



Should
women serve
in front line
combat
units?

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

Editorial Board

Victor Davis Hanson, Chair
Bruce Thornton
David Berkey

Contributing Members

Peter Berkowitz, Max Boot, Josiah Bunting III, Angelo M. Codevilla, Thomas Donnelly, Colonel Joseph Felter, Josef Joffe, Frederick W. Kagan, Kimberly Kagan, Edward N. Luttwak, Peter Mansoor, Walter Russell Mead, Mark Moyar, Williamson Murray, Ralph Peters, Andrew Roberts, Admiral Gary Roughead, Kori Schake, Kiron K. Skinner, Barry Strauss, Gil-li Vardi, Bing West, Amy Zegart

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

June 2013 | Issue 3



THE HOOVER INSTITUTION
Stanford University

Copyright © 2013 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University

CONTENTS

STRATEGIKA · JUNE 2013 · ISSUE 3

BACKGROUND ESSAY

5



Women Soldiers Confront not just the Enemy, but a Range of Political Issues

By Kori Schake

FEATURED COMMENTARY

12



For Women in the Infantry, Political Correctness is not enough

By Josiah Bunting III

15



The Military's March to Equality

By Kiron K. Skinner

RELATED COMMENTARY

18 **The Direction of the Current Debate**

By Victor Davis Hanson

20 **Women's Current Front Line Involvement**

By Gary Roughead

21 **Sexual Harassment in the Military**

By Bruce S. Thornton

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

22 **Suggestions for Further Reading**

23 **Discussion Questions**

Women Soldiers Confront not just the Enemy, but a Range of Political Issues

By Kori Schake

In the past twelve years, 800 American women have been wounded and 136 killed in our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly three hundred thousand have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet women remain barred from service in infantry, artillery, armor, combat engineers, and special operations units.

Mythology. There are three prevalent myths about the United States military's combat exclusion policy. The first myth is that women are prevented from serving in combat. Women are serving in combat; they are prevented from being assigned to units whose primary mission is ground combat. The second myth is that they are excluded by law. There is no legal exclusion of women from assignment to combat units; they are excluded as a matter of Department of Defense policy, and that policy varies by Service. The third myth is that manpower needs constitute a strong argument for opening combat units to women. In nearly every case of countries that permit it, including Israel, women constitute about 2% of combat forces.

History. The 1948 Women's Armed Service Integration Act established permanent female service in the American Military. It also limited the proportions of women who could serve and hold officer's ranks, and prohibited assignment to aircraft or ships considered combatants. Restrictions on the numbers of women who could serve were removed in 1967, but they resulted in no greater numbers of women joining the force.



Hoover Archives Poster Collection: US 2814.

A substantial increase of women in the American military occurred with the advent of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. In 1988, the Pentagon established the “risk rule,” which determined that women could be excluded from military occupational specialties with “exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture.” The rule was rescinded in 1994 on the argument that all U.S. forces in the theater of war were subject to those risks. Servicewomen could then be excluded only from “assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in combat on the ground.”

Current Practice. Nearly all occupational fields are open to women in the Air Force and Navy (women currently serve even aboard submarines). Women are currently excluded from infantry, artillery, armor, combat engineers, and special operations units of battalion size or smaller. The question of combat exclusion is thus principally an Army and Marine Corps issue, and principally about whether to force integration of ground combat units.

A subtle but important distinction exists between assignment and employment policy. That is, current policy prevents assigning women to ground combat units, but it does not proscribe the activities they can perform. The local commander has authority to use all available personnel to fulfill the unit’s mission, and therefore to order female soldiers into combat roles.

Existing policy also does not prohibit the “attachment” (as opposed to assignment) of women to combat units. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have, in fact, seen female service members attached to combat units in significant numbers. Women have served in Army forward support companies attached at the brigade level but operating as part of battalions, and in explosive ordnance disposal teams of all Services.

The success of female engagement teams—soldiers and Marines assigned to all-female units but attached to male combat teams to perform searches and interrogations—has further blurred the line because those women have been exposed to hostile fire, direct combat, and capture. That they have performed well and met an acknowledged operational need (traditional societies' aversion to male contact with women) reduced resistance to their inclusion, even among infantry and special operations units.

The Obama Administration announced in January its intention to “eliminate all unnecessary gender-based barriers to service.” The military Services were instructed to develop plans for full integration of women into all military occupational specialties by January 2016, justifying any “necessary” gender-based barriers.

