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PREGNANCY IN THE US ARMED SERVICES
AND ITS IMPACT ON READINESS

A Research Paper

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Fear that the current United States military will become like the "hollow force" of the late 1970s is one reason why readiness is a hotly debated issue. The end of the Cold War resulted in a 25 percent reduction in military personnel and significant decreases in defense budgets. Critics began to question whether the cuts were too much, too fast. Concurrent with these reductions, the roles and percentages of women in the military continued to increase. Would these demographic changes further exacerbate the readiness status of the military? Specifically, are pregnant military women less deployable than men, resulting in a negative affect on readiness? Through a review of the current literature and the use of two case studies, this paper attempts to identify the impact pregnancy has on the deployability of women. In the Marine Corps case study, the pregnancy rate is very low and one would expect there to be no affect on readiness and deployability. In the Desert Storm case study, the percentage rate of pregnancy is high enough to conclude there was an impact on readiness. In the first case, while statistically insignificant, the perceptual problems are very significant. In the second case, while statistically significant, in actual numbers, the impact was considerably less than that of men. The paper then provides some recommended actions senior leadership can take to minimize the affect of pregnancy. Since women are in the military to stay, the paper concludes with a recognition that women bring some very unique capabilities.

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Preface

When I first enlisted in the Air Force in 1974, women were still a novelty. Acceptance of military women has been hard fought. Considering the current alleged sexual harassment misconduct within the services, maybe our progress is not as great as we thought.

With readiness being such a hotly debated issue in our downsized military, it was inevitable that women and pregnancy would become a readiness issue. I chose this research topic to see if there is any justification for this to be a concern. In researching this topic, I was unable to obtain statistical data on pregnancy and deployability. I was told by the Air Force Personnel Center that they are reluctant to release the data because it is subject to misinterpretation. Therefore, my analysis is based on information available in periodicals and other current literature. If what I found in the literature is what the services' statistical data shows, I understand the reluctance to release the data. The data is subject to misinterpretation. I greatly appreciate the assistance I received from Major Donald F. Daly, my Faculty Research Advisor. His insights and comments kept me focused. As a result, I believe the topic addressed is one of keen importance to senior military leadership and commanders at all levels.

Abstract

Fear that the current United States military will become like the ‘hollow force’ of the late 1970s is one reason why readiness is a hotly debated issue. The end of the Cold War resulted in a 25 percent reduction in military personnel and significant decreases in defense budgets. Critics began to question whether the cuts were too much, too fast. Concurrent with these reductions, the roles and percentages of women in the military continued to increase. Would these demographic changes further exacerbate the readiness status of the military? Specifically, are pregnant military women less deployable than men, resulting in a negative affect on readiness?

Through a review of the current literature and the use of two case studies, this paper attempts to identify the impact pregnancy has on the deployability of women. In the Marine Corps case study, the pregnancy rate is very low and one would expect there to be no affect on readiness and deployability. In the Desert Storm case study, the percentage rate of pregnancy is high enough to conclude there was an impact on readiness. In the first case, while statistically insignificant, the perceptual problems are very significant. In the second case, while statistically significant, in actual numbers, the impact was considerably less than that of men.

The paper then provides some recommended actions senior leadership can take to minimize the affect of pregnancy. Since women are in the military to stay, the paper concludes with a recognition that women bring some very unique capabilities.

Chapter 1

Introduction

“Your Mother (sister, wife) wears combat boots” applies to more than 193,000 of the United States finest. Over the past fifty years, the role of women in the military has changed drastically. Each change came more out of necessity than because the DOD and the military services embraced the changes. Some of the most recent changes, including the repeal of the “Risk Rule” (Discussed in Chapter 2), came about because of Desert Storm. Still others, such as the increasing percentage of women and “gender neutral” recruiting, are a result of demographic shifts and the services’ needs to meet recruiting goals and quality standards. The increasing numbers and expanding roles of women may have remained a non-issue except for other developments having an impact on the military.

As the post-Cold War military is downsized to fit the new world order and the decreasing defense budgets, there is increasing concern about the readiness of the military. If the military is called upon to achieve our national objectives, will they be where they are needed, when they are needed, and prepared to perform their missions? Since no one wants a repeat of the ill-equipped, poorly trained “hollow force” that existed in the late 1970s, both President Clinton and former Secretary of Defense Perry have cited readiness as the top defense priority.¹ Just what is meant by readiness? Joint Publication 1-02

defines *readiness* as “the ability of forces, units, weapon systems, or equipment’s (sic) to deliver the outputs for which they were designed (includes the ability to deploy and employ without unacceptable delays).”² Readiness is a very broad topic. This paper will address one aspect of readiness—deployability. Joint Publication 5-03.1 defines *deployment* as “the relocation of forces and materiel to desired areas of operation.”³ The specific deployment issue of this paper is to see if there are differences in the deployability rates of men and women, especially as the percentage of women increases. If there are differences, is pregnancy one of the causes and what impact is it having on readiness today? Of more importance, what are the long term implications?

To adequately examine this topic, it is important to have an understanding of why the military has a higher percentage of women today. The current expectations of what the military must accomplish also need to be understood. Chapter 2 will examine both of these through a historical review of the changes in the military over the past fifty years and a look at the Bottom-Up Review. Chapter 3 will address the deployability aspect of readiness, and how it relates to women. Specifically, it will explore concerns about quality of life issues, unit cohesion, “male” bonding, and pregnancy. Chapter 4 will look at two case studies, one on the Marine Corps and the other on Desert Shield/Desert Storm as examples to draw some conclusions about pregnancy and deployability trends. Chapter 5 will make some recommendations for the services and units to consider and conclusions.

Notes

¹ Pat Towell, “Concerns About Readiness Fuel Battle Over Budget,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, no 50 (December 31, 1994), 3614.

² Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, vol. II, March 1992, 298.

³ AFSC PUB 1, *The Joint Staff Officer’s Guide 1993*, I-12.

