



**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**WOMEN WARRIORS:
OXYMORON OR REALITY**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT
WOMEN WARRIORS: OXYMORON OR REALITY

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this paper is to show why it is in the best interests of the Army to open all military specialties, including "direct ground combat" positions to women. It is not the purpose of this paper to advocate placing women in combat arms jobs at the expense of standards or readiness. Today women comprise approximately 14.9% of the active Army. In a period of shrinking force structure and budgets, the Army cannot afford to under utilize a significant portion of its population. Current policies on ground combat exclusions for women are based on belief systems that have little correlation to women's capabilities, demonstrated performance, or requisite standards. The environment is changing and if the Army is to remain effective as an organization, it must be capable of adapting and changing as well.

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PREFACE

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance and time given by Captain Barbara Brehm, United States Navy and Brigadier General Evelyn Foote, U.S. Army (Retired). Their historical and current perspectives on women's roles in the military, significantly enhanced the validity of this paper.

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WOMEN WARRIORS: OXYMORON OR REALITY

The purpose of this paper is to show why it is in the best interest of the Army to open all military specialties, including "direct ground combat" jobs to women. It is not the purpose of this paper to advocate placing women in combat arms jobs at the expense of standards or readiness. The title for this paper was chosen when a Marine Corps classmate at the Army War College commented that "Women Warriors" is an oxymoron. This statement highlights the crux of the problem; despite years of demonstrated performance, women's capabilities and contributions as soldiers are still in question because they are not allowed to serve in the traditional "warrior" positions. The result is that women are not considered combat multipliers and to some critics, a deterrent to readiness. Until the Army provides the same opportunities and the same standards for all of its soldiers, there will be a perpetuation of this attitude.

Perhaps nothing in history has been romanticized to the extent that the images of war and the men who fought them have been. Add to this portrayal the historical roles of women as mothers and wives and it is not hard to understand how the myth that women cannot be warriors developed. What is troubling, is that the Army allows these myths to exist today and uses them to support policies and practices that limit opportunities for a significant number of the volunteer force.

Today women comprise approximately 14.9% of the active Army.¹ It is inconceivable in a period of shrinking budgets and force structure, that our nation would tolerate a significant percentage of its Army being incapable of fighting and winning on the battlefield. Critics of women in combat use questionable definitions of combat, stereotypes, and discussions of lower standards to justify maintaining the status quo. When pressed, critics cannot quantify how fast a warrior must run, how fat a warrior can or can not be, or how much weight a warrior must carry. Critics inside and outside the Army are more comfortable with concepts than facts, when discussing why women cannot be warriors.² Critics are also eager to point to problem areas that exist because of women in the force, such as the impact of pregnancy on readiness. These same critics have failed to adopt realistic policies that would solve these problems. Women's problems are the Army's problems.

The current Department of Defense (DoD) and Army policy which excludes women from "direct ground combat roles", has its origin in historical precedent and sociological context. It is an issue that has roots in deeply held cultural perceptions about the roles and capabilities of women. However, the American culture is changing and cultural changes will have an impact on the Army as an organization. Indications from polls are that the majority of American society has changed its

attitudes regarding the placement of women in combat. In a 1993 Roper survey, the American public was more supportive of women in combat than those in the military. Twenty-seven percent of the civilians polled were opposed to the assignment of women to ground combat in contrast to 49% of the military polled.³ Women will continue to assume more traditionally male jobs in the civilian sector, and the distinctions of outmoded gender roles will become less important.

In addition to the societal changes discussed above, the performance of women in the military, demographic changes, and economic prosperity will also have an impact on the ability of the Army to maintain the status quo. The performance of women in combat and operations other than war has disproved the theories of women's inability to deal with the rigors of combat and operations in austere environments. Current and projected demographics will affect the number of men and women eligible for military service. According to the 1997 U.S. Bureau of Census report, women comprise 51.1% of the 18-24 year old resident population of the United States and this trend is expected to continue through 2025. This means over 50% of the potential "target" population for military recruitment is women. This is a significant factor considering that the Army cannot meet its current recruiting requirements because of a prosperous economy and has recently lowered standards and added incentives

to attract recruits. The Army will only be able to maintain its current high level of professionalism by attracting the most qualified people to serve.

This paper will provide a factual examination on the issue of women in ground combat units. The framework for examination will be a review of the historical evolution of women's roles in the Army; a review and analysis of the current policies; organizational impacts of the current policies; and recommendations for change.

EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE ARMY

Unofficially, women have served in the military in various capacities, from the Revolutionary War until 1901 when they officially began service in the Army Nurse Corps. Congress mandated women into the Army at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War based on the perceived need for skills that could more easily be provided by women.⁴ Since 1901 women's roles have evolved dramatically. The reasons for this evolution is varied, but the primary causes stem from legislation and presidential directives that more often than not, were linked to events external to the military community. This section will examine the changes in women's roles in the context of laws, critical periods, and policies that have shaped the current posture.

