



The Phyllis Schlafly Report



VOL. 11, NO. 2, SECTION 2

BOX 618, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002

SEPTEMBER, 1977

Women in Military Combat?

The Supreme Tragedy of the Equal Rights Amendment by Brigadier General Andrew J. Gatsis (Ret.)

General Gatsis was a principal witness at the hearings held by the North Carolina House and Senate in 1977. His two addresses describe the supreme tragedy of ERA with indisputable facts and the compelling eloquence of first-hand experience. ERA proponents cheerfully admit that ERA will positively require the drafting of women and their equal assignment to combat duty in all our country's future wars. There is NO dispute about that. The only question is: Do the American people want this to happen?

General Gatsis is one of the most highly-decorated officers in the U.S. Armed Forces. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, and other distinguished Medals, Stars, and Crosses too numerous to list. He entered the U.S. Army as a private and served as a professional combat infantryman for 33 years, including the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the incursion into Cambodia. He is a graduate of West Point and many other Army schools.

General Gatsis' Testimony Before the North Carolina House Constitutional Amendment Committee, January 26, 1977:

As a combat infantry general who recently retired after 33 years service in the army, including three tours of combat at the fighting level, each time as a commander, I feel fully qualified to speak on the impact which ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment will have on those women who could be drafted into the army and on the inevitable effect it will have upon our army.

The draft will some day be reinstated since our modern volunteer army cannot cope with large wars or small long-term conflicts. Maintaining a modern volunteer army is extremely expensive and, as the economy improves, it is becoming more difficult to recruit personnel. Women will be subject to the draft under E.R.A. and many of them who are not qualified in a skill will be placed into combat units against their own will. This only stands to reason since our infantry draftees, during war, normally come from those who are not particularly qualified for anything else. Even those who are assigned to support-type units may be subject to combat if the war is the type which is characterized by no front lines.

I am deeply concerned over this matter for I know what the rigors of ground combat are, and have seen what they can do to men who were physically and

psychologically fit for this task.

Combat Is Ugly

The combat environment is an ugly one. It is characterized by loneliness and desolation, weary marches, at times relentless heat, bitter cold, torrential rains, filth, pestilence, disease, the slime of dripping dugouts and the stench of human carnage, all coupled with feelings of depression which stem from fear, uncertainty and long separation from loved ones. It is an environment totally alien to womanhood.

To survive these conditions and to function effectively at the same time against a determined enemy, it is mandatory that the individual soldier be in top physical condition, with a long-term inborn stamina that will not wane after long gruelling hours of trudging toward the objective. It is the kind of strength that keeps the soldier fit to fight after he reaches the enemy, regardless of the obstacles he must overcome before contacting him.

This condition of fitness is not attained through physical training alone, but rather by developing, through training, a natural inborn physical strength normally found in men but not in women. Army tests at Fort Jackson and West Point show conclusively that most women do not have this type of strength.

For example, reports show that women suffer a very high injury rate, as a rule are miserable in the field and

cannot keep their minds on what they are supposed to do, lack upper body strength, have trouble with long road marches, and just don't like to beat people up when participating in hand-to-hand combat training. As a result, physical standards have been lowered so that they can meet the requirements for basic training. As an example, women are not recycled as the men are when they fail to meet the physical requirements.

Reduced Standards For Women

At West Point, women are not required to participate in boxing or wrestling, and must only be able to hang on to the horizontal bar a specified period of time rather than accomplish a certain number of pull-ups as the male cadets must do.

I tell you these things about our modern volunteer army, for if this is what we can expect from highly motivated female volunteers, what type of performance can we expect from drafted and unmotivated women? After all, we do have the security of our country to think about as well as our women's welfare.

There has been much publicity recently that women make good marksmen, participate in karate, and have a good attitude. This is true, but doing these things is a far cry from what combat is all about. Ground combat is a tough, dirty, and brutal business where you slug it out and kill in any way that you can before you are killed. It requires the individual soldier to be as physically and psychologically tough as possible. A good attitude alone just won't hack it. Israel found this out, but quick, and transferred all of its women from combat units to support-type organizations.

Want To Go Into Combat?

