



# How the Pentagon Can Build on NATO's Success with Women, Peace & Security

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No nation treats its women as well as it treats its men. Yet, research has shown (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>) that gender equality and inclusive security correlate positively with stability and inversely with radicalization. In short: gender equality is global security.

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted UNSCR 1325 (<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>), the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) platform calling for the protection of women in conflict zones, the increased participation of women in all aspects of security-related decision-making and the inclusion of gendered perspectives in policy-making and implementation. “Protection, prevention, and participation” are the 3 pillars of the agenda.

UNSCR 1325 has been supplemented with additional resolutions since 2000, in areas including women's empowerment, recognizing sexual violence as a weapon of war, recognizing the barriers to women's participation in peace processes, calling for an end to impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, recognizing sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations, and human trafficking and its impact. The evolution of the agenda has also focused on the impact of conflict on men and boys as well as women and girls.



*An Indian officer from the first all-female unit of United Nations peacekeepers stands in front of troops as they arrive at Roberts International Airport outside Liberia's capital Monrovia January 30, 2007. (Christopher Herwig/Reuters)*

The Women, Peace & Security agenda is about building a world where security can be both achieved and sustained, and 79 countries have adopted National Action Plans for its implementation. There are also 11 Regional Action Plans in place, including for both the African Union and the European Union. However, only 43% of these national plans were created with funding. That leads to a significant gap between supportive Women, Peace & Security rhetoric and the reality of implementation. This is particularly concerning, when women's participation in peace processes (<http://wps.unwomen.org/participation/>) means that those agreements are 35% more likely to last 15 years or longer.

Without funding, national governments hamstring the implementation of these plans: senior level officials aren't hired, departments operate with skeleton crews, programs that prevent violent extremism—like educating girls or preventing sexual violence against boys—cannot thrive. Without funding, a program that is a security necessity is relegated to a political nicety.

Funding, high-level commitment to and accountability for implementation, and having Women, Peace & Security mainstreamed and crosscut within organizations rather than organizationally stovepiped, are requirements for effectiveness. Some countries and organizations have done better than others. This is a field in which the United States, particularly in security and defense sectors, lags behind both NATO allies and other allied nations such as Australia. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has served as a role model for other organizations, including the African Union Peacekeeping Forces, rather than the United States (US).

## **THE US APPROACH TO WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY IMPLEMENTATION**

The US issued its first National Action Plan for executing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in 2011 during the Obama Administration, and this plan was most recently updated in 2016. That was followed by passage of the Women, Peace & Security Act in 2017, signed by President Donald Trump, making implementation the law of the land. This presented significant leadership on behalf of the United States, as the U.S. was the first nation to make Women, Peace & Security implementation law.

While the State Department has had a Women, Peace & Security implementation plan in place since 2012, an 83-page report with clear responsibilities and accountability outlined, the Pentagon has been working on it in what has been called a typically military “hurry up and wait” (<https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/hurry-and-work-dods-lack-momentum-women-peace-and-security-act>) fashion, without the resources necessary for sustainable and widespread implementation.



*Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs Anne Witkowsky meets with Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Director Col. Joseph Martin and Deputy Director Douglas Wallace at the organization's headquarters in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii July 24, 2015. (US Government Photo)*

In 2016, Anne Witkowsky, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, wrote (<https://cco.ndu.edu/PRISM/PRISM-volume-6-no1/Article/685073/integrating-gender-perspectives-within-the-department-of-defense/>), “The [Defense] Department...developed an implementation guide for the [National Action Plan] that serves as a tool for applying the [National Action Plan] objectives into the strategic, operational, and tactical environments.” Moving from that implementation guide to an actual plan with delineated responsibilities and accountability has suffered delays. Witkowsky’s successor, Mark Swaney, was quoted in 2018 as saying (<https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1461815/dod-works-to-incorporate-more-gender-perspective-in-operations/>) the Department hoped to have a plan completed by the end of 2018. That didn’t happen. The Defense Department and Joint Staff did organize a Women, Peace & Security Synchronization Group to coordinate Pentagon efforts, but most of its efforts seem to focus on discussion rather than action.

The Defense Budget included specific funding for implementing the Women, Peace & Security Act for the first time in FY2019, \$4 million (<https://oursecurefuture.org/blog/make-2019-women-peace-security>) out of a \$1.3 trillion budget. Comparatively, the cost of one Abrams tank is over \$8 million, and in July 2015 *Military Times* reported (<https://www.militarytimes.com/pay-benefits/military-benefits/health-care/2015/02/13/dod-spends-84m-a-year-on-viagra-similar-meds/>) the Pentagon spends over \$84 million annually on Viagra prescriptions and similar medications.

In the US, politicians pay attention to what constituents pay attention to, and organizations pay attention to what leaders reward. In the US, politicians, organizational leaders, and voters have been shown to have little awareness of the Women, Peace & Security platform, so it becomes easily overlooked. Part of that problem is that the discussion in the US has been largely about women and girls when including men and boys in the discussion happened 10 years ago in the UN, NATO, and other partner nations. It therefore becomes easier in the US to disprage Women, Peace & Security as “Fempolik” rather than the hard-power, geo-political “Realpolitik” that dominates security discussions.

Women, Peace & Security is still largely seen as a social justice agenda rather than a security agenda in the United States. Even during the Obama Administration, discussions were largely relegated to human rights deliberations within the National Security Council (NSC) rather than security deliberations. With “human rights” now missing (<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/05/trump-human-rights-nsc-hall-duterte/>) as an area of focus for the National Security Council, and the post of US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues left unfilled, (<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/title/as/204538.htm>) Women, Peace & Security is left with few senior-level organizational champions.