Changing Current Policy. Allowing assignment of women into ground combat units carries a number of policy concerns, including whether women are strong enough, physically and emotionally, for combat; whether the presence of women negatively affects unit cohesion; the problems that arise from involuntary assignment; and the effect forcing the policy change may have on civil-military relations.

The majority of men in both the Army and Marine Corps support continuation of the combat exclusion for women. Surveyed last year, 17% of men in the Marine Corps responded that they would leave the Service if women were permitted in combat units.

Across the Services, a high proportion of women among junior enlisted and junior non-commissioned officer ranks support lifting the combat exclusion. However, senior female non-commissioned officers and female officers are much less supportive of changing the policy. Thirty-four percent of female Marines responded they would volunteer for ground combat units if given the

chance; but 17% would leave the Marine Corps if they were at risk of being involuntarily assigned to a combat unit. Ninety percent of enlisted women in the Army responded they would leave service if they could be involuntarily assigned to combat units.

Mission effectiveness. Opposition to women being assigned to combat units comes primarily from those serving in them. While 74% of the general public would support changing the policy, the characteristic attitude among infantrymen on the subject is that “‘integration’ erodes combat effectiveness—lowering behavioral and proficiency expectations and riddling the force with time-consuming misconduct issues.”¹

Physical standards currently are gender specific in the military. The Army physical fitness test requires the same number of sit ups for men and women, but women are given more lenient standards for push ups and the timed run. The Marine Corps physical fitness test allows women to hang from a bar instead of doing pull ups. Where combat training has been opened to women (both in other countries, and in recent U.S. Marine Corps efforts), few women apply, and those that do suffer much higher injury and attrition rates.

Both the Army and, most aggressively, the Marine Corps are currently developing gender-neutral occupational standards for infantry. The Marine Corps flatly stated “the Marine Corps’ high standards cannot be lowered, nor can we artificially lower them to ensure a certain percentage of females will qualify.” Given the Marine Corps’ record of influence on Capitol Hill, they are likely to be given latitude to set their own standards.

However, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has called such functional standards into question, suggesting he may intervene to reduce physical standards. General Martin Dempsey has said that “if we do decide that a particular standard is so high that a woman couldn’t make it,

1. 1st Lt Robert K. Wallace, “Women In Combat: The Issue Hasn’t Been Settled” (Marine Corps Gazette), <http://www.mca-marines.org/gazette/article/women-combat-issue-hasnt-been-settled>.

the burden is now on the service to come back and explain to the secretary: Why is it that high? Does it really have to be that high?"

Evidence is mixed on whether women experience greater trauma with combat exposure, in part because data have been only recently collected. Non-military health research suggests women may suffer post-traumatic stress disorders at higher rates than men, possibly because of gender differences in the processing of stress.

Unit Cohesion. The question is not just physical fitness, but also maintaining the operational integrity of the unit. Similes about chains being only as strong as their weakest link are frequent in military discussions of combat, with or without women. The men in infantry, artillery, armor, combat engineers, and special operations units strongly oppose any change in the exclusion. One possible explanation is that they are overwhelmingly misogynistic; another is that perhaps they know something about their profession the rest of us do not. The policy question then becomes whether to impose on those men the standards we hold in the broader society.

Many men in ground combat units express concern about deference to women changing the dynamic in their units: men protectively looking out for women to a greater extent than they do for men, giving women less dangerous jobs, or distracting attention in combat to care for women. This sometimes conflates with concerns about female physical and emotional fitness, but what the men are reporting is their concern about the behavior of other men with women in the unit. What little data there is on the subject do suggest units that have experienced female casualties have a more difficult time recovering.

And then there is sex. Not just sex between consenting adults, which by itself is often problematic within units, but sexual harassment, sexual assault, and the suite of related issues. Military commanders seek to limit these difficulties where possible because of their corrosive effect on

unit morale and cohesion, and one way of limiting the problems is limiting contact. Men engaged in direct ground combat live in an environment of aggression, and tempering that aggression is difficult for leaders, whether the issue is restraint under fire or bringing civilian codes of conduct into combat environments.

These are difficult issue to discuss, given the political correctness surrounding them generally and the current furor about whether there is an epidemic of sexual misconduct in the military. But it is historically true that there is a connection between sexual scandals and policy changes advancing women's opportunities in the military: the 1994 policy change resulted from the Tailhook scandal, not manpower needs or changes in the nature of the battlefield or how we fight.

