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**SPECIAL
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REPORT**

WHY GENDER MATTERS IN THE MILITARY AND FOR ITS OPERATIONS

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In July 2018, NATO allies gathered for the Brussels Summit and renewed their commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The Declaration reads:

Today we have endorsed our renewed WPS policy and action plan, which are integral to NATO's three core tasks. **Gender mainstreaming and increased representation of women in NATO civilian and military structures and in Allied and partner forces improve our effectiveness** and contribute to a more modern, agile, ready, and responsive Alliance (emphasis added).

What the Declaration highlights is the importance of pursuing the twin goals of including a gender perspective in NATO's civilian and military activities, but also to employ more women, as a way to improve the Alliance's effectiveness across its core tasks: collective defence, crisis management and security cooperation. The updated NATO Action Plan, for its part, focuses on three interrelated objectives. The first is integration, so that all NATO activities take gender equality into account and recognize that any planned action might affect women and men

differently. The second is inclusiveness, to increase the representation of women across NATO institutions, but also within all member states' own armed forces. The third is integrity, in order to tackle unfair and discriminatory practices which impede the "equal treatment of women and men in the Alliance".

In stressing the link between women and operational effectiveness, NATO is borrowing from the UN playbook. Not only did the WPS agenda emerge from UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000¹ but follow-on resolutions have identified more specific targets, like the need to increase women in operations, as stated in Resolution 2242, adopted in 2015. Indeed, Resolution 2242 "called on the Secretary-General to initiate a revised strategy, within existing resources, to double the numbers of women in peacekeeping operations over the next five years".

At the national level, NATO and UN member states have pursued the WPS agenda through the prism of their own national action plans (NAP). Canada, for example, adopted a new NAP under the Trudeau government and recently released its second implementation report.ⁱ Through the NAP, Canada has established the foundations of its feminist foreign

¹ This resolution recognizes and reaffirms that women play an essential role in peacebuilding and security efforts. It calls for women's representation at decision-making levels and in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. It also stresses the

importance of women's equal participation in field-based operations and urges for the integration of a gender perspective into peace operations and the inclusion of training guidelines for women.



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policy, which emphasizes that women's participation in conflict resolution is essential to achieving lasting peace. Recognizing that women's integration in the peace process is jeopardized by systemic barriers, Canada has pursued targeted initiatives to increase the number of women in peace operations. The Elsie Initiative, announced during the 2017 Defence Ministerial in Vancouver, commits an initial \$21 million to incentivize troop contributing countries to do just that.

Canada has also made efforts to address the vexing legacy of sexual misconduct in the military.² However, some of its efforts have been criticized as inadequate. As the [recent Auditor General report notes](#): "We found that the policies, education, and training on inappropriate sexual behaviour were not adequate."ⁱⁱ Another goal has been to recruit and retain more women into the CAF. The targeted goal is to achieve a representation of 25% of women in the military by 2026 by increasing the percentage by 1% annually.³ While this goal is laudable, the Auditor General reported that, although the Canadian Armed Forces has established a goal of 25% for the representation of women, it did not set specific targets by occupation, nor did it have a strategy to achieve this goal.ⁱⁱⁱ Diversity targets and better

training, relying on Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to inform every project, policies and programming, are intended to contribute to the CAF's attempts to change its culture.^{iv} At Global Affairs Canada, the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) has committed to advance gender equality goals with a majority of investments aiming at WPS activities by 2021-2022. Finally, Canada's 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE), states its commitment to gender equality in the force and to the implementation of the WPS agenda in its operations. SSE recognizes that women's participation has a positive impact on operational effectiveness and on the improvement of military culture. To achieve these goals, the CAF intends to revamp their Diversity Strategy, work to better integrate gender perspectives into policies and operations, develop CAF-specific GBA+ training, and improve their accountability structure by working with other government departments and civil society.

While much work remains to be done, the CAF can point to some early successes. For example, CAF initiatives to promote women's representation in the forces have been trialed. Programs such as Women in Force aim to show women what life in the CAF looks like, encouraging them to consider a military career.⁴

² Operation HONOUR aims to eliminate inappropriate sexual behavior in the Canadian military by following the Deschamps report's 10 recommendations.

³ As of January 2018, the representation of women in the CAF had reached 15.3% (17.9% officers and 14.6% non-commissioned members). In 2001, that number was 11.4%. The Primary Reserve has a representation of 16.3% women with 16.4% being officers and 16.3% being non-commissioned members. As of February 2018, the representation of women in

CAF combat arms was 4.3% (2.7% in the Regular Force and 6.2% in the Primary Reserve). Canada, "Women in the Canadian Armed Forces" (2018) at <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=women-in-the-canadian-armed-forces/izkjqzeu>.

