

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE FEMALE SOLDIER IN THE ARMED FORCES

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### ABSTRACT

The adoption of Resolution 1325 by the United Nations was a milestone in the recognition of the disproportionate impact of war on women and children. The Resolution prompted reflection on the importance of the role of women as mediators and negotiators in conflict resolution. Currently, in the Afghanistan theatre, the awareness-raising activities and commitment to Afghan women of ISAF forces (International Security Assistance Force) is a key factor in the success of the mission. The cultural characteristics of Muslim countries mean that women must be approached by female personnel. In this operations scenario, women soldiers from allied countries have added a very important additional role to their tasks in their respective units. Women have now been in the Armed Forces for over twenty years and this has inspired us to review the process of integrating women into the armies of various countries in Europe, the USA and Israel. Analysis shows that, although most armies began to have mixed units from the mid-1990s onwards, female representation remains below 12% at present and women are still not represented in all units or in all posts. Although some countries still limit access for women to combat units and submarines, they are starting to adapt their policies to enable women gradually to enter these units if they so wish, once they have passed the selection and training processes; this has particularly been the case since late 2011.

### Key words:

**Women soldier, Armed Forces, Female Engagement Team, Combat units, close combat**

## ■ INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict, war and peace have been ever present since the dawn of human society. Since time immemorial, the myths, works of art, literature, imagination and fantasies of society have almost always associated the masculine figure with war and the feminine figure with peace<sup>(1)</sup>.

Although men have always been in the majority in wars, women have been in militias in many cultures dating back at least four thousand years into antiquity, whether wielding weapons, helping the soldiers, or just throwing stones, like the Iberians for example<sup>(2)</sup> or the female warriors in the Peloponnese. War has been a source of concern and positioning for women throughout history, both individually and collectively.

And many women have taken part in open combat using a male name, for example the US soldier Deborah Sampson<sup>(3)</sup> who enlisted in the Continental Army during the War of Independence under the name Robert Shurtliff.

There have been a number of important examples in Spain, such as Agustina de Aragón<sup>(4)</sup>, who defended Zaragoza during the sieges in the Spanish War of Independence and other less well known examples, such as Ana María de Soto<sup>(5)</sup>, a woman from Cordoba who served in the Marines from 1793 to 1798 under the name Antonio María de Soto.

Whatever the various roles played by women in armies in the past, the role of women in the Armed Forces, particularly in combat, continues to be controversial. It is only recently (particularly from the 1990s) that women have started to play a more prominent role in the Armed Forces.

Whilst this chapter was being written, there have been substantial changes in the integration of women into practically all army units and specialities. CNN

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<sup>(1)</sup> "Peace has been represented as a woman throughout western history. Peace was born with a female body and attributes in ancient Greece, incarnated in the goddess Eirene. "Las mujeres y la paz en la historia". Cándida MARTÍNEZ LÓPEZ. 2000. In Francisco MUÑOZ and Mario LÓPEZ (ed.) *Historia de la Paz. Tiempos, espacios y actores*. Granada: Instituto de la Paz y los Conflictos.

<sup>(2)</sup> Cándida MARTÍNEZ (1986). "Las mujeres en la península Ibérica durante la conquista cartaginesa y romana". In E. GARRIDO. *La mujer en el Mundo Antiguo*. SEM-Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, pp. 387-396.

<sup>(3)</sup> See: WEATHERFORD, D. (1994). *American Women's History*. Prentice Hall General.

<sup>(4)</sup> QUERALT DEL HIERRO, María Pilar. *Agustina de Aragón, la mujer y el mito*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2008.

<sup>(5)</sup> PARENTE RODRÍGUEZ, G. (2010). "Una mujer en la Infantería de Marina del XVIII". *Revista Española de Defensa*, 259, 56-57.

has reported that the Pentagon<sup>(6)</sup> was preparing to allow women to participate in certain combat units<sup>(7)</sup>. In addition, the UK is now permitting women to serve on board its submarines for the first time<sup>(8)</sup> and France is preparing to remove all remaining restrictions on women in its Armed Forces<sup>(9)</sup>.

The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000, calling for an end to the traditional inequality between men and women in peace building, was an important milestone in recognising the disproportionate effect of wars and conflicts on women and children.

This also led to reflection on the role of women as mediators and negotiators in conflict resolutions, not only as a right recognised under international law, but also because women's values, opinions and actions are essential for the success of the solutions adopted. This is the case because women represent nearly half of the population in current theatres of operations (particularly Afghanistan) and because traditionally, whether because of maternity or socialisation processes, they have prioritised the values of dialogue and conflict resolution, putting human security before violence<sup>(10)</sup>.

*"We need to be aware that they [Afghan women] are important in their families, as they are throughout the world... as the central figure in the family, women play a fundamental role in educating children. We want those children to grow up on the correct path, not to go and join the insurgents"<sup>(11)</sup>. This benefits operations.*

In December 2007, NATO and its partners agreed to implement Resolution 1325 and to expand the role of women in United Nations operations, particularly as military observers and civilian police. This was set out in the report *CWINF Guidance for NATO Gender mainstreaming*. This document was the Alliance's first contribution to developing a general gender perspective for its military operations. It was the start of a new role for female soldiers in allied countries in conflict scenarios, in which,

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<sup>(6)</sup> On 24 October 2011, Lance M. Bacon reported this initiative in the magazine *Your Army*, as a project of the new Chief of Staff, General Odierno. In BACON, L. M. "Odierno: "We need their talent"". October 24, 2011, 17-18.

<sup>(7)</sup> ATENEA DIGITAL (10 February 2012). "El pentágono anunciará cambios en la política sobre mujeres en unidades de combate".

<sup>(8)</sup> "Women to be allowed to serve on submarines". A Defence Policy and Business news article. 8 December 2011. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicyAndBusiness/>

<sup>(9)</sup> Story reported by ONDA Cero Radio on the afternoon of Friday, 10 February 2010.

<sup>(10)</sup> ALAÑIZ MOSCARDÓ, M. (2009). "La presencia de las mujeres en la resolución de conflictos armados: mediación y capacitación". *Información psicológica*, 96, 43-53.

<sup>(11)</sup> Ella van den Heuvel is a lieutenant commander in the Dutch navy. She was deployed as part of a Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan's Baghlan province in 2005-2006 and has since worked as a gender advisor in operations. She has also taught a number of courses in her own country and in Spain. NATO. "Changing Gender Perspective" (8SEP2010).

in addition to their basic roles, they could also be communicators with and influencers of, the female segment of the host nation, particularly in Muslim cultures. For the first time since women joined the Armed Forces, there is a military field based on gender.

This has led to the emergence of Gender Advisors in Operations, who are responsible for preparing specific gender action plans for each NATO operation and for the Female Engagement Teams (FET)<sup>(12)</sup>.

FETs consist of female soldiers who have received specialist training to work with female communities in Afghanistan that are not accessible by conventional means. They collect and spread information that may be applied in any part of the counterinsurgency (COIN): for example, influencing the local population in developing awareness and acceptance of the force. In addition to contributing to peace building, this also helps to protect allied troops and facilitates their actions<sup>(13)</sup>.

The experiences of the USA and the UK have demonstrated that the ISAF's women soldiers have greater opportunities to get involved with Afghan women and their families. This is particularly relevant in areas where the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan does not allow foreigners to communicate freely with local women.

Few professional careers have resulted in such social, political and media debates as the role of women in the Armed Forces. There is no need to go deeper into such debates after over twenty years of soldiers of both sexes working together. For the first time, in current operations these differences can benefit everybody and being a women soldier can offer added value. It therefore seems appropriate to go on to describe the current scenario for female soldiers in some Western European countries, noting how their roles have evolved and the changes made to these armies since women joined their ranks to defend their countries. We will also be offering some information on the female presence in the Armed Forces of the USA and Israel, two countries with extensive experience of combat and inclusion of women in their ranks.

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<sup>(12)</sup> The FET is an initiative implemented in 2010 by the US Marine Corps, leading Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. This begins with sending teams of women to forge links with Afghan women who, because of their social customs, would seldom have any dealings with male soldiers. The FETs have had significant impact in some areas, leading local governors to comment on the importance of their work in improving the lives of Afghan people. Colonel Pratt describes how, in a meeting, a district governor went so far as to say that local elders and men should be ashamed of not getting involved to help their communities, as American women had no fear of doing so. See: "Empowering Afghan women" (NATO) [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_76542.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_76542.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>(13)</sup> An increasing number of units operating in Afghanistan and on the Pakistan border are using FETs, with the primary objective of involving the local female population and demonstrating that coalition forces are sensitive to their needs. Some female soldiers perform other roles in their units but are also involved in the FETs as necessary.

