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Don't Put Women in Military Combat

Testimony by Brigadier General Andrew J. Gatsis, U.S. Army (Ret.)

My expertise in speaking on this matter stems from experience. Combat and preparation for combat were my business for 36 years. I was an enlisted man for three years and have served as an infantry commander in three separate combat tours, all at the fighting level, in Korea and Vietnam. I have personally participated in hand-to-hand combat and have seen men fight and die on the battlefield. I have had women in my command in peacetime and have observed their performance first hand.

There are some women who like the military, like to live and work with men, and have given an excellent performance in certain non-combat positions such as clerks, telephone operators, vehicle drivers, computer technicians, supply supervisors, nurses, and the like. World War II is ample proof of this. However, these roles do not satisfy the objective of the women's liberation movement, which is to make women equal with men in *all* sectors of military activity, to include combat roles.

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 the task.

The combat environment is an ugly one. For the ground soldier 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 calls for an antic toughness that women do not normally possess. The soldier's feelings fluctuate from despair to extreme hate and bitterness, and those emotions tend to bring forth his most animalistic instincts. 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.

All kinds of tests — field tests, training tests, and readiness tests — have been conducted over and over again, showing conclusively that women by nature are smaller, slower, physically weaker — particularly in upper body strength. Women are less aggressive and less combative than men. It takes upper body strength to throw a grenade effectively, to dig a foxhole in the hard ground rapidly, to hack a path through the thick jungle with a machete all day, to fight an enemy soldier with a rifle butt and a bayonet, to pull injured personnel out of a burning, crashed helicopter, or to cut and lift heavy logs for constructing defensive bunkers, just to mention a few.

In a discussion with a National Organization for Women lobbyist, the question 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.

Complete combat effectiveness calls for self-sufficiency in *all tasks* required of that job by *all soldiers*. Weak warriors become a burden on others, diminishing fighting power and increasing the likelihood of casualties. When physical strength is important, one simply does not send his second best, especially when the lives of others depend on that strength. I need not tell you what this will do to U.S. national security. Equality, whatever that is, is unobtainable in the armed forces, as long as male back-up is necessary. Assigning a woman to combat and then having to back her up with another man is no way to run a combat force. The last thing fighting soldiers need in combat is part-time help and on-lookers getting in the way.

On November 13, 14, 15, 16, 1979, the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, Military Personnel Subcommittee, held four days of hearings in Washington, D.C., on the women's lib proposal to repeal the laws which exempt women from military combat. Carter Administration spokesmen and feminist organizations testified in favor of repeal. This newsletter contains some of the testimonies against repeal.

Today the all volunteer forces are being used by our top defense officials and the media as a mechanism to mislead the American people into believing combat and war are natural roles for women. They do this by lowering the physical training requirements and attempting to portray that women can do anything men can do in the armed forces. This takes the form of pictures showing women soldiers dressed in combat attire, crawling on the ground, firing a weapon on the range, making a long march with male soldiers and the like.

Combat is not a series of isolated actions such as firing a rifle on the range without being fired at, making one long march and then returning to a hot shower, jumping out of an airplane in a parachute and then returning to the barracks, or lifting 100 pounds once or twice with rest in between. Combat is a long, grueling, sustained effort to overcome all of these things under the most trying conditions for great periods of time.

As far as combat is concerned, educating people to something that they have not experienced sometimes becomes rather difficult. I only wish those parents who cannot see the difference between sending their daughters and sons into combat could see it as I have.

One early July during the Korean War, we had to move quickly to secure a position on Pork Chop Hill. The orders were to take it. I remember how it was after a long fast walk, all up hill, in a very hot and humid climate. The composition soles of my shoes burned my feet as I watched my weary men moving up in staggering columns, bending under soggy packs, almost sapped of all their strength.

As we approached the lower base of the hill, we had to trudge through a sea of sticky mud, resulting from the monsoon season, which wore us down almost to the point of exhaustion. When we had almost reached the top of the hill, we ran into solid rock and could not dig in. The enemy knew this and began to bring the artillery in upon us with steel shrapnel ricocheting everywhere among the rocks. The noise was dreadful. The sky was ripped with explosions that turned faces a dull red. I thought we were all about to die. We had to fall back further down the hill where we could dig in for some protection. Using our M-1 rifles and field jackets, we fashioned supplementary make-shift litters and started back down the hill carrying what wounded and dead we could take. Explosions caused many to drop their litters on the side of the steep, slippery, muddy hill, which was extremely painful for the wounded.

