

**Rough Transcript**  
**Maj Glenys Bussler, 41 CBG HQ (15 April 2016)**

**Deployment(s):** Afghanistan 2011 (about to deploy to Kosovo 2016)

**Interviewer/Transcriber:** LCol M.C. Vernon

***Note: Quotations are not 100% verbatim***

<b>Timecode</b>	<b>Content</b>
0:15	How did you join? Started in high school, Summer Youth Employment program. Transferred to Calgary Highlanders, but had to join band (drums) because infantry was not open to women then. Switched to clerk. Went to Mobile Command in Montreal, came back to Calgary, then went to Regina Rifles. By 23, she was a sergeant. A warrant at 26. Then commissioned in 1994 as a Logistics officer. Got laid off from her civilian job in Saskatoon, so returned to brigade headquarters in Calgary. Now about to deploy to Kosovo.
2:35	First impressions of military in the 1980s? More like an old boys' club that didn't know how to deal with women. At 17, she remembers being yelled at by a warrant officer: "Why are you staring at me? Do you LOVE me?" You had to be like a guy—"talk tougher, be ruder, be meaner". It was different. She took her Junior Leader Course in Petawawa in 1988. RCR Battle School ran the course. They tried to break you back in those days. Started with 36 and graduated 12. Started with 5 women and 2 finished. Many guys had never worked with women before. They didn't have any idea. She topped her JLC. Warrant Officer was opposed, but course officer was a woman. Then the CREW trials were underway. (Combat Related Employment for Women). There was a lot of talk about lowering standards, women's inability to measure up etc. She didn't want to be that poster child, so she decided not to do it. Not to try for an infantry job.
5:50	"I thought about quitting every two or three years." She took it a few years at a time. And then there are the usual issues relating to any job.
6:30	When did it get better? "It hasn't always been bad. There's been bad incidents. Got better the more senior she got in rank." As a lieutenant, she hoped it would be more civilized, but it wasn't. But she was treated as a peer as a captain. Every once in a while she'd have an "old dog" boss.
7:55	Why stick it out? She likes it. Believes in Canadian Armed Forces. In Afghanistan in 2011 it was multinational. It made her appreciate our leadership, training, and professionalism. Sometimes you question it. But then you see how we are and how we're respected overseas. It made her proud.
9:00	Overseas? She went March-November 2011, Information Dominance Centre at ISAF HQ in Kabul. Supposed to be a governance analyst,

	<p>“completely out of my experience level, but basically filling out a spreadsheet... along the lines of what a corporal would do. Person before me didn’t have a lot of capacity. My Brit lieutenant-colonel gave me more to do.” Various teams in her circle. She became development team leader, involved with stability operations, working with non-profits and NGOs. An interesting job. Got to leave the camp quite a bit. Flew in a Black Hawk to Bagram. Dealt with a lot of generals. Interesting to see from strategic level, campaign planning, working with Americans. “I thought we were really similar until I worked with them and then I realized we’re not as similar.”</p>
12:00	<p>It made her appreciate Canada, her family, things we have. She volunteered for a women’s bazaar, working with two Afghan-Americans to help women sell their wares and earn a profit, retaining more of the money. Two guys who sold carpets used their truck to pick up the women’s stuff. They’d all meet up at the bazaar. Some confrontations between men/women, deciding who goes first through screening, biometrics.</p>
13:40	<p>One silly experience: A mix-up involving some gates, requiring an escort. She got in the Afghan truck, but it went into streets of Kabul instead... and she was alone with them. “Not a good one, but it was fun.”</p>
14:40	<p>She’d learned her lesson from being on the streets with pistol and soft hat. Another time, she was fully geared-up, but a woman noticed her wedding ring. They exchanged them for a look. Some younger girls asked her about her marriage, children, the common family talk. They wanted their daughter to go to school, thinking about engineering. The progress! Talk of dead fathers. Her kids didn’t have a care in the world by comparison. Touching. “One of my happy moments. Sorry, I’m tearing up...”</p>
16:50	<p>Why Afghanistan? “I wanted to go because I had been the person at home dealing with the casualties... wanted the experience, and because as the G1 I’d been dealing with casualties and notifications. To see what it was like firsthand. To see what we could be doing. Never had a tour. Not many women went on tours back then. Had a job, then a child, then a single parent. This was perfect time for us and family.”</p>
18:40	<p>How difficult to be G1? It was the constant bellringers. The notification someone’s been seriously injured or killed. Always happened in the middle of the night. Go to HQ, brief everyone. Sometimes things didn’t go right. Had to assign an assisting officer. The person who assists the family with repatriation, the military aspect. Quite often I’d taken the designated assistant to the family. Worst moment of their life. Hard to meet them. You just felt sad. But you couldn’t be. You had to be compassionate, but not break-down person. I must have talked about it at home too much. Daughter called in a bell-ringer. For a dead fish. A VSA—vital signs absent. She used all the terminology. We dealt with</p>

