



For Immediate Release
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Women Veterans Tell their Stories of Service in Today's Military

COLUMBUS – A panel of women veterans who served during the time of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will tell their stories in a panel discussion sponsored by the Ohio Department of Veterans Services in honor of Women's History Month. The panel will be held Tuesday, March 18, at 10:30 a.m. in the Grant Hearing Room of the Ohio Statehouse.

Women today make up over 14 percent of America's military. Over 60,000 women veterans of all eras reside in Ohio. They have served with distinction in every war in a variety of capacities, mainly support or medical roles, and became casualties or prisoners of war.

Beginning in the 1980's, military specialties previously closed to women were opened that put them much closer to direct combat, and their roles expanded during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Today, women serve as pilots and in combat support units that have led to them being directly engaged in the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. This involvement has led recently to the lowering of barriers to women serving in direct combat positions, such as infantry and special operations. The U.S. military is currently studying the most effective ways to integrate women into these positions.

The panelists are veterans of America's most current wars. The discussion will center on their personal motivations toward their military, their experiences in training and in war, and their views on women in direct combat roles.

Five distinguished women will serve on the panel:

- Petty Officer Denise Davidson is originally from east Texas, but has served on active duty in the Coast Guard since 2009. Her first permanent duty assignment was to the Coast Guard Station in Destin, Florida. There she qualified as both a boat crewmember and a boarding team member, and participated in numerous search

and rescue and law enforcement operations. She later served in New Orleans and trained as a Marine Science Technician in Yorktown, Virginia. Currently, she is assigned to the Marine Safety Detachment in Cincinnati. Her unit's responsibilities include search and rescue, homeland security, port safety, security, law enforcement, vessel inspection, waterways management and environmental protection.

- Veronica Anne Minnefield of Columbus is an "Army Brat" who retired from the Navy in 2011 after a total of 27 years of service both as an enlisted sailor in grades E-1 to E-7 and as an officer, from Chief Warrant Officer Two to Chief Warrant Officer Four. She is trained in a variety of fields, including telecommunications, administration, security and law enforcement. She has served at several stateside locations as well as overseas on Bahrain, England, France, Germany, Japan, Korea and Scotland. From 2008-2009, she served as the Equal Opportunity Officer, Training Officer and Security Manager for Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group Forward INDIA in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. She retired as Chief Warrant Officer 4 in 2011. She holds two bachelor's degrees from Ball State University, a master's degree from Anderson University, and is currently pursuing a doctorate from the University of Phoenix. Today she serves as Assistant District Director of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs in the Columbus District Office.
- Monica Nicholson of Columbus is an active duty member of the Marine Corps who enlisted in 2007 and served in Japan, California and Washington, D.C. She also served a six-month tour in Afghanistan in 2012. During her deployment, she was a member of the Female Engagement team. She was also a team leader who was responsible for counterinsurgency operations as her unit moved from one forward operating base (FOB) to another in support of different infantry units. Currently, she is attending The Ohio State University in pursuit of a bachelor's degree and a commission as a Marine Corps Officer.
- Sheila L. Pryor of Mansfield is a Master Sergeant who currently serves as the Information Resource Manager of the 179th Airlift Operations Flight, Ohio Air National Guard. She has been a member of the Ohio Air National Guard since 1990, working in the administrative field. Prior to her assignment to the 179th, she worked as a civilian fitness instructor and in newspaper advertising. She is also pursuing a bachelor's degree at North Central State College. She deployed with the 179th to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, in 2010.
- Susan Skrzynski of Youngstown, a veteran of 25 years in the Army from 1982 to 2007. She served in Panama, Alaska, Japan, Germany and finished her career

with a 15-month tour in Iraq, retiring as a Sgt. 1st Class (E-7). Her duty assignments include unit clerk, legal clerk and construction supervisor. In Iraq, she was her unit's Headquarters Platoon Sergeant as well as the Operations NCO. In this capacity, she was responsible for coordinating all construction activities in-theater. She holds a bachelor's degree from Youngstown State University. Currently, she is the Executive Director of the Mahoning County Veterans Service Commission.

The stories of these veterans will paint a picture of different types of wartime service during a time of frequent deployments for the military, as well as of the unique challenges faced by women in completing that service. The discussion will be an informative and insightful look at the vital role played today by a group of veterans who have served with pride and honor.

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