

## The reality of combat; A change in thinking about specialties; Global Zero and the Pentagon Chief nominee ....

### AREN'T THEY ALREADY?

The few remaining military jobs that have been off-limits to women—primarily ground combat jobs and special operations assignments—will be open to anyone who can qualify for them, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta announced in January. The move elicited mostly shrugs from within the services and Congress, since women have been in de facto combat assignments for many years.

Men and women in US uniforms, Panetta said in a Pentagon press conference, are “fighting and dying together. And the time has come for our policies to recognize that reality.”

Panetta said the Pentagon has been scrutinizing the last few job specialties that have been closed to females since a 2012 decision “opened up more than 14,000 new positions to women, including positions that were collocated with ground combat units.” The experience from that move “has been very positive,” he said.

Panetta said he and Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Joint Chiefs Chairman, “believe that we must open up service opportunities for women as fully as possible” and ordered the end of the “direct ground combat exclusion rule for women.”

He continued, “Our purpose is to ensure that the mission is carried out by the best-qualified and the most capable” personnel. If service members “can meet the qualifications for a job—and, let me be clear, I’m not talking about reducing the qualifications for the job”—then they should have the “right to serve, regardless of creed or color or gender or sexual orientation.”

Panetta noted that since the 2001 terrorist attacks, 152 women have died in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have “faced the reality of combat, proven their willingness to fight, and yes, to die to defend their fellow Americans.”

The order sweeps away the 1994 direct combat exclusion rule.

The process of figuring out how to comprehensively include women in combat assignments is well along, Panetta said, and will be accomplished “in a responsible, measured, and a coherent way.” It will not cause any harm to morale or combat capabilities, he said.

Standards will be examined to determine exactly what is required of a troop in a combat assignment, and only the absolute necessary requirements will determine who is qualified to fill them, Panetta noted. There will be no sacrifice of capability, he said.

“Not everyone is going to be able to be a combat soldier. But everyone is entitled to a chance.”

He has directed Dempsey to present the final plan on how to accommodate the end of restrictions on women by next month.

Dempsey said the opening-up process will be done “in a way that maintains readiness, morale, and unit cohesion” and that “clear standards of performance” will be established for all the positions now becoming unrestricted.

He discounted the notion that Panetta’s directive signals some new milestone allowing women to serve in combat.

“We’re way beyond that,” he said. “Women are serving in combat and have been.” The Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously endorsed the plan, Dempsey said.

The change in thinking, Dempsey said, will be in turning the old standard on its head. “The burden used to be that we would say, ‘Why should a woman serve in a particular



USAF photo by Samuel King Jr.

*All doors will open for military women.*

specialty?’ Now, it’s, ‘Why shouldn’t a woman serve in a particular specialty?’” All that’s left to do is “make sure we got the standards right.”

Panetta dismissed questions about how privacy would be arranged, saying that, in the desert wars in Iraq in 1991, 2003, and beyond, “we figured out privacy.” Women have been integrated onto ships and submarines and have served as fighter pilots for 20 years already. “I think we can meet those challenges,” he said.

In the Air Force, just seven specialties were off-limits to women until Panetta’s order, and only four were closed to enlisted women. All seven are associated with ground combat roles—so-called “battlefield airmen” jobs—such as tactical air control party members, pararescue jumpers, and combat rescue.

The change will open up 3,235 specific billets to USAF women. They represent just one percent of all Air Force jobs.

Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, Chief of Staff, said USAF can now “pursue integrating women into the seven remaining Air Force career fields still closed. ... We’re focused on ensur-

ing America's Air Force remains capable and ready with the best-qualified people serving where we need them."

Part of Panetta's plan calls for making sure more than just one woman is injected into a particular specialty where they have not been included before. Dempsey wrote that the implementation plan will ensure "that a sufficient cadre of midgrade/senior women enlisted and officers are assigned to commands at the point of introduction to ensure success in the long run." This may require "an adjustment to our recruiting efforts, assignment processes, and personnel policies. Assimilation of women into heretofore 'closed units' will be informed by continual in-stride assessments and pilot efforts."