## ■ GERMANY



When the Bundeswehr – the Unified Armed Forces – was created in 1955, women were expressly excluded from participation by Article 12a of the Constitution. As the Constitution established a clear separation between the civil and military administration of the Armed Forces, women were initially limited to civil administration of defence<sup>(14)</sup>.

On 19 February 1975, the German government approved a proposal from its Defence Minister to accept female soldiers as medics, dentists, vets and pharmacists in the Bundeswehr's health services. The first five women joined the army's health service in October that year. This exception was justified on the basis that soldiers involved in health are not considered combatants under the laws of war and they are not authorised to fight with weapons except in *self-defence*. These women were given basic weapon handling instruction and training, in case this need for self-defence should arise.

In 1988 women were allowed access to other corps, such as Musicians and their involvement in health services became routine. For the first time in the history of the German armed forces, in April 1994 a woman was employed as a general doctor.

There was a major change in this regulation in 2000, as a result of a ruling from the<sup>(15)</sup> European Court of Human Rights on a case lodged by Tanja Kreil. In its ruling, the Court argued that German regulations excluding women from serving under arms was contrary to the principles of equality between men and women. As a result, on 1 January 2001, women were allowed to participate in all parts of the Bundeswehr, with no limitations. This required changes to Article 12a of the Constitution<sup>(16)</sup>, which was drafted as: "Women shall not be obliged to serve under arms under any circumstances".

There are at present some 17,500 women in the Bundeswehr, of whom 2,800 are officers (accounting for 9% of professional and temporary military personnel).

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<sup>(14)</sup> In 2003, 49,700 women were involved, just over a third of the total civilian employees.

<sup>(15)</sup> "11 January 2000 Court Ruling: Tanja Kreil v Bundesrepublik Deutschland. - Reference for a preliminary ruling: Verwaltungsgericht Hannover - Germany. - Equal treatment for men and women - Limitation of access by women to military posts in the Bundeswehr. - Case C-285/98 [online]. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:61998J0285:EN:HTML> This European Court ruling has been implemented since 1 January 2005 under the Implementation of Gender Equality in the Bundeswehr Act. Germany's Constitutional Court issued an opinion that there was no contradiction between this regulation and the fact that only men were obliged to do military service.

<sup>(16)</sup> Germany. Basic Law for the Federal Republic of German, 23 May 1949 (*Official Federal Gazette*, I, page 1).

There are no limits for women on any specialities in the Bundeswehr, nor on the posts they can occupy in German contingents in foreign operations<sup>(17)</sup>.

An April 2011 report by the German Federal Government<sup>(18)</sup> highlights a number of relevant issues, such as the under-representation of women in command positions, the scarcity of facilities suitable for female personnel, the need for uniforms more suitable for women soldiers and the low percentage of female soldiers, below the 15% target (Tables 4-1, 4-2 and 4-3)

**Table 4-1. Distribution of personnel in the German Armed Forces by corps (as of April 2011)**

Branch	Men	Men %	Women	Women %	Total:
Common corps*	75,033	92.5	6,126	7.5	<b>81,159</b>
Topography	527	90.9	53	9.1	<b>580</b>
Specialists	11,106	98.1	217	1.9	<b>11,323</b>
Military musicians	886	87.6	125	12.4	<b>1,011</b>
Health	10,392	59.0	7,234	41.0	<b>17,626</b>
Arms	73,106	95.0	3,829	5.0	<b>76,935</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>171,050</b>	<b>90.7</b>	<b>17,584</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>188,634</b>

\* In the German Armed Forces, this refers to all specialities other than those under arms. Source: In house, based on data provided by Spain's military attaché in Germany and provided by the German government in response to a parliamentary question (20 April 2011) asked by the members of parliament Katja Keul, Marieluise Beck and Volker Beck.

<sup>(17)</sup> Figures provided by the German Defence Ministry in the name of the German Federal Government in response to a parliamentary question (Report Ref. 17/5664, 20 April 2011) asked by the members of parliament Katja Keul, Marieluise Beck and Volker Beck. The figures for female participation in the Bundeswehr can still be regarded as reliable, with the sole exception that the current reform of the Bundeswehr has suspended compulsory military service, partially replacing it with a new volunteer system, which is open to women. As this new system has only been implemented recently, we cannot yet draw any conclusions on its impact on female participation in the German Armed Forces.

<sup>(18)</sup> Reference 15.

**Table 4-2. Distribution of personnel in the German Armed Forces by rank (as of April 2011)**

Rank	Men	Men %	Women	Women %	Total:
Officers	34,485	92.4	2,835	7.6	<b>37,320</b>
Career non-commissioned officers	61,608	91.5	5,706	8.5	<b>67,314</b>
Non-commissioned officers on contracts	37,094	86.9	5,615	13.1	<b>42,709</b>
Troops and sailors	37,863	91.7	3,428	8.3	<b>41,291</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>171,050</b>	<b>90.7</b>	<b>17,584</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>188,634</b>

Source: In house, based on data provided by Spain's military attaché in Germany and provided by the German government in response to a parliamentary question (20 April 2011) asked by the members of parliament Katja Keul, Marieluise Beck and Volker Beck.

**Table 4-3. Distribution of personnel in the German Armed Forces by service (as of April 2011)**

Service	Men	Men %	Women	Women %	Total
Army	105,880	90.8	10,694	9.2	<b>116,574</b>
Air Force	46,788	91.0	4,646	9.0	<b>51,434</b>
Navy	18,382	89.1	2,244	10.9	<b>20,626</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>171,050</b>	<b>90.7</b>	<b>17,584</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>188,634</b>

Source: In house, based on data provided by Spain's military attaché in Germany and provided by the German government in response to a parliamentary question (20 April 2011) asked by the members of parliament Katja Keul, Marieluise Beck and Volker Beck.

**AUSTRIA** 

Women began serving in the Austrian Armed Forces in 1998. Austria's Armed Forces are based on compulsory military service, which women can volunteer to take part in, with no limits on specialisations. The Army draws its commanders from professional soldiers and others belonging to militias. Temporary contracts are also permitted for a few specialities. Women are able to participate in all areas under equal conditions to men. This also applies to participation in operations, although this has only happened very occasionally.

There are currently around 360 women in Austria's Armed Forces, 2% of total personnel, ignoring reservists<sup>(19)</sup> (Table 4-4).

Women officers are divided 50:50 between medical services and units under arms, with the highest rank reached by a woman being Colonel Doctor. In other corps, the highest ranks reached have been commander in logistics specialities and captain in weapons specialities.

There are currently six women from the Austrian Armed Forces taking part in missions abroad<sup>(20)</sup>.

**Table 4-4. Number of female soldiers in the Austrian Armed Forces (as of 7 December 2011)**

Rank	Women
Officers	69
Non-commissioned officers	125
Troops	131
Recruits	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>554</b>

Source: In house, based on figures provided by Spain's military attaché in Germany.

Despite the initial excitement in the country about the opening up of the Armed Forces to women and following an initial increase, figures for new enlisting have stalled. The Ministry of Defence does not know why Austrian women are not interested in enlisting. The Federal Government has launched a recruitment campaign specifically targeted at women<sup>(21)</sup>.

■ **SWITZERLAND** 

Women first began to join the Swiss army in 1977. Since then there have been a number of changes, with the current set up - known as "Women in the army" - dating from 1995; under this, female personnel can only join logistics

<sup>(19)</sup> A further 2,500 women are involved in civilian posts with the Ministry of Defence, bringing total female representation to around 12%.

<sup>(20)</sup> As of 7 December 2008.

<sup>(21)</sup> In the Spring this year, the Government wrote to all Austrian women born between 1983 and 1993 to remind them that they could join the army, giving them a permanent position in the public service, career opportunities and the possibility of missions abroad. Minister of Defence Darabos recently insisted on the need to increase the number of women, to bring this into line with other European countries.



and support units, being excluded from armed units. The introduction of the "21st century army"<sup>(22)</sup> in 2004 represented a radical change in one regard, as it established gender equality, opening the way to female participation in all corps and all army specialisations.

Switzerland still has compulsory military service, as in Austria, with voluntary service for women. On reaching the age of 18, Swiss women are invited to an information day at which they are informed of the options regarding joining the Armed Forces, career paths etc.

The country currently has 1,020 female soldiers, 0.5% of the total. They are involved in combat and rescue units, as aircraft pilots and they are also involved in logistical and health functions (Table 4-5).

**Table 4-5. Distribution of female soldiers by rank in the Swiss Armed Forces**

Rank	Women
Officers	262
Non-commissioned officers	263
Troops	495
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,020</b>

Source: In house, based on figures provided by Spain's military attaché in Germany.

