

WOMEN IN INDIAN ARMY

Maj Gen P K Mallick, VSM(Retd)

For number of years I had been sending e-mails on matters of military interest to many of you. I have not been publishing them as papers because free and frank opinion cannot be given in military journals for obvious reasons, Role of Woman in Army has been covered number of times by me.

In view of recent statement by COAS and policy decision taken by the Army, I thought I would revisit the issue.

The issue is contentious. Opinion is divided in black and white. I fall in gray variety. Both black and white opinion have genuine reasons. I don't want to go into those.

I have trained Young Officers of Corps of Signals in YO's Course which had number of lady officers. I have commanded unit which had lady officers. In higher ranks also one had to deal with issues relating to lady officers. With all humility I want to put forward the following issues.

There are good officers, there are bad officers. There are good lady officers as well as bad lady officers just as the gentlemen officers.

We must keep our own Indian conditions into account. All most all our combat arms units are based on caste. They bring their own mindsets of the village clan. For keeping the cohesion of the unit intact nobody fiddles with that. It is encouraged in unit and sub unit level. What effect this have in our men folk, has there been a study on that.

Everybody quotes Western statistics. They have problems about manpower. Nobody wants to join army. Even today USA is seriously thinking of conscription to get good quality intake. We are not the army of West. There a very large number of armies which do not have women in combat arms. For very valid reasons. When did the European Armies fought wars or CI Ops after Second World War. That is why in Sweden and Norway men and women share the same room as combat soldiers. Well they will behave like 12 year old kids! Progressives will say what is wrong in that. Make your choice.

In our case after a lady officer gets married and has kids she has very little utility to the unit. Most of the blame lies with us. In civil whether a lady is employed as school teacher or clerk or anything after child birth and maternity leave she performs as usual. No problem. In army we have been brought up in ladies first culture. We tend to get involved in domestic help, feeding of kids etc. That is not a bad thing per se. But unit suffers. In AMC it does not happen.

Unit cohesion is a big casualty. For understandable concerns 2IC will not like to detail lady officers for duty officer/ temporary duties where one has to move on short notice without reservations etc. The other officers get their undue share which they resent. Again there should not be any discrimination on duties, does not happen on ground.

Before taking a decision please ask Commanding Officers of units who have lady officers. Also ask Officers of MS Branch controlling those arms and services who have lady officers.

In operations and exercises very little attention is paid to personal comforts. There is nothing more soldierly than going out in the morning with a bottle in hand. Please don't get Swach Bharat into this. One has to understand the conditions where we operate. Additional administrative burden is an issue which we can do without.

We exist to fight a war and win it. Not for peace time soldiering. In rain, mud, high altitude, assaulting a hill feature under intense enemy fire will you like to have somebody who is not physically upto the mark, whose battle loads you have to share and be extra protective to her so that she does not become POW.

Basic building block of Indian Army is the units. Nothing should be done so that unit cohesion gets adversely affected. The day it happens doomsday would not be far behind.

What is the hurry. Everything has its own time. The ladies of Switzerland, one of the most advanced countries in the world, got voting rights in 70s. Our ladies got this right from day one of our republic. The US Marines had argued that women should be barred from the corps' ranks of infantry, machine-gunners and fire-support reconnaissance units. It is only in December 2015 the US Secretary of Defence Ash Carter ruled that women will be allowed to serve in all combat jobs in the U.S. military overruling the recommendations of USMC Chief, later Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff.

So far we were talking about officers. Now women in other ranks. Army has very well established methods of arriving at major decisions. I wonder whether some major studies have been conducted, feedback obtained and an informed decision has been taken on getting women in rank and file. You want to know how this kind of studies are done ? Please click on <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdf/files/PUB830.pdf> .

In 2012 the U.S. Marine Corps temporarily opened its Infantry Training Battalion (ITB) and Infantry Officer Course (IOC) to female volunteers. At the end of the Marine Corps experiment, 29 female officers had attempted the course but none had graduated. The Marine Corps reported that 98% of the women dropped from the IOC were due to physical performance failures and one woman dropped due to injury. The pass rate for women in the enlisted Marine Corps Infantry Training Battalion (ITB), which is regarded as a less strenuous course than the IOC, had been 35.9% over the testing period compared with a 98% pass rate for males entering the course.

I recommend policy makers to read CRS Report on Women in Combat: Issues for Congress, December 13, 2016 available at: <https://fas.org/sqp/crs/natsec/R42075.pdf>.

In a 2014 speech to veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Gen Mad Dog Mattis, the present Defence Secy of USA said he was opposed to opening some of the military's most demanding combat jobs to women not because he doesn't believe they are qualified, but because he doesn't believe in mixing love and close-quarters combat.

"The idea of putting women in there is not setting them up for success," Mattis said at the time. "Could we find a woman who can run fast enough? Of course we could. Could you find a few who could do the pullups? Of course you could. That is not the point. That is not the point at all. It is whether or not you want to mix Eros.

"Do you really want to mix love, affection, whatever you call it, in a unit where you, as a 20-year-old squad leader, can point at someone else and point forward knowing full well you've now introduced all the affections and the testosterone and the love and everything

else that goes into young people?" he continued. "I think it would only be someone who's never crossed a line of departure into close-counters fighting that would ever even promote such an idea." You may like to click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDxU4Y4aXPg> .

In July 2015, US Govt Accounting Office reported that the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the military departments had conducted 41 studies as part of their women in the services reviews. The issue areas studied included:

- Unit cohesion
- Women's health
- Equipment, gear, and uniforms
- Facilities modification
- Interest in serving in combat roles (propensity)
- International issues

[\[https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42075.pdf\]](https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42075.pdf)

U.S. Government Accountability Office, DOD Is Expanding Combat Service Opportunities for Women, but Should Monitor Long-Term Integration Progress, GAO-15-589, July 2015]

I hope these kind of studies have been done!

There are lot of holy cows in our cupboards. For very valid and understandable reasons they are not taken out in the open and discussed threadbare because that will adversely affect the very basic building blocks of our army. Our combat arms units, mostly are based on caste, religion, location etc. In 21st century? Caste based regressive system? But when an infantry jawan charges an enemy bunker with fixed bayonet knowing fully well he may or may not survive the assault, he does not do that for Bharat Mata, he does this for paltan ka izzat. His war cries are different based on religious deity or clan they belong to etc. It is for this paltan ka izzat that we still have those caste based systems of recruitment which are not tinkered with. Well you can give examples of mixed class units but they are few in number. If you wanted to change this slowly this could have been done, that has not happened.

Most of our men come from Punjab, Haryana, HP, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Western UP. Disproportionately. Constitutionally we are duty bound to recruit proportionately from male recruitable population from all states. We have regiments which compose of say 100% Brahmin Thakurs. We have to change, then a process has to be in place so that change happens gradually without any major commotion. Do we have any system in place.

Are you willing to look at recruiting Gorkhas from Nepal. As Field Marshal Slim says there is no good or bad regiment. There is only good or bad officers. We have heard enough of good will, let's talk about return of investment. Slowly we can replace Gorkha units from Nepal with Indian units. If you ask any Gorkha from Nepal which army he will join British or Indian, you know what will be the answer. Our senior officers from Gorkha Regiments will like their units to go to UN Missions, understandable. But the money which the unit gets will go to Nepal and not to some Indian villages. We are a big country, ki farak paida syndrome will prevail. We have our officers who go to the remote locations of Nepal to distribute pay to ESMs. What about doing the same to remote locations of Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal or North East.