Once we had gotten off the rock part back onto soft ground, we needed *men* with *physical strength* to dig those out quickly who were buried alive. Luckily, there were some old constructed bunkers in the area which had been occupied by the enemy previously. We utilized these for consolidating our positions. The heat and stench in my bunker were unbearable. Drenched with sweat, I had to walk out in an exposed area several times to maintain my equilibrium. Squads and platoons dug gun positions frantically. When the enemy counterattacked, somehow we held the hillside. The casualties were enormous. As the night came upon us and the darkness fell like a shadow of primitive terror, we could not find many of our wounded, although we could hear their cries. They had to lie there and die. The night weather became cold (as it always does in the mountains), and our perspiration-soaked wet clothes stuck to our bodies and became miserably cold. This was good because it tended to keep us awake for the coming attack later that night on the same hill.

As the night wore on, even as cold as we were, many began to fall asleep from sheer fatigue. This was short-lived, for at about 3:20 A.M. mortar and artillery fires began to fall again and build up to an extremely rapid rate. At the height of this fire holocaust, the startling voice of my forward platoon leader frantically rang out over the sound-powered telephone — "Captain, they're coming up the hillside, hundreds of them. My God, black figures, they are everywhere." As I called for my final protective line fires, I looked up from the

trenches — the enemy seemed to blanket the whole hillside. Men were screaming and shouting — I still remember some of the cries such as "I'm blinded, help me, don't let them take me," as some soldiers were dragged away. The fight was mass confusion and exhausting. We were like vicious animals in the hand-to-hand fighting that followed. Once we were able to illuminate the hill with an artillery searchlight, we were able to stabilize the situation with some of our reinforcing tanks and artillery fires and the enemy began to fall back off the hill.

As daylight broke that morning, we could see the hill was covered with bodies, some which had been there several days from previous battles. Our first task was to clean out the trenches by throwing the dismembered hands and limbs, caused from grenade and artillery explosions, over the top of the parapets.

Later that morning the hot summer sun, with no wind, began to bear down upon the bare hilltop. The deathly scent of ripened bodies, several days old, created such an unbearable nausea that aircraft had to be called upon to spray the area. Due to the baldness of the terrain created from the intense continuous poundings, there was no vegetation, shade, or concealment. The lack of concealment prohibited anyone from raising his head above the hot, stultifying trenches, for he would be a sure target for enemy snipers positioned on the terrain overlooking the hill. Because of this lack of mobility in the day, cramped-up soldiers ate their C-rations from cans in their holes and tossed them over the top of the trenches down the hill. The food crumbs left in the cans drew large rats at night, nibbling away at the food and rattling the cans. This created false alarms of another enemy attack, causing near hysteria, for C-ration cans were also hung on the barbed wire to give warning when the enemy tried to cut through the wire at night. This description covers only two days of my experience on Pork Chop Hill. Without physical strength, none of us could have made it.

No one who has seen real combat could believe that our Congressmen and governmental leaders would talk about drafting women and placing them in this nightmare. Yet they move steadily in this direction with no regard for the sanctity of womanhood or our national security.

Women liberationists often state that for the sake of equality, if husbands and sons can be sent into combat, it is only fair to make wives and daughters also fight. What kind of equality is this when women are more delicate than men and are more subject to abuse than men? What kind of special humiliating plan do you think our enemy will have for female prisoners of war? And what a trump card they will have in blackmailing the United States while holding female prisoners! Colonel Dalia Raz, Commander of the Israeli Army Women Contingent, said: "The most equal job is combat, but we don't want it because of what happened to our women in the last war in which they fought."

Russia and Israel have experimented with women in combat. The actions of these two countries clearly point out that they have learned their lesson, for there are no women serving in their combat units today. In fact, Israeli Army women's duties are now mostly confined to domestic chores.

Compare the female strength of almost seven percent in our military forces today and programmed for twelve percent in 1983 with that of the Soviet Union (less than one percent) and Israel (less than 3%) who have had combat experience with women, and it becomes unmistakably clear that the U.S. high percentage stems from the women's movement and not concrete combat experience.

I do not believe that any woman even as a volunteer should have the right to go into combat if she desires to do so. It is not a question of what she wants, but a matter of jeopardizing the lives of soldiers who depend upon all members of the team to do their full share. Furthermore, I do not believe the American people want to see our national security weakened for the sake of a social experiment.

Testimony by Mary Lawlor

representing WAC Veterans for Freedom

I am Mary Lawlor of Winnetka, Illinois. I served as a WAC lieutenant in the European Theater of Operations in World War II, landing in Normandy behind our American fighting men on D+90. My service in the Army as enlisted woman and officer, and subsequently as an Army wife, has served to reinforce my strongly held view that women should not serve in combat positions in the U.S. Army. I represent WAC Veterans for Freedom.