■ **ITALY** 

Allowing women into the Armed Forces has been the subject of debate in Italy since 1963, when a draft bill raised this possibility for the first time<sup>(23)</sup>.

Changes in public opinion and developments in society and the international environment resulted in women being allowed to take up a military career following approval of Act 380, of 20 October 1999<sup>(24)</sup>, empowering the

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<sup>(22)</sup> The "21st century army" reform was adopted in a popular vote in 2009, replacing the previous "Army 95" model and reducing the number of personnel from 400,000 to 200,000. Of these, 120,000 are active soldiers and 80,000 are reservists.

<sup>(23)</sup> Italian women have been able to work in the Armed Forces in all civilian professions and public offices, with the exception of the Military Defence of the State since 1919. In 1992, the Italian army carried out an experiment with a sample of 29 Italian women, in which they lived in barracks for 36 hours and were involved in all the normal activities of the military functions of the "Montebello" Lancers at their HQ in Rome.

<sup>(24)</sup> Italy. LEGGE 20 ottobre 1999 n.380 Delega al Governo per l'istituzione del servizio militare volontario femminile. Published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* (255), of 29 October 1999 [online]. Available at: [http://www.difesa.it/Legislazione/Norme\\_in\\_rete/Pagine/urn\\_nir\\_parlamento\\_legge\\_1999-10-20\\_380\\_2003-06-0901\\_06\\_2011\\_15\\_08\\_22.aspx](http://www.difesa.it/Legislazione/Norme_in_rete/Pagine/urn_nir_parlamento_legge_1999-10-20_380_2003-06-0901_06_2011_15_08_22.aspx)

Government to set up military volunteering for women and enabling them to enter the Armed Forces and Guardia di Finanza. However, it was not until 4 January 2000<sup>(25)</sup>, with publication of the first access notices in the *Official Gazette*, that women joined the ranks of the Italian army. Initially women only entered officer academies. They accessed all other jobs subsequently as their entry coincided with the ending of compulsory military service and the need for reform of both infrastructure and regulations.

On balance, the presence of female personnel was positive for their colleagues, particularly as the merit of both men and women was judged on their individual qualities and skills<sup>(26)</sup>.

Women can now access all military categories and ranks (officers, non-commissioned officers and troops), once they have passed the entrance tests, in which there are different scales for men and women. Women work in all types of units, including combat and combat-support, excluding special forces - as a result of their demanding physical requirements - and submarines, where space is very restricted and they have not yet been prepared for female personnel.

Units on tour in theatres of operations abroad employ all the personnel assigned to the mission in all activities, with no gender distinctions or limitations on the number of women.

There are 11,413 women in the Italian Armed Forces (3% of the total), with 7,264 in the Army, 1,879 in the Navy, 915 in the Air Force and 1,355 in the Carabinieri<sup>(27)</sup> (Table 4-6).

The Italian Armed Forces were the last in Europe to incorporate women into their ranks. However, they present this as an advantage that enables them to benefit from the lessons learnt in other countries.

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Other Acts and related regulations: Legislative Decree 24/2000 pertaining to provisions on recruitment, legal status and promotion. Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 112/2000. Modifications - Defence Minister Decree 114/2000 on Regulations on Suitability for Military Service. Health Director General Directive of 19 April 2000. Selection Criteria for Female Personnel, 27 May 2005. Specifically, Decree 112 of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of 16 March 2000, setting height limits for recruitment of Armed Forces personnel: for officers, non-commissioned officers and volunteers, not less than 1.65 (men) or 1.61 (women) and not taller than 1.95. Navy pilot officers and normal fleet officers and special Air Force officers: not less than 1.65 or taller than 1.90. Carabinieri officers: not less than 1.70 (men) or 1.65 (women). [Online]. Available at: [www.difesa.it](http://www.difesa.it)

<sup>(25)</sup> There was massive demand for places: there were 22,692 applications, of which 54.91% came from women.

<sup>(26)</sup> Report by Major General Gianfranco MARINELLI. (June 2002). "Analysis of the initial results in the Italian Armed Forces" following incorporation of female personnel. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.difesa.it/Approfondimenti/ArchivioApprofondimenti/Servizio\\_femminile/Pagine/Donne\\_nelle\\_forze\\_armate.aspx](http://www.difesa.it/Approfondimenti/ArchivioApprofondimenti/Servizio_femminile/Pagine/Donne_nelle_forze_armate.aspx)

<sup>(27)</sup> Figures for 30 September 2011, provided by the Italian Defence Military Staff.

**Table 4-6. Distribution of female personnel in the Italian Armed Forces by service (as of 11 September 2011)**

	Officers	Non-commissioned officers	Troops	Total
Army	244	94	6,926	7,264
Air Force	167	115	633	915
CEMM Navy	245	122	755	1,122
CP Navy	136	32	589	757
Carabinieri	197	487	671	1,355

Source: In house, based on figures provided by the Italian Ministry of Defence and Spain's Defence Attaché in Italy.

At the proposal of the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Commandant General of the Guardia de Finanzas, a Committee was set up to help the Ministry of Defence and Guardia di Finanza in their planning, coordination and assessment of the training and retention of female personnel. The Committee, created for a two year period on 9 June 2011, will help to increase the number of female soldiers and will monitor their conditions. The Committee will study aspects such as the integration of female personnel into training and operations departments and it will develop specific actions for the support of children and other potential needs of both men and women<sup>(28)</sup>.

Working with the local female population is of vital importance in achieving the objectives of current operations, particularly in Afghanistan. As a result, 27 female Italian soldiers completed the first Herat "Female Engagement Team" (FET) course<sup>(29)</sup> in December 2011. The objective of the course was to provide soldiers who are going to work in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan with the tools needed to foster cooperation with Afghan women.

■ **FRANCE<sup>(30)</sup>** 

The 11 July 1938 Act on Organisation of the Nation in Times of War<sup>(31)</sup> provided for female recruitment to the Armed Forces in case of need,

<sup>(28)</sup> Servizio Militare Femminile. Document dated 13 September 2011. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.difesa.it/Primo\\_Piano/Pagine/Serviziomilitarefemminile.aspx](http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Pagine/Serviziomilitarefemminile.aspx)

<sup>(29)</sup> First course *Herat Female Engagement Teams*. December 2011. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.difesa.it/Primo\\_Piano/Pagine/HERATFemaleEngagementTeams.aspx](http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Pagine/HERATFemaleEngagementTeams.aspx)

<sup>(30)</sup> Source: MONRIQUE, M. (2004). *Placer Des Femmes dans la Professionnalisation des Armées*. Notes d'Iéna. Informations du Conseil Économique et Social, (148). [Online]. Available at: [http://www.femmesaeeana.com/pdf/reperes/armees\\_monrique\\_2004.pdf](http://www.femmesaeeana.com/pdf/reperes/armees_monrique_2004.pdf)

<sup>(31)</sup> France. Loi du 11 juillet 1938 dite Paul Boncour, portant sur l'organisation de la Nation en temps de guerre.

enabling many women to take part in the defence of their country during the Second World War, with civilian status. These formations were dissolved by the occupying forces and women ceased being involved in the defence of the nation. In 1951, women were once again allowed to enlist in all of the armed services in peacetime, but as part of the Female Personnel Corp<sup>(32)</sup>. This gave them similar status to men, but with different personnel management and careers.

The first decisive step towards the access of women to the Armed Forces came in the 70s and 80s, when women were accepted as volunteers in military service<sup>(33)</sup>. This was an experiment, at the end of which the women were able to continue their military career as ranking military personnel.

The 13 July 1972 Act on the General Status of Military Personnel<sup>(34)</sup> removed the distinction between military personnel based on gender, with both male and female personnel serving under the same system with the same obligations and rights. Women have access to all jobs and may even join the reserves, even though they belong to specific women corps, for example, as nurses and members of the Female Naval Officers Corp.

A Decree dated 23 March 1973 established that women can potentially access all military careers up to the grades stipulated for first employment in the General Officers Scale. This also created the Female Personnel Defence College (EIPMF<sup>(35)</sup>) to ensure common military training for students from all three armed services. The Decree further regulated access of women to different corps than men, establishing annual percentages for personnel of both sexes and regulating specific questions related to the functions or work to be performed by women.

