

July 1993

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

Deployment in the Persian Gulf War





United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

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The Honorable Les Aspin
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

This report discusses the deployment of women in the military to the Persian Gulf during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, an action that renewed debate about the restrictions that prohibit the assignment of women to combat positions. The information in this report addresses women's roles and performance; ability to endure deployment conditions; effect on unit cohesion; and effect on a unit's ability to deploy.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretaries of the Navy, the Air Force, the Army, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, interested congressional committees, and other interested parties.

If you or your staff have any questions, please call me on (202) 512-5140. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix IV.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Mark E. Gebicke'.

Mark E. Gebicke
Director,
Military Operations and Capabilities Issues

Executive Summary

Purpose

Of the more than half a million U.S. troops deployed to the Persian Gulf during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, approximately 7 percent (about 41,000) were women. The deployment of so many women renewed debate about whether restrictions that prohibit the assignment of women to combat positions and units should be removed. The Persian Gulf War provided the first opportunity to evaluate some of the salient issues in that debate on the basis of a large-scale, lengthy military deployment involving a hostile situation.

In April 1993, the Secretary of Defense lifted the restrictions on women flying combat aircraft in the Navy and the Air Force. Additional debate is anticipated regarding the service of women in other combat positions in the Armed Forces.

GAO visited 10 support units that deployed to the Persian Gulf with both women and men to learn of their experiences in relation to women's (1) roles and performance, (2) ability to endure deployment conditions, (3) effect on unit cohesion, and (4) effect on a unit's ability to deploy. This report summarizes the views of the unit commanders GAO interviewed and the military personnel who participated in focus group discussions GAO conducted at each unit. Although the results of the focus group discussions cannot be statistically projected to the deployed population as a whole, they provide the perspectives of a broad cross-section of military personnel on key issues related to women in the military.

Background

Four of the most frequently raised issues in the debate about removal of combat assignment restrictions for women focus on whether

- combat and noncombat role distinctions made in women's assignments have any meaning in modern warfare;
- women can endure the hardships of a lengthy hostile deployment and perform assigned tasks without mission impairment;
- the presence of women negatively affects unit cohesion and, therefore, unit performance; and
- women impede the ability of units to deploy due to lost time for reasons such as pregnancy.

This report contains the results of GAO interviews with unit commanders and 59 focus group discussions held at 10 different military units that participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Group participants comprised 171 men and 130 women with a variety of

demographic and military service characteristics. Thirty-eight percent of the focus group participants were in the Army, 24 percent in the Air Force, 21 percent in the Navy, and 16 percent in the Marine Corps.

Results in Brief

Overall, the unit commanders and focus group participants gave primarily positive assessments of women's performance in the Persian Gulf War. Women in the units GAO visited worked on a broad spectrum of assignments and tasks during the deployment. Focus group discussions indicated that women and men endured similar harsh encampment facilities and conditions. Health and hygiene problems during the deployment were considered inconsequential for both men and women. Cohesion in mixed gender units was generally considered to be effective during deployment, and the unit commanders and focus group participants often described cohesion as being best while the units were deployed. The groups GAO talked to cited pregnancy as a cause for women returning early from deployment or not deploying at all, but the groups generally identified few actual cases.

Principal Findings

Women's Roles and Performance

Women performed a wide range of tasks throughout the deployment area before, during, and after hostilities. Women were stationed in units close to the northern border of Saudi Arabia and served in units that crossed the border into Iraq and Kuwait during the air and/or ground wars.

Women filled a variety of jobs, ranging from medical positions to aircraft weapons assembler and loaders. Along with men, women performed generic deployment-related tasks, including setting up and tearing down tents, filling sandbags for building bunkers, and burning human waste. Perceptions of women's performance were highly positive. Some people expressed concerns about women's physical strength capabilities; however, teamwork was frequently cited as a way physical strength limitations were overcome for both women and men.

Comments that women benefitted from favoritism with regard to assignments or engaged in task avoidance were relatively infrequent among focus group participants. While many said that men felt a need to protect women, they gave little support for the notion that such attitudes

distracted men from their responsibilities. No gender preferences were perceived in awards decisions or other forms of recognition. Some operational concerns arose as units implemented the combat assignment restrictions affecting women. For example, two units in two services, which provided temporary support teams to all-male combat units, could not or would not assign women to those teams because the receiving units could not accommodate women or did not want women assigned.

Deployment Conditions

The focus groups indicated that women and men endured the same austere housing, shower, and latrine conditions, including situations in which women and men went without any facilities at all. Housing ranged from dormitory-style rooms in existing buildings, to overcrowded tents with and without air conditioning, to no housing at all for some units during the ground war. Housing and bathroom facilities were sometimes separate for women and men and other times were shared.

According to commanders and focus group participants, health and hygiene problems were minor for both women and men and had no negative effects on mission accomplishment. Although there were some initial shortages of women's hygiene supplies, shortages were alleviated by supplies people brought with them and received later in the mail; sufficient supplies eventually became available. Within the focus groups there was little difference in perceptions of women's and men's ability to deal with the stress of the deployment.

Unit Cohesion

Unit cohesion was both important and effective during the deployment, according to the women and men GAO talked to. They most often defined cohesion as teamwork and/or working together to get the job done. The focus groups said that cohesion was most important in smaller units (such as platoons or sections). Gender homogeneity was not reported by focus group participants as a requirement for effective unit cohesion during the deployment.

Ability to Deploy

Some women and men were unavailable for deployment or returned early for a variety of reasons. Focus group participants frequently described pregnancy as a cause for women returning early or not deploying, but the participants generally recalled few specific cases. As GAO noted in a

August 1992 report,¹ the Department of Defense lacks complete and comparable data on the total number of personnel that could not deploy for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Personnel not deploying had a greater impact in units that deployed in their entirety than in units that deployed only a portion of their personnel. In the former instance, personnel who could not deploy created vacancies that needed to be filled. In the latter case, unit commanders had a choice of which personnel to send (since not all had to deploy), so substitutions were easier.

Recommendations

This report contains no GAO recommendations.

Agency Comments and GAO Evaluation

The Department of Defense reviewed a draft of this report and concurred with its findings. The Department's comments reiterated GAO's point that, because of the sampling and methodology techniques used, the results cannot be generalized (statistically projected) to the entire deployed population, including combatant units. Nevertheless, GAO believes this report provides important and useful insights into how women performed in a variety of roles and units in a lengthy and hostile deployment which exposed some units, regardless of their combatant/noncombatant status, to combat conditions. Complete Department of Defense comments are provided in appendix III.

¹Operation Desert Storm: War Highlights Need to Address Problem of Non-Deployable Personnel (GAO/NSIAD-92-208, Aug. 1992).

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Abbreviations

GAO General Accounting Office
NCO Noncommissioned officer

Introduction

Of the more than half a million U.S. troops deployed to the Persian Gulf during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, approximately 7 percent (about 41,000) were women. The inclusion of so many women in that deployment renewed debate about whether restrictions that prohibit the assignment of women to combat positions and units should be removed. The Persian Gulf War provided the first opportunity to review the issues being debated in the context of a lengthy hostile deployment that included thousands of women.

Repealed and Remaining Assignment Restrictions

The Defense Authorization Act of 1992 contained two amendments: one to repeal the prohibitions against women flying combat aircraft¹ and a second establishing the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces to evaluate restrictions affecting women. The Secretary of Defense indicated that he would wait for the Commission's November 1992 report before taking further action on the assignment of women in the military.

In April 1993, the Secretary of Defense lifted the restrictions on women flying combat aircraft in the Navy and the Air Force. Additional legislative action is anticipated in the near future regarding the service of women on warships and, possibly, in other areas.

With removal of the combat aircraft assignment restriction, the only remaining statutory restriction in 10 U.S.C. 6015 prohibits the assignment of women in the Navy and the Marine Corps to combat mission ships. The Army, although not covered by statute, has a policy which reflects the statutory restrictions of the law and precludes the assignment of women to those positions most likely to engage in direct combat. Marine Corps policy also prohibits the assignment of women to direct ground combat.

Service implementing policies also result in the limiting or closure of some noncombat positions or job categories to accommodate operational programs. For example, the Army closes some noncombat positions to provide for the stateside rotation of overseas combat personnel. Also, under the Department of Defense's "risk rule," the services may prohibit assignment of women to those noncombat positions exposed to risk that is equal to or greater than that of associated combat units.

¹Section 8549 and part of section 6015 of title 10 of the United States Code (U.S.C.).

Issues Related to the Removal of Assignment Restrictions

Four of the most frequently raised issues in the debate about removing combat assignment restrictions for women focus on whether

- combat and noncombat role distinctions made in women's assignments have any meaning in modern warfare;
- women can endure the hardships of a lengthy hostile deployment and perform assigned tasks without mission impairment;
- the presence of women negatively affects unit cohesion and, therefore, unit performance; and
- women impede the ability of units to deploy because of lost time (pregnancy, for example).

A major issue in the debate about assignments is the contention that the exclusion of women from combat roles does not exclude them from the dangers of war. According to this argument, the modern battlefield is so fluid that women cannot be protected and therefore, the combat restrictions have no impact during war. On the other hand, there are concerns that women do not have sufficient physical strength to perform all of the tasks associated with a lengthy, hostile deployment. Further assertions contend that combat assignments, in particular, require greater physical strength than women are generally capable of.

Second, concerns have been raised about women's ability to endure the harshness of a lengthy hostile deployment and effectively carry out their responsibilities. Living in tents with little or no privacy, the lack or limited availability of bathroom facilities and clothes laundering options, and the inability to shower daily or at will are cited as some of the hardships of field deployment conditions. Related to these issues are concerns about the impact of these conditions on women's health and, hence, women's availability to perform their duties.

A third concern focuses on unit cohesion and its importance to the accomplishment of a unit's mission. Male bonding is considered by many to be essential for the success of combat unit missions. Some have asserted that the introduction of women to an all-male unit would, at best interfere with, and more likely destroy or prevent, the male bonding necessary for effective unit cohesion during combat operations.

A fourth concern questions women's availability for deployment because of pregnancy and the belief that women generally lose more time on the job than men do.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of this report is to provide information on the following four areas as they relate to the inclusion of a large number of women in an actual lengthy hostile deployment:

- women's roles and their physical ability to perform assigned tasks;
- men's and women's deployment conditions such as encampment facilities, and hygiene and health conditions;
- cohesion in mixed-gender units; and
- deployability.

We visited 10 units, which had both men and women assigned to them, after their return from deployment to the Persian Gulf War. We discussed the four issue areas with unit commanders and with women and men in separate focus group discussions at each unit. The types of units we visited in each service are listed in table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Types of Units Visited

| Service | Type of unit |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Army | Medical command |
| | Military police brigade |
| | Aviation brigade |
| | Forward support battalion |
| Air Force | A-10 fighter wing |
| | F-15 fighter wing |
| | F-111 fighter wing |
| Navy | Combat logistics force ship |
| | Destroyer tender |
| Marine Corps | Expeditionary force |

Within units, we selected focus group participants by (1) screening personnel by gender, rank, and job category and (2) selecting final participants on the basis of a random sampling of eligible personnel.

The qualitative information obtained through the group discussions and, to a limited extent, from the commander's interviews was analyzed using a systematic design that captured and categorized like information from each discussion. That information was analyzed to determine the extent to which it was reflected among all of the groups.

