Women, Peace, and Security in Professional Military Education

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Chapter Three
Background of WPS in the United States

Following the publication of international policy and coinciding with the evolution of WPS scholarship, the United States developed state-level policy and guiding documents. In 2011, President Barrack Obama signed Executive Order 13,595 establishing the United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. In 2017, the Women, Peace, and Security Act was signed into law, strengthening efforts for the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and peace building. The law ensures congressional oversight of how the United States promotes and implements women’s meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution. The United States released a national strategy on WPS in 2019 outlining four primary lines of effort.

1. Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women in conflict related decisionmaking.
2. Promote the safety and protection of women’s and girls’ human rights.
3. Adjust U.S. international programs to improved outcomes in equality for, and the empowerment of, women.
4. Encourage partner nations to adopt policies to improve the meaningful participation of women.

To achieve the goals outlined across the four lines of effort, the DOD released the Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementations Plan (WPS SFIP) in June 2020. The SFIP organizes WPS implementation along three defense objectives that include modeling and employing WPS, promoting partner-nation women’s participation, and promoting the protection of partner nation civilians. The WPS SFIP further dissects each objective and provides intended effects. Following the release of the WPS SFIP, DOD issued a memorandum outlining the guidance for implementation that included a series of data calls to document progress. The data call requires DOD entities to report on a series of indicators supporting the defense objectives outlined in the WPS SFIP. The indicators include the number of high-level commitments on WPS led by DOD, the funding expended in support of WPS objectives, the number of public statements by high-level officials on WPS, the number of doctrine changes to support WPS, and the number of training curricula that integrate WPS. The memorandum calls for DOD entities to include lessons learned to further refine metrics and best practices on operationalizing WPS.

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To date, none of the Services have implemented collective, systematic plans; most of the services and their affiliated professional military education (PME) institutions are implementing individual WPS strategies, led largely by individual change agents in leadership positions. For example, the U.S. Army War College recently signed a charter on WPS, which officially seeks to integrate WPS principles into its curriculum. The Marine Corps University Command and Staff College spearheaded a WPS community of interest, which also recently passed a charter and is currently exploring curriculum modifications to include gender analysis and perspectives. The U.S. Naval War College recently created the position of WPS chair to better assimilate WPS topics into PME and coordinate among different communities of interest. Though each of the Services has taken initiatives to meet the SFIP objectives, the actions vary and lack standardization.

In order to analyze how military Services operationalize WPS, a study of existing data in publications and archival data was conducted. Additionally, seven semistructured interviews—three gender advisors, one gender focal point, and three cultural support team members—were conducted to help inform a comprehensive WPS implementation plan. Interview participants were selected based on their background and experiences as gender advisors or cultural support team members. The interviews were 30–40 minutes long and were recorded via note-taking. Interview participants were found through contacts at the UN DPKO. Finally, a case study of WPS implementation within the Australian Defence Force using publications and two semistructured interviews help inform WPS best practices.

**Operationalizing WPS in the Armed Forces**

This study uses the defense objectives outlined in the 2020 WPS SFIP as a framework to discuss current WPS implementation efforts in the U.S. armed forces. It is important to note that since the armed forces do not currently have a codified WPS program, much of the information has been provided through a series of semistructured interviews with subject matter experts and through analysis of existing data.

**Defense Objective 1**

Defense Objective 1 states, “The Department of Defense exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force.” The WPS SFIP goes on to specify that the DOD should model and implement the WPS principles it encourages in part-


ner nations and to continue to model and advocate for meaningful participation of women. Across the Services, different initiatives are underway or have been started to support Defense Objective 1.²₇

To address the modeling portion of Defense Objective 1, the armed forces have focused on increasing the number and capacity of women within the ranks. A majority of these initiatives focus on what this paper will refer to as structural barriers—items or systems that inhibit career progression or lead to decreased retention of women. The most notable initiative is the 2015 lifting of the ban on women in combat and the integration of women into those previously closed combat arms billets. Additionally, the Services have taken a number of administrative measures that consider the recruitment and retention of women such as primary and secondary caregiver leave, enhancing deferred deployment options for birth mothers, modifying grooming and hairstyle policies, and reevaluating child-care options in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) annual report provides a comprehensive summary of recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment of servicewomen in the U.S. armed forces and is used to inform policy changes that the Services have made in the past.²₈

While recognizing that continued analysis and revision of policy related to structural barriers is essential to the meaningful participation of women in the armed forces, the research in this paper does not address structural barriers in recommendations for WPS implementation, but recommends further research on the subject.

