



JAN 31 2013

## Ending the Direct Ground Combat Exclusion Rule for Female Soldiers

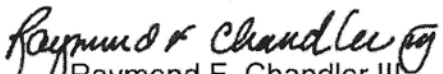
The Secretary of Defense announced the end of the direct ground combat exclusion rule for female service members. Accordingly, the Army will increase the number of units open to women and gradually begin assigning women to those units. The Army G-1 is working with Training and Doctrine Command to develop guidance to implement this important and welcome change.


As we integrate women into combat units, the Army is committed to:

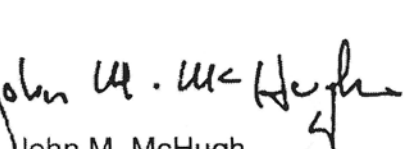
- Optimizing mission readiness and esprit de corps.
- Providing both male and female Soldiers the best and widest opportunities to succeed, both professionally and personally.
- Promoting policies that attract and retain the most qualified Soldiers in the Army.
- Ensuring that mental and physical performance standards for all Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) are evaluated objectively through independent scientific studies.
- Developing a core group of female midgrade and senior Soldiers, both officer and enlisted, who can form a strong support system for junior female Soldiers.
- Evaluating and adjusting our recruiting efforts, assignment processes, and personnel policies to sustain the envisioned composition of Army units.
- Continually conducting assessments to identify areas of improvement.

Over the last decade of war, women have proven themselves to be critical to our success in theater. This change will give the Army access to the untapped potential that our women warriors have to offer and much-needed flexibility in unit assignments and deployment rotations. We will not compromise our pursuit of excellence as we continue to anchor Army standards to the skills that are necessary to perform mission-essential combat duties.

To provide time to institutionalize this policy and establish an environment in which women can flourish, the Army will approach these changes in a careful and deliberate fashion. We will keep the lines of communication open as we move forward, and your feedback will be indispensable to a smooth transition. Thank you for your support and assistance in planning and implementing this important initiative. Army Strong!

  
Raymond F. Chandler III  
Sergeant Major of the Army

  
Raymond T. Odierno  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff

  
John M. McHugh  
Secretary of the Army