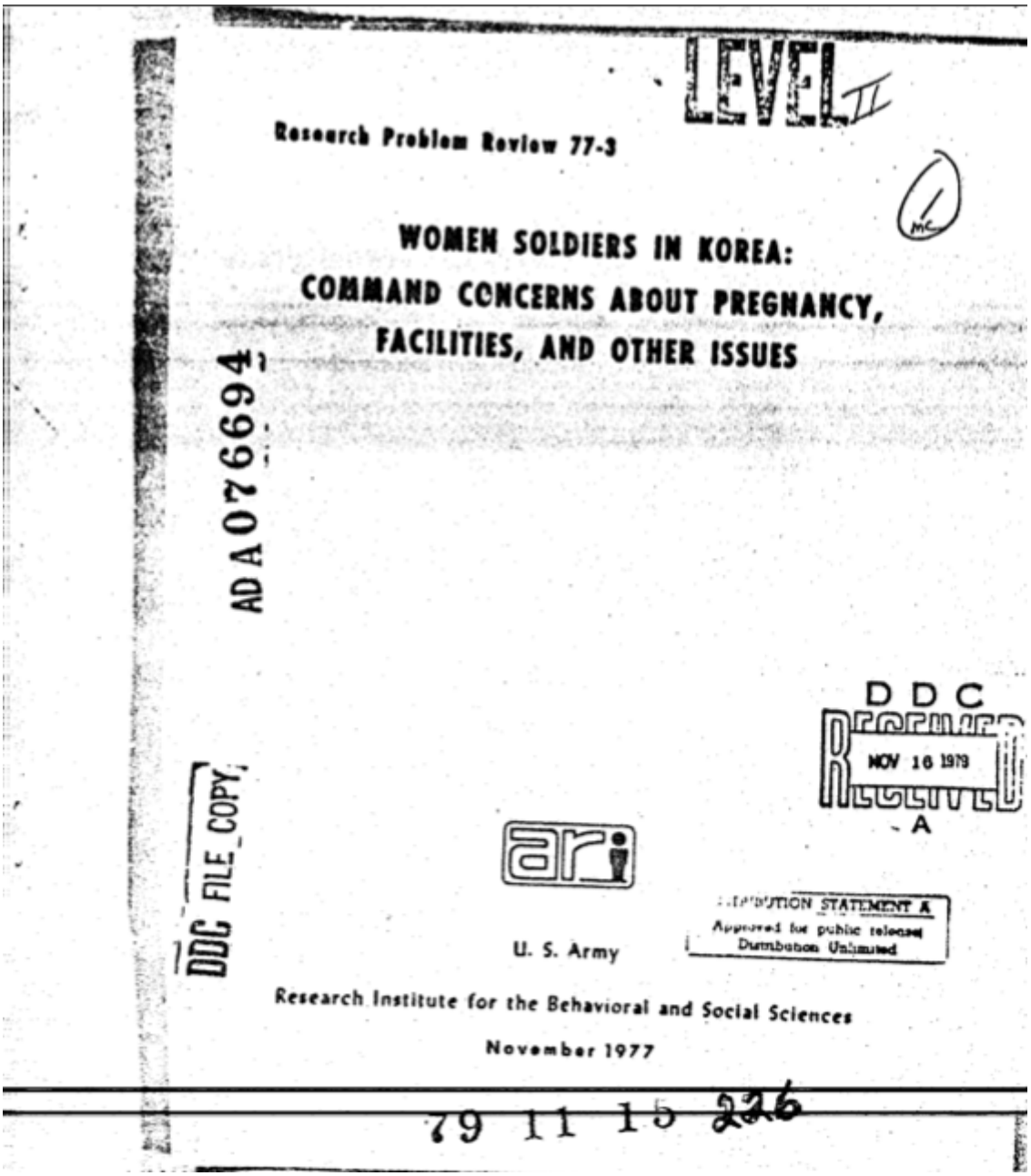
Women Soldiers in Korea: Command Concerns about Pregnancy, Facilities, and Other Issues



Recommended Citation

"Women Soldiers in Korea: Command Concerns about Pregnancy, Facilities, and Other Issues", September 17, 2012, https://nautilus.org/foia-document/women-soldiers-in-korea-command-concerns-about-pregnancy-facilities-and-other-issues/

In April 1972, the Department of Defense implemented new policies toward greater utilization of women in all military specialties, with the exception of those involving “direct combat or unusual physical demands”. Hitherto, women in Korea were primarily assigned to administrative and medical fields in the Seoul area. This policy of greater inclusion and utilization had a delayed impact on the Eighth United States Army (EUSA), the Army component of United States Forces Korea, which had long been an army composed of unaccompanied men operating under threat of hostile action. Given the United States’ ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and its proposed pivot towards Asia in the future, the possibility of manpower shortages in future conflicts has reignited the debate over women in direct combat roles. This 1972 memorandum provides insight into the military’s discussion over longstanding arguments against the inclusion of women in combat roles by examining the viewpoints of commanding officers regarding issues of female pregnancy, separate facilities, and other issues including deficiencies in physical strength. This study and others not only meant more women in the military in Korea, but also set the stage for bringing more families to Korea. As more families came to Korea, there was an increase in people-to-people contact. There were cultural differences, to be sure, but all sides learned a great deal. Alliance management is strengthened as Korea saw that the U.S. was willing to ensure families of U.S. service members were safe.

The purpose of this research was to identify problem areas associated with assigning f female soldiers in increasing numbers to the Eight United States Army in the Republic of Korea (ROK). The researchers used survey questionnaires to examine the situation from the viewpoints of unit commanders with women under their leadership.

Ulnae (one of the authors of the study) writes:

"Commanders with most women were most often concerned about pregnancy in relation to other commanders and other priority problems.

Commanders with fewest women were most often concerned about facilities for women in relation to other commanders and other priority problems." [page 5]

This report was released to the Nautilus Institute under the US Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
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