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America's Evolution of Women and Their Roles in the Intelligence Community

Author Biography

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Abstract

The role of women in the Intelligence Community has evolved over time and captures the use of their skills to further assist, perpetuate, and lead intelligence operations globally. This paper serves as a historical overview of some of the techniques of the early female spies and highlights the successes of the modern woman's contributions to the intelligence mission. Emerging female operations officers often face obstacles: dealing with bias within the bureaucracy, issues of female equality within certain cultures, and experiencing slower rates of promotion. This has meant a lack of females in competitive leadership positions. Female mentors and former intelligence members explore avenues for surviving and thriving within the CIA. Women must have high standards of performance and professionalism and grasp the politics of advancement in a male-dominated hierarchical agency. Communication in leadership training and awareness is key, as seen in the CIA's 1991 "glass ceiling" study and 2013 Director's Advisory Group on Women in Leadership (DAG) report on the statistics of the lack of women in senior management. The current trend of women serving in top positions in intelligence organizations should offer encouragement and promote further changes within the American culture.

Introduction

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The success of women in American military history, from the American Revolution to modern day warfare, as well as their acceptance in the Intelligence Community (IC), give women much to be proud of despite the obstacles they had overcome and continue to face in their career. Historically, females were seen as valuable for cooking, cleaning, and tending to the care of their children at home. Women now have held some of the highest leadership roles and in leading intelligence operations, women have gradually become involved as respected and integral parts of the IC. More women are sought after to fight in today's ever-changing globalized terrorist threat, and it is critical to develop their skills toward intelligence gathering efforts.

Clandestine Women: Spies in American History

History has repudiated the traditional tendency to regard espionage as a man's domain. For centuries, countless women have served their allegiances with as much distinction, bravery, and capability as their male counterparts. Wanting to serve their country, women have volunteered to enlist in the military, and have also effectively served in espionage as couriers, guides, code breakers, intelligence analysts, and operations officers. Women's heroic assistance in the work of spies has long been seen and dates back to Biblical times, as described in the Book of Joshua. In the early years of the American Revolution (1775-1783), many Philadelphia women passed key information along to General George Washington at Valley Forge. Wives were used to pass secret notes along to help the Continental Army fight the British.¹

Both sides used the non-threatening traditional nature of housewives to leverage military secrets. Women were recruited as cooks or maids to go undercover and eavesdrop on soldiers without being detected. Colonial housewives did not raise suspicion among the male commanders and women were able to collect key intelligence to help win the war. The Culper Ring included a spy network of women in New York in 1778, which used the code for female agent “355,” and played an important role in the counterintelligence missions that caught Benedict Arnold for treason.² Female undercover operatives would hang their laundry outside on a clothesline to send secret messages and signals to other operatives.

During the American Civil War (1861-1865) intelligence gathering became much more dangerous for women, as the perception of gender roles began to change. Field agents would report to their designated handler, a military or civilian case officer responsible for an agent's activities.³ Recruitment and training also became more

¹ National Women's History Museum. 2007, available at: <http://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/spies/1.htm>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

structured. Elaborate clandestine networks were established and managed by each side across the country, with women serving at all levels, including as scouts, encryption specialists, case officers, and intelligence agents. Rose O'Neal Greenhow was considered a 'spymaster' and operative for the Confederates, with a network operating out of Washington, DC.⁴ The socialite secretly obtained intelligence by hosting social gatherings in her home for military and political leaders. From the tidbits of information she read and heard, Greenhow was able to send coded messages concerning troop movements, supplies, and military strategies to General P.G.T. Beauregard to help the Confederates win the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) in 1861. Women commonly held secret messages in the layers of their clothing or tied intelligence documents inside the ribbons in their hair. Some braver women enlisted as infantry and disguised themselves as men to infiltrate enemy lines.⁵

The United States entered World War I in 1918, and the military recruited women as translators, telephone operators, drivers, and cryptologists.⁶ This was a turning point for American intelligence activities, with notable advancements in communications technology, requiring improved encryption techniques. Breaking new ground, the Army Signal Corps actively recruited women as "Hello Girls," (bilingual telephone switchboard operators), for overseas duty. This marked the first time in the history of warfare that commanders serving on the front lines could communicate directly with the general command. To help protect these and other military and diplomatic communications networks, the American Black Chamber, America's first peacetime cryptanalytic organization and a precursor to the National Security Agency (NSA), was established under Herbert O. Yardley.⁷