There are other issues also.

The decision has already been taken. It is dusted and done. For a long time I have been writing Indian Army has to get out of All izz well syndrome, not taking any decisions for any major reforms. That is when in today's world the vested interested media, the ill informed politicians and wily bureaucrats will take decisions, good bad or ugly and put those down the throat of army. We will have no recourse but lump it like a thick lump of shit and say they are the political masters. Do we require one Lt Gen Shekatkar to tell us what reform we have to do as if Indian Army does not know what is to be done.

Previous UPA Govt was hell bent on giving up Siachen. Some doves from veteran community, experts in strategic affairs, were part of that campaign. The Army for very valid reasons resisted tooth and nail. The Chief went to media. The Govt developed cold feet and Siachen was saved. But give the devil its due, the Govt did not force the army to accept their decision. Or on AFSPA. In view of stubborn resistance from Army that decision which Shri Chidambaram wanted was not taken. Today Supreme Court ruled every incident in CI ops will be investigated by the same police due to whose failure army has to come in.

One gets a feeling decisions are coming from top and we have no other way but accept it. Like lady officers marching like jawans in Rajpath. Ki pharak pahanda?

Three years back when discussing this issue via e mail, a very respected Lt Gen Baljit Singh sent me his paper. Also a paper from Marti Van Crevald both of which I had shared earlier , I am reproducing below. Some of the other articles which I shared earlier are attached. This is for academic purposes.

WOMAN EMPOWERMENT AND COMBAT ZONE SOLDIERING

by
Lt General (Retd) Baljit Singh

A woman's femininity and vulnerability must never be compromised, not even at the altar of woman empowerment. True woman empowerment implies a societal mind-set which honours and studs guarantee against the vulnerability of a woman's person.

Unbelievable though it might sound but the protection of a woman's honour and the life of an infant are a significant part of the unwritten creed of soldiering. This is imbibed from the very first moment when a young lad makes entry into the profession of Arms. For, he acquires a new persona which goes by the status "Gentleman Cadet" (GC). The emphasis is on the prefix "Gentleman" which implies a host of virtues, that is, honesty, integrity, upright and steadfast character, professional excellence, humility, courage, courtesy, and above all chivalry. And chivalry in the soldier's creed is all about honouring the person of a woman from any walk of life and caring for the life of infants in the course of duty.

On successful completion of training and imbibing a gentleman's virtues, the GC graduates to a "Gentleman Officer" as distinct from a "Civil Servant". In the milieu of such an exacting officer corps of the Indian Armed Forces, not only will the "lady officers" be accepted as equals but in addition they will function in a protective and chivalrous environment. No country- man or woman need have any apprehensions on this count.

Gender discrimination is or ought to be anathema to a gentleman's creed. But the circumstances of soldiering and the very nature of every active battle field is unfortunately (for our lady officer) gender indiscriminating. From my personal experience of the last ten years in the Service when I was in a position to shape policy and watch policy being shaped, it is my firm conviction that the armed forces are not gender biased. It is just that the incontrovertible nature of the active combat zone and of combat zone simulated intensive training, simply does not and cannot provide the kind of creature comforts for privacy and personal hygiene so vital for the physical and emotional equipoise of the feminine gender. And it is this single factor which is and will create mental and emotional stresses for the lady officers leading to depression, indiscipline, hyper irritability and even suicide.

There was a time when officers of the Armed forces trained for combat but superannuated from the Service without ever going into combat. They simply alternated between two years "peace" and "field" tenures. But since the 1980s the officer corps alternates between low-intensity-combat tenure and "peace" stations. Admittedly the degree of stress in the latter period is non-lethal but nevertheless it is a time of continuous and high voltage training carried out in combat zone simulated scenarios.

Perhaps I can best illustrate these invidious stress prone situations which the lady officers will find most disconcerting by taking random examples both from active combat zones and the present day combat simulated training regimen.

Brig Sir John Smyth VC, MC has this hilarious episode from WW I in his autobiography which demonstrates how awkward and therefore stress-generating an active combat zone can be for a lady officer. He was the Adjutant (capt) of the 15 Sikh, the first Indian troops to land in France in 1914. After disembarkation, 400 Sikh soldiers and eight officers marched the whole day to their destination. It was a hot day and their bodies were

covered with dust and uniforms soaked in sweat. On spotting a water hose amid an excited sea of French faces. the Sikh soldiers stripped down to their home-spun cotton drawers. opened their hair and beards and set about having a good wash. The men then created a screen around the water-hose by suspending a few turbans and their officers too washed up!

Now if there were one lady officer among the eight, would she have been comfortable to bathe almost in the open ? If she abstained, what a torture to remain coated in dust and sweat may be for another 48 hours. Also, when men's drawers get soaked in bath water and soap there remains nothing hidden. Imagine the awkwardness for the lady officer to be around which may well have been required of her as part of duty. And then be seated for dinner with the other seven, spruced and clean.

Closer to our times, this is the kind of happening which was witnessed daily, for over a year. Around the tube-wells in the Punjab farm-lands where the Indian Army remained combat-deployed following attack on the Lok Sabha in 1998.

Let us take a look at a counter-insurgency simulated training in the NE. A lady officer along with a body of soldiers in battle fatigues are tasked to march through a dense tropical forest for the whole day to set up an ambush for the insurgents after dusk. At the regulation halts, a man would simply, turn his back on his comrades and just a few paces away from them, relieve himself. What about the lady officer, especially where tiger leeches rejoice at the exposed human body? Besides, she may well be in the phase where she would need at least a few snatches of privacy for essential personal hygiene. If her temperament revolts at accepting the rough with the smooth for the whole day and perhaps one night as well, she is bound to be traumatised, to say the least. And repeated exposures to similar and more demanding assignments can emotionally unhinge any one.

No matter how reprehensible but the fact is that plunder and rape have been the booty of war in the history of mankind. Even as recent as WW II, the Japanese and to a lesser degree the Russian, soldiers had betrayed these traits. There is the Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs and one can state with pride that at least the Indian Army has been its staunch adherent. But there are many Nations who are not.

The greatest threat of trauma to a lady officer in active combat arises from the eventuality of falling a POW. It is a fact that war does brutalise a soldier's or any man's psyche and he may commit the most horrid excesses. Take for instance the case of Maj Rhonda L Cannim of the US Army whose helicopter was downed in Iraq. most graphically recounted by Pritam Bhullar in his fortnightly column "Fauji Beat" in the Chandigarh Tribune of Jul 04. Maj Rhonda had fractured both arms, one knee and had a bullet in the right shoulder. Despite the pain of injuries. she was "violated manually. vaginally and rectally." Must we expose our women to such barbarity merely for attaining what some consider the ultimate in the empowerment of women?

Even when there were no lady officers in the Army, the Service did not tolerate any misdemeanor from its soldiery towards Army's women folk living in the cantonments. In the 1980s. two serving Lieut Generals were suspected of such traits and both were told to face a court martial or resign forthwith. Promptly. they chose the latter option.