Between 1975 and 1979, all statutory differentiation between men and women was phased out. The 22 December 1975 Decree<sup>(36)</sup> on the status of officers and non-commissioned officers in the armed services and the Decree of 18 February 1977, on Statutory Provisions applicable to the Female Defence Officer Corp, replaced the 1973 statute and all specific female corps were phased out in 1976. In the Land Army, women cannot serve in armed corps, but can serve in technical and administrative corps (with 40% of posts reserved for women) and administration (with 15% of posts reserved for women). Nevertheless, access to combat corps - such as Army Infantry and Artillery - is limited<sup>(37)</sup> and in the Navy they are prohibited from postings on warships.

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<sup>(32)</sup> Personnels des cadres militaires féminins (PCMF).

<sup>(33)</sup> Service national volontaire (SNV).

<sup>(34)</sup> France. Loi du 13 juillet 1972 portant statut général des militaires.

<sup>(35)</sup> École Interarmées du Personnel Militaire Féminin.

<sup>(36)</sup> France. Loi de 1975 relative aux statuts particuliers des corps des officiers et des sous-officiers de Gendarmerie.

<sup>(37)</sup> In 1977, 150 women enlisted in the army.

From 1977, female officers undertook mixed training with men at the Cherbourg Technical and Administrative Corps College. Non-commissioned officers join the Navy in the mobile branch of the Non-Commissioned Officers Ports Corp and in the Military Staff Specialities and Services Group. Nevertheless, they only occupy land destinations and perform functions such as secretaries, aeronautics and signals, computer programmers and air-traffic controllers.

In the Air Force, women have access to various corps that were, until recently, reserved for men, except for pilot officers, with an annual quota limit of 15%. Women only join flight crews as air nurses. Women may also become career non-commissioned officers. This opens up access to air traffic control, electronic, radio and radar equipment, IT management and administration and signals.

The Prospective Study Committee for Female Soldiers was established in 1982. The objective of this was to unify military training for men and women at the Grandes Écoles Militaires, enabling access to most specialities in the various armed services, including combat pilots and removing the letter "F" (*femme*) which had been appended to their names, whilst also developing infrastructure to facilitate childcare.

When the Female Personnel Defence College closed in 1983, training of non-commissioned officers became mixed in all the armed services. All branches of the Army are open to female non-commissioned officers; however, there are annual quotas on recruitment, set at 3.5% for Infantry, Armoured Vehicles, Cavalry, Artillery and Engineering, 7% for light weapons (material, training) and 2.5% for Signals.

In 1983, the Special Military College and the Defence Military College opened to women with a 5% annual limit. In 1984, women were allowed to enter the Officer Corps, with places limited to a maximum of 5% and access to a range of posts: support, logistics, command and intelligence. All other specialities related to "direct and prolonged combat with hostile forces" (combat in the infantry, armoured vehicles, engineers and artillery) are closed to female personnel. Women started to be recruited to the Air Force in 1984, as contracted crew and pilots for logistics transport or connections. The annual quotas range from 10% to 20%, depending on the speciality. In 1986, the first woman officer entered the Air Warfare School and women were allowed to become fighter pilots for the first time.

We can identify three important milestones for women in the French Armed Forces: 1) in 1997, the 28 October Act reforming the national commitment to the professionalization of the armed services resulted in a significant increase in female personnel in all military roles and specialities, 2) finally, in 1998, Decree 86 and Order 29, eliminating the quotas restricting access for women to certain positions, gave women the opportunity to serve in almost all posts, except

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"those which by the nature of the post and its demands justify the exclusion of female soldiers" and 3) the Order of 12 December 2002, modifying the 29 April 1998 Order, limiting the access of women to submarines in the navy due to lack of space, the mobile subdivision of the Gendarmerie (anti-disturbance) and operational roles in the Foreign Legion.

In the Navy, the majority of officers are recruits under contract, particularly in the Signals, Air Traffic Control, IT and Administration specialities. Colleges are mixed and recruitment and course progress requirements and training processes are identical for men and women. The first woman officer joined the Naval Warfare College in 1987. In 1986 women entered the Port Supplies Non-Commissioned Officers Corps and the Fleet Crew Senior Officer Corps.

The posting of women on warships was officially established in 1993, following a trial from 1983 to 1987. Women were able to enter specialities such as Manoeuvring and Piloting, Naval Mechanic and Weapons Electrician, although there was a 10% access quota and female personnel had to be represented in all roles and ranks on board. The principle of equality of treatment for employment and services on board was maintained and women were permitted to carry out all technical and military functions, although not all ships had to have mixed crews at the outset.

Subsequently, in January 2004, the number of ships with mixed crews was increased, including the "Charles de Gaulle" aircraft carrier. A total of 445 women could be onboard (4.4% of the personnel onboard), out of almost 5,000 women belonging to the Navy. However, these figures were insufficient and the number of women onboard was increased in 2005 to 700 through an increase in the ships accessible to female personnel, and the percentage of women on board grew from 10% to 15%.

In 1999 the restriction on women in the crews of onboard aircraft was lifted. 2000 and 2001 saw the opening up of posts in the Army's Foreign Legion and the specialities of onboard fighter pilot and Commando Fusilier in the Navy. In both the Army<sup>(38)</sup> and the Air Force all posts are open to women. In 1999, a woman became a fighter pilot in the French Air Force and nine other women joined special operations commandos. Since 1 January 1999, any woman who joins the Navy can be posted onboard ship, irrespective of her family situation<sup>(39)</sup>, with the exception of specialities involving being onboard submarines, women can now access all specialities in the Navy. Today, there

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<sup>(38)</sup> In 2006, 1.7% of combat infantry soldiers were women. Source: CAWKIL, P, ROGERS, A, KNIGHT, S. and SPEAR, L. (2009). "Women in Ground Close Combat Roles: The Experience of other Nations and a Review of the Academic Literature". Human Systems Group Grenville Building Information Management Department. DSTL Porstdown West Fareham.

<sup>(39)</sup> Mothers can however request to be posted ashore.

are female naval fusiliers and some "Atlantique" aircraft pilots and pilots of onboard fighter aircraft.

Women today account for 19% of military personnel and are represented in nearly every corps, including combat infantry (where they represent 1.8%), with the exception of anti-disturbance gendarmerie and submarines. However, less than 5% hold senior officer rank (Table 4-7).

The percentage of female personnel in the French Armed Forces increased from 10% in 2000 to over 19% in 2010, with medical and Air Force specialities having the highest proportion of female soldiers<sup>(40)</sup>.

**HOLLAND** 

The Dutch Armed Forces are a voluntary professional organisation. Dutch women have been integrated into units since 1944, serving under the same rules and regulations as men and with the same performance and discipline requirements.

**Table 4-7. Number of female personnel by category and armed service (2010)**

Service	Women soldiers				Total	%
	Officers	Non-commissioned officers	Troops	Volunteers		
Army	1,333	5,259	6,359	138	13,089	10.5
Navy	591	3,135	1,198	280	5,204	13.1
Air Force	816	5,380	4,756	267	11,219	21.4
Other Ministry Services <sup>1</sup>	1,757	3,685	145	330	5,917	33.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,497</b>	<b>17,459</b>	<b>12,458</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>35,429</b>	<b>15.1</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>15.1</b>	

Source: In house, based on information published in: BILAN SOCIAL 2010. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.defence.gouv.fr/sga/le-sga-en-action/ressources-humaines/hommes-et-femmes-de-la-defense/bilan-social-2010>

<sup>(1)</sup> These services include health and other Ministry of Defence Secretariat specialities.

<sup>(40)</sup> Although we have not been able to find precise figures, French sources suggest the percentage of female personnel is stabilising at around 15%. It would seem that although demand is increasing, women are leaving the Army at earlier stages of their military careers.

Women are integrated into all corps, with the same opportunities for promotion and advancement in their careers, except for Marine Special Operations and Submarines. These units have remained closed to women because of their physical demands, combat effectiveness requirements and for reasons of space in the case of submarines. There are almost fifty thousand people in the Dutch Armed Forces, of whom some one thousand three hundred are women.

Women are involved in international peace-building missions under the same conditions as men<sup>(41)</sup> and have the same obligations, if they are mobilised. Currently, almost 7% of personnel involved in operations abroad are women.

Holland incorporated the gender perspective into its Armed Forces in 2001<sup>(42)</sup>. This includes a commitment from above to create a Gender Policy with clear objectives and responsibilities and knowledge of the appropriate resources and instruments for getting the most out of each gender.

Holland was one of the first countries to stress the importance of mixed teams, "as they can offer better performance, particularly in the light of current international policy, which defends the introduction of gender into the doctrine and missions of NATO, the EU and OSCE".

Between 2005 and 2007, the Dutch Ministry of Defence implemented an *EU-funded Gender Force Project* to accelerate and intensify the gender policy process in its Armed Forces. The objective of this was not just to increase the number of female personnel and to improve their promotion prospects, but also to recognise the significance of cultural and social gender differences, removing barriers and making maximum use of these differences and associated competences.

