

VA Facility Dedication Recommendation Report

May 2021



VA Facility Dedication Advisory Panel Chair - Karin Brennan (U.S. Army)

Members

Jodie Grenier (U.S. Marine Corps veteran)

Karen Foore (U.S. Navy, Ret.)

Jessica Brown (Military Spouse)

Terry "Skip" Curtis (U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.)

Mollie Juberien (U.S. Marine Corps)

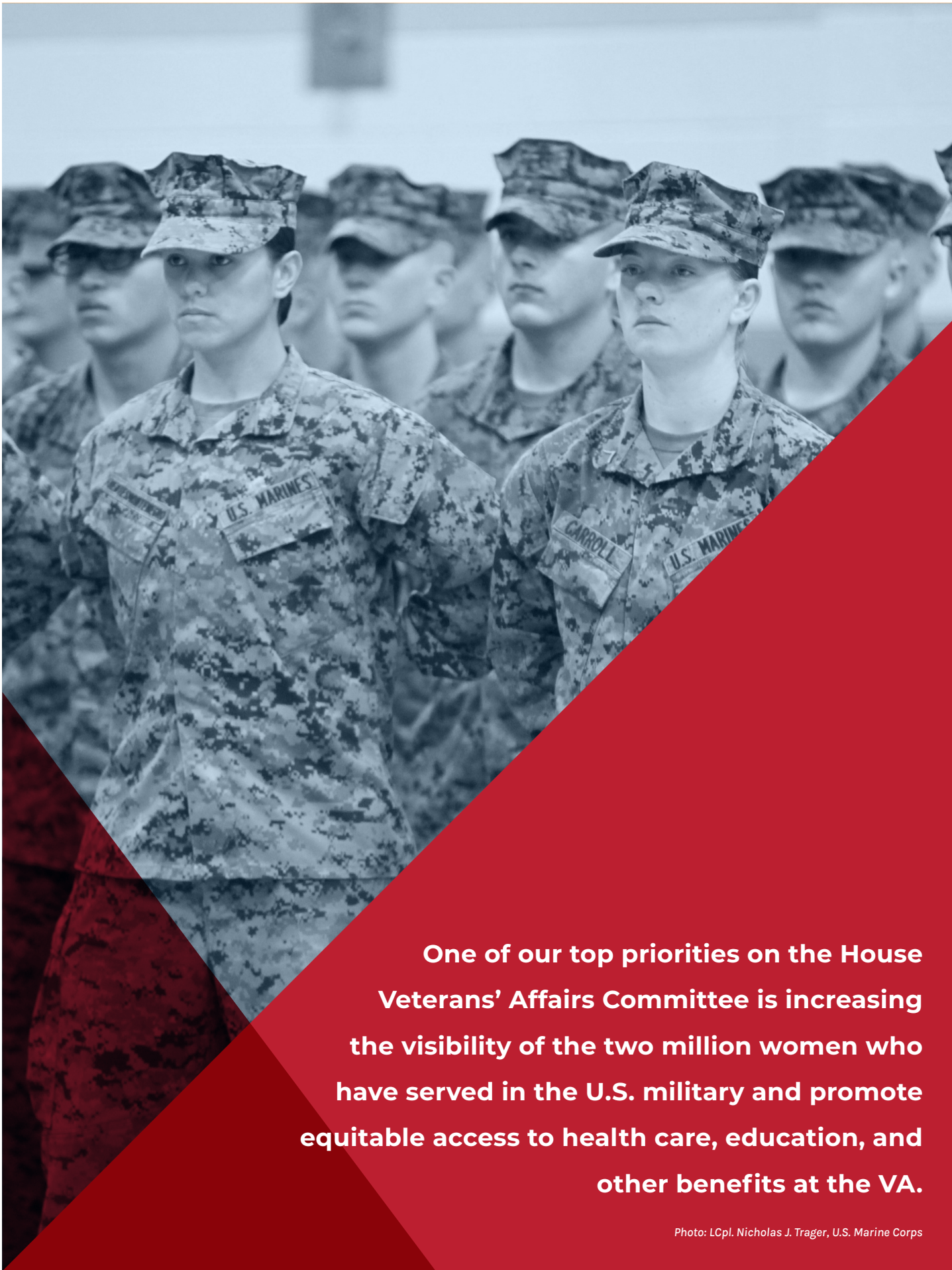
Janessa Goldbeck (U.S. Marine Corps veteran)

Kassandra Perry (U.S. Navy)

Edwin Gombio (U.S. Navy)

Charles Anderson (U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.)

Gustavo Aguilar (U.S. Marine Corps)



One of our top priorities on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee is increasing the visibility of the two million women who have served in the U.S. military and promote equitable access to health care, education, and other benefits at the VA.

Photo: LCpl. Nicholas J. Trager, U.S. Marine Corps



Letter from **Representative Mike Levin**



In November 2020, I convened a panel of highly qualified servicemembers, veterans, and community leaders to collaborate on recommendations to name a local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility after a woman veteran. While millions of women have served in the U.S. military, only two of VA's 1,293 health care facilities have been named after these brave and courageous Americans. Our panel, which included a wide variety of local stakeholders from organizations like The American Legion, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars, set out to change this.