No, the Indian Armed Forces are certainly not gender biased by keeping the combat Arms and active combat zone off-limits to its lady officers. No one segment of any society is truly perfect. Nor are our Armed Forces. But yes, our Armed Forces understand the risks

involved to a woman's dignity in combat and let us hope the three Service Chiefs will stand by their well founded convictions no matter how persistent and politically motivated the demands to the contrary.

Indian women in Armed Forces uniform are as capable as their male counterparts when employed on combat support roles. For the sake of the honour of our women, let us not confuse this truth with the prevalence of male chauvinism tendencies in the Armed Forces.

About 1330 words

Lt General Baljit Singh
House 219. Sector 16-A
Chandigarh- 160 015
Tel : 2770619

In Jan 15 Lt Gen Randhir Singh responded by writing to me:

Gen Baljit has written well.

I was a GOC on LC during Parakram and had many lady officers serving under me.

They all acquitted themselves most creditably, even under intense shelling. Nevertheless all COs and commanders up the chain were acutely aware of their vulnerabilities. None of them complained but we all knew a line we could not make them cross.

I have another point. Why were our lady officers made to march as ORs in the Parade? A precedent has been set and I shudder as to future consequences. We are creating an image, which we will not be able to sustain

Martin Van Creveld: Women are a Problem in The Military, Not The Cure

Summary: Martin van Creveld examines the reason behind the Israel Defense Forces' enthusiasm to recruit women. It's the same reason for the enthusiasm of the US military. Men are increasingly unable or unwilling to serve. He discusses some of the likely consequences of this experiment.



[“Military Women Are Not the Cure, They Are the Disease”](#)

By *Martin van Creveld.*
From his website, 24 November 2016.

For about twenty years now, I have been warning whoever would and would not listen about the dangers of feminizing the military. Now, in my own country, the chicks — no pun intended — are coming home to roost. As readers will know, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are the only ones in history to have made women wear uniform even against their will. However, from the end of the War of Independence (1948) to the late 1970s they only did so in a variety of auxiliary Military Occupation Specialties (MOS) that had little impact on the fighting “teeth.” At that point a shortage of manpower generated by the forces’ expansion following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War on one hand and feminist pressures on the other caused the situation to change. Female officers and enlisted personnel increased in both numbers and importance until the IDF was blessed with three small “combat” battalions made up mostly of women. Albeit that they are deployed along the borders with Egypt and Jordan, where hardly a shot has been fired for decades past.

Fast-move forward. For about a month now I have noticed, in Israel’s most important paper *Yediot Ahronot*, a series of articles about various combat IDF units. How little the public knew about them. How wonderful they were. How important the missions they carried out, and how daring their feats. Which towns provided them with proportionally the largest number of recruits. And so on. Briefly. the kind of stuff you would expect from a military that has difficulties attracting manpower.

Last week, the reasons behind the various publications came out of the bag. What I had suspected all along has now been announced with great fanfare. Year by year, fewer recruits are interested in joining the combat arms. From 2015 to 2016 alone, the figure went down by two percentage points, from 71.91 to 69.8. The decline is less pronounced among women, more among men. Coming on top of the fact that more and more men do not serve in the first place, the IDF has good reason to worry about its ability to fill combat slots as they should be.



Women in the IDF Infantry Instructors course, 27 May 2008. IDF photo.

Throwing in money apart, several solutions have been proposed. One is to cut down on the training of cadets and fresh recruits so as to free them for tasks such as holding down the Occupied Territories. Another is to dramatically lower physical standards. Should this come to pass, then soldiers previously classified as fit only for desk-bound tasks and disaster relief either in the Territories or in Israel itself will be able to serve in “combat” MOS. For example, by controlling passports and looking for contraband at the various checkpoints leading from Israel to the Palestinian territories, Egypt and Jordan.

The most radical idea of all is to have women serve in the armored corps. But don’t let the slim figure, narrow shoulders, slender arms, and manicured nails of the good-looking girl in the picture mislead you. Over half of a tank’s weight consist of armor, and each of the road wheels shown weighs about as much as she does. As you would expect from such a machine, operating and maintaining it — as by loading ammunition, or swabbing the barrel of the gun, or changing a link in the tracks—is very heavy, and often very dirty, work only a handful of women can do. Should a woman be included in a tank crew, then the outcome will be to increase the burden on her male comrades. Perhaps even more problematic, in the confined space of an armored vehicle privacy is not minimal — it simply does not exist.

Such a system, in other words, can only lead to one of two things or, perhaps, to both. First, there will be another increase in the number of injured, in some cases even crippled, women hobbling about. And of course in claims for compensation of the kind which, even now, amounts to fully four percent of Israel’s entire defense budget. Second, there is going to be a big rise in “sexual harassment” claims; a problem which, as I pointed out in my recent book *Pussycats*, is currently wrecking not only Israel’s armed forces but those of all other Western ones as well.

More women in the forces are not the cure. They are the disease, or at least part of it. Feminization will inevitably lead, by all signs has already led, to the creation of a vicious cycle. By definition, the more women enter any professional field, institution, or branch of service the fewer men will remain in it. The fewer men remain, the more its prestige and the economic rewards it can command will be compromised. The more its prestige and economic rewards it can command are compromised, the fewer men it will be attract.

This process has been documented many, many times. Often by female researchers who worry, with good reason, about the impact their own growing presence may have on the rewards they can expect in their chosen fields. The best-known cases are those of secretaries (once upon a time, practically all secretaries were male), bank-tellers, pharmacists, book-editors, bakers, psychologists, and “wealth managers.” The ongoing decline in the ability of the humanities to attract students also seems to be linked with the fact that the percentage of female faculty members is them is exceptionally high.

And which IDF combat units do *not* suffer from a shortage of men? You guessed it: The two elite, entirely male, infantry brigades, Golani and the paratroopers.

Editors’ note: for more about the loss of status following women’s entry into a profession see [“Is the Feminization of a Profession a Sign of a Loss of Prestige?”](#) by Marlaine Cacouault-Bitaud in *Work, Gender and Societies*, 2001/1, and also [“As Women Take Over a Male-Dominated Field, the Pay Drops”](#) by Claire Cain Miller in the *New York Times*, 18 March 2016.

<https://fabiusmaximus.com/2017/02/16/women-in-the-israeli-military/>

The Truth About Women in Ground Combat Roles

Daniel L. Davis

January 14, 2016



Women have long been an integral part of the U.S. military, having performed admirably—in some cases, [heroically](#)—in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Over the past month and a half a succession of some of the nation’s most powerful civilian and military leaders have lauded the recent decision to remove all restrictions on what jobs women can fill in the U.S. Armed Forces. Lifting the ban, they say, will make the military stronger. They are wrong.

The very best outcome we can hope for is that the Armed Forces’ abilities will remain static. The most likely outcome, however, is that there will be some degradation in the units that are charged with some of the most critical roles: closing with and destroying enemy forces. Lifting the restrictions was, no doubt, designed to elevate the stature of women and give them an opportunity in the military equal with men. The result of the move, unfortunately, is likely to be that we’ll place women at a disadvantage and put them in a danger greater than that faced by men in combat.

