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Women in the Canadian Armed Forces

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WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

AIM

1. In this service paper, the focus will be on women in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in terms of recruitment and retention, and the reasons and obstacles that prevent achieving the desire of the Canadian Armed Forces to increase the proportion of women in the ranks of the various branches to reach a rate of no less than 25%.
2. Some possible solutions will be presented in addition to comparing this with the process of recruiting and ‘retaining women’ in the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and taking the lessons learned from the two experiences.

INTRODUCTION

3. Women in CAF have played important roles and contributed significantly to the fulfillment of many key tasks and roles. This is due to the long participation of women in the ranks of the CAF since nearly a hundred years ago.
4. Canada was one of the first countries to encourage the recruitment of women in its ranks, as women have played pivotal roles since that time. In achieving security, peace and defending Canada, the Canadian government remains ambitious to give more opportunities to women in the armed forces to promote and consolidate the concepts of diversity and equality.¹
5. The Canadian government is trying to reach a representation of 25% of women in the ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces, by 2026, but so far, according to the statistics published on the Canadian government website, the percentage has not exceeded 16.3%.²
6. Statistics indicate rates of women's representation among officers and non-commissioned members (NCMs) in the Navy, Army, and Air Force roles in the Regular Forces and the primary Reserve. Total Army members is 13.80%, total Air Force members is 20.10%, total Navy members is 20.50%, total Regular Force and Primary Reserve members is 16.3%.³
7. Figures showed that nearly 50 percent of women in the Canadian Armed Forces work in nursing, various medical professions, in logistics, as supply technicians, cooks, and in administration support.⁴

¹ Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.” (Ottawa – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces -March 7, 2017)

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces.html> (2022).

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces.html> (2022).

⁴ Ibid., 5.33.

DISCUSSION

History Background

8. Women began working in the Canadian Armed Forces since 1920, and they were working in the nursing profession until 1930, and representation at that time was not great, but the number of women increased with the beginning of World War II. By 1945, the number of nursing sisters reached 4480 and they served in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and in the medical services of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). and the need for women became more than ever before, therefore, women were taking on new jobs and roles that previously belonged to men and were not performed by women in any way ⁵.

9. In 1941, 45,423 women joined the armed forces and they did logistical and some administrative work, which expanded the opportunity to send men to battle, women performed the roles that were previously performed by men, which led to a better strengthening of the battlefield, in the year 1954-1955, the RCN, the RCAF and the Canadian Army began to increase the number of women, although the numbers were few, but it was acceptable at that time.⁶ After that period, the number of women began to gradually increase, especially after the “1971 Royal Commission Decision on the Status of Women and the 1989 Canadian Human Rights Commission Decision”.⁷ The desired target is 1 woman out of 4 people across all occupations in CAF by 2026, We note that there has been an increase in the number of women joining CAF from 11.4% to 16.3% from 2001 to 2022. We conclude from this that there is a reasonable increase, and this certainly indicates that if the appropriate conditions and desire are provided by the government and the Canadian Armed Forces, and appropriate policies are developed and implemented accurately with the availability of promotion and media for this, then the desire of women to join CAF will be greater.

Reasons that reduce women's desire to join CAF

10. Although the job through CAF provides many privileges and secures safe living conditions, there are, on the other hand, many reasons why some women do not want to work in the armed forces. In general, women's needs are different from men's needs, and some women have their own reasons, but these issues revolve around the inability of some women to create a balance between work and their ability to take care of their children or elderly parents and their inability to be physically fit for some professions within the armed forces. There are also other reasons related to the CAF environment that contribute significantly to the unwillingness of women to join the service in the CAF. Among them are sexual misconduct and sexual harassment, as well as issues of geographic instability, pregnancy leave, child custody, and spousal employment⁸.

11. All women consider women's unwillingness to join military service to be normal as a result of women's feeling of the need for stability and their reluctance to accept risks that may affect their private lives. They also believe that military service will keep them away from their homes and

⁵ Babbara Dundas, and ROGER SARTY “Women in the Military.”(Historica Canada,2014).

⁶ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces.html> (2022).

