



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MAY 04 1993

April 28, 1993

ADM E. R. Zumwalt, USN, Ret.
1500 Wilson Blvd., Suite 641
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Dear ADM Zumwalt:

I want to let you know that today I am issuing a new policy on the assignment of women in the armed forces. The purpose of this new policy is to improve readiness, especially as we downsize the force.

With a smaller post-Cold War force, we will be expected to meet a diverse array of challenges. In order to do the job well, we'll need to recruit the best talent we can find and assign the most qualified individual for each military job. Currently, many important military jobs are closed to women, and as long as that is the case, we cannot be sure that we are putting the very best person in the job.

The new policy has several key components:

First, all of the services are to allow women to compete for assignments in combat aircraft;

Second, the Navy is to open up additional ships to women;

Third, I am instructing the Navy to draft a proposal, which I shall forward to Congress, for inclusion in the authorization bill, that would remove the last legislative barrier to the assignment of women to combat vessels;

Fourth, the Army and Marine Corps are being instructed to look for opportunities for women to serve in positions such as field artillery and air defense artillery;

Fifth, exceptions to the general policy of opening assignments to women shall include units engaged in close combat on the ground, assignments where physical requirements are prohibitive and assignments where the costs of appropriate berthing and privacy arrangements are prohibitive; and

Sixth, I am establishing a committee consisting of senior personnel officials at OSD, the services, and the Joint Chiefs to review a number of related areas, such as deployability policies and the "risk rule," that may be affected by this change in policy.

Women have proved that they can contribute mightily to the readiness and effectiveness of the force. We know, from experience, that women can fly our high performance fighter aircraft. We also know from experience, that they perform well when confronted with shipboard emergencies. And we know, from Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield, that women can stand up to the most demanding environments.

Last November, a Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces submitted its report. I disagree with several of the commission's specific recommendations, including its recommendation that Congress re-enact the ban on assigning women to combat aircraft. However, I support the key principle behind its work, which was that "military readiness should be the driving concern" when developing assignment policies. It is my strong conviction that opening up more assignments to women will enhance the readiness and effectiveness of the force.

The Service Chiefs have already assured me of their support of this initiative and process. However, there is still much to do in order to ensure that the services implement the policy consistently. We in the Department of Defense will be working this issue hard in the days ahead and I hope we can count on your support and counsel.

The steps we are taking today are historic: they will open up a range of new opportunities for women in the armed forces. They also constitute a vital part of our effort to ensure the readiness and effectiveness of our military forces.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized letter 'P' with a vertical line extending downwards from its base, ending in a small flourish.