⁴ This program's goal includes: (i) providing women with a candid overview of the challenges and benefits associated with a military career, (ii) promoting awareness about the wide range of job opportunities that are available through the CAF, (iii) instilling the confidence required to navigate the early



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The CAF are global leaders when it comes to the number of women holding high-ranking military positions (when one controls for size). There are currently 12 female General Officers⁵ and 939 (9%) women in senior officer positions (Major, Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel). As of February 2018, women represented 4.3% of CAF Combat Arms members, from less than 1% in 1989-1990 (the year women were permitted to join the Combat Arms).^v The CAF, following NATO and UN practice, have also relied on the appointment of gender advisors (GENAD), specialist advisors who are meant to assist commanders in assessing the impact of operations on women, men, boys and girls. The GENAD capacity has grown and training more of these specialists is underway to have more deployable GENADs in the future.

Has this call to action, coming from NATO, the UN and individual countries been sufficient for the WPS agenda to gain real momentum? On November 15, 2018, experts and practitioners from Canada, the US and NATO gathered in Montreal to take stock of the situation. With presentations ranging from gender training to the deployment of women in combat roles, this report summarizes specific recommendations, modeled on some of the key Canadian NAP goals of governance, training and education, accountability, recruitment and retention, as well as operations.

Our participants: Dr. Nancy Otis; Dr. Alan Okros; Victoria Tait; Kayla Williams; James Collins; Olivia

phases of one's CAF membership, and (iv) enabling women to determine whether a career in the CAF would be compatible with their lifestyle and interests.

Holt-Ivry; Kristy Kamarck; Dr. Allen English; Dr. Ellen Haring; Dr. Elizabeth Lape.⁶

Governance

In Canada, the governance pillar refers primarily to GBA+ as a key framework for policy, operational planning and missions. The participants were unanimous: GBA+ is insufficiently tailored to defence policy challenges and military tasks. International cooperation was seen as important to improve access to training resources. A GENAD network, for instance, could support efforts to share tools and training materials.

In terms of the US experience with WPS implementation, there is a recognition, which resonates in the Canadian context, that there should be a closer connection between the internal and external dimension of WPS. Internally, the US Department of Defense (DoD) and US Armed Forces need better gender integration to be able to credibly and efficiently carry out WPS objectives abroad. Militaries should reflect the populations they serve, both domestically and internationally, which means having women visibly participating, but also eliminating sexual misconduct to have the legitimacy and authority to protect civilian populations against sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings.

Another key challenge with NAP implementation is interdepartmental coordination, financing (there is no sustainable budget to implement gender in military operations), and robust monitoring and

⁵ Highest number in history.

⁶ Thank you to Meaghan Shoemaker and Col. Christopher Ingels for moderating the panels, and special thanks to Charlotte Blatt.



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evaluation to learn what has worked and what has not, and to bolster WPS efforts going forward. The Department of Defense also struggles to understand the relevance of gender equality to its mission, often seeing it as more relevant to the US Department of State and USAID. Another challenge is the disconnect between civil society organizations (CSOs) and militaries: CSOs often criticize military action writ large, and DoD rarely interacts with peacebuilding CSOs, especially when compared to their civilian agency counterparts. Bridging that gap will be critical to meaningful engagement between DoD and the US Armed Forces and women peacebuilders in civil society.

In terms of international governance, NATO provides further guidelines and directives for its member states. The primary objective of NATO's WPS Policy, Action Plan and Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 is to get all 29 countries on a minimum baseline. NATO countries who are a bit behind can then adopt the NATO standard as their own which can lead to greater harmonization over time. NATO countries report to the International Military Staff GENAD annually on WPS, including the representation of women in their armed forces. This facilitates consultation, but there is very little leverage to really push change forward.

Training and Education

There are multiple entry points for training and education in Canada. It starts with GBA+ which, as previously mentioned, is far removed from military requirements. Then, there is more specialized training available through the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations. To become an

internationally-recognized leader in this space, we recommend developing and regularly offering a Canadian version, as the Swedish course is not reflective of the intersectional approach of GBA+ and the training slots are too limited to really train big cohorts of people on gender. Canada should also develop a repository on gender training resources for easier access to training for the GENAD community (as suggested in the NATO Action Plan on WPS). When it comes to pre-deployment training, WPS is integrated in the Peace Support Training Centre curriculum, but retention of the information is a challenge given the packed training schedule. One way to overcome this would be to integrate WPS injects into other training activities, like military exercises (e.g. JointEX, Maple Resolve in Wainwright, RIMPAC and Maple Flag).

