

SPEECH

International Women's Day Written Message

March 8, 2016

As written by Secretary of Defense Secretary of Defense Ash Carter
Washington DC



Today is International Women’s Day, a moment to celebrate the contributions and achievements of women around the world from our past and present. From Margaret Corbin’s heroism during the American Revolution, to the first Navy WAVES during World War II, to the first women soldiers who graduated from the elite Army Ranger School last year, women have been serving, fighting, and contributing to the security and prosperity of our great nation since its founding, and continue to do so today.

The Department of Defense must continue to be open and inclusive as we strive to bring in America's best talent, including from our extraordinary community of women, who make up more than 50 percent of the American population. To succeed in our mission of national defense, we cannot afford to cut ourselves off from half the country’s talents and skills – we have to take full advantage of every individual who can meet our high standards.

That’s why I recently announced that DoD is opening all military occupations and positions to women. Going forward, this will enable our military to better harness the skills and perspectives that talented women have to offer.

We’ve also made other important strides to empower women around the globe. Through the implementation of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, DoD is supporting programs aimed at advancing women’s inclusion in peace building and conflict prevention processes, and addressing the impact of violence and conflict on women and girls. Through courses and seminars hosted by DoD’s regional centers and geographic combatant commands, we encourage our friends and allies to expand the recruitment and retention of women in their security sectors and the incorporation of gender perspectives into their peace and security policy. Also, in training partner militaries in peacekeeping operations, our forces help equip them to better prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

Today and every day, let us pledge to continue our work to advance the status of women and girls worldwide, and to build the future strength of the finest fighting force the world has ever seen by harnessing the talents, skills, and perspectives of 100 percent of America’s population.

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