Despite women having the opportunity to serve in combat units, very few women work in these areas. The majority of women deployed in the theatre of operations serve in logistical combat support units. Around 13% of all female soldiers in the Army are in combat units, whilst the proportion is much higher in the Navy and the Air Force (33% and 21%, respectively).

The Netherlands has recognised that women have psychological abilities such as negotiating and communication skills in compliance with United Nations Resolution 1325, which aims to promote the role of women in conflict resolution through integration of the gender perspective into Peacekeeping Operations.

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<sup>(41)</sup> However, women with one or more children under the age of five are not posted abroad, unless service requirements make this unavoidable.

<sup>(42)</sup> *Government Viewpoint on Gender Mainstreaming, a strategy of quality improvement.* Netherlands Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. June 2001.



In fact, gender is considered fundamental in analysis and planning processes for Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan<sup>(43)</sup>.

## ■ THE UK

Women have played an important part in the UK Armed Forces, particularly since the Second World War, occupying a large variety of posts related basically to supporting the Forces.

The first women to join the British Army entered the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) between 1949 and 1992<sup>(44)</sup>, with the exception of medics, dentists, vets and chaplains, who belonged to mixed units, and nurses who joined the female Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

The WRAC was created in 1949 by order of the Army as the successor to the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), which had been founded in 1938. Throughout most of its existence, its members were involved in logistical tasks (mainly as cooks, telephone operators and waitresses) and administrative work. However, in 1992, the WRAC was dissolved and its members were transferred to those corps most suitable for their professional knowledge and experience. This fully integrated women into mixed combat support units.

The Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) was founded in 1918 as the female branch of the air force, to work as mechanics and free up men during the First World War. This body was dissolved in 1920, but the organisation saw huge advantages in the work of these women as volunteer drivers and mechanics and providing other support services for the Forces in wartime. This resulted in the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in 1939, as the auxiliary female Royal Air Force, reaching its peak with 2000 personnel in 1943. Women were integrated into the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1994<sup>(45)</sup>.

The female branch of the Navy was created as the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), more commonly known as the *Wrens*. This branch of the Royal Navy included cooks, telegraph operators, *radar plotters*, weapons analysts, electricians, flight assessors and mechanics. It was founded in 1917

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<sup>(43)</sup> VAN DEN HEUVEL, E. and MEIJER, M. "Gender Force in the Netherlands Armed Forces". RTO-MP-HFM-158. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.ftprta.nato.int/public//PubFullText/RTO/MP/.../MP-HFM-158-02.doc>

<sup>(44)</sup> The WRAC motto was: "Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo" (Resolutely in action, gently in manner). The first women to join the Armed Forces were welcomed with similar words, when a colleague said "have an iron fist in a velvet glove".

<sup>(45)</sup> See: ESCOTT, Beryl. *Women in Air Force Blue*. Patrick Stephens, 1989, MANNING, Mick. *Taff in the WAAF*. Janetta Nutria-Barry Libros (Frances Lincoln), 2010, RICE, Joan. *Sand In My Shoes: Coming of Age in the Second World War: Wartime Diaries of a WAAF*. Harperpress, 2006 and YOUNGHUSBAND, Eileen. *One Woman's War*. Candy Jar Books, Libros Candy Jar, 2011, ISBN 978-0-9566826-2-8 2011

during the First World War and had 5,500 members by the end of the war, of whom 500 were officers. It was disbanded in 1919.

The idea was resurrected at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, in order to release men from these tasks and make them available for the fleet. 3,000 women were recruited, also performing new functions, such as radio operators, weather forecasters and shell range markers. The service reached its peak in 1944, when 75,000 women were enlisted. It continued in existence after the war, being integrated into the Royal Navy in 1990.

In the 1990s, women were gradually integrated into all corps and units. The proportion of women in the UK's regular forces has risen considerably over the last decade, increasing from 8.0% in 2000 to 9.6% in 2011. As of 1 April 2011, women accounted for 12.3% of officers and 9% of other ranks. The Air Force has the highest percentage of female personnel (13.8%), followed by the Navy (9.4%) and the Army (8.0%) (tables 4-8 and 4-9).

**Table 4-8. Personnel in the UK Armed Forces by Armed Service (as of 1 April 2011)**

Service	Men	Men %	Women	Women %	Total
Army	97,750	92	8,480	8	106,230
Air Force	36,620	86.2	5,840	13.8	42,460
Navy	34,130	90.6	3,530	9.4	37,660
Total	168,500	90.4	17,850	9.6	186,350

Source: In house, based on figures provided by the Defence and Air Attaché at the Spanish Embassy in London.

**Table 4-9. Personnel in the UK Armed Forces by rank (as of 1 April 2011)**

Service	Total officers	Female officers	Female officers %	Total other ranks	Total women in other ranks	Total women in other ranks %
Army	14,760	1,670	11.3	91,470	6,810	7.4
Air Force	9,660	1,510	15.7	32,810	4,330	13.2
Navy	7,410	720	9.7	30,240	2,810	9.3
Total	31,830	3,900	12.3	154,520	13,950	9

Source: In house, based on figures provided by the Defence and Air Attaché at the Spanish Embassy in London.

Despite the increase in the number of women in the UK's Armed Forces, there are still some corps which are closed to them. This is the case with the Household Cavalry and the Royal Armoured Corps in the Army, the Royal Air Force Regiment and the Royal Marine Commandos and Submarines in the Navy, at least in posts where the main objective is to "confront and kill the enemy"<sup>(46)</sup>, although they can join in logistical posts.

In 1997, the then Defence Secretary announced to Parliament that, following an exhaustive review of women in the Army, a report was to be carried out into the performance and suitability of women for close combat roles, with regard to mission effectiveness, based on the premise that having women in small units could negatively effect the cohesion of the Unit.

As a consequence of this report<sup>(47)</sup>, and supported by reports from the Chiefs of Staff of the three armed services, the then Secretary of State announced to Parliament on 22 May 2002 the decision not to raise the restrictions in place on women serving in combat. This was because it was not clear whether mixed units would work as well as men-only units in close combat, as there was no empirical evidence and the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence were not prepared to take any risks. Women were therefore once again excluded from the Marines, Infantry and Cavalry Units and the Royal Air Force Regiment.

Eight years later, the European Union obliged the Defence Department to at least review this restriction. As a result, a study was carried out in 2009-2010<sup>(48)</sup> analysing experience of women in small combat units in other countries. The study also reviewed existing literature on the cohesion of military units and carried out quantitative investigation into the cohesion and functioning of groups in extreme situations using questionnaires with men and women who had been deployed in the theatre of operations, some of whom had experience of close combat.

The study found that women felt less cohesion than men in small combat units, particularly when the unit had three or more women. However, it

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<sup>(46)</sup> UK legislation (Section 85 (4) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA75) establishes an exemption in order to ensure the combat effectiveness of the Armed Forces. There is a similar provision in Schedule 3, part 4 of the Equality Act 2010. This exemption proposes that women could undermine and degrade combat effectiveness.

<sup>(47)</sup> The results of the report are detailed in *Women in the Armed Forces. A Report by the Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group Report May 2002*. Online: [http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A9925990-82C2-420F-AB04-7003768CEC02/0/womenaf\\_fullreport.pdf](http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A9925990-82C2-420F-AB04-7003768CEC02/0/womenaf_fullreport.pdf).

<sup>(48)</sup> The resulting reports are: 51 Report on the Review of the Exclusion of Women from Ground Close-Combat Roles PDF [53.4 KB] Study of Women in Combat – Investigation of Quantitative Data PDF [300.9 KB] Study of Women in Combat – Qualitative Report PDF [308.3 KB] Women in Ground Combat Roles – Experiences of Other Nations and a Review of the Academic Literature PDF [407.9 KB].

also recognised that these different perceptions of cohesion between men and women could not solely be ascribed to questions of gender, as other variables could be involved, such as: the women held lower ranks than the men and they had not worked with the male team members over an extended period and did not know them as well as the men knew each other.

Despite these results not being fully conclusive, to the extent that women may cause difficulties in relations and cohesion among members of small units, women were denied participation in such combat units.

Women in the UK are also limited from being detailed to submarines by the Navy. This is based on a belief that the high levels of carbon dioxide in submarines could be harmful to the female body. However, recent findings from the Institute of Naval Medicine show that there are no reasons to exclude women from service on submarines and that they could be posted from 2013 in Trident-class submarines.

