



Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC)
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The Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) Releases Final Report

Following 18 months of research and analysis today marks the release of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission's Final Report. At this time, copies of the report will be delivered to the President, White House staff, and members of the U.S. Congress, fulfilling requirements established under the provisions of The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09). Recognizing existing disparities and seeking to look ahead, Congress mandated the creation of the MLDC through the FY09 NDAA to "conduct a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of policies that provide opportunities for the promotion and advancement of minority members of the Armed Forces, including minority members who are senior officers."

The MLDC, an independent deliberative body of 31 members demonstrated itself as an inclusive organization whose members consisted of active-duty and retired officers, senior enlisted personnel from the Active and Reserve Components of all military Services, as well as civilian representatives to include senior executives of major corporations, civil servants, and a law school chancellor.

The Commission's charter listed 16 specific tasks. To ensure each of these tasks were addressed accordingly, the MLDC divided into 10 subcommittees, each supported by a research team. Each subcommittee produced issue papers on specific topics and a decision paper that reports the subcommittee's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The Final Report, founded on the investigations conducted by the subcommittees, presents the Commission's main findings and recommends policies and practices to develop future military leaders who represent the face of America.

Unanimously, the Commission recognizes that the understanding of diversity must, and can, change throughout the Department of Defense (DoD). The U.S. military currently faces two challenges that need immediate response. Primarily, the racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup of our nation is changing where projections suggest that minority populations of ages appropriate for military service will increase in the next century, while the non-Hispanic, White population will decrease. Following, skills critical to 21st-century mission success needs to be identified and rewarded. Leaders will need to address complex and uncertain emergent threats. The ability to work with multicultural stakeholders will be critical, requiring greater foreign language, regional, and cultural skill sets.

The MLDC's Final Report and recommendations therein support two overriding and related objectives. The first is that the Armed Forces systematically develop a demographically diverse

leadership that reflects the forces it leads and the public it serves. Second, that the Services pursue a broader diversity that includes the range of backgrounds, skills, and personal attributes that are necessary to enhance military performance.

Twenty recommendations have been proposed by the MLDC. These recommendations establish a definition of diversity that is appropriate for today's challenges. They build a foundation for change by ensuring leadership commitment to diversity and the development of future leaders through strong implementation strategies. As well, the recommendations ensure continued progress through policy goals and metrics that will allow DoD to manage and sustain great diversity.

Retired Air Force General Lester Lyles, Chairman of the MLDC said, "Diversity is more than simply representing the American population -- it is about gaining a more effective military capability through inclusion -- recognizing, and fully utilizing the wide range of talents, skills, and abilities of our Servicemembers." He continued, "The Commission envisions expanding opportunities while maintaining the military's high standards. This could be done by removing barriers that are unrelated to doing the job, such as barriers related to individuals' demographic membership, rather than their ability."

The Commission found a series of tacit barriers that occur throughout a Servicemember's career, including a lack of clarity about the promotion process and knowledge about career-enhancing opportunities and choices. As such, the MLDC recommended a sustained process of improvement, transparent and inclusive throughout the advancement of a Servicemember's career that will keep the U.S. military in step with the ongoing changes among the American people. Vice-chairman of the Commission, retired Army Lt. Gen Julius Becton explained, "Diversity is a leadership style that enhances performance through inclusion. Acknowledging and utilizing the contributions of all Servicemembers, and including them in the decision-making process is imperative."

The MLDC found one overt barrier to advancement into senior leadership, the policy excluding women from combat. As such, the Commission recommends that DoD and the Services remove institutional barriers to open traditionally closed doors, especially those relating to assignments in both the initial career field assignment and subsequent assignments to key positions. The Commission additionally recommends focus on the realignment of organizational structure, instituting a system of accountability, ensuring the succession of leaders committed to diversity, and the development and implementation of robust policies and strategic metrics. Lyles added, "Our diversity makes our country and our military great; the Commission's purpose was to build on this greatness."

For additional information or questions related to the MLDC Final Report, please visit the organization's website <http://mldc.whs.mil>, or contact Master Chief Steven Hady, MLDC Executive Director at (703) 602-0818 or steven.hady@wso.whs.mil.