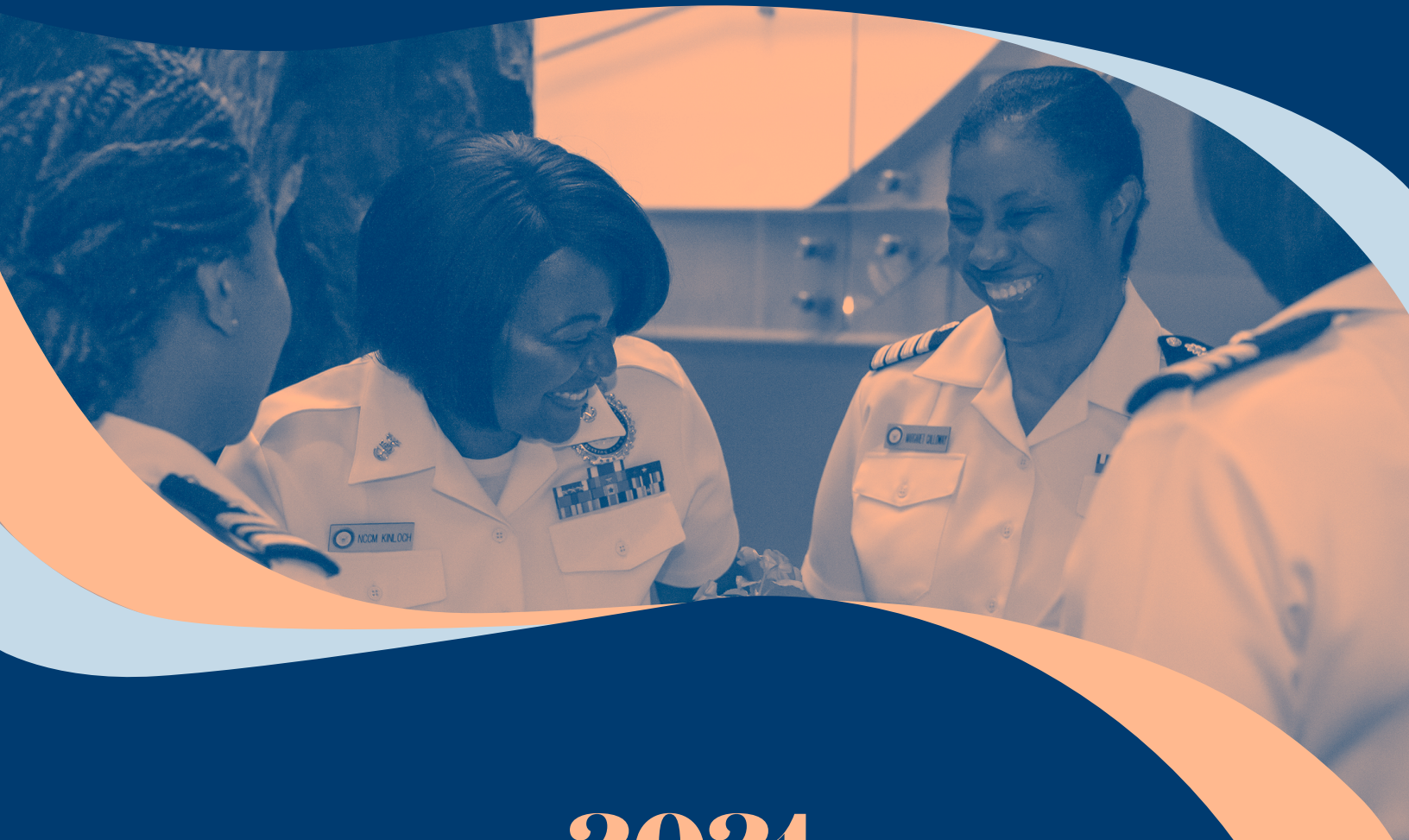


Service 
Women's 
Action 
Network 



2021
ANNUAL
REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

Service Women's Action Network is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2007 as the only organization that advocates for and supports the needs of both service women and women veterans, regardless of rank, military branch, or years of experience. With over 40,000 nonprofits in America working to serve the needs of veterans and military personnel, this is an important distinction. While women service members and veterans have benefited from many support programs, the majority of them are still designed, by default, to meet the needs of men. We're making sure that changes. SWAN differs heavily from most veteran organizations because it focuses on the financial, legal, housing and mental health needs of women. It caters to the highly sensitive interaction needed to assist women during their time of need. It is more than a discussion, an email, and a phone call to these women. Our resources save their lives and give them hope in moments when they have no one left to call.