Fairness Issues. American men are required to register for selective service when they turn 18, a practice the Supreme Court has upheld on the basis of the nation's need for their combat service. Men do not always get to choose their branch of Service; assigning women to combat units will raise the issue of whether they can be assigned involuntarily to combat service. If so, it could lead to fewer women in service—negating the intentions of the policy. If not, it could constitute a gender bias against men. In either case, it will embroil the military in a host of practical implementation issues that most in the leadership would prefer not to have to deal with.

Civil-Military Relations. Major changes in military personnel exclusions—ending racial segregation in 1948, including women in 1973—tend to gain support of the military Services when manpower needs drive the policy change. With the end of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army is currently scheduled to be reduced by 80,000 soldiers and the Marine Corps by 20,000; this is an unpropitious scenario for a policy change over the objections of the military leadership. Allowing the issue to advance because of concern about unwanted sexual contact among service members would create even more resentment.

And while the American military is comfortably subordinate to civilian control, thirty years of being a volunteer force in which only a small part of the general public bears the distinction and burdens of military service, and twelve years of being a military at war—not a country at war—has frayed somewhat the connection between our military and broader society. There is a strong sense among the military of being cursorily thanked for their service but society making no effort to understand their experience or weave veterans back into our communities. The separation of our military from the rest of society isn't a danger to civilian control of the military, but it is deeply frustrating for many in the military that the rest of society freely imposes social diktats without trying to understand why the military has in place the standards and policies it does.



KORI SCHAKE is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. She has held the Distinguished Chair in International Security Studies at the United States Military Academy and worked in the Pentagon, State Department, and National Security Council and as senior policy adviser to the 2008 McCain presidential campaign. Her most recent book is *State of Disrepair: Fixing the Culture and Practice of the State Department*.

For Women in the Infantry, Political Correctness is not Enough

By Josiah Bunting III

Not long before leaving his job as Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta announced that women would be eligible for service in all branches of the military establishment, not excluding duty in the “combat” arms, and not, specifically, excluding duty in infantry units, Army and Marine, in direct combat with an enemy. Among the influences driving the Secretary’s order was the presumption that female officers and senior non-commissioned officers would likely continue to be under-represented in the most senior grades: ground combat remaining the sine qua non among criteria ordinarily used in judging fitness for promotion.

“Where fear of consequences is greater than love of truth,” wrote John Stuart Mill, “there can be no philosophy.” When supporters of regular assignment of women to infantry units base their arguments on facts and reasons other than likely performance in direct combat (as members of infantry squads and platoons) they furnish proofs of Mill’s observation. Their minds are made lawyers to their wills. Their arguments are factitious: placed at the service of goals extrinsic to a central (although not *the*) central purpose, for which the Army and Marines exist. “Political pressure,” steadily and forcibly applied within the military chain-of-command by ambitious senior officers anxious to support what they sense the larger political culture *wants*, serves only to discourage honest debate: by fear of consequences.

For the vast range of military and naval duties and missions, women—it is a truism—are as well-qualified as men. No one doubts this. Nor should their exclusion from service in infantry units deprive them of full and equal opportunity for promotion to the highest uniformed ranks in all

the armed services. There are serious problems, however, with assigning women to infantry units. The litany of these is familiar. Discussants are reluctant to acknowledge them because they are afraid of what people will think of them: that they are Right Wing; that they are anti-feminist; that they are out-of-date and out-of-touch. Schemes are contrived to prove that women are just as capable of ground combat service as men: the criterion of proof is not, however, combat efficiency; it is whether women are “accepted” by the soldiers in the units to which they are assigned; these units are and will always be, overwhelmingly male: the mix—say, twelve to one—will itself be a significant “issue.” John and Marcia will develop tender feelings for each other: unignorable, emotional chemistries which compromise the communitarian bonds that unite male soldiers in pursuit of common missions: trying to kill armed enemies, often at close range, and sometimes even in “hand to hand” combat.

Marine Commandant, General James Amos (a Marine aviator by specialty) endorses the goal of women’s assignment to some combat jobs, including in tank and artillery units by early next year (2014) [*New York Times* March 29, 2013]. As for infantry service, he promises fair and comprehensive trials of endurance and strength. Those who pass, for example, the 86-day Infantry Officer Course, “which is viewed with special reverence within the corps,” will be eligible for assignment as infantry platoon commanders. The course will not be (in a phrase rarely heard without a shudder) *gender-normed*: that is, deliberately contrived to allow deficiencies in certain areas of strength and fitness to be “made up for” by strengths in others—aptitudes with which male and female physical endowments are plainly different.