Chapter 2

The Changing US Military

Background

Prior to World War II, women were utilized by the armed forces only in times of national emergencies. Today, there would be a national emergency if women were not part of the armed forces! At the very least, the All Volunteer Force (AVF) would have failed and the draft, or some other form of mandatory enlistment, would be in place. A short review will be helpful in understanding some of the issues related to women and readiness in today's military.

Early History

In the American Revolution and Civil War, women's roles included victims, providers, camp followers, nurses, covert operatives, and sometimes warriors, often times disguised as men.¹ World War I provided many firsts for women. It was the first time the Army and Navy activated their nurse corps. It was the first war "women officially and openly served in the Navy, Marine Corps, and the Army Signal Corps."² It was the first time women were actively recruited for military service.³ However, once the war ended, the services returned to the status quo and the only women allowed to remain in the military were nurses.⁴

World War II was the first time women could be inducted (drafted) into the armed services, as nurses, even though the war ended before final enactment.⁵ Women served in the following organizations:

- Woman's Army Corps (WAC)
- Woman Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES)
- Coast Guard as SPARS (Semper Paratus)
- United States Marine Corps (not a separate organization)
- Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS)
- Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP).

The primary purpose for women in the military was to free men for combat duty.⁶ Perhaps Albert Speer, Hitler's weapons production chief, best summed up the contribution of women: How wise you were to bring your women into your military and into your labor force. Had we done that initially, as you did, it could well have affected the whole course of the war. We would have found out, as you did, that women were equally effective, and for some skills, superior to males.⁷

In June 1948, the Women's Armed Services Act of 1948 passed, giving women a permanent place in the Armed Services. The law provided limited opportunities for women during peacetime, but did provide a framework to enable rapid mobilization of women in time of national emergency. Some of the specific provisions of this Act included:

- a two percent ceiling on women in the military (excluding nurses)
- a limit on promotions
- unprecedented discharge authority (used against members who became pregnant or had minor children)
- an ambiguous provision on the role of women in combat—the services established policies that banned women from all forms of combat related assignments based on their interpretation of the combat provision.⁸

In 1959, rumors surfaced that women, except for nurses, were going to be eliminated from the armed services. While the rumors were vehemently denied, there was probable cause to consider eliminating women. First, the Eisenhower Administration's doctrine of massive retaliation did not allow for a prolonged mobilization, the primary reason for women. Second, 70 to 80 percent of the enlisted women left the service before their first enlistment was up. The Women's Armed Services Act of 1948 required the separation of women who married or became pregnant, which accounts for many women not completing their enlistment. These losses required the services to replace up to 50 percent of their strength each year to keep the programs viable. Even with so few women completing their enlistment, their completion rate was still higher than that of male draftees (non-volunteers).⁹

The Kennedy Administration's doctrine became one of flexible response. The US military forces were expanded to demonstrate America's commitment to meet any Communist threat. As the military services expanded, the women's programs continued to decline. There was a surplus of young men, which removed any incentive for an increased utilization of women.¹⁰ By 1965, there were only 30,600 women (excluding nurses) in the military.¹¹ Columnist Jack Anderson coined those who remained as "typewriter soldiers."¹² The chief criterion for recruitment became physical appearance. Women performed almost exclusively administration and clerical work. Many of the non-combat jobs were closed to women—"intelligence, weather, flight attendants, intricate equipment maintenance, and control tower operations."¹³ Women who served during World War II and Korea in these career fields were retrained into one of the remaining jobs open to them. By the mid-1960's women had become a token force.¹⁴

Winds of change began in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In May 1967, President Johnson requested an extension to the Selective Service Act. In a report by the President's Commission on the Selective Service, which recommended extending the draft, it also made recommendations on how the services could increase voluntary enlistment. The specific recommendation addressed opening more positions to women:

Particularly at a time when manpower demands are great-such as the present-there is a disturbing paradox in this circumstance: Women willing to volunteer for military duty exist in far greater numbers than the services will accommodate; but at the same time there are undoubtedly military tasks suitable for women which are being filled by men who have to be involuntarily inducted.¹⁵

On 8November1967, President Johnson signed Public Law 90-130, which was the first policy change affecting women since the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in 1948. While this legislation removed many of the gender inequities that existed in the military, it left many issues unresolved. Most of these issues would be resolved over the next several years.¹⁶

1973 to the Present

A 1995 Special Report entitled "The Pentagon Paupers," published in *Financial World*, states:

When the US converted to an all-volunteer military after the end of the Vietnam War, over a third of the ranks were high school dropouts. Some personnel had drug problems, and many more were incapable of dealing with the discipline required to flip hamburgers, let alone serve as a soldier or sailor.¹⁷

Even with the low quality of the draftees, the services did not want to see the end of the Selective Service and their guaranteed stream of recruits. When the draft ended in 1973 and the All Volunteer Force began, the services had to compete with industry and universities for their quality recruits. Several events coincided with the inception of the All Volunteer Force to radically change the composition of the military.

The most profound occurred in 1972, when the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was passed by Congress. While the ERA was being debated in Congress, two amendments were proposed to exclude women from the draft and from combat. The rejection of both amendments suggested Congress may have envisioned a larger military role for women in the future. When Congress passed the ERA, the nation was focused on equal rights for women, and the DOD knew their policies were discriminatory. If the ERA was ratified, the services knew the impact on personnel policies would be significant.¹⁸

Concurrent with the ERA debates, a special subcommittee, chaired by Representative Otis Pike, was examining the role of military women. After the hearings, the subcommittee's final report published in June 1972 concluded:

We are concerned that the Department of Defense and each of the military services are guilty of "tokenism" in the recruitment and utilization of women in the Armed Forces. We are convinced that in the atmosphere of a zero draft environment or an all-volunteer military force, women could and should play a more important role. We strongly urge the Secretary of Defense and the service secretaries to develop a program which will permit women to take their rightful place in serving in our Armed Forces.¹⁹

The committee report resulted in the services being tasked to develop contingency plans for an increased utilization of women. The services did not wait to be told to act on these plans, but began to recruit more women. By June 1977, there were more than

110,000 line officer and enlisted women on active duty.²⁰ As Table 1 shows, the percentage of women continues to increase.