Army veteran and Carlsbad resident Karin Brennan led this effort. Karin exercised strong leadership in bringing stakeholders together to make recommendations for female veterans with ties to the region who are among the most worthy of receiving this honor.

Women have served in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War, and long before women could formally serve, hundreds like Deborah Sampson and Cathay Williams disguised themselves as men to fight in our armed forces. Hundreds of thousands of women answered the call to serve in World War I and World War II, and their invaluable contributions were recognized when women became permanent members of the U.S. Armed Forces in 1948.

There are over two million women servicemembers and veterans living in the United States, and women comprise the fastest growing subpopulation of both the military and veteran populations. Currently, women comprise nearly 20 percent of serving military personnel and

10 percent of the veteran population, and the woman veteran population is projected to grow to 18 percent of the total veteran population by 2040.

One of our top priorities on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee is increasing the visibility of the two million women who have served in the U.S. military and promote equitable access to health care, education, and other benefits at the VA. This effort was inspired partly by a September 2020 report from the VA's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans that recommended the inclusionary branding of VA facilities to honor women. In response to that report, VA wrote that it agreed with the recommendation but could not implement a name change without congressional action.

Again, I am very proud that our panel compiled such a detailed report on notable women veterans with ties to the region who are worthy of this recognition. I would like to extend my thanks to chair Karin Brennan and each member of the panel who volunteered their time in the production of this report. I look forward to introducing legislation to rename a local VA facility based on their recommendations and working with my colleagues in Congress to see it become law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Levin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot above the 'i' in Levin.

Mike Levin

United States Representative, 49th District of California



Transmittal Letter

Dear Representative Levin:

On behalf of the members of the VA Facility Dedication Advisory Panel, I transmit the final report of the Panel for your consideration. The report represents the views of all participating Panel members unless specifically noted. As you requested, we are providing our final recommendations for the renaming of the San Diego VA Medical Center after a woman veteran, based upon the criteria we were initially given and including additional criteria agreed upon by the Panel. In arriving at our recommendations, we undertook comprehensive outreach and research and conducted multiple interviews with family members and other key individuals who had personal or other relevant knowledge about the lives of our two final short list candidates.

In addition to our primary recommendation of renaming the San Diego VA Medical Center after Jennifer Moreno, we have a second recommendation. From our research, we found both of our two short list candidates to be deserving of a visible honor in San Diego based on their service and connection to the region. Therefore, we are recommending that Kathleen Bruyere be put forward for the honor of having a significant space within the same VA facility be named for her as well. At this writing, the actual facility space has not been identified, but a request for available options has been made to the VA facility administration leadership team.

As you know, the **VA Facility Dedication Advisory Panel** was convened by you on November 11, 2020 in support of the findings of the “2020 Report of the VA’s Advisory Committee on Women Veterans”.¹ One summary finding from this report, “Inclusionary Branding of VA Facilities,” included the recommendation for the VA to strongly consider women veterans when naming currently undedicated VA facilities. Since this would require congressional action, the VA “concurred in principle” to supporting legislation that “promotes the renaming of VA facilities to honor women who have made significant contributions to military service, to recognize the impact of women who serve and to promote inclusiveness and cultural transformation.”

Since 1998, the renaming of VA facilities has solely been a congressional prerogative, achieved through legislation based on rules set forth by the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs. Currently, there are two existing VA facilities named after women veterans, one in Saginaw, MI (1990) and the second was signed into law in 2020 in New York City, NY. As we began our work, the Panel also learned that at the beginning of every new Congress, the House and Senate committees each decide on their respective procedural rules, the one historical standard of which is

1. “2020 Report of the Department of Veterans Affairs”, Advisory Committee on Women Veterans VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans (ACWV), 4/7/20.

that renaming facilities are to honor a deceased individual.² This was the starting basis for the work of the Panel, in addition to the veteran also having had a significant tie to the San Diego area.

The Panel began by first reaching out to our contacts in the San Diego area to get recommendations for consideration. We looked at local media stories, social media mentions, and received several direct emails and calls with candidate suggestions. Secondary research was then undertaken, utilizing multiple sources across the country. By far, the most comprehensive source of support was provided by The Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc. (also known as the Military Women’s Memorial) in Washington, DC. It was primarily due to their ability to perform multiple keyword searches across an extensive database of women veteran stories that we were able to narrow our comprehensive search. From their database, we received hundreds of names and brief (mostly self-reported) stories of women veterans who met the starting criteria (significant tie to the San Diego area and deceased) as potential candidates for the renaming honor. Finally, we also conducted interviews with key individuals who could provide first-hand background information about our top two candidates. We are including our process and findings, based on our final decision criteria, which we used to make our final selection.