As code breakers and linguists, women helped to advance the use of electronic messaging technologies by enhancing security. Unlike many occupations women entered into during WWI, cryptology was not traditionally considered a male job. Since the beginning of permanent cipher bureaus post-WWI, female civilians had worked in the Army and Navy code rooms.⁸ One of the best cryptanalysts of the time, Agnes Meyer Driscoll, worked for the Navy as a civilian. Known to some as "Miss Aggie," she was a math teacher before joining the Navy in 1918. Following WWI, she worked for the NSA and is credited with making breaks into most of the Japanese naval codes that the Navy's Enigma Office (OP-20-G) worked on.⁹

During WWII (1939-1945) thousands of women joined the military or worked as civilians for the military as cryptanalysts, intercept operators, and technicians. The attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 spearheaded the creation of the nation's first intelligence

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ NSA. *Women in American Cryptology*. 2007, Available at: http://www.nsa.gov/about/cryptologic_heritage/women/index.Shtml.

⁹ Wilcox, J. *Sharing the burden: Women in cryptology during WWII*. (Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, 2013) available at: http://www.nsa.gov/about/_files/cryptologic_heritage/publications/wwii/sharing_the_burden.pdf

service in 1942.¹⁰ Founded and headed by Major General William J. Donovan, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) allowed women to play roles in service from clerical to operational missions. Of the 13,000 employees at the OSS, approximately 4,500 women served, and continued to stay in the field after the war, providing breakthroughs and contributions throughout the Cold War. Many of the women who had helped break Germany's and Japan's encoding systems were recruited into the NSA and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as communications and intelligence analysts during the Cold War. Eventually, women rose to the highest ranks of management and today continue to support, develop, and build the cryptologic legacy.¹¹

Some examples of noteworthy women in the field include Virginia Hall and Eloise Randolph Page. Virginia Hall was one of the only American civilian women during WWII to receive the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism. Working with the OSS, she returned to France after being discovered by the Gestapo on a mission. Her sabotage operations against the Germans destroyed bridges and disrupted enemy communications. Hall organized three Free French battalions, distributed radios and weapons, aided downed airmen and worked with the French Resistance movement on many highly dangerous missions.¹² Eloise Randolph Page worked during WWII as a secretary to Major General Donovan, chief of the OSS, until the founding of the CIA in 1947. She transferred into the agency and made espionage and intelligence her life's work. From 1975 until 1987, Page was the CIA's highest-ranking female officer and first female super grade, the agency's first female chief of station, one of the CIA's experts on terrorism, and the first woman to head a major intelligence community committee. Known as the "iron butterfly" in the workplace, Page was one of fifty CIA officers honored as an agency "trailblazer" for their career service. Her award citation called her "a role model and a champion of using technology to solve operational problems." After her retirement from the CIA, she became a consultant on terrorism to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and an instructor at the Joint Military Intelligence College.¹³

As American intelligence expanded into the cyber domain with the introduction of computers and satellites, women played key roles in signals intelligence (SIGINT) as technicians, analysts, engineers, scientists, and mathematicians representing all facets of today's technology-driven, intelligence-gathering operations.¹⁴ Juanita Moody supervised the NSA's production and reporting during the Cuban Missile Crisis. She revolutionized SIGINT reporting and put the NSA into the White House Situation Room briefings.¹⁵ After thirty-three years of service in the NSA, Moody became the first recipient of the National Intelligence Medal of Achievement.

¹⁰ <http://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/spies/1.htm>, 2007.

¹¹ nsa.gov, 2007

¹² Defense Intelligence Agency. 2014, Available at:

<http://www.dia.mil/News/Articles/tabid/3092/Article/8362/women-in-intelligence-part-2.aspx>.

¹³ Central Intelligence Agency. 2013, Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/people-of-the-cia-elaine-page.html>.

¹⁴ <http://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/spies/23.htm>.