Profile of Group Participants

Focus groups included military service women and men with a variety of demographic and military service characteristics. A total of 318 individuals

participated in 63 focus group discussions. One hundred and seventy-one men and 147 women participated in the groups.²

Thirty-eight percent of participants in the 63 groups were in the Army; 16 percent in the Marine Corps; 21 percent in the Navy; and 24 percent in the Air Force. About one-quarter of the participants were officers; the remainder were equally divided between enlisted and noncommissioned officer (NCO) ranks. In terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds, 68 percent were white; 22 percent black; 8 percent Hispanic; 2 percent Asian or Pacific Islander; and 1 percent Native American.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 51 years, with an average age of 29 for the groups. Enlisted personnel were 9 years younger on average than either NCOs or officers; the women participants were an average of 2 years younger than the men. About half of the participants were married when they deployed; of these, 26 percent were married to military personnel. The men were more likely to be married than the women—61 percent of the men were married compared with 39 percent of the women. However, women were far more likely to be married to a fellow service member; 51 percent of the married women participants had military spouses, compared with only 12 percent of the married men.

Forty-four percent of those who were married to military personnel had spouses who also deployed to the Gulf during Operations Desert Shield and/or Desert Storm. Half of the women members married to military personnel had a spouse who also deployed while only 31 percent of the men did.

Focus group participants had served an average of 8 years in the service. Men had served an average of 3 years longer than the women. NCOs had served the longest—12 years—while junior enlisted personnel had served for the shortest period of time (4 years). Participants served an average of 5 months in the Persian Gulf. Actual time periods spent in the Gulf ranged from 1 to 15 months, and 9 out of 10 participants spent at least 3 months in the Gulf region.

Of the 63 group discussions, 59 were included in our data base. Of those, 32 are men's groups, 27 are women's, 16 are officer groups, 22 are NCO groups, and 21 are enlisted personnel groups.

²The material from four group discussions was inadequate for coding because of unresolvable problems of interpretation of the raw field notes made while the group discussions were taking place. Consequently, the data presented in the report is based on 59 groups. The four uncodable groups were women's groups (a total of 17 women).

Explanatory Note on
Focus Group Data

This report summarizes the results of our analysis of the information collected during our visits with 10 units deployed to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The focus group data is presented in terms of the number of separate focus groups that (1) discussed the particular issue at hand and (2) contained at least one person who made a statement or reported an experience summarized in the data. The number of groups discussing a topic varies by topic; also, the number of comments within one group on a single topic varies by group. Thus, one group may be recorded under two different opinions expressed on the same topic because two people in the same group made different comments on the same topic. Thus, the number of groups commenting on an issue will not always equal the total number of groups reported under each of the different kinds of opinions expressed on a single topic. The pattern or preponderance with which a single viewpoint or experience occurs across the focus groups provides the understanding or overall message of the deployment experiences and perceptions of the people we talked to in the 10 units we visited.

The results of these focus group discussions cannot be generalized as representative of the deployed population as a whole as might be the case with a survey because we did not conduct a survey. Statistical estimates cannot be derived from these results. Although the results are presented in numerical form, they are presented in this way solely for the purpose of describing replication across the groups. Further information on our methodology is provided in appendix I. Demographic characteristics of focus group participants are provided in appendix 2.

We conducted our fieldwork between April and October 1991 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Women Were an Integral Part of Military Service Operations

During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, women performed a variety of jobs and tasks and worked in a cross-section of locations during the deployment and hostilities. Perceptions of their performance were primarily positive, except for comparatively infrequent concerns about their physical strength capabilities. Perceptions of favoritism, the tendency of men to want to protect women, and comparable award recognition generally were not considered impediments to the effective operation of mixed-gender units.

Commanders and focus group participants said that because of varying interpretation of how to apply the combat restrictions applicable to women, flexibility in the assignment of personnel was somewhat restricted and some qualified personnel were not given assignments they were trained to perform. As a result, women's mobility on the battlefield was more restricted than men's.

Women's Roles and Responsibilities Represented a Broad Spectrum

The women and men we visited described a vast array of jobs or positions that women held while deployed in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Table 2.1 presents an overview of those positions and generic tasks.

Chapter 2
Women Were an Integral Part of Military
Service Operations

Table 2.1: Selected Roles and General Deployment Tasks Women Performed While Deployed in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm

| Roles/responsibility | Generic task |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Administrative clerk | Building bunkers |
| Aircraft mechanic | Burning human waste |
| Ambulance driver | Digging trenches |
| Aviation ordnance technician | Filling sandbags |
| Boiler technician | Guarding encampment |
| Chaplain's assistant | KP |
| Chief engineer for ship | Ready reaction |
| Combat signaler | Setting up/tearing down tents |
| Communications technician | |
| Cook | |
| Damage control assistant | |
| Dentist | |
| Dietician for hospital | |
| Dining facility manager | |
| Doctor for ship | |
| Electrician | |
| Flight operations clerk | |
| Food services officer | |
| Fuel handler | |
| F-111F crew chief | |
| Head of ship's foundry | |
| Head nurse | |
| Helicopter repairer | |
| Helicopter pilot | |
| Information management specialist | |
| Intelligence analyst | |
| Legal clerk | |
| M60 gunner | |
| Machinist mate | |
| Military police | |
| Mission support for personnel | |
| Operating room nurse | |
| Personnel administration specialist | |
| Photographer | |
| Psychiatrist | |
| Stock control storage officer | |
| Supply clerk | |
| Tank repairer | |
| Truck driver | |
| Truck mechanic | |
| Unity diary clerk | |
| Weapons assembler and loader | |
| Welder | |

Women Were Stationed Across Deployed Area

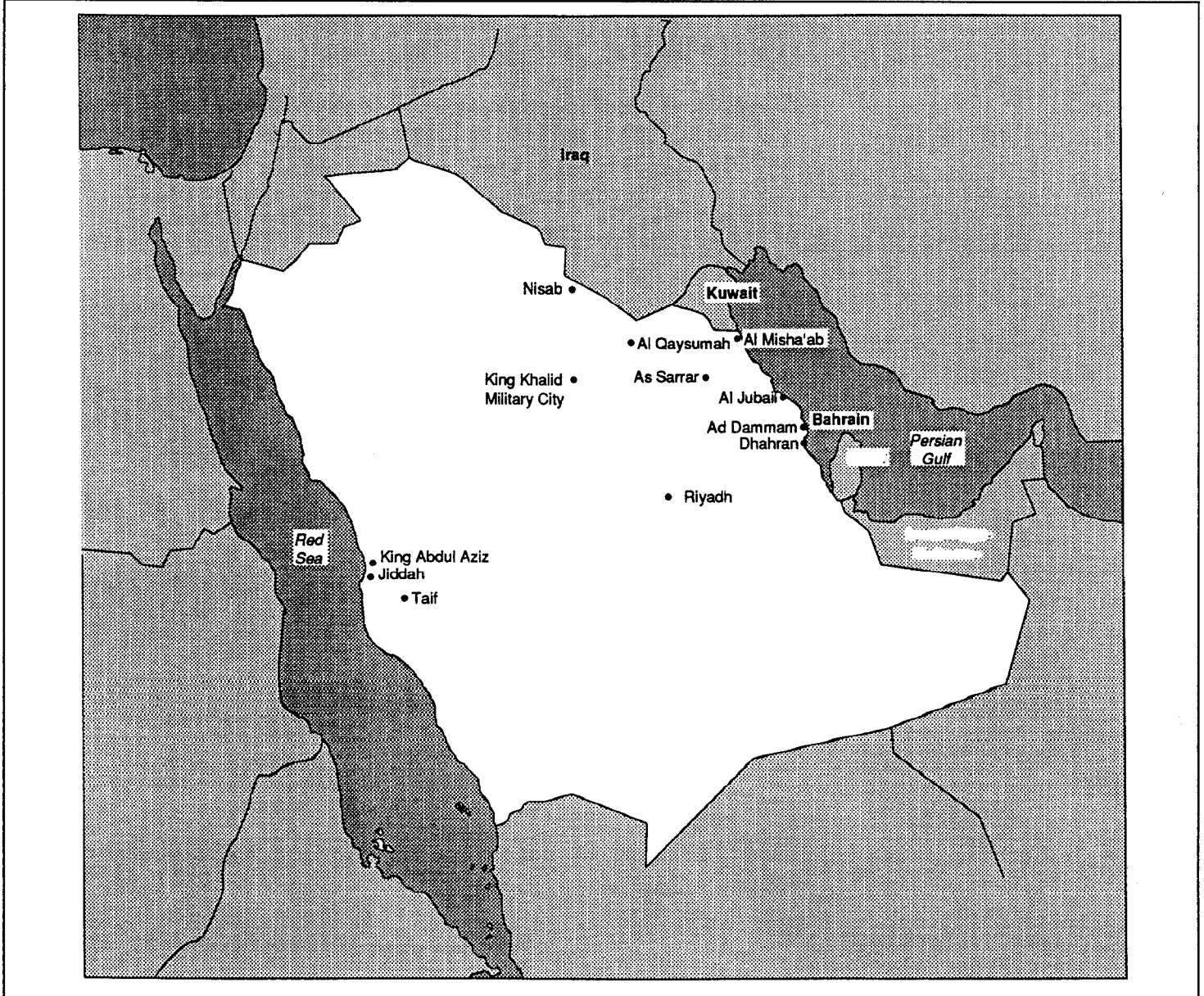
Women in the units we visited performed these tasks in locations that stretched across the stationing area for deployed allied forces and some went into Iraq and Kuwait during and after the air and ground war. Women were deployed to a variety of locations, from Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, on the Red Sea, to the country of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, and from Riyadh,

the capital of Saudi Arabia, to Dhahran and Al Jubail on the Persian Gulf and Al Misha'ab, Nisab, Al Qaysumah, and other locations very close to the Saudi Arabian borders with Kuwait and Iraq.

Figure 2.1 shows deployed locations in or near cities or named facilities and installations. It does not include encampments or troop movements in undeveloped desert areas.

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Women Were an Integral Part of Military
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Figure 2.1: Deployed Locations Identified by Units That Included Women



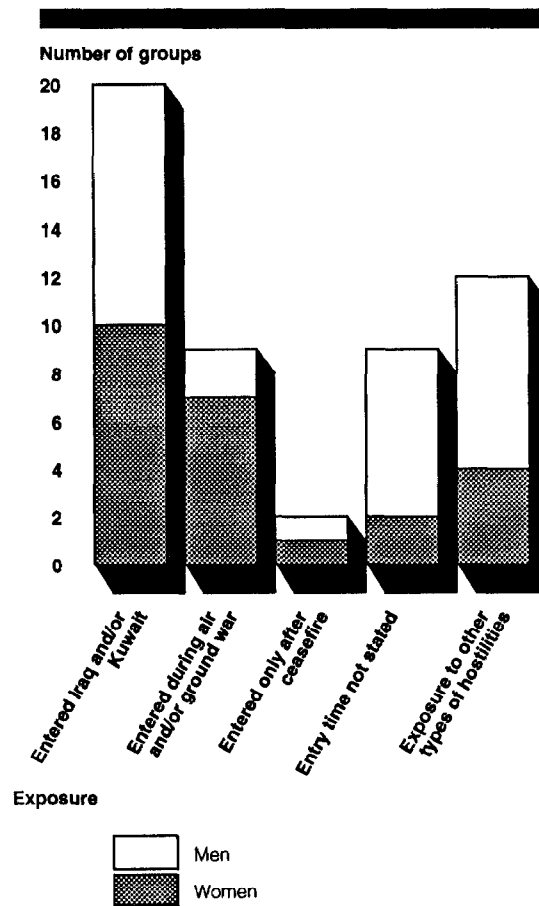
Note: Included in the map are only those locations that could be identified by reference to a city, facility, or installation. Locations that were referred to only by a distance from the border with Iraq or Kuwait are not included.

Sources: Mission briefs, commander interviews, and focus groups.