Some women will tell you that they want to go into combat. They just don't know what they are talking about, for I know of no man who has seen real combat who wants any part of it. If a woman wants to volunteer for combat, that is one thing; but to drag American women into such a hellish environment through a draft is unbelievable. I leave it to your imagination as to the kind of treatment our women captured as prisoners of war would receive.

You may ask how can women weaken our military? The answer is very simple. The male soldier tries to help her or does the job for her when she is physically incapable, and neglects his own duties. Weak soldiers become a burden on others, diminishing combat effectiveness, and increasing the likelihood of casualties.

Already in our modern volunteer army we find that the male soldier is over-protective of the female soldier and constantly neglects some of his own tasks by helping the female lift heavy objects such as truck tires, heavy mechanics tools, tank ammunition and the like.

Some proponents of ERA say that ground combat is no longer likely with the ascendancy of nuclear weapons, and that there is no longer a need for tough fighting soldiers. I don't know where they get all of these opinions. Current army doctrine in FM 100-5 recently revised by our military professionals at the Training and Doctrine Command says the next war will probably be fought by independent small-squad ground units and, in the first battle, the outcome of the fight will depend on the conduct of individual soldiers and squads as never before. Some proponents will also

tell you that the draft is past history. Senator Stennis, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has advised the Secretary of Defense that we need to reinstate the draft.

ERA proponents will tell you that women can be drafted and be effective in combat units. They will tell you that women meet the training requirements. What they do not tell you is that the standards for those requirements have been lowered, that our combat effectiveness would be reduced, and the degradation to which our women would be subjected. Only the real test, combat, will uncover this grave mistake. Then it may be too late.

I seem to recall the old refrain that Vietnamization was working, while all along our combat veterans knew it was not, but no one would listen because they didn't want to. Don't do this to our women and our national security. Vote against the ERA.

General Gatsis' Testimony Before the North Carolina Senate Constitutional Amendment Committee, February 24, 1977:

It was only a little less than a month ago that I had the privilege of speaking before the House Constitutional Amendment Committee on the effect of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment on our armed forces.

At that time I characterized the combat environment as one totally alien to womanhood.

Today I plan to bring home to you the reality of this characterization and the adverse impact ratification of this ERA will have upon our combat effectiveness as well as on drafted women. I speak as an expert on the military ramifications of this proposed legislation, and my knowledge is based on indisputable facts.

My expertise stems from experience. Combat and preparation for combat were my business. I am not one of those political or egghead generals who are only too willing to shape the situation to fit a convenient pattern. I am a combat infantry soldier of 33 years service who draws his expertise from three separate combat tours. I have personally participated in hand-to-hand combat and have seen men fight and die on the battlefield.

ERA Does Not Permit Exceptions

The Equal Rights Amendment will have a substantial and pervasive impact upon military practices and institutions. As now formulated, the amendment permits no exceptions for the military. Such obvious differential treatment for women as exemption from the draft and exemption from combat would have to be

brought into conformity with the amendment's basic prohibition of sex discrimination.

The draft will some day be reinstated since our modern volunteer army cannot cope with large wars or small long-term conflicts. Maintaining a modern volunteer army is extremely expensive and, as the economy improves, it becomes more difficult to recruit personnel. Recruiting for the reserves today is at an all-time low which makes the draft almost a certainty in the near future for these components.

Under ERA, drafted women who are not qualified for any other skill will be placed into combat units against their own will. This only stands to reason since our infantry draftees, during war, normally come from those that are not particularly qualified for anything else. Even those who are assigned to support units may be subject to combat if the war is characterized by no front lines.

Yes, I am concerned over this matter for I know what ground combat can do to *men* who are physically fit for this task.

What Combat Really Means

I have watched weary men moving up in the attack, in staggering columns, bending under soggy packs, chilled in the drizzling rain, almost sapped of all their strength, covered with sludge and mud, knowing all the while that many would not return. Uppermost in their mind was that ever-clinging thought, "Oh God, give me the courage and *physical* strength to face the stress of this challenge." As those ghastly men pushed on to their objective through the foggy haze, they grasped for that last straw and prayed that their fellow soldiers would also possess this strength, for they knew that their survival and their mission depended upon their fellow soldiers' being physically fit to fight, too. Does this tell you something? It should, for it stands out like a beacon in the night: *There is no place for women in combat.*

Some of our constitutional law professors and representatives, who are proponents of this Amendment, make prognostications about the absurdity of drafting women into combat. They say that Congress would never let this happen. Let me tell you what is already happening in anticipation of this Amendment's ratification.