There will be different kinds of tests for the more senior—indeed the most senior—Army and Marine generals: tests of character: their willingness to stand up and say, at the hazard of another star or two, to their civilian superiors: “It doesn’t work. I understand and respect your determination to make it work, but it doesn’t.” Or, equally difficult, if evidence substantiates the argu-

ment that women *can* serve successfully in combat units: "It does work." Give it a final fair test. As fair as you can make it. Get at the real truth. Say the truth, fight the consequences.



JOSIAH BUNTING III is president of the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation in New York City. Before taking up his duties at the foundation, he served as superintendent of his alma mater, the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia. A Rhodes Scholar, he served as an infantry officer in Vietnam (1967– 68) and as an assistant professor of history at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He is the author of six books including *The Lionheads*, a novel of the Vietnam War, and a recent biography of Ulysses S. Grant written for Arthur Schlesinger's series on the American presidency. He is currently completing a biography of George C. Marshall, army chief of staff during World War II and secretary of state (1947– 49). Bunting lives with his family in Fauquier County, Virginia.

The Military's March to Equality

By Kiron Skinner

On January 24, 2013, Leon E. Panetta, then Secretary of Defense, and Army General Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of State, signed a memorandum rescinding the 1994 ban on women serving below the battalion level and eliminating the remaining sex-based restrictions throughout the services. Panetta's rationale was lofty: "If members of our military can meet the qualifications for a job...then they should have the right to serve, regardless of creed or color or gender or sexual orientation." His rationale was also practical: "Female service members have faced the reality of combat, proven their willingness to fight and, yes, to die to defend their fellow Americans." Prior to this announcement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously endorsed allowing women to serve on the front lines. The decision is intended to be operational by 2016.

In the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, approximately 300,000 women have served in or near combat zones, more than 150 have died as a result of combat or noncombat factors, and nearly 1,000 have been wounded. Furthermore, approximately 14 percent of the 1.4 million active-duty U.S. military personnel are women.

Neither these statistics nor these lofty goals for a gender-neutral military are sufficient reasons for rescinding the 1994 ban on women in combat. Historical trends and America's founding ideas suggest a more powerful case.

Women have been an integral part of every war in U.S. history. Women worked alongside their husbands, sons, and brothers in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, typically serving in support capacities, although some disguised themselves as men in order to fight. Others served as spies or couriers. In the Spanish-American War of 1898, 1,500 women served.¹

1. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, *America's Women Veterans: Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics* (Washington, DC: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, Department of Veterans Affairs, November 2011).

Women formally became part of the U.S. military in 1901 with the creation of the Army Nurses Corps, and more than 10,000 US women joined World War I, serving primarily as nurses. In World War II, 400,000 women served in nursing, administrative, and other capacities. Recognizing the importance of women's roles in the deadliest war in history and their subsequent military service, Congress legislated in 1948 that women would become part of the permanent military. Thousands of women served in the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Women have died in all of these wars.

Major changes to the status of women in the military occurred in the 1970s. Among numerous distinctions, a woman finally attained the two-star rank, women were accepted into the service academies, and a woman was selected to be a military chaplain.²

The 1988 "risk rule" prohibited women from serving in noncombat roles that would put them in the line of fire or expose them to situations that could lead to their capture. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin revoked the rule in 1994, but he also oversaw a policy mandating that "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."³

The risk rule was rendered invalid due to battlefield realities. In the Gulf War of 1990-91, everyone in or near combat zones was inherently at risk. Fine lines of demarcation that were extremely difficult to draw are now often impossible to discern in the counterinsurgency and asymmetrical wars waged post-9/11. Men and women who join the U.S. military to serve in the theater of war in the twenty-first century must know that they will face complex challenges on an amorphous and unpredictable battlefield that bears little resemblance to combat zones of the past. The newest

2. John H. Cushman Jr., "History of Women in Combat Still Being Written, Slowly," New York Times, February 9, 2012.

3. <http://big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/irectGroundCombatDefinitionAndAssignmentRule.pdf>

Pentagon decision on women in the military reflects this reality. What constitutes the battleground in a counterinsurgency war like the one in Afghanistan? Aren't medical staff members and intelligence officers as much at risk as soldiers? Women have been on patrols with ground troops in Afghanistan. They have also been indispensable in meeting with Afghan women as the International Security Assistance Force implements confidence-building measures among civilians.