Units Were Exposed to Hostilities

Unit activities took some Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps women into Iraq and/or Kuwait even during the air and ground wars. Some women were exposed to other kinds of hostilities: for example, they received enemy fire, returned fire, and/or dealt with enemy prisoners. Figure 2.2 shows how many groups identified the various ways in which participants described their exposure to hostilities.

Figure 2.2: Exposure to Hostilities



Note: Data is based on a total of 47 Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps groups. See explanatory note in chapter 1 on focus group data. Other kinds of hostilities include receiving enemy fire, returning fire, and/or dealing with enemy prisoners.

The nature of hostilities that personnel in support units were exposed to appears to be associated with a particular service and the way it wages war. Because the Army and the Marine Corps essentially fight on the ground, people we talked to in those services were more likely to be close to or exposed to battlefield combat conditions than the Air Force or the Navy support units. Fifty-nine percent of all the Army focus groups we met with included reports of crossing the border, 62 percent of the Marine Corps focus groups reported crossing it, and 12 percent of the Air Force focus groups included these reports.

The Air Force generally deployed to stationary sites from which aircraft were launched and to which the aircraft returned. Thus, Air Force support units were more likely to be exposed to other kinds of hostilities. Twelve groups reported exposure to hostilities but did not go into Iraq or Kuwait: 18 percent of the Army groups, 25 percent of the Marine Corps groups, and 35 percent of the Air Force groups. The Navy ships we visited were stationed at the Port of Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, and/or the Red Sea area. The following examples illustrate the geographic scope of the activities in which women participated:

- One unit was initially stationed within 8 miles of the front, which, according to the unit commander, placed it within enemy artillery range; the unit's logistics forces moved into Iraq during the ground war, progressing about 370 kilometers in the first 100 hours.
- Women and men required to be nearby and/or attached to the rear of U.S. combat maneuver battalions, moved with those battalions as the battalions captured enemy forces.
- One unit was airlifted forward to assume control of enemy prisoners, placing it behind another U.S. combat unit but ahead of two follow-on U.S. combat units; the airlifted unit was accidentally fired upon by friendly forces.
- Army women received combat flying time credit and Combat Medical Patches, while Marine Corps women received Combat Action Ribbons because of the location and timing of the performance of their duties.
- A hospital unit was stationed on the Iraqi border ahead of some allied infantry units that passed it on their way into enemy territory.
- One unit's location was described as ranging from 5 to 20 kilometers behind the front line.

Perceptions of Women's Performance Were Positive

Commanders and participants in the discussion groups gave positive assessments of women's performance during the deployment. In all nine of our interviews with one or more commanders, at least one commander said women performed as well as or better than men. In only three of the nine interviews did any commander indicate that women's performance was not as good as men's.

Participants in 44 of the 59 focus groups commented on the quality of women's performance during the deployment (see explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data). As table 2.2 shows, group participant comments were notably positive.

Table 2.2: Group Participant Assessments of Women's Performance

| Assessment of women's actual job performance | Women's groups | Men's groups |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Women performed as well as or better than men | 15 | 26 |
| Women did not perform as well as men | 6 | 14 |
| Group patterns of assessments | | |
| All positive assessments | 11 | 13 |
| Both positive and negative assessments | 4 | 13 |
| All negative assessments | 2 | 1 |
| No assessments expressed | 10 | 5 |

Further, as table 2.3 shows, these positive assessments occurred in spite of generally lower expectations of women's performance.

Table 2.3: Group Participant Expectations for Women's Performance

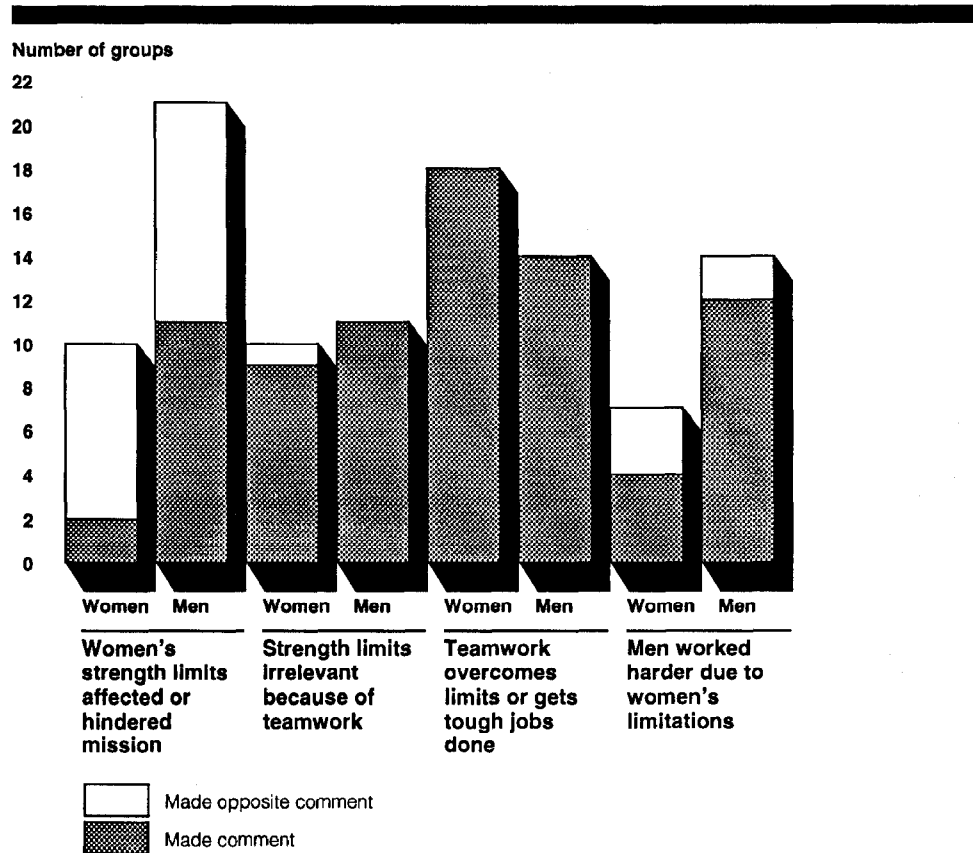
| Expectation | Women's groups | Men's groups |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Women should/would perform as well as or better than men | 8 | 12 |
| Women should/would not perform as well as men | 9 | 12 |
| Group patterns of expectations | | |
| All positive expectations | 3 | 6 |
| Both positive and negative expectations | 5 | 6 |
| All negative expectations | 4 | 6 |
| No expectations expressed | 15 | 14 |

Some Concerns Expressed About Women's Physical Strength Capabilities

In general, physical strength was neither a problem nor an issue during the deployment. Both commanders and group participants often noted that women effectively performed the following strenuous tasks: setting up

tents, filling sandbags, and constructing sandbag bunkers. The context of comments often noted that capabilities of service personnel were more dependent on the individual's characteristics than gender. Teamwork was noted as a major factor negating physical strength as an issue or in overcoming anyone's strength limitations. Women and men were just as likely to report that strength limits had no effect on mission accomplishment and that teamwork made strength issues irrelevant. Figure 2.3 shows group participant comments on physical strength; 47 groups discussed the issue, 26 of which were men's groups, and 21 of which were women's groups.

**Figure 2.3: Group Discussion
Comments on Physical Strength
Issues**



Note: See section in chapter 1 on focus group data.

To the extent that group participants expressed negative assessments of women's capabilities, they tended to focus on differing physical strength or physical fitness capabilities perceived before or during the deployment. In one focus group, concern was expressed about women's inability to maintain physical fitness performance standards equivalent to men's; one person considered gender-normed standards as ineffective and noted that women appeared to often escape scheduled fitness training exercises. Further, 16 groups reported at least once that men felt they had to work harder because of women's physical strength limitations.

Negative assessments were more likely to come from men than women. Men were more likely to report that they had to work harder because of women's strength limitations (15 percent of women's groups and 37 percent of men's) and that women's strength limitations both hindered the mission on at least one occasion (7 percent of women's groups and 28 percent of men's).

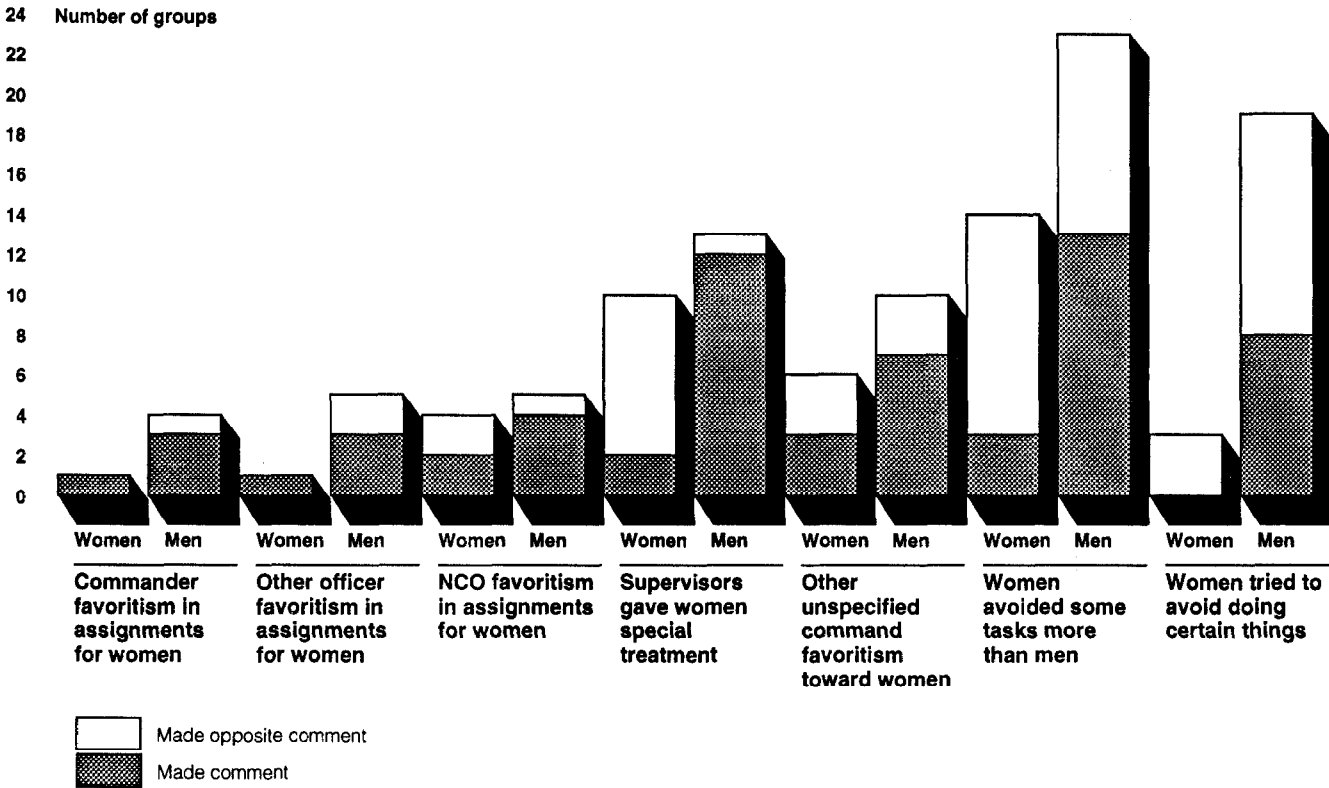
Other Performance-Related Issues

Discussions of women's roles and performance often raised issues of favoritism and task avoidance, protection, and awards.

Favoritism and Task Avoidance

There was some perception that women received special treatment from supervisors but few groups stated that women benefitted from command or supervisory favoritism with regard to the assignment of tasks. Figure 2.4 summarizes group comments on these topics. Of the 40 groups discussing favoritism, 21 were men's groups and 19 were women's. Of the 26 groups discussing task avoidance, 20 were men's groups and 6 were women's.