President Obama commended the [December 3 decision](#) by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter to open all combat jobs to women. [He said](#) that, as commander in chief, he knows “this change, like others before it, will again make our military even stronger.” Echoing that sentiment, Secretary of the Navy [Ray Mabus argued](#) that lifting the ban is “not going to make [the U.S. military] any less fighting effective. In fact I think they will be a stronger force, because a more diverse force is a stronger force.” Evidence, logic and experience says these hopes will not be realized.

Approximately 90 percent of all military occupations have already been open to women for quite some time. The 10 percent of the jobs that have been restricted to men-only were the frontline, direct combat roles requiring significant physical strength such as infantry, artillery and armor. In determining if this restriction has unfairly prevented women from filling those roles, it is instructive to examine comparisons to other male-only organizations.

There are currently no women in the National Basketball Association, the National Football League, Major League Baseball, the National Hockey League or other professional sports leagues. The reason for their absence has nothing to do with discrimination but is flatly rooted in the fact women biologically are not able to perform physically to the same level as men.

What must always be the overriding—if not exclusive—criteria for making any change in the U.S. military is that it make the Armed Forces more effective. Having women serve in 90 percent of military jobs they currently do makes sense. Women can and have made significant military contributions in all the positions where they’ve served. But there are

some very specific combat related factors that would likely diminish the effectiveness of tactical fighting units if women were included.

I fought in Desert Storm with an armored cavalry squadron. For literally months I lived in the tiny space on the inside of my armored personnel carrier with two other men. There was no privacy, no cloistered sleeping spaces and no restrooms. For three men this is a hardship but doesn't present any operational problems. If one of those crewmen had been a woman—or if the crew had been two women and one man—there would have been problems.

No matter what anyone may desire to be true, it would be inviting disaster to put mixed men and women in such intimate settings and expect there to be no friction. The vast majority of armored crewmen, infantrymen, and artillerymen are roughly between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. According to numerous studies, that age range lines up almost exactly with the [height of male sexual desire](#).

Confining men and women of that age in combat or training environments and expect there to be no sexual interaction is naïve. Some will engage in consensual sex, some number of other men will force themselves on women via sexual assaults or outright rape.

Even when no sexual acts take place, there will certainly be considerable sexual tension among that crew.

Following Desert Storm I served in a field artillery unit, where gunners and crewmembers had to carry 103lb 155mm shells for the howitzers. In 2011, while serving in Afghanistan I observed infantrymen on patrol who had to carry up to 100lbs of body armor and equipment. There would likely be few women who would be able to perform those tasks. These are not inconsequential matters.

If the only enemy the United States ever faced was an insurgent group with no tanks, no artillery battalions, no attack helicopters, no jets and no formal logistics systems, then the U.S. military will never face an existential fight and will thus never risk being driven from the field. In such an environment, you can do almost anything to a combat unit and it'll successfully accomplish its mission. Let the enemy be Russia, China or a few other armed forces and the situation changes dramatically.

There is no issue with a women's intellectual quality or value as a human being. It can be argued that in some cases women are smarter and more clever than men! In areas of the military not requiring physical strength or stamina, a woman ought to be able to compete on an equal footing with a man. But we ignore biology at our own peril. In the name of advancing women's rights we cannot risk diminishing the capabilities of ground combat units.

Daniel L. Davis is a widely published analyst on national security and foreign policy. He retired as a Lt. Col. after twenty-one years in the U.S. Army, including four combat deployments. The views in these articles are those of the author alone and do not reflect the position of the U.S. Government. Follow him on Twitter [@DanielLDavis1](#).

Women in Ground Combat

How did it happen? And what will it do to the military?

BING WEST

Two decades ago, the Commandant of the Marine Corps declared that women serving in the infantry “would destroy the Marine Corps.” General Robert Barrow explained that, “in three wars—World War II, Korea and Vietnam—I found no place for women to be down in the ground combat element.” He cited the 1950 fighting retreat from the Chosin Reservoir in temperatures of minus 20 degrees, with one Marine division pitted against eight Chinese divisions. Had women comprised 15 percent of his division, Barrow concluded, the Marines would have lost the battle.

“The very nature of women disqualifies them from doing it (killing so brutally),” Barrow said. “Women give life sustain life, nurture life; they don’t take it.”

To Barrow, a warrior admired by three generations of grunts, ground combat meant killing under the harshest of circumstances. Barrow opposed the incorporation of women into infantry units characterized by primal instincts: sleeping, defecating, eating and smelling like wolf packs while hunting down and slaughtering male soldiers.

Now the military has decided to open up ground combat billets to females. “If they can meet the qualifications for the job,” Secretary of Defense Panetta said, “then they should have the right to serve.”

The Marine Corps has proudly fought our country’s battles for 247 years. Yet in the course of a mere twenty years it has pivoted from General Barrow’s firm belief that women were disqualified by reason of gender to insisting that qualifications have nothing to do with gender. How could the Marine Corps—and the Army—pivot so fundamentally in so short a time? Why was this “the right thing to do”? When did the right of the individual take precedence over the duty to provide for the common defense?

There are two alternative explanations: the “true believer” and the “politician.” Our generals may truly believe that women are genuinely qualified in substantial numbers—say, 5–15 percent of the combat arms billets. Although the Chiefs have said they will not relax standards, they have bound themselves to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Having declared that women are capable of serving in the infantry, they must now deliver on that promise.

Forebodingly, General Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has said, “If we do decide that a particular standard is so high that a woman couldn’t make it, the burden is now on the service to come back and explain to the Secretary, why is it that high?” In other words, standards will be determined by politically appointed civilian officials. Inevitably, entry standards will slip. That the Chairman has made a virtue of this error is disappointing.

One could argue that a decade of war has established ample precedent for the female in combat. In Iraq and Afghanistan, our generals had changed the mission of the infantry, declaring that, “Soldiers and Marines are expected to be nation-builders as well as warriors.” That led to arduous restrictions on fire support and to zany statements like, “you can’t win a war by killing.” A Marine Corps deployed as a Peace Corps could

accommodate females at all ranks, as well as civilian aid workers and visiting Congressmen.

Female soldiers were taken under fire or struck mines while riding in armored vehicles. But taking such risks was not ground combat. Iraq and Afghanistan led to the misleading image that in war there are bases with showers and good food, air-conditioned quarters and moderate rather than stunning casualties. Females did operate very capably in that environment at every level.

Once out on lengthy patrols, however, the environment shifted. Over the past ten years, I have accompanied our grunts on countless combat patrols in cities, mountains and farmlands in Iraq and Afghanistan. I saw the same sticky blood, stinking feces, screaming and wailing, IEDs and tourniquets, smashed vehicles and crumpled bodies that I saw in the paddies and jungles of Vietnam. Ground combat has become no cleaner and no less exhausting.

If you're a grunt, you go forth to kill. That is your mission. You are uncivilized—a gorilla set loose inside Tiffany's with a hundred-pound sledgehammer. You are an animal running with a pack on the hunt. Such small-group effectiveness cannot be measured by enlistment standards or during peacetime training. The performance that counts emerges during battle, when the pack has to aggressively close with and kill the enemy.