Getting Ready For Women in Combat

Our Secretary of Defense recently said that the restriction against women in combat-related jobs has resulted in under-use of them and he was going to look into it. Senator Proxmire of Wisconsin then said, "Congress should change current law and allow women in combat. Women can do anything men can do; combat is not a matter of muscle." The first Marine officer company training for combat at Quantico, Virginia has been sexually integrated. The commander General Kelly said, "We don't plan to put these women in the front lines -- *at least not yet.*"

We have all heard the story of the camel's foot in the tent. I've heard some of the critics of my speech to the House Constitutional Amendment Committee say, "Congress would not let women go into combat." "Doesn't this General have any faith in our Congress?" My answer to this is: Congress let Vietnam happen! They did it by voting for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and, after we were in that war, they and Administration

officials also let us lose it by placing undue restrictions on military operations.

My faith in Congress is in proportion to the political trend existing at the time. That political trend, we all know, is determined by power politics regardless whether it is right or wrong.

Physical Differences Exist

The condition of physical fitness for combat is not attained through physical training alone, but rather by developing, through training, a natural inborn physical strength normally found in men but not in women. Army tests from Fort Jackson and West Point show conclusively that most women do not have the physical strength to sustain combat. As an example, reports show that women's bodies cannot take the punishment of combat training at the standards set for men. They suffer a high injury rate, lack upper body strength, do poorly on long road marches, and the majority of them usually straggle at the end of the column.

This is not to say they do not do well in all military training. They make excellent marksmen, participate in karate, and have a good attitude. They rate exceptionally high in personal camouflage, which is essentially face make up, at which they are masters. The Army just adds a new dimension. But doing these things is a far cry from what combat is all about. Ground warfare is a tough and dirty business. It is direct and vicious and requires the individual soldier to be as physically and psychologically tough as possible.

When physical strength is important, one simply does not send his second best, especially when other lives depend on that strength.

Standards Are Lowered For Women

ERA proponents will tell you that the first step in initiating women to combat training is a success. They will show you statistics that women meet all the requirements satisfactorily. What they won't say is that the standards have been lowered for women, and many standards for men have also been lowered to make them the same for all.

Some examples are: West Point female cadets are not required to participate in boxing or wrestling, in order to avoid incidents of breast cancer. Since only one-tenth of one percent of the women can do one pull-up, they are not required to accomplish the minimum of six as the male cadet must do. Instead, women must only pass the Flexible Arm Hang, which is simply hanging on to the bar for a specified period of time. Obstacles on the obstacle course at the Air Force Academy have been adjusted for shorter people since women are smaller in size. This makes it easier for both sexes. The ridiculousness of this situation is even carried to the point that bolt springs on women's rifles were changed from eight pounds of pressure to five because the girls couldn't get their bolts open. To accommodate the female cadets, training at the Air Force Academy such as push-ups and squat thrusts has also been eliminated for all.

When women's organizations talk about the ERA, none of them have any idea of what combat is or seem to realize that soldiers' lives are at stake.

Are Women Aggressive Enough?

One only has to ask a few questions to point out the absurdity of it all. As an example: Are women aggres-

sive enough? Medals of Honor and Silver Stars are awarded for jumping in a trench with enemy soldiers and bayoneting them to death.

A National Organization for Women lobbyist was asked if women were aggressive enough. Her response was that women, not being allowed to be physically aggressive, usually get their way by psychological manipulation. But how does one psychologically manipulate a flame thrower across a rice paddy at a dead run?

The question also arose of medics trying to carry a wounded man from a battlefield under machine-gun fire. It was suggested that women would have a hard time carrying a heavy man on a stretcher. The reply, which greatly disturbs me, was that women could carry the wounded man's feet since they are lighter. What happens when there are only two women there? And who stops to think in all that confusion who is going to carry which end? For the wounded man on the stretcher, a slow stretcher bearer provides a superb opportunity to die.

