Marine Corps Force Integration
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Much remains to be done

by Gen James F. Amos

Throughout our Corps' proud 238-year history, Marines have earned their place among the world's elite ground combat forces. Direct ground combat remains indispensable to the security of our Nation in chaotic and dangerous times. Even as military technology advances, physical strength, speed, and endurance still matter for those who seek out, close with, and destroy the enemies of the American people. At the same time, moral and mental factors such as honor, courage, judgment, speed of decision, resilience, and coup d'oeil are as equally important in this ultimate crucible of war. For these reasons, Marines have placed the rifleman at the core of our institutional focus. The Corps' mandate is to make our riflemen as ready as possible when they go forward to meet the enemy; we will accept nothing less.

Carefully selecting and rigorously training ground combat arms Marines—Marine infantrymen in particular—are the critical elements in building an elite expeditionary force. Until recently, the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCAR) limited the Corps to choosing males to serve as ground combat arms Marines.[1] On 24 January 2013, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) eliminated the DGCAR and directed our Corps to open all previously closed units and MOSs to female Marines.[2]

In the 18 months since this change in policy, Marines have engaged in important research and assessment efforts to determine how best to take advantage of the opportunity the SecDef has presented to the Corps. With a year's worth of study, more than a decade of war, and 238 years of history behind us, I directed that a group of our finest commanders, staff officers, trainers, and manpower experts gather to assess what we have learned, and to develop a Marine Corps Force Integration Campaign Plan. That plan has now been written, staffed appropriately, and I signed it May. This plan will increase combat readiness in a way that offers each Marine, regardless of gender, an equitable opportunity to reach his or her highest potential.

>Gen Amos is the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

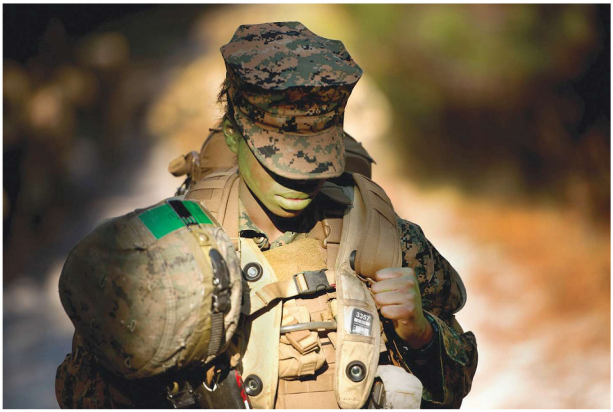
Gen James F. Amos. *(Official USMC photo.)*

First Principles

The SecDef has directed the Marine Corps to integrate our ground combat arms to the maximum extent possible no later than 1 January 2016. We will accomplish the mission that the Secretary has assigned by maintaining and refining rigorous standards, enhancing our warfighting capabilities, affording every Marine the chance to succeed, and preserving the faith of the American People in their Corps of Marines. *What we will never do is lower—or apologize for—our very high and very necessary Marine Corps standards.*

In my role as a Service Chief, I am responsible for manning, training, and equipping the most capable Marine Corps our Nation can afford. All Marine leaders have a sacred obligation to train their Marines to the highest levels of military competence so that when they meet our Nation's enemies, they have the mental, physical, and moral tools to dominate any challengers and accomplish the mission. Fundamentally, Marines win battles as units, not as individuals. Therefore, our focus has been, and always will be, on building the most combat ready formations—this is a requirement on which we will not compromise.

The Corps must maintain the highest standards for all Marines to enable them to excel in the unforgiving arena of human combat. For previously closed occupational fields and units, these job performance standards have been and will remain gender-neutral. Based on these standards, we will take those deliberate, measured, and responsible actions across the DOTMLPF (doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, and facilities) spectrum to achieve the maximum possible integration of women into previously closed MOSs and units by 1 January 2016. Where, and if required, I will



Female Marines have more opportunities to volunteer for entry-level training courses. *(Photo by* **Marine Corps News.***)*

recommend exceptions to policy to the SecDef. Let me be clear—the final decision rests with the Secretary.

Integration means allowing all Marines to serve in any occupational field and unit based on needs of the Marine Corps, their desire, ability, and qualifications. Our implementation will include fully integrated planning, analysis, decision, execution, and assessment. The decision to integrate or recommend an exception to policy will be based on my foremost guiding principle: fielding a Marine Corps that is ready to fight and win on short notice, in the most difficult and uncertain circumstances. We will maintain our high standards and afford every Marine the maximum opportunity to succeed.

What We Have Learned

Marines were studying integration well prior to the SecDef's decision to rescind the DGCAR. The Corps' research and analysis focused on setting all of our Marines up for success. To that end, we attempted to discern which physical differences between men and women would impact job performance in the ground combat arms. Researchers also studied the experiences of America's public safety professionals whose occupational requirements are most similar to those of Marines—in particular firefighters, smoke jumpers, and police special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members. Finally, study groups looked at the experiences of allies and partners whose military forces' organization and culture most closely resembled our own.