⁷ Ibid.,

⁸ Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.” (National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces 6 March, 2014), Project number: BG-14 006.

children, especially since women still largely do their responsibilities and do not depend on men for it. On the other hand, women fear sexual assault, and this is what the media promotes. They also claim that new women are sexually assaulted, threatened and intimidated. One report also claimed that women are subjected to sexual exploitation because men do not want women to be with them, which makes them practice a policy of intimidation against them.⁹ There are also other reasons for women's lack of interest in CAF such as increasing age at childbearing, changes in population diversity, increasing number of female soldiers with children, increasing number of female immigrants and the changing nature of conflicts¹⁰.

Recruitment and Retention Strategies in the CAF

12. The strategies that were created were not able to make women want to enlist in a way that helped them join without fears. Women still feel afraid of the environment because the policies are still old and not sufficient to make them flexible through which women can create a balance and ensure the performance of their work at the same time with balance with their family life. One of those old policies is the "one size fits all" policy that forbids women of some privacy at work and make her completely equal to a man. Therefore, there is a need to amend some policies in line with women's desires, considering observations and considering all the reasons that prevent women from achieving their full desire to be employed and work appropriately. In addition to spreading and educating women wishing to join the military service through programs that explain the privileges and work that women can perform, the advantages of each job, and its physical and intellectual work and psychological requirements. A strategy will also be implemented that will enable the Canadian Armed Forces to retain numbers currently in service.¹¹

13. CAF relies on its strategy to encourage the employment of women in the media, television programs and through social media to raise awareness and educate women about job opportunities in CAF.¹² Of course, these measures related to amending policies, studying every detail by experts, and guarantees of correct implementation contribute directly to increasing the number of women wishing to enlist, in addition to keeping women currently within CAF.

Recruiting Women in the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF)

14. The recruitment of women into the Jordanian army as teachers in military schools began in 1950, and the numbers were very few. In 1962, the Faculty of Nursing was established, where it was more accepted, and the first batch of nurses graduated in 1965. The number of graduate nurses was 8 nurses, and they were granted the rank of Lieutenant.¹³ In order to encourage female students to join. In subsequent years, the demand for admission to the college increased.

⁹ Noémi Mercier and Alec Castonguay, "Our Military's Disgrace," *Maclean's*, 16 May 2014.

¹⁰ T.M.Brown, "Changing the Unchangeable: Recruitment and Retention of Women in the Canadian Military." (Exercise Solo Flight Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2014),

¹¹ Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence." (2016 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016)

¹² Women in the Canadian Armed Forces." (Ottawa – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces -March 7, 2017).

¹³ The role of women in Jordan Armed Forces." (NATIONAL REPORT JORDAN ARMED FORCES 2006).

15. With the passage of time, some issues emerged that led to the need to establish a special directorate concerned only with the care of women and the care of their affairs in the armed forces it called Directorate of Women's Affairs. This was done in 1995 in order to enable women to work in the Jordanian Armed Forces.¹⁴ This directorate carries out many duties related to the affairs of recruiting women into the armed forces, overcoming the difficulties in front of that, following up the work of women within the units of the armed forces, ensuring the creation of a suitable environment for women's work, and making sure that equality between men and women is achieved in the armed forces.¹⁵ And improving the quality of training women receive in the Jordanian Armed Forces and increasing the percentage of female soldiers (officers, non-commissioned officers and female recruits) by opening the door to recruitment.

16. Many issues that women were suffering from have been resolved, such as giving them maternity leave for a period of 90 days and equal salaries, and in many cases a woman's salary is higher than a man's salary in some workplaces if she passes some courses or promotions as well as the period of military service to achieve equality.