That does not mean, however, that individuals cannot take up the mantle. Conferences and presentations on the roles women can play in military and security affairs have been held for many years, including outside of the US. But they depend on the knowledge and commitment of what has been a small group of individuals, with wider commitment to enlarging that small group lacking.

Within the Defense Department, for example, commands have billets designated as Diversity Advisors and Gender Advisors. The Diversity Advisors are largely concerned with human resources: manpower numbers and whether more women and minorities are being integrated into the workforce. Gender Advisors (GENADs) are tasked with operational planning: assuring that gendered perspectives are considered in planning, policies and operational implementation. Training for Gender Advisors (<http://pksoi.armywarcollege.edu/index.cfm/resources/pksoi-publications/articles/joint-certified-operational-gender-advisor-course/>) consists of a weeklong course, supplemented by online courses. While the US course does include discussion about men and boys, policy still focuses on women and children.

Currently, however, there are no individuals of high enough rank serving as full- or part-time Gender Advisors in the Defense Department to seriously and effectively execute their task in more than a cursory fashion. Some positions are unfilled, are seen as secondary duties, or are filled by contractors or enlisted reservists. While some individuals are fully committed to their Gender Advisor positions, others take it less seriously—and because the most senior leadership does not fully embrace or understand the role, there is no inherent accountability. Quite simply, high-level buy-in in the United States is weak and individual-dependent at best.

## **NATO’S COMMITMENT TO WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY**

NATO, headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, and with numerous four-star-level commands, including Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk, Virginia, and Joint Force Command in Naples, Italy, has a far more comprehensive approach to implementation of the Women, Peace & Security agenda. NATO adopted a policy supporting the agenda in 2007 and began employing Gender Advisors in 2009—years before the UN or the US implemented similar policies. NATO Gender Field Advisors were deployed in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points are also assigned to all NATO Commands at the strategic level, and most at the operational level. NATO's Bi-Strategic Directive 40-1

(<https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/structure/genderadvisor/nu0761.pdf>), most recently revised in 2017, requires the incorporation of gender perspectives into all of NATO's tasks.

Claire Hutchinson currently serves as the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace & Security. She is the ambassador-level champion for gender consideration in NATO policy and planning that is lacking in the United States.

NATO Gender Advisors are trained (<https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/swedint/nordic-centre-for-gender-in-military-operations/courses-at-ncgm-and-how-to-apply2/nordefco-gender-advisor-course/>) in a two-week course at the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations in Sweden, then supplemented with on-going training. An annual conference of Gender Advisors is also held each year to keep the community connected and able to learn from each other's successes and failures, and a number of smaller community of interest gatherings take place throughout the year. Gender Advisors have been most successful in convincing individuals at levels within NATO of the relevance to security of gender perspectives and considerations, thereby increasingly allowing the incorporation of gender considerations into NATO operations.

Further, among other areas the Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation (SACT) Commander, one of two NATO strategic commanders, is responsible for NATO training and education programs. ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50114.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50114.htm)) Hence this general officer has the authority to ensure all individuals assigned to NATO have gender-focused training. Various modules have been developed and are offered through the headquarters. The intent is to build gender capacity and capabilities and successfully integrate gender perspective into the three core tasks of the NATO alliance and its members: collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security. Given that nearly all militaries have mandatory education requirements, integration of gender perspectives into core mandatory training and education programs assures that it reaches everyone.



NATO still has a long way to go regarding full implementation of the Women, Peace & Security agenda. More funding is needed, effective fieldwork requires that Gender Advisors have better understand of the cultures they are working in, and buy-in among service members is certainly not complete. But NATO has demonstrated a commitment to and pathway toward working on those challenges.

#### **A NEEDED PENTAGON ACTION PLAN**

The first evidence of a similar commitment by the US Department of Defense would be the appointment of a Special Advisor for gender perspective at the Secretary of Defense level, appointment of a general officer with responsibility and accountability for gender perspective on the staff of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and a high-level Senior Executive Service (SES) with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The Chairman could champion funding for operations and accountability for implementation. Without such, activities will remain nice-to-do-but-expendable.

It will be up to the Office of the Secretary of Defense to assure that professional military education includes Women, Peace & Security principles within its core. Swayne states (<https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1461815/dod-works-to-incorporate-more-gender-perspective-in-operations/>), “We are weaving Women, Peace & Security into all training activities, and into the fabric of how we institutionalize DoD objectives.” Certainly, weaving Women, Peace & Security into all training activities is meant to include congressionally mandated education as well, and mainstreamed across the spectrum from enlisted personnel schools to War Colleges. While Witkowski stated (<https://cco.ndu.edu/PRISM/PRISM-volume-6-no1/Article/685073/integrating-gender-perspectives-within-the-department-of-defense/>) in 2016 that Women, Peace & Security had been designated as a special area of emphasis in professional military education, it is still entirely possible for students to graduate from a 10-month resident War College course with a Master’s Degree in National Security Affairs without ever hearing about the Women, Peace & Security agenda. Operators cannot implement an agenda they don’t know about.

The same kind of commitment is necessary within any country serious about Women, Peace & Security. Key to convincing leadership of the importance is demonstrating that Women, Peace & Security is crucial to ensuring lasting international security.

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*Header Image: Medal ceremony for 450 peacekeepers from Benin, including 21 women, in Kalemie, Province of Tanganyika, Democratic Republic of Congo. (Marcelline Comlan/MONUSCO)*

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