As the Panel concludes our effort, I want to thank everyone who served on the Panel for their contributions and camaraderie. This effort gave all of us the opportunity to learn the military stories of some truly remarkable women, and to better understand the history of women in military service from the Revolutionary War up to the present day. I also thank you, Representative Levin, for the opportunity to lead this Panel. We stand ready to answer any questions that may arise from the information contained in this report as you prepare to introduce legislation to bring this effort to completion.

Sincerely,

Karin M. Brennan, Chair (U.S. Army veteran)

Members:

Jodie Grenier (U.S. Marine Corps veteran)
Karen Foore (U.S. Navy, Ret.)
Jessica Brown (Military Spouse)
Terry “Skip” Curtis (U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.)
Mollie Juberien (U.S. Marine Corps, active duty)
Janessa Goldbeck (U.S. Marine Corps veteran)
Kassandra Perry (U.S. Navy, active duty)
Edwin Gombio (U.S. Navy, active duty)
Charles Anderson (U.S. Marine Corps, Ret.)
Gustavo Aguilar (U.S. Marine Corps, active duty)

2. “Naming VA Facilities: Fact Sheet”, Congressional Research Service, 3/31/21.

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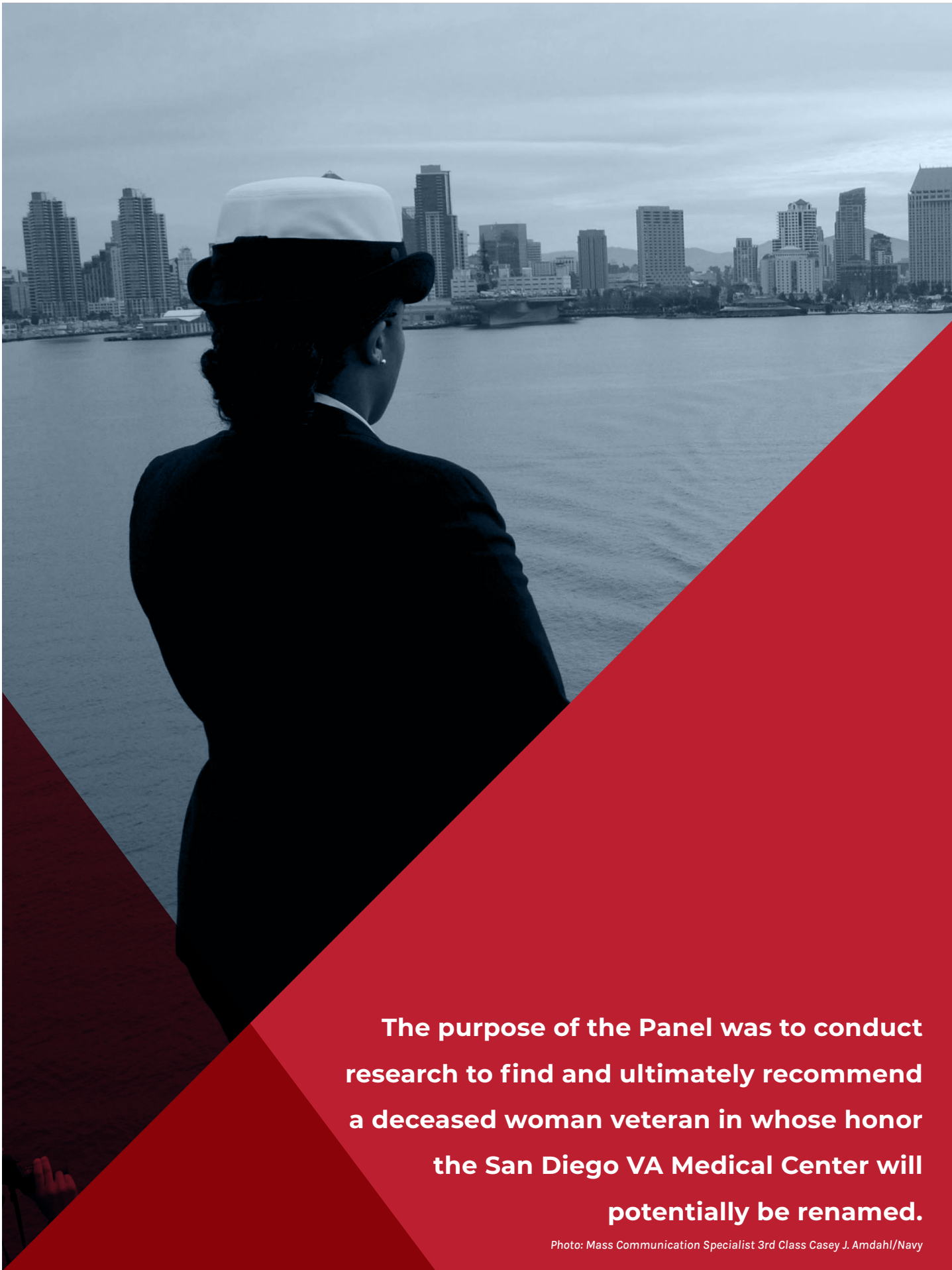
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The purpose of the Panel was to conduct research to find and ultimately recommend a deceased woman veteran in whose honor the San Diego VA Medical Center will potentially be renamed.

