STATEMENT REGARDING DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMBAT INTEGRATION DECISION

The Service Women's Action Network, the voice of women in the military, congratulates Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on his decision to support full combat integration of servicewomen. This is a momentous decision in the history of our military, and will ensure that our armed forces remain the strongest and most able because all qualified servicemembers-regardless of their gender-will be allowed to compete for all combat jobs in 2016.

The fight for full integration has not been easy, even after the decision to break down gender barriers was announced in 2013. But throughout the drawn-out process, proponents have been sustained by the stories we have heard of women performing with courage and valor on the ground and in the air in Afghanistan and Iraq. Their stories about serving in combat have helped generate support among Americans and have inspired the next generation of service women.

At the same time, even as we celebrate the Secretary's decision, we recognize that the decision is not the end of this process; full combat integration will not occur overnight on January 1, 2016. SWAN will remain a vigilant advocate for the fair and fast implementation of integration.

By rejecting all requests for exceptions to full combat integration, Secretary Carter has ushered in a new era for American women to serve the nation with valor and courage on the battlefield.

We salute his leadership on this issue, and look forward to working with him and the service branches to create full combat integration in 2016.

-- Judy Patterson, CEO, Service Women's Action Network, December 4, 2015

About Us
SWAN is a civil rights organization founded and led by women veterans. SWAN works to transform military culture by securing equal opportunity and freedom to serve without discrimination, harassment or assault; and to reform veterans' services to ensure high quality health care and benefits for women veterans and their families. You can find the Service Women's Action Network on our homepage, on Twitter and on Facebook.