PUBLIC LAWS

Congress has the constitutional responsibility for the provision of the country's armed forces. Congress enacted legislation under United States Codes Titles 10 and 32, which embodies the public laws pertaining to both active and reserve forces, respectively. These statutes currently do not specify restrictions for employment of women in military service but provide broad guidance to the Service Secretaries to develop those policies. There have been many changes in public law since 1901 that have had an impact on women's policies.

Listed below is a brief chronology of key legislation and presidential directives affecting women in the Army.

- 1901 - Congress established the Army Nurse Corps
- 1942 - Congress established the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) with PL 554. There is some disagreement about the reasons for establishment of the WAAC, but most agree there was support from both the Roosevelt administration and Army Chief of Staff, George Marshall.⁵
- 1943 - Congress changed the WAAC to the Women's Army Corps (WAC), ostensibly to correct problems stemming from differences in rank, pay, and benefits.

- 1947 - Congress authorizes integration of nurses and medical personnel into the active and reserve components of each Service.
- 1948 - Congress passes the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act (PL 80-625). This act gives permanent status to women in the Armed Forces, but also places significant restrictions on women in the military. Some of the most notable restrictions included the 2% ceiling on the accession of women, limits on rank structure to include no General Officers, and Service guidance on determining combat exclusion policies. The Air Force and Navy statutes were more restrictive than the Army's to address the presence of women on naval vessels and combat aircraft.
- 1951 - Presidential Executive Order #10240 - Involuntarily discharges women due to pregnancy or sole parenthood.
- 1967 - Congress passes PL 90-130 which repeals many of the restrictions of the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948. Specifically, the 2% accession ceiling was lifted, promotion and retirement regulations were equalized, and women were allowed to be General Officers. Services still maintained authority to determine combat exclusion policy. In accordance with USC 3012, the

Secretary of the Army may assign, detail, and prescribe the duties of members of the Army without restriction.

- 1975 - Presidential Order #10240 rescinded, and women were given the option to stay in the military if pregnant or sole parent.
- 1975 - Congress passes PL 94-106, which opens the Air Force, Naval, and United States Military Academies to women.
- 1978 - Congress passes PL 95-485 which abolishes the WAC and assigns women directly to non-combat branches within the active Army and reserves. Further, Title 10, USC 6015 is amended to assign women to non-combat vessels.
- 1992 and 1993 - Congress repeals specific combat exclusions enacted in 1948 for the Air Force and Navy, thus eliminating the last legal restrictions on women in combat.

In addition to the laws mentioned above, there has been other legislation that has had a profound effect on women in the military. Those laws included the Equal Pay Act, the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Rights Amendment (although not ratified), abolishment of the draft and establishment of the all-volunteer Army in 1973. These laws were symbolic of the prevailing political-social climate at the time and directly affected the evolution of the laws governing women in the military. That

evolution included removing the legal restrictions on the employment of women.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE MILITARY

As unique and inspiring as the history of this nation is, we collectively overlook its realities and develop sentimentalized pictures of the way we were. Women have sacrificed their lives in this nation's conflicts since its birth; in battles with foreign adversaries, during the Civil War, and on our own frontiers. The evolution of women's official roles in the Army can be divided into two periods; from 1901 to 1978, and from 1978 to the present.

During the period 1901 to 1978, women's roles in the military became official, but were limited. In 1901, women were mandated into the Army because of the need for nurses in the Spanish-American War. The manpower shortage theme played again in WWI and led to establishment of the WAC as a permanent military organization in WWII. The rationale was to use women for administrative, specialty, and medical functions to free "men" to fight. Over 350,000 women served on active duty during WWII.⁶ There was no manpower shortage during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts and there was a reluctance to use women except in a very limited capacity. The situation can be summed up in a statement given by Brigadier General Evelyn P. Foote, U.S. Army,

(RET), who was serving in Vietnam as a public affairs officer with an artillery unit located less than fifty miles from the Cambodian border. "When I was in Vietnam in 1967, I was not weapons qualified. In fact, we were not permitted to carry weapons. The only thing I could do was to run around carrying a purse - I called it my M16 purse. I was wearing a baseball cap, no helmet, no flak jacket, no nothing. I was a liability to that unit."⁷

The most dramatic phase of the evolution of women's roles began in 1978 with the abolition of the WAC, and those roles are still evolving. Women were given the opportunity to train and lead as non-commissioned officers, platoon leaders and commanders of combat support and combat service support units. The changes wrought in the sixties and seventies expanded the fields available and increased the number of women to the point that the Army had to use them during combat operations in Grenada, Panama, and Desert Storm. As an example, the Army deployed 30,855 women to Desert Storm.⁸ Direct combat concerns became a moot point on the modern battlefield as women performing combat support and service support functions were required to locate forward with combat units, and rear areas were threatened with long-range weapons systems.