Photo: Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Casey J. Amdahl/Navy



Executive Summary

On November 11, 2020, an Advisory Panel consisting of a broad cross section of local veterans, active-duty service members, military spouses, and representatives of groups working in support of the military community was convened by U.S. Representative Mike Levin (CA-49). The purpose of the Panel was to conduct research to find and ultimately recommend a deceased woman veteran in whose honor the San Diego VA Medical Center will potentially be renamed.

Shortly after the Panel was convened, we met virtually to review our timetable and develop/prioritize a set of criteria to be used as the basis of our evaluations. We used this standard to review our initial list of hundreds of veterans³ to help us create a “short list” of candidates from which a deeper dive of background research would be done.

By mid-March, the Panel had finished the bulk of our research, resulting in the short list of four deserving women veterans who most completely met our prioritized criteria. Biographical summaries were compiled for each candidate and the four candidates were then evaluated and individually rated by each participating Panel member against our criteria on a scale of 1 to 10, with “10” indicating the highest possible rating. All the ratings were then added together and divided by the number of voting Panel members to reach an average rating for each candidate.

With our research and Panel ratings completed, the Panel then narrowed our short list of candidates to our two final candidates. At this juncture, we conducted more in-depth background research on both women, receiving input from available family members, friends, advisors, teammates, and other key individuals who knew them best. The Panel learned a great deal about both of our exceptional candidates from these amazing interactions.

As a result of our work, we are now able to put forward our recommendation of **U.S. Army CPT Jennifer M. Moreno** as our top candidate to receive the honor of our local VA Medical Center renaming. Between the two very deserving women veterans, CPT Moreno was the only candidate on our short list to fully meet all four of our prioritized criteria. Included in our report is her military story and the biographical information the Panel used to support our choice.

However, our evaluation concluded with an incredibly close decision between CPT Moreno and our second choice, **U.S. Navy CAPT Kathleen M. Bruyere**. While all four finalists are highly deserving of honor, these two women were both very well-known and respected in the San Diego area for the lives they lived, not just for their military accomplishments, but for their personal contributions to their communities as well.

3. Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Washington, DC, Jan-Mar 2021.

It is for this reason that the Panel has added a second recommendation to our report. Specifically, we also recommend that CAPT Bruyere be honored with the naming of a space within the VA Medical Center in San Diego. Because this does not require congressional action, the process and timeline for implementation will not be included in the body of this report.

As a postscript, the Panel also recommends that efforts be undertaken in the very near future to investigate other appropriate honors for the remaining two short list candidates, ***U.S.M.C. Capt Jennifer J. Harris*** and ***U.S.M.C. Maj Megan L. McClung***, both of whom were deployed from units attached to Camp Pendleton when they were killed while on active duty. Their inclusion in this report indicates how meaningful and inspirational their contributions and sacrifices were to their country.

117th Congress Facility Naming Rules



- ▶ House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee rules⁴ prohibit naming a VA facility after an individual unless the individual is deceased and is:
 - a veteran who was instrumental in the construction of the facility to be named, (or) was a recipient of the Medal of Honor, or, as determined by the chairman and ranking minority member, otherwise performed military service of an extraordinarily distinguished character;
 - a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives or Senate who had a direct association with such facility;
 - an Administrator of Veterans Affairs, a Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a Secretary of Defense or of a service branch, or a military or other federal civilian official of comparable or higher rank; or
 - an individual who, as determined by the chairman and ranking minority member, performed outstanding service for veterans.
- ▶ In addition, each member of the congressional delegation representing the state where the designated facility is located must indicate, in writing, his or her support of the bill.
- ▶ Finally, the pertinent state department or chapter of each congressionally chartered veterans' organization with a national membership of at least 500,000 must indicate, in writing, its support of the bill.
- ▶ Both committees' rules allow for any of the above criteria to be waived by unanimous consent.

4. "Naming VA Facilities: Fact Sheet" - Congressional Research Service, R46740, 3/31/21.

Advisory Panel Decision Criteria



The Panel was given two initial criteria:

- ▶ The veteran must be deceased (congressional edict).
- ▶ The veteran must have a strong connection to the San Diego area.

In addition, the Panel collaborated on a list of potential additional criteria to help us differentiate between the candidates. We prioritized eight additional criteria and chose to add the following top four to be used in our search. The Panel determined criteria were (in priority order):

1. Military honors/awards
2. (tie) Evidence of heroism
3. (tie) Under-represented population (e.g. person of color)
4. First to achieve something noteworthy (trailblazer)
5. Combat service
6. Length of service
7. High level/extensive responsibility
8. Community service beyond military service

Candidate Search Outreach

The Panel contacted the following organizations for assistance in identifying candidates.