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), a leading member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, issued a statement supporting Panetta's move, saying, "American women are already serving in harm's way today all over the world and in every branch of our armed forces. Many have made the ultimate sacrifice." McCain urged that in implementing the change, "it is critical that we maintain the same high standards that have made the American military the most feared and admired fighting force in the world—particularly the rigorous physical standards for our elite special forces units."

### **“NOTIONAL” UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT**

The severe nuclear force structure reductions featured in a report of the self-appointed blue-ribbon panel calling itself "Global Zero" were simply an illustration of a path to a US military thoroughly divested of such arms and didn't constitute a proposal as such. So insisted Chuck Hagel, former Nebraska Senator—and Global Zero panelist—during his grueling, eight-hour confirmation hearing to be Secretary of Defense.

The May 2012 report—signed by Hagel and fellow panelists Ambassadors Richard R. Burt and Thomas R. Pickering, retired Army Gen. John J. Sheehan, and retired Marine Corps Gen. James E. Cartwright, the former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and head of US Strategic Command—seemingly called for taking all nuclear weapons off alert and limiting the inventory to 300 warheads or less. It also seemed to suggest that the US should proceed with such disarmament unilaterally, if necessary.

Hagel's signing of the Global Zero report put him under intense and aggressive questioning during the marathon Jan. 31 confirmation hearing. Those Senators who said they were undecided about whether to support Hagel's nomination—or voiced outright opposition—cited it as among their chief concerns, along with Hagel's supposed lack of full-throated support for Israel.

Under questioning from Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), Hagel maintained that his position "has never been unilateral disarmament, ever." He quoted President Ronald Reagan as saying "we must eliminate nuclear warheads from the face of the Earth" and said the goal is a laudable and necessary effort.

"Global Zero has been very clear on this," Hagel said. "Their effort is in line with every major leader in the world, including President Obama, to continue to try to make an effort to reduce our nuclear warheads." That reduction, however, must be bilateral and "verifiable. ... It has to be negotiated, as all our treaties have been," Hagel said.

The Global Zero report suggested taking down all US ICBMs, tactical nuclear weapons, and nuclear cruise missiles and retiring the B-2 bomber long before the end of its service life, converting the B-52 to a conventional-only platform, and

downsizing the Trident submarine fleet to just 10 boats with 45 warheads each. The report drew few fans in military circles when it was released. Then-Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton A. Schwartz said he didn't agree with the "assessment, nor the study."

Hagel told the Senate Armed Services Committee in his prepared answers for the hearing he believes "providing the necessary resources for nuclear modernization of the triad should be a national priority," and he told Inhofe in testimony, "I agree with that. And that's ... what the policy of this Administration is."

He told Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) the Global Zero report "didn't propose or call for anything." The reductions outlined were "illustrative," he said.

Sessions, however, insisted that the report expressed the opinion that although bilateral reductions are most desirable, "a less-good approach would be to adopt this agenda unilaterally. ... It does call for these reductions."

Under questioning from Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Hagel said the reductions described in Global Zero's white paper were "an illustration ... because that's the term it used at the front end of the report." He amplified that it was "not a recommendation" and noted the text meant the approach was one the US "could" take: "illustrative scenarios, possibilities."

Ayotte said she was troubled that Hagel would put his name on a document offering "what you call an 'illustration'" but which to her seemed "a significant reduction in our nuclear deterrence," even though Hagel said he believes the triad should be maintained and improved.

"I view that as troubling and inconsistent," she said.

In response, Hagel said he "won't be signing off on reports in the same way as a private citizen, obviously. I will have a different kind of responsibility if I am confirmed by the Senate. But I don't think that there's anything that also changes my position in that report."

He added that he doesn't think there's an inconsistency in his philosophy.

Sessions voiced his concern that the "vision stated in your Global Zero report, I believe, is likely to create instability, rather



**Hagel is beleaguered by Global Zero.**

than confidence and stability—create uncertainty in the world among our allies and our potential adversaries."

Hagel told Sessions, "My record has always been very clear. ... A strong, agile, safe, secure, effective nuclear arsenal for the United States is not debatable. I voted that way. I believe that." He said he would "never do anything or in any way take any action that would minimize or harm or downgrade" a strong nuclear deterrent.

"That's the commitment I make to you. I made it to the President. My record's clear on this," Hagel said. ■

AP photo by Susan Walsh