Table 1. Women on Active Duty

	1973	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996
Total Personnel	2,241,230	2,036,672	2,137,419	2,029,300	1,505,283	1,451,429
Total Women	55,070	170,238	209,370	223,154	191,399	193,099
% of Women	2.5%	8.4%	9.8%	11.0%	12.7%	13.3%

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, Figures as of 31 Dec 96.

Even with mounting pressure, the services continued to avoid the issue of women in combat and combat support roles. It was not until the exceptional performance of women during Desert Shield/Desert Storm that the services were forced to readdress the exclusion of women in combat roles. The FY92 Defense Authorization Bill repealed the 1948 combat exclusion provisions “as it applies to women flying or serving as crew members of aircraft engaged in combat missions.”²¹ Then, effective 1 October 1994, the Secretary of Defense, William Perry, rescinded the “risk rule,” which had “barred women from noncombat units where the risk was as great as that in a combat unit.” The implementation of the “risk rule” had been left to the individual services, who were allowed to determine which career fields were closed to women. The new policy, entitled the “Direct Combat Ground Rule” is more closely monitored by the civilian leadership of the Department of Defense. The new rule bars women from jobs when all three of the following conditions are met: “they engage the enemy on the ground with weapons, are exposed to hostile fire and have a high probability of direct physical contact with the enemy.”²² One of the arguments used to bring about the new policy was the impact of changing technology on the battlefield. The range and destructive power of new weapons

have changed the combat zone to include hundreds of square miles, including space. It is impossible to ensure that women are not exposed to hostile fire. Enforcement of the “risk rule,” under these conditions, would prohibit women in the entire theater of operations. Still, the inclusion of women in combat is yet to be resolved.

In 1997 only a small percentage of career fields remains closed to women. The majority of them are in the Army and Marine Corps. Therefore, gender is still a consideration in their recruiting policies. The Air Force and the Navy have so many career fields open to women, that they have gone to a policy of “gender neutral” recruiting. They recruit the best qualified applicant, irrespective of gender.²³

Beginning in 1990, the military began a five year, 25 percent drawdown. While the drawdown was occurring, the recruitment of women remained strong. As a result, today’s substantially smaller military has a higher percentage of women. The question now becomes: has the role of the military changed to accommodate these reductions?

Bottom-Up Review

The basic reason for a military remains unchanged. The National Military Strategy states that US military forces must be prepared to fight and win the nation’s wars, deter aggression, prevent conflict and conduct peacetime engagements.²⁴ What has changed is how the United States will meet these objectives.

Change is very difficult for most people and even more so for bureaucratic organizations, especially if what you have been doing for the past fifty years has worked. So it is with the United States military. In 1992, Les Aspen, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, criticized the Bush Administration’s “Base Force” concept as

being nothing more than an across-the-board reduction of military forces. It was not the thorough rethinking of the defense needs for the new world environment.²⁵

This rethinking of defense needs, although many will say it has not been rethought, resulted in the Bottom-Up Review in 1993. The purpose of the review was to “define the strategy, force structure, modernization programs, industrial base, and infrastructure needed to meet new dangers and seize new opportunities.”²⁶ The review identified the dangers to America’s national security as: regional conflicts; proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; threats to our economic well being; and the failure of democratic reform in the former Soviet Union and other fledgling democracies.²⁷ It was also determined that military forces should be “sufficient to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts.”²⁸

The United States will be able to meet these commitments only with highly capable forces that are prepared to rapidly respond to the changing post-Cold War demands. To meet these demands “the number one priority of the Department of Defense is maintaining the readiness and sustainability of the US forces.”²⁹ The forces are ready to maintain this status today. But what about the future? The DOD must be able to recruit, develop and retain quality people, ensure adequate funding for readiness is provided and, as outlined in the Annual Report to the President and the Congress, “develop and manage a system of measuring and assessing readiness.”³⁰ Let us now look at readiness, including what it is, reporting requirements, and some of the factors that may have an impact on readiness.

Notes

¹ Linda Grant DePauw, “Roles of Women in the American Revolution and Civil War,” *Social Education*, no 2 (February 1994), 77.

Notes

² Carl J and Dorothy Schneider, "American Women in World War I," *Social Education*, no.2 (February 1994), 83.

³ Mary E. Haas and Cynthia S. Sunal, "Convincing American Women to Join in the Efforts to Win World War I: A Lesson Plan," *Social Education*, no.2 (February 1994), 89-91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵ Susan Mathis, "Propaganda to Mobilize Women for World War II," *Social Education*, no.2 (February 1994), 94-96.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷ Maj Gen Jeanne Holm, USAF (Retired), *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution* (Novato, CA.: Presidio Press, 1992), 100.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹² *Ibid.*, 175.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁷ Katherine Barrett and Richard Greene, "The Pentagon Paupers," *Financial World*, no.22 (October 24, 1995), 51.

¹⁸ Holm, 249-250.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 250.

²¹ Col Mackubin T. Owens, USMCR, "Women in Combat-Equal Opportunity or Military Effectiveness?," *Marine Corps Gazette*, no.11 (November 1992), 32.

²² Neff Hudson, "Will there be more assignments for women?," *Army Times*, no.54 (July 11, 1994), 8.

²³ Neff Hudson, "Pentagon: Goals met, but quality is suffering," *Army Times*, no.30 (February 27, 1995), 11.

²⁴ *National Military Strategy of the United States of America 1995* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995), i.

²⁵ Eliot A. Cohen, "Beyond 'Bottom-Up'," *National Review*, no 22 (November 15, 1993), 40.