¹⁵ National Security Agency. 2009, Available at:

http://www.nsa.gov/about/cryptologic_heritage/hall_of_honor/2003/moody.shtml

Through the determination, hard work, and exemplary analytical abilities of Jeanne Vertefeuille and Sandy Grimes at the CIA, Aldrich Ames, recruited to spy by the Soviet Union, was identified as a CIA mole and successfully captured.¹⁶ Grimes, a former agency operative in the Clandestine Service, and intelligence expert in the former Soviet Union, on a team with Vertefeuille, an expert on counterintelligence and East Bloc specialist, gathered credible information on Ames and his wife. They found evidence proving treason by wiretapping his phone, bugging his house, and keeping him under constant surveillance. Vertefeuille joined the CIA in 1954 as a GS-4 typist and blazed a trail for women in the Directorate of Operations (DO), the forerunner of the National Clandestine Service, responsible for collecting foreign intelligence and overseeing covert and counterintelligence operations. She worked her way up to leadership positions and retired as a member of the Senior Intelligence Service in 1992. In 1976, according to the CIA's history staff, of the agency's ninety-eight key officials at that time, only one was a woman.¹⁷

“You’ve Come a Long Way Baby!”

Though the Agency had begun to recruit more women in the 1980's and 90's, their ability to move into senior positions was limited. In 1991, a CIA-commissioned “glass ceiling” study found that women were not achieving at the same pace or to the same degree as men, and were receiving proportionately fewer awards, while men were still being given the choice assignments. The report also noted that, in order to be accepted, female officers tolerated widespread sexual and racial harassment.¹⁸ The study found that women made up forty percent of the CIA's workforce, with seventeen percent as operations officers, and held only nine percent of the Senior Intelligence Service positions. In the DO, there was a strong belief that women could not recruit agents, due to the low standing women have in the Arab culture, as well as the lack of acceptance of women in authority by the Latino culture. According to Mahle,¹⁹ while a few women were given the opportunity to work as operations officers in the Latin America and Near East Divisions, many found it a struggle working with a sense of unequal status for women and left the Agency.

In 1992, a woman began a class-action lawsuit, eventually joined by 250 female operations officers, against the CIA for sexual discrimination and systematic denial of promotion opportunities for women—when female employees complained about it, they were instructed to have a psychological evaluation.²⁰ The CIA paid more than \$1 million in back pay and salary increases to settle charges, and gave twenty-five retroactive

¹⁶ <http://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/spies/24.htm>.

¹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. 2013, Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/2013-speeches-testimony/remarks-by-brennan-and-albright.html>.

¹⁸ Mahle, M., *Denial and Deception an Insider's View of the CIA from Iran-contra to 9/11*. 2004. New York: Nation.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ R. Jeffrey Smith, CIA bias settlement is inadequate, says group of female agents. *The Seattle Times*, 1995, Available at: <http://community.seattletimes.nwsources.com/archive/?date=19950605&slug=2124820>.

promotions.²¹ The settlement brought short-term benefits and provided for a few long term changes.

According to a former manager of the 1991 CIA's "glass ceiling" study, the Directorate of Strategic Planning and Management Committee was created with a strategic vision to evaluate the CIA's workforce. The study found that they needed more progress and held meetings to view the status of each Directorate. They looked at ways to improve promotion rates and hiring of women and minority groups. Under Judge William Webster, as Director of Central Intelligence, there were periodic reviews with deputy directors conducted by the 'SIS Women's Group.' After Robert Gates was sworn in as the new Director of Central Intelligence, the culture at the Agency went back to being more traditional and dropped the Strategic Planning and Management Group. During that time, however, the Agency began hiring minorities, and got better numbers. Ultimately, a more diverse workforce equaled a better workforce. A productive workforce needed balance.²²