## ■ SPAIN

The first women joined the army in 1941, in the *Cuerpo de Damas de Sanidad Militar* (the Women's Military Health Corps)<sup>(49)</sup> This was founded by Mercedes Milá Nolla. The female volunteers in this corps provided honorary nursing services, for which they received no salary. In order to join the Corps, volunteers took a two-year course in nursing techniques and military skills (including instruction in military drills). They wore military uniforms: khaki, skirt, cap and shoulder bag, with the Military Health Service emblem on the flap. In hospitals they wore nurses' uniforms, but on manoeuvres they wore fatigues and boots just like any other soldier<sup>(50)</sup>.

The roots of this Corps stretch back to the Civil War, with women who wanted to join the Spanish Red Cross, the *Sección Femenina de Falange*, and women who worked voluntarily but with no qualifications in military hospitals; at the end of the war there were 12,307 nurses and auxiliaries.

In 1977, the *Damas de Sanidad* (Ladies of Health)<sup>(51)</sup> were divided into two Corps: the *Cuerpo Especial de Damas Auxiliares de Sanidad Militar* (with the status of public servants) and the *Agrupación de Damas Auxiliares de Sanidad*

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<sup>(49)</sup> The initial bylaws of the *Cuerpo de Damas de Sanidad* were approved by an Order dated 31 July 1941 (DO. n.º 172/5 of August 1941).

<sup>(50)</sup> ÁLVAREZ LUQUERO, A. B. *Fuerzas Armadas Unidas*. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/revistas/FuerzasArmadasUnidas\\_CESEDEN315\\_Alvarez.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/revistas/FuerzasArmadasUnidas_CESEDEN315_Alvarez.pdf)

<sup>(51)</sup> One famous "dama de sanidad" was Fabiola de Mora y Aragón, Queen of Belgium, who trained with the Corps in her youth.

Militar (unpaid volunteer workers). Each of these had their own regulations. The "damas auxiliares" reached their peak in 1985, when there were 7,000 Damas in the two Corps, including the veterans and students incorporated at various times<sup>(52)</sup>.

Today the nursing speciality, consisting of men and women with the rank of officer, is integrated into the Cuerpos Comunes de Defensa.

With the exception of the Damas de Sanidad, women in Spain could not join the armed forces until September 1988<sup>(53)</sup>, at which time they were granted access "with no other difference than their physical condition to perform certain postings".

This began the first selection processes<sup>(54)</sup> for women to access the following corps and grades: the Army Legal Corps, the Navy Legal Corps, the Air Force Legal Corps, the Defence Audit Military Corps, the Weapons and Construction Engineers Corps, the Aeronautical Engineers Grades, the Weapons and Construction Technical Engineers Corps, the Aeronautical Technical Engineers Grades, the Army Medical Corps, the Navy Medical Corps (Medicine Section), the Air Force Medical Corps, the Army Musical Directors Grades, the Navy Musical Directors Grades, the Air Force Musical Directors Grades, the Army Auxiliary Technical Medical Assistants Corps, the Health Section of the Basic Naval Non-Commissioned Officers Grades, the Air Force Auxiliary Medical Corps, the Army Non-Commissioned Officers Musicians Corp, the Musicians Section of the Navy's Basic Non-Commissioned Officers Grades and the Musicians Section of the Air Force's Basic Non-Commissioned Officers Grades.

The remaining Corps and Grades in the three services not specified in Royal Decree Act 1/1988 were to remain closed to female personnel until the necessary organisation and infrastructure changes were made.

A year later, Act 17/1989, Regulating Professional Military Personnel<sup>(55)</sup> extended the incorporation of women to all corps and grades in all three armed services, although postings could be subject to specific regulations based on particular physical requirements. This Act also included the official names

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<sup>(52)</sup> A 1974 Ministerial Order (*Official State Gazette* 180, of 29 July 1974) granted the Damas de Sanidad Militar the status of Auxiliary Clinical Technicians, Professional Training, grade I for health services (a qualification which each dama had to apply for individually), whilst members of the Cuerpo Especial were considered to be civil servants working for the military administration, under Decree 707/1976, of 5 March.

<sup>(53)</sup> Spain. Royal Decree Act 1/1988, of 22 February, on the incorporation of women into the Armed Forces. *Official State Gazette* number 46, of 23 February 1988, p. 5672.

<sup>(54)</sup> As in Germany, Italy and France, this aimed to provide an urgent response to a general and specific demand from society.

<sup>(55)</sup> Spain. Act 17/1989, of 19 July, Regulating Professional Military Personnel. *Official State Gazette* number 172, of 20/7/1989, page 23129.

for military roles<sup>(56)</sup>, which will be the same for all members of the Armed Forces. It also included equality of conditions for accessing and progressing in military careers, with no gender distinctions.

Three years later, Royal Decree 984/1992<sup>(57)</sup>, of 31 July, established that female personnel who are professional troops and sailors can opt for all postings in their military careers, except for tactical and operational roles in the Legion, Special Operations, Paratroops and Paratroop Hunters. It also stated that women could not join landing forces or the crews of submarines or ships where accommodation conditions would not be suitable.

Act 17/1999, of 18 May, removed sex distinctions in postings. This therefore achieved the full integration of women in Spain's Armed Forces. Female personnel now began to take up posts in the Legion<sup>(58)</sup>, the Parachute Brigade and the Marines Brigade, providing that they could meet the psychological and physical requirements for these units<sup>(59)</sup>.

Today, women in Spain can join all corps and grades and carve out a professional career, just like a man. Women take part in all missions abroad under the same conditions as men and perform the same functions in their postings and the positions they are assigned to for operational reasons.

In January 2012<sup>(60)</sup>, 305 female soldiers from the three armed services were involved in missions abroad.

Following necessary conversion work, the first two women were posted to submarines in 2000. The only condition imposed was that there had to be at least two women on board for each manoeuvre or mission. The highest ranking woman in submarines is currently a staff sergeant.

Despite twelve years having passed since women were given access to all corps and grades, there are still some units where women are underrepresented and even some which no woman has yet joined. This is the case with the former Marines Special Operations Unit, the current Reconnaissance Unit and the Naval Special Warfare Unit. These units

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<sup>(56)</sup> In Spain, the names of military roles are the same for men and women, the only difference is the article preceding the task, which in Spanish varies with gender. In Spanish we therefore say "la capitana", "la sargento", "la comandante" etc. for women.

<sup>(57)</sup> Royal Decree 984/1992, of 31 July, approving the Regulations for Professional Troops and Sailors in the Armed Forces.

<sup>(58)</sup> In 1990, a female medical officer was posted to the 3rd Division of the Legion (Fuerteventura). In 1993, the first female legionnaire weapons specialist joined the 4th Division (Ronda), and in 1995 five female legionnaires joined the Legion's Logistics Group (Almeria).

<sup>(59)</sup> However, women have to volunteer to be assigned to posts in fighting units. In other words, if they do not apply, they cannot be assigned to such postings.

<sup>(60)</sup> Information provided by the MOP.

require completion of an initial training course that, to date, has not attracted any female Spanish soldiers.

However, five women have passed the course for the Army's Special Operations Group, with two of these women currently serving in this group. The physical and psychological standards required are the same for both men and women in these units.

The Spanish Armed Forces consist of the Army, Navy and Air Force and the Armed Forces Combined Corps (table 4-10).

There are currently over 16,000 women in the Spanish Armed Forces, having increased from 6.6% in 2000 to 12.1% in 2012.

The Armed Forces Combined Corps have the highest concentration of female soldiers, at 19.8%<sup>(61)</sup> (Table 4-11).

Although women can now perform all military roles, the highest rank achieved by a woman is lieutenant colonel, as no woman has been in service long enough to achieve a higher rank.

**Table 4-10. Services and Corps in the Spanish Armed Forces**

Service	Corps
Army	General Army Corps. Army Administration Corps. Army Engineering Corps.
Navy	General Navy Corps. Marine Corps. Navy Administration Corps. Navy Engineering Corps.
Air Force	General Air Force Corps. Air Force Administration Corps. Air Force Engineering Corps.
Armed Forces Combined Corps	Military Legal Corps. Military Audit Corps. Military Medical Corps. Military Music Corps.

Source: In-house, based on Act 39/2007, of 19 November, on military careers.