- ▶ Military Women's Memorial, Washington, DC
- ▶ Foundation for Women Warriors
- ▶ CalVets (Women Resources)
 - ◆ CA Women Veterans Leadership Council
 - ◆ American Women Veterans.org
 - ◆ National Association of Black Military Women
 - ◆ Service Women's Action Network
 - ◆ Army Women's Foundation
 - ◆ United States Army Women's Museum
 - ◆ Women Marines Association
- ▶ VFW Post 10577 (Oceanside)
- ▶ American Legion Post 149 (Escondido)
- ▶ Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation
- ▶ WaspMuseum.org
- ▶ MuseumofWomenPilots.org
- ▶ International Women's Air and Space Museum
- ▶ Women's Museum of California
- ▶ Womenofthe6888th.org

In addition, family members, friends, and other key contacts were interviewed about their recollections of the top two candidates, which contributed insights to the biographical histories.



Panel Meetings and Deliverables

November 11, 2020: Announcement of Panel

November 23, 2020: First Panel meeting

December 7, 2020: Judging criteria set, call for preliminary candidates

January 13, 2021: Second Panel meeting. Review preliminary list, assign research (backgrounds, biographies, accomplishments, etc.)

February 13, 2021: Deadline for draft research

February 28, 2021: Share research with full Panel for review and judging by consensus criteria

March 3, 2021: Third meeting. Review candidates/research status, vote on candidate prioritization using criteria, identify top three

May 11, 2021: Report delivery to Rep. Levin and staff for review

May 31, 2021: Public release/distribution of report

Facility Naming Veteran Biographical Overview Jennifer M. Moreno



Military Branch/Highest Rank: U.S. Army/CPT (KIA)

Conflict: Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan

Honors/Awards: Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Star, Global War on Terror Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Combat Action Badge, Parachutist Badge, Overseas Service Bar.

Connection to San Diego: Born in San Diego, San Diego High School (SDHS) graduate.

Life/Military Story: Jennifer Madai Moreno was born in San Diego, CA on June 25, 1988, and was raised in Logan Heights by her single mother after the early loss of her father. Her immediate family, including her older brother and two younger sisters, was close and persevered despite the constant strain of economic hardship.

While attending San Diego High School, Moreno was an active member of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) for all four years, ultimately rising to achieve the second highest rank in a nationally ranked program. The SDHS JROTC is known as a Department of the Army Honor Unit with Distinction, which means it is in the top 10 percent of all units in the country. She was also chosen to be a member of the San Diego Unified School District Brigade Staff, selected from students from across 13 local schools. Additionally, as a high school senior, and despite not starting until age 15, she rose quickly to become the top junior marksman in the state of California through the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP).⁵ Moreno graduated from SDHS in 2006.

Moreno was offered a college scholarship by CMP, but instead chose an ROTC scholarship to the University of San Francisco (USF) for Nursing, becoming the first person in her family to go

5. Interview with former JROTC Senior Instructor (Ret.), SDHS, 4/5/21.

to college.⁶ Nursing suited her strong desire to help people, while the military offered her the opportunity to serve her country. While at USF, she was on an accelerated ROTC track due to the rigors of the Nursing program combined with her military training. While students normally attend the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) between their third and fourth years of college, she took the summer course between her sophomore and junior years. Her physical strength and fitness level was exceptional, for which she received the highest scores possible while also getting top scores for her overall character and leadership abilities. At 5'2", Moreno could outrun most of the other students and embraced the challenge of proving herself in virtually any environment. She ultimately achieved the highest level of physical fitness in her ROTC unit at USF.⁷

Following her graduation from USF with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing, Moreno received her commission in the U.S. Army as a Second Lieutenant Nurse Corps Officer. Upon commissioning, Moreno also served as a Gold Bar Recruiter (temporary duty to assist with training and recruiting) for USF from July 2010 to September 2010.⁸

Anecdotally, Army nurses rarely go to Basic Airborne Course (BAC), but Moreno embraced challenges and because of her standing in the ROTC program at USF, she applied for one of the few, highly competitive slots that each school receives. She was chosen to attend and after completing the BAC at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and the Army Medical Department Officer Basic Course at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, Moreno was then assigned to Madigan Army Medical Center, Joint Base Lewis McCord, Washington in January 2011. While at Madigan, she served as a Clinical Staff Nurse on a medical-surgical unit. She earned her certification as a Medical Surgical Registered Nurse in February 2011 and was promoted to First Lieutenant.⁹

While Moreno began her military career as an Army nurse, she felt a calling to extend the breadth of her service and volunteered for a position with U.S. Army Special Operations Command (SOC) in 2011.¹⁰ She was successfully assessed against the rigorous criteria and selected into the SOC Cultural Support Team (CST) program, composed of both multinational and multi-branch soldiers. At the time, this team was one of the only ways for a female soldier to participate in combat missions alongside the all-male Army Ranger and Green Beret teams. While the role of the CST had been evolving for several years, the first formal CST members from both the Army and Marines did not start to deploy in two-woman teams until early 2011.¹¹