Upon promotion to the SIS, Bonnie Hershberg organized a group of senior women and spearheaded the SIS Women's Group to network and promote diversity at all levels. An early pioneer leadership analyst of the 1990's, she acted as a mentor to feeder groups in the DO and DI, and looked at why most women stopped at a GS-13 level. She guided a comprehensive study of the barriers that were preventing women and minorities from reaching the top levels of the Agency. Armed with the results, she and the SIS Women's Group developed plans to address each barrier and won the support of Agency leaders to change key policies. Improvements ranged from ensuring that promotion and selection panels had minority representation, to conducting formal training for upwardly mobile GS-15 women, to strengthening mentoring for junior officers. Ms. Hershberg's efforts directly resulted in a significant increase in the number of women and minorities in critical positions, a permanent change that will vastly improve the Agency's ability to collect, analyze and communicate vital intelligence to our nation's leaders. After 2000, most women in this group retired.²³

The Director's Advisory Group on Women in Leadership (DAG) was established by former CIA Director David H. Petraeus to help the Agency's leadership continue the advancement of women in the workplace.²⁴ Comprised of senior Agency officers and led by Secretary Madeleine Albright, the team reviewed the organizational and societal factors affecting women's careers and analyzed information provided by nearly half of the CIA's workforce over the course of ten months through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The DAG published its final report in February 2013 and has formed a team and several working groups to implement the ten recommendations, including

²¹ Pear, R. C.I.A. settles suit on sex bias. *The New York Times*, 1995. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/03/30/us/cia-settles-suit-on-sex-bias.html>.

²² Summarized telephone conversation with a former CIA officer, 2014

²³ Divine secrets of the RYBAT sisterhood: Four senior women of the Directorate of Operations discuss their careers. 2013, Available at: <http://www.foia.cia.gov/typisttrailblazer/pdfs/1994-01-08.pdf>.

²⁴ Director's Advisory Group on Women in Leadership. 2013, Available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/CIA_Women_In_Leadership_March2013.pdf

establishing clear promotion criteria from GS-15 to Senior Intelligence Service and expanding the pool of nominees for promotion to SIS.²⁵ The DAG found that there is no single reason why CIA women from the GS-13 level and above are not achieving promotions and positions of greater responsibility and that organizational and societal challenges factor into the issues affecting women. Women in the American workplace face many challenges, including:

- A lack of sponsors, or someone who uses their authority and influence to advocate for them,
- Subtle forms of bias and harassment,
- Insufficient workplace flexibility,
- An increasing number of extreme jobs, defined as working more than sixty hours per week,
- The ‘pull of outside responsibilities,’ such as caring for family members, or health issues that lead to a higher rate of ‘off-ramping,’ or voluntary time off from a career to care for outside responsibilities, which affects women at a higher rate than their male counterparts.

The CIA will focus on three key areas to improve the progression of women, including fostering intentional development, valuing diverse paths, and increasing workplace flexibility.²⁶ A group of senior (SIS) women came together and were responsible for mentoring and providing statistics.

Undervaluing women’s talents and expertise directly and negatively impacts the mission. According to the 2013 DAG unclassified report,²⁷ women currently make up forty-six percent of CIA’s workforce, up from thirty-eight percent in 1980. Female representation at the GS-13 to GS-15 levels has increased from nine percent to forty-four percent over the same period of time. As of October 2012, females constituted thirty-one percent of the Agency’s SIS officers. This percentage is proportionally higher than at other IC agencies, which have a combined average of 28.8 percent females in their senior executive ranks. As noted in an extensive study in 2008 by McKinsey & Company, companies with three or more women on their senior management teams scored higher on nine important dimensions of organization, from leadership to accountability and motivation to innovation, than those with no senior-level women.²⁸

Some of the advantages that women have can be seen as a reverse benefit. While men tend to identify things from point A to B and move on, women tend to have a psychological desire to create context for a situation, which can be better in the long run. Women usually have more patience than men, and can “smooth over edges and work through boundaries” more easily than men.²⁹ In a transcript of four SIS women speaking candidly about the course of their careers, some remarked on the gender

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Summarized telephone conversation with a former CIA officer, 2014

differences at the CIA.³⁰ Some of the differences are that while women make sacrifices like men, they feel guilty about them; about leaving behind husbands, children, and not being at home. Today's culture has changed. Females have more choices in today's evolved culture. Another advantage is that women recruit differently than men.³¹ The biggest advantage to women in operations is that foreign men will tell women anything, because of their disarming, nurturing, and non-threatening nature. Men never suspect women are intelligence officers. Women can easily play "dumb Dora." A physical archetype myth is that women have to be "butch," or as the pendulum has swung with current Hollywood trends, female operators run around looking glamorous in mini-skirts. This is far from the truth. Women in intelligence are just as diverse as the population. However, they all have an edge to them. They are not pushovers, and they have a natural curiosity. They like to analyze things.³²