²⁶ Department of Defense, *The Bottom-Up Review: Forces for A New Era* (Washington, DC, Office of the Secretary of Defense, September 1993), 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁰ Department of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, (Washington, DC, Office of the Secretary of Defense, March 1996), 23.

Chapter 3

Readiness And Deployability

The breadth and variety of problems...are indicative of a more serious readiness problem than many would believe.

—Rep. Floyd D. Spence, RS.C.

Simply stated, readiness is the ability of units to be where they are needed, when they are needed, and prepared to carry out their missions. If the best trained, best equipped, most modern and sustainable military can not get where they are supposed to be, then everything else is for nothing. In recognition of the importance of readiness, Congress directed that the Department of Defense submits annual reports on readiness, with special attention on deployability.

New Deployability Reporting Requirements

Individuals assigned to deployable units are expected to deploy with their units. A December 1993 study, *Family Status and Initial Term of Service*, found that the vast majority of individuals do deploy with their units, regardless of their personal situation. It is inevitable that some individuals will not be able to deploy, whether as a result of a temporary medical condition, a family emergency, or a number of other circumstances. In each situation, the problem is addressed at the appropriate level, which is almost always the unit level. Current DOD policy recognizes that each service has unique situations, and

therefore, provides each service the flexibility to manage the situations while still meeting their readiness goals.¹

Since readiness of the military is a high priority issue, Public Law 103-337, Section 533 requires the Department of Defense to submit an annual report on readiness factors by race and gender, beginning in FY96. As part of this report, deployability trends must be tracked. Since DOD was not required to track deployability statistics in the past, or use standard reports and definitions, they were not able to provide the data for FY96. To ensure the data is reported in the future, a contract was issued to Logistics Management Institute to provide “a comprehensive analysis of the impact of non-deployable personnel on readiness...this study will also look at the degree to which individuals in active component units, who are non-deployable, are adversely affecting readiness.”² With all the attention being given to readiness, it is important to understand some of the factors that may impact readiness.

Quality of Life Issues

Readiness of personnel depends on the ability to recruit, train, and retain quality people. In July 1994, then Secretary of Defense, William Perry, voiced concern “that widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of life could undermine morale and discourage experienced personnel from reenlisting.”³ Quality of life issues that are part of compensation include pay, health benefits, promotion opportunities, retirement, and housing. In recent years, military compensation has eroded due to budget reductions. Additionally, the expected outcome of the current Quadrennial Defense Review is that there will be more cuts. The services are meeting their near-term (current year plus one

year) readiness goals. However, without adequate compensation, the ability to recruit and retain individuals will affect the services medium-term readiness (years three through six of the Future Year Defense Plan [FYDP]).⁴ The improving economy and increased job opportunities in the private sector make it harder for the military to compete for quality workers. If these pressures are not enough, there are other factors, inherent in the operations of the military, that make the military less attractive to individuals, especially those with families. One of these factors is PERSTEMPO.

Perstempo

As defined in the *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, PERSTEMPO is the amount of time service members spend away from their home bases.⁵ The Gulf War and its post-hostilities' missions, Somalia, Haiti, Panama, and Bosnia are a few of the contingencies US military forces have supported over the past six years. These missions have resulted in a 31 percent increase in PERSTEMPO. This increase, along with 62 percent of military members being married, results in people asking themselves if the time away from home is worthwhile.⁶⁷ For example, the crews of AWACS deploy for an average of 170 consecutive days, even though Air Force policy states deployments during peacetime will not exceed 120 consecutive days.⁸

While extended time away from home may affect morale, unequal distribution of deployment duty may have a greater affect on morale. If a unit has deployed three times over the past two years and some members have deployed each time, while others have never deployed, morale could become a serious problem.

Unexpected Personnel Changes

Personnel changes, especially those that are unplanned, may wreak havoc on a unit's cohesion and readiness status. If a group of individuals practices and trains together for months to accomplish a task or mission, and then one or more of the individuals are unable to participate in the task or mission, the effectiveness of the group is impacted. As an example, if a maintenance crew is practicing to participate in a competition to see who is the best, and after months of honing their skills, one member is replaced unexpectedly, the performance of the team is bound to be less than expected. This is also the case when members of a unit are unable to deploy, whether due to discharges, transfers, or absenteeism. The bonding and cohesion of the unit are lessened.

Cohesion And Bonding

Cohesion is the “glue” that keeps groups together. It can be seen as what attracts members to the group, what provides resistance to leaving the group, and what motivates the members to actively participate in the group. A highly cohesive group is likely to have lower absenteeism and turnover, which often leads to higher performance.⁹ Logic says a highly cohesive military unit will have better performance and greater mission accomplishment than a less cohesive unit.

There are individuals, both within the military structure and in the civilian leadership who do not want women in combat or combat support units because they think women will destroy a unit's cohesion. Women will disrupt the process of “bonding” that underlies unit cohesion.¹⁰ Bonding is seen as “a curiously intangible cohesive force that enables men [emphasis added] to function as a group at levels greater than the sum of their individual

efforts.”¹¹ In his book, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, J. Glen Gray describes bonding as follows:

Numberless soldiers have died, more or less willingly, not for country or honor or religious faith or for any other abstract good, but because they realized that by fleeing their posts and rescuing themselves, they would expose their companions to greater danger. Such loyalty to the group is the essence of fighting morale. The commander who can preserve and strengthen it knows that all other physical and psychological factors are little in comparison. The feeling of loyalty, it is clear, is the result and not the cause of comradeship. Comrades are loyal to each other spontaneously and without any need for reasons. Men may learn to be loyal out of fear or rational conviction, loyal even to those they dislike.¹²

If cohesion is seen as a bond among “desperate individuals who have nothing in common other than facing death and misery together,”¹³ why is it viewed as a phenomenon that can only occur among exclusively male groups? One of the concerns often heard is that women in military units will cause there to be competition among the men for them, and that this competition will inhibit the unit from bonding. Another concern is in combat situations, because it is believed men will protect the women instead of doing their jobs. Let us look at these concerns objectively. First, women are currently not in direct combat units. Second, if men and women train as a unit and everyone in the unit knows what the other members are capable of, then unit performance should not be affected.