Figure 2.4: Group Discussion Comments on Favoritism and Task Avoidance



Note: See explanatory note in chapter 1 on focus group data.

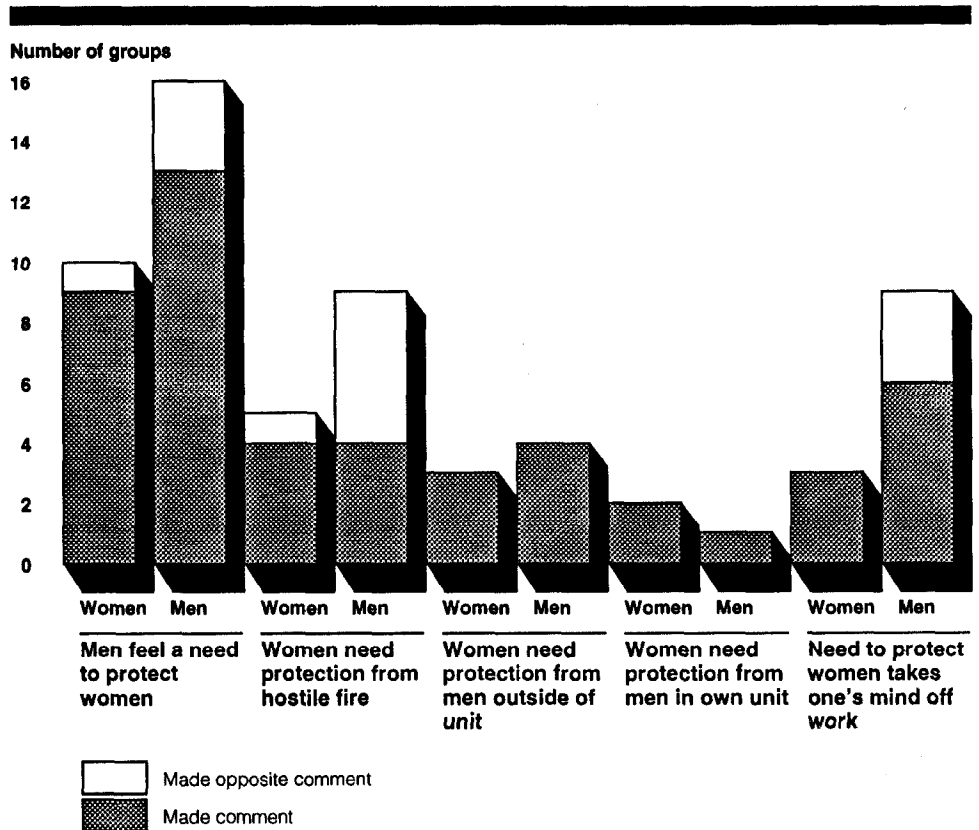
Successfully avoiding tasks can imply that someone benefitted from preferential consideration. Men were more likely to say women avoided doing some tasks (41 percent of men's groups and 11 percent of women's). However, men were also more likely to say women did not try to avoid doing some tasks (34 percent of men's groups and 11 percent of women's).

Protection of Women

At least 1 participant in each of 22 groups, 13 of which were men's groups (representing 41 percent of all men's groups) expressed the belief that men felt a need to protect women. However, there was little elaboration, other than hostile fire and men, of what women needed protection from.

Figure 2.5 summarizes the comments from group participants on protection. Of the 41 groups discussing protection, 26 were men's groups and 15 were women's.

Figure 2.5: Group Discussion
 Comments on Protection of Women



Note: See explanatory note in chapter 1 on focus group data.

No Gender Preference in Awards

There was little perception that gender-based differences existed with regard to recognition for group participants' efforts during the deployment. Fifty-nine percent of both the women's and men's groups, or a total of 35, reported at least 1 participant who received some kind of award for service in Operations Desert Shield and/or Desert Storm. Forty-four percent, or 12 of the women's groups and 50 percent, or 16 of the men's groups reported that there was no difference in the kind of recognition men and women received. Only 19 percent, or 6 of the men's groups, and 22 percent, or 6 of the women's groups reported that men and

women were treated differently when it came to recognition for their efforts.

Operations Issues Surfaced From Implementation of Combat Restrictions

The women and men we talked with described some operations issues that arose in some of the units when the combat restrictions were applied during deployment.

Question of Applicability

Some group participants described occasions during the deployment when insufficient clarity over application of the combat restrictions may have affected unit operations or assignments as the units engaged in the activities and logistical moves necessary to fulfill their mission. Some of those occasions may have impeded the most effective assignment and, hence, the most effective and efficient utilization of human resources during a hostile deployment. For example, the following situations were described to us during our site visits:

Women in one ground maintenance unit were not allowed to be assigned near or with ground combat units to conduct repairs because of possible exposure to hostile fire. Nevertheless, people in that unit said they saw women from other units who had to work “forward” being assigned “forward.” Since the women were trained just like the men, they did not understand the imposition of such restrictions.

Members of a unit reported that women were not allowed to perform a specified type of mission prior to the opening of hostilities because of the unit’s understanding of the combat restrictions during the Persian Gulf deployment, in particular, because the mission would place women within 10 to 15 miles of the northern border of Saudi Arabia. Women in the unit were trained for the mission and had performed that mission in another hostile condition/location. Nevertheless, that same unit allowed women to go into Iraq when the war started. One person noted that some people were not sure what the restriction rules were and the unit’s changing, and seemingly contradictory, policies seemed to highlight that uncertainty.

There was reported concern within a service that defining combat flying time to include aircraft crewed by women could result in the violation of the combat assignment restrictions. This generated differences in some units’ definitions of what constituted combat flight time as well as some

confusion in efforts to clarify what the service ultimately settled on as the definition of combat flight during and after the air and ground wars.

In one group, men reported different policies among their separate subunits with regard to the forward stationing of women. One reported that although several women volunteered to help set up a forward camp (closer than their existing location of about 30 kilometers from the border) and could have contributed meaningfully, the commander would not let women help with that effort. Another, however, reported that, as a hospital unit, it was the most forward unit on the battlefield and it contained women. A third reported being ahead of combat military police units very close to the Iraq border with no protection, yet women were not restricted from that unit.

One woman in a unit reported not being allowed to move to a forward base because it was considered too far forward for a woman to be situated; she was surprised to learn she could not go there because she was a woman.

Confusion about application of the combat restrictions generated rumors in three units. According to the rumors, women were either to be moved to the rear when war started or to be removed from the unit so it could move into the combat zone. As some commanders in some unit noted, such rumors can hurt morale.

Restrictions Raised Some
Ground Deployment
Logistics Issues

Some logistics issues arose during the deployment with regard to field sanitation and/or housing conditions when women were assigned to support teams detailed to all-male units. Those support teams usually remained with the all-male units for more than 1 day, often for several days at a time. Two units in two different services, which sent out support teams to all-male combat units, told us that women either could not be or often were not assigned to those teams. Sometimes it was because the receiving unit could not accommodate women, and sometimes the receiving unit did not want women assigned to those support teams. We were told that in one case a less experienced man was sent on a support team in place of a woman, and in another case, men who were not specifically trained for the job were sent. We were told that at least one receiving unit chose to go without support rather than have women assigned. We were told, nevertheless, that when the need for support was great, as in the heat of battle, need overcame gender considerations.

Chapter 2
Women Were an Integral Part of Military
Service Operations

Another logistics issue was the assignment of personnel to teams guarding an encampment's perimeter. Because military police were not always available at every encampment (especially during the early months of the deployment), unit members were often assigned to guard the perimeter in teams. Commanders and group participants in some units expressed a reluctance to have women assigned to perimeter guard duty teams.

Women and Men Sustained Similar Deployment Conditions

The debate about expanding opportunities for women often addresses their ability to endure harsh encampment conditions. Some critics argue that women are less able to successfully endure a lengthy hostile deployment because women (1) need or prefer to be more meticulous than men about personal hygiene, (2) more readily run the risk of health complications resulting from harsh deployment conditions, and (3) are less able to endure the lack of privacy associated with encampment.

The women and men in the mixed-gender units we visited endured the same physical conditions of the deployment. Specifically, we learned from our interviews and group discussions that (1) women and men endured similar encampment housing and hygiene facilities and conditions and those conditions were generally austere and often harsh; (2) both women and men preferred more privacy than was available and made adjustments to accommodate those desires when possible; (3) women's health and hygiene issues were inconsequential; and (4) although women and men considered the wartime stress to be significant, it was not considered to be a gender-based problem. However, a mixed-gender deployment did require more advance logistical planning for gender-related supplies than was initially evident.

Women and Men Endured Similar Encampment Facilities and Conditions

The women and men in each of the 10 units we visited endured similar encampment facilities and conditions during the Gulf deployment; those facilities generally differed, however, by service, unit, stage of deployment, and/or encampment location. Whether facilities were separate or shared by both women and men, generally was a matter of availability. Because personnel on the Navy ships we visited remained on ship during the deployment, as they would during a peacetime deployment, they did not experience a change in their housing, shower, and latrine conditions. This was not true for Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps personnel.

Housing Conditions

During their deployment to the Persian Gulf, the women and men that we talked with in the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps were generally assigned to ground encampments. Housing facilities at ground encampments generally varied by service, location, and phase of the deployment.

The Air Force usually established permanent encampments where facilities and living conditions could be continually embellished over time. Women and men in the Army and the Marine Corps units, on the other

hand, often described moving encampments during the deployment and endured more austere encampment housing conditions that varied from location to location. Before moving to or establishing a unit's main encampment, some described spending 10 days or a couple of weeks in gymnasiums or barracks where several hundred people slept on cots that were so close together that people had to climb over them to move about.

As time passed, encampment supplies arrived, and "tent cities" were established, most enlisted women and men were assigned to tents that were designed for 10 or 12 people but in some cases held as many as 16 or 17 people. Officers were more likely to be assigned to smaller tents. Overcrowding in tents was often cited as a problem. For example, we were told that in 1 unit 15 people sometimes slept in a tent designed for 6 to 8 people. We were told that the tents in that unit were so crowded people had to slide off the end of their cots in order to get up.

Air Force tents were generally air-conditioned, unlike Army and Marine Corps tents. Within the tents, Army and Marine Corps personnel slept on cots, while some Air Force personnel had beds with mattresses, sheets, and pillows. Some tents had cement or wooden floors, while others did not. Since Air Force encampments tended to be permanent, personnel were more likely to be able to improve upon their housing conditions with small items such as wooden furniture (e.g., bookcases) made through a self-help center at the encampment. Women and men stationed at ground encampments often noted the pervasiveness and invasiveness of the desert sand. Women and men in the Air Force and the Army reported sharing housing for part or all of the deployment.

Some women and men were stationed at locations where permanent buildings were available for housing troops, and a few were assigned housing in trailers. On the other hand, some men and women reported having no housing during part or all of the deployment and sleeping on the ground or in trucks or other unit vehicles. These conditions generally occurred among units moving into Iraq or Kuwait during the ground war. Table 3.1 provides an overview of housing experiences described by the 47 groups we talked to in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps (see explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data).