My past experience was as an Army lieutenant; therefore my remarks will pertain to the question of employing women in ground combat roles in wartime against an armed enemy. My observations in the area are further seasoned by the fact that I am the mother of two daughters and four sons, three of whom have served in Army uniform in recent years.

I believe the question of women in combat has been raised, in the first instance, by feminists who have never served in the uniform of the U.S. Army and never will, despite the opportunity that has been given to all women for a period approximating four decades. I believe their motives are not to improve national defense, but to satisfy other interests. When I was serving in France during World War II, up to my knees in mud, there was no agitation among the women soldiers to be allowed to go into the front lines. Nor did the men ever dream of using American girls in combat despite shortages of male replacements. The situation today remains unchanged; uniformed personnel within the Army are not demanding this type of service. U.S. Army Recruiting Command figures show that today's women are volunteering at a much higher rate for jobs in the traditional women's roles rather than those more recently opened up to women and until recent years filled by men. The failure to meet last year's recruitment goals may well stem in part from the increased emphasis on female combat roles in the Army.

Because our form of government is vulnerable to concentrated pressure from lobbies which do not always act in the public interest and because the Army is a disciplined organization, the Army becomes an ideal vehicle to be used by a small group not representing a majority viewpoint whose principal objective is social change.

Obviously the purpose of the Army is to fight and not to force changes in our society, especially when such changes do not have universal acceptance.

The crux of the matter before us today is the answer to a simple question: will broadening the specialities of females in the Army to include combat increase or decrease the Army's efficiency? I believe the answer to be in the negative.

While it may be argued that a woman has the right to serve in the Army wherever she is qualified, the vast majority of those in combat will be male. Such men have a counter-prevailing right to have women excluded since their presence would impair efficiency.

An important point that impressed me during my command of WAC's was that, when the women worked together or were isolated, so to speak, there was greater efficiency. As soon as the boy-girl relationship came into play, there was an almost instant shift to role playing. Suddenly there was more attention to appearance and less to the job. I believe that this sex urge cannot be disregarded merely by saying — "see, now you are all equal." The fact of the matter is that even if we were equal we would still not be alike — and for that I am grateful. In a combat situation where teamwork is so important the fewer the distractions, the better.

We also hear the statement made that members of the Army Nurse Corps served in the front lines; therefore it should not be world shaking if women become infantry riflemen. The comparison, of course, is a poor one. Nurses surely have been subjected to small arms fire, but the fulfillment of their mission of aiding medical doctors is meant to be

undertaken in an area protected from enemy fire. Furthermore, a nurse, like a doctor, is designated as a non-combatant. As such she is not normally subjected to the intense exposure to the enemy that close combat units are.

My more specific objections as to women in combat are: *It's not fair to the men.* While I was in the European Theater, when a crisis arose the men instinctively became protective of the women. Despite a deliberate program of defeminization now being inflicted on women recruits, under combat conditions an instinct as old as mankind will not change. The experience of the Israeli Army bears this out. During the Arab-Israeli war the men reacted with extreme shock at seeing women's bodies mutilated, much more so than seeing men injured. The Israelis, of course, abandoned the folly of utilizing women in positions requiring close contact with the enemy.

I am told that today's Volunteer Army finds it necessary to control the number of females in certain units, such as medical detachments. If the male-female mix were not controlled, it would not be possible to get many jobs done that require upper torso strength.

One high ranking officer at West Point was asked how the girls worked out as artillery gunners. His response was to the effect that, wherever necessary, the boys pitched in and helped the girls out a bit. I submit that combat units must consist of soldiers who can stand on their own two feet in performing their assigned jobs lest they endanger themselves and all other members of the unit.

Next: *Women bear children.* If the United States adopts the questionable policy of the utilization of women in combat and close combat support roles, it will be alone among major nations. The concept of presumed total equality between men and women was initiated by the Soviet Union in the time of Lenin. Though Russian women, because of a shortage of men, aided in the defense of their country during the second World War in the front lines, the present front line Russian infantry units are all male — despite 60 years of presumed equality.

In the event of war against our most likely enemy, it is fair to assume the enemy infantry will be men. If captured in a jungle of close combat, the combat or combat-support woman soldier might well be exposed to all sorts of indignities by men who have been denied female companionship for a long period. We wonder also how much respect an enemy will deal with captured women prisoners.

