



**Dear Supporters,**

The [recent report](#) from the Department of Defense on Women in the Service does not go far enough in integrating women into combat roles. SWAN is firmly committed to ending the Combat Exclusion Policy, and will continue to urge both the DOD and Congress to follow the recommendations of the [Military Leadership Diversity Commission](#) and remove all institutional barriers that prevent qualified women from having every opportunity to serve. It's unfair and un-American to arbitrarily prohibit women from doing the jobs they can and want to do to defend our nation. The Pentagon wants us to believe that the Combat Exclusion Policy does not affect women's promotion rates or career potential, but that is untrue. Military awards, honors and distinctions that lead to promotions are closely tied to combat experience. And without access to combat arms jobs, women remain at a clear disadvantage for selection to the prestigious leadership assignments that are readily available to men. Please read below to find out why our nation's service women deserve better.

Thanks for all you do to support and defend our nation's women in uniform.

Semper Fi,

Anu Bhagwati

Executive Director, Service Women's Action Network

**Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) Issues Statement on New Department of Defense (DOD) Women in Service Review**

*SWAN welcomes the removal of co-location policy and opening of 14,325 jobs, but decries DOD for ignoring Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations to provide equal job opportunities in combat arms positions to qualified women*

**New York, NY** - Today (2/9/2012) the Service Women's Action Network issued a statement on the release of a long-delayed Defense Department report on the role of women in combat required by the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act.

Pentagon officials offered recommendations to Congress for two significant changes to rules set in place in 1994 governing women in combat: occupations will

## SWAN in the NEWS

SWAN issued a [response](#) to GOP Presidential Candidate Rick Santorum's commentary on Women in Combat.

Feature on Women in Combat in this morning's [The Takeaway](#) including commentary from SWAN's Anu Bhagwati and [Paula Broadwell](#), author of *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus*.

SWAN interviewed for [The New York Times](#) on DOD Women in Service Review press conference.

[The Daily Beast](#) covered the DOD conference and weighed in with SWAN.

[The Washington Post](#) interviewed SWAN on the DOD report.

[The Washington Times](#) did a piece on rules shifting for women in combat with SWAN AP wire quotes.

[The Christian Science Monitor](#) reported that doors were now open for women in combat - just barely.

SWAN Commentary on DOD Women in Service Review in Yahoo's blog [The Envoy](#).

[BBC](#) did an interview with Anu Bhagwati on women in combat - the SWAN appearance is at eight and a half minutes.

no longer be closed to women solely because the positions are required to be co-located with ground combat units, and a sizable number of positions will be opened to women at the battalion level in select direct ground combat units in specific occupations. The services also will continuously assess their experience with these changes to help determine future changes to the 1994 rules, with an anticipated report back to the Pentagon in six months.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta directed the services to update him in six months on assignment policy implementation and the progress made developing gender-neutral physical standards. "Gender-neutral physical standards ensure all members can meet the physical demands of the duties they are assigned," acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Jo Ann Rooney said on air.

But according to Anu Bhagwati, former Marine Corps Captain and executive director of the Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), the changes do not reach far enough. "On the plus side, this is a step in the right direction. These changes will allow women to be assigned to units at the Battalion level. It will have a huge impact on the units that are most frequently exposed to direct ground combat and will open up over 14,000 positions that were previously closed to women."

"Now talented women will be serving alongside their male peers in infantry and tank battalions, for example, in skills that are critical to the unit's operational success," Bhagwati said. "This policy will also present some relief to war-weary battalions by providing an influx of fresh personnel that will help alleviate the burdens that frequent deployments present to troops."

However, the DOD is not lifting the long-standing, obsolete and unfair Combat Exclusion Policy that prohibits women from accessing career opportunities in the combat arms, meaning they can serve alongside infantry, but they can't become infantry themselves. "This is extremely disappointing," Bhagwati said. "To continue such a ban is to ignore the talents and leadership that women bring to the military and it further penalizes service women by denying them the opportunity for future promotions and assignments that are primarily given to personnel from combat arms specialties, a phenomenon SWAN calls the *Brass Ceiling*."

"Over 280,000 women have deployed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan thus far, including 144 women who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Over 800 women have been wounded. And yet, because the DOD continues to enforce this obsolete barrier on women's entry into combat arms fields, women who have deployed alongside their male peers have been denied the awards, badges, and even veterans' benefits that their male counterparts have been granted for doing the same job. Women have more than proven they are capable of defending our country during war. It's time military leadership establish the same level playing field to qualified women to enter the infantry, Special Forces, and other all-male units. It's simply un-American to arbitrarily prohibit U.S. service women the equal opportunity to excel and serve their nation at the highest levels."

"This week, in fact, the Senate is in the process of confirming only the second woman 4-star general in history of the U.S. military," Bhagwati said. "Two top generals in 200 years isn't exactly a stellar track record for upward mobility."

As required by law, these changes to policy will take effect after 30 days of continuous session of Congress, which is expected to occur later this spring.



## About Us

SWAN is a human rights organization founded and led by women veterans. SWAN's vision is to transform military culture by securing equal opportunity and the freedom

to serve in uniform without threat of harassment, discrimination, intimidation or assault. SWAN also seeks to reform veterans' services on a national scale to guarantee equal access to quality health care, benefits and resources for women veterans and their families. You can find the Service Women's Action Network on our [homepage](#), on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#).

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