



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JAN 29 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Restoring America's Fighting Force

The Department of Defense (DoD) has an obligation to the American public to ensure their sons and daughters serve under the best leadership we can provide them. Doing so is a national security imperative. A foundational tenet of the DoD must always be that the most qualified individuals are placed in positions of responsibility in accordance with **merit-based, color-blind policies**.

The DoD mission is to win the Nation's wars. To do this, we must have a lethal fighting force that rewards individual initiative, excellence, and hard work based on merit. In the Executive Order of January 27, 2025 (Restoring America's Fighting Force), the President and Commander in Chief prohibited any preference or disadvantage for an individual or a group within the Armed Forces on the basis of sex, race, or ethnicity.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies, as defined in the January 27, 2025, Executive Order, are incompatible with the values of DoD. The DoD will strive to provide merit-based, color-blind, equal opportunities to Service members but will not guarantee or strive for equal outcomes.

To ensure DoD focuses on its core mission of providing the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's security, the Department will ensure all decisions related to hiring, promotion, and selection of personnel for assignments are based on merit, the needs of the Department, and lastly, the individual's desires.

Restoring America's Fighting Force Task Force. To ensure compliance with the principles above, I direct the establishment of a multi-functional "Restoring America's Fighting Force" Task Force charged with overseeing the Department's efforts to abolish DEI offices and any vestiges of such offices that subvert meritocracy, perpetuate unconstitutional discrimination, and promote radical ideologies related to systemic racism and gender fluidity.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) will establish a Task Force to oversee the elimination of any program, element, or initiative that was established to promote divisive concepts as defined in Executive Order 13950 of September 22, 2020 (Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping), or gender ideology as defined in Executive Order of January 20, 2025 (Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government). The Task Force will provide an initial report to the USD(P&R) of actions taken by DoD to terminate DEI initiatives by March 1, 2025, and a final report no later than June 1, 2025. The Task Force has the authority to task the Military



OSD000599-25/CMD000952-25

Departments and DoD Components for necessary information for the report and establish deadlines for compliance.

Promotion and Selection Reform. The DoD will not consider sex, race, or ethnicity when considering individuals for promotion, command, or special duty. DoD Components and the Secretaries of Military Departments, may designate categories of assignment that require exceptions to this policy due to clear operational need.

Elimination of Quotas, Objectives, and Goals. No DoD Component will establish sex-based, race-based, or ethnicity-based goals for organizational composition, academic admission, or career fields.

Prohibition on Instruction on Critical Race Theory, Gender Ideology, and DEI. No element within DoD will provide instruction on Critical Race Theory (CRT), DEI, or gender ideology as part of a curriculum or for purposes of workforce training.

Instruction to Promote a Lethal Force. The U.S. Service Academies and other defense academic institutions shall teach that America and its founding documents remain the most powerful force for good in human history.

Boards and Councils. All advisory boards, councils, and working groups will cease operations related to gender ideology, DEI, and CRT.

The USD(P&R) will oversee the implementation of this memorandum, in coordination with the Secretaries of the Military Departments. The Department will continue to monitor the progress of these efforts through the Restoring America's Fighting Force Task Force.

The strength of the DoD comes from our unity and our shared purpose. We will focus on lethality, meritocracy, accountability, standards, and readiness. Providing Service members an equal opportunity to excel will help us remain the strongest and most lethal fighting force the world has ever known.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'FBK' in a stylized, cursive font. To the right of the signature, the alphanumeric code 'SD29' is written in a bold, blocky font.