As a matter of fact, large numbers of security personnel were needed to protect the women I commanded, not from the enemy, but from *our own men.*

Finally: *There would be serious complications in human relations.* We cannot compare the life-and-death situation of front-line combat with the commingling of the sexes in the rear echelon, especially with the low proportion of female to male that will exist on the front lines. Relationships will be formed that could complicate daily operations. We must remember we will be dealing with men and women who have been separated from their spouses for long periods of time.

In conclusion, the great 19th century sociologist, Alexis de Tocqueville, whose writings today more vividly than ever reflect the strengths and weaknesses of our great land, supports our reasoning as follows: "There are people . . . who confounding . . . the different characterizations of the sexes would make man and woman into beings not only equal but alike. They would give to both the same functions, impose on both the same duties . . . They would mix them in all things . . . It may readily be conceived that by thus attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded, and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women."

Testimony by Colonel Phelps Jones, U.S.A. (Ret.) representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars

My name is Colonel Phelps Jones, USA (Ret.), and it is my honor to serve the 1.85 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as their Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs.

My purpose is to offer relevant views of the V.F.W. on the question of legislation bearing on the combat role of female members of the armed forces. The mandated position of the V.F.W. arises from Resolution Number 409, "No Women in Combat Jobs," the operative portion of which reads: "No women will be assigned to ground, sea, or air military assignments that call for closing with and destroying the enemy."

The Congress provides, maintains, raises and supports — and the American people pay for — armed forces to fight and to win our wars. I will not try the patience of this Subcommittee by reciting the missions of our forces as set forth in the United States Code. These straightforward mission statements — direct, plain, and unambiguous — are well known to you. They do *not* appear to be the prime concern of the political leadership of today's peacetime armed forces.

Until military power is used, it is what people believe it to be. If our U.S. military posture appears to be powerful and purposeful, it may serve to deter. If not, the deterrent effect slackens; war will become more likely.

In today's armed forces we find women totalling over 6%, ca. 124,000 of a total of 2,027,000. No other nation — except New Zealand — approaches this percentage. The Soviet Union, in forces totalling more than 4.4 million, has about 10,000 women in traditional jobs; Israel has about 8,000 women in a fully mobilized force of 278,000.

Now, if the purpose was to free men to take combat assignments, this influx of women would be a welcome addition. The sad fact is that we are on an unexamined "slippery slope" and have been placed there by those in the Executive Branch of the government who either (1) view a future combat role for women as a desirable domestic social goal, or (2) know better, but don't have the political guts to blow the whistle on the single-focus feminists who in the White House, the Department of Defense, and the Service Secretariats, have combined to turn much of our armed forces into a day-care center.

One example may suffice. During 1978, in the Army alone, 7,832 of some 50,000 female soldiers (15%) became pregnant. Of this number (1) 2,068 women left the service; (2) 2,626 abortions were performed; and, (3) 3,138 female soldiers had their babies and stayed in the service.

I believe you will agree that combat readiness — what the peacetime services are all about — had to erode in three ways: (1) duty time lost due to pregnancies; (2) the departures from the Army, again due to pregnancies; and, (3) the child-care problem brought on when both parents are soldiers.

Now, if we're extraordinarily lucky, none of this will matter because the Army (and the other services) will not be called upon to fight. But — and here is the crucial "but" — what if there is a war, large or small, waiting for us somewhere?

As of today, American servicewomen would be killed in numbers unprecedented in history. Service

readiness forces ("Deployment Packages") would have to either (1) deploy shorthanded (without women), or, (2) deploy with women and undergo both the anguish and the burden of sending scores, hundreds, or even thousands of American women home in body bags or on stretchers.

This scenario may or may not be what the Bella Abzugs and Gloria Steinems in our society have in mind. But it is exactly what would happen if present unexamined trends are permitted to continue.

Apart from sickening human and social costs, I submit we would soon lose our national stomach for protecting our valids interests anywhere by use of military force. We would deter only ourselves.

The James Webb article from the *Washingtonian Magazine*, "Women Can't Fight", is appended hereto. I urge members of this distinguished Subcommittee to read this memorable piece by the young Annapolis graduate (and USMC Vietnam veteran) who wrote the best of the Vietnam books, *Fields of Fire*. Webb makes my point in honest, searing language.

I urge this Subcommittee to rise above the peacetime "trendy" and to prohibit, by law, any deliberate exposure of female service members to the numbing horrors of combat. As a three-war infantry veteran, I can urge no other course.

To sum up, permissiveness in terms of combat roles for women would: (a) erode deterrence; (b) generate self-deterrence even when vital U.S. interests were involved; and, finally, (c) given the crucible of combat, create a special kind of social horror for American society at large and, in my judgment, for our people's representatives who permitted it to happen.



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