

FRANCE - NATIONAL REPORT 2007

Introduction

Women have always contributed directly to the Armed Forces whether in peacetime or during war. The Second World War put women in the French Forces on the "map", so to speak. They had already been serving since 1938, but only on a civilian basis. On November 7, 1940, the Women's Corps attached to the Free French Forces was created in London. It gave women the opportunity to serve as ambulance orderlies and in the First Aide Corps. In 1943, the Rochambelles Corps, consisting of nurses and first aide personnel was created. Female staff took part in campaigns in Tunisia, Italy, France and Germany as well as serving in Indochina and North Africa.

In 1951, the French Parliament gave a female personnel specific status. The adoption of the 13 July 1972 law gave women the same status as their male counterparts. The Decree of February 1998 removed any mention of theoretical limitation to women's access to a military career.

Currently, the French Armed Forces has ended a period of transformation, with the end of compulsory national service by the year 2002. This has led to a larger recruitment of women to the military.

1. Policy changes

There has been no significant change in 2006 in the French Armed Forces.

Nevertheless, the French Defence Minister keeps granting a particular attention to the outcome of the texts quoted above.

Above all this, a Committee of observation on the integration of servicewomen was created in early 2002 (see paragraph on "special interest") and has already proposed adjustments to these texts.

2. Organisation

Women are now integrated in all Services : Army, Navy, Air Force, Gendarmerie, the Medical Service and the Oil supply Service under the command of the Chief of Defence.

The repartition per service and per rank is presented below for the end of 2006:

FEMALE PRESENCE PER SERVICE AND PER CATEGORY
(IN OCTOBER 2006)

	Officers			NCO's			Enlisted			Volunteers			Total		
	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%
Army	18 135	1 376	7,59%	47 264	5 805	12,28%	66 410	6 963	10,48%	1 716	242	14,10%	133 525	14 386	10,77%
Airforce	7 581	628	8,28%	34 645	5 412	15,62%	17 213	5 139	29,86%	921	465	50,49%	60 360	11 644	19,29%
Navy	5 350	528	9,87%	28 700	3 080	10,73%	7 899	1 066	13,50%	1 377	331	24,04%	43 326	5 005	11,55%
Gendarm rie	6 021	272	4,52%	78 577	7 680	9,77%	0	0	-	14 545	5 019	34,51%	99 143	12 971	13,08%
Procurement Agency	2 171	260	11,98%	11	0	0,00%	44	0	0,00%	158	65	41,14%	2 384	325	13,63%
Health Service	4 142	1 242	29,99%	5 084	3 032	59,64%	247	113	45,75%	224	147	65,63%	9 697	4 534	46,76%
Oil Supply service	218	16	7,34%	306	21	6,86%	776	62	7,99%	0	0	-	1 300	99	7,62%
Other services	130	15	11,54%	73	33	45,21%	0	0	-	0	0	-	203	48	23,65%
TOTAL	43 748	4 337	9,91%	194 660	25 063	12,88%	92 589	13 343	14,41%	18 941	6 269	33,10%	349 938	49 012	14,01%

3. Employment

Eligibility requirements for employment in the French Forces are the same for women as they are for men. They are also granted the same opportunities for promotion as their male counterparts.

The 25 August 2000 Decree clearly outlines the arms and services that are only open to males and therefore the access to some specialities (the French Foreign Legion, submarines and NCO's in the squadrons of the mobile Gendarmerie) may be restricted.

In the Army, women can fill all posts depending on their rank and specialised trade with the exception of those trades involving the possibility of direct and long term contact with hostile forces. However, some women are assigned to operational duties with regiments. A consequent number of women are assigned to operational regiments or onboard Warships. Nevertheless, the Navy has not opened yet posts on submarines to women. In the Air Force, there is no restriction at all while the Gendarmerie still except NCO's from the mobile Gendarmerie.