Once you insert women into these male hunting packs, you introduce the complex dynamics between the sexes. In close, primitive quarters with no privacy, there will be instances of friction, copulation, over-protectiveness, jealousies, miscommunications and resentments. There is a tradeoff between increasing the career opportunity of the individual female soldier and decreasing the net performance of the pack. But in peacetime, evaluating small-unit effectiveness tends to be moot; each platoon argues that it is the best. So the Services could alter the gender composition with no observable degradation—until the next war.

In contrast to the "true believer", the "politician" explanation is that the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt they had to preempt the Administration before it imposed even stricter "gender-neutral" regulations. Admitting gays had been a major issue among liberal advocacy groups. With the support of the President and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Congress passed legislation more than a year ago to permit gays to join the military. In comparison, no major women's advocacy group has lobbied to fight in the mud and the blood. Nor had womensuddenly become stronger, faster or more attracted to killing. The military had more male recruits for the combat arms than were needed. Still, we have no information about discussions between the Joint Chiefs and political appointees.

As politicians, the Chiefs may have offered a token gesture, confident that the number of women actually qualifying will be tiny—say, less than one percent. There are women with Olympic-standard physical, mental and psychological attributes who could lead a SEAL or Army Delta team. But they are as rare as Olympic athletes. In a ground combat force numbering in the hundreds of thousands, such women will remain very rare—perhaps less than 2 percent. If the services do keep their current standards, then the Joint Chiefs have mollified the liberal community by a press release, with scant practical consequence.

However, if women in ground combat billets gradually increase to 15% (the overall percentage of women in the military), then General Barrow's warning about defeat in battle is portentous. We will be defeated.

The Chiefs did not choose between the real and the token change. It all comes down to unknown numbers. You can read the opaque statements by the generals in two mutually exclusive ways: 1) substantially more females (10–15 percent) will fill ground combat billets; or 2) very few females (1–2 percent) will ever qualify. However, General Dempsey made clear that the Chiefs have passed their stewardship of standards to political appointees, guaranteeing lower standards over time. Nor did the Chiefs recommend that women register for the draft and, in an emergency, be forced by law to serve in the combat arms, as is required of men. Instead, the Services went with the political flow, endorsing equality of opportunity but inequality of obligation.

In sum, the Joint Chiefs have taken a clear long-term risk for an unclear near-term political gain, perhaps hoping to diminish budgetary cuts. The question is whether increasing the individual rights of the female soldier decreases the combined combat effectiveness of the killing pack. We won't know the answer until we fight a hard ground war sometime in the future.

Sex is Major Reason Military Commanders are Fired

Brig. Gen. Jeffrey A. Sinclair, 82nd Airborne Division and Regional Command (South) deputy commanding general of support, speaks with an Afghan leader during the Combined Team Zabul Winter Operations Back Brief for American and Afghan key leaders at Forward Operating Base Eagle, Nov. 16, 2011.

Amanda Hills/U.S. Army

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

The Associated Press Published: January 20, 2013

Cmdr. Michael P. Ward II departs the brow after relieving Cmdr. Michael K. Savageaux as commanding officer, USS Pittsburgh (SSN 720) at Groton, Conn., on August 3, 2012. Ward was fired after being accused of allegedly having an affair and faking his death.

Jason J. Perry/U.S. Navy

WASHINGTON -- Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sinclair, fired from his command in Afghanistan last May and now facing a court-martial on charges of sodomy, adultery and pornography and more, is just one in a long line of commanders whose careers were ended because of possible sexual misconduct.

Sex has proved to be the downfall of presidents, members of Congress and other notables. It's also among the chief reasons that senior military officers are fired.

At least 30 percent of military commanders fired over the past eight years lost their jobs because of sexually related offenses, including harassment, adultery, and improper relationships, according to statistics compiled by The Associated Press.

The figures bear out growing concerns by Defense Department and military leaders over declining ethical values among U.S. forces, and they highlight the pervasiveness of a problem that came into sharp relief because of the resignation of one of the Army's most

esteemed generals, David Petraeus, and the investigation of a second general, John Allen, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan.

The statistics from all four military services show that adulterous affairs are more than a four-star foible. From sexual assault and harassment to pornography, drugs and drinking, ethical lapses are an escalating problem for the military's leaders.

With all those offenses taken together, more than 4 in every 10 commanders at the rank of lieutenant colonel or above who were fired fell as a result of behavioral stumbles since 2005.

The recent series of highly publicized cases led to a review of ethics training across the military. It also prompted Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to conclude that while training is adequate, it may need to start earlier in service members' careers and be reinforced more frequently.

Still, officials struggle to explain why the problem has grown and they acknowledge that solving it is difficult and will take time.

"I think we're on the path. I think the last two defense secretaries have made this a very high priority and have very much held people accountable. But we've got a ways to go," said Michele Flournoy, a former undersecretary of defense under President Barack Obama.

She said the military must enforce a "zero tolerance" policy and work to change the culture so service members are held accountable and made to understand that their careers will be over if they commit or tolerate such offenses.

"The policy is in place," she said. "I don't know that it's as evenly and fully enforced as intended."

For top officers, the numbers are startling.

Eighteen generals and admirals, from one star to four stars, were fired in recent years, and 10 of them lost their jobs because of sex-related offenses; two others were done in by alcohol-related problems.

The figures show that 255 commanders were fired since 2005, and that 78 of them were felled by sex-related offenses. A breakdown: 32 in the Army, 25 in the Navy, 11 in the Marine Corps and 10 in the Air Force.

Alcohol and drug-related problems cost the jobs of 27 commanders - 11 in the Navy, eight in the Army, five in the Marine Corp(s and three in the Air Force.

"It's troublesome," said Rear Adm. John Kirby, the Navy's top spokesman. "Navy leadership is taking a look at why personal conduct seems to be a growing reason for why commanding officers are losing their commands. We're trying to get to the root causes. We don't really fully understand it."

He and other military leaders agree that poor leadership, bad judgment, and ethical lapses, rather than operational failures, are growing factors in the firings. But Kirby said it's not clear whether that has anything to do with the strains of the past 10 years at war or simply reflects deteriorating morals among the general population.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta ordered the ethics review in November. He said that "when lapses occur, they have the potential to erode public confidence in our leadership and in our system for the enforcement of our high ethical standards. Worse, they can be detrimental to the execution of our mission to defend the American people."

Anu Bhagwati, executive director of the Service Women's Action Network, said there is more focus on this issue now than ever in the past, but that there really is no sufficient deterrent in place. She said a major problem is that military commanders are responsible for deciding what cases should move forward.

She said military lawyers, who are trained and have a greater appearance of impartiality, should make such an important legal decision.

The statistics gathered and analyzed by the AP represent a very conservative estimate of the problem. While the Army, Navy and Marine Corps provided details for all military commanders who were lieutenant colonels or commanders and above for 2005 until now, Air Force officials said they could only provide data for colonels and above from 2008 until today.

Also, the figures reflect only officers who were in command positions. The numbers don't include what could be hundreds of officers fired from other jobs, such as administrative or other military posts. Military officials said they only collect data on officers in command who are fired.

The reasons for the firings are also murky. In some cases, no reason was listed; in other cases, it was vague - such as "ethics" or "leadership" or for fostering a bad command climate.