What happens to the morale and discipline of a unit if the sergeant is in love with his machine gunner? Or a female member of his squad? Who do you think will get most of the dangerous patrol assignments?

If these thoughts are not sufficiently convincing, and you don't believe ERA will bring combat to women, ask yourself why our generals are planning for it and talking positively about it? Why are we training women to fight in combat today? What makes Brig. Gen. Mary Clark, current WAC Director, say, "we shouldn't push too hard for something we know so little about"? Why do we have women in service academies when the mission of those academies is to train combat officers? What will be the ultimate result of pressures from women libbers to place women into combat? Why are our physical training standards being lowered so that women can get acclimated to a combat environment?

Women will be subject to combat if ERA is passed. It may not come today or tomorrow, but it will come gradually, with ERA used as the lever for its implementation.

Only One Percent?

Some of the proponents say that, even if this is so, only one percent of our armed forces see combat. This is true, but *it is a sizable chunk of our military personnel*. Do you wish to take the risk of placing any of our women in this hellish environment? Do you desire to have them subjected to the stench of bloated and ripened bodies left in the sun several days, where fumigation is required by aircraft daily to minimize nausea? Do you want your daughter out on recovery patrols to shovel up decomposed human carnage into rubber sacks for evidence identification? Do you wish to see our female soldiers left exposed to the wrath of the enemy because they could not dig in the hard ground in time for protection? Should they have to witness the top of a fellow soldier's head blown off waiting to die? Do they need to hear that dreaded noise of incoming artillery which is like two steel needles pressing on the ear drums, reaching into the brain, while the sky is ripped by explosions, and it seems that everyone is about to die?

And what kind of man will be content to stay at home with the children while his wife is in this holocaust simply because her draft number came up before his? The reality of this happening is not as far

fetched as it may seem.

Finally, when the chips are down, and the order comes to go for broke, who is going to carry that heavy ammunition up the hill? Who is going to strap that 20-pound flame thrower on his back and climb up the steep rocky slopes of hill 812 to flush out the enemy?

I will tell you. It will be left to those physically fit, not our female soldiers who become a burden on others, diminishing combat effectiveness and increasing the likelihood of casualties.

Ladies and gentlemen, don't do this to our women when it is not necessary. Don't do it to our nation. Our national security is too important. And finally, don't do it to that soldier who will sacrifice his all for your birthright.

If you vote against this Amendment and it is not ratified, our senior military men will provide us with the security we need. However, if this Amendment is ratified, these same military men will implement its provisions to the utmost, as applied to the military, as obedient soldiers must do.

Unfortunately, I have not the words nor time to tell you all that this would mean. The future of our lifestyle and our national security rests in your hands. I hope you will be worthy.

How Do the ERA Proponents Answer the Question Of Women in Combat?

Senator Birch Bayh, and a few others, argue that women should consider it a "privilege" to be drafted and put in military combat.

It is unlikely that many people, men or women, consider it a "privilege" to be drafted or placed in combat. If it were a "privilege," we would never need a draft! A draft was necessary in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Most female proponents of ERA, when asked the crucial question about women in military combat, duck the question, evade it, and talk around it, in the hope that they can cloud the issue.

When confronted face to face with the final question, "Would YOU serve in military combat?", most female ERA proponents give the answer given by Mary Dunlap.

At the American Bar Convention in Chicago on August 8, 1977, Phyllis Schlafly and Mary Dunlap debated the Equal Rights Amendment. A member of the audience asked Ms. Dunlap the question, "If ERA is ratified, will YOU serve in military combat?"

Mary Dunlap replied: "No, I would be a conscientious objector."

Her answer is typical of the many female ERA proponents who do not have the slightest intention of ever serving in our Armed Forces themselves -- but who want to force this obligation on *other* women -- and *other* people's daughters.

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Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002

Published monthly by Phyllis Schlafly, Fairmount, Alton, Illinois 62002.

Second Class Postage Paid at Alton, Illinois.

Subscription Price: For donors to the Eagle Trust Fund -- \$5 yearly (included in annual contribution). Extra copies available: 15 cents each; 8 copies \$1; 50 copies \$4, 100 copies \$8.