Each of the readiness factors discussed thus far, except for the quality of life issues, may be affected by pregnant military members. If so, is the affect direct or indirect, real or perceived? The remainder of this paper examines these questions.

Pregnancy

In early 1995, in a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel, the Pentagon reported there has been no impact to readiness, either tangible or intangible, as a result of the expanded utilization of women in the military. During the same hearing, Ms Elaine Donnelly, Center for Military Readiness, said the personnel chiefs were being less than honest with Congress. She went on to say, “We know that women are not as deployable as men, and that [situation] is now being transferred to combat units.” And, “This is a readiness issue because short handed units are not as deployable as those without shortages, and pregnancy causes shortages.”¹⁴ Is it possible that both the services and Ms Donnelly are correct, depending on whether the issue is viewed from the perspective of the service or the individual unit.

Service Verses Unit

For the sake of argument, let us say ten percent of the approximately 193,000 women on active duty are pregnant at any given time. This would equate to about 1.3 percent of the military force in a non-deployability status due to pregnancy. The 1.3 percent number assumes that each pregnant member is in a unit that deploys, so this could be viewed as a worst case scenario. Since most of these women are still able to perform their jobs, as long as the unit does not deploy, the service chiefs do not intend to lead Congress to believe the sky is falling.

However, at the individual unit levels, the situation may look more like Ms Donnelly’s view of the world. If a deployable unit has thirty female members and 10 percent, i.e., three, are pregnant, this unit could face undue stress and critical shortages. But the

bottom line is: would the non-deployability status of these women prevent a unit from deploying? Unless the situation was severe enough to require mobilization of all units including the activation of reserve and guard units, replacements would be available to fill the vacancies and allow the unit to deploy. Even though a unit is able to deploy, the pregnancies may have created or contributed to a unit morale problem that goes much deeper. If these problems at unit levels are not addressed and resolved, what was a minor irritant may become a major issue. And, what was once a unit issue may become a service wide problem with serious ramifications.

With a historical perspective of women in the military and a basic understanding of readiness/deployability, let us see if pregnancy is impacting readiness and Deployability.

Notes

¹ Department of Defense, Annual Report to the President and the Congress, Annex G, 1.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Pat Towell, "The Human Element," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, no 29 (July 23, 1994), 1995.

⁴ Ibid., 1995.

⁵ Department of Defense, Annual Report to the President and the Congress, 93.

⁶ John M. Shalikashvili, "Report to Congress: 1995 Force Readiness Assessment," *Joint Operations and Campaign Concepts Volume 7*, January 1997, 72.

⁷ Department of Defense, *Worldwide Manpower Distribution by Geographical Area*, (Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, March 31, 1996), 57.

⁸ Pat Towell, "Keeping the Fighting Edge: Monitoring Vital Signs," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, no 29 (July 23, 1994), 1996.

⁹ Richard L. Hughes, Robert C. Ginnett, and Gordon J. Curphy, *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience* (Burr Ridge, Illinois: Richard C. Irwin, Inc., 1993), 241.

¹⁰ Col Mackubkin T. Owens, USMCR, "Women in Combat-Equal Opportunity or Military Effectiveness?," 34.

¹¹ Lt A. DiLucente, USNR, "Equity: A Step Backward," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, no 2 (February 1992), 47.

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¹² Quoted in Col Mackubin T. Owens, USMCR, “Women in Combat-Equal Opportunity or Military Effectiveness?,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, no 11 (November 1992), 34.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁴ Rick Maze, “Women Given High Marks,” *Air Force Times*, no 35 (April 3, 1995), 7.

Chapter 4

Case Studies

Pregnancy does contribute to absenteeism and personnel turnover, especially if a unit deploys. How significant are losses due to pregnancy and what is the overall impact on deployability? In an attempt to answer these questions, two separate cases will be reviewed. The first case looks at the Marine Corps, and the second explores Desert Storm.

Marine Corps Review

Does pregnancy cause a significant readiness problem in the Marine Corps? To keep things in perspective, in 1996 only 4.7 percent¹ or 8,093 members of the Marine Corps were women.² Experience shows that about 4 percent of deployable women are pregnant at any given time.³ Without knowing how many women Marines are in deployable units, the number of pregnant Marines can only be estimated. In the worst case scenario, if one assumes that all women are in deployable units, 324 women would be pregnant at any given time. While the numbers appear insignificant, there are other things that need to be taken into consideration, such as perceptions.

By law, all the services used to discharge a member when she became pregnant. Today, only the Marine Corps, by Marine Corps Order 5000.12C, routinely approves

requests for early separation (before enlistment term is complete) based on pregnancy, unless retention is in the best interest of the Marine Corps.⁴ As Table 2 shows, even with the option available to pregnant Marines, early separations due to pregnancy account for less than 2.5 percent of all separations each year. Transfers from deployable units due to pregnancy account for less than 2 percent of all transfers. For comparison, the chart also shows that physical disabilities account for a third of all early separations (men and women) and *unanticipated* transfers of men account for the turnover of a third of deployable units each year. Absenteeism, when looked at in terms of restricted duty hours and convalescent leave due to pregnancy, is insignificant when compared to time lost “due to other medical rehabilitation, persons held in confinement, or even emergency leave cases.”⁵ With the small impact of pregnancy on loss of personnel, one would think this issue would receive very little attention. But, perceptions tell a different story.