Finally, gender education and training needs to better reflect the entire career cycle, from basic training to the CFC's senior officer's professional military education system. The Canadian Defence Academy's curriculum review can help in this respect but might benefit from the involvement of external experts, as research being done by civilian institutions is an untapped resource.

Accountability

The overarching challenge here is to promote changes in attitudes. There is significant professional defensiveness when it comes to discussion of topics like Operation Honour, gender integration within the military and even WPS, where gender is primarily seen as meaning women. More examples about gender integration should be drawn from the experiences of men to dispel that myth. General



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apathy when it comes to the gender perspective in the military could also be tackled through efforts to restore trust in the fair enforcement of standards, to reduce some of the friction that inevitably emerges with ambitious organizational and cultural change. Many of those changes are often framed as changes for women, but they should be reframed as promoting a better working environment for everyone and better work-life balance for military families in general. In the US, the Career Intermission program is a case in point that is designed to allow servicemen and women to remain competitive with their year group. Career interruptions do not have to be career killers and both men and women can thus benefit from this flexibility by furthering their educations, starting a family, supporting a spouse's career, or working in the civilian sector for a while.

When it comes to sexual misconduct, these issues are often framed in terms of men perpetrating abuse on women, but in absolute terms, significant numbers of men are also assaulted. In the US, there was a pilot study using survey data on sexual harassment and assault to identify units with increased or decreased risk when controlling for demographics; by combining this information with command climate surveys and official reports, it may be possible to better understand the conditions under which toxic working environments emerge or are discouraged.^{vi} Since these types of surveys are also used in Canada, they could be utilized to better guide commanders in terms of leadership skill-building. The goal is to create a climate where sexual misconduct is

unacceptable: incidents should be rare, survivors should feel comfortable reporting and receive adequate support, and perpetrators should be held accountable.

Recruitment and Retention

New research conducted by DRDC sheds light into what women value when considering a military career, such as job security, benefits and opportunities for advancement and growth. The drawbacks of a CAF career were seen as physical risk, geographical instability with postings, work-life conflict, and negative work environment. These findings should inform recruitment and retention strategies and more data should be gathered to identify occupation-specific targets and strategies, since the 25% target is meant to apply generally across the armed forces.

Women in the CAF are concentrated into six non-combat occupations, out of a total of 84 occupations. While there is a big push to increase the recruitment of women into combat roles and to have more women on operations, this might stand in contradiction to what we know about women who are interested in a military career. When asked to identify which strategy from a list would increase the attractiveness of a CAF career, women who visited the CAF recruitment website most frequently select the option not to work in a combat role, so there should be a conscious effort to showcase trades that seem to attract a greater proportion of women already, to increase the overall number of women in CAF.⁷

⁷ Increasing growth will require attracting more women to occupations across the CAF. Research findings suggest that the CAF needs to work on two fronts to increase representation

of women in more male-dominated occupations: 1) information about these trades, women may have lots of misconceptions about these; 2) Capabilities- some women may have an interest



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Alongside this effort should be a parallel campaign promoting the roles that women are under-represented in, to break down some of the biases and psychological barriers to women in combat roles. Recruiters and military leaders should be introduced to the concept of unconscious bias for better decision-making during key recruitment and promotion milestones.

The CAF will need to work hard in terms of conveying that the CAF is a welcoming environment for women. The more women join and are deployed, the more their presence is normalized. Attitudes still act as a significant barrier for recruitment but especially for retention, where acceptance of women can be resisted and where women can find themselves socially excluded given their minority status in certain trades. There should also be concerted effort to dispel the myth of favouritism. When women get promoted, there are grumbles about the promotions system favouring women over men. But when men seen as “undeserving” get promoted, it is not attributed to their gender. Either way, there is a trust issue with the enforcement of standards and in the promotions system overall and women do not want to be seen as unduly benefitting. The CAF should recruit from the broadest pool possible in order to have the most competitive and competent applicants. Relatedly, reward systems must reward actual desired behavior. Lasting behavioral change requires long term efforts to influence values, attitudes and beliefs within the organization.

in more male-centric occupations but don't join because they doubt they will meet the requirements.

Finally, there is a lost opportunity in tapping into female veterans in various civilian fields who could be powerful advocates for the military. Working with veterans' associations as well as organizations that promote women in non-traditional employment are other promising avenues for change. In the US, for example, female veterans are accruing greater visibility as members of Congress. Beyond these heartening examples, research on female veterans paints a concerning picture. Female veterans are less likely to report easy adjustment to civilian life, have lower rates of labour force participation, and have lower incomes upon exiting the military. Because of these factors, women might be less likely to view their military experience as a career enhancer. This, combined with higher rates of PTSD and unique aspects of military sexual trauma, when compared to the male cohort of veterans, means that the system has failed female servicewomen and this follows them into their transition to civilian life.