Since Desert Storm, women have deployed routinely to peace operations in Haiti, Cuba, Panama, Somalia, Bosnia, and around

the globe. Although peace operations are different than "wars", soldiers can die and combat may be necessary. The significance of this evolution is that women have demonstrated the capability to perform well in these expanded roles. It was the performance of women in Desert Storm that led to the decision by the British to open combat arms units to women. It was also the performance of women in Desert Storm that led to the U.S. congressional debates and subsequent repeals of the Navy and Air Force combat exclusion laws.

EVOLUTION OF MILITARY POLICY ON WOMEN

Historically, changes in Army policy regarding the employment of women has been initiated by forces outside the military establishment, except during the Spanish-American and World Wars where a potential manpower shortage existed. The most dramatic change was the 1967 repeal of the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act, eliminating legal barriers to employment of women. There has been resistance to women in the "warriors" domain since the Army Nurse Corps was established. Policy debate on the employment of women in the Army has never been about maximizing the capabilities of all soldiers, but rather on defending the status quo. The essence of the Army's position is that to allow women to serve in ground combat positions would

surely lead to our Nation's defeat under "Buffly", the mechanized infantry battalion commander.

Generals George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower were instrumental in the establishment of the WAC and the decision to retain women on active duty past the demobilization period of 1946, which eventually led to permanent status in 1948. They were also responsible for establishment of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), an organization that is instrumental in integration of women in the military today. However, even with support from Marshall and Eisenhower, the intent was to limit the use and numbers of women in the military.⁹ The limitations on military women remained in place for over twenty years.

In 1973, as a result of lifting the ceiling on women's accessions and changing to an all-volunteer Army, policies had to be revised. A study was conducted that established the ceiling for the female population at 22% based on the combat exclusion criteria for unit readiness.¹⁰ This was a much higher percentage than the Army leadership could accept and an assignment policy was established that allowed certain percentages of women to be assigned to each unit, based on distance from the front line or combat areas.¹¹ In 1978 the employment criteria was changed again and a new definition of "combat" was introduced that switched assignment considerations

from the distance to the front lines to the primary duties of the individual or mission of the unit.

During the period from 1967 to 1981, the Army transitioned from a female population of less than 2% to almost 9%, still grappling with the assignment policy.¹² In 1981, the Army put a 9% ceiling on the accession of women and established the Women in the Army (WITA) Policy Review Group to review critical issues and formulate women's assignment policies. The critical issues were defined as physical capabilities and combat exclusions.¹³ Many studies were done on the employment of women during this transitional period, however they all started with the premise that women could and should not serve in ground combat units.

The 1981 WITA review resulted in a new definition of "direct combat" and the Direct Combat Probability Coding for assignment of women. The new definition stated that direct combat meant engaging the enemy with individual or crew served weapons, while being exposed to direct enemy fire, a high probability of direct contact with enemy personnel, and a substantial risk of capture. The coding system was developed using numerical values of P1 to P7 to establish positions of closeness to direct combat, with P1 being the closest. Women were excluded from positions coded P1.

The other issue studied in the 1981 WITA review was physical capabilities and standards for each military specialty. It was determined that physical standards for jobs should be developed

and used during screening for military service. These recommendations were never acted on and lack of physical capability is one of the major points of contention against women serving in ground combat units today.

In 1988, with women comprising almost 11% of the force, the Army developed a new combat exclusion policy called the "risk rule". This policy stated that non-combat units could be closed to women, provided that the type, degree, and duration of risk is equal to or greater than that experienced by associated combat units.¹⁴ If the "risk rule" had been adhered to as stated, it would have meant removing women from all units on a non-linear battlefield. It would also have meant taking women out of divisional and some Corps combat support and service support units who directly support combat units. These changes were not made before Desert Storm, which effectively negated the policy. On 1 October 1994, DoD rescinded the "risk rule" and established the new "Direct Ground Combat" policy.¹⁵ This is the policy governing assignment of women in the Army today and will be discussed in detail in the next section.