In a panel of CIA trailblazers, female speakers mentioned several key factors for success at the Agency, including enhanced communication and training to women to be able to appropriately track themselves to be positioned to be competitive within the IC. Managers must be able to give plain feedback to junior members and tell them the truth of their development gaps. Women must understand the politics of the agency that they work for, so that they understand early on what they have to avoid and what they have to develop. They need to also get a grip on the 'politics' and professional culture of the agency where they hope to propel forward.³³

Due to the demands of being a mother, it is almost impossible in operations to juggle a family overseas.³⁴ One spouse almost always has to sacrifice being in separate locations; this is especially true in wartimes. This is one of the large sacrifices women make. If they decide to have a family and children, women assigned in operational positions of leadership overseas can't bring their children to work. Much of their career involves traveling assignments, and therefore many women forego having children. My interviews have shown that many successful women that are able to rise through the ranks do not have children, and some have never been married, or are divorced. One woman described being looked at differently when she began her career in the 1970s because she was married. She described being compared to her husband because they worked together on the job. While she had the opportunity to live abroad, she and her husband made the decision to stay state side for their family. Another theme discovered was that some women quit the CIA due to frustrating demands on their personal life, and not being able to keep in touch with loved ones. One woman quit the Agency and went to work in the private sector after realizing the strain on her family with frequent moving around and being absent from traveling all the time. The examples of marriages that have survived are those that work tandem in the field, or where the spouse doesn't

³⁰ foia.cia.gov, 2013

³¹ Ibid.

³² Summarized personal interview with a former CIA officer, 2015

³³ Meredith, C. "Typists and trailblazers: Women in the CIA," 2013, available at: <http://www.paradisecitypress.org/2013/11/13/typists-and-trailblazers-women-in-the-cia-video/>.

³⁴ Summarized telephone conversation with a former CIA officer, 2014

care to hear about the other one's job, and therefore there are no issues because it works out for them to have separate work lives.

Women of Courage, Character, and Commitment

Women made up the majority of analysts, dubbed "the Sisterhood" in Alec Station, the unit charged with finding Osama Bin Laden, managed the CIA's Counterterrorism Center after 9/11, and participated in the interrogation and waterboarding of al Qaeda suspects.³⁵ They were critical to the first capture of a major al Qaeda target, Abu Zubaydah, helped find and kill Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, in a US air strike in 2006, and ran CIA black sites. Nada Bakos, who led the Zarqawi "targeting team" and is now writing a book on the role of women in the war against al Qaeda, recalls that three quarters of the officers who worked for her were female.³⁶ They not only tracked his whereabouts, but his finances, his followers, and his international motivations, including where he wanted to strike.

The rise of women in intelligence, particularly in the fight against al Qaeda, has not been without cost. In December 2009, two senior female officers were among seven who were killed in a suicide bomb attack by an al Qaeda double agent at Camp Chapman near Khost, Afghanistan. Among the fallen were two women, Jennifer Matthews, the Chief of Base, a wife, and mother of three children, and Elizabeth Hanson, Kabul station targeter.³⁷ These women made the ultimate sacrifice in serving their country and the memory of it will not be forgotten.

Women now make up one third of the agency's senior staff, triple the level of twenty years ago. At forty-six percent, nearly half of the total workforce is female.³⁸ Now three of the top four officers and five of the top eight are women, including the CIA's deputy director, executive director, chief information officer, director of support, director for intelligence, H.R. director, deputy chief financial officer, and the chief of staff. Society has reached a point where it is now normal for women to hold command, management, and senior positions across national security and defense organizations. In 2010, Letitia A. Long became the fifth Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and the first female head of a major U.S. intelligence agency. As Director, Long led and directed NGA under the authorities of the Secretary of Defense and Director of National Intelligence to provide geospatial intelligence (GEOINT).³⁹ According to Long,

³⁵ NBC News Investigations. 2013, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/hunting-osama-bin-laden-was-womens-work-f2D11594091>.