History

In 2007, a group of women veterans who were having trouble getting their Veteran Affairs (VA) claims approved decided to organize and do something about the VA claims process. Initially working under another organization, in 2009 they broke away and formed the Service Women's Action Network, establishing SWAN as a 501c3 in New York City.

They quickly found that many of the problems that women veterans face stemmed from harassment and assault that they experienced while serving. At the time, the Veterans Administration (VA) did not recognize sexual assault as a source of post-traumatic stress (PTS) in the way it recognized combat stress. SWAN worked to support victims of military sexual assault, to hold perpetrators accountable in the military justice system, and to have the PTS that results from a sexual assault recognized by the VA. Despite orchestrating many institutional improvements, including having sexual assault recognized as a source of post-traumatic stress by the VA, SWAN continues to work on these issues today and provides direct assistance to women facing challenges related to mental health, sexual assault, VA claims and more.

In 2012, SWAN began advocating for equality within military assignments after researching the DOD's exclusion of women from more than a quarter of a million prestigious ground combat jobs. SWAN believed that excluding women from key positions contributed to a military culture that devalued women, prevented advancement opportunities and created a culture that caused service women to be more vulnerable to harassment and assault. Due to dedicated legislators, military officials and SWAN's consistent efforts on Capitol Hill, the policy preventing women from entering combat positions was eliminated in 2013. In 2016, the military services began integrating women into previously closed occupations and units.

Today, SWAN continues to press for law and policy changes to better address the needs of service women and women veterans. Our organization also provides direct services in the form of workshops, case management assistance, and speaker services for leadership conferences around the country. In 2015, the organization moved to Washington, DC where it is better positioned to engage with law and policy makers. With a focus on research, advocacy and direct support, SWAN is the leading national organization focused on supporting service women and women veterans.

SWAN LEADERSHIP



Army Capt. Deshauna Barber

Army Captain Deshauna Barber is a top-rated speaker who is widely requested as a speaker at Fortune 500 companies. She was born in Columbus, Georgia, and is the daughter of two Soldiers. Serving in the military is a family tradition. In 2016, Deshauna was crowned the first Soldier to win the prestigious title of Miss USA. She spent her yearlong reign as Miss USA advocating for men and women in uniform and continues her work advocating for service members suffering from post-traumatic stress. She is dedicated to ensuring that service members and veterans receive the support and assistance that they need. She has a Bachelor's degree in Business Management from Virginia State University, a Master of Science in Computer Information Systems and Services from University of Maryland and she is currently pursuing a Diversity, Social Justice and Inclusion Certification at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. SWAN looks forward to advancing our mission with Deshauna's leadership and dedication

As Miss USA, she spent her year-long reign advocating for our men and women in uniform by encouraging our government to provide additional support for soldiers suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The 32-year-old uses her platform to encourage us to pay close attention to the mental health of our service members after deployments and their service to our country.

Captain Barber has served her country for over 11 years and now works as cadet instructor at Howard University's Bison Battalion during her Army Reserve commitment. When she is not serving her country, she travels the world as a full time Motivational Speaker. She has made it her life goal to encourage, inspire, and strengthen the people around her.

Deshauna has appeared on *The Steve Harvey Show*, *The Rachael Ray Show*, *Fox and Friends*, *The Chelsea Show*, *Good Morning Washington*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *The T.D. Jakes Show*, *The Nightly Show*, *The Source on Sirius XM*, *The Daily Show*, *Lunch Break*, *Live with Kelly*, *Good Morning America* and in *Glamour Magazine* and *Diversity Magazine*.