	more than 41 Brigade. I think I'm quite resilient, but it was tough. Even when I saw what happens, I volunteered even though I knew what it might mean for my family. I wanted to be part of it."
22:15	How did military handle notifications? Sadly, we got really good at it. The first few times, we didn't know what to do . Where to send people . We had training, to teach people how to tell people their son had been killed. Did exercises. Got better at it. " Complications—like people out hiking and hard to track down. Lockdowns until all next of kin are notified. Can't control people overseas who break the news to a family. Can't control when someone works for major media outlet, and you find yourself in a news studio in uniform. All very respectful. It was dignified. For everyone who was repatriated.
24:40	"I don't want to do it ever again. It was heartbreaking to see the young kids. We were given a next of kin name that was different. It came out this person had been raised in unstable home life. Then in early 20s was killed overseas. NOK wasn't even family, but someone who took this person in." Once in a meeting with Minister of Education in Afghanistan, was asked why we hadn't solved their problem. She asked, "What are you doing about it as an Afghan, as a country?" She wondered why are our people dying here if the Afghans aren't willing to fix their own problems, but then she thought about the young women. She was hospitalized for a kidney infection in the Role 3 (French) hospital. She saw that women and children had to be supervised by men. All drugged up, she noticed an old bearded Afghan man praying across the hospital room.
28:05	The things we take for granted, there was a girl whose legs were wrapped up and infected. Another lady had tried to kill herself by lighting herself on fire. Some kids came over to her bed, and they'd watch a Disney movie together, cuddling in. By day six, moms would put their kids on her bed and go off to have tea. They didn't know she was in the military until she came in in uniform and they were shocked.
29:30	A girl recovering from a combine accident who recognized her jumped into her arms, when she was in uniform. Surprised her father. These are the stories she takes away. Driving from ISAF HQ back to her camp in a two-vehicle move, someone cut in between them. People in the vehicle pulled their weapons out. She remembers the threats like this, and the human stories about the mom of the burn victim who was going to sleep on the floor until she got her a bed. "If you're kind to someone, they're going to be kind back. And then there's the other part of the country..."
31:40	Canadians and Americans? They're 20 years behind us as a general rule. Met some really wonderful people, the analysts, but then there were some colleagues like majors and colonels. They were repealing "don't ask, don't tell". They wondered how she knew what she did as a Logistics female officer. "We have a broader viewpoint." She

	mentioned women going to a motorcycle show with other women, and found people were homophobic. "Don't tell me this stuff again." Misunderstandings about The American Way. "If you don't believe us, we're going to force it down your throat." Canadians were willing to discuss, guide and mentor, but Americans insisted on doing it their way. "We had a broader knowledge, as well as our specialty, and consistent leadership. " In a case of sexual harassment, three women got sent away. "How dare you say that about the general."
35:40	Three women made allegations against the same general. They got sent away and he stayed.
35:50	Homophobia? Because she said "my adjutant and her wife". Which she never gave any consideration to. That's one thing she's seen change. When same-sex became acceptable, similar to when women were allowed into combat roles. Period of transition. "We've grown leaps and bounds, but compared to Americans... I've found the mentality is 'USA is the only way'".
37:10	Integration success? It depends on the group. She sees Service Battalion work well together. Signallers too. Don't see a lot of women in the combat arms and hear stories about them. Like the dating pool is bigger. Op HONOUR identifies the problem, but what do we do about it? We need to eliminate gender. We do a lot of joking. She just filled out a survey about sexual misconduct that brought back a lot of memories. That 5% that's bad can ruin a reputation or organization. It depends how it's treated. It comes down to dealing with the change. She's at senior rank, with less awareness about integration on the armoury floor, but she still experiences issues. "As a young corporal I was just a target. When you're one woman in a hundred men, someone's going to look at you as a dating opportunity."
40:50	Would you want your daughter to join the CAF? "I wouldn't want her to join a combat arms unit. Okay with Navy, Service Battalion, Signals. But combat arms culture has not changed as much as it should have. There's still an elitist mentality. If you're not a Highlander, I don't have to listen to you." She still sees it and hears stories. "We're not that far ahead yet."
42:15	Mixed feelings about Afghanistan? Very proud to know she went over, contributed, was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice for the country. To broaden the world. Trying to change the country, even a little conversation with the Minister of Education or getting Afghans to participate in changing their country... very proud. Cautiously optimistic it will have made change. "I could have been killed too. For a good reason? Not about me, but about the big picture."
44:45	How did you explain it to your family at the time? They just knew. It's hard to say you want to put yourself in harm's way, or put yourself in harm's way and potentially break up one's family. But she'd never

	<p>deployed in 23 years of service. She thinks they understood after the years of notifications. "I want to be part of this. Missing out on something. It wasn't fun. I know it war really hard on my husband." She was the one who took their daughter to appointments. "And then I was gone and he had to step up to the plate. A huge change. We'd fight and have nasty conversations over the phone... wow. I'm not telling you about the eight American who were killed 300 metres from me..." Daughter was in grade eight. "I don't think she even noticed I was gone. In her own social world. They went to Cuba... mom's gone but she sends money. Kidding." It was hard but strengthened relationship. Eight months apart made them stronger than ever before. Now heading to Kosovo. Looking forward to it. Daughter is an adult now. Going to much calmer region. "It was tough. They understood. My mom didn't understand. She was quite angry. But at the end, it made us a stronger family."</p>
49:30	<p>Now going to Kosovo as deputy commander of Joint Logistics Centre. Overseeing logistics aspects of several camps in Kosovo and into Greece. More of a global threat than anything. She'll retire when she comes back.</p>
50:15	<p>Final thoughts? Almost as if she's retiring now, after a little six month trip. "It's changed me. Went into military as silly little high school kid who didn't have an ounce of discipline, didn't know what I wanted to do. Didn't have a plan. Remember my dad saying 'this should last a week. You don't like being yelled at.' I've seen change. They didn't have to have women in the Highlanders. But now there's a female senior officer." From being treated to "you're just date bait, to being commissioned, to positions I never thought I'd hold... dealing with different countries on a higher level. It's been an amazing time. Prefer to look at the good. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. When I reflect, I don't have any regrets. It's made me quite a strong person."</p>
	<p><b>Additional visuals desired:</b></p>