CST members often focused on medical outreach, helping the local women and children receive care that male medical personnel could not deliver. But, as needed, they also participated in Ranger-led missions that often happened at night and which involved significantly higher risk. During those missions, the CST role was to handle all interactions with women, who were often given weapons and other items that the men did not want the U.S. military to see. Prior to the CST program, the female

6. Interview with former JROTC Senior Instructor (Ret.), SDHS, 4/5/21.

7. Interview with USF Advisor, 4/14/21.

8. Interview with USF Advisor, 4/14/21.

9. U.S. Army Special Operations Command Public Affairs Office – “Biographical Sketch - Cpt Jennifer Moreno”, 10/28/13.

10. Interview with current/former CST members, 4/18/21.

11. National Defense University Press, “Blurred Lines: Cultural Support Teams in Afghanistan”, 9/30/14.

half of the local population could not be directly engaged by male special operations soldiers due to cultural restrictions. The involvement of CST members helped to dramatically reduce that barrier. They were specially trained to establish rapport with local women and interrogate them, enabling the collection of actionable intelligence about local operative actions and plans.¹²

Moreno was deployed to Afghanistan in June 2013 and was attached to a joint special operations task force as a CST member. Female troops serving in the cultural support role would typically engage with and physically search local women in countries such as Afghanistan, where interaction between women and men to whom they are not related is socially unacceptable.¹³

CPT Jennifer M. Moreno was killed in action on Sunday, October 6, 2013 while on a night mission in the Zhari district in Kandahar Province. She was only three months into her first tour to Afghanistan with the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment, after deploying in June from Madigan Army Medical Center. According to multiple accounts from different sources,¹⁴ Moreno and other troops went on a mission to capture a person the military described as a high-value target. During the last moments of Moreno's life, she reportedly heard two orders. One was a call to help a wounded soldier struck by a blast in a booby-trapped killing field at an Afghanistan bomb-making compound. The other was a command to stay put in case she was to strike another mine in the area. Prior to her final, heroic actions, Moreno had already endured three explosive devices, including a suicide explosive at a range of no more than 25 meters. These explosives resulted in at least eight friendly casualties and two enemy combatants killed. A fourth device was triggered, killing an enemy combatant and one U.S. military working dog.¹⁵

Despite these blasts, Moreno did not hesitate to respond to the call for help. As she made her way to help a fallen soldier, she triggered the fifth explosion, which ended her life. A total of 12 bombs exploded that night—a chain reaction that took the lives of four U.S. soldiers and wounded 30 others.

As the first Nurse CST member to die in action, the reaction to her death was widespread. Part of her legacy is the number of young women coming from medical fields, seeking out voluntary assignments to join the CST program. At virtually all memorials in her honor, a Ranger badge is present as a reminder of how deeply respected she was by her U.S. Army Ranger teammates.¹⁶

CPT Jennifer M. Moreno (promoted posthumously) was the first combat casualty to be buried at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego since the Post-9/11 conflicts began. She received full military honors.

12. Spec Ops Magazine – “1st. Lt. Moreno is one of the unsung heroes who died to save others”, 5/8/21.

13. Fayetteville Observer – “Soldier with Fort Bragg ties among four killed by IED in Afghanistan”, 10/9/13.

14. Army Times, “The Last Moments of Jennifer Moreno, an Army Nurse killed in Afghanistan,” 4/30/14.

15. San Diego Union Tribune, “Army Nurse Died Helping Others”, 5/27/16.

16. Interviews with USF/ROTC Advisor, U.S. Army Special Operations Command Cultural Support Team program leader and current/former CST members, 4/21.

Interior Naming Veteran Biographical Overview Kathleen M. Bruyere



Military Branch/Highest Rank: U.S. Navy/CAPT (Ret.)

Conflict: No direct involvement in war zone.

Honors/Awards: Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (two awards), Meritorious Unit Commendation, National Defense Service Medal (two awards), Navy Recruiting Service Ribbon.

Connection to San Diego: Long term resident of Chula Vista, CA.

Life/Military Story: Kathleen Mae Donahue was born in Norfolk, VA, on February 5, 1944. Part of a proud Army family, she completed her high school education while her father was stationed in Germany. After graduation, Bruyere (then Donahue) chose to return to the U.S. on her own to attend

Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, graduating in 1966. From a young age, she had a strong desire to serve others, so it came as no surprise to her family when she also chose a path of military service. Instead of the Army,¹⁷ however, she was recruited by and subsequently enlisted in the U.S. Navy and was accepted into Officer Candidate School (OCS). Following her successful completion of OCS, she was assigned as an on-campus Navy recruiting officer in California. From this point forward, her path became noteworthy.

LCDR Bruyere (then Byerly) was the first woman to serve as flag secretary to an admiral when, in 1975, she was named to the staff of Rear Adm. Allen Hill. The next year, the 31-year-old LCDR Bruyere (Byerly) was one of 12 Women of the Year—including Betty Ford, Billie Jean King, Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, and Connecticut Governor Ella Grasso—chosen for the January 1976 cover of Time Magazine.¹⁸ In 1977, she joined a class-action lawsuit with five other women officers who sued the United States

17. Interview with Bruyere family, 3/21.

18. Task & Purpose (Philadelphia Inquirer story) – “The trailblazing Navy captain who helped win the right for women to serve at sea has died”, 9/11/20.