Another way the armed forces have implemented Defense Objective 1 is through the use of gender advisors and gender focal points. The combatant commands have championed the use of gender advisors to incorporate gender perspectives and human security considerations into campaign plans, operations, and training. Generally speaking, combatant commands attempt to follow NATO Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001 guidance as it pertains to gender advisors and gender focal points. However, the commands lack internally published guidance or explanation of the structure and training associated with these initiatives. In the absence of a codified gender advisor or focal point construct, a series of interviews with current and former gender advisors and gender focal points helped paint a clearer picture of roles and responsibilities, current structure, and training requirements. Gender advisors (GENADs) are personnel whose sole responsibility is to provide guidance to commanders on how to incorporate a gender perspective into operations and missions. A gender focal point (GFP) is often located in subordinate units or staffs and supports the GENAD in operationalizing gender perspectives. The role of a GFP is usually secondary to the primary role the individual has within their respective unit or staff sections. The location

of the GENAD on the staff varies between different combatant commands, with some located in the Operations Section (J3), Strategic Planning and Policy (J5), or the Civil Military Cooperation section (J9). Three out of four of the GENADs interviewed stated that the GENAD should have a place on the special staff with direct report authority to the commander. Additionally, former and current GENADs stated that there should be GFPs within the J3, J5, and J9, as well as staff synchronization functions to foster persistent coordination.29

The training associated with the GENADs and GFPs varied among the individuals interviewed. Two personnel interviewed had completed a gender operationalization course offered by a combatant command and two individuals had not received any training due to cancellations as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions. The U.S. Army’s Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute website provides information on a Joint-Certified Operational Gender Advisor Course to train personnel. The article implies that the course was rotating through the combatant commands with a future plan of residing at one location within the United States; however, research did not discover any updated information past December 2018.

Additionally, Joint Knowledge Online offers training modules on integrating gender perspectives into operations and on the role of GENADs.30 The specific training and training level expected of the combatant command GENADs and GFPs varied greatly between organizations and lacked codified prerequisites and requirements. In the December 2019 DOD WPS overview brief, none of the armed forces indicated integrating a formal GENAD or GFP program. In the same brief, the Army specified that it would “provide subject matter expertise on WPS principles such as gender integrations, female engagement teams, and gender perspective within Army component support to CCMD theater security cooperation.”31

Integrating WPS into various Service-level PME is another way the Services implement Defense Objective 1. Specifically, the Naval War College and the Naval Postgraduate School seek opportunities to incorporate WPS into their curricula and activities. The Marine Corps Command and Staff College offered a “Gender, War, and Security” elective in the 2020–21 academic year and is exploring options to incorporate WPS initiatives into exercise planning, wargaming, and the core curriculum. As they have not incorporated WPS across all curricula and activities, at this time, PME institutions continue to develop their integration. In addition to inclusion in PME, the Services complete annual training requirements for sexual assault awareness and

29 Gender advisor, interview with author, 6 January 2021; gender advisor, interview with author, 29 January 2021; gender advisor, interview with author, 8 February 2021; and gender advisor, interview with author, 11 February 2021.
combating trafficking in persons with additional training given to deploying troops. However, there are not courses available that are specific to WPS.

The same progress can be seen on including WPS pillars in training exercises at both the Joint and Service level. The Army has expressed efforts to incorporate WPS into combat training center rotations. WPS was incorporated into a U.S. and Australian Joint exercise called Talisman Sabre in 2015, which marked the first appearance of a WPS component in a large-scale Joint training exercise. In order to mainstream a gender perspective into all levels of planning, the armed forces must include WPS training objectives in exercises and activities.

During the December 2019 DOD WPS overview brief, the combatant commands stated their intentions to reference WPS in their respective theater campaign plans. Several Joint publications mention gender and women, peace, and security, such as Joint Personnel Support, Joint Publication (JP) 1-0, which includes a section on WPS, or Joint Planning, JP 5-0, which includes gender considerations and highlights the necessity for a gender advisor. The Army is currently updating regulations such as pamphlets and doctrinal manuals as they come up for revision. Stability, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-07, includes a section on WPS that focuses on incorporating objectives from the 2016 WPS national action plan (NAP) where appropriate. Protection of Civilians, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-07.6, and the Protection of Civilians Military Reference Guide, second edition, emphasize gender perspectives and sexual and gender-based violence. References to WPS have recently been included, or are in the process of being included, in policy and doctrine at both the Joint and Service levels. However, most of the doctrine mentioned deals with stability operations or protection of civilians. In order for WPS to be effectively implemented and considered, considerations must be included in the deliberate planning process doctrine and Service-level guiding documents.