There also are varying degrees of publicity when such action is taken.

In Sinclair's case, the charges and impending court martial have received extensive coverage. The five pages of allegations, which involve his conduct with five women who were not his wife, include one count of forcible sodomy, two counts of wrongful sexual conduct, six counts of inappropriate sexual relationships, and eight counts of violating regulations. He could receive life in prison if convicted.

But in many other cases, particularly of those below the rank of general, there is little public notice if the senior officer is in the Army or Air Force. The Navy, however, issues a public statement every time a commander is removed from a job.

The figures also highlight the Navy's reputation for being quick to justice. Although it is the second smallest of the four military services, the Navy has relieved the most commanders, 99, over the past eight years. By comparison, it was 83 for the Army, 41 for the Marines and 32 for the Air Force.

Dismissing a commander from a job does not mean that officer is forced out of the military. In some of the more serious cases, officers may be discharged or forced to resign. But in many other cases, service members may go on to another job for some time.

Still, a dismissal often signals the end of an officer's career, and with no chance for promotion, officers will often retire or leave the service.

The Army is the largest of the military services, reaching a peak of about 570,000 active duty soldiers at the height of the Iraq war. It is supposed to cut 80,000 troops by 2017. The Marine Corps is the smallest service, with about 202,000 at its peak during the wars and is set to slim down to about 182,000. The Navy has about 322,000 active duty forces and the Air Force has about 328,000.

The other reasons for dismissals by the services cover a broad range of offenses, from assault and drug and alcohol use to being a poor or abusive leader. There are also instances of fraud as well as a few cases where Navy officers commanding a ship have hit something, such as a buoy or another ship.

Four generals have lost their jobs in recent years as a result of public scandals. All were dismissed while Robert Gates was defense secretary:

-Gen. Michael Moseley, the Air Force Chief of Staff, was dismissed in 2008 for failing to address several nuclear-related mishaps by the service.

- Army Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley and Army Maj. Gen. George Weightman were dismissed because of the poor outpatient treatment of wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 2007.

-Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal resigned after members of his staff made disparaging remarks about Obama's national security team, including Vice President Joe Biden. A Pentagon investigation later cleared him of wrongdoing.

No sex? Permission to Speak Freely, Sir.

By Laura Cannon,

Laura Cannon, a 2001 West Point graduate, is writing a memoir on her military service titled "War Virgin." She blogs at WarVirgin.com.

West Pointers are human beings, even those with names such as David Petraeus and Paula Broadwell. I think I have the standing to make this declaration, because I'm a fellow graduate. West Point is long on molding military officers, but a bit short on humanity. Its mission statement stresses the intent to commit every graduate to a career of professional excellence and service, embodying the values of "duty, honor and country." How does West Point do that?

Here's how: Rules! Hundreds upon hundreds of rules that govern every facet of human conduct imaginable, including my favorite: no sex in the barracks.

Yes, to become a leader of character and serve my country well, it is imperative that I not have sex in my college bedroom.

Does West Point succeed in stifling one of the most basic of human urges? What about cadet couples who are in love and will one day get married and have families? Does the threat of punishment — namely having to spend a weekend dressed in full parade regalia, marching with a heavy rifle, back-and-forth in a confined area — deter them?

Not so much.

Whether it's because love (or lust) conquers all, or because ambitious Type-A's stop at nothing in the face of adversity, cadets soon become experts at evading the no-sex rule. West Point officially designates "Flirtation Walk" as the one area where cadets can enjoy romance. But who, with the exception of the die-hard infantry types who will go on to Ranger school, wants to trek outside, far from the cadet barracks, to do their "flirting"? (Plus, for most of the year, it's freezing outside in upstate New York.)

So cadets engage one another in the parking lot, behind Battle Monument and in sports equipment rooms, among other places. Many grow tired of navigating these complicated logistics, and succumb to the comfy confines of their bedrooms, breaking myriad rules in the process.

Now throw us into a war zone, and things get really wild.

General Order No. 1 prohibits sex (and alcohol consumption) on an Army deployment. Typical deployments last approximately one year, so if West Point graduates follow the academy's rules, then they abstain for all four of their college years, plus the year-long deployment. Five years of abstinence is enough to make anyone crazy.

I was a part of the Iraq invasion in 2003. At the time, I was a naive, 24-year-old lieutenant and still a virgin (because of my former Jesus obsession and aversion to cadet marching). I assumed General Order No. 1 would have no impact on my life. I was wrong.

I had no idea that a combat zone would be such a sexually charged environment. Blame it on amped-up testosterone pouring out of aggressive, athletic men. Or blame it on combat stripping even the strongest of men and women down to their core, raw emotions. Combine that with forming special bonds with comrades who promise to do whatever it takes to ensure your safe return home, including sacrificing their life for yours. What do you think happens?

Let me tell you, covert combat sex (or in my case, hard-core making out, because I was too scared to go "All-In") ranks high on the list of life's thrills. I'm a comfortable civilian now, and I know it's impossible to inject that intense passion back into my life. But I reflect on it almost every day. There's nothing that compares to making love at war.

What would I do if I were in charge? I'd abolish General Order No. 1. Keep the rules that protect soldiers from sexual harassment. But allow deployed officers and troops to have sex while at war. West Point should come to its senses as well.

West Pointers and other military service members endure tremendous sacrifices. We appreciate the adoration and respect we receive. In that same spirit, I ask the public to accept and forgive our weaknesses. It's okay to be disappointed, but please don't be misled. Beneath the heavy combat gear and impressive uniform, we're human, just like you.

warvirgin@gmail.com

Laura Cannon, a 2001 West Point graduate, is writing a memoir on her military service titled "War Virgin." She blogs at WarVirgin.com, and performs in a comedy show that she created in Boston.

The Truth About Women in Combat

DAVID FRUM

03.01.13



Conservatives often stand accused these days of standing outside the "reality-based community." Yet liberals can be blinded by ideology, and nowhere is this more true than in the debate over women in combat.

Over the past two decades, the United States has moved steadily to open all military roles to women. Last month, departing Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta removed the last barriers. Women may henceforward qualify for every duty, including combat infantry. The few - very few - public objections raised to this decision were met with derision rather than argument, well represented by [this sneering item from the Daily Show](#).

Yet to deny the highly combat-relevant differences between the sexes is to deny reality as blatantly as ever done by any anti-evolutionist - and with potentially much more lethal consequence.

In 2007, Kingsley Browne gathered the evidence in a clear and concise book, [Co-ed Combat: The New Evidence That Women Shouldn't Fight the Nation's Wars](#). The case presented by Browne won't come as news to any military decision-maker. But it will and should jolt those who have relied on too credulous media sources for their information about what soldiers do and how they do it.

The case for women in combat runs more or less as follows:

- 1) We have entered an era of push-button war in which purely physical strength has lost much if not all of its military relevance.
 - 2) To the extent that strength continues to matter, some women can meet requirements and should be given a chance to qualify.
 - 3) Other than physical strength, there are no militarily relevant differences between men and women.
 - 4) To exclude willing women from military service is unfair and unjust.
- Browne demolishes these four claims, step by remorseless step, with studies and examples drawn from military experience.