**Chapter 3
Women and Men Sustained Similar
Deployment Conditions**

Table 3.1: Housing Facilities and Conditions Described by the 47 Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps Discussion Groups

| Housing condition | Percentage of 47 groups | Percentage of Men's groups | Percentage of women's groups |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| No housing for part or all of deployment | 30 | 35 | 24 |
| Tent for part or all of deployment | 91 | 92 | 90 |
| Semipermanent structure for part or all of deployment | 43 | 42 | 43 |
| Permanent structure for part or all of deployment | 30 | 38 | 19 |
| Other type for part or all of deployment | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Number of types of housing lived in | | | |
| One type | 19 | 19 | 19 |
| Two types | 32 | 19 | 48 |
| Three types | 28 | 38 | 14 |
| Four types | 13 | 15 | 9 |
| Women and men shared housing at least part of deployment | 55 | 58 | 52 |
| Sharing was temporary | 28 | 31 | 24 |
| Sharing was not temporary | 30 | 35 | 24 |
| Sharing caused problems | 25 | 27 | 24 |
| Sharing did not cause problems | 30 | 27 | 33 |
| Women and men did not share housing during the deployment | 62 | 69 | 52 |

Note: There was no recorded information for 4 of the 47 groups.

Shower and Latrine Facilities

Shower and latrine facilities varied considerably; however, women and men within the same unit had the same or similar facilities. Sometimes they shared showers or latrines by having separate hours designated for women and men. Often the smaller number of women in a unit meant women had access to shared showers for about 2 hours or less during a 24-hour period. Of the 47 Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps groups we talked to, 38 percent (or 18), included 1 or more people who shared showers by having different hours for use, and 30 percent (or 14), included 1 or more people for whom there were no separate latrines for women and men.

Some units, particularly ground units that moved into Iraq or Kuwait, had neither shower nor latrine facilities at times during the deployment. Twelve groups included 1 or more people who reported having no shower facilities for part of the deployment, and 9 groups with 1 or more people reported having no latrines for part of the deployment.

The Navy had separate shower and latrine facilities for enlisted women and men in berthing compartments on the ship. The officers generally had separate facilities as well.

Where facilities were available, some of the facilities and/or conditions that women and men described include the following:

- In a ground unit, showers consisted of a wooden stall with a big pot of unheated water on top; the water remained unheated during the winter season.
- In a ground unit, latrines sometimes consisted of portojohns with metal drums that had to be emptied periodically; human waste collected in the drums had to be burned by military personnel during times when local contractors were unavailable.
- In one unit, latrines consisted of a wooden shed that was only partly screened to enable ventilation and compromised men's and women's privacy.
- In one unit, a latrine consisted of a "4-holer," or 4 holes carved in wood; each hole was positioned over a barrel that was emptied periodically, and people were visible through window screening from the waist up.

Sharing shower and latrine facilities caused some problems. For example, women in one unit told us that their designated shower hours were very limited. There were only two showers, and they had to be shared by men and women. The 17 women in the unit worked noon to midnight shifts and were allowed to shower only between midnight and 1 a.m. Some of the women said the men waiting to take a shower begrudged the women access to the showers. Eventually, separate shower facilities became available. Some men reported that, while sharing latrines, women and men did not always respect the sign on the door that noted which gender was using the facilities.

Mixed Perception of Special Treatment for Women

Perceptions that women did or did not receive special consideration with regard to housing, shower, and latrine facilities were about equally divided. Eighteen (10 women's groups and 8 men's) or 30 percent of the 59

groups we talked to reported perceptions that women did not receive special consideration, while 17 (5 women's and 12 men's), or 29 percent reported perceptions that women did receive some special treatment.

**Privacy Was Important to
Both Women and Men**

Both women and men expressed concerns about a lack of privacy during the deployment and to the extent possible, found ways to adapt to conditions and accommodate their need or preference for privacy. The most frequently raised privacy issue was privacy in showers and latrines, and women were more likely to raise this issue than men. Eighteen, or 56 percent of the 32 groups discussing privacy issues, mentioned this as a problem; of the 32 groups, 72 percent of the women's groups (13) reported that this was a problem; 36 percent (5) of the men's groups reported this opinion.

One example of the lack of privacy women described related to gender-separate but collocated shower facilities; for example, a woman in one unit said (1) upper bodies were exposed when reaching up to turn on the water and (2) tall men were able to look over into the shower stalls. Women in another group cited "Peeping Tom" problems while they were in the showers. Nevertheless, 12 groups (37 percent of the 32 groups) reported comments that there were no privacy problems associated with showers and latrines.

The only other topic mentioned with any notable frequency was a lack of general privacy as opposed to personal privacy. Twelve groups (8 women's groups and 4 men's), or 37 percent of the 32 groups, reported comments that a lack of general privacy was a problem; only 1 group reported the opposite opinion.

Privacy for personal care was seldom voiced as a problem or concern. A direct link between privacy and gender was seldom made and occurred in a positive context. Only five groups included reports of a lack of privacy for personal care, while one reported the opposite opinion. And only four groups associated privacy with gender, reporting that men and women handled a lack of privacy equally well.

Both women and men adapted their surroundings or behavior to accommodate their need or preference for privacy. The relatively small concern about personal privacy may be a reflection of the extent to which people adapted their housing conditions when possible. For example, both women and men, whether they lived in shared housing or single-gender

housing units, constructed “walls” in their tents by hanging sheets or blankets, used shelving units or other furniture where available, and even constructed wooden partitions to define boundaries between cots or beds. One person wore headphones even when music was not playing to provide some sense of privacy, and some women used ponchos to provide privacy when relieving themselves in the open desert.

Women’s Health and Hygiene Issues Were Inconsequential

Questions about women’s ability to effectively contribute to a lengthy hostile deployment often address health and hygiene issues. Women and men in the 10 units we visited reported the existence of many kinds of health problems; few were gender related, and none were of any consequence. Forces group participants told us that health and hygiene issues were generally as much a concern to men as to women.

Few Health Problems Mentioned Were Gender Related

The women and men we talked to described many health problems associated with the deployment. These health problems were generally associated with the desert environment or caused by virus infections, food contamination, and injuries. Most of the health problems mentioned include the following: dehydration and other problems caused by heat, gastrointestinal problems including diarrhea/dysentery, athlete’s foot and other fungus infections, insect bites, hernias, crabs, depression, jock itch, urinary tract infections, yeast infections, migraine headaches, and sore muscles. The only problem mentioned as occurring with any magnitude was an outbreak of diarrhea described by one group.

Jock itch and yeast infections were the only gender-associated health problems that were mentioned; we were told these problems were generally infrequent and had no impact on mission accomplishment. Only three groups included reports that yeast infections were a common occurrence among women.

According to the women and the men we interviewed, female menstruation generally did not seem to affect women’s ability to perform their duties. Some women told us that they did not have menstrual flows for several months or during the entire deployment, whereas others said they had irregular menstrual flows. Some women took birth control pills to regulate their menstrual cycles.

**No Clear Perception That
Women Experienced More
Problems**

Opinion was divided on whether women experienced more health or hygiene problems than men during the deployment. Of the 51 groups discussing health issues, 20 (39 percent) reported perceptions that women experienced more health problems than men, and 19 (37 percent) reported perceptions that they did not. Similarly, of the 30 groups discussing hygiene issues, 12 (40 percent) reported perceptions that women were more affected by hygiene problems, and 11 (37 percent) reported perceptions that they were not.

**Women and Men Adapted
to Conditions to Address
Their Hygiene Needs**

Our discussions indicate that women and men generally adapted to the harsh deployment conditions and were able to effectively address their personal hygiene needs. Women and men in units that moved into Iraq and Kuwait during the ground war demonstrated their adaptability in various situations. For example, when water usage was limited, some women and men sponge bathed from a basin of hot water, while others used their helmets as a basin for sponge bathing. In the absence of latrine facilities, some women relieved themselves in the desert by using their ponchos for privacy or by going between, behind, or underneath trucks.

Women who were stationed in permanent encampment facilities during the deployment described some of the alternative ways they met their hygiene needs. For instance, some said they addressed their hygiene needs behind partitions or in secluded areas outside their housing facilities. One woman who shared a tent with men told us that, because there were no shower facilities or other women in the tent, she went into a tracked vehicle to give herself a sponge bath.

**Some Initial Shortages
in Women's Hygiene
Supplies Occurred**

The majority of the military personnel we interviewed indicated that, overall, military supply lines adequately provided for hygiene needs, even though some items for women were initially in short supply. For the initial deployment periods, personnel were generally required to provide their own personal hygiene supplies. The amount of supplies taken to the Gulf was dependent upon the length of time military personnel were told to pack for, as well as limits to how much packing space each person was allowed. The length of time people were advised to pack supplies for varied from about 1 to 6 months.

Women and men who deployed early had to rely heavily on their own resources because supply lines were not always fully operational upon their arrival. We were told that women compensated for initial shortages

of feminine hygiene items by sharing among themselves, purchasing on the local economy, and receiving care packages. As the deployment progressed, women and men were able to rely on the supply lines and the many care packages from relatives, friends, and other donors in the United States. Military personnel told us that, by the end of the deployment, there was an overabundance of hygiene supplies in the Gulf theater. Reportedly, hygiene supplies that could not be mailed home were destroyed.

Little Difference, if Any, in Ability to Cope With Wartime Stress

The women and men in the focus groups described many sources of stress during the deployment, but few groups stated that any cause of stress was worse for either women or men, or that either women or men were better able to deal with the stress they experienced. Stress during the deployment was generally attributed to such factors as (1) the uncertainty of war, (2) SCUD missile alerts, (3) being away from families and friends, (4) the austerity of the physical environment, (5) the absence of mail, (6) rumors of various kinds, (7) military family policy, and (8) the uncertainty of when personnel would return to their home stations.

While many groups may have identified a particular source of stress, there was consistently very little identification of it with either men or women in any context. For example, the stress and/or uncertainty of war was mentioned most often by group participants as a source of stress during the deployment. Only one group reported an opinion that war-related stress was not significant. However, only five groups (four of them men's) reported that war-related stress was worse for women, while only three (all women's groups) reported that such stress was worse for men. Further, only three groups (two of them women's) reported opinions that women coped better with war stress, while four (all men's) reported that men coped better. Both of these views are overshadowed by the 15 groups (12 men's and 3 women's groups) that reported that there was no difference between men and women in how well either coped with war stress.

The analysis of the discussion of other sources of stress produces similar results, except that only on the item of general war-related stress do so large a number of groups discuss the lack of difference in men's and women's ability to cope. These results coincide with the frequent references group participants made to individual capabilities rather than gender as the determinant of how well anyone coped with the stresses of the deployment.

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Women and Men Sustained Similar
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One distinction was made with regard to gender. Some group participants thought that in some respects women had to cope with some sources of stress that did not affect men, in part because the Saudi Arabian culture restricted women in ways that men were not restricted. Women appeared to receive more scrutiny and perhaps harsher repercussions with respect to off-duty socializing, and the media focused attention on the women who deployed to the Gulf.

Gender Homogeneity Was Not a Prerequisite for Unit Cohesion

In discussions about women's roles in the military services, some analysts have expressed concern that mixed-gender units may not be able to achieve the cohesiveness or camaraderie of all-male units. These analysts argue that the presence of women may interfere with a bonding process characteristic of all-male units and necessary for successfully accomplishing wartime tasks and missions, especially direct offensive combat.

The military personnel we talked to in 10 mixed-gender units generally reported that unit cohesion was important to their mission, particularly at the smaller unit level. They also reported that cohesion in their mixed-gender units was effective during their deployment in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and was often better (than it was at their home station).

The people we met with did not identify gender as a component or determinant of cohesion and generally considered bonding in mixed units to be as good as, and sometimes better, than in single-gender units. Some, however, expressed a preference for all-male units.

The creation of new operating units in the deployed zone with personnel from different home-unit locations was a more noticeable cause of cohesion problems than mixing genders. Discipline problems during the deployment were considered to be infrequent, and women were more likely to be seen as having a positive or neutral effect on interpersonal friction than a negative one. Few instances of sexual harassment incidents during the deployment were described. Service policies regarding personal interaction between women and men, and related rumors, sometimes impaired off-duty bonding.

