

CHARRTS No.: HOG-01-001
House Government Reform Committee
Hearing Date: February 24, 2010
Subject: Sexual Assault in the Military Part IV: Are We Making Progress?
Congressman: Congressman Tierney
Witness: Mrs. McGinn
Question: #1

Question: During the hearing entitled, "Sexual Assault in the Military Part IV: Are We Making Progress?," held before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, the Subcommittee requested your response to the following question for the record: At our hearing entitled "Sexual Assault in the Military Part III: Context and Causes" (July 25, 2009), we heard testimony from Mrs. Helen Benedict about the connection between the ban on women in ground combat and sexual assault. Specifically, she testified that the ban sends the signal from the top that women are second class soldiers. This inferiority perpetuates an antagonistic view of women that helps create a culture that is conducive to sexual assault. She recommended that the Department of Defense end the combat ban for women. Attached is Ms. Benedict's testimony for your reference. You will find the specific mentions of the combat ban on pages four and nine. What is your response to Ms. Benedict's suggestion that the combat ban contributes to a culture that is conducive to sexual assault? In light of this, do you believe the combat ban should be reexamined?

Answer: While Ms. Benedict may have made this suggestion in good faith, the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Policy does not ban women from combat. It prohibits the assignment of women to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground. As for its link to sexual assault, I do not believe scientific research can support a claim this policy contributes to a culture conducive to sexual assault. Consequently, I do not believe the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Policy impacts the success of the Department's sexual assault prevention program.