



#BeBoldForChange

Det er mange tøffe damer i den amerikanske hæren.

Hun som er tøffest nå, har jobbet ved JWC*



The story below is partly an excerpt of the original article written by **MARIE BERBEREA**, Editor of the Fires Bulletin, TRADOC, and published online at army.mil on 30 March 2017.

Mary Skindrud, who served in the JWC's Joint Training Division from 2009 to 2012, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel last September, thus becoming the highest ranking active-duty female field artillery officer in the United States Army. Skindrud currently serves as the Chief of Fires in the CJOC, within HQ Resolute Support in Kabul, Afghanistan. She says the JWC has been one of her best deployments ever. "I remember my time at the JWC every single day! I miss it very much and would come back in a heartbeat, if I could," she says.

Skindrud credits her mother and grandmother and other female relatives as women who inspired her the most. "All of them are/were strong in their own ways, but I know above all I learned the value of hard work from them."

Due to being a member of a combat arms branch, Skindrud says she did not have a lot of interaction with female leaders. She nevertheless names Lieutenant Colonel Marci Miller, whom she met during her first deployment; Canadian Lieutenant Colonel Katherine Vigneau, her supervisor at the JWC; and Senior Assistant Legal Officer Lone Kjelgaard, a former JWC employee currently working at the Office of Legal Affairs, NATO HQ, as examples of women she looks up to for their knowledge, character and work ethics.

"I consider them to be among the smartest women I know and I am so lucky my career allowed me the opportunity to meet and work with them," Skindrud says.

Inci Kucukaksay, JWC PAO

M ARNY SKINDRUD was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel September 1, to become the highest ranking active-duty female field artillery officer in the [United States] Army. Like other "female firsts," piloting in new lanes of history doesn't feel awkward to Skindrud because her way of navigating is the only way she knows.

"I just try to see myself as a Soldier and a leader. Yes, I know I'm female, other people know I'm female, but I don't really differentiate between those roles," said Skindrud.

She shares this mentality with Colonel Andrew Preston, a former 214th Field Artillery Brigade Commander, who told his troops he didn't have female leaders and male leaders. *He had leaders.*

[Skindrud] said her upbringing by her Norwegian mother and being raised on a farm instilled that type of confidence in her abilities. "On the farm there were never any boy-jobs or girl-jobs, and my parents never told me that I couldn't do anything because I was a girl. That was important," said Skindrud. She has made a habit of taking on challenges.

Almost as impressive as her military career is the myriad other activities [Skindrud] have tackled. From college soccer,

national-level tug-of-war, jiu jitsu in the European championships, playing on a men's rugby team, weightlifting competitions, snowboarding competitions, joining and becoming an instructor in hula and her latest adventure, roller derby, Skindrud is not afraid of new frontiers.

She recognizes the sacrifices of women before her and is thankful that discrimination has not affected her path. The closest she felt any ignorance regarding her gender was hearing that Iraqis believed the women on the mobile transition team before her were only on the team to service the men. "I know there are people out there that have crazy views on females in the military, but I don't feel like I've ever been specifically discriminated against as a female. As soon as I'm working alongside (male Soldiers) and they see that I'm putting in the same amount of effort as everyone else, I feel like it calms the waters."

Skindrud understands her position as a role model, but she doesn't believe any suggestion of being an example applies just to junior ranking women. "There are a lot of male leaders that I admire their qualities," she said. "That's what I want; someone who wants me to be their mentor because they admire the qualities that I show." ✦

* There are many tough ladies in the U.S. Army. The toughest one right now, used to work at the JWC.