Our comprehensive DOTMLPF analysis and considerable research revealed a complex situation that includes both opportunities and challenges. First, female Marines have performed brilliantly during the past 13 years of war. Second, although there is no question that female Marines have engaged the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan and repelled assaults by fire, we lack direct evidence of female Marines closing with the enemy and destroying them by fire, maneuver, and close combat. Third, there are undeniable physiological differences between men and women. While women exhibit somewhat superior endurance in extremely long distance athletic events, men possess significant advantages in physical strength—especially upper body capacity and power.[3,4] In particular, males tend to demonstrate significantly higher performance in that all important activity for ground combat arms Marines—marching under load.[5]

Given the above differences, we examined the impact of training on the physical capabilities of women and men. What we learned is that properly conducted conditioning does significantly improve female physical performance. In fact, training and exercise appear to show faster results among women than men.[6] Yet the research showed that, in most cases, the females in the various studies did not match the performance of males.[7]

We also examined the experiences of U.S. public safety and law enforcement agencies and of allied nations whose military forces resembled our own. Here again we found a series of mixed outcomes. While some women in the Australian and British ground forces were able to meet important entry-level minimum standards, only a very small number (as few as between 1 percent and 3 percent) could meet critical combat simulated tasks such as longer distance movements under load, negotiating obstacle courses, digging in under fire, rapidly moving heavy weights, and conducting timed fire and movement drills.[8,9] Moreover, female Australian and British soldiers were injured at far higher rates than their male counterparts. In Canada, where ground combat arms positions have

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been open to women since the 1980s, female soldiers comprise fewer than 2 percent of the ground forces because of a lack of propensity and inability to meet physical standards.[10] Although U.S. police SWAT teams, fire departments, and smoke jumper teams have been open to women for 4 decades and have well-established gender neutral physical screening tests, today only 4 percent of fire fighters, 7 percent of smoke jumpers, and almost no SWAT team members are females.[11]

Broad-based analysis of the data showed that some ground combat MOS were acceptable to open now while others required additional study to make informed recommendations to our civilian leadership. In particular, we needed to learn about female Marines executing Marine Corps ground combat tasks in the austere conditions in which Marines fight. To that end, the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, conducted two research studies at our Infantry Officer Course (IOC) and at Infantry Training Battalion–East (ITB-East) to learn about the capabilities, performance, propensity and injury rates among our female officers and enlisted Marines. To date, 15 female graduates of The Basic School have attempted IOC (three other volunteers are waiting to start training). So far, none have successfully completed this challenging course. Our 238-year combat history—reinforced by recent bloody experience—shows that infantry officers must be physically, mentally, and morally elite. This is why IOC is *and will remain* as tough and challenging as it is today.

Since September 2013, 1,817 female recruits have earned the title Marine at Parris Island, 824 met the physical requirements to volunteer for infantry training, 199 entered training at the ITB 0311 rifleman course, and as of May, 85 successfully graduated. While these superb enlisted female Marines matched the academic performance of their male brothers-in-arms, their physical performance was not as strong as their male peers.

While this research was in progress, we worked to determine how well female Marines in open MOSs would do if assigned to ground combat units. We selected female officers and SNCOs and assigned them to 21 Operating Force battalions that had previously been closed to women—as an exception to the 1994 policy. It should surprise no one that, while one or two cases resulted in some minor friction, the majority of these proven professionals performed superbly. In many cases, battalion commanders and sergeants major noted that the assignment of female administrators, communicators, logisticians, and supply Marines improved the professionalism and combat readiness of their commands.

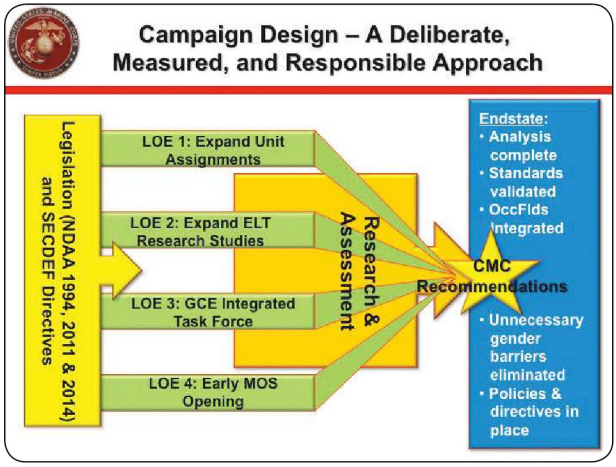

Figure 1. The campaign design.