MISSION AND GOALS



SWAN's Mission: The mission of the Service Women's Action Network is to support, connect and advocate for service women-past, present and future.

In 2021, our work centered on four major goals, derived from the three focus areas outlined in our mission as well as our commitment to developing a well-sustained organization in order to maximize our impact.

Advocate: Advocate for the rights of service women and women veterans in order to create lasting, institutional change to create just military and veteran systems.

Connect: Connect service women, women veterans, and organizations focused on supporting military women to each other, creating a national network of military women.

Support: Directly support service women, women veterans, and their families by connecting them to direct services, information, and opportunities to support personal and professional goals.

Develop: Maintaining organizational sustainability, transparency, and growth so that SWAN can continue its mission, increase its impact, and promote more equal and just military and veteran systems.

Barksdale Women Fly for Women's History Month by SrA Lillian Miller



SWAN 2020: BY THE NUMBERS

Today, there are **more than a quarter of a million women** in uniform and **over 2 million women veterans**; the highest number in history.

SWAN Members:
9,825

Case Management:

135 service members and veterans were referred to direct service providers

11,000+ people accessed the website, including more than 3,700 who accessed the resource portal

New Community Partners: 10+

New community partners in 2021 included corporate and small business partners, as well as charitable organizations. These include Focus For Health, Military Pritzker Foundation, The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program, Survivor, Verizon and Professional Bull Riders Organization

LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Independent Review Commission

SWAN was one of five organizations invited to consult with Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough and their deputies as they developed the tasking for the Independent Review Commission on Military Sexual Misconduct soon after President Biden ordered its formation. SWAN's Representative met with them three times, each meeting lasting at least an hour in January 2021. The completed report was issued in July 2021. It addresses key issues that SWAN's representative suggested that the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs include in the IRC's tasking.

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS):

SWAN wrote to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin asking him to preserve the DACOWITS and the vital work it does on behalf of women serving on Active Duty and in the Reserve and National Guard. DACOWITS was one of the Defense Advisory Committees that survived the Secretary's review of existing committees.



LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY CONTINUED

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

One of the ways that SWAN enacts change for military women is through legislative efforts.

Part of our legislative efforts include crafting language for legislation and communicating and educating congressional offices and staff members as experts. While SWAN publishes new legislative priorities each year, the legislation we track is constantly evolving as it moves through the lawmaking process.

Congress

National Defense Authorization Act 2022 made major changes for which SWAN has long advocated to the Military Justice System. These changes include:

- Prosecution decisions on special victims' crimes involving sexual assault, domestic violence, and certain other charges, such as murder, will be made by military prosecutors, not by the accused's commander.
- Determination of most court-martial sentences by the judge-alone, instead of by jury.
- Criminalization of sexual harassment under UCMJ Article 134.
- Requirement that the services centrally track retaliation claims made by victims of sexual assault or harassment.

Veterans Affairs

SWAN also advocated for necessary changes in support of women veterans using DVA facilities and services including:

- Halting sexual assault and harassment of women veterans using DVA facilities;
- Providing oversight of VBA adjudicators to ensure they follow Congressional law and VDA regulations when processing compensation claims for MST;
- Eliminating VHA copays for contraception;
- Widening the narrow set of service-connected veterans who are eligible for IVF treatment through DVA.



LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY CONTINUED

Public Relations/Media

SWAN constantly highlights the contributions of military women in the media, shines light on issues affecting service women and women veterans and provides expertise on women in the military. We collaborate with major news outlets like *The Hill*, *Politico*, *National Public Radio*, *Sirius XM*, and more. In 2021, SWAN issued 19 Press Releases:



Above: SWAN Fellow Dr. Ellen Haring discussing how female veterans are affected by homelessness during an interview on Sirius XM.