1) Physical strength continues to matter in warfare. Soldiers still must hoist heavy packs and march for miles. Soldiers still must be prepared to function with reduced food and water. Soldiers must still sometimes fight and kill their enemies hand to hand. And even in other contexts where strength seems obsolete, the mischances of war can suddenly thrust soldiers into situations where strength determines who lives and who dies. Browne reminds us of the 2001 encounter between an American EP-3E surveillance aircraft and a Chinese "Finback" fighter jet. The EP-3E is a big plane, powered by four turboprop

engines and carrying a crew of 24. The much faster Finback harassed the EP-3E with mock interceptions.

On his last approach, [the Chinese pilot] comes too close. He pitches up to maintain his slow speed, and one of the EP-3E's propellers strikes his plane at the junction of the vertical stabilizer and the fuselage, sounding "like a monster chain saw hacking metal." The propeller cuts the Finback in two. The fighter's nose flips up and strikes the nose of the American plane, knocking off the large fiberglass nose cone containing the weather radar. The immediate decompression of the cabin is deafening.

The EP-3E immediately flips over into a nearly completely inverted dive. "This guy just fucking killed us," [Captain Shane Osborn] thinks, as he is looking *up* at the sea below and observing that his plane is falling almost as fast as the wreckage of the Finback. The lumbering EP-3E, which is a converted Lockheed L-188 Electra passenger airliner, has never been rolled and never recovered from an inverted dive.

Using "every ounce of strength" in his muscular frame, Osborn struggles to bring the wings level. Gradually, he is able to gain airspeed and recover from the roll. The plane has fallen almost 8,000 feet from its original altitude of 22,500 feet in about thirty seconds and is still losing altitude.

Osborn eventually brought the plane to an emergency landing on Hainan Island and succeeded in destroying the plane's computers before Chinese forces arrived. He won the Distinguished Flying Cross for saving his plane and crew.

As Shane Osborn's experience reveals, strength is not irrelevant to modern aviation. Although it is not usually an issue in flying modern airplanes under ordinary circumstances, when things go wrong the situation can change dramatically. In the words of the principal investigator of a study of strength requirements of aviators, "If they lose hydraulics or an engine or two engines, it gets really tough to fly the plane."

Strength matters too for a grounded helicopter pilot or a captured aircrew. Browne notes that about 90% of the prisoners of war held by North Vietnam were downed pilots and aircrew.

The United States is planning its future air force on the assumption that future aircrews need not worry much about enemy fire. That's a very dangerous assumption.

2) One might answer: "Fine. Strength matters. But why should gender matter? Set strength requirements, run the tests. If the women pass, they pass. If not, not."

But that answer ignores the bureaucratic realities. The record shows that the military does not and will not enforce gender-neutral standards.

[A]t the time of enlistment, a seventeen-year-old female is expected to do thirteen push-ups, compared to thirty-five for males, while for forty-one-year-olds, the numbers are six and twenty-four, respectively. A seventeen year-old girl is expected to run two miles in nineteen minutes, forty-two seconds or less, which is twelve seconds more than a forty-one year old man gets. A forty-one-year-old woman has to "run" two miles in twenty-four minus and six seconds, almost five minutes more than a man receives. Only in combat, it seems, will demands on the sexes be equal

The military executes missions, and the generals and admirals understand that one of their most important missions - from the point of view of their personal advancement - is to recruit sufficient numbers of women to please their political masters. The only way to achieve that mission is to operate very unequal standards. Browne again:

The probability that a randomly selected man will have greater upper-body strength than a randomly selected woman is well over 95 percent.

The army's standard fragmentation grenade has a blast radius of 15 meters. Infantrymen are required to demonstrate the ability to throw a grenade 35 meters; military women, only 25 meters. In practice, many military women cannot throw even that far. Browne tells the story of a Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester and squad leader Timothy Nein who came under attack in Iraq. Both won the Silver Star.

Hester gave her grenade to Nein because he "had the better arm." She did, however, throw one about fifteen yards, which, depending upon cover, may be a little close for comfort Even if two men had been involved, of course, one might have given a grenade to a comrade with a better arm, but the soldier with the better arm in a mixed-sex pair will almost always be the man. If both members of the pair are women, their ability to throw a grenade where it is needed will be substantially limited.

The sexes differ psychologically as well as physiologically. Women react to threat very differently from men. It seems painfully obvious to say this, but the sex hormones testosterone and estrogen push the sexes to behave radically differently. Many young men will risk death rather than be seen by their peers to flinch from a fight. Women's courage takes very different forms. Browne amasses a battery of stories of military women behaving in ways that, had they been men, would have brought accusations of dereliction of duty - or worse.

During the 1989 invasion of Panama,

CBS News reported that two female truck drivers had tearfully refused to drive troops to the scene of fighting, prompting an Army investigation. Two days into the investigation - and several days before it was completed - the Army announced that the women had acted appropriately. According to Army spokesmen, the two women were "exhausted" after driving under fire for nine hours According to officers of the infantry battalion whose soldiers were supposed to be transported, however, the women had not been driving under fire for nine hours. They had come under fire briefly in the first hour of the invasion and then spent eight hours waiting for their next mission, at one point having to be roused from their barracks and made to stay with the trucks. ...

[Quoting another author, Browne adds] "The men at the scene had no doubt but that the women were afraid, not tired."

Sex integration has tangled the military in double standards and collective denial. The Army, Browne reports, maintains an unofficial policy whereby women - but not men - showers in the field every 72 hours. This practice is not written down, but it's observed by the troops as another example of a demoralizing military culture of denial and lying. Browne quotes interviews of enlisted men by military sociologist Laura Miller:

"Today all you hear in the Army is that we are equal, but men do all the hard and heavy work whether it's combat or not."

"The majority of females I know are not soldiers. They are employed. Anything strenuous is avoided with a passion. I would hate to serve with them during combat! I would end up doing my job and 2/3 of theirs just to stay alive."

More cutting still, Browne repeats a bitter military joke that true equality will arrive - not when women receive Medals of Honor (since it will be suspected that the standards were bent in their favor) - but when women "can be subject to a court-martial for cowardly conduct."

3) The most fundamental differentiator between men and women of course is mutual sexual attraction. That fact has become an increasing source of weakness to US military units, and will weaken them still further when full combat integration is achieved. Where men and women are put together, sex will follow. So will pregnancy - which is of course grounds for removing women from active duty. Sex is sometimes consensual. It is sometimes coerced. And it is sometimes sold.

[P]rostitution by female personnel appears to be a widespread phenomenon, although the Pentagon's reticence on the subject makes it difficult to ascertain just how widespread. I have heard from numerous sources claiming personal knowledge (not as customers, they all assure me) of prostitution rings in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. I have heard it from officers who were responsible for discipline and from enlisted men who were aware of the women to go to.

The most dangerous consequence of sexual attraction, however, is the corrosion of unit cohesion. A "band of brothers" pretty quickly degenerates into a snarling pack of primates when the brothers begin to compete amongst themselves for the sexual attention of a much smaller number of women.