Operations

Operations conducted since the end of the Cold War highlight that women can have certain comparative advantages on the ground. This was perhaps most visible in Afghanistan where it was difficult for men in uniform to access 50% of the population, the women, who tended to be cloistered in and around the home. Yet the argument that women improve operational effectiveness also leads to a double bind, whereby women are expected to physically perform equally to men but somehow need to bring something more to the table, that is not expected of men. Women, in this



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way, face more scrutiny in terms of their performance. Arguments about women's comparative advantages in operations can also lead to the perception that women should be pigeonholed into performing certain tasks.

Taking a broader perspective, we should recognize the physical strain that operations have on everyone. This is apparent with the high rates of injuries and disability related to musculoskeletal issues. Everyone in the military can benefit from offloading weight and the reduction of injuries for both men and women can make for a more constructive dialogue. The military might also stand to benefit from more broadly defining their core competencies. Instead of prioritizing the warrior ethos and focusing on increasing lethality as the primary success metric, alternate skills should also be recognized as useful as they are central to the military tasks of all ongoing missions. For example, the bulk of current missions are multinational in their design and, therefore, overcoming cultural barriers with allies and partner nations is essential to mission success. This requires a skillset that is not given as much emphasis as is required.

In terms of integrating a gender perspective in operations, things have changed quite dramatically in the last decade. In Canada's case, the introduction of Gender Advisors (GENAD) was announced in a 2016 directive and the CAF have been playing catch up ever since. Early feedback indicates that how GENADs are used depends on the Commander's personality.^{vii} If the Commander sees the value added, then GENADs are brought into the planning process in meaningful ways, as opposed to being asked to draft paragraphs

and provide add-on briefings to "check the box". Commanders need to understand what the role and purpose of the GENAD is and establish a network of focal points to institutionalize the gender perspective in all aspects of operational planning and missions, from the strategic to the tactical level.

NATO's guidelines are meant to assist in this process. To incorporate gender into the fabric and conduct of operations, there should be more systematic guidance in the Comprehensive Operational Planning Directive, NATO's bible when it comes to NATO, COPD and CAF doctrine on operational planning. By having clear benchmarks in established procedure, we remove the moral hazard of delegating all things gender to the GENAD, which hampers institutionalization. Gender annexes were an important first step, but can be easily ignored, so finding better and more entry points for gender analysis into plans and assessments, as well as the execution of missions at the tactical level, is a priority.

In the US, work is being done to integrate training on gender into all combatant commands to better include gender in training and military exercises. For example, the US did a bilateral training operation with Australia called Talisman Saber. Its scenario involved dealing with a near peer competitor but it included some injects that familiarized participants with 1325 objectives. The US has also integrated gender in inter-organizational tabletop exercises. Finding such opportunities for the CAF would translate into easy win for building greater gender awareness.



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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- There are existing training packages and tools to promote gender awareness but these should be better tailored to defence and military contexts;
- Relatedly, pooling available training materials from different countries in an online repository could support the efforts of GENADs and gender focal points worldwide;
- GENADs should be integrated in the planning process and should be able to contribute in meaningful ways, with the support of gender focal points.
- There should be a conscious effort to recognize that gender integration within the armed forces also improves the application of a gender perspective in the context of operations. Diversity within NATO forces is essential to promote diversity and gender equality abroad, through military operations.
- Militaries should reflect the populations they serve. The integration of a gender perspective is important to maintain credibility and legitimacy in operations.
- As greater gender awareness is being introduced, the machinery of government needs to adapt accordingly. That means finetuning interdepartmental coordination, better financing, and designing monitoring and implementation frameworks.
- Intergovernmental cooperation is equally pressing. International organizations such as NATO and the UN serve to harmonize standards of gender integration, which is especially important when operating in a multinational environment.
- A change of mentality is essential to implement better gender awareness and gender balance in the Armed Forces. Command leadership plays an important role in the treatment and inclusion of women in the forces.
- Attitudes are a significant barrier to recruitment and retention. Making the CAF a welcoming environment for women and breaking down stereotypes about women in non-traditional roles are key to a successful recruitment.



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vii See Megan Bastick & Claire Duncanson, "Agents of Change? Gender Advisors in NATO Militaries, International Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping* 25:4 (2018), 554-577.

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