



US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

# BLAST INJURY RESEARCH PROGRAM COORDINATING OFFICE

## Risk Assessment and Surveillance

### Characterization and Comparison of Combat-related Injuries in Women During Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom

Researchers from NHRC, sponsored by BUMED, characterized combat-related injuries in 835 Service Women, comparing injury profiles between OIF and OEF and examining the likelihood of leaving active duty after injury. Women currently represent 15% of forces deployed in OIF and OEF. Although restricted from combat roles prior to 2013, women in the Armed Services have evolved from supportive occupations in previous conflicts to complex roles that now directly relate to combat operations. Detailed medical, injury profile, injury severity, and tactical data for each female casualty was obtained from NHRC's EMED. The women studied were nearly equally divided between OIF and OEF, the majority were in the Army (85%) and over 90% of the injuries were due to blasts. While the majority of the injuries were in the mild category, over half of the injured women had multiple injuries, which commonly occurs with blast exposure. The injury patterns did differ between OIF and OEF, with head and spine injuries more prevalent in OEF and open wounds more common in OIF. Seventy-eight percent of the injured women still remained in the military with active status. With women beginning to take a more active role in combat operations, it is important to examine injury patterns to determine if there are gender differences in combat injuries or if these injuries affect military women in unique ways. The results of this study and other planned work can inform and prepare health care providers to care for injured military women in ongoing and future conflicts.