4) It is on the point of "fairness" that Browne expresses himself most scathingly. It's not the military's job to be "fair." It is the military's job to win wars. Our society values freedom of speech. It values the right to elect leaders. It values individual choice and market competition. All of those values are suspended in the military, sacrificed to the paramount need for military effectiveness. Yet on gender issues, the military seems to have decided that the desire of a relatively very small number of female officers to reach the highest levels of command trumps the necessities of national defense.

Ironically, the motive that most impels women into combat - the eagerness of some female officers to ascend to higher levels of leadership - is precisely the end that may be most unobtainable. A battery of studies cited by Browne confirms the reluctance of men to accept female leadership when the shooting starts. This reluctance actually *increases* the more that male soldiers experience female leadership, for reasons hard-wired into the male brain. Psychologists find that women's leadership is accepted by men (and women!) to the extent that it is warm, nurturing, and participatory: in other words, maternal. It is least accepted when it is cold, challenging, and hierarchical: in other words, paternal - or in other other words, military. Which means:

Military women may be in a bind. The leadership role calls for an authoritarian style, but when women act accordingly, they tend to be negatively evaluated and therefore less effective.

Is the unwillingness of men to follow women into battle "unfair"? What does that question even mean?

[T]he measure of a leader lies not in the leader's behavior but in the behavior of his subordinates. If potential followers will not follow a leader for whatever reason, the leader cannot be effective. Whether blame is assigned to the failed follower or the failed leader is immaterial. If the mission is not being accomplished, the unit is ineffective.

Browne stresses: "one may challenge the policy of sexual integration without disparaging the service of military women. Those who are serving now, and those who served in the past - not to mention those who will do so in the future - deserve the thanks of a grateful nation."

Too many draw an analogy between sex distinctions and the military's discredited history of racial discrimination. Browne urges us to think of sex as a distinction more like age.

[W]hat would happen if the United States had fifteen thousand sixty-year-old men in Iraq and Afghanistan instead of fifteen thousand women. If it did, many of these older men would undoubtedly behave bravely. Would these stories be persuasive evidence that the military should allow sixty-year-olds to enlist? Not at all. The relevant question is whether the sixty-year-old men are as effective in combat as twenty-year-old men, and few would be (or be expected to be).

Co-ed Combat depicts a country that seems to have made up its collective mind that it need not worry about ever again fighting a major war against a capable enemy - A country so confident in its margin of superiority that it can afford deliberately to weaken its own military performance for reasons of pure ideology. And this time it is the so-called progressive side that treats facts as unwelcome intruders.

Sara Lister, [the Clinton-era] Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, candidly stated that the Army does not publicly discuss strength and pregnancy issues because "those subjects quickly become fodder for conservatives seeking to limit women's role in the Army."

Well, yeah. But if your preferred policy can only be advanced by concealing relevant facts, isn't that a blaring warning of a bad policy? A big, rich country like the United States can afford many mistakes. But in this case, the mistakes will exact a cost in lives sacrificed and - very conceivably - future battles lost.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/the-truth-about-women-in-combat#comments>

Women in Combat: Let's Get Real

MARGARET WENTE
The Globe and Mail
Jan. 26, 2013

In a milestone for gender equality, the Pentagon is finally ending the combat ban for women – a ban that had become woefully obsolete. At last, women warriors will get the recognition and promotions they deserve. The brass ceiling has been shattered, and that's good news for both women and the military.

Or is it? I admire tough fighting women as much as anyone. Their leadership skills are as good as men's. They have important roles to play in war, and they've been on the front lines – and dying – for years.

But please, people. Let's get real. Women cannot equal men in ground combat, the kind of dirty, brutal stuff that (fortunately) makes up a very minor part of modern military life, especially post-Afghanistan. It's not that they can't be trained to kill – they can. The issue is that the physical differences between men and women are very large, and on the battlefield, they really matter, and can't be wished away. Men are better fighters because they are bigger and stronger and can endure far more physical punishment before they break down.

The average female soldier is “about five inches shorter than the male soldier, has half the upper body strength, lower aerobic capacity and 37 per cent less muscle mass,” Stephanie Gutmann, author of *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, wrote in the *New Republic*. “She cannot pee standing up ... She tends, particularly if she is under the age of 30 (as are 60 per cent of military personnel) to get pregnant.”

U.S. Marine Captain Katie Petronio is as tough and motivated as they come – a combat engineer officer with five years of active service, during which she led many field operations. She used to think women like her could serve in the infantry, but she has changed her mind. For one thing, women are far more prone to injury than men. Her last stint in Afghanistan was so gruelling that after seven months, she had lost a large amount of muscle mass and stopped producing estrogen. “I went from breaking school records to being broken in a rather short amount of time,” she told an interviewer. “And I was only doing a portion of what my infantry brethren were doing.”

The full integration of women in combat roles has been portrayed as a breakthrough equivalent to the integration of black soldiers and gays. But when it comes to fighting, gender differences matter much more than race or sexual orientation. Not that any military leader dares to say so. Any effort to question the equal capabilities of men and women is a career-ender. And so we have developed the fiction that these differences can simply be negotiated away. With the exception of the Marines, training and performance standards in the U.S. military are now gender-normed (i.e., watered down) for women. Officially, this is not a problem. If a woman isn't strong enough to carry a wounded soldier off the field, they'll just work in teams!

What happens when women are fully integrated into combat? Fortunately, we have a great example: Canada. Overall, women account for 14 per cent of all jobs in the Canadian Forces, a slightly lower percentage than in the U.S. As a result of a human-rights decision, front-line combat jobs were opened to women in 1989. Yet today, despite strenuous recruiting efforts, women hold just 2.4 per cent of these jobs. Their commanding officers praise their competence but treat them differently, by shielding them from combat. According to a *Wall Street Journal* report this week, the widespread impression among Canadian female soldiers – much to their frustration – is they are used “only sparingly.” Men serving next to women also exhibit a counterproductive battlefield trait: protectiveness. They want to carry women's gear and keep them out of harm's way. As one male soldier told the *Journal*, “That brother-sister protective thought was always in the back of your mind.”

In the real world, few enlisted women want to be on the front lines. Like a lot of men (but more so), they join up for the free education and career training, and would really rather

not get anywhere near combat. The drive for full combat integration comes from female officers who need front-line experience to build their careers, as well as from a persistent band of activists who have succeeded in making the U.S. military hypersensitive to charges of discrimination.

Nowhere is the military ethos more challenged than over issues of sex, pregnancy and motherhood. The high rate of pregnancy among females in the U.S. military is a big taboo and an operational nightmare. According to a study reported this week by Reuters, more than 10 per cent of active-duty U.S. military women had an unintended pregnancy in 2008 alone – a rate that one of the study's authors called "really shocking." But it shouldn't be. One study of a brigade operating in Iraq, cited by commentator Linda Chavez, found that female soldiers were evacuated at three times the rate of male soldiers – and that 74 per cent of them were evacuated for pregnancy-related issues.

Outside the developed world, women do not take equal roles in war alongside men. There is a reason for this. The reason is that women on the battlefield are a liability. The sheer physical demands of war (to say nothing of group cohesion, and all the rest) mean that fighting capability and performance are simply not compatible with gender equality. It's a fantasy to think otherwise. Fortunately, our world is generally peaceful enough to indulge our fantasies. If things heat up, we'll snap back to reality soon enough.