Table 2. Marine Corps Unit Losses

Early Separations	
Pregnancy Related	2.5%
Physical Disabilities (# 1 reason)	27-35%
Transfer Out of Deployable Units	
Pregnancy Related	<2%
Unanticipated Reassignment of Men	33%

In a 1994 Marine Corps survey, 64 percent of commanders and senior enlisted members believed pregnant women lead to other members having to work longer and harder. There is also a belief among the male troops that some women use pregnancy as a means to separate early, which leads to the belief that a bias exists in the separation system. This bias then leads to the belief that they (men) are being discriminated against. So men begin to view women as detrimental to the unit. If these attitudes are allowed to

fester, the unit's cohesion, integrity and teamwork will be impacted and the commander is dealing with a problem he/she wishes never happened.⁶

Pregnancy is a very visible element and is easy for people to target, even when there is no direct impact on deployability. Is there statistical evidence that pregnancy could have had a direct impact on large deployments such as Desert Storm? Let us take a closer look at that situation.

Desert Storm

From the time Kuwait was invaded until the air war began, six months elapsed. The Coalition forces needed this time to deploy their forces in theater. Desert Storm was the first major wartime contingency fought by the US since the inception of the AVF and the increased role of women. Senior military leadership acknowledges women were vital to the successful execution of the war. Even though women played a major role in this war, are there reasons to be concerned about the impact pregnancy had on the deployability of women?

First, one must remember that about 324 Marines are pregnant at any given time. To determine whether the Marine Corps number is representative of military women, additional data points are needed. Since the services have not tracked data uniformly or are reluctant to release this sensitive data, the general female population of the US was used as the second data point. Military women are a subset of the total population, therefore, the data should be representative. *The Statistical Abstract of the United States for 1996*, with statistics through 1994, provided the necessary data (Annex A). This abstract identifies pregnancy statistics on a great number of characteristics, such as age,

race, marital status, labor status and income. Identifying what characteristics are most representative of military women was the next step.

Two characteristics selected as most representative were age and labor status. Members of the military are young, with the vast majority under age 25. Even in the post drawdown military, the services plan to access approximately 200,000 enlisted members a year.⁷ During this time frame, separations are expected to average 250,000 per year.⁸ With an average enlistment of four years, about half of the military members are first term recruits (200,000 times 4 years), and these individuals are usually recent high school graduates. Therefore, women between the ages of 15 and 29 (Annex A) were viewed as the appropriate age group. The second key characteristic was labor status. The representative group is women who are employed. In 1994, as the chart in Annex A shows, women between the ages of 15 and 29 who are employed had 60.4 births per 1,000 women, or 6 percent. This pregnancy rate of 6 percent becomes the second data point for this case study. How does the pregnancy rate for Desert Storm compare? More importantly, was there an impact on deployability?

In researching the literature on Desert Storm, the data available was stated as percentages and not as specific numbers. However, based on the percentages, one is able to derive numbers. While these numbers may not be exact, they are a very close approximation based on the percentages. For the purposes of this paper, a close approximation is more than adequate.

In a 1992 *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* article, Pentagon officials are quoted as saying that 9 percent of women were unable to deploy to the gulf war while 2 percent of the men were unable to deploy. "The difference is attributed largely to pregnancy."⁹

These statistics and statements are indirectly saying pregnancy prevented 7 percent of the women scheduled to deploy from deploying. Table 3 (page 24) shows that 40,579 women deployed. If 9 percent of women were unable to deploy, then the number deploying represents the 91 percent who did deploy. One can then conclude the total pool of women who should have deployed was approximately 44,592. The difference of 4,013 women represents the 9 percent who were unable to deploy. Based on the Pentagon statistics, 3,121 (7 percent) of these women did not deploy because of pregnancy.

In addition to those unable to deploy, “more than 1,200 pregnant women were evacuated from the gulf region.”¹⁰ Of the 40,579 women deployed to the gulf (Table 3), 1,200 were redeployed to their home bases due to pregnancy. This equates to an additional 3 percent pregnancy rate.

Table 3. Service women in The Gulf

Service	Women in Military		Deployed to Gulf
Army	75,633	11.8%	30,855
Air Force	70,346	14.5%	4,246
Navy	54,912	10.2%	4,246
Marines	8,603	4.6%	1,232
Total	209,494	11.3%	40,579

Source: Rodman D. Griffin, “Women in the Military,” CQ Researcher, no 36 (September 25, 1992), 843.

Based on the above, pregnancy accounts for approximately 4,321 military women (10 percent) being unable to deploy or returned to their home units. When this data point is compared to the numbers from the Marine Corps case study and the representative groups of the US female population, it is higher (4-6 percent verses 10 percent). Since the Desert Storm number is statistically higher, it would be helpful if the following data was available:

- The pregnancy rate for non-deployable women during the gulf war.

- What is the peacetime pregnancy rate for military members? This would determine if the Marine Corps number of 4 percent is representative of peacetime numbers for the other services.

Having this additional information could provide a clearer picture. However, it would not change the findings on the impact of pregnancy on deployability. This chapter examined two case studies to determine if pregnancy is having an affect on the readiness and deployability of the military. The low numbers in the Marine Corps case study appear to be so insignificant that one would conclude there is no affect. The percentages in the Desert Storm case study seem high enough to conclude that there was an impact to readiness and deployability. But one must look beyond the numbers and examine the true affects. The next chapter examines these affects through a summary of the findings, as well as makes some recommendations and draws some conclusions.

Notes

¹ Rodman D. Griffin, "Women in the Military," CQ Researcher, no 36 (September 25, 1992), 843.

² "Marine Family Breakdowns and Family Service Center Locations," Marine Corps Homepage, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 26 February 1997, available from <http://www.asmr.com/pam/family.html>.

³ Capt Terri E. Schoby, "When the Bough Breaks: Pregnancy and the Marine Corps," no 12 (December 1994), 53.

⁴ Ibid., 53.

⁵ Ibid., 54.

⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁷ Department of Defense, Annual Report to the President and the Congress, 91.

⁸ Ibid., 94.

⁹ Griffin, "Women in the Military," 839.