- February 26, 2021 – SWAN Responds to DoD’s Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault and Harassment
- March 9, 2021 – SWAN Joins Survivor and Verizon for International Women’s Day Campaign
- April 2, 2021 – SWAN Unveils Rebrand with New Website and Logo
- April 29, 2021 – SWAN Announces New Director of Communications
- April 29, 2021 – SWAN Announces Community Survey
- May 20, 2021 – Big Changes to the Military Are Likely
- June 17, 2021 – Legislation Update-MJIIPA
- June 24, 2021 – SWAN’s Response to the IRC’s Recommendation
- July 2, 2021 – SWAN’s Comments on the IRC’s Report
- July 9, 2021 – SWAN Issues Letter to Secretary of Defense Regarding DACOWITS
- July 27, 2021 – Legislation Update-MJIIPA
- August 18, 2021 – Extending Our Thoughts and Prayers to Afghanistan
- September 11, 2021 – Twenty Years Later: Remembering September 11th
- September 21, 2021 – Upcoming Events
- September 29, 2021 – Job Announcement Director of Operations Position Open to Applicants
- November 11, 2021 – Happy Veterans Day
- November 26, 2021 – Giving Tuesday
- December 16, 2021 – Congress Passes The National Defense Act For 2022
- December 25, 2021 – Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

Amicus Briefs signed by SWAN

- Modern Military Association of America and Others submitted in the case *National Coalition of Men v. Selective Service System*, Subj: Selective Service Registration, Feb 2021
- Protect Our Defenders New Ferris Doctrine Amicus Brief, Jul 2021, filed Sep 2021

SWAN Letters

- SECDEF, Subj: Retain DACOWITS, Jul 2021
- Letters to HASC/SASC with Protect Our Defenders and others in support of MJIIPA

Other Congressional

- SWAN participated in a “by-invitation only” Speaker’s Roundtable on Veterans led by Speaker Pelosi, Jul 2021
- SWAN testified at a hearing of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee hearing on *Economic Opportunity and Women Veterans*, Oct 2021

LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY CONTINUED

2021 Letters on Briefs

Congressional Legislation Support (Congressional Ask)

- *No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act*, Jan 2021
- *Vanessa Guillen Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act*, Jul 2021
- *Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans Act*, Jul 2021
- *Justice for Women Veterans Act*, Subj: Study of women forced out of the military for pregnancy prior to 1970s and eligibility for veterans' benefits, Jul 2021
- *Allies Act (H.R. 3985)*, Subj: Increase visas for Afghan Allies, Jul 2021
- *Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act (S. 374)*, Subj: Fix VBA's Comp&Pen decision process for MST survivors, Jul 2021
- *Military Sexual Trauma Retirement Equity Act*, Subj: Retirement compensation to certain MST Survivors, Jul 2021
- *Unlawful Turnaways Act*, Subj: VA Character of Discharge Decisions, Aug 2021
- *Military Dependents School Meal Eligibility Act*, Aug 2021
- *Stop the Copay Overpay Act (H.R. 4824)* Subj: In support of mental health treatment for veterans, Aug 2021
- *Fatigues Act*, Subj: Pricing of Women's Uniform Items, Oct 2021
- *Amendments to Senate NDAA 2022 Act*, Subj: Deals with protective orders and randomized selection of jurors, Oct 2021
- *Veterans Centers for Mental Health Act*, Subj: Expands the number of Veterans Centers, Nov 2021

TMC Letters Signed*

- To: SECDEF. Subj: Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts, Jan 2021
- To: CFPB. Subj: Reinstate Military Lending Act Supervisory examinations of Pay Day Lenders, Jan 2021
- Caregiver 1099. Subj: Taxes relief fo full-time caregivers of Post 9/11 Wars disabled veterans, Feb 2021
- To: SECDEF. Reconsider planned military medical billet reductions, Feb 2021
- SWAN Letter of the Willing: Elimination of TRICARE Copays for Contraception (MOAA, Wounded Warrior, IAVA and others signed), Jul 2021
- *Parental Leave Equity Act (H.R. 3122/S. 1571)* also the Parental Leave Act, Jul 2021
- *Military Moms Act (H.R. 3047)* Post-Partum Medical Appointments, etc., Jul 2021
- Possible Changes to Arlington National Cemetery Internment Eligibility Rules, Jul 2021
- Letter to the Supreme Court on *Torres v. State of Texas*, Subj: Ineligibility of a veteran exposed to burn pits to serve as a Texas State Trooper, Jul 2021
- *Credit for Caring Act (H.R. 3321/S.1670)* Act, Subj: Tax credits for certain caregivers of military veterans, Aug 2021
- *Reducing Barriers for Military Voters Act*, Aug 2021
- Letter of the Willing to the President, Subj: Endorse the Military Families Basic Needs Allowance, Aug 2021
- *Military Spouse Hiring Act (H.R 2975)*, Sep 2021.
- *Advancing Toward Impact Aid Full Funding Act*, Subj: Funding for public schools near military bases, Sep 2021
- Letter of Support for *H.R. 4350 Sec. 719* DoD Report to Congress on military medical billet cuts, Oct 2021

