

COMMIT Foundation Spotlight on Women in the Military Featuring Tiffany Myrick-Woodley

In honor of Women's History Month in March, The COMMIT Foundation interviewed Army leader and trailblazer, Tiffany Myrick-Woodley. Tiffany's military service spanned 20 years and a wide variety of different leadership positions. Read more about her inspiring story and advice to young women below!



Tiffany Myrick-Woodley Background:

Tiffany Myrick-Woodley is a native of Norfolk, VA and retired December 1, 2022 after 20 years of service in the United States Army's Military Police Corps. During her time in service, she held every direct leadership position, culminating in her career as a First Sergeant and Sergeant Major-select.

Tiffany completed two combat tours to Afghanistan 2004-2005 and 2011-2012 and two tours to Korea in 2003 and 2018. She played an essential role in the gender integration of the Army's Combat Arms occupations where she served as a member of Cultural Support Team – Two (CST-2), enabling 75th Ranger Regiment and Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU) Special Mission Units by engaging the female and adolescent populations in Afghanistan. Additionally, she was selected to observe and advise on the implementation of standards during the integration of Ranger School, the Army's premier leadership course. Tiffany holds an MBA with a concentration in International Business and is married with a blended family of four children.

Question: How did you initially make the decision to join the Army?

Tiffany: I was a young mother in college and found myself struggling to work and go to school to provide for my child. I initially joined the Army on a two-year contract with the intent of getting experience to obtain a better job and G.I. Bill benefits.

Question: Were there any immediate struggles you faced as a woman in the Army when you first started?

Tiffany: Absolutely! It was my first time being far away from home and I realized that I was not viewed in everyone's eyes as I see myself; strong, intelligent, and fully capable. It was a struggle because it was the first time that I felt as if I was under a microscope and always

having to prove that I was just as good, just as capable. It was extremely draining until I learned how I best manage, which was by focusing on my goals and my own performance.

Question: What was your experience like as you helped lead the gender integration of the Army's Combat Arms occupations and Army Ranger School?

Tiffany: Prior to the combat exclusion policy being lifted in 2013, I served as a member of CST-2 where I conducted direct action missions with 75th Ranger Regiment and DEVGRU Special Mission Units. These organizations had very little experience working with women while conducting their missions. Fortunately, both organizations ensured my partner and I had the proper equipment to successfully perform our duties. They made sure we looked like members of the team to the extent that we were issued uniform items from helmets, hearing protection, NVGs, footwear, "Crye" uniforms, weapons, and body armor specifically altered for proper fit. Further, we were provided additional tactical training including marksmanship, fast-rope, and mission planning throughout our tenure that made us even more proficient.

Each organization had its own "personality", and we knew that every team member did not want us there. Despite that, our competence could not be denied. My partner and I were respectfully received by most of the men we worked with which made my experience as a CST positively memorable.

In the fall of 2014, I was one of 32 women assessed and selected to be cadre during the integration of Ranger School. My experience enabled me to be assigned to the Ranger Training Assessment Course (RTAC), the mandatory two-week pre-Ranger course that all women had to pass prior to attending Ranger School. At the forefront of the program, I observed approximately 138 female students attempt the course. During my tenure at RTAC and 4th Ranger Training Battalion, I analyzed course requirements, advised Ranger Instructors and other staff on women-specific issues, briefed members of the Armed Forces Committee, the media, and senior military leaders on their progress. I ensured all standards were maintained and informed course leaders of any perceived discrepancies. Additionally, I used my influence in efforts to quiet critics, advocate for women, and inform policy. The first integrated courses graduated two women and a third shortly after. Currently, 126 women have graduated from the course. I am fortunate and tremendously proud to have been a part of this significant time in military history.

Question: What do you feel was the most important component of your success in the military and the various leadership positions you have held?

Tiffany: The most important components of my success were: determination, courage, and resilience. Have determination to go after your goals. If you want to do something, put fear aside and go for it. I had to have the courage to speak up for myself, my subordinates, and in some cases, my peers. Sometimes I got the short end of the stick, but that's just the nature of the beast. I learned that I won't always be able to do everything that I set out to do, either due to my

own shortcomings or outside influences. That's where resiliency comes into play and you just keep moving forward.

Question: Do you feel that your experience as a woman in the military has changed since you first started out?

Tiffany: Yes I do. Women have more opportunities to lead in positions that weren't open at the time when I joined. The Military Police Corps was the closest branch to combat arms women could get. There are now many opportunities for women to climb the ladder in combat arms branches and pave the way for future generations in ways previously unavailable. There are still some challenges, yet more women are now able to be in positions where they can help address them.

Question: How do you feel about transitioning out of the military and your next steps?

Tiffany: I feel determined and supported by my family and friends. The COMMIT Foundation has helped me map out my next steps and taught me how to build on what I already know and the skills I already have to successfully navigate this journey.

Question: What were some of the key takeaways from your involvement with COMMIT?

Tiffany: The COMMIT Foundation provided outstanding coaching and mentorship that helped me align my goals with my strengths and identify transferable skills I obtained through service. I was able to gain a network of high-achieving veterans who continue to excel after military service.

I also learned how to bring my personality into new environments, tell my story in a way that captures the listener, and communicate what I bring to the table. Additionally, I learned intentional presence setting where I identify my performance goals and determine how I choose to show up. This allowed me to reframe my thoughts and center on what I can control. Further, I identified habits to take forward through my transition and those I should leave behind. The Commit Foundation was definitely a value-add in my transition.

Question: What were some of the unexpected challenges you've had to overcome during your transition from the military? Were there transition challenges that you felt might be unique for women?

Tiffany: Although the challenges I faced were expected, it did not make them any easier. I went through a phase where I felt lonely since I was no longer part of a team. One piece of advice I received during The COMMIT Foundation Workshop was to find a new tribe and continuously

build relationships. I took the advice and reconnected with friends and family, enrolled in courses of study, volunteered for nonprofit organizations, and participated in civic engagement.

I have not experienced any challenges I believe are unique to women. Doubt and uncertainty is shared across both genders and increases with every year served. Heads of households however, have the additional burden of providing for their families. Transitioning to a role that provides financial security and purposefulness makes for an additional challenge. Fortunately for me, I have a loving husband who has supported me every step of the way making my transition smoother.

Question: What advice would you give to young women interested in military service today?

Tiffany: In short, my reply is: Please serve! We need you! Women make up approximately 51% of the population, but only 17% of our Military. Women are a great asset to any military organization and bring a multitude of skills that makes our Armed Forces much more effective.

Talk to a recruiter to see what your options are. I recommend finding a female mentor who will answer your questions and guide you from their experience in the Branch or MOS of your choice. Feel free to reach out to a service member or vet, including myself. We're here to help.