CURRENT POLICY ON ASSIGNMENT OF ARMY WOMEN

In 1991, after Desert Storm, the political machinery in the U.S. Congress went into action on behalf of military women. According to the Chairman of the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee, Representative Ike Skelton, "In light of the

experience of that war, the citizens of our country became engaged with the complex and emotional issue of whether U.S. women should serve in the combat arms or in other direct combat positions within the U.S. military."¹⁶

As a result of the 1991 House Armed Services Committee debate, legislation was introduced that would repeal the combat exclusions for the Navy and Air Force. However, when it appeared the legislation might go further, an amendment was offered by Senator John McCain to establish a commission to study the legal, military, and societal implications of amending the exclusionary laws. His position was, "we will be able to make the kind of judgement which will give the American people what they want. We will find the best way to defend this Nation's national security interests, and provide equality for women in all ranks and military specialties."¹⁷ The result was PL 102-190, effective 5 December 1991, containing two amendments; one repealed the combat exclusionary provisions relating to female Naval aviators and female Air Force officers in combat aircraft, and the other established the Presidential Commission on the assignment of women in the Armed Forces.

The results of the Presidential Commission were cited as "highly controversial and contradictory", due to the composition and conduct of the members.¹⁸ The tenor of public opinion on women in ground combat was never fully explored, nor were the

women's equality issues. The testimony of senior military officers was used to reinforce the position that allowing women in ground combat positions would degrade readiness and national security. However, despite controversies, the combat exclusion repeals for the Navy and Air Force were passed in 1992.

In 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin revised DoD policy, stating, "Expanding the roles for women in the military is the right thing to do, and it's also the smart thing to do."¹⁹ In a memorandum, dated January 13, 1994, Aspin outlined the new DoD policy, effective 1 October 1994:

RULE: Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground, as defined below.

DEFINITION: Direct ground combat is engaging an enemy on the ground with individual or crew-served weapons, while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel. Direct ground combat takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect.

The Services were directed to expand the opportunities for women based on the 1994 policy. The Services were also granted

latitude to establish restrictions where the costs of collocation became prohibitive, where units and positions are collocated with direct ground combat units, where units have Special Operations or long-range reconnaissance missions, and where job related physical requirements would necessarily exclude the majority of women.

The Army "opened" 32,699 new positions to women as a result of the 1994 policy change. The positions that were opened and those that remain closed are shown in Table 1.²⁰

1994 POLICY POSITION CODING CHANGES

POSITIONS OPENED

POSITIONS CLOSED

Separate Brigade Headquarters
 Division Military Police
 Chemical Recon and Smoke Platoons
 Smoke Platoons (Mechanized)
 Engineer Bridge Companies
 Military Intelligence Coll and Jam
 Forward Support Teams
 3d Infantry (Old Guard) Ceremonial
 Armored Cavalry Regiment Headquarters
 160th Aviation Headquarters (Special Ops)
 Special Forces Group Headquarters
 Division Air Defense Artillery Battalion
 Combat Engineer Battalion
 Regimental Aviation Squadron of
 Air Cavalry Regiments and Troops
 Enlisted Engineer Brigade Crewmember
 Enlisted Combat Engineer Senior Sergeant
 Enlisted Field Artillery Surveyor

Armor
 Air Defense (SHORAD)
 Combat Engineers
 Cannon Field Artillery
 Multiple Launch Rocket (MLRS)
 Infantry
 Special Forces
 Ranger Regiment
 Ground Surveillance Radar
 *68,278 other combat support
 and service support based on
 ground combat restrictions

Total Positions Opened: 32,699

Positions Remaining Closed: 348,301

TABLE I.

The current Army position on assignment of women is that they may not be assigned below brigade level to units whose primary mission is to engage in direct ground combat as defined in DoD policy. Further, women cannot serve in infantry, armor, specified field artillery, and Special Forces battalions and below. They are not permitted to fly special operations rotary wing aircraft or perform organizational mechanized maintenance. They cannot be assigned to Ranger units or Ground Surveillance Radar Platoons. Women can be assigned to the headquarters that command and control armor, infantry, artillery and special forces units. They do perform the same jobs and hold the same aviation and support specialties as male counterparts in combat arms units. They are assigned to combat support and service support units that are task organized to combat arms units during combat operations.

According to the Army, almost 70% of the Army's positions are open to the assignment of both men and women. A floor for accessions of women has been established at 18%, with actual accessions currently at over 20%.²¹ Although the statistics for opportunities look impressive, many that are coded as available to women require combat arms experience as a prerequisite. Other positions are restricted based on the preferences of local commanders. In a Washington Post article it was reported, "Progress in moving women into new areas has been impeded by

factors from open discrimination to informal preferences of local commanders, according to Army Statistics, internal reports and scores of interviews."²²

In addition to the incongruities discussed above, the current assignment policy has also created limitations on advancement for women. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) conducted a study in May 1998, to determine if this policy was detrimental to promotion rates and selection for advanced schooling and key assignments.²³ The reports' conclusions do not indicate a large variance in selection rates, but did not address General Officer selections or the disproportionate attrition rate of women. The report did indicate that women surveyed believed the current ground combat policy hurt promotion opportunities. Only combat arms officers have been selected for the highest levels of Army leadership. The majority of Army General Officer' positions are held by combat arms officers. In terms of opportunities for advancement, if compared to a civilian corporation, the current Army policy limits women to mid-level management positions with no opportunity to compete for the top executive jobs.