Cohesion Was Important and Effective

Cohesion can be described as "the bonding of the members of a unit in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the organization, and the mission."¹ To the military personnel we met, unit cohesion generally meant "teamwork" and/or "working together." Eighty-two percent of the 28 groups commenting on what cohesion meant to them, included 1 or both of those responses. In other words, cohesion was associated with how well people interacted and supported each other in accomplishing their common and more immediate missions.

¹William Darryl Henderson, *Cohesion—The Human Element In Combat* (National Defense University Press, 1985), p. 9.

Unit Cohesion Was
Important to the Wartime
Mission

The military personnel we talked with generally believed that successful completion of their mission depended on good unit cohesion. Their descriptions of the need for cohesion were primarily: important, very important, critical, and/or necessary. Of 26 groups commenting on the significance of unit cohesion, 25 (96 percent) gave 1 or more of those responses. Only one group reported an opinion that cohesion was not required because military personnel are directed to take orders and so would be expected to fulfill their responsibilities even without cohesion.

During the deployment, the organizational level at which cohesion was considered most important was predominantly the smaller unit: the team, the platoon, the shop, the company, the section within a company, the squadron, and the department. People identified with these units because they interacted with the people in them on a daily basis to accomplish their commonly shared tasks and responsibilities. Forty-one of the 42 groups identifying a unit or entity named 1 or more of these smaller units. Twenty groups referred to a larger or umbrella unit they were part of (the ship, the wing, or all enlistees) as needing effective unit cohesion. In the groups commenting, however, nearly 3 times as many separate references were made to smaller units than to larger ones. Also, 10 groups referred to the people they lived with in the encampments as a focus for cohesion.

Cohesion Was Effective in
Mixed-Gender Units

The men and women we met with generally believed that unit cohesion during the deployment was very good. Many considered it better during the deployment than at their home station. Group participants generally characterized their cohesion by how well people worked together or got along while deployed, with some characterizing their bond with coworkers in terms of family ties. Table 4.1 shows the nature of the remarks made in the 49 groups that discussed the quality of cohesion during their deployment (see explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data).

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Gender Homogeneity Was Not a Prerequisite
for Unit Cohesion**

Table 4.1: Comments by 49 Groups That Discussed the Quality of Cohesion During the Deployment

| Basic comment | Number of groups making comment | Percentage of groups discussing topic |
|---|--|--|
| Cohesion was good and/or better during the deployment | 42 | 86 |
| Cohesion was better during the deployment | 22 | 45 |
| Quality of cohesion described in terms of family | 11 | 22 |
| Cohesion was poor or lacking during the deployment | 10 | 20 |

Gender Was Not a Factor in the Definition of Cohesion

When defining cohesion, gender was generally not cited as a contributing or determining factor for achieving good unit cohesion. When asked to comment on whether mixed-gender units could bond as effectively as single-gender units, most group participants commenting said that bonding could be as effective and was sometimes better in a mixed-gender unit. In 42 (79 percent) of the 53 groups commenting on the impact of gender on cohesion, at least 1 person said mixed-gender units bonded well or better than single-gender units, and/or that women did not negatively affect unit cohesion or bonding. The following represent the general themes of responses in discussions of the impact of gender on cohesion:

- The theory that only men can bond is misleading. Individuals who experience a crisis bond because of the crisis—not because they are women or men.
- It did not matter whether you were a woman or a man, per se, but whether the individual wanted to adapt and be versatile and flexible enough to adapt to their working environment. Cohesion is based on individual effort and not gender.
- Gender is not what affects the cohesiveness of a unit. The important factors are individual capabilities, personalities, training, and overall skill levels.

In contrast, six groups included at least one comment that women had a negative impact on male or unit bonding. And in 12 groups, at least 1 person expressed a preference for male bonding or for all-male units. One person in these groups thought bonding was better in a single-gender unit whether the unit was all male or all female.

What follows are some of the benefits given for preferring all-male units: (1) Bonding in an all-male unit was tighter than in mixed units; (2) women interfered with male bonding; and/or (3) single-gender units, whether male or female, would be more cohesive than mixed units. Some also expressed concerns about the impact of women and/or pregnancy on cohesion in previously all-male units (such as fighter aircraft squadrons). Also, some respondents' commanders thought that a male unit was easier to motivate. However, such concerns were not associated with negative effects on mission accomplishment.

Unit Integrity Was Important for Cohesion

When discussing what they thought constituted unit cohesion, the women and men we talked to often cited the lack of prior experience with coworkers as interfering with unit cohesion. While some units deployed in their entirety, other units deployed only a portion of their personnel. Some Persian Gulf units, therefore, were created by combining portions of the same functional unit from several different home stations.

Generally, the people we interviewed who worked in newly created units in the Persian Gulf said those units were not cohesive because of differences in training and mission approach. As one person explained, for a unit to have cohesion, its members must train and work together.

Little Evidence of Impediments to Cohesion

To help assess unit cohesion, we asked group participants if they experienced friction with coworkers during the deployment. All but 7 of the 52 groups discussed friction in some respect. When friction occurred, more people perceived that it was between men and women (42 percent of groups reported at least one such opinion) than between only men (17 percent of the groups) or only women (17 percent of the groups).

Nevertheless, the majority of those groups commenting on the impact of women on friction said women reduced or had no negative impact on friction among troops. Twenty-six (50 percent) of the 52 groups commenting on friction did so in terms of the impact of women. Twenty-one (81 percent) of the 26 groups reported that women either reduced friction (16 groups) or had no negative effects on friction (6 groups), while only 19 percent (5 groups) reported that the presence of women contributed to interpersonal friction.²

²Some groups included more than one kind of comment.

Of the 21 groups reporting that the presence of women reduced friction and/or had no negative impact, 14 (67 percent) reported only positive opinions. In contrast, only one of the five groups reporting negative opinions reported 100-percent negative comments on the impact of women.

Fifty-three percent of the men's groups (17) commented on friction in terms of the impact of women, while only 33 percent (9) of the women's groups did. Also, of the 26 groups, 88 percent of the men's groups and 67 percent of the women's reported that the impact of women was either positive or neutral. Of the five groups reporting negative assessments, 80 percent (4) were men's groups.

Few Discipline Problems Emerged During the Deployment

We also inquired about the occurrence of discipline problems during the deployment to help assess cohesion in the units we visited. According to the women and men we interviewed, the frequency of discipline problems—including physical fights and other manifestations of interpersonal tensions and friction—was low and did not interfere with unit cohesion or mission accomplishment.

Military personnel believed that the low incidence of discipline problems, especially in units stationed in Saudi Arabia, was probably due to (1) limited free time, (2) the absence of alcohol in Saudi Arabia, and (3) travel restrictions that often restricted going into town during off-duty hours. Personnel deployed to locations outside of Saudi Arabia, such as Turkey, generally had fewer off-duty travel restrictions and had access to alcohol.

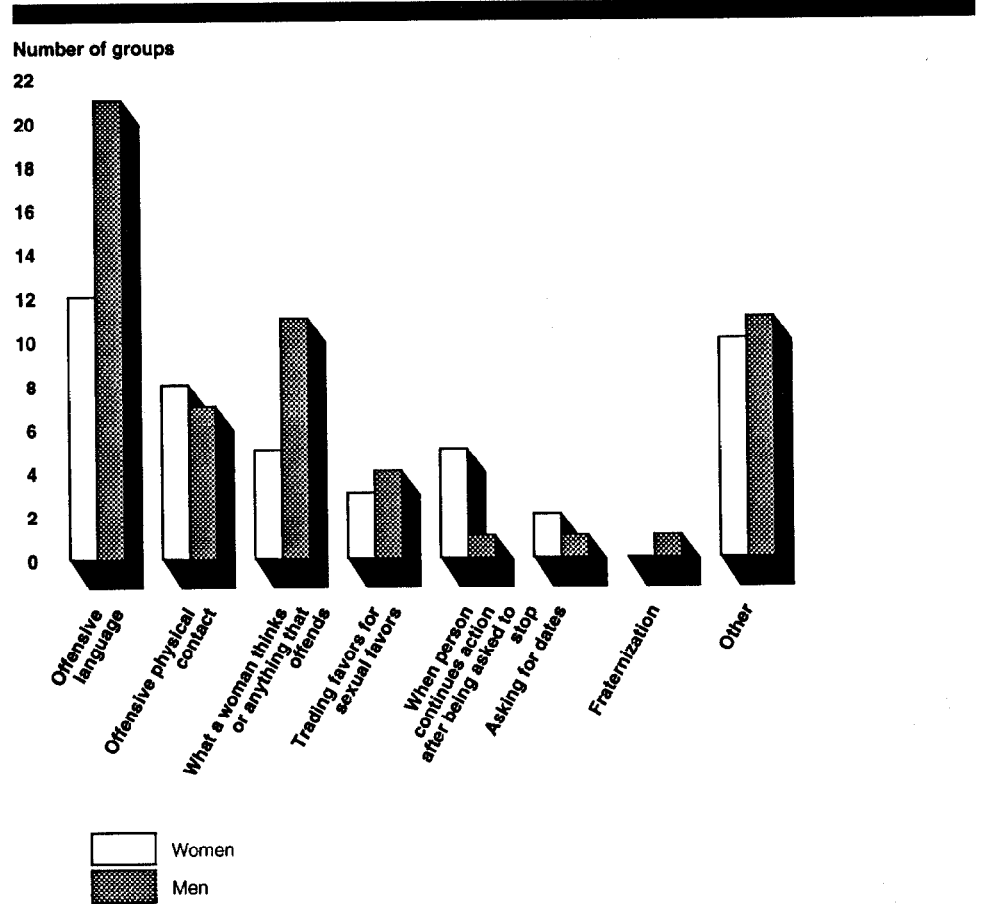
Some of the kinds of discipline problems that did occur, according to the women and men we talked with, included instances of women and men falling asleep while on guard duty, attitude problems associated with the stress of a wartime environment, theft, unauthorized access to alcohol or drunken behavior, and unauthorized social/sexual relations between men and women.

Few Instances of Sexual Harassment or Assault Were Described

The women and men we interviewed also reported a few sexual harassment incidents during the deployment. Group participants described what they thought constituted sexual harassment primarily as (1) offensive language, (2) offensive physical contact, and/or (3) whatever a woman thinks it is (anything that offends). Nine groups, eight of them

men, noted at least once that men can be harassed by women. There was little further consistency in definitions provided by group participants. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of comments on what group participants believed constituted sexual harassment.

Figure 4.1: Group Discussion Comments on the Definition of Sexual Harassment



Note: Some items under "other" include (1) gestures, (2) overstepping relationships, (3) anything that interferes with work, (4) "normal" interaction between men and women, and (5) anytime an individual is treated differently because of gender (see explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data).

