Forces."**

1 “(b) The prohibition in subsection (a) does not apply to
2 female members of the Air Force designated under section
3 8067 of this title (or appointed with a view to designation
4 under that section) or to female members assigned to duty in
5 reconnaissance, training, or transport aircraft.”

○

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