³⁶ Windrem, R. "Sisterhood of spies: Women crack the code at the CIA," *NBC News Investigations*, 2013, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/sisterhood-spies-women-crack-code-cia-f2D11594601>

³⁷ I. Shapira, "For CIA family, a deadly suicide bombing leads to painful divisions," *The Washington Post*, 2012, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/for-cia-family-a-deadly-suicide-bombing-leads-to-painful-divisions/2012/01/20/gIQAyJGVYQ_story.html.

³⁸ Windrem, 2013.

³⁹ National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. available at: <https://www1.nga.mil/About/Leadership/Pages/Director.aspx>.

relationship-building while navigating a career in intelligence and national security is key. She insists that having a work-life balance is something to work out daily. ⁴⁰

In an interview with Tom Fox, writer for the Washington Post's Federal Coach blog and director of the Partnership for Public Service's Center for Government Leadership, Long was asked: What are the challenges and rewards of being a female leader in a traditionally male-dominated arena like intelligence? Long replied:

“I tend not to think about being a woman in a man's world. I really look at it as the challenges and rewards of being a leader in times like today. I cannot deny the fact that I am a woman. Women have made great strides in the intelligence and defense communities, and I think both communities clearly understand the business case for diversity. From an NGA perspective, we really focus on cognitive diversity, not diversity simply based on age, gender or ethnicity. Diversity is about your experience, your background and everything you bring to the table. The challenge is that we are leading during a challenging time, and the reward is being a part of an agency that delivers outstanding geospatial intelligence, analysis and products that make a difference.” ⁴¹

As Director of NSA's signals intelligence branch during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Maureen Baginski paved the way to merge intelligence and law enforcement. She was the first to train intelligence analysts and FBI agents together at Quantico. Mary Margaret Graham was appointed as Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Collection in 2005. She also recently served as the Associate Deputy Director for Operations for Counterintelligence at the CIA. In her twenty-seven years with the Agency, she has led numerous field and headquarters assignments.

Numerous women have made a difference to shatter the glass ceiling across the government and private sector. In July 2014, as the former Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans and Strategy, Vice Admiral Michelle Howard became the first woman to hold the rank of four-star admiral in the history of the U.S. Navy. She is the first African-American woman to achieve three-star rank and four-star rank in the U.S. Armed Forces. This is an important milestone that comes three years after the Air Force's first woman four-star general, and seven years after the Army's first woman four-star general. In her new position as Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Howard has also become the first woman to serve as the second-ranking officer of a military service within the DoD, making her the highest-ranking woman in uniform in Pentagon history. ⁴²

⁴⁰ T Fox, “Leadership intelligence: An interview with Letitia Long of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency,” *The Washington Post*, 2012, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-leadership/leadership-intelligence-an-interview-with-letitia-long-of-the-national-geospatial-intelligence-agency/2012/06/21/gJQAvJ2lsV_story.html?wpisrc=nl_fedinsider.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Hagel, C. *The DoD's Women of Character, Courage and Commitment* (DoDLive, 2014), available at: <http://www.dodlive.mil/index.php/2014/03/the-dods-women-of-character-courage-and%20commitment/>.

Christine Fox was appointed by President Obama as Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense in December 2013. With her appointment, Fox became the highest-ranking female official in history to serve in the Department of Defense. Having previously served as director of the DoD's office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, as president of the Center for Naval Analyses, and as senior advisor to the National Security Analysis Department at Johns Hopkins' Applied Physics Laboratory, Fox brings more than thirty years of experience as a defense leader, and as an analyst and research manager focusing on real-world operations. She's among the Pentagon's most brilliant strategic thinkers, and, having broken many barriers, she serves as a role model for women throughout the national security and foreign policy arena.⁴³