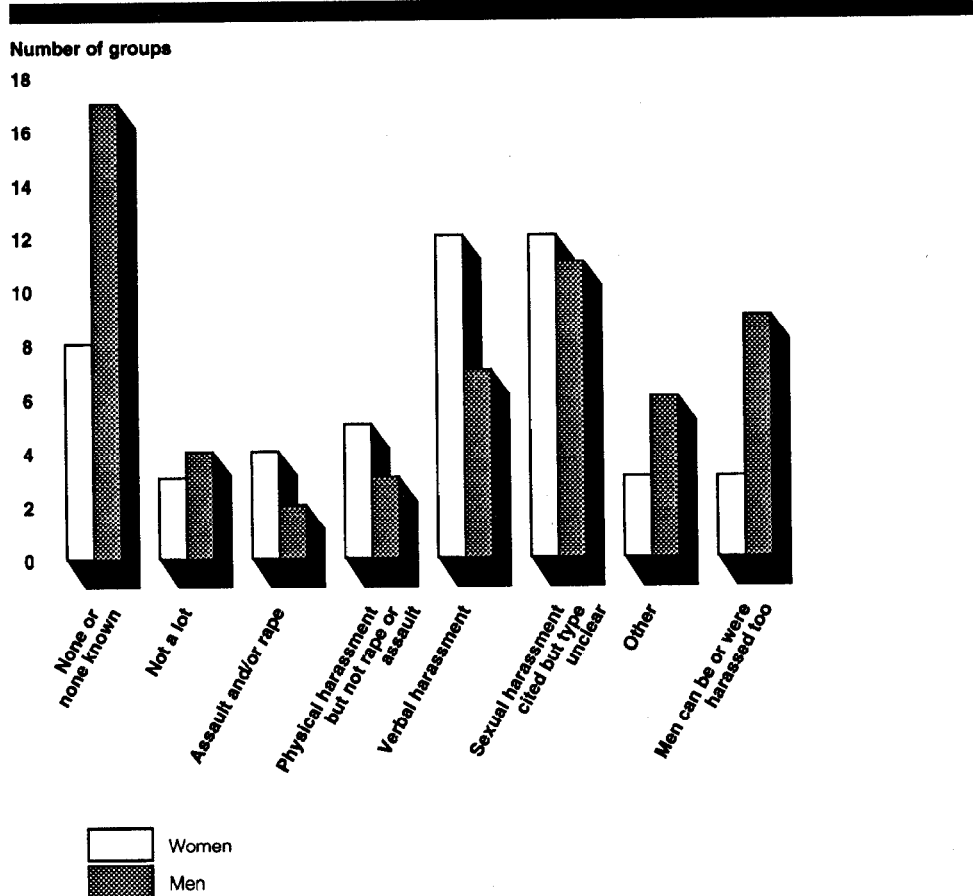
Verbal harassment was cited most often among the groups that identified specific instances of harassment that they perceived to occur during the

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for Unit Cohesion

deployment. Few cases of physical assault were mentioned. Rape cases were mentioned in three groups. Two different sites from the 10 visited are represented by the 3 groups; 2 groups were from the same site visit. Because two of the groups were from the same unit, the references may have been to the same instance of rape. One group in each of two additional units cited one case of a man trying to force his attentions on a woman during guard duty. Two groups from the same unit reported some pursuit of a woman for sex.

Figure 4.2 provides an overview of group participants' perceptions of the actual occurrence of instances of sexual harassment or assault during the deployment.

Figure 4.2: Group Participant Perceptions of the Occurrence of Sexual Harassment in or Outside of Own Unit



Note: See explanatory note in chapter 1 on focus group data.

Off-Duty Bonding Was Sometimes Impaired

The existence of mixed-gender units generated policies on social/sexual intimacy that many reported as impairing off-duty bonding. Fifty-eight percent (34) of all groups reported a unit policy toward social/sexual intimacy within the unit. Nineteen groups reported formal policies, 13 reported informal policies, and 19 groups mentioned penalties associated with violating these policies. The existence of policies was reported in each of the four services, and at least half of the groups in each service identified such policies. About one-third of the groups (11) identified the existence of formal and/or informal policies and attributed the policy to command discretion.

In one unit, for example, the commander (1) insisted that all encampment and recreation facilities be separated by gender, (2) distributed a list of deployed women's names and told the men not to socialize with the women during off-duty hours, and (3) prohibited sexual relationships during the deployment. Unit personnel told us that the commander was concerned that the mission would suffer if individuals became personally involved and worried too much about each other and their privacy. They added, however, that such policies seemed extreme and hurt morale. In another unit that implemented a mandatory buddy system, personnel believed a sign-out list was used to monitor fraternization.

Rumors Impaired Off-Duty Bonding

Despite service policies to segregate women and men, rumors about social relationships developed and affected personal friendships and off-duty recreation choices. Twenty-eight groups mentioned rumors and/or social isolation during the deployment. Twenty-six groups discussed rumors and 19 (73 percent) reported that rumors about men and women were a problem. Only six groups reported that there were no rumors or social isolation problems. The theme of what group participants told us was that if men and women were seen together for almost any reason while off-duty, it was assumed and rumored that the individuals were socially and/or sexually intimate.

Many men and women told us the attention paid to interaction between men and women because of unit policies and rumors made them feel constrained during their off-duty time, adding to the tension and stress generally associated with the deployment. Some group participants explained that rumors discouraged friendships and recreational activities between men and women. Some examples of what group participants told us include:

- A woman officer said she was counseled on several occasions about socializing with men in her unit.
- Another woman was similarly counseled for spending too much time with men, despite the fact that there were no other women in the unit; subsequently, she was transferred to another location on base until rumors dissipated.
- An enlisted man told us that his friendship with a woman resulted in a lecture to all of the men in the unit on the abstinence rule during deployment.
- In one encampment, all the women in a tent were rumored to be working as prostitutes during the deployment.

Unavailability for Deployment

Military readiness depends in part on the availability of military personnel for deployment. Discussions about opening more positions for women in the military services often raise concerns about whether women are readily available for deployment, particularly given the constraints created by pregnancy.

A variety of reasons were cited for why women and men did not deploy with their units for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and why they returned home early. We also learned from our site visits that although people readily identified pregnancy as a reason for not deploying, few recalled specific instances within their immediate unit or outside of it. Group participants also identified very few causes of personnel returning early or not deploying for reasons other than pregnancy.

Some of the units we visited deployed in their entirety, and some deployed only portions of their personnel. The inability of military personnel to deploy had greater visibility and potential impact in those units that deployed in their entirety.

Causes for Unavailability and Early Returns Varied

The women and men we talked with cited a broad array of causes that prevented some people from deploying with their unit or resulted in others' returning early to the unit's home station in Europe or the United States. Participants talked about strong personal commitment to the military mission on one hand and to personal interest on the other, of self-inflicted wounds to stay home, of people hiding conditions so they could deploy with their unit, of a woman who purportedly got pregnant to stay home, and of another who purportedly ended a pregnancy so she could deploy.

Among the 53 groups discussing this issue, the following reasons for personnel's not deploying were given: medical/psychological conditions, injuries (real or fake, including self-inflicted gunshot wounds), family hardships, inadequate dependent child care plans, religious beliefs, sole-survivor situations, conscientious objection, single parenthood, and pregnancy (including the pregnancy of spouse). People returned early, either before hostilities ended or before their unit returned, for similar reasons according to the 52 groups that discussed the early return of personnel.

Pregnancy Cited Often but Usually Few Cases Identified

Pregnancy was cited most often among the main reasons that people did not deploy or had to return early. Table 5.1 shows how often the major categories of reasons were mentioned (see explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data).

Table 5.1: Frequency With Which Groups Cited Reasons for Personnel Not Deploying and Returning Early

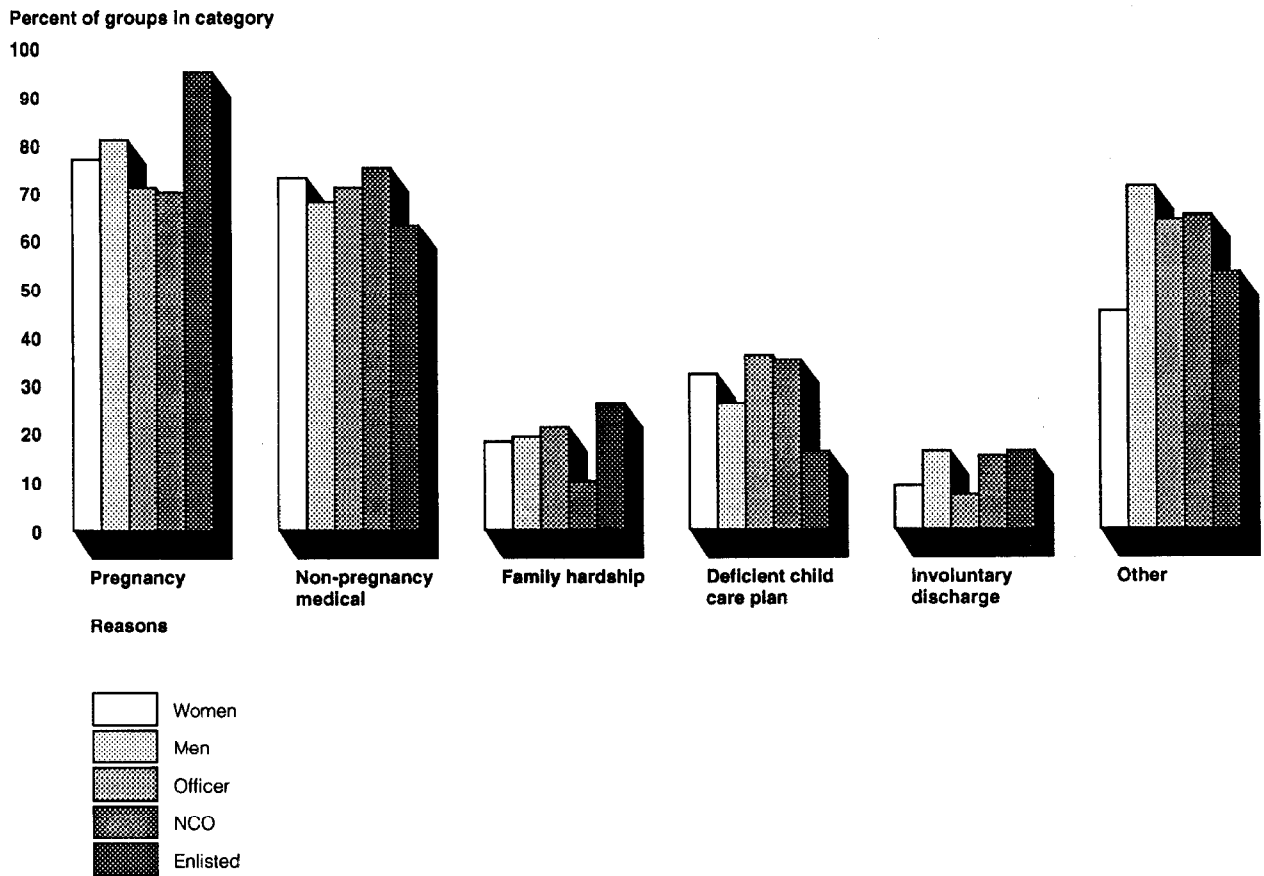
| Reason | Did not deploy | Returned early |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Percentage of 53 groups | Percentage of 52 groups |
| Pregnancy of woman | 79 | 86 |
| Other medical condition | 70 | 40 |
| Family hardship | 19 | 35 |
| Deficient child care plan | 28 | 13 |
| Involuntary discharge | 13 | 13 |
| Other | 60 | 42 |

High percentages of both women’s and men’s groups reported perceptions that pregnancy was a cause for not deploying and for returning early. Of the 53 groups discussing reasons for not deploying, 81 percent of the men’s and 77 percent of the women’s groups included at least one comment that identified pregnancy. Of the 52 groups discussing why personnel returned early, 89 percent of the men’s and 83 percent of the women’s groups identified pregnancy.

The perception that pregnancy was the main cause of women’s not deploying was extremely common: Army—100 percent, Navy—100 percent, Marine Corps—85 percent, and Air Force—43 percent. Likewise, pregnancy was identified as the primary cause for early returns (Army—100 percent, Navy—100 percent, Marine Corps—89 percent, and Air Force—69 percent). Enlisted groups identified pregnancy more often than other ranks.