In its final report of March 15, 2011, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission recommended allowing women to serve in combat roles on these grounds: "Given the nature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, women are currently engaged in direct combat, even when it is not part of their formally assigned role."

The service of women on the front lines is as important for the American Creed as it is for battlefield realities. The American Creed, encompassing the concepts of equality of all, liberty, individual rights, property rights, and democracy, forms the basis upon which U.S. political institutions and the Constitution are built and, indeed, has provided justification for U.S. entry into some of the world's bloodiest wars. In order to survive as a democratic nation, the United States must ensure that its political institutions come into alignment with the ideas put forth by the Founding Fathers. Allowing women to serve in the armed forces at every level is simply one more means of cementing these ideas into institutions that are inherently brittle.



KIRON K. SKINNER is the W. Glenn Campbell Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. At Carnegie Mellon University, she is founding director of the Center for International Relations and Politics; director of the Institute for Strategic Analysis; university adviser on national security policy; and associate professor of political science. Her areas of expertise are international relations, US foreign policy, and political strategy. Since 2004, she has served on the Chief of Naval Operations' Executive Panel. In 2010, Skinner was appointed to the advisory board of the George W. Bush Oral History Project. In 2012, Pennsylvania governor Tom Corbett appointed Skinner to his Advisory Commission on African American Affairs. Skinner's coauthored books *Reagan, in His Own Hand* and *Reagan, a Life in Letters* were New York Times best sellers. Her opinion pieces appear in leading newspapers and national online outlets.

The Direction of the Current Debate

By Victor Davis Hanson

We may legitimately anticipate how the women in combat issue may eventually play out. After insisting that female soldiers must meet the same rigorous physical standards for front line combat units as do men, in time—and perhaps in not so long time—we will begin to hear that these demanding requirements are somewhat ossified and now arbitrary in our postmodern, high-tech world, or can be adjusted for gender considerations without impairing a unit’s combat effectiveness, or that female aviators or ship officers have proven that gender has become irrelevant in their own combat situations, and thus by extension, ground combat units should follow suit.

Following necessary alterations in current physical standards, Army and Marine officers will then be obliged to consider whether female participation in their particular ground combat units are proper reflections of the Pentagon’s efforts to ensure gender diversity. And there will probably then follow subtle pressures to ensure gender equality.

The issue is reflective of a larger debate within American society about whether the military by its very nature is somewhat different from other civilian institutions and therefore at times exempt from their protocols, or it should conform exactly to the norms adopted by the rest of the 21st-century federal bureaucracy. Also implicit in the discussion is a certain liberal disconnect. At times, progressives distrust the supposedly militaristic and authoritarian nature of the armed forces, yet also find the Pentagon’s ability to enact liberal social policy by fiat, bypassing cumbersome congressional debate, quite attractive—whether in implementing new policies about homosexuals in the military or the current policy change about women in combat.

There is also another implicit assumption: the high-tech, professional American military is deemed so competent and superior to rivals that it has the luxury to embark on social experimentation. We supposedly enjoy such a margin of error that if we discover in time that the presence of women in wartime combat units imperils fighting efficacy, the downside will not be such to imperil the mission—or at least be countenanced by the resulting social benefits as defined by government officials and Pentagon bureaucrats.

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, is a classicist and an expert on the history of war. He is a syndicated *Tribune Media Services* columnist and a regular contributor to *National Review Online*, as well as many other national and international publications; he has written or edited twenty-three books, including the *New York Times* best seller *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power*. His most recent book is *The Savior Generals: How Five Great Commanders Saved Wars That Were Lost - from Ancient Greece to Iraq* (Bloomsbury 2013). He was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Bush in 2007 and the Bradley Prize in 2008 and has been a visiting professor at the US Naval Academy, Stanford University, Hillsdale College, and Pepperdine University. Hanson received a PhD in classics from Stanford University in 1980.

Women's Current Front Line Involvement

By Admiral Gary Roughead

Should women serve in front line combat units? Yes, and the question is anachronistic.