* All letters to Congress unless otherwise noted

CONNECT

Survivor's International Women's Day Campaign

SWAN partnered with phone case designer Survivor and Verizon as part of Survivor's International Women's Day Campaign during March for Women's History Month. Within this month-long campaign, Survivor included SWAN in its initiative "Survivor Stories," celebrating inspirational women and sharing their stories of adversity and resilience. One of the notable women Survivor featured was SWAN's CEO, Deshauna Barber. Survivor also donated 25 percent of March's product sales from Verizon.com and GetSurvivor.com to SWAN.



Military Women's Coalition

The Military Women's Coalition is a national group of formal and informal organizations that work collaboratively to serve and support active duty, reserve, guard, veteran and retired service women by uniting and elevating their voices to influence policy and improve their well being. In 2018, SWAN researched and led the creation of the Military Women's Coalition.

SWAN identified over 150 small, mostly unfunded organizations across the country that were serving military women at the local and state levels. In 2021, we have worked diligently to establish the Military Women's Coalition as an impactful and valuable Coalition for both member organizations and military women across the United States. In June 2019, SWAN hosted the first annual MWC Steering Committee meeting in Washington, DC. Through the establishment of the steering committee, the MWC has been able to focus its mission, create organizational bylaws and governing practices, establish avenues of funding for the MWC, and more. Though the MWC is a new organization, members have already seen the benefits of coalition membership in the ways of fundraising, resource allocation, connecting service women to relevant coalition organizations to assist them with the challenges they face and more. In 2019, SWAN played a major role not only in the Steering Committee and by the establishment of a basic organizational structure for the MWC but by planning, organizing, and hosting this conference.

MILITARY WOMEN'S COALITION

UNITING SERVICEWOMEN:
PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

SWAN 2021 SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Facebook: 17,380

Instagram: 3,285

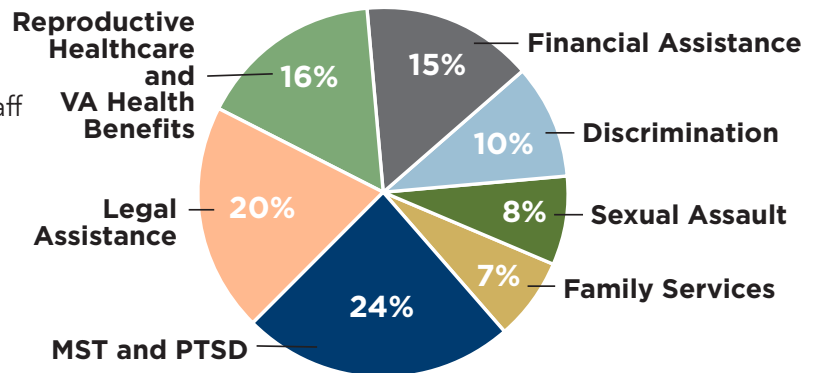
Twitter: 8,504

LinkedIn: 655

SUPPORT

Case Management

In 2021, SWAN continued to support service members and veterans with our case management program, with a member of staff solely dedicated to responding to support requests from women veterans and service women and identifying gender specific resources in communities all over the United States. SWAN responded to requests from veterans and service members related to a wide variety of issues in 2021—>



Internships

SWAN provides young professionals and students with paid internship opportunities, enabling them to gain professional development experience, the opportunity to learn about issues affecting service women and women veterans and the ability to give back to their communities. In recruitment, we give priority to candidates who have served, currently serve or come from military families.

