

Women in Military Combat?

What It Means for American Culture and Defense

By Phyllis Schlafly

Current law forbids the assignment of women to military combat roles in the Air Force, Navy and Marines. Women, of course, can volunteer for those services, but they are excluded — or protected — (whichever language you prefer) from the most dangerous of the military assignments. An attempt was made in 1979 during the Carter Administration to repeal the combat exclusion laws. Hearings were held by the House Military Personnel Subcommittee, after which the proposal quietly died and never came to a vote.

On May 8, 1991, Representative Patricia Schroeder, the Democrat from Colorado, presented what the *Washington Post* called “a surprise measure” to a closed meeting of the House Armed Services Committee and on a voice vote it was approved without any hearing or roll call. Calling this a “landmark action,” the Congressional news release described it like this: “The House Armed Services Committee voted to allow women to fly combat missions as Air Force and Navy pilots.” The *Washington Post* called this a “legislative watershed” and Congresswoman Schroeder later said, “I never dreamed we would get it out of the House Committee on Armed Services.”

The Schroeder amendment was attached to the 1992 Defense Authorization bill and passed by the full House on May 22. If agreed to by the Senate, it would repeal the laws that exclude women from military combat duty in the Air Force, Navy and Marines.

The proposal to assign women to combat duty in the U.S. Armed Services is a very bad idea for many reasons.

The Pregnancy Problem. The proposal to repeal the combat exclusion laws is based on the feminist ideology that there is not any difference between men and women — that men and women are fungibles in all occupations, even in the most demanding, vicious and dangerous occupation called military combat.

So, how does the military deal with the problem that women get pregnant and men do not? When a servicewoman gets pregnant, she is given the option of resigning immediately (i.e., escaping from the remainder of her term of enlistment) or having limited duty during pregnancy, receiving full medical benefits, receiving paid maternity leave ranging from six weeks to a couple of months, and promising to accept deployment then to anywhere in the world.

It costs \$1 million more or less, depending on the type of aircraft, to train a pilot in the U.S. Armed Services. When war comes and there is some nasty fighting to do, every female pilot would have the option to say: “Pardon me, fellas. I am taking nine months off from flying in order to be pregnant, and then a couple of months more to recuperate. You guys go ahead and kill off the enemy, and I will see you all in about a year.”

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All the female pilots would not get pregnant, but some of them would. Even if they promised at the start of their training, not to get pregnant, some of them would change their minds. Based on actual experience since the sexual integration of the U.S. Armed Services, about ten percent of servicewomen are pregnant at any one time. The Army's rate of discharge for pregnancy during Desert Shield and Desert Storm was four times the normal rate.

But a few facts leaked out despite tight military news management. When the ship *Acadia* docked in San Diego, it had 36 pregnant crew members. When the *Yellowstone* docked, 20 of the crew were pregnant. The Navy spokesman defensively protested, "These women have a right to get pregnant." Columnist Jack Anderson reported from Saudi Arabia that doctors told him that "their most frequent visitors were women asking for pregnancy tests because a positive result would be a ticket home."

This situation is not fair or just or equal. The life of a service person in peacetime can be interesting, exciting and career-productive. The life of a service person in wartime can be nasty, dangerous and fatal. Our All Volunteer Army is voluntary when GI Joe and GI Jane sign up — but once they sign up, it is not supposed to be voluntary as to whether or not they take the wartime duty when it comes. Repealing the combat-exclusion laws for women would give women expensive aircraft training in peacetime along with the choice to opt out (by pregnancy) when the nasty duty came along. Of course, the men would get no such option.

The military women who appear on panels and on television to argue that pregnancy is not a problem are usually career women with no children and well over childbearing age. The women eligible for combat assignment are in their prime childbearing years: 18 to 26 years old.

There is no way out of this dilemma. We hear a constant refrain that "times have changed" and that "public attitudes have changed." There is no change in the fact that young, healthy women are apt to get pregnant. Feminist ideology has not yet corrupted our thinking to the extent that the military would send a pregnant pilot up to engage in aerial dogfighting with the enemy. Repealing the combat exclusion cannot by any stretch of the imagination be justified as "equal rights" or "an end to discrimination." Repealing the combat exclusion would be manifestly unfair and discriminatory against all men and against those women who want to pursue a serious military career and do *not* become pregnant.