Current DoD policy is a derivative of changing political and social conditions, long-held beliefs, and the performance of women as soldiers. It is also a policy that significantly limits women's roles and potential. This policy is the pivotal

issue for the total integration and best utilization of women in the Army. Section III will examine the rationale and arguments that support the current policy on assignment of women.

RATIONALE FOR CURRENT ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Since the 1967 Act that removed legal limitations on the employment of women, Army policy has consistently excluded women from combat arms in one form or another. The question is whether the Army's rationale for this exclusion is valid. This section will explore both the official DoD rationale and the "unofficial" rationale that supports perpetuation of this policy.

GAO recently conducted a study at the request of Congress to review the treatment of men and women in the armed forces; specifically, the DoD policy that excludes women from direct ground combat and its definition of direct ground combat. The findings included the numbers and types of positions closed to women and the justification, DoD's current rationale for excluding women from direct ground combat, and the relationship of DoD's definition of direct ground combat to military operations.²⁴ Findings in each of these key areas provides insights on the validity of the current policy.

JUSTIFICATION FOR POSITION CODING

Data on the positions currently closed to women was shown in Table 1, Section II. GAO reported the following justifications for those positions closed to women: 46% of the positions closed to women in the military are associated with the direct ground combat exclusion policy (affecting the Army and Marine Corps); approximately 41% of the positions closed to women are attributed to the collocation exclusion policy (also an Army and Marine Corps issue); cost prohibitive living arrangements account for 12% (Navy issue only - tents are plentiful and cheap!); and the special operations forces and long-range reconnaissance exclusion policy accounts for almost 2%.²⁵ This report did not address the process used to determine these justifications or the consistency of the position coding.

In an article published in the Army Times, the coding problems associated with the current Army policy are apparent.²⁶ The article used the examples of the positions that were opened to women in Air Cavalry Troops and Special Forces Headquarters. Specifically, there is confusion on how women can be assigned to Air Cavalry who operate forward of ground combat units or to Special Forces headquarters that can locate anywhere on the battlefield. Other positions that are still closed and are under review by DACOWITS, are the assignment of women to special operations aircraft and Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS).

The rationale for not opening Special Operations aircraft is that they operate behind enemy lines, but so do other units in a non-linear battlefield. The argument for not opening MLRS is based on the collocation restriction, but the MLRS is the Army's long-range indirect fire system normally positioned behind other units that women can be assigned to. These are just a few examples of the inconsistency in the current coding system, indicative of the arbitrary nature by which these positions were identified.

DOD'S RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT POLICY

According to the 1998 GAO report, DoD's rationale for the current policy is the same as it was when the Combat Exclusion Policy was formulated in 1994. The source for the 1994 DoD policy was the Army Ground Combat Exclusion Policy. According to a DoD source, "the prohibition on direct ground combat was a long-standing Army policy, and for that reason, no consideration was given to repealing it when DoD adopted the current assignment policy in 1994."²⁷ The report also stated that DoD did not consider changing its long-standing policy because they believed the integration of women into those units lacked congressional and public support. Official transcripts from the press release in 1994 indicate that DoD officials believed that assignment of women to direct ground combat units "would not

contribute to the readiness and effectiveness of those units" because of physical strength, stamina, and privacy issues.²⁸ The argument invoking lack of public support has been disproved through several polls since Desert Storm. Physical limitations have never been proven as no physical standards have been established for each specialty. Lastly, the privacy issue was insignificant during combat operations in Desert Storm and was not used as a justification to close any positions to women under the current coding system.

The significance of this report is that it clearly shows that the current policy is a continuation of a combat exclusion policy that is based on long-standing biases, not facts. In 1992, during the contentious post Gulf War debates in Congress, Representative Pat Schroeder proposed a comprehensive four-year test to determine the validity of the long-held beliefs on ground combat exclusions for women.²⁹ That proposal, like the one to establish physical standards for each military specialty never came to fruition.

During the 1998 GAO review, it was stated that DoD has no plans for further review of this issue, because: (1) there is no military need for women in ground combat positions because an adequate number of men are available; (2) the idea of women in direct ground combat continues to lack congressional and public

support; and (3) most servicewomen do not support the involuntary assignment of women to direct ground combat units.³⁰

The three reasons DoD is using to not pursue the issue of women in combat arms units, simply lacks substance. There are not enough men to fill the ranks which is why the Army had to lower recruiting standards in December 1998. In terms of public support, in addition to polling data, there was no hue and cry by the American public over the women killed or captured in Desert Storm. American culture is changing and the gender norms that critics of women in the Army espouse, are disappearing with reruns of "I Love Lucy". The assertion that women do not support involuntary assignment to the combat arms is a red herring created by the word involuntary. The issue of voluntary versus involuntary is irrelevant absent a draft. Joining the Service and accepting an assignment based on the needs of the Service is voluntary. Most servicewomen support equal opportunities, equal standards, equal benefits and hardships, as equal members of the team.