Secretary of the Navy and the United States Secretary of Defense over restrictions that prevented women from serving on combat aircraft and ships. This led to the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act being struck down as unconstitutional, overturning a ban on women serving at sea.¹⁹

In 1983, after being appointed head of U.S. Navy Personnel Support Activity in Philadelphia, she told The Philadelphia Inquirer that she planned to bring the Navy's "personnel management system into the computer age."²⁰ Bruyere was promoted to Captain in 1987, and as Special Assistant to the Chief of Naval Operations for Women's Policy, CAPT Bruyere helped conduct an examination of the status of Navy women, including career opportunities as well as complaints of sexism. The study led to 9,000 sea-duty and command jobs opening up for women on 24 combatant ships.²¹

In 1991, CAPT Bruyere was selected and assigned as Commanding Officer for the Navy Recruit Training Command at Orlando, Florida. At the time, it was the Navy's only boot camp that included women. CAPT Bruyere oversaw the training of 30,000 enlistees, one-third of them women.

In 1994, she retired from the Navy as a Captain, never having had the opportunity to serve on a ship. During her 28 years of exemplary service, CAPT Bruyere was a key figure in the movement to advance women's opportunities in the military and was described as an "outspoken advocate for women's rights in and out of the service."²² She helped shape the military's policies on sexual discrimination and was instrumental in expanding opportunities for women in the Navy. Her family describes her as having been a passionate "Civil Rights Actionist".²³

From 2012 until shortly before her death in September 2020, CAPT Bruyere was an active volunteer at Miramar National Cemetery, devoting almost 4,300 hours to helping visitors locate their loved ones' graves and providing information about veterans' burial benefits. She also coordinated frequently and effectively with the Support Foundation during its various activities at the cemetery.²⁴

CAPT Kathleen M. Bruyere was buried at Miramar National Cemetery in San Diego, CA with full military honors.

19. Navy Times – "Retired Navy captain and trailblazer for women's equality in the service dies at 76", 9/10/20.

20. Legacy.com (San Diego Union Tribune obituary), 9/13/20.

21. Legacy.com Obituary - Kathleen Mae Donahue Bruyere Capt., USN (Ret.), 9/20.

22. The Washington Post – "Kathleen Bruyere, Navy captain who helped win right for women to serve at sea, dies at 76", 9/17/20.

23. Interview with Bruyere family, 3/21.

24. Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation, 3/21.

Honorable Mention

Biographical Overview Jennifer J. Harris



Military Branch/Highest Rank: U.S.M.C./CAPT (KIA)

Conflict: Operation Iraqi Freedom

Honors/Awards: Purple Heart, Air Medal (17 awards), Navy Commendation Medal (two awards), Navy Achievement Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Marine Corps Meritorious Unit Commendation, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon.

Connection to San Diego: Three tours of duty with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364, (HMM-364) “Purple Foxes”, a CH-46 squadron stationed on Camp Pendleton, and was deployed from Camp Pendleton with the squadron when she was killed in action.

Life/Military Story: Jennifer Jean Harris was born in MA on January 6, 1978, and was raised in Swampscott, Massachusetts. After graduating from Swampscott High School in 1996, she received an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) in Annapolis, MD, and graduated in 2000. It was during her time at the USNA that she became impressed by upperclassmen who were planning to become Marines. Anecdotally, it was for this reason that she chose to become a Marine Corps officer and pilot.²⁵ Following graduation from USNA and her commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps, Harris went to The Basic School (TBS) in Quantico, VA.

At TBS, she trained for six months to develop the skills needed to effectively lead Marines who would be under her command. After her graduation from TBS, Harris then reported to Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL for Aviation Preflight Indoctrination. After completing her training, she went to Naval

25. Landstuhl Hospital Care Project (archival website) – “Marine Capt. Jennifer J. Harris – September 2013 Shipment Honoree”, 9/3/13.

Air Station Corpus Christie, TX for her primary flight training. There, Harris was trained to fly the T-34 turbo propeller, fixed-wing aircraft.

Following her primary flight training, Harris was selected to fly helicopters, and reported to Naval Air Station Whiting Field in Milton, FL. There, as a member of Helicopter Training Squadron Eight (HT-8), she completed her training and earned her “Wings of Gold” on September 13, 2002. Next came an assignment to a training squadron, HMMT-164 in Camp Pendleton, CA, where she learned to fly the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter (also affectionately known as the Battle Phrog).²⁶

After completing her CH-46 training, Harris was assigned to HMM-364 and quickly deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). While with HMM-364, she attended the Weapons and Tactics Instructor’s Course (WTI), which is the Marine equivalent to “TOPGUN” training. After graduation from WTI, she served three tours of duty in Iraq and was the first female pilot to be deployed with the Purple Foxes Squadron. While with the Purple Foxes, Harris was promoted twice; first to the rank of First Lieutenant, and then to the rank of Captain.

