

France – National Report

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 2003 in the French Armed Forces.

Nevertheless, the French Defence Minister keeps granting a particular attention to the outcome of the texts quoted above¹.

The Social Observatory of Defence has launched a huge inquiry on women in the French Armed forces in 2004. A multiple choice question paper has been finalised recently. This new questionnaire is interested in the participation of women in operations which is a innovation since the last inquiry in 1999.

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 2003:

FEMALE PRESENCE PER SERVICE AND PER CATEGORY (IN OCTOBER 2003)

	Officers			NCO's			Enlisted			Volunteers			Total		
	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%	Current staff	Female	%
Army	15 932	1 019	6,40%	49 614	5 528	11,14%	68 276	7 164	10,49%	2 501	573	22,91%	136 323	14 284	10,48%
Airforce	6 916	491	7,10%	35 957	4 824	13,42%	16 931	4 768	28,16%	1 260	649	51,51%	61 064	10 372	17,58%
Navy	4 784	413	8,63%	29 305	2 768	9,45%	7 474	1 307	17,49%	1 464	391	26,71%	43 027	4 879	11,34%

¹ And to the modernization/fitting of women uniforms (sizing, colours, material).

Gendarmerie	4 114	115	2,80%	78 104	5 841	7,48%	3	3	100%	15 196	4 912	32,32%	97 417	10 871	11,16%
Procurement Agency	1 896	178	9,39%	118	9	7,63%	41	0	0,00%	161	48	29,81%	2 216	235	10,60%
Health Service	3 014	621	20,6%	4 377	2 804	64,06%	246	84	34,15%	217	147	67,74%	7 854	3 656	46,55%
Oil Supply service	212	14	6,60%	309	19	6,15%	747	36	4,82%	0	0	0,00%	1 268	69	5,44%
Other services	739	19	2,57%	539	84	15,58%	0	0	0,00%	0	0	0,00%	1 278	103	8,06%
TOTAL	37 607	2 870	7,63%	198 323	21 877	11,03%	93 718	13 362	14,26%	20 799	6 720	32,31%	350 447	44 829	12,79%

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 2003)**

	Field Officer	Junior Officer	Superior NCO	Junior NCO	Enlisted	Total
Male	13 719	18 833	58 079	113 785	300 129	300 129
Female	573	2 155	6 838	14 273	44 236	44 236
%	4,0%	10,3%	10,5%	11,1%	17,6%	12,8%

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 DECEMBER 2003)

ARMY	Management of the Human resources	44,2 %
	Infantry combat	4,9 %
AIR FORCE	Management of the Human resources	54,2 %
	Mechanical environnement	1,9 %
NAVY	Secretary	41,4 %
	Marine	0,2 %
HEALTH SERVICE	Nurse	78,9 %

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 (In October 2003 : Army 17,6% ; Air Force 52,1% ; Navy 31,6% ; Gendarmerie 36,2% ; Procurement Agency 36,7% ; Health service 64,6%)

Generally speaking, the global rate of female recruitment (except volunteers in the armies) was close to 19.12% in 2001, 20,53% in 2002 and 19,72% in 2003. A slight fall can be observed for this year. It affects the categories of NCO and enlisted. Furthermore, the rate of officers' recruitment through external examination has risen from 22.9% in 1999, to 25.7% in 2000, 27.4% in 2001, 28,54% in 2002 and has reached 32,2% in 2003.

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 2003)

	Army	Air Force	Navy	Gendarme rie	Health service	TOTAL
Staff in Operations or on board	12 260	1 422	10 599	305	589	12 915
Female in Operations or on board	516	68	396	9	120	593
%	4,21%	4,78%	3,74%	2,95%	20,37%	4,59%

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.

FEMALE ENGAGED IN NATO OPERATIONS PER SERVICE
(IN APRIL 2004)

	Army			Air Force			Health service			Oil supply service		
	Total staff	Female	%	Total staff	Female	%	Total staff	Female	%	Total staff	Female	%
SFOR	933	61	6,53	321	34	10,59	97	18	18,56	33	0	0
KFOR	3054	170	5,56	873	85	9,73	141	47	33,33	195	9	4,61
ISAF	544	13	2,39	491	30	6,11	37	7	18,92	0	0	0
Total	4531	244	5,38	1685	149	8,84	275	72	26,18	228	9	3,94

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

FEMALE OFFICERS
(IN DECEMBER 2003)

	General	Colonel	Lieutenant colonel	Major	Captain	First Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant
Male	527	2 389	5 494	5 309	10 685	6 921	1 227
Female	1	43	176	353	761	1 061	333
%	0,19%	1,77%	3,10%	6,23%	6,65%	13,29%	27,14%

The presence of several women in the Joint Defence College shows that they are capable of high-level trainings, as soon as the basic requirements are fulfilled. 24 women obtained their qualification: 8 in the Army, 10 in the Air Force, 2 in the Navy, 3 in the Health service and 1 in the Gendarmerie.

8. Special interest items/ events

The integration of women in the Armed Forces has proved to be very straightforward and has not caused any concerns. This can be illustrated in the Navy where at present 12 warships currently have women on board. The presence of women on board warships has meant that a number of changes have had to take place. The boarding of women nevertheless implies the respect of a certain number of rules for instance :

*Accommodation and lavatories adaptations in order to respect privacy;

*Equal treatment on board (women are likely to serve in every technical or military field);

*A female crew covering all ranks and reaching 10% of the whole crew.

At the end of 2003, the sharing of women onboard French warships is as follows :

NAME OF THE VESSEL	CREW	NB OF WOMEN	% OF WOMEN ONBOARD
BOUGAINVILLE	91	15	16,5%
CHARLES DE GAULLE	1267	161	12,7%
DE GRASSE	272	12	4,4%
FOUDRE	223	35	15,7%
GEORGES LEYGUES	178	19	10,7%

GUEPRATTE	143	23	16,1%
JEAN DE VIENNE	217	21	9,7%
LATOUCHE TREVILLE	219	26	11,9%
MONTCALM	217	23	10,7%
PRIMAUGUET	219	22	10,0%
SOMME	157	20	12,7%
TOURVILLE	273	26	9,5%

As there was in January 2004, 445 women on board French warships, the main objective for 2005 is to offer more than 700 positions on board to women.

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.

For instance, the FAF airwomen list:

	Women 2003
Fighter pilots	7
Transport pilots	21
Transport pilot monitors	1
Hélicopter pilots	7
Air commandos	268
Weapon system officers	2
Ground to air defence	47
Medical crew members	20

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.