Campaign Plan Design: Four Lines of Effort

After analyzing all available information, the Marine Corps Force Integration operational planning team developed a campaign plan that will integrate our ground combat arms to the maximum extent possible, while making it possible to recommend a narrowly tailored exception to the SecDef's policy, if such a step is necessary. This plan builds on the 24 April 2013 Implementation Plan that I submitted to the SecDef. As Figure 1 shows, our campaign will proceed along four lines of effort (LOEs). These four LOEs—Expand Unit Assignments, Expand Entry-Level Training (ELT) Research Studies, Ground Combat Element (GCE) Integrated Task Force, and Early MOS Opening—form our deliberate, measured, and responsible approach to validating standards, providing equitable opportunities, ensuring the availability of viable career paths, and, most critically, maintaining and increasing combat readiness. Figure 1 shows the relationship between law, policy, the LOEs, and the Marine Corps end state.

LOE 1 builds on the success that our open MOS female officers and SNCOs have had in ground combat arms units. First, we will continue to assign female officers and SNCOs to these selected 21 Active Component and 9 Reserve Component units (to include artillery, tank, assault amphibious vehicle, combat engineer, and low altitude air defense battalions, and air naval gunfire liaison companies). Second, we will begin assigning female NCOs from open MOSs to these same commands. Third, we will broaden assignments beyond unit headquarters down to the company and battery levels. Fourth, we will ensure that unit commanders have full

authority to deploy their assigned female Marines in accordance with the current training, exercise, and employment plans. These actions will inform the final decision to formally open each unit and the manner in which that opening will occur.

Under LOE 2, we will use the model of our research studies at IOC and ITB to learn about the entry-level training pipelines for our infantry and noninfantry ground combat arms (e.g., tanks, artillery, assault amphibians). Just as in the ongoing ELT studies, we will solicit physically qualified female volunteer recruit training graduates to undergo the current program of instruction along with their male peers. The purpose of this research is to determine success rates, assess propensity, and analyze injury rates.

We will use LOE 3 to test the hypothesis that an integrated ground combat arms unit under gender neutral standards will perform just as well as a similar all male unit. Marine Corps enlisted ELT provides a minimum baseline for a graduate to be able to function in the Operating Forces. Building beyond that baseline to more advanced individual and collective occupational tasks is the responsibility of unit commander–directed managed-on-the-job training. In many cases, these more advanced occupational tasks require individual physical capabilities far beyond what is required to complete ELT. Heretofore, the Marine Corps has functioned under the assumption that any male ELT graduate could, with sufficient training and motivation, meet these requirements. Sometimes this assumption was good, other times less so. The rescission of the DGCAR affords us the opportunity to develop a rigorous, realistic, gender neutral set of physical parameters that can replace this no longer valid assumption. The most expedient way to quantify these physical parameters and test this hypothesis is to establish an integrated ground combat arms unit and conduct a research study on individual and collective performance.

To this end, we are establishing a GCE Integrated Task Force. This unit of approximately 500 Marines includes about 120 female Marine volunteers from across the Corps. The reason for the relatively high number is to ensure that every task that this unit undertakes includes female Marines. The female Marine volunteers are going through the ELT training for a designated ground combat arms MOSs (e.g., 0311 (rifleman), 0331 (machinegunner), 0341 (mortarman), 0811 (field artillery cannoneer), 1812 (tanker), etc.). We solicited MOS-qualified male Marines to volunteer for the GCE Integrated Task Force from our Active and Reserve Component forces.

The Integrated Task Force will conduct training in company- and battery-level collective tasks at its home station. When that training is complete, this unit will conduct offsite training, like many of our Operating Forces units, in locations such as the Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Camp Pendleton, and the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center. The GCE Integrated Task Force will use deployments to these training centers to conduct collective training and evaluation up to the company and battery levels. By assessing individual Marines in an integrated unit in their performance of our individual and collective tasks under demanding and realistic conditions, we will be able to answer the following question: What are the physical, physiological, and performance characteristics that predict success in each combat arms MOSs?

Over the past several months, the sponsor for each occupational field has analyzed every MOS through the lens of what we have learned to date and determined that several are ready for opening today. This is the purpose of LOE 4. Based on the recommendation of the occupational field sponsors and their Deputy Commandant advocates, I have forwarded a request to the Secretary of the Navy to open the following MOSs:

- 0803 (target acquisition officer)
- 0842 (field artillery radar operator)
- 0847 (field artillery meteorologist)
- 2110 (ordnance vehicle maintenance officer)
- 2131 (towed artillery repairer/technician)
- 2141 (assault amphibious vehicle repairer/technician)
- 2146 (main battle tank repairer/technician)
- 2147 (light armored vehicle repairer/technician)
- 2149 (ordnance vehicle maintenance chief)
- 7204 (low altitude air defense officer)
- 7212 (low altitude air defense gunner)

I am confident that our female Marines will perform every bit as well as their male peers in these specialties. If, as we proceed along the other three LOEs, we find other MOSs that can be opened before a study or assessment has run

Women have fought and performed valiantly in combat over the last 13 years of war. *(Photo by* **Marine Corps News.***)*

its course, we will do so quickly and confidently.

