

AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S COMBAT CAPACITY

7-8 MARCH

2024



MILITARY  
WOMEN'S  
SYMPOSIUM

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PRESENTED BY THE VALKYRIE PROJECT IN COLLABORATION  
WITH MIT LINCOLN LABORATORY

# Welcome to the second annual **MILITARY WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM!**

On behalf of the team at The Valkyrie Project Inc. (VP) and MIT Lincoln Laboratory, I'd like to welcome you to the second annual symposium, MWS24!

The Valkyrie Project Inc. been dedicated to optimizing female tactical athlete performance through woman-centric programming for the last five years, but in 2023, opened our aperture as a 501c3 nonprofit so we could better educate the defense enterprise, support research benefitting American servicewomen, and advocate for the same.

We are thrilled to host stakeholders from industry, scholars and servicemembers from the US and abroad, and defense and civilian sectors at MWS24, expanding on last year's foundation with larger panels, recent research presentations, and focused talks that address the hard questions. More than a decade after the Combat Exclusion Rule for American women in service was overturned, we are still not fully investing in the asset that is the female service member. Why more women are not in senior leadership in the US military remains a concerning point. Women's factors related to health and wellness and human performance remain under-researched and misunderstood. Whole life course support is still lacking to keep women in service longer. Tactical gear and equipment are still predominantly made for men, reducing functionality and increasing risk for our servicewomen.

We hope this symposium illuminates the unique dynamics servicewomen navigate, triggers further research, catalyzes policy improvements, and inspires investment in our most critical weapon system, the service member.

## **MEG TUCKER**

Founder & President  
of the Board, VP, Inc.

## **DAY 1**

Mar 7 | Agenda

0830

0845

0855

0900

0915

0930

0945

1000

1045

1100

1115

1130

1145

1200

1300

1345

1400

1415

1430

1445

1500

1515

1530

1545

1600

1655

1700

### **CHALLENGES & GAPS**

Check-In / Continental Breakfast

Administrative and Opening Remarks - Dr. Melissa Choi / Dr. Jonathan Pitts, MIT LL

Opening Remarks - Meg Tucker, MA, MS, US Army Veteran, Founder  
& President of the Board, VP, Inc.

**Keynote/Invited: Women in International Security - Joan Johnson-Freese,  
PhD, Senior Fellow**

Policy Gaps: Past, Present, and Future - Dr. Sidra Montgomery, Principal  
Researcher, A-G Associates

Why We Needed WildAI, the Groundbreaking Women's Performance App  
- Helene Guillame Pabis, CEO & Founder of WildAI

**BREAK**

**Panel 1 - Challenges & Gaps**

**BREAK**

### **SERVICEWOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**

**Keynote/Invited: Freedom to Serve - Col Eries L. G. Mentzer**

Failure to Adapt - Jessica Rutenber, Lt Col (Ret) USAF, Director, Level Up Aviation

Climbing a Moving Wall: Systemic Inequities Faced by Servicewomen - Priya Phillips, Esq,  
J.D., CPT, US Army Reserve Judge Advocate, Trial Defense Counsel

Leading Alone: The Isolation of Women in Male-Dominant Fields - Maj Sydney Jacques,  
US Army, Balance your Grit Founder

**LUNCH**

**Panel 2 - Servicewomen in Leadership**

**BREAK**

### **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

**Keynote/Invited - Karl Friedl, PhD, Senior Research Scientist, Performance Physiology,  
US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine**

Rise of the Female Warfighter: Built from within - Holly McClung, MS, RDN CSSD

Rise of the Female Warfighter: In all Environments - Gabrielle E.W Giersch, PhD

Automated Screening for PTSD via Vocal Biomarkers - Jing Wang, ME, MIT LL

**BREAK**

Change your Brain: Three Nutrients for the FTA Mind - Jenna Stedman, DCN, RD, CSSD

Don't Let the Sword Cut Both Ways: Debiasing AI - Ngaire Underhill, MIT LL

**BREAK**

**Panel 3 - Health and Wellness**

Closing Remarks - Dr. Jonathan Pitts, MIT LL

Networking & Social (ends at 1800)

# DAY 2

Mar 8 | Agenda

0630

**Shield Maiden Memorial Workout (Weather-dependent)  
at Hanscom Fitness and Sports Center, 180 Marrett St, Hanscom AFB**

0830

Check-In / Continental Breakfast

0855

Administrative and Opening Remarks - Meg Tucker, Founder & Chair, VP Inc.