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<sup>(61)</sup> Source: Ministry of Defence Personnel Department. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.defensa.gob.es/areasTematicas/observatorio/estadisticas-enlaces/>

**Table 4-11. Number of women by service in the Spanish Armed Forces**

Service	Women soldiers			Total	%
	Officers	Non-commissioned officers	Troops	Men and women	Women
Army	252	449	8,776	80,928	11.71
Navy	94	119	2,395	21,547	12.10
Air Force	220	252	2,452	21,537	13.57
Total	556	820	13,623	124,012	12.1
%	6.5	2.7	17	100	

Source: In-house, based on figures from the Ministry of Defence's SIPERDEF database (23/01/2012), the SIEP information system (31/01/2012) and the Army's MAPER EA Personnel Department (31/01/2012). This does not include students in training centres or voluntary reservists.

Spain has some of the most advanced policies of any country to protect women who are pregnant or who have children under one year old. Act 17/1999 allowed for the possibility of a pregnant woman moving to a different organic post to that to which she was assigned, if medical staff consider this appropriate, without losing her posting. This right has been developed and extended in subsequent legislation, so that women now have the right to take leave from their postings for prenatal examinations, prenatal classes and fertility treatment. Women are given 16 weeks of maternity leave, which may be extended in the event of a premature birth or if the baby is hospitalised. They are also permitted an extension of their commitment to the Armed Forces and one hour of leave for breastfeeding of children under 12 months old.

Finally, Royal Decree 293/2009, on measures to protect maternity, grants women who are pregnant, giving birth or post-birth who cannot attend training courses or higher education the opportunity to attend these courses again; this also applies to teacher training courses.

Spain is also a pioneer in its Observatorio Militar para la Igualdad (Military Equality Observatory), which works to achieve the "integration of women under equal conditions in all regards to their male counterparts, until the presence of women in our Armed Forces is an established reality"<sup>(62)</sup>.

<sup>(62)</sup> The Observatorio Militar para la Igualdad was recently created by Ministerial Order 51/2011, of 28 July, replacing the Observatorio de la Mujer en las Fuerzas Armadas (Women in the Armed Forces Observatory).



Based on the premise of the importance of "active participation by men and women under equal conditions, the creation of equal opportunities for men and women in our missions and institutions, and the rebuilding of post-conflict societies, is a question of operational efficiency". The Dutch and Spanish Defence Ministries are organising a "Comprehensive approach to gender in operations" course and have held various "Gender Advisor Training Courses for Operations" sessions. Spain organised two of these in 2010 and 2011 at its Mando de Adiestramiento y Doctrina (MADOC - Training and Doctrine Command), training around fifty gender advisors in the implementation of the gender perspective in missions, particularly in Afghanistan.

■ **USA** 

As in many other countries, many American women served during the First World War as nurses in military hospitals and telephone operators<sup>(63)</sup>. Over four hundred of these women lost their lives doing their duty. In 1920, the Army Reorganization Act granted official status to Army nurses.

Over seventy thousand women served as nurses in the *Army* during the Second World War (67 were captured in the Philippines).

In 1947, the Army-Navy Nurse Act created the Army Nurse Corps and the Women's Medical Specialist Corps as part of the Armed Forces, giving Army nurses official status.

In 1948, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act<sup>(64)</sup> granted women the right to join the Armed Forces as regular soldiers on active service and as reservists. Nevertheless, there were numerous restrictions on postings and numbers, which could not exceed 2% of any troop category - with the exception of nurses, who were unlimited - or officers, who could not exceed 10%. Women were also not allowed to command men.

This Act also permitted women to join the Navy, but only on hospital and transport ships, with the latter having restrictions on postings related to combat aircraft.

Subsequently the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1992 and FY 1993 removed all specific prohibitions on the assignment of women in the Armed Forces and to aircraft on combat missions. This Act also established that the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy and Air Force could establish the conditions under which female personnel could be assigned to postings.

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<sup>(63)</sup> The Army Signal Corps recruited 230 telephone operators.

<sup>(64)</sup> Pub. L. No. 80-625, 62 Stat. 356-75 (June 12, 1948).

In April 1993<sup>(65)</sup>, the Defence Secretary, Les Aspin decided to open up more specialisations and tasks to women, including those related to combat aircraft<sup>(66)</sup> and as many ships as possible as allowed under existing legislation, as this prohibited women marines being assigned to ships taking part in combat missions. At the same time, Secretary Aspin instructed the Army and the Marines to examine the possibility of opening up more postings for women. The Directive categorically prohibits women from joining units involved in direct land combat and those with demanding physical requirements or where habitability was not viable.

In November 1993<sup>(67)</sup>, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994, Congress repealed the ban on the assignment of women to combat ships.

In 1994<sup>(68)</sup>, the Defence Secretary removed the "risk rule" that had previously stopped women from serving in units with a high probability of being involved in combat. This was in part recognition of the changing nature of warfare, as there is no longer any safe place on the battlefield. This resulted in units such as the Military Police and the Logistics Support Battalion and Military Intelligence being opened to women; however, women were still barred from serving in small ground combat units involved in deliberate action against the enemy.

This regulation also included restrictions where there were habitability difficulties due to space issues, such as submarines, minesweepers, mine hunters and patrol boats, wherever units and positions were obliged to seek accommodation with direct Ground Combat Units and in Reconnaissance and Special Operations Units.

This has a permanent effect on career profiles, with 80% of generals coming from the tactical and operational branches that are closed to women: of 100 promotions to Brigadier General in 2010, only one was a woman. Only 24 of the 403 generals in the Army are women<sup>(69)</sup>, just 6%, even though women represent 15% of the total force<sup>(70)</sup>.

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<sup>(65)</sup> Memorandum on Policy on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of the Army, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of the Air Force, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) and Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs) (Apr. 28, 1993).

<sup>(66)</sup> 8 December 2008 was a historic day for the US Air Force, when a warplane crewed only by female personnel took to the air.

<sup>(67)</sup> Pub. L. No. 103-160 § 541, 107 Stat. 1547, 1659 (Nov. 30, 1993).

<sup>(68)</sup> Memorandum on Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of the Army, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of the Air Force, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) and Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs) (Jan. 13, 1994).

<sup>(69)</sup> On 23 July 2008, the promotion of Lieutenant General (LTG) Ann E. Dunwoody to the rank of general (four stars) was confirmed by the US Senate. LTG Carol Mutter, of the US Marine Corps was proposed and chosen as the first woman to receive three stars, in 1996.

<sup>(70)</sup> Although the Army's policy until 2012 was that women could not be posted to direct combat units below Brigade level that involve "engaging an enemy with individual or crew-served

Until 2012, 9% of the posts in the Army and 8% in the Marine Corps were barred to women, compared to 6% in the Navy and 1% in the Air Force. All Coastguard posts are open to women. Women detailed to other units often miss out on promotion opportunities in their careers as they cannot be assigned to units or roles that involve direct combat. When this is taken into account, only 70% of posts in the Army and 62% in the Marine Corps are open to women, according to the *Military Leadership Diversity Commission* report of 15 March<sup>(71)</sup>.

Nevertheless, in a 9 February 2012 report, the US Defense Department<sup>(72)</sup> announced changes to its post assignment policy, which makes an additional 14,325 posts available to women. The Defense Department believes that "women are contributing in an unprecedented way to military missions. Through their courage, sacrifice and skills, women have demonstrated their capacity to serve in an ever increasing number of roles, both on and off the battlefield".

The Defense Department notified Congress that it intended to make two changes to the regulations in place since 1994 concerning the service of female Armed Forces personnel: firstly, posts in ground combat units would no longer be closed off to women and secondly, a considerable number of posts would be opened to women at the battalion level. The psychological and physical requirements for men and women will be the same.

The April 2010 announcement by the US Defense Secretary that he wanted to integrate women into submarines was another significant development. A plan is being prepared to integrate the inclusion of three women into the crews of eight attack and ballistic missile submarines. These submarines were chosen based on their sleeping and hygiene facilities, so that few changes would be required.

Currently, 14.5% of the personnel of the US Armed Forces are women. Over twenty-five thousand of them have taken part in operations.

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weapons while being exposed to direct enemy fire, a high probability of direct physical contact with the enemy and a substantial risk of capture", three quarters of the women who took part in the 2010 DACOWITS report stated that had been exposed to hostile actions against their person or unit, with half having received hostile fire. Over 259,000 of the 2.2 million soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been women. As of 1 April 2011, 1,758 of these had been injured and 137 killed.

<sup>(71)</sup> *Military Leadership Diversity Commission*. Tuesday, July 5 2011. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/issue.php?issue=2011-07-05>

<sup>(72)</sup> Report No. 092-12 from the US Defense Department (2012). *Department Opens More Military Positions to Women*. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.defense.gov/news/WISR\\_Report\\_to\\_Congress.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/WISR_Report_to_Congress.pdf)

## ■ ISRAEL

Women have served in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) since it was created in 1949 and also served in Israeli defence organisations prior to the creation of the State of Israel<sup>(73)</sup>. Every year, over one thousand five hundred female soldiers do military service in the IDF.

