



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 31, 2017

No Urinals, but Plenty of Potential Problems, on “Gender Neutral” Navy Ship

The Navy is touting its very first “gender neutral” aircraft carrier, and in the process Navy brass are ignoring a serious and ongoing problem that comes with women on ships.



As reported by the *Navy Times*, while the USS *Gerald Ford* “has all sorts of high-tech gear equipped for 21st century naval warfare ... there is one thing that male sailors will notice is no longer available: Urinals. That is because every “head” (sailor talk for restroom) on the *Gerald Ford* has been fitted to be “gender-neutral,” so that all urinals have been dismissed in favor of flush toilets and stalls, especially for female sailors.

“The vast majority of the 5,000-plus sailors who will deploy aboard the carrier Ford are men,” reported the *Navy Times*, “as women account for only about 18 percent of sailors in the Navy.” The Navy insists, however, that the change is intended to accommodate the comfort of all sailors, not just women. The USS *Gerald Ford* “is designed to give the ship flexibility because there aren’t any berthing areas that are dedicated to one sex or the other,” Operations Specialist 1st Class Kaylea Motsenbocker explained to the *Navy Times*.

Every berthing (living) area on the ship includes a private restroom attached to it, Motsenbocker said, “so if this space was needed for males, we could shift the females to other berthing areas and make this all male without any modification being necessary.”

But bathroom professionals say the re-fitting doesn’t quite make sense, pointing out that bathrooms without urinals on a ship mean less sanitary facilities. Chuck Kaufman of the Public Restroom Company, which specializes in designing bathrooms, noted that “a toilet is by far a less clean environment than a urinal — by far.” Attempting to explain the problem in as delicate terms as possible, Kaufman noted that men typically don’t sit down to urinate, and a urinal provides an easier target to hit than a toilet bowl in a confined water closet. “A urinal is a target,” he said, noting that when men are required to relieve themselves in a water closet, the results over time are a messy floor and unsavory stench.

But it appears that the Navy is ignoring a far bigger problem than stinky bathrooms on ships. In March of this year, the *Daily Caller* reported that, according to [data it obtained](#) through the Freedom of Information Act, 16 of 100 female Navy personnel are reassigned from ships to shore duty because they are pregnant.

Overall, reported the *Daily Caller*, “women unexpectedly leave their stations on Navy ships as much as 50% more frequently to return to land duty, according to [documents](#) obtained from the Navy” which cover January 2015 to September 2016.



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According to Jude Eden, a female Marine Iraq combat veteran as well as an expert on women in the military, it can cost the Navy up to \$30,000 for each woman trained for a specific task, then shifted from ship to shore duty — up to \$115 million in expenses for 2016 alone.

Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, said that a pregnancy takes a female sailor “out of action for about two years. And there’s no replacement. So everybody else has to work all that harder.” And for personnel on small ships and submarines, “you really have a potential crew disaster,” she added.

The *Daily Caller* noted that in January 2015, “3,335 women were pregnant aboard military vessels, representing about 14 percent of the 23,735 women then serving such duty, according to the data. But by August 2016 that number reached nearly 16 percent, an all-time high. The Navy reported 3,840 of the 24,259 women sailors who were aboard Navy ships were pregnant.”

One secret that the Navy appears not to want publicized is that female Navy personnel may intentionally get pregnant just to avoid being deployed. “There do seem to be coincidences,” Donnelly said. “There is a lot of anecdotal evidence.” She added that “this information is considered so sensitive. You just don’t talk about it. And you don’t ask. It’s just something that everybody knows occurs.”

Even through the problem is well-known, it did not stop the Navy under the Obama administration from increasing the quota of women in the Navy. In May 2015 Admiral Michelle Howard [announced](#) that there would be an effort to raise the quota of women on ships to an astounding 25 percent. “We’re going back and looking at the ships — all of them — and what percentage of women are on the ships,” she said, “Over time, we’ll modernize them to make sure we get to about 25 percent on each ship.”

In September 2015, then-Navy Secretary Ray Mabus [pushed the policy](#), “stating that the Navy SEALs and all other combat jobs in the Navy should be open to women, with no exemptions as part of the Pentagon’s new ‘gender-neutral’ employment policy,” reported the *Daily Caller*.

But Eden said that such a policy is a failure-in-progress for the Navy. “It’s bad policy when you think of ships that have to be battle-ready and then have to transfer women off for pregnancy — something that has to do with controlled behavior or voluntary behavior.”

Photo of USS Gerald Ford: AP Images



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