¹⁰ Ibid., 839.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Summary of Findings

The affect pregnancy has on readiness and deployability can be summarized as both direct and indirect. First, there has been no direct impact to readiness due to pregnant women. Even though approximately 4,321 women (10 percent) were unable to deploy during Desert Storm due to pregnancy, this is still insignificant when compared to the number of men who did not deploy. The 2 percent of men equates to almost 9,800 ([530,000-40,000 women]¹ times 2 percent). If one assumes the 10 percent number of pregnant women is accurate, the percentage of women in deployable units would have to more than double to approximate the number of men who did not deploy.

There is a saying that goes “statistics don’t lie, statisticians do.” Such is the case with pregnancy in the military. Some military and political leaders cite the very high pregnancy rate as a reason to limit the number of women in the military, as well as limit their career opportunities. These leaders are not looking at the whole picture. How much time do women lose due to pregnancy and follow-on child care compared to the time lost by men due to confinement and medical rehabilitation’s? How much time do women lose due to confinement and medical rehabilitation’s? Are pregnant women able to accomplish the

mission, other than if the unit deploys? These questions then beg the issue of the productivity of women in general, and how does it compare with their male counterparts. The caliber of the AVF recruits is significantly higher than that of the Selective Service draftee. A limit on the number of women in the military would force the services to lower the standards to meet their quotas. These leaders not only use statistics to support their position, but these statistics also lead to perceptual issues.

Indirect affects are much harder to measure. The statistical data supports neither a direct nor indirect affect. Why then does the belief that pregnancy affects readiness persist? And why isn't there more attention paid to the substantial time lost by men? Perceptions are a primary factor. Since perceptions are not necessarily based in reality, working these problems is very difficult. Statistically, the Marine Corps case study does not support the belief that pregnant members cause others to work harder and longer, but the perceptions of commanders and the troops tell a different story. Are these perceptions an extension of senior leadership beliefs?

Whatever the reason, there are beliefs that pregnancy is detrimental to the military and readiness. What actions could be taken to correct these misperceptions?

Recommendations

There are a number of actions commanders and senior leadership can take to address the affect pregnancy may have on readiness and deployability First, all service members, especially senior leadership, need to understand the actual impact pregnancy has on readiness. Consolidate the statistical data and get the information to the troops. This information could be included as part of the required annual sexual harassment training.

Only when senior leadership understands and believes these statistics, will the message filter down to the troops. The attitude of the junior military members may be a reflection of senior leadership attitudes. The services have not yet accepted women as equals. For example, Air Force Chief of Staff Merrill McPeak said that “while there are women who meet the standards required to fly bombers and fighters, if given the choice between a more-qualified woman and a less-qualified man, he would select the man.”²

Second, provide pregnancy prevention and family planning, especially to first term recruits. Some pregnancies will be planned, while others are not. In either case, these young adults need to understand the impacts to themselves and their units. For many of these young adults, it is their first time away from home. They are still learning to be independent and responsible adults. A little extra guidance may help.

Third, the Marine Corps should consider changing their separation policy to remove any gender differences. Today, if a young woman decides she made a mistake by joining the Marine Corps and is desperate to get out, she may see pregnancy as a way. She is not thinking of the long term implications of raising a child. She just sees pregnancy as a solution to her immediate problem. By eliminating this inequity, it may also save some young women from choosing a path that will have life long ramifications instead of a few remaining years on an enlistment.

Lastly, the services could institute a “stop clock” policy.³ To properly implement this policy, it should apply to all members in deployable units. Each member assigned to deployable units would sign a ‘contract’ for a specified term. The term applies to the time an individual is available to deploy. If a member becomes non-deployable, his/her clock would stop until they are again able to deploy. For example, if a ski injury requires knee

surgery and six months of physical therapy, the individual's commitment would be on hold until he/she was again able to deploy. In this instance, the individual's time in the unit would be extended for six months. The same is true for pregnant women.

This policy would certainly complicate the assignment process, especially for members in overseas assignments. Another consideration is that the services would have to rotate members from deployable units for periods of time. If a policy similar to this was instituted, would the potential benefits outweigh the costs? This policy would add considerable personnel stability to units, which could improve morale and unit cohesion. It would also remove the inequities associated with pregnancy.

Conclusions

Women being members of the armed services is a relatively new experience for the country, the military services and for women. The integration of women into the services is an ongoing process. It is the most recent diversification to take place in the military services since 1948 when President Truman desegregated the military. There were many who believed "integration would undermine unit cohesion"⁴ Today women are often seen as the group that will undermine morale and unit cohesion.

There are many forces, both internal and external, working against the readiness of the military. Only through constant vigilance and adaptability will the military be prepared when called upon. There is concern that pregnant women are having a negative impact on readiness and deployability. As the two case studies demonstrated, there is no statistical data to support this assumption. It is a perceptual problem about pregnancy and deployability. While some in the military believe women are a detriment, many others

recognize that women have increased the readiness status of the military. By opening combat support careers to women, the services have broadened the pool of qualified individuals to fill the jobs.⁵

Women are in the military to stay. Their skills and talents need to be utilized to the fullest extent. The military is still finding its way in the post Cold War environment. If the past several years are any indication, as Squadron Leader E.G. Jones points out in his award winning essay, militaries will “spend more time dealing with civilians in crisis, as with the peacekeeping forces in Yugoslavia...or the Kurdish refugee aid in Iraq.”⁶ These delicate situations require different skills than conducting war, and “they are skills women possess as much as, and sometimes more than men.”⁷ While, the services must train all members of the military to fight and win wars, today’s military members must be more versatile. Each member of the smaller US military is more important than ever. Instead of looking for differences to act as barriers to acceptance, let us look for ways to capitalize on these differences to improve mission accomplishment.

Notes

¹ William Head and Earl H. Tilford, Jr, *The Eagle in the Desert: Looking Back on U.S. Involvement in the Persian Gulf War* (West Port, Connecticut, Praeger Publishers, 1996), 182.

² LCDR Lori Bolebruch, USN, “And the Walls Come Tumblin’ Down,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, no 2 (February 1992), 43.

³ Schoby, “When the Bough Breaks: Pregnancy and the Marine Corps,” 54.