Women now serve in front line combat units and “front line” does not acknowledge the nature of the battle-space of our time. Sadly and problematically, today’s battle-space lacks the more clear definition of front lines of past conflicts. Flying close air support missions, flying missions where man-portable air-defense systems or MANPADs pose a threat of death or capture or engaging in operations and activities in environments where ambush and improvised explosive device detonations are the nature of war today place women squarely in the front lines; or, more accurately, in the front space. That will not likely change, and the women who have served competently, coolly and valiantly in that environment affirm their position in the battle-space of today.

If the question is intended to address more specifically serving in front line ground units, the answer remains yes. Like the women who have served brilliantly in our other military services and specialties, the key is adhering to the relevant, legitimate, and unwavering physical, mental, and intellectual standards of a particular military specialty. That is a must, and my experience is the women who seek that demanding path will not want it any other way. Similarly, women who strive and fail must be viewed in exactly the same light as male aspirants who do not succeed.

ADMIRAL GARY ROUGHEAD, USN (Ret.), an Annenberg Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, graduated from the US Naval Academy in 1973. In September 2007, he became the twenty-ninth chief of naval operations after holding six operational commands and is one of only two officers in the navy’s history to have commanded both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. He served as the commandant of the US Naval Academy, during which time he led the strategic planning efforts that underpinned that institution’s first capital campaign. He was also the navy’s chief of legislative affairs, responsible for the Department of the Navy’s interactions with Congress, and the deputy commander of the US Pacific Command during the massive relief effort following the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Sexual Harassment in the Military

By Bruce S. Thornton

Putting women into front-line combat units potentially could create a sexual harassment minefield and an explosion of complaints and investigations. Current sexual harassment law prohibits more than just unwanted sexual advances or sexual quid-pro-quos. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by *making offensive comments about women in general* [emphasis added]... Although the law doesn't prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment..." Given the role of sexual banter and slang in close-knit groups of males like sports teams or combat platoons, the presence of women in such groups would require a wholesale and perhaps impossible change of behavior on the part of men who have grown up accustomed to using such locker-room chaffing and humor to bond with their fellows. Moreover, such banter frequently is a way to alleviate stress and fear. Even in less lethal schools and offices, the inherent subjectivity of categories such as "hostile," "severe," and "intimidating" has led to expensive and disruptive investigations of charges no matter how irrational and absurd on their face. Given that the military is already suffering what some call an "epidemic" of sexual harassment, the presence of women in combat has the potential to make a quantum leap in such charges and the subsequent investigations and trials, with deleterious effects on group cohesion and effectiveness.

BRUCE S. THORNTON is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. He received his BA in Latin in 1975 and his PhD in comparative literature—Greek, Latin, and English—in 1983, both from the University of California, Los Angeles. Thornton is currently a professor of classics and humanities at California State University in Fresno, California. He is the author of nine books and numerous essays and reviews on Greek culture and civilization and their influence on Western civilization. His latest book, published in March 2011, is titled *The Wages of Appeasement: Ancient Athens, Munich, and Obama's America*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING



Should women serve in front line combat units?

For this issue of *Strategika*, our contributors have suggested the following recent reports that discuss the current state of women in the military and related topics:

- David F. Burrelli (Congressional Research Service), *Women in Combat: Issues for Congress* (May 9, 2013)
- Military Leadership Diversity Commission, *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military* (March 15, 2011)
- Military Diversity Leadership Commission, *Women in Combat: Legislation and Policy, Perceptions, and the Current Operational Environment* [Issue Paper #56] (November 2010)
- National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, *America's Women Veterans: Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics* (November 23, 2011)
- Society for Women's Health Research, *PTSD in Women Returning from Combat: Future Directions in Research and Service Delivery*.

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

Hoover Institution | Stanford University | www.hoover.org | 650-725-3461
Copyright © 2013 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Should women serve in front line combat units?

1. Should physical standards be occasionally adjusted to ensure greater participation of women in combat, or must they remain fixed regardless of the consequences that follow?
2. Should we expect to see more sexual harassment cases as women are integrated into combat units, or is the current worry about escalating harassment allegations an entirely separate issue?
3. Should the U.S. be attentive to gender practice elsewhere in the world (in which increasingly women are integrated into more but not all units), or should the American experience remain unique?
4. Why exactly is combat perceived as an exceptional ordeal in which the normal assumptions about equal opportunity and access do not quite apply?

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

Hoover Institution | Stanford University | www.hoover.org | 650-725-3461
Copyright © 2013 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University





THE HOOVER INSTITUTION
Stanford University

Copyright © 2013 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University