0900

**Keynote - Shelly Stoneman, Senior VP of Government Affairs, Lockheed Martin**

## MAXIMIZING COMBAT PERFORMANCE

0920

**Invited Speaker – Honorable Alan R Shaffer**

0935

Woman Warfighter Load Carriage - Chris Connaboy, PhD

0950

Break

1005

Context is Queen: The Revolution in Data Analysis - Anne Gibbon, Founder, Matri.ai

1020

Improving Female Preparedness  
for Arduous Courses - Dr. Anne Carroll, Captain, British Army

1035

The Metabolic Pink Tax - Dr. Allison Brager, Major, US Army

1050

Improving Operational Performance  
through Physiological Monitoring - Dr. Paula Collins, MIT LL

1105

**BREAK**

1120

**Panel 4 - Maximizing Combat Performance**

1205

**LUNCH**

## GEAR & APPAREL

1315

**HighCom Armor: Inclusive Rifle Insert System - Mark Lodge**

1330

Optimizing Fit: How Garments and Gear Transform  
into Performance Partners - Stephanie Muhlenfeld, Founder of the Squad

1345

FDP™ Advance Force Protection - Judy Lee Greenhill, CEO, COO, Co-Founder  
and Zach Greenhill, Strategist, Inventor, Co-Founder

1400

MIT Fabrics Center Presentation - Lauren Cantley, PhD

1415

Break

1430

**Panel 5 - Gear & Apparel**

1500

Closing Remarks - Meg Tucker, Founder & Chair, VP Inc.

1505

Adjourn

# DAY 1

## PANEL 1 - CHALLENGES AND GAPS

Fiona Thwaites, CEO and Managing Director of Jennis; MAJ Ashley Shepherd, US, Executive Officer, Raleigh Recruiting Battalion; Helene Guillame Pabis, CEO and Founder of WildAI; MAJ Samantha Sliney, USAF, JD, LLM, Department of the Air Force Women's Initiatives Team Co-Chair

Moderated by Candace Esquivel, US Navy, VP Inc. Board of Directors

## PANEL 2 - SERVICEWOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

CDR Christina Humphries, USN, Operations Officer, Naval Leadership and Ethics Command San Diego; MAJ Sidney Jacques, US Army, "Balance Your Grit" Founder; Lt Col Sarah Fortin, US Air Force, TACP Operations Support Squadron Commander; CAPT Lexia LittleJohn, Chief of Staff, First Coast Guard District

Moderated by Tiffany Myrick-Woodley, 1SG (Ret), US Army, MBA, VP Inc Board of Directors

## PANEL 3 - HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Jenna Stedman, DCN, RD, CSSD; MAJ Tashina Miller, US Army, PhD., LCSW, 3rd Security Force Assistance BDE Behavioral Health Officer; MAJ Alivia Stehlik, US Army, PT, DPT, 3rd Security Force Assistance Brigade; Holly McClung, MS, RDN, CSSD. Gabrielle E. W. Giersch, PhD

Moderated by Lt Col Kristen DeWilde, MD, CPE, Lt Col, USAF, MC, SFS.

# DAY 2

## PANEL 4 - MAXIMIZING COMBAT PERFORMANCE

Dr. Allison Brager, MAJ, US Army; Dr. Chris Connaboy. Dr. Ann Carroll, Captain, British Army; Dr. Paula Collins, MIT LL

Moderated by Meg Tucker, MA, MS, US Army Veteran, Founder & President of the Board, VP Inc.

## PANEL 5 - GEAR & APPAREL

LTC Rachel Cepis, US Army, ARSOF Women's Initiative Lead; Jess Schindler, DEVCOM

Moderated by Katheryn Basso, Founder & CEO, KADRI Clothing

## MEET THE PLANNERS



### MEG TUCKER

US Army Veteran, Founder & President of the Board, The Valkyrie Project Inc.



### KATHERYN BASSO

Founder/CEO, KADRI Clothing



### LINDA MADDEN

Group Administrative Assistant, Counter-WMD Systems Group, MIT Lincoln Laboratory



### DR. JONATHAN PITTS

Assistant Division Head, Homeland Protection & Air Traffic Control, MIT Lincoln Laboratory



## ENJOYED THE WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM?

VP Inc. is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to delivering a world-class forum for defense stakeholders via MWS every year. Your contribution helps keep this event free and supports our current and future programs. Please consider donating using the QR code below. Contributions go directly to VP Inc., and are not shared with MIT Lincoln Laboratory, which is a separately funded entity.





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