MALE / FEMALE PRESENCE PER CATEGORY **(IN DECEMBER 2005)**

	Field Officer	Junior Officer	Superior NCO	Junior NCO	Enlisted *	Total
Male	13 639	19 208	59 266	109 110	92 726	293 949
Female	754	2 366	7 392	15 902	19 496	45 910
%	5,2%	11,0%	11,1%	12,7%	17,4%	13,5%

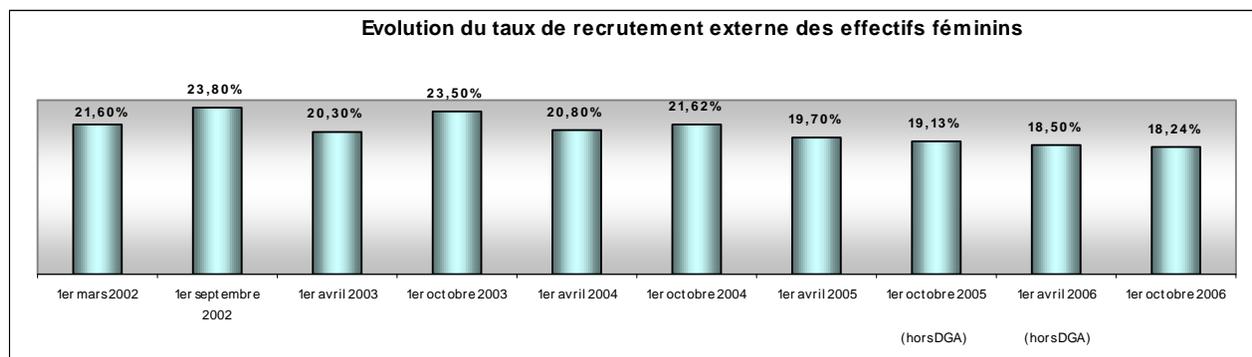
In spite of the openness of all posts to women, except those mentioned above, the feminization isn't homogeneous in all duties. The next table shows in which areas women are specialising the most (human resources, secretarial work and health care).

FEMALE PRESENCE PER FIELD **(in octobre 2006)**

ARMY	Management of the Human resources	40,5 %
	Infantry combat	1,1 %
AIR FORCE	Management of the Human resources	63,9 %
	Mechanical environnement	2,0 %
NAVY	Secretary	43,2 %
	Marine	0,5 %
HEALTH SERVICE	Nurse	67,5 %

4. Recruitment

Recruitment of women has been positively affected by the ending of compulsory national service in 2002. In parallel, the Decree of February 1998 removed any mention of theoretical limitation to women's access to a military career. The professionalization of the FAF has led to a boost in female recruitment. In fact, more than the half of the officers serving under contract are female and the proportion of women in the number of volunteers is still increasing



5. Training

Training is identical for women and men in the Armed Forces. Physical requirements are partly adapted to female personnel.

Women are allowed to enter all Academies and any training schools and receive the same training and diplomas as their male colleagues. They have the same access to training corresponding to the posts opened to them.

6. Deployments

Female personnel (officers, NCOs and troops) frequently work in humanitarian missions and on foreign operations under the same conditions as men.

Since last year, there hasn't been any significant evolution in Female participation in Operations, which is still light. The participation of women relies on a voluntary basis and there are no specific restriction to their departure.

A table showing the number of women engaged per army on foreign theatres can be seen below.

FEMALE PRESENCE IN OPERATIONS PER SERVICE **(IN OCTOBER 2006)**

	Army	Airforce	Navy	Gendarmerie	Oil supply	Health service	TOTAL
Staff in Operations or on board	14 929	1 225	11 374	272	330	336	28 466
Female in Operations or on board	679	68	608	6	13	82	1 456
%	4,5%	5,6%	5,3%	2,2%	3,9	24,4%	5,1%

French women take part in NATO Operations. Since 1995, women have been deployed in support of IFOR and continue to be deployed today in support of SFOR, KFOR and ISAF.

7. Career development

The perspective of career development and promotion for females is similar to their male colleagues, including for the highest assignments in the hierarchy where the same rules of management and selection criteria apply.

A table showing the number of women being officers can be seen below

8. Special interest items/ events

In addition to the different measures taken in the armies, one should notice the creation, in the early 2002, of a Committee in charge of the observation of women integration in the armies, examining the practical conditions for their access to operational assignments –up to now unreachable –and more generally studying staff management policies and their consequences on feminisation.

Conclusion

Women have made significant strides in the French Armed Forces over the years and continue to do so. Women are serving their country with pride and are also able to lead a family life with the provision of maternity and parental leave policies. The Armed Forces enable those women who choose to have a career the opportunity to fulfill their goals and train equally with their male colleagues.

In addition, we can underline a particularly protective national legislation for all French women (pregnancy vacation...) and huge political concerns which guarantee equality of treatment and promotion in labour circles where women are gradually taking place.

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