

Military beginning to recruit women for combat jobs

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The military services are already beginning to recruit women for combat jobs, including as Navy SEALs, and could see them serving in previously male-only Army and Marine Corps infantry units by this fall, according to new plans endorsed by Defense Secretary Ash Carter and obtained by The Associated Press.

Some of the services predict that only small numbers of women will volunteer or get through training courses, details of the plans show. The Marine Corps estimates 200 women a year will move into ground combat jobs. And U.S. Special Operations Command said it anticipates a “small number” of volunteers for its commando jobs.

The Navy said it is already collecting submission packages from prospective SEAL candidates and could see women in entry-level enlisted and officer training in September and October. The Navy started collecting the packages last month.

All of the services say they have made required changes to base bathrooms and other facilities to accommodate women, and they will monitor training, injury assessments, and possible sexual harassment or assault problems.

The plans have been under review by senior Pentagon leaders and have not been made public.

Carter said Thursday that he accepted the services’ implementation recommendations, but provided no

details. He is expected to sign a memo in the coming days telling the military to begin executing the plans next month.

The top Army and Marine Corps generals told senators last month that it will take up to three years to fully integrate women into all combat jobs. And they have insisted they will not lower standards for the combat posts or bow to pressure or quotas to get more women into the grueling frontline jobs.

After a lengthy review by the services and the Pentagon, Carter in December ordered all combat jobs open to women. The Marine Corps initially sought to keep certain infantry and combat jobs closed, citing studies showing combined-gender units are not as effective as male-only units. But Carter and Navy Secretary Ray Mabus rejected that proposal.

Since then, the military services have put together plans outlining exactly how they will incorporate women into the male-only units.

The Marine Corps said that having about 200 women moving into combat jobs each year would mean that they would make up less than 2 percent of the Marines in those occupations. The Corps would use what it called a “teaming concept” that would try to assign two or more junior enlisted women to the same unit.

The plan notes that so far no women have made it through the Marine infantry officer course, and added that, “we recognize there may be small numbers, and the Services are prepared to handle this.”



Ash Carter

Public health: ‘We are always being challenged’

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funding for such management by \$20,000 in 2013.

Over the past five years, Clatsop County Public Health received nearly \$600,000 less than what was budgeted. The department’s annual budget has remained about \$2 million, yet expenses and salaries continue to increase.

The department has lost programs, funding and full-time positions since 2007.

The three nursing positions are split among five programs — communicable disease, general clinic, home visiting, Women, Infant and Children and family planning.

Overcoming challenges

“We try to rise to the occasion,” Mahoney said. “We are always being challenged.”

A challenge came recently when one man with tuberculosis exposed more than 100 people in the county.

Staff had to find where the person with TB had been, how long he spent in those places and who was exposed. Every one of those people had to be tested and some had to be treated. Those who were treated are almost finished with their four-month regimen of daily medicine.

Since last summer, seven communicable disease outbreaks occurred in Clatsop County. The outbreaks — defined as more than two nonrelated people with the same disease — happened in schools, nursing homes and other congregated areas.

“There is a lot of work that goes into trying to keep people from communicable diseases,” Mahoney said.

Public health modernization

Overall, Mahoney said, public health departments have successfully treated acute diseases such as influenza or tuberculosis. However, the public health system is not set up to properly treat the recent rise in chronic diseases.

“We are at a point where we



Patsylee Horeceny, a maternal child public health nurse, in her office at the Clatsop County Public Health Department.



Sheri Salber, a public health nurse, talks on the phone at the Clatsop County Public Health Department office.

have a lot of chronic diseases,” Mahoney said. “The killers now are heart disease, hypertension and diabetes.”

Each health department in Oregon is undergoing a statewide assessment, called public health modernization. The effort was born out of the state Legislature.

The departments are reviewing their own capacity, capability, spending and costs. The self-assessments will be

compiled into a plan for a public health modernization bill in the 2017 session.

“We are rating ourselves on all of these various areas,” Mahoney said.

The result of modernization will help departments understand the resources they have and need while looking toward the future. The idea is that every health department should have the same basic capabilities.

One need Mahoney sees

for the county is an epidemiologist, a professional who studies patterns, causes, and effects of health and disease in a population.

Community support

Moving forward, Mahoney said, a key to success for public health is working with the community. Public health plans to continue partnering with nonprofits, hospitals and other organizations.

Mahoney is also working with the county through the budget process. He is emphasizing that funding prevention programs is the most efficient use of funds. For every dollar spent on prevention, Mahoney said, it saves \$5.60 in health care costs.

Clatsop County Commissioner Sarah Nebeker, who serves on the county’s Human Services Advisory Council, said education and an open dialog about health should be a priority for the community.

“I would like to see far more funding for these programs,” Nebeker said. “Our staff works very hard to do the best they can and meet as many needs as possible.”

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