Betty Sapp was appointed the eighteenth Director of the National Reconnaissance Office (DNRO) in July 2012. The DNRO provides direction, guidance, and supervision over all matters pertaining to the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) and executes other authorities specifically delegated by the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence.⁴⁴ Stephanie O'Sullivan was sworn in as the Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence (PDDNI) in February 2011. As PDDNI, O'Sullivan serves in a role similar to that of a Chief Operating Officer where she focuses on the operations of the ODNI, and manages IC coordination and information sharing. She also reinforces the DNI's intelligence integration initiatives and focuses on IC resource challenges. Before this assignment she served as the Associate Deputy Director of the CIA, where she worked with the Director and Deputy Director in the overall leadership of the Agency, with emphasis on day-to-day management of the organization. Prior to becoming Associate Deputy Director of the CIA, for four years O'Sullivan led the CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology (DS&T), the part of the Agency responsible for developing and deploying innovative technology in support of intelligence collection and analysis.⁴⁵ In a CNN interview, O'Sullivan admitted that she has spent the bulk of her career sticking out. Initially, as one of a very small number of women enrolled in civil engineering classes, and later, as she recalled, was the only woman in a conference room full of engineers. Being the only female has had its advantages and she maximized them whenever possible.⁴⁶

The Success of One Woman is the Inspiration of Another

In a recent Leadership Summit for Women in National Security Careers,⁴⁷ women were encouraged to break female stereotypes and the confidence gap as barriers to women's success by being brave. Guest speakers encouraged women to step up into STEM

⁴³ US Department of Defense. available at:

<http://www.defense.gov/bios/biographydetail.aspx?biographyid=385>

⁴⁴ National Reconnaissance Office. available at: <http://www.nro.gov/about/leadership/DNRO.htm>.

⁴⁵ Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Available at:

<http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/leadership/principal-deputy-dni>.

⁴⁶ Kelly, S. "Help wanted, must keep a secret: the case file on ODNI's Stephanie O'Sullivan," CNN, 2012, available at: <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/09/help-wanted-must-keep-a-secret-the-case-file-on-odnis-stephanie-osullivan/>.

⁴⁷ Working Mother Conference. 2013, available at: <http://www.workingmother.com/conference-events/leadership-summit-women-national-security-careers-2013>.

(science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) career fields, and to lead other women to follow in the power of influence and leadership change. Intelligence agencies can derive support and best practices from one another to achieve organizational missions and create positive, diverse working environments.⁴⁸

In an interview, one former female CIA officer said, “Forget the gender issue. Align yourself with a male or female in power above you that likes you, and hang onto them.”⁴⁹ She said to gravitate to people that make you happy, because you’ll be more productive at work. A big theme echoed by many of the women I spoke with was to be confident. Never assume you can’t do something until you try and don’t communicate your doubts. Sometimes women shoot themselves in the foot by getting caught up in people’s personalities and by making assumptions about what others think. Another theme was being proactive at your job. Don’t wait to be told what to do. Figure out what needs to be done and do it! Be proactive about your agency’s mission. Set a framework for the problem that encompasses everyone’s position and look at the long-term strategy. See the big picture and think above your pay grade. Look for context and offer solutions to problems, always thinking one step ahead. There is much value in your loyalty to the job. Trust the organization. Have strong communication skills, and have quality production. Be mobile and flexible, and do good recruiting and analysis. All of these things will earn you a strong reputation. Most importantly, be true to yourself.

Conclusion

While the status of women in the CIA has generally been a reflection of the status of women in American society, most of the problems experienced by these women in intelligence are not unfamiliar to women in the rest of the government and in the private sector.⁵⁰ Their dedication and abilities proved that women could more than adequately do this challenging, detailed, and critical work. They left behind a strong legacy, allowing thousands of women to follow in their footsteps. These women played vital roles throughout US history and will continue to bring their talents, skills, and abilities to advance the intelligence capability of our nation. By looking at the historical context of their agency, junior members can have a full appreciation and respect for their agency culture and understand how it has grown. Women need to pay it forward as ‘translators’ or mentors to the younger women of today, recruiting and molding them to become successful in the IC. They need to leverage the talents, ambition, and drive of the junior members in rank in our workforce today to reap the full benefits in order to meet an increasingly complex and challenging mission.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Summarized personal interview with a former CIA officer, 2015.

⁵⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, 1996, available at: https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/1996/exdir_speech_051596.html.