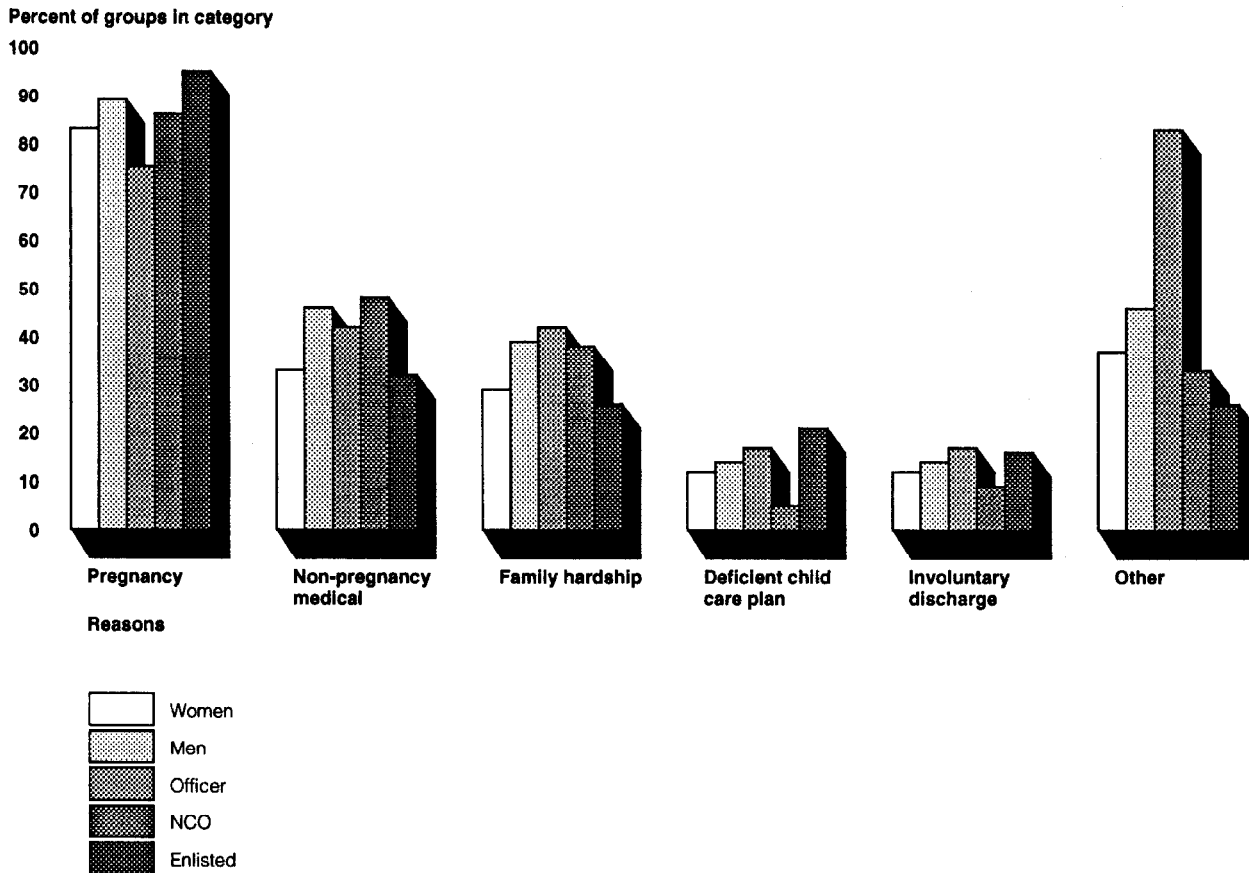
The comparative visibility of other reasons cited for personnel returning early or not deploying varied. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the proportion of groups that discussed these issues and included at least one reference to reasons other than pregnancy. Of note regarding people not deploying is the difference between the frequency with which women and men cited “other” reasons. Of note regarding early returns is the difference between the frequency of officers’, NCO’s, and enlisted personnel’s identification of “other” reasons.

Figure 5.1: Frequency With Which Reasons Were Cited for Personnel Not Deploying



Note: Of these 53 groups, 22 were women's groups and 31 were men's; 14 were officers, 20 were NCOs (non-commissioned officers), and 19 were enlisted personnel (see also explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data).

Figure 5.2: Frequency With Which Reasons Were Cited for Early Return



Note: Of these 52 groups, 24 were women's groups and 28 were men's, while 12 were officers, 21 were NCOs, and 19 were enlisted personnel (see also explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data).

Generally Few Actual Pregnancy Cases Were Identified

Group participants generally identified few actual instances of women that did not deploy because of pregnancy. Twenty-nine groups provided numerical estimates of women they knew of that did not deploy for this reason: 24 groups included responses of 0, 1, and/or 2, and 6 groups included higher numerical estimates. Twenty-three groups provided qualitative responses to this question: 18 reported responses of "none," "very few," "heard about from others," "know about personally," and/or "yes." Only five groups included apparently higher qualitative responses,

and only one of these was provided in each group. These responses consisted of "a lot," "about half," or "very often."

The group participants cited pregnancy as the reason for early returns slightly more frequently. We were told that women were not always screened for pregnancy before being deployed. Of the 39 groups providing numerical estimates of the number of women that returned early because of pregnancy, 31 groups included a total of 67 responses of 0, 1, and/or 2, while only 15 groups included a total of 18 numerical responses in excess of 2. Of the 21 groups providing qualitative responses to this question, 19 reported responses of "none," "very few," "heard about from others," and/or "yes." Only four groups included a total of five apparently higher estimates; those responses consisted of "some," "a lot," "about half," or "very often." Neither numerical estimates nor qualitative responses can be cumulatively summarized since participants in the same or separate groups from the same unit could have been, and often appeared to be, referring to the same cases. For example, at 1 unit 6 group participants appeared to agree that 2 women returned early due to pregnancy; it appeared from the discussion that group participants were referring to the same 2 people and not to 12 separate people. Instead, the data is illustrative and not additive; it provides a scope or range of people's perception of the frequency of these cases occurred. Documentation on the actual number of personnel that returned early or did not deploy was not always available during our visit to the 10 units. As we noted in our August 1992 report, there was a lack of complete and comparable data on the total number of personnel that could not deploy for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Focus group participants cited very few actual cases of other reasons for women's returning home early or not deploying. Table 5.2 presents the numerical estimates provided when group participants responded to this question. As with the pregnancy data, these numbers may present multiple references to the same individuals. Also, only 7 percent of all deployed military significant personnel were women (see the explanatory note in ch. 1 on focus group data.)

Table 5.2: Number of Women and Men Identified as Who Did Not Deploy or Return Home Early Due to Reasons Other Than Pregnancy

| Reason | Did not deploy | | Returned early | |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| Medical condition | 10 | 56 | 3 | 8 |
| Family hardship | 2 | 10 | 3 | 13 |
| Deficient child care package | 5 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Involuntarily discharged | 4 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 12 | 20 | 6 | 18 |
| Total | 33 | 95 | 16 | 41 |

Impact of Personnel Not Deploying Was Greater When Entire Unit Deployed

Some of the units we visited deployed as a whole unit, while others deployed only portions of their personnel. When an entire unit deployed, everyone in each subunit was scheduled for deployment. Therefore, when personnel were unable to deploy with the unit, positions went unfilled unless replacements were found from outside the unit.

Those units that deployed only a portion of their personnel had more people available for consideration for deployment. Therefore, the unavailability of a particular individual for deployment was unlikely to create a vacancy; rather, if one person was unavailable for whatever reason, another person from among unit personnel could be selected to deploy. Further, when only a portion of a unit was required to deploy, commanders were able to exercise some discretion in establishing policies that governed who would be considered for deployment and who would not. For example, in one unit command policies directed that when a husband and wife were both in the military and they had children, only one parent would be deployed. In another case, two people were available for assignment to a position, but only one was needed for deployment; the commander was able to use discretion in determining who would actually deploy.

Details on Our Methodology

A total of 63 group discussions were held, which included 318 participants (see app. II for data on the demographic and military service characteristics of the participants). Groups ranged in size from 2 to 10 members, with a modal size of 6.

Groups were led by a moderator and co-moderator team. Moderators who guided the discussions were gender-matched to group participants. Co-moderators took detailed notes of the discussions and distributed and collected demographic questionnaires from all group participants. Although the discussions took place in informal settings and encouraged free expression and expansion on any relevant topic, they followed a fixed outline of topics. Group discussions were tape recorded whenever possible.

The group discussions generally ran from 1 to 1-1/2 hours in length. Thirty-six group discussions were successfully tape-recorded and transcribed. (All group discussions were tape-recorded; however, due to equipment failure and/or excessive background noise in the various physical settings in which the discussions took place, only 36 could be transcribed.) Partial transcripts were available for an additional two groups. For the remainder of groups, detailed field notes taken by the co-moderator were available. These transcripts and field notes make up the basic documentary material analyzed.

The material from four group discussions was not used because of unresolvable problems in the interpretation of the raw field notes made while the group discussions were taking place. The focus group data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The bulk of the analyses took the form of comparison among classes of groups based on gender or rank.

Demographic and Military Service Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

Tables II.1, II.2, and II.3 break down the focus group participants' demographic and military service characteristics by gender, racial and ethnic background, military service, rank, marital status, age, length of service, and time in the Persian Gulf.

Table II.1: Demographic Makeup of Focus Group Participants

| Characteristic | Percent ^a | Number |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| Gender | | |
| Men | 54 | 171 |
| Women ^b | 46 | 147 |
| Racial/ethnic background | | |
| White | 68 | 214 |
| Black | 22 | 69 |
| Hispanic ^c | 8 | 24 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 2 | 8 |
| Native American | 1 | 2 |
| Service | | |
| Air Force | 24 | 78 |
| Army | 38 | 122 |
| Marine Corps | 16 | 51 |
| Navy | 21 | 67 |
| Rank | | |
| Officer | 24 | 75 |
| NCO | 39 | 123 |
| Enlisted | 38 | 120 |

^aPercentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

^bSeventeen of these women were in the 4 groups not included in the data bank of 59 groups.

^cHispanics may be of any race.

Table II.2: Marital Status

| Characteristics | Percent | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total |
| Not married | 39 | 61 | 49 |
| Married | 61 | 39 | 51 |
| Spouse in military | 12 | 51 | 26 |
| Spouse not in military | 88 | 49 | 74 |
| Spouse deployed to Gulf | 31 | 50 | 44 |
| Spouse not deployed to Gulf | 69 | 50 | 56 |

**Appendix II
Demographic and Military Service
Characteristics of Focus Group Participants**

**Table II.3: Age, Length of Service, and
Time in Persian Gulf**

| Characteristic | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|
| Age (in years) | | |
| Men | 30.1 | 7.3 |
| Women | 27.8 | 6.4 |
| Officers | 32.1 | 6.0 |
| NCOs | 32.7 | 6.4 |
| Enlisted personnel | 23.3 | 3.4 |
| Length of service (in years) | | |
| Men | 9.8 | 6.7 |
| Women | 6.7 | 5.1 |
| Officers | 9.0 | 6.0 |
| NCOs | 12.2 | 6.2 |
| Enlisted personnel | 4.1 | 2.6 |
| Time in Persian Gulf (in months) | 5.1 | 2.0 |

Comments From the Department of Defense



FORCE MANAGEMENT
AND PERSONNEL

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22 MAR 1993



Mr. Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General
National Security and Intelligence Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "OPERATION DESERT STORM: Lessons Learned From the Deployment Of Women In the Military." dated February 26, 1993 (GAO Code 391159/OSD Case 9336).

The DoD has reviewed the draft report and concurs with its findings relative to the interviewed support personnel. The Department agrees that the sampling and methodology of the review prevent the results from being generalized to the deployed population as a whole; therefore, it is important to emphasize that the findings cannot be generalized to combatant units for the same reasons.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to review the report in draft form.

Sincerely,

Nicolai Timenes, Jr.
Principal Director
(Military Manpower and Personnel Policy)

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