

More Female GIs Fall in Crosshairs of Divorce

By Barbara J. King

For a startlingly high number of women, married life does not go hand-in-hand with military life. That is according to new Pentagon statistics that show the divorce rate of female service members is more than two times greater than the rate of their male counterparts.

While the military's exploding divorce rate has received significant media attention in recent years amid sustained operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the statistics recently reported by the Washington Post highlight how the trend is heavily and disproportionately affecting women service members. According to the Post report, 7.8 percent of female service members divorced last year compared to 3 percent of male service members. Approximately 220,000 women have served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A 2007 RAND Corp. study on military families noted that female service members are more vulnerable in marriage than their male counterparts. For example, the civilian husbands of military women are more likely to be unemployed, when compared to civilian wives of military men. Also, gender may play a factor in making these civilian husbands feel discriminated against, socially isolated and overall less satisfied in a relationship, according to the RAND report. Female service members are also more likely to marry other service members than their male counterparts, with such marriages occurring at a rate of 50 percent to 10 percent, respectively.

Regardless of cause or gender, divorce is a difficult matter for families. For women in the military it is especially fraught with financial and custody concerns. The attorneys at Tully Rinckey PLLC, many of whom have served in the armed forces, are experienced in handling such matters with sensitivity. People with questions about dissolving their marriages or concerns about how they would be impacted by a divorce should contact a family and matrimonial attorney.