

Permanent Commission for Women in the Army

September 3, 2020

A **Permanent Commission** means a career in the army until one retires. If one gets selected through the **Permanent Commission**, one has the option to serve the country up to the **full age of retirement**. As per the order of the apex Supreme Court (SC), the union government has been asked to ensure that women officers, irrespective of their years of service, are granted Permanent Commission in the army.

Permanent Commission to Women in Military

The court added that the woman officers will now be eligible for command posting. The SC bench observed that there could not be absolute exclusion of women officers for command assignments, and that they should be considered on a case-by-case basis. **Previously, women officers served for 10-14 years in the Short Service Commission (SSC).** Women officers are allowed entry into branches such as **Army Service Corps, Ordnance, Education Corps, Engineers, Signals, Intelligence, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineering.**

In response to SC verdict, the Ministry of Defence issued the formal Government Sanction Letter for grant of Permanent Commission to women officers in the Indian Army, paving the way for empowering women officers to shoulder larger roles in the organisation. The order specifies **grant of PC to Short Service Commissioned (SSC) Women Officers in all 10 streams of the Indian Army.** Women had so far been allowed PC in only the **Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC).**

As of January 1, there were a total 1,648 women officers in the 10 streams. Army Aviation had the lowest representation of women officers (24 officers; 3.46% of the stream); JAG had the

highest (103; 40.23%). Additionally, there were 1,185 women (21.25%) medical officers in the Army, and 170 women dental officers (making up a quarter of the Army's dental officers). Overall, **women comprised just 3.8% of the Army's strength.**

About 322 women officers had approached the apex court on the issue of PC and the issue of command postings came up in the discussion on subsequent avenues after the grant of PC. In its appeal, the government cited **"physical" and "physiological limitations"** in granting command positions to women officers, to which the Supreme Court said there was **need for administrative will and "change of mindset."**

Status of Women in Other Armies

- UK- Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron lifted a ban on women serving in close combat roles in 2016. In 2018, women became eligible to apply for every role in the British forces.
- France- Women can serve in every position in the military, including submarines and combat infantry. Women make up around 15% of all service personnel in the combined branches of the French military.
- Australia – All combat and non-combat roles are open to women. In 2016, women were allowed to serve in the front-line combat roles.
- Russia – Women can serve in most areas of the military except riot control. They have been allowed in submarines, including nuclear submarines, since 2014. Women are also allowed to lead the combat infantry.