17. The General Command of the Jordanian Armed Forces set a goal of raising the percentage of women to work in field units by 3%, and began by giving strong authority to the Directorate of Women's Affairs to work and overcoming difficulties to achieve this. Some statistics indicate that the percentage of women in the Jordanian Armed Forces is 17.3%. but in fact, Civilian workers and female medical and nursing workers constitute nearly 90 % of the total number of women working in the Jordanian Armed Forces.¹⁶

18. The following fields are the most preferred for women to work in the Jordanian Armed Forces, which are the medical, administrative and engineering professions, and subjects related to information technology, in addition to some women who wish to work in the Military Police and the Royal Guard as a bodyguard for princesses.¹⁷

19. Many women want to join the armed forces because of their desire to serve the country, but due to the nature of the Jordanian Arab culture, women are directly responsible for housework and raising children. Some women leave military service after marriage, so the preferred work for women in the armed forces is in the medical field because of the privileges it offers that suit the nature of women and their role in Jordanian society.¹⁸

20. There are a number of aspects related to the nature of Jordanian society and religious norms, and the armed forces have worked to take that into account. For example, allowing women to choose the appropriate dress for themselves, and special facilities and dining halls have been established for women. Transportation is sent to secure transportation from home to work and back home. As for sexual harassment, there is no fear of it, because the armed forces imposed harsh penalties on any case related to sexual harassment, up to 7 years in prison. Also, all the policies of the armed forces related to this aspect are derived from the Islamic religion and from the Arab customs that maintain

¹⁴ Ibid., 1. The first citation has to be cited.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶ <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/87367>

¹⁷ Jumana Kawar, "Women in International Security: Jordanian Women's Evolving Role in the Armed Forces." (WIIS Global, 2017), http://wiisglobal.org/2017/11/28/jordanian-womens-evolving-role-in-the-armed-forces_

¹⁸ History of Women in the Jordan Armed Forces."

https://www.jaf.mil.jo/Contents/Woman_in_Army_forcesar.aspx#.WcAv1bYrKi4

the lack of direct contact with women, and therefore sexual harassment is something that is not to be feared, and has not been violated.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

21. Canada is a pioneer in recruiting women and achieving equality between men and women in military service, one of the first countries to do so almost one hundred years ago. Women also contributed to building and developing the Canadian Armed Forces, and women participated in peace and security operations around the world.

22. The Canadian government seeks to reach a percentage of women of up to 25% by 2026 and is striving to reach this number, but it seems that this needs more work and a solution to all the problems facing women working in the armed forces.

23. Most issues and difficulties as in the whole world, are related to the family and raising children, but specifically Canada has some exceptions related to the vast area that exposes women to family instability due to the possibility of moving to new work sites, and this is a very important aspect, in addition to issues of women's fear of sexual harassment.

24. Looking at the Jordanian experience, we find that there are differences related to strict Islamic customs and traditions that helped the armed forces remove fears of sexual assaults, which helped attract women to work in the medical field and other fields that were mentioned, on the other hand, these customs and traditions can be considered as obstacle for the armed forces to attract women to work in field units that are not permitted by religious customs and traditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

25. Some of the recommendations that will be mentioned may be useful in order to achieve the goal of reaching 25% of women in CAF.

a. The role of the media is important, whether in promoting the recruitment of women in an appropriate way through which women can be encouraged to join the military service to serve their country, and also to not publish any news related to sexual misconduct without verifying it, so CAF must task specialized departments to follow up on that.

b. Women who wish to join the military service must be made aware of the nature of work and its physical and psychological requirements, and this helps reduce discharge issues at the beginning of training.

c. Continue to explore and develop new enrollment support initiatives, such as 'try-before-you-buy' and mentorship programs.²⁰

¹⁹ Jumana Kawar, "Women in International Security: Jordanian Women's Evolving Role in the Armed Forces." (WIIS Global, 2017), <http://wiisglobal.org/2017/11/28/jordanian-womens-evolving-role-in-the-armed-forces/>.

²⁰ Ibid., 7.

d. Implement decisive measures and deterrent penalties related to sexual misconduct against women which should include maximum penalties of imprisonment and removal from military service. This policy was successfully implemented by the Jordanian Army, but it must be developed in line with CAF policies.

e. The CAF should benefit from the experiences of other militaries in NATO and the US Army, as many of these militaries have achieved good ratios of recruiting and retaining women.

f. The CAF should establish specialized directorates to look into women's problems, identify their needs, and work to solve them in every way, this practice was applied in the Jordanian army and achieved good results.

26. Finally, the goal that the government seeks to achieve by recruiting and retaining women in the Canadian army is an ambitious plan and a source of pride for all Canadians, but challenges must be faced, all obstacles overcome, and creative solutions found.

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