The Motherhood Problem. After a year of pregnancy and maternity leave, during which time the servicewoman has received full pay but others have been doing all or part of her work, we face the motherhood problem. Present military policy is based on the feminist notion that there is not any difference between motherhood and fatherhood, and that after maternity leave, the new mother is fully deployable to anywhere in the world. After all, she voluntarily enlisted, so she is supposed to make daycare arrangements for her baby.

This is the policy which the American people watched in amazement when they saw press photos of nursing mothers of six-, ten-, and twelve-week-old babies — plus mothers of two and three preschool children — being shipped out to the Gulf war. Some were women on active duty; some were women called up from the reserves after completing their term of enlistment.

The sending of these mothers out to fight a war shows that the military has acquiesced in the feminist fallacy that having a baby is no more incapacitating than breaking a leg; i.e., after six weeks or so, the person is fully deployable. Pregnancy and motherhood are simply not compatible with military service. It is wrong to pretend that a woman who is pregnant or

has a baby is ready to ship out to fight a war. She is not ready, and she should not be paid as though she were ready.

It is ridiculous even to discuss women in combat until the military comes to grips with the pregnancy and motherhood questions. The present policies are contrary to combat readiness, common sense and respect for family integrity. When the press photos of mothers tearfully saying goodbye to their infants hit the press, the feminists responded by seeking a gender-neutral legislative response. They tried to divert public discussion to problems of single parents and of dual-career military parents deployed to the Gulf. But pregnancy and motherhood are not gender-neutral situations, and we should not pretend they are. Human experience recognizes that the mother of a six-week-old baby can never be combat ready like the father of a six-week-old baby.

The military has consistently concealed how many mothers of babies were deployed to the Gulf war. The public is entitled to know this figure. Instead, the military has released only the figure of "single parents" and asserts that there are more single parent fathers than mothers. It is evidence of the dishonesty of the military that one statistic lumps together both mothers who have recently given birth and have custody of small children along with fathers who do not have custody at all. The pretense that this is the same problem is a fantasy propagated by childless feminists.

We need an investigation of the stress that the Gulf war placed on mothers and on their children when women with babies under age three were deployed to the Gulf war. How did these mothers perform on the job when they were yearning for their babies at home? In addition, our society has an obligation to be concerned about the harm caused to the babies by sending their mothers out to the Gulf war. It is a national embarrassment that the Pentagon acquiesced in the feminist delusion that driving a jeep in the Middle East was more important than a mother taking care of her own baby.

The Affirmative Action Quota Problem. Repealing the combat exclusion laws so that women officers can fly planes in military combat would mean affirmative action quotas for women in an occupation in which they cannot compete equally with men. We know this would be the result because of the mountain of evidence that women are not performing equally with men in military service today.

We can thank the recent Virginia Military Institute (VMI) trial for providing us with proof about how affirmative action functions for female cadets at West Point. Those who are suing VMI to force it to admit women and to feminize its curriculum called as their witness Colonel Patrick Toffler, a West Point spokesman, who was supposed to testify that sexual integration is a success at the U.S. Military Academy. During five hours of cross-examination under oath, he revealed a lot of things that West Point has heretofore concealed.

Colonel Toffler admitted that West Point does not require the same physical performance of female cadets that it requires of male cadets. He admitted that West Point has dual standards for males and females; that women cadets do not pass the same physical tests as men, and that if they perform the same task, the women are given higher grades. Female cadets are allowed to hold leadership positions based on their padded scores.

Colonel Toffler admitted how the training has been changed — "modified" he called it — to accommodate what the female cadets are physically capable of doing and so that they would not be "psychologically discouraged"; e.g., a number of events have been eliminated from the obstacle course "which require considerable upper-body strength," cadets now run in jogging shoes instead of in boots; a lighter-weight rifle has been substituted; judo is al-

lowed to substitute for boxing; and the forced march carrying a heavy pack has been eliminated.

Colonel Toffler admitted that West Point has a sexual quota system for the admission of women cadets and for their assignment after graduation (such as to the engineers). "Those quotas have got to be met," he said. The women cadets do not compete with the men, but compete only against each other for designated female quota slots.