DEFINITION OF DIRECT GROUND COMBAT TO MILITARY OPERATIONS

The third part of the 1998 GAO findings, concluded that DoD's definition of direct ground combat occurring "well forward" on the battlefield is not reflective of modern battlefields that are non-linear in nature. Most peace

operations occur in a non-linear environment as well. The key is that operational reality negates the definition. Further, "engaging the enemy with individual or crew-served weapons while under hostile fire", can occur any place on the battlefield. Military Police units are comprised of more than 25% women and are used routinely as economy of force and rear area response forces to deal with enemy incursions in rear areas and on flanks.

UNOFFICIAL REASONS THAT SUPPORT THE CURRENT POLICY

In addition to the official reasons given by DoD, opponents of women in direct ground combat, both inside and outside the military have cited other reasons. There is not time in this paper to provide all the opposing viewpoints, but some of the more widely supported views by critics of women in the Army include the following: it would disrupt the bonding and unit cohesion process; it is in contravention to American culture and values; and it would promote equal opportunity over unit readiness.

The underlying premise for the argument on disruption of bonding and unit cohesion, is that bonding is inherently a male function and cohesion cannot be achieved in gender integrated units because of the natural sexual tension between men and women.³¹ A Washington Post reporter spent three days with a

military police battalion in Bosnia. In an article that followed, entitled "Engendering the Warrior Spirit" it was reported, "Asked in dozens of interviews about the changes that have to be made for women in military police squads, soldiers and officers were uniformly nonchalant about what they described as routine adjustments."³² Those adjustments include throwing a blanket across the squad-sleeping tent to ensure privacy for personal hygiene or using a poncho in the desert to go to the bathroom.

The Military Police Corps has been integrated with women since the 1970's and the team leaders, squad leaders and gunners are assigned by rank and capability, not gender. There are exceptionally mission capable and cohesive gender integrated units in the Army today. The key to successful integration of women or any other "group" is leadership. "The same principles that military leaders have used for centuries to forge effective fighting forces, namely discipline and accountability underpin gender integration. Successful integration is dependent on a common identity and purpose: a soldier is a soldier."³³

The argument against women in combat arms units because it is at odds with American culture and values is based on the premise that women are genetically incapable of possessing the warrior spirit and are not fighters. A Marine Captain wrote, "since combat requires men on occasion to be downright beastly,

warriors must possess an aspect of masculinity that women will and should find distasteful.³⁴ In another article it was asked, do you want your wives, sisters, or daughters subject to the horrors of combat? Has anyone asked do you want your husbands, brothers, or sons subject to the horrors of combat? In terms of American values and culture, it is inconceivable that a parent would feel worse over the loss of a daughter than a son. Further, one definition for "warrior" is "an experienced fighter". Many women in the military today are "experienced fighters".

Another argument by the opposition to women in combat arms, is that the issue boils down to promotion of individual interests over the good of the Service. The underlying assumption is that women do not have the capability to perform in combat arms units. These critics believe that opening combat arms units to women will erode the nation's defense capability for what amounts to an equal opportunity issue. This position assumes that equal opportunity and military readiness are mutually exclusive conditions. The capability part of the argument has never been proven, and equal opportunity for all soldiers to compete should ensure that the best qualified have a chance to be selected. "A gender neutral meritocracy creates a level playing field where membership on the team and the position played is predicated on individual ability. It is the

common identity of being a soldier first that transcends the differences of gender and unites highly competitive people to serve a common purpose."³⁵

There are two other arguments against women in combat arms units that should be mentioned. One is the argument that male soldiers would be overly protective and therefore distracted during combat. The other is that the enemy will fight harder not wanting to lose to the "weaker" sex. Although women were not in infantry or armor units during Desert Storm, they were in units close to the fight and no one was distracted from their jobs. Further, the Iraqi's knew the American Army had women and it defies the imagination that they could have done anything differently because of that fact.

In summary, all of the reasons that support the current policy have one common thread: they are all based on supposition and beliefs rather than facts. The Army must decide whether it wants to set standards and get the people who can meet them, or continue to discriminate against potential contributors based on gender. Section IV will detail the impacts of the current "women's" policies on the Army as an organization.