⁴ Martha H. Peak, “About Face,” *Management Review*, no 8 (August 1993), 1.

⁵ Joe West, “Pfingston: Women help readiness,” *Air Force Times*, no 49 (July 13, 1992), 6.

⁶ Squadron Leader E.G. Jones, “Women in Combat—Historical Quirk or the Future Cutting Edge,” *RUSI Journal*, no 4 (August 1993), 40.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

Appendix A

Vital Statistics

No. 104. Characteristics of Women Who Have Had a Child in the Last Year: 1994

[As of June. Covers civilian noninstitutional population. Since the number of women who had a birth during the 12-month period was tabulated and not the actual numbers of births, some small underestimation of fertility for this period may exist due to the omission of: (1) Multiple births, (2) Two or more live births spaced within the 12-month period (the woman is counted only once), (3) Women who had births in the period and who did not survive to the survey date, (4) Women who were in institutions and therefore not in the survey universe. These losses may be somewhat offset by the inclusion in the CPS of births to immigrants who did not have their children born in the United States and births to nonresident women. These births would not have been recorded in the vital registration system. Based on Current Population Survey (CPS); see text, section 1, and Appendix III]

CHARACTERISTIC	TOTAL, 15 TO 44 YEARS OLD			15 TO 29 YEARS OLD			30 TO 44 YEARS OLD		
	Number of women (1,000)	Women who have had a child in the last year		Number of women (1,000)	Women who have had a child in the last year		Number of women (1,000)	Women who have had a child in the last year	
		Total births per 1,000 women	First births per 1,000 women		Total births per 1,000 women	First births per 1,000 women		Total births per 1,000 women	First births per 1,000 women
Total ¹	60,088	64.7	27.4	27,893	85.6	46.3	32,195	46.6	11.0
White	48,531	64.0	28.3	22,104	83.8	47.3	26,427	47.5	12.3
Black	8,524	66.5	24.3	4,269	98.3	44.1	4,255	34.6	4.4
Hispanic ²	6,492	99.2	42.4	3,469	129.6	65.2	3,023	64.4	16.2
Currently married	31,659	91.1	35.1	8,917	174.3	88.9	22,742	58.4	14.0
Married, spouse present	29,218	94.0	36.5	8,053	182.3	94.4	21,165	60.5	14.5
Married, spouse absent ³	2,441	55.4	17.9	864	100.4	38.4	1,576	30.8	6.7
Widowed or divorced	5,697	20.1	4.3	948	59.8	21.1	4,749	12.2	1.0
Never married	22,733	39.2	22.5	18,028	43.1	26.6	4,705	24.3	6.8
Educational attainment:									
Less than high school	12,369	67.3	28.3	8,732	76.4	38.0	3,637	45.5	5.2
High school, 4 years	18,543	70.3	28.1	7,426	116.7	60.0	11,117	39.3	6.9
College: 1 or more years	29,176	60.1	26.6	11,735	72.9	44.0	17,441	51.5	14.9
No degree	12,672	53.6	23.3	6,448	68.6	39.3	6,224	38.0	6.7
Associate degree	4,756	63.4	29.1	1,536	112.2	73.6	3,221	40.2	7.9
Bachelor's degree	8,850	70.3	31.4	3,291	65.6	40.8	5,559	73.1	25.8
Grad. or prof. degree	2,897	52.2	22.1	459	53.4	32.1	2,438	52.0	20.2
Labor force status:									
Employed	39,644	46.3	21.8	16,690	60.4	37.1	22,954	36.0	10.7
Unemployed	3,352	69.2	31.9	2,199	91.0	48.4	1,153	27.4	0.3
Not in labor force	17,092	106.7	39.6	9,003	131.0	63.0	8,089	79.5	13.5
Occupation of employed women:									
Managerial-professional	10,880	51.0	23.9	3,190	66.1	42.0	7,690	44.7	16.4
Tech., sales, admin. support	16,903	42.9	21.4	7,781	55.0	36.3	9,122	32.7	8.7
Service workers	7,544	47.5	21.2	4,042	60.1	33.3	3,502	33.0	7.1
Farming, forestry, and fishing	469	37.2	25.4	215	53.0	53.0	255	23.8	2.2
Precision prod., craft, repair	831	55.5	30.2	261	106.2	71.9	570	32.2	11.1
Operators, fabricators, laborers	3,016	44.0	14.9	1,202	73.5	30.9	1,815	24.4	4.4
Family income: Under \$10,000	7,555	89.0	34.9	4,282	123.3	57.4	3,273	44.2	5.5
\$10,000 to \$19,999	8,956	73.7	28.7	4,897	98.8	48.9	4,059	43.4	4.3
\$20,000 to \$24,999	4,758	76.8	34.6	2,394	111.2	55.6	2,364	41.9	13.3
\$25,000 to \$29,999	4,593	62.6	28.8	2,310	90.1	52.4	2,283	34.7	4.9
\$30,000 to \$34,999	4,341	62.2	23.0	1,963	77.6	43.9	2,378	49.4	5.8
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10,239	58.0	26.9	4,324	78.5	47.9	5,915	43.0	11.6
\$50,000 to \$74,999	9,571	54.4	24.8	3,715	58.2	40.1	5,856	52.0	15.1
\$75,000 and over	6,494	48.8	17.9	2,468	29.2	14.5	4,026	60.8	20.0

¹ Includes women of other races and women with family income not reported, not shown separately. ² Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. ³ Includes separated women.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, P20-375, P20-454 and P20-482.

Glossary

ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
AU	Air University
AVF	All Volunteer Force
DOD	Department of Defense
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
FYDP	Future Years Defense Plan
PERSTEMPO	The amount of time a service member spends away from their home base
SPARS	Semper Paratus. Name given to women in the Coast Guard
WAC	Woman's Army Corps
WAFA	Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron
WASP	Women's Air Force Service Pilots
WAVES	Woman Accepted for Voluntary Service

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