Colonel Toffler admitted that to accommodate the women who cannot perform as well as the men, West Point has changed from equal training of all cadets to "comparable or equivalent training." This is a concept that if men and women exert equivalent effort, they will be ranked as though they had achieved equal performance. An example is the pull-ups, which women lack the arm strength to do, so they are required only to exert "comparable effort" to do a "flexed arm hang."

Colonel Toffler admitted that no free speech is permitted about the performance of women at West Point. Female cadets are allowed to correct their superiors who use such words as "chairman" instead of "chairperson," but men are not permitted to make any negative statement about women in the military. The *New York Times* reported on May 26 that it is a "career-killer" for a man to utter anything negative about the performance of women. Colonel Toffler even said that the cadets are given sensitivity training to help promote acceptance of the sexually integrated program.

This situation is similar to affirmative action for minorities, which has been taking place for years while authorities have been denying it and covering it up. When a student at Georgetown University exposed the truth about minority quotas for admission to law school, he narrowly escaped expulsion because the authorities did not want their practice known. The American public has just discovered that for the last ten years the government has been engaging in a process called "race norming," i.e., falsifying the employment test scores of minorities and then deceiving prospective employers.

Thanks to Colonel Toffler's sworn testimony, we know that West Point has been engaged in a similar practice — we might call it "sex norming" — and then hiding it from the public. We can reasonably infer that the practice at West Point is carried on also at the Naval and Air Force Academies. We can also reasonably infer that the same practice would obtain if female officers were admitted into the highly demanding and competitive program for flying combat aircraft precisely because the prime candidates for these jobs would be the female Academy graduates who have enjoyed affirmative action benefits ever since they entered the military.

The Problem of Who Makes the Combat Decision. The Congressional news release issued after the Schroeder amendment was passed in a closed House Armed Services Committee meeting explained it thusly: "The committee action would not require the services to place women on combat missions, but would give them the option by lifting the statutory prohibition that exists today for the Air Force and Navy." "Allow" and "option" are certainly very different words from "assign" and "require." It is probable that, when the House Armed Services Committee passed the Schroeder amendment, the members thought they were merely giving the military the discretion to open some combat jobs to women.

However, this plan to pass the buck from Congress to the Armed Services was knocked into a cocked hat when Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Personnel Christopher Jehn gave a written response to questions from the Senate Armed Services Committee in which he stated that if Congress gives the Defense Department the authority

to allow women to serve in combat jobs, the Department of Defense will "be obligated" to use that authority. It is one thing to "allow" the Defense Department to open some combat jobs to women, and it is something else to mandate the assignment of women to combat jobs and missions, just like men.

The Problem of Enlisted Women Versus Female Officers. All this push for women in combat is coming only from the female officers. Enlisted women do *not* want repeal of the combat exclusion laws. The women officers are seeking their career advancement at the expense of the enlisted women who would get the heavy and dangerous work without any of the glamour of piloting planes. Repealing the combat exclusion laws would betray the enlisted women because they signed up when the law assured them they would be excluded from combat. Professor Charles Moskos of Northwestern University interviewed scores of women who served in the Panama invasion, and he did not find *any* enlisted women who favor repeal of the combat exclusion laws.

The two laws which would be repealed by the Schroeder Amendment do not cover the Army, which maintains its combat exclusion policy by Army regulation. However, this Army policy is clearly tied to and grounded in the legislative policy established by Congress through the combat exclusion laws that apply to the Air Force, Navy and Marines. The repeal of those laws would cut the Constitutional ground out from under the Army policy.

The Problem of Making Women Liable to Conscription. In the landmark case of *Rostker v. Goldberg* decided June 25, 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is Constitutional for Congress to exempt all women from the military draft and from draft registration. In that decision, the Court recognized the reality that draft registration, conscription and military combat are all one continuum. The court based its decision on the fact that any military draft is for the purpose of raising combat troops. If women are not eligible for combat duty, then it makes no sense to draft them or to register them for the draft.

What the Court said was this: "Women as a group, unlike men as a group, are not eligible for combat. The restrictions on the participation of women in combat in the Navy and Air Force are statutory," citing 10 U.S.C. 6015 and 8549 (the sections targeted for repeal by the Schroeder amendment). The Army and Marine Corps prohibit the use of women in combat as a matter of policy in conformity with those statutes.