IMPACTS OF THE CURRENT POLICY ON THE ARMY

The Army is heralded by its senior leaders as a "values based organization" with people as its most valuable asset. Leadership, teambuilding, and equal opportunity are all integral

parts of Army doctrine. Unfortunately, current Army policies regarding women are contradictory to the values, leadership principles, and teambuilding techniques that are being espoused. Biases about women's capabilities and limited utility are clearly communicated in current policies. The second and third order effects of having a policy that is discriminatory in nature has created many problems for the Army. This section will address some of those problems to include perceptions of double standards, controversy over advancement potential, the effects of pregnancy on readiness, and continued sexual harassment problems.

PERCEPTIONS ON LIMITATIONS ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Within the last year, Congress directed a number of studies to look at the problems associated with gender integration as a result of the notorious sexual harassment cases of the past few years. GAO recently conducted a study on inequalities or perceptions of inequalities in the treatment of men and women in the armed forces that are tied to statutes and regulations. GAO identified two major areas that servicemen and servicewomen perceive as inequities, although not from the same viewpoint. Those areas are restrictions on career advancement based on assignment policies and double standards for physical fitness and weight control.³⁶

GAO reported that the findings from surveys indicated that perceptions of inequity in career advancement stem from policies by local commanders and the ground combat exclusion policy. Men and women appear to be divided on the issue of opening combat arms units to women, with the majority of women in favor and the majority of men opposed. The report also stated there wasn't enough data to draw definitive conclusions. The significance of this finding is that wide perceptual disparities exist in an organization whose effectiveness is measured by cohesion and commitment to common goals and values.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT DUAL FITNESS STANDARDS

According to GAO, there are also perceived double standards regarding physical fitness and weight control. Part of the reason for this perception is that the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) is misconstrued as an indicator of combat readiness rather than an indicator of general fitness. GAO stated that using the APFT as prerequisite for combat effectiveness is erroneous.³⁷ General fitness tests used to assess physical fitness, is not the same as job-specific physical performance standards. None of the Services have adequately studied or developed job-specific physical performance standards.³⁸ Additionally, testing that has been done has largely measured the differences in capabilities between men and women rather

than women against job standards. The perception problem with weight control, according to GAO, is that development and enforcement of standards needs additional validity and oversight.

The perceptions highlighted in these reports form the basis for the fundamental belief that women do not possess the physical capabilities or stamina to function in combat arms units. These perceptions are exacerbated by the fact that in a peacetime environment, the APFT and appearance are perceived as visible assessments of a soldier's physical or "warrior" ability in a very physical profession. The fact there are different standards for men and women in general fitness tests and women can appear to be overweight and within standards, automatically makes women appear less capable. Without job-specific physical performance standards, this perception will be perpetuated.

READINESS

In recent months, the effect of pregnant women on readiness has become a major issue for the Army. According to the Army Chief of Staff for Personnel, on average approximately 5% of women on active duty are pregnant and non-deployable. While this has just become an issue for the downsized Army, this has been a major issue for units with large percentages of women for some time. It is particularly significant for combat support

and combat service units that deploy frequently. The real issue is whether the current policy which allows women to remain on active duty when pregnant, should be revised.

The issue of pregnancy and military women is an issue that requires extensive legal and policy review. The Armed Forces are this nation's defense and primary instrument for a policy of global engagement. That capability must be maintained at all times. The mission of the Armed Forces is the basic difference between the military and a civilian corporation. Losing an employee in the civilian world for months may not affect business, but having a soldier non-deployable for months has a significant impact on readiness. Pregnancy is a choice and a situation exclusive to women. It is the only real biological issue that affects a woman's ability to perform as soldier.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In 1996, the Chief of Staff of the Army appointed a Senior Review Panel to conduct an assessment of the Army's human relations environment with an emphasis on sexual harassment issues. He also directed the Army Inspector General to look at equal opportunity and sexual misconduct policies at initial entry training organizations.³⁹ The key findings in the reports from these two groups is as follows:

- The Army lacks institutional commitment to the Equal Opportunity Program and soldiers distrust the complaint system.
- Sexual harassment exists throughout the Army, crossing gender, rank, and racial lines; but sex discrimination is more common than sexual harassment.
- Army leaders are the critical factor in creating, maintaining and enforcing an environment of respect and dignity.
- The overwhelming majority of drill sergeants and instructors perform competently and well, but respect as a core value is not well institutionalized in Initial Entry Training.

As a result of these reports, the Army developed the "Human Relations Action Plan", which addresses everything from staff reorganization to an extensive education program designed to increase levels of awareness and ensure a successful human relations environment. Although the reports very accurately identified the problems, one of the primary causes that gives tacit approval to sex discrimination was curiously omitted from these findings. That cause is the strategic level policy on assignment and utilization of women. If the umbrella policy under which all other programs are developed is discriminatory, then no matter what the Army says, biases will prevail. The

result is that leaders will just become more "politically correct" in doing business the same old way.