Throughout 2021, SWAN had 3 interns, all of whom were women.

Resource Portal

Since its creation in 2018, our Resource Portal is continuously expanding. In 2021, the SWAN Resource Portal grew to include more than 275 gender-specific resources and was accessed over 3,700 times. The Portal includes resources related to gender equality, housing, financial assistance, alternative therapies, mental health, and more.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

In order to work towards our mission for service women and women veterans, we depend entirely on the generosity of our members, community partners, and charitable foundations. In 2021, with the help of our supporters, SWAN has:

- Fought to ensure equal treatment of women in the military, hold sex offenders accountable in the military justice system, and eliminate barriers to disability claims for women veterans.
- Worked to expand and solidify the Military Women's Coalition, and to expand the efficacy of a national network of organizations and individuals focused on supporting service women and women veterans.
- Fought to ensure service women have access to all jobs, regardless of their gender.

SWAN remains focused and passionate in advancing our mission. In 2022, join us in supporting, connecting and advocating for service women-past, present and future.

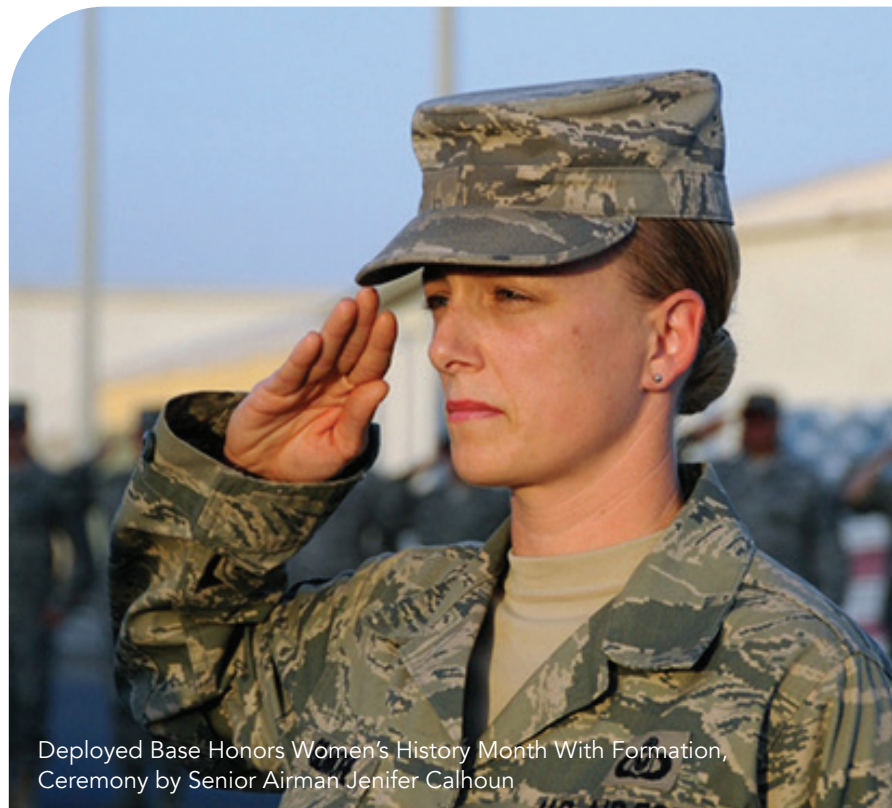
To continue your support for service women, women veterans, and the Service Women's Action network, visit our website to become a SWAN member or to make a contribution in solidarity with all military women.

SWAN could not conduct research, educate policy makers, build networks among military women, or connect service women and women veterans to the resources they need without the support of our community.

THANK YOU for supporting the Service Women's Action Network!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:

- Procter & Gamble
- MKM Foundation
- Kaufman Fund
- Stavros Niarchos Foundation
- Palmieri
- Survivor/Verizon
- Pritzker Military Grant
- Focus For Health



Deployed Base Honors Women's History Month With Formation, Ceremony by Senior Airman Jenifer Calhoun

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