The Court's decision in *Rostker* hammered the point home hard. "The existence of the combat restrictions clearly indicates the basis for Congress' decision to exempt women from registration. The purpose of registration was to prepare for a draft of combat troops. Since women are excluded from combat, Congress concluded that they would not be needed in the event of a draft, and therefore decided not to register them."

The Court quoted from the legislative history of the draft law. The Senate report stated: "The principle that women should not intentionally and routinely engage in combat is fundamental, and enjoys wide support among our people. It is universally supported by military leaders who have testified before the Committee.... Current law and policy exclude women from being assigned to combat in our military forces, and the Committee reaffirms this policy."

The Court again cited the legislative history spelled out in the Senate Report: "The policy precluding the use of women in combat is, in the Committee's view, the most important reason for not including women in a registration system." Under current federal law, every young man of age eighteen must register for the military draft. No young women are required to register. It is clear that this exemption of women is based on the laws that exclude women from military combat, since the only purpose of a draft is to induct for combat. If

the government could promise that all those drafted would never see combat, we obviously would never need conscription!

The oft-stated goal of the radical feminists is a totally gender-neutral society, and the military is the cutting edge. Their three-step scenario to achieve this goal starts with repealing the combat exclusion laws, while telling the public that this change would apply only to women who volunteer. Step number two will be to make the draft registration law gender neutral, while reassuring the public that a draft will never be reimposed. Step number three will be to impose some kind of conscription or universal military service, thereby inducting young women along with young men. Most advocates of repealing the combat-exclusion laws admit that they seek a reimposition of the draft. That may seem unlikely, but then who would have guessed that any Congressmen would have voted to send women into military combat? The radical feminists would then be able to use the raw power of government to force us toward the gender-neutral society which is their longtime goal.

The Problem with Critics' Arguments. The advocates of assigning women to military combat assert that American attitudes have changed. On the contrary, the Associated Press poll of February 1991 reported that the American public by a two-to-one vote thinks that the military policy of sending mothers to the Gulf war was wrong. Sending moms to battle is not acceptable to any Americans except the radical feminists who are over military and childbearing age and have not any daughters.

The advocates of assigning women to military combat assert that the 33,000 women who served in the Persian Gulf proved that women can and should serve in combat. First of all, by any historical standard, the Gulf war was not real combat; it was, as one soldier described it, "a turkey shoot." During the entire six-week war, with some 540,000 Americans in the region, only about 100 U.S. troops died from hostile fire as compared to more than 100,000 enemy deaths — a precedent-shattering ratio of 1,000 to one.

The few U.S. servicewomen who were killed in the Gulf war prove only that women in a war zone can be killed, which was always obvious. These deaths certainly do not prove that units comprising both men and women can survive successfully when engaging in combat. Combat occurs when a unit must keep fighting while members of the unit are being killed by enemy fire. Even the mini-invasion of Panama provided more combat than the Gulf war.

We do not know what the Gulf war proved about the performance of servicewomen there because the military would not tell us. The American public got only the news which the military chose to give us, and, as reported by the *New York Times* of May 26, 1991, military policy permits no negative comment about the performance of women.

The Problem of the Feminist Attack on American Culture. The combat exclusion laws are a rational legislative recognition of fundamental differences between men and women. The combat exclusion laws have been fully supported by the American people through all the wars of this century. The armies and navies of every potential enemy are exclusively male, and no women diminish their combat readiness.

Fighting wars is a mission that requires tough, tenacious and courageous men to endure the most primitive and uncivilized situations and pain in order to survive, plus determination to kill enemies who are just as tough, tenacious and courageous, and probably vicious and sadistic, too. Men are attracted to serve in the military because of its intensely masculine character. The qualities that make them good soldiers — aggressiveness, risk taking, and enjoyment of body-contact competition — are conspicuously absent in women. Pretending that women can perform equally with men in tasks that require those attributes is not only dishonest; it corrupts the system.

Only a tiny minority of American women choose a military career at all, and of those only a tiny minority are agitating to get combat jobs (in peacetime, of course), namely, the officers. This little group of ambitious women should not be allowed to impose their peculiar views of gender neutrality on our nation.

The whole idea of men sending women, including mothers, out to fight the enemy is uncivilized, degrading, barbaric and embarrassing. It is contrary to our culture, to our respect for men and women, and to our belief in the importance of the family and motherhood. And furthermore, no one respects a man who would let a woman do his fighting for him.