Until the 1980s, women were restricted to support and administration (medical, personal etc.) roles. However, many new opportunities opened up for women between the 80s and mid-90s, through both an increase in the number of roles and postings available and through training and preparation for combat.

The Israeli army is the only one in the world with obligatory military service for women. Currently, 34% of compulsory military service personnel and 20% of career soldiers are women.

Although the Israeli army began to integrate women soldiers into combat posts in 1995<sup>(74)</sup>, only 88% of military posts are open to them. Small close combat units are closed to women - women are not integrated into the Infantry, the Cavalry, the Special Forces and some naval posts.

At present, 2.2% of women serve in specialist areas directly related to combat (Military Occupation Specialties, MOS), even though women volunteer for these units and 6% of women serve in technical and mechanical combat support specialities.

Half of all women taking officer training courses over the last three years have been women (55% of all officers in the Military Staff on the "Officer Training Course", 53% of officers in combat support positions and 3% of all combat officers were women). There has been an increase in the percentage of women combat officers over the last decade. Over recent years, women have achieved high rank in the Israeli Army and have successfully integrated into combat and border protection units<sup>(75)</sup>.

The IDF has modified the Women's Service Act<sup>(76)</sup> to give the same rights to male and female recruits to serve in any position, subject to suitable training

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<sup>(73)</sup> Some important figures here include Hannah Senesh and Aaronsohn Sara.

<sup>(74)</sup> This occurred when a 23-year old woman named Alice Miller with a pilot's licence from her native South Africa emigrated to Israel and sought work training the Air Force. She was automatically rejected as women were not allowed to serve in combat positions. Alice Miller then appealed to Israel's Supreme Court. As a result of the Supreme Court ruling, an amendment was issued to the Military Service Act stipulating that women have equal rights to men to serve in all positions in the Army, with the exception of posts with such challenging requirements that they would not be able to perform them. As a result, women in the IDF are integrated into some artillery and light infantry roles.

<sup>(75)</sup> <http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/News/today/09/03/0901.htm>

<sup>(76)</sup> Amendment 11 of the Women's Service Act, of 3 January 2000.

and with approval from the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. A number of changes are planned relating to the inclusion of women in all services, the creation of an Equality Unit, an increase in women in posts with responsibilities and the creation of a discrimination-free environment.

## ■ FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter we have reviewed how the role of women in the Armed Forces has evolved over time in various countries currently involved in military operations.

Analysing the information in this chapter, we notice a similarity in the female presence in the military, starting with women playing roles traditionally associated with female stereotypes. The first military women were therefore nurses, telephone operators, secretaries, doctors etc.

Subsequently, as recognised by many commentators, the motivation and effectiveness of women has resulted in them joining nearly all specialities, including both combat support and combat itself. In all these cases, the changes have been the result of demands made by women and the opening up of a traditionally masculine institution.

Over the last three years in particular, those countries that still have limitations on their posts and specialities for female personnel have implemented inclusion and adaptation policies to enable the full participation of women in all posts and specialities, including posts involving close combat. The UK has so far been the most conservative country.

This opening up of the Armed Forces to women has been slow and progressive. It has involved not just changing laws and regulations, but also changing installations, equipment and uniforms, among other things. But, above all, there has been social and cultural change - both inside and outside the armed forces - requiring both men and women to adapt to each other.

This progressive debate has not been without social and media-fueled controversy, focusing mainly on the capacity of women to perform the tasks and functions of a soldier effectively. Some of the arguments discussed have related to whether women have inferior physical conditions, their differing hygiene requirements and their potential negative impact on the cohesion of the unit.

Cohesion may be social - the nature and quality of emotional bonds of friendship, affection, understanding and closeness of group members - yet there is another form of cohesion, that of the task, a shared commitment by group members

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to achieve goals through collective endeavour. We are therefore dealing with the latter type of cohesion, the set of competences and capabilities that the different individuals in a team contribute to achieving a common objective.

Nevertheless, what is cohesion in military units? In a military culture, we could say that cohesion is the degree that an individual identifies with and is committed to their unit, as a result of their feelings of belonging, confidence, pride and bonds. A cohesive unit will therefore be motivated to coordinate the efforts of the whole team to achieve their mission. The important factor is that the members of the group should share a commitment to achieving objectives with team spirit, feeling of belonging, confidence, pride and unity. These are military values shared by everyone who wears a uniform, irrespective of their sex.

In this chapter, I do not want to go deeper into the discussion about the suitability of one gender or the other. After more than twenty years of mixed armed services, systems are being put in place to foster the design of military careers for each individual, based on their interests, competences and capabilities, subject to the standards and requirements of the organisation and, of course, under the universal premise of serving the defence of your country and all of its people.

But let us look at current theatres of operations. In current overseas missions, military women are playing a very important role that benefits the effectiveness of the operation simply based on them being female. This is building confidence and commitment to the allied forces in women in the local population in the area of operations.

The suitability of women for certain functions carried out by FETs and medics and nurses because of their gender is certainly determined by the culture of the country in which they are operating. In my opinion, this is a fine example of the effectiveness of mixed teams in which the varied characteristics and competences of the team members can be harnessed to the good of the objective or the shared goal of completing the mission.

However, although the FET teams may consist entirely of women, they do not act alone. They are preceded by their male colleagues who, because of their gender, are able to establish contact with the village elder, respecting local traditions, to get authorisation for female soldiers to interact with the local women and the male soldiers also remain on guard outside houses, providing security for their female colleagues.

Despite the opening up of almost all army specialities and units, it is still striking that the percentage of female personnel is still hovering around 13%-

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15%, being much lower than this in some cases. It might be thought that this is the percentage of women who are attracted to the military profession. However, it is likely that many other variables are involved, such as the extreme physical and family pressures of a military life, with its frequent changes of posting and location and long periods away from home on manoeuvres or operations, making it difficult to combine a military profession with family life and bringing up children.

Over recent years there have been many studies and questionnaires regarding the suitability of female participation in the armed forces, focusing on whether or not the effectiveness of units with female personnel is impaired.

At present, the debate should be whether the number of women involved is sufficient to meet mission requirements effectively and whether women are sufficiently represented in all specialities.

Numerous studies have tried to forecast possible negative effects of military women on their units, but very few have studied whether their integration into the Armed Forces has benefited the institution.

In my opinion, based on the evolution of army life over the last twenty years and leaving aside operational questions, I consider it essential to mention the advances in fostering a balance between professional and family life that have taken place as a result of the entry of women into the Armed Forces, benefiting both men and women, in Spain and also in other countries.

I also believe that it is time to abandon approaches based on differences between male and female soldiers. Instead, we should concentrate on taking fuller advantage of every team member and their individual qualities to meet the specific requirements of each mission.

**Table 4-12. Examples of units and women's posts in the Israeli army**

Battalion Signals Officer	As the officer responsible for communications, she is in charge of maintaining and running communications in the battalion and has a crucial combat role.
76th Battalion of the Combat Engineering Brigade	As part of the Combat Engineers Brigade, 76 Battalion is the only battalion with mixed units. Its work consists of real-time neutralisation of chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) threats on the battlefield during combat. These soldiers enter the heart of enemy territory together with other combat troops in times of war and help to protect them against non-conventional weapons.

334th Battalion of the Artillery Corps	The 334th Battalion specialises in Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS), and has a primary role in all artillery operations. All positions in the Artillery Corps are open to women, including combat roles <sup>2</sup> .
Combat soldier in electronic warfare	Women in electronic warfare undergo team-building military tests, advanced combat training and a half-year course in which they acquire the specific skills of their profession.
The Oketz Unit	This canine unit of the Special Forces includes soldiers of both sexes, who are partnered with dogs which they personally train and with which they embark on operational activities. The dogs – together with their handlers – sniff out explosives, track terrorists and neutralise security threats.
Aerial defence system operator	All units in the Aerial Defence System are open to women, who may serve in combat or command and control roles, intercepting aircraft, missiles and rockets. This includes manning the new Iron Dome system.
In-Flight Teleprocessor	These soldiers operate unique telecommunications devices on planes during flights in order to enable communication in remote areas. Female soldiers serving in this position operate during routine activities and during wartime. The position requires great skill and professionalism, and the soldiers work in extremely stressful conditions. They undergo courses in both teleprocessing and paratrooper skills.
Fighter pilot	

(Own work).

<sup>(2)</sup> Women serving in combat units and completing training are integrated in Israel's ongoing security operations and are obliged to continue for 12 months in addition to the compulsory recruitment period, as well as enlisting as reservists.