

Women In Combat
Military Medical Culture
and Women

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The opinions and assertions expressed herein are those of the presenters and should not be construed as reflecting those of the Department of Defense or of Washington DC.

My credentials

- **Experience**

- 24 years active duty
- deployments to Korea, Somalia, Iraq, Cuba
- Women's health issues at Health Affairs

- **Publications**

- Reactions to Rape: A Military Forensic Psychiatrists Perspective. **Military Medicine**, Aug 1998
- Issues for Military Women in Deployment. **Military Medicine**, Dec 2001
- Breastfeeding in the Military. Part I: Information and Resources Provided to Servicewomen. **Military Medicine**, October 2003.
- Breastfeeding in the Military. Part II: Resource and Policy Considerations. **Military Medicine**, October 2003.
- Women in Combat, **Psych Annals**, April, 2014.
- Women at War. Oxford University Press, in press.



Special Issues for Female Soldiers

- **Deployment Health**
 - Urinary tract infections
 - Dehydration
 - Menstruation
- **Reproductive**
 - Pregnancy
 - Breastfeeding
- **Musculoskeletal**
 - Stress fractures
- **Psychological reactions**
- **Sexual assault**



Deployment Health

- **Genito-urinary issues**
 - Lack of clean bathrooms
 - Bombs by the side of the road
 - Fluid restriction
 - Dehydration
- **Menstruation**
 - Regulating
 - Suppressing
- **Birth control**



Reproductive Issues

- **Pregnancy**
 - Physical training
 - Deployment
 - Exposure to toxins
- **Breast-feeding**
 - Maintenance of breast feeding
 - Exposure to petroleum products



Musculoskeletal issues

- **Heavy personal equipment**
 - Kevlar helmets
 - Body armour
- **Stress fractures**
 - Pelvic
- **Personal strength**



Psychological Issues

- **Stressors of deployment**
- **Balancing family and deployment**
- **Combat**
- **Military sexual assault**



Psychological Reactions to Sexual Assault

- **Shame**
- **Guilt**
- **Loneliness**
- **Secrecy**
- **“Rape-syndrome”**
- **“Accommodation-syndrome”.**



Co-Morbidities

- **Substance abuse**
- **Depression**
- **Anger**
- **Especial impact on women and girls**
 - **Inability to trust**
 - **Sexual issues**
 - **“Acting out”**
 - Promiscuity
 - Substance abuse



Deployment vs Combat

- **Women in deployment**
 - **“Issues for Military Women in Deployment”**
Bathrooms, pregnancy, breast-feeding, home front problems
- **Women in combat**
 - **Women’s Health Task Force report from Afghanistan (COL Anne Naclerio)**
 - **Bathrooms (see next slides)**
 - **Body armor**
 - **Home front issues**
 - **PTSD**
 - **TBI**

Women's Health Task Force COL Naclerio

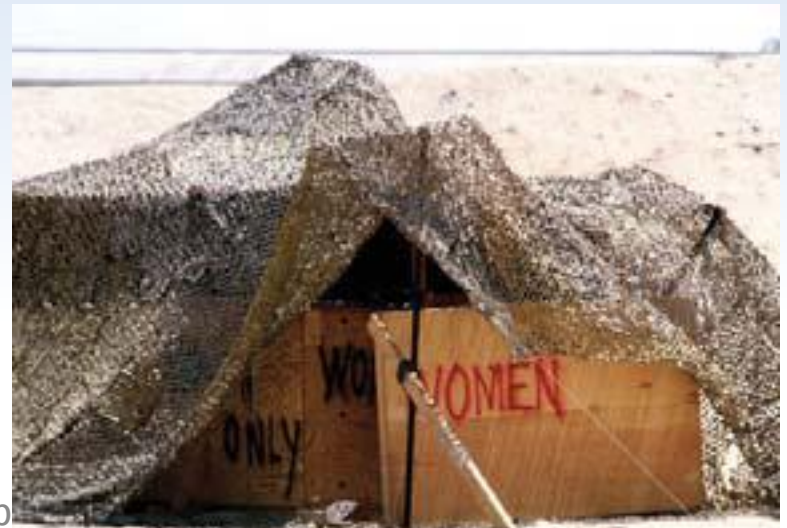
- **Issues women face while in austere environments that AFFECT their health**
 - a. **How to urinate in the field**
 - b. **Maintaining urogenital hygiene**
 - c. **Managing menstruation in field environment**
 - d. **Managing lactation in the field**
 - e. **Improper fit of uniform**

Women's Health Task Force COL Naclerio

- **Dealing with female health issues in an austere environment**
 - a. **Levels of care / providers**
 - b. **Menstrual dysfunction**
 - c. **Urogenital infections**
 - d. **Access to birth control**
 - e. **Unintended pregnancy**

Military Medical Culture and Women

- **Military Medicine**
 - Many women in medical roles
- **Deployed hospitals relatively female friendly**
- **Further forward medical units often austere**
 - May have very few women



Women in Comb

What has been done

- **Research**
 - **Mental Health Advisory Teams focus on men**
 - MHAT II showed essentially equal rates in PTSD in women (12%) and men (13%)
 - **Millenium Cohort Study**
- **Policies**
 - **Advances in pregnancy and breast feeding policies and procedures (garrison)**
- **Practice**
 - **Female urinary devices (FUDs)**
 - Not widely used
 - **More female friendly body armor**
 - In development

Conclusions

- **More attention needs to be paid to issues of reproductive and urogenital health**
- **Lack of clean facilities degrade ability of women in deployment and combat**
 - **Health planners need to anticipate deployed women**
- **BLUF: let us develop and organized approach to solving these problems**
 - **Training in leadership courses**