

# Navy Policy Will Allow Women To Serve Aboard Submarines

Story Number: NNS100428-31

Release Date: 4/29/2010 6:35:00 AM

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13 / 13

## From Commander, Submarine Forces Public Affairs

NORFOLK, Va (NNS) -- The Department of the Navy has announced a policy change that will allow women to serve on submarines. The change was considered by Congress after Secretary of Defense Robert Gates formally presented a letter to congressional leaders Feb. 19, 2010 notifying them of the Department of Navy's desire to reverse current policy of prohibiting submarine service to women.

"There are extremely capable women in the Navy who have the talent and desire to succeed in the submarine force," said the Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy. "Enabling them to serve in the submarine community is best for the submarine force and our Navy. We literally could not run the Navy without women today."

On July 28, 1994, Congress was notified of policy changes to expand the number of assignments available to women in the Navy. At that time, opening assignments aboard submarines to women was deemed cost prohibitive and assignments on submarines remained closed. Currently, women make up 15 percent of the active duty Navy – 52,446 of 330,700. Integrating women into the submarine force increases the talent pool for officer accessions and subsequently the force's overall readiness, ensuring that the U.S. Submarine Force will remain the world's most capable for ensuing decades.

"The young women that have come up to me since we announced our intention to change the policy have such great enthusiasm," said Adm. Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations. "Knowing the great young women we have serving in the Navy, as a former commanding officer of a ship that had a mixed gender crew, to me it would be foolish to not take the great talent, the great confidence and intellect of the young women who serve in our Navy today and bring that into our submarine force."

"Today, women earn about half of all science and engineering bachelor's degrees," said Vice Adm. John J. Donnelly, Commander, Naval Submarine Forces. "There are capable women who have the interest, talent, and desire to succeed in the submarine force. Maintaining the best submarine force in the world requires us to recruit from the largest possible talent pool."

Implementing the policy change will begin by assigning three female officers in eight different crews of guided-missile attack (SSGNs) and ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). The assignments involve two submarines on the East Coast and two on the West Coast, each of which is supported by a Blue and Gold crew. More living space is available aboard these platforms which will require no modification, permitting the Navy to move quickly on integrating female officers in submarines.

"We need to open up the aperture for submarine officer selection to maintain our current selectivity," said

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091106-N-9531K-003 GROTON, Conn. (Nov. 6, 2009) Lt. Thomas Belchik trains Midshipman 1st Class Elizabeth Byers, a U.S. Naval Academy Dolphin Club member, on a Los Angeles-class submarine crew trainer during a visit to the Naval Submarine School, Groton, Conn. (U.S. Navy photo by William Kenny/Released)

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Rear Adm. Barry L. Bruner, Commander, Submarine Group Ten and leader of the Women in Submarines Task Force. "The key to making this significant change happen successfully will be correctly carrying out the plan and also ensuring that we educate the force and their families."

SSGNs provide the Navy with an unprecedented combination of strike and special operation mission capability within a stealthy, clandestine platform, while SSBNs are specifically designed for extended strategic deterrent patrols. There are currently 14 SSBNs and four SSGNs in the Navy's inventory, each with two crews assigned.

The female officers would be assigned after completing the 15-month submarine officer training pipeline, which consists of nuclear power school, prototype training, and the Submarine Officer Basic Course. The SSBNs are billeted for 15 officers and 140 enlisted, while the SSGNs have a crew allotment of 15 officers and 144 enlisted.

"We have created a well-thought-out plan to phase in the female officers to the selected SSGN and SSBN submarine crews," added Donnelly. "Enabling these bright and talented female officers to serve will be a great asset to our submarine force, our Navy, and the strength of our military."

For more news from Commander Submarine Force visit [www.navy.mil/local/sublant](http://www.navy.mil/local/sublant).


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5/15/2010 12:49:00 AM

A sad day for the silent service... Thank God the US Government had more sense during WWII when this was more serious. It's easy to play social engineering games with our national defense today when there is no real formidable enemy to be concerned about... Oh, wait... I forgot about China... I give them 20-30 years before they're bullying the US around with their economic might and forth coming military might. I wonder how this will effect battle readiness? negatively I'm will... [->More](#)

Sam, Arizona

5/13/2010 9:56:00 PM

I do not believe Female Navy Officers should be training to serve on submarines. These are war ships which are deployed for six months or more at a time. The work is intense and needs suburb vigilance and shipmates do not need the distraction of women being present. Quarters are tight and limited. Undoubtedly, there would be pregnancies occurring requiring the assistance of someone trained in labor and delivery. Please reconsider the policy. Annabelle R. Humphrey

Annabelle R. Humphrey, Wisconsin

5/11/2010 1:59:00 AM

We already have women serving the same roles onboard nuclear aircraft carriers and have been for years. It will not make a difference whether women are under water or on the surface. Either way, we are all still miles away from shore for months at a time. As a nuclear prototype instructor where we train enlisted/officer men and women to stand watch in a submarine engine room, I have no doubt that women can do the same job on a submarine as they already do on our nuclear carriers.

Dino, California

5/10/2010 11:35:00 PM

For those of you that said women don't belong on ships or subs because they get pregnant, well it takes two to tango, shipmate! It's not just the woman to blame. I say good on us for serving our country and being out to sea, when can senior enlisted females get on subs? I would love to serve on one.

FCC(SW) Marsolais, Virginia

5/10/2010 1:28:00 PM

Put them on a all female submarine, things will be fine, mix them in with the males your asking for trouble, 6 months or so under the water, hormones are going to get wild and pregnancies will occur.

Mike, Asia

5/10/2010 7:44:00 AM

I do not think that women should be allowed on ships or submarines. The reason being is that the are out to sea for six months or more at one time. To do this, you are asking for trouble. What will you say and do when a married man or woman become more than just shipmates and the woman comes up pregnant? You really need to use your head here.

Judy Hubbard, USA

5/6/2010 1:49:00 AM

Well that's great for female officers, but what about us Senior enlisted females who would jump at the chance to serve on a sub? So is that going to take another 20 years?

Anonymous, Africa

5/5/2010 6:35:00 PM

I really had my doubts years ago about women onboard Navy warships and a submarine is not a boat no matter what nostalgia you through at me. Call them what they are. (Navy warships) I am an old guys now, but women have proven to me that they make great Navy pilots and it was a shame what the Navy did on the first fatality of a women on a carrier, making it look like her gender played a role in the accident. Lets get the women on submarines. Boats have paddles.

Bill Jamieson, Ohio

5/5/2010 1:06:00 AM

As a former bubblehead, I think it's about time for women to serve on boats! I was on a fast boat, and there were usable quarters to have berthed females without any problems from the men. Give us a break; duty on a boat is time consuming; so much to do and never enough time to do it! Who has time to think about causing "problems" with females? Good on ya!

DocSki, California

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