

## The German Marshall Fund of the United States

**Innovation:** Mission Critical: Inclusive Leadership  
for the Security Sector

**Introduced:** 2013

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The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) initiated **Mission Critical: Inclusive Leadership for the Security Sector** in 2013 to focus attention on a fact that had not been sufficiently addressed: Democracies can only achieve security by applying the principles and practice of inclusive leadership across the security sector.

Without taking this step, security may deteriorate at both the local and national levels. With this in mind, GMF founded a biennial conference to strengthen inclusive leadership skills within the security domain, and to generate increased awareness of the critical importance of D&I to security. This series of conversations is helping to move D&I in security onto the

agenda of both practitioners and policymakers.

Inclusive leadership in the security sector strengthens intelligence, widens the talent pool, increases public trust, and improves decision-making. To advance such leadership, GMF convened its first transatlantic exchange “Mission Critical, Diversity and Inclusion Best Practices for Militaries” in 2013 in Washington, D.C., in partnership with the U.S. Helsinki Commission, U.S. Department of Defense, True Blue Inclusion, and others.

Germany’s delegation so valued the content that they stepped up to host the next discussion in 2015 in Berlin, which resulted in the creation of Germany’s first office dedicated

to D&I within its Unified Armed Forces. The D&I team is transforming the Bundeswehr’s culture of recruitment, retention, and advancement.

In 2017, GMF reconvened Mission Critical in Washington. The initiative included cross-sector, cross-border, and intergenerational discussions, as well as original workshops that can be brought to scale and in-depth learning and exchange to strengthen and energize participating leaders.

At the opening of 2017 event, Dr. Karen Donfried, GMF president had this to say regarding inclusive leadership at large, “As our security personnel at all levels of leadership—engaged to ensure peace and freedom for all in our democratic societies—grow to fully

reflect the diverse populations they are sworn to serve, we will become best equipped to inspire new generations to engage in public service. Vital conversations with constituents and stakeholders outside of the security services can richly inform decision-making.”

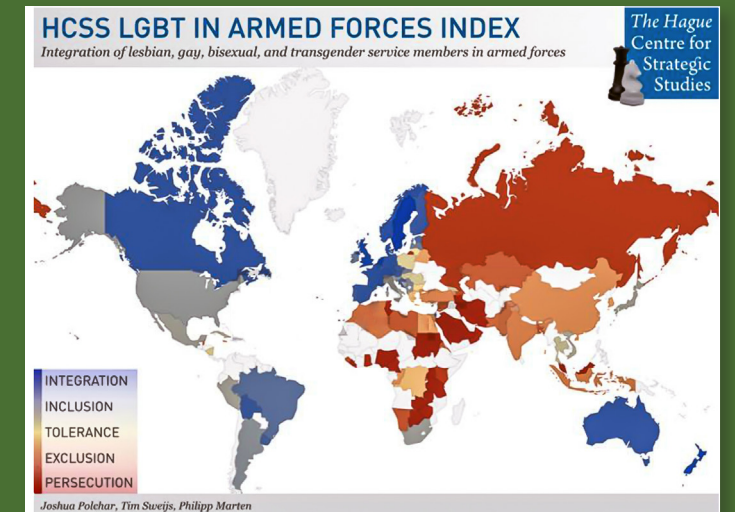
Even as experts increasingly recognize the benefits of inclusive leadership to security, instances of its absence become more striking. Since GMF’s first conference in 2013, the negative impact of exclusion on security in our cities and nations has dominated front-page news on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, we continue to face the societal impact of exclusive behaviors in policing that challenge core values of equality. These events impact the whole nation, its morale, and its ability to project power abroad. Given this concern, GMF widened the 2017 conversation to include not only national security, but also domestic security.

### What are the next steps for leaders?

It is essential to define the goal—an approach to security that is comprehensive, designed for every member of the society, with wide input, and ensured by security forces that are reflective of highly diverse populations. With this goal in mind, those at the forefront of advancing inclusive security will continue to accelerate their work by sharing best practices. The high level of interest in this exchange, as indicated by anonymous conference-participant evaluations, has led the partners to move from a biennial to an annual format. The United States Air Force is stepping up to host the 2018 conversation.

## Security and Diversity

- **We Cannot Afford Not to Use All Talents:** Against the backdrop of the changing demographics seen in many countries today, the military cannot continue to meet its goals and be mission ready without expanding its recruitment to include the talents of a wider range of people.



- **Plan Less, Act More:** Due to the nature of bureaucratic leadership, it is often easy to get bogged down in D&I planning without taking action and making actual changes. Although it is important to conduct research to understand what problems exist, taking action creates initiative and produces experiences that can be learned from.
- **All Transformations are Led from the Top:** Good leadership is vital to achieving successful D&I. Although an inclusive environment must be created at all levels of an organization, leadership is responsible for demonstrating that D&I is a top priority for the organization.
- **There is no Silver Bullet or Quick Fix:** Creating inclusive organizations requires changes to society and to people’s mindsets, and therefore takes time. The concept of long-term strategy is popular in military circles. Diversity management should be thought of in the same way. It is crucial to institutionalize D&I and establish a specialized office with personnel committed to addressing long-term goals.
- **In Addition to Being a Mirror of Society, the Military can serve as a Mirror for Society.** In a democracy, the composition of the military must reflect that of the society. Given its hierarchical structure and ability to institute changes that must be adhered to, the military is also in a position to lead the way in society’s shift to a culture of inclusion. The successful policies enacted within the military can serve as an example for civilian policies.

– Dr. Nelson Lim, Executive Director, Fels Institute of Government, University of Pennsylvania and Adjunct Senior Sociologist, RAND.