**Defense Objective 2**

Defense Objective 2 states, “Women in partner nations meaningfully participate and serve at all ranks and in all occupations in defense and security sectors.” The WPS SFIP affirms that the United States will adjust security cooperation programs and work with allies and partners to promote inclusion of women at all levels of defense and

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23 WPS PowerPoint presentation.
security.\textsuperscript{36}Prior to the WPS SFIP release, combatant commands were already considering WPS in their operations.\textsuperscript{37} In U.S. Southern Command, leaders emphasize women’s participation in the security sector during key leader engagement with strategic partners across South America. In 2018, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command started a women’s mentorship program to share knowledge and empower women in the Mongolian defense and security sector to build capacity and conduct gender analyses in disaster response efforts.\textsuperscript{38}

At the Service level, specifically the Army, an example of promoting women in partner nations is the often-cited use of CST members to train the Afghan Female Tactical Platoon (FTP) supporting the Afghan Special Security Forces (Ktah Khas). An interview with a recent CST member involved in training the FTPs uncovered anecdotal information based on the person’s experience.\textsuperscript{39} The interviewee observed dwindling support among Afghan and U.S. leadership, stating that leadership did not observe training unless there were dignitaries or political personnel visiting. The interviewee also noted resourcing issues, highlighting funding disparities between the FTPs and the Ktah Khas. The establishment of the FTP is one example of many that demonstrates a clear focus of the U.S. military to promote gender equality and participation of women in partner nation security forces. However, the dwindling support from leaders at all levels, especially as the United States looks to leave Afghanistan after current and ongoing Taliban negotiations, highlights gaps and seams in tactical, operational, and strategic level thinking on why WPS matters for security and seemingly treating it as a neglected collateral duty.

Another example of a potential opportunity to implement and integrate WPS was the Army’s development of the Security Forces Assistance Brigade in 2018 to specialize in train, advise, and assist missions. Members received specialized training needed to advise partner nations.\textsuperscript{40} While this type of unit seems to be an ideal organization to support defense objective two of the SFIP, a member of 2d Security Forces Assistance Brigade that participated in the 2019 deployment in support of Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan confirmed that the brigade’s training did not include the 2016 WPS NAP or the 2017 Women, Peace, and Security Act. Additionally, the brigade member, a tactical level leader, did not have any involvement with women in the Afghan defense or security sector and noted that gender perspectives were not a consideration when conducting tactical-level planning with Afghan counterparts. While this is the experience of one individual, the 2d Security Forces Assistance Bri-

\textsuperscript{39} Cultural Support Team member, interview with author, 4 February 2021.
\textsuperscript{40} “Army Creates Security Force Assistance Brigade and Military Advisor Training Academy at Fort Benning,” Army.mil, 16 February 2017.
gade is the Army’s key unit to support the development of a partner nation’s military. By not training 2d Security Forces Assistance Brigade members on WPS pillars, the ability to build a partner nation fully committed to WPS is severely crippled. While the armed forces, specifically the Army, have made significant efforts to support and encourage the participation of women in the defense and security sector of partner nations, there are many opportunities that can provide more meaningful and comprehensive security assistance for partner nations.

**Defense Objective 3**

Defense Objective 3 states, “Partner nation defense and security sectors ensure women and girls are safe and secure and that their human rights are protected, especially during conflict and crisis.” The WPS SFIP explains that the department will work closely with partner nations’ security sectors to facilitate their ability to ensure the safety of their civilians, especially women and girls. As part of their WPS initiatives, the combatant commands have supported defense objective three in various ways. In the December 2019 DOD WPS overview brief, U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) pledged to execute capacity building with military legal professionals on sexual and gender-based violence and human rights and integrate WPS principles into exercises with partner nations. In its premier annual training event, Flintlock 2019, USAFRICOM integrated WPS themes throughout the exercise to promote meaningful participation and to enhance the ability of key partner nations to provide security to their people, especially women and children.

As previously referenced, all U.S. military servicemembers conduct annual training on combating trafficking in persons as an online course that provides awareness on sexual and labor trafficking scenarios. While this course does not provide in-depth information on sexual and gender-based violence as it pertains to conflict, the course does raise awareness of associated issues such as human trafficking. However, Stability, ADP 3-07, has information about including gender perspectives and highlights war crimes affecting women as a special consideration in the “Protection of Civilians” and “Women, Peace, and Security” sections. During the 2019 WPS overview brief, the Army pledged to include sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific data and analysis into the Army Threat Integration Center products. Currently, the military has emphasized defense objective three in a limited capacity through data collection, doctrine, and training. Planning doctrine is a useful tool to help include and plan for gender considerations in operations. The Army could capitalize and include more broad gender considerations with regards to gender-based sexual violence in plan-

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44 Stability, 3-9, 3-11.
45 WPS PowerPoint presentation.
ning doctrine at the Service and Joint levels and include gender dimensions in training operations. In addition, the Army could expand its annual online course to include protection aspects.

The combatant commands have used gender advisors, gender focal points, education and training, and policy and doctrine to incorporate WPS and implement the DOD WPS SFIP with varying levels of success. Subject matter experts at the combatant commands state that leader buy-in is the number one factor that determines how gender perspectives are integrated into strategic- and operational-level planning and execution. At the Service level, efforts to incorporate WPS are ongoing and largely focused on PME and incorporation into doctrine. Most operational and tactical leaders have no knowledge of the 2016 WPS NAP, the Women, Peace, and Security Act, or how to incorporate gender perspectives into operations. A U.S. Army WPS implementation plan would help synchronize efforts across the Service, thereby enhancing operations and mission effectiveness.