The Physical Screening Test

One additional topic bears discussion. Keeping in mind the physiological differences discussed earlier, we saw the need to develop a screening tool that would provide us with the reasonable assurance that a Marine had the capability to undertake physically demanding entry-level training and proceed to serve in a combat arms MOS without sustaining a significant injury. To that end, we designed a gender neutral physical screening test (PST) for male and female Marines, officer or enlisted, who desire to train for one of these physically demanding occupations.

During the past year, Training and Education Command (TECom) analyzed all 335 primary MOSs and identified 21 closed MOSs and 8 open MOSs with existing Training and Readiness Manual 1000-level physical standards. Within the closed MOS Training and Readiness Manuals and ELT programs of instruction, TECom validated 170 1000-level physical standards and an associated 278 physical tasks. With the support of the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC), TECom developed a 5-event proxy test battery comprised of 14 separate pass-fail tasks. This proxy test battery served as a surrogate for all closed MOS entry-level physical tasks.

Last summer, TECom administered the proxy test battery to approximately 800 Marines—410 males and 390 females. The NHRC then analyzed the data to determine if the proxy test result correlated with individual performances on the physical fitness test (PFT) and combat fitness test (CFT). What we found is that 5 of our 7 PFT and CFT events—pull-ups, 3-mile run, ammunition can lift, movement to contact, and maneuver under fire—strongly correlate to proxy test performance. One event—crunches—showed moderate correlation. The flexed-arm hang, however, showed weak correlation to the proxy test, and therefore, closed MOS tasks.

NHRC research and the success that we have previously had in developing ground combat arms Marines were closely aligned. Of the Marines who successfully passed 75 percent of the proxy test measures, performance for the vast majority exceeded third-class PFT and CFT scores (135 points and 190 points respectively with certain minimums on each event) on the current male age 17 to 26 scoring table. Of the Marines who successfully passed 100 percent of the proxy test measures, a vast majority exceeded a first-class PFT and CFT (225 points and 270 points respectively) on the same table. These results mirror those standards that we currently use, and have used, as the minimums for enlisted Marines and officers respectively.

The current PST is a screening tool. . . .

Armed with this data, we chose the six strongly and moderately correlated events to build the PST. For enlisted Marines, the PST includes two steps. Because enlisted Marines sign a contract for a particular occupational field, they will have to meet a prerequisite at their recruiting stations prior to being assigned a ground combat arms Program Enlisted For. That prerequisite includes performing at least 2 pull-ups and 44 crunches and running 1 1/2 miles in under 13:30. Before being assigned a ground combat arms MOS at Recruit Training, Marines must score at least third class on the PFT and CFT using the gender neutral scoring table. To graduate the Basic Officer Course at The Basic School, officers must score at least a first-class PFT and CFT before being assigned *any* MOS.

The current PST is a screening tool that provides reasonable assurance of success as early as possible in ELT. It is not the end-all, be-all of ground combat arms occupational performance. As our research efforts across all four LOEs continue, we will refine this PST. The final test parameters will include measurable physical and physiological characteristics specific to the requirements of each combat specialty. Further, this final test will include a series of occupational task performance metrics that will inform and determine combat arms MOS assignments.

The Bottom Line

The senior leadership of our Corps is dedicated to fielding the most capable Marine Corps possible. This means placing the best-qualified Marine in each job regardless of gender. Throughout our history, female Marines have served magnificently. The past 13 years of war have only further reinforced their record of honor, courage, and commitment. With this in mind, the Marine Corps will open every MOS in which female Marines, side-by-side their male brothers-in-arms, can contribute to the combat readiness of the Nation's crisis

We must place the best-qualified Marines in each job regardless of gender. *(Photo by* **Marine Corps News***.)*

The Marine Corps will not sacrifice combat readiness or lower standards. *(Photo from "Women on the Front Lines,"* **Marine Corps News.***)*

response force of choice. That said, we will not compromise on combat readiness or lower any standards. In fact, it is counter to our ethos and our very nature as Marines to focus on minimums, lower standards, or reduced readiness. To a woman, every female Marine I have spoken to has told me that they just want to be able to compete and urged me not to lower any standards. I am also mindful of the sacred trust that the parents of our wonderful young Marines have placed in our Corps. We will not assign any Marine—male or female—to training or an MOS that will result in a disproportionally high probability of injury or failure.

I am committed to the success of our female Marines and our Corps. The Nation demands nothing less.

Notes

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