On February 7, 2007, while on the last planned flight of her third deployment, CAPT Jennifer J. Harris was killed in action when the helicopter she was piloting, a CH-46 Sea Knight, was shot down by enemy combatants and crashed in a field in Anbar Province approximately 20 miles from Baghdad. She was on a mission to transport blood for wounded Marines. All seven people aboard the helicopter died in the crash.

CAPT Jennifer J. Harris was buried in Swampscott Cemetery, Swampscott, MA, with full military honors.²⁷

26. The American Fallen Soldiers Project, “Marine CAPT Jennifer J. Harris”, 2/7/07.

27. Legacy.com, (Boston Globe obituary), “Jennifer J. Harris”, 2/8/07.

Honorable Mention

Biographical Overview

Megan M. McClung



Military Branch/Highest Rank: U.S.M.C./MAJ

Conflict: Operation Iraqi Freedom

Honors/Awards: Bronze Star, Purple Heart, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Hawaii Medal of Honor.

Connection to San Diego: Grew up in Orange County, graduated from Mission Viejo High School. McClung served as the public affairs officer for the Army's 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division. Her home unit was the I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) based at Camp Pendleton.

Life/Military Story: Megan Malia Leilani McClung was born on April 14, 1972 in Honolulu, Hawaii. Her family moved to Orange County, California where she was raised and attended Mission Viejo High School. After her graduation in

1990, McClung then became one of the first women to attend Admiral Farragut Academy in New Jersey. She then attended the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, graduating and receiving her officer's commission to Second Lieutenant in 1995. McClung then went on to complete Basic Officer Training and the Public Affairs Officer Qualification Course at Fort Meade, MD.

In 1996, McClung served at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton as the public affairs and media officer. She transferred to the Marine Corps Recruiting Depot Parris Island in 1999, where she served as the academics and scheduling officer. McClung then transferred to the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing at Cherry Point, NC, to again serve as the public affairs officer.²⁸

In 2003, McClung made the move to the Marine Reserves and worked as the east coast regional representative for the Marine for Life program at Camp Lejeune, NC. In 2004, McClung joined American engineering and construction company Kellogg, Brown, and Root and went to Iraq as a civilian in

28. U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs - "#VeteranoftheDay - Marine Corps Veteran Megan McClung, 4/25/19.

a public relations role. While there, she reportedly handled³¹ fatalities and the public relations preparation for congressional hearings. After her yearlong contract ended, she returned home and in January 2006, McClung returned to active duty with the Marines and was deployed to Iraq as a public affairs officer with the I MEF.²⁹ McClung was subsequently promoted to the rank of Major in June 2006.

On December 6, 2006, in her last month of a planned year-long deployment to Iraq, McClung was serving with the I MEF as the Marine Corps Head of Public Affairs for Al Anbar Province, in charge of journalists who were in the country. Earlier that day, she had accompanied former Marine LtCol (Ret.) Oliver North with a Fox News Channel camera crew in Ramadi. She was escorting *Newsweek* journalists into downtown Ramadi when a massive improvised explosive device (IED) destroyed McClung's Humvee, instantly killing her and two other passengers. The *Newsweek* journalists following in a second vehicle were not injured.³⁰

McClung was the first female Marine officer to be killed in the Iraq war and the first female graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy to die in action since the school was founded in 1845.

MAJ Megan McClung was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery on December 19, 2006. Her headstone is engraved with her favorite saying, which was "Be Bold. Be Brief. Be Gone."³¹

29. Meganmcclungmemorialrun.com - "Biography", 9/8/18.

30. Marines.mil - "Be brief. Be bold. Be gone.": A decade later, Maj. Megan M. McClung's legacy lives on", 12/22/15.

31. Military Times: "Honor the Fallen - Marine Major Megan M. McClung", 12/06

References and Sources

The Panel thanks the families and close contacts of our final two candidates for sharing their recollections of these remarkable women, including (but not limited to):

- ◆ The Moreno family*
 - ◆ The Bruyere family*
 - ◆ San Diego High School JROTC program senior instructor*
 - ◆ University of San Francisco Associate Dean-Nursing and Professor, ROTC advisor*
 - ◆ U.S. Army Special Operations Command Cultural Support Team program leader* and current/former members
 - ◆ U.S. Army Ranger*
 - ◆ Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee*
 - ◆ Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation*
- * Names withheld for privacy.

Additional Sources:

- ◆ Military Times – “Honor the Fallen – Army Cpt Jennifer M. Moreno” (10/2013)
- ◆ The Seattle Times – “Kathleen Bruyere, Navy captain who helped win right for women to serve at sea, dies at 76” (9/17/20)
- ◆ Military Times – “Honor the Fallen” – Capt Jennifer J. Harris (2/2007)
- ◆ Legacy.com (obituary) – Maj Megan M. McClung (12/06)

Note: All references made in this report to the military ranks of the candidates were made in accordance with public guidelines for each branch (Army, Navy, Marine Corps).



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