The overall impact of all these issues on the Army, is that it has to allocate significant resources to deal with them. More importantly, the Army is not fully utilizing all of its soldiers. Under the current policy on assignment of women, the "be all you can be" slogan doesn't apply to almost 15% of the Army population. Attaining organizational effectiveness means capitalizing on the capabilities of all of the organizations' members. Section V will address the recommended changes that could help the Army to build a better organization based on common commitment, trust, adherence to standards, and the ability to perform.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Adapting to change is difficult for any large organization, especially a large organization with a long history, rich tradition and fairly conservative culture. However, the Army exists in a dynamic environment of change. Technology changes, societies and governments change, and effective organizations must be capable of adapting to changing environments. More importantly, effective organizations must be capable of constantly assessing changing dynamics. The Army is at this crossroads with women.

WHY THE ARMY SHOULD CHANGE

The purpose of this paper is to show why it is in the best interest of the Army to change the current restrictive policy on assignment of women. Brigadier General, U.S. Army (RET), Evelyn Foote summarized the situation best, "As long as the Army maintains gender constraints on key military specialties, male soldiers who perform duties in those "protected" specialties will consider female soldiers to be second class soldiers. This marginalization of Army women creates an atmosphere in which sexual harassment and sexual discrimination will flourish if senior leaders do not take the necessary strong measures to support it."⁴⁰ Based on studies by the Senior Review Panel, the Army Inspector General, and GAO, this is the environment that exists in the Army today.

Critics argue that it would be too disruptive and resource intensive to change the policy. The Army should carefully examine the level of resources required to deal with the problems caused by this policy. Further, based on real operational experience during combat operations, the costs for collocation of women could be minimal with proper application of common sense. The major cost to the Army in eliminating this policy would be exercising the vaunted leadership principles that are the heart and soul of Army culture.

The purpose of changing the current policy is not to advocate women's rights at the expense of standards or readiness. The intent is to open opportunities to everyone who can meet the standards. There are physiological differences between men and women, and those have been apparent since Adam and Eve. This does not automatically translate to the fact that women cannot meet the standards required for combat arms jobs. Continuation of this policy effectively eliminates over 50% of the available population as potential candidates to compete for combat arms jobs and potentially under utilizes almost 15% of the current force structure. This is simply not effective management of resources.

There are other nations who have faced the issue of women in ground combat and made the necessary changes. Canada, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium, and most recently, Great Britain, have opened combat arms units to women. A British Squadron Leader wrote, "now that the demographic trough is beginning to bite, the military is slowly coming to realize the increasing importance and potential of the female recruit. If a woman has to lead men into battle, or has to fight on her own, is she aggressive enough to do it? With requisite training there is no doubt that certain modern women have that capability. The history of female resistance fighters, terrorists and guerrillas, bears testament to this fact."⁴¹ Of course critics

point to the novelty of these programs and prefer to use the Israeli example, which does not allow women in combat. The fact that the culture is different, and the Israeli policy is based on events from the Yom Kippur War in 1973, doesn't deter critics. Critics also fail to mention that women in Israel are subject to the draft.

HOW TO CHANGE

There are four changes the Army should make if it wants to maximize utilization of its female population and maintain readiness.

- Eliminate the current ground combat exclusion policy and attendant restrictive assignment codes. As a DoD and Service policy, this does not require congressional approval.
- Establish job-specific physical standards. Objective, clear-cut and enforceable standards are the only way to ensure readiness. Incorporate these standards into the recruiting and entry level training process. This would provide not only a standard for women, but for all soldiers.
- Develop a long-range plan that systematically integrates women. This plan should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary to minimize turbulence. The same type of

training and awareness programs, and leadership emphasis developed to counter sexual harassment, must be part of the plan. The plan must also address the incremental accession of women from different sources, I.E., Reserve Officer Training Courses (ROTC), enlistment, Officer Candidate Schools, branch transfers, and the Military Academy.

- Last, the Army needs to review the current policy on pregnancy. There are alternative solutions such as a leave of absence program or transfer to the Individual Ready Reserve. The key is that a solution must be found that allows the Army to maintain readiness, but also to retain those soldiers who are valuable contributors.

If the Army would make these changes, it would eliminate most of the problems and perceptions about double standards, capabilities, and limits on opportunities. It would create an environment where all soldiers could reach their potential. Most importantly, the Army wouldn't have to work so hard at teaching dignity and respect because the mechanisms that reinforce biases would be eliminated and every soldier could be judged as a soldier first.

The risk for the Army in changing current policy is minimal. Readiness is driven by standards and women have proven they can meet the standards. Experience in combat support and combat

service support units demonstrates the successful integration of women. The real measure of success for future changes is performance on the battlefield. If past and present performance are indicators, women will exceed those challenges and serve the nation well in combat, as they have done in every war in the nation's history.

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