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COMBAT-EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR ARMED FORCES

Is the primary purpose of the U.S. Armed Forces to defend the United States, or is it to engage in social experimentation? That sounds like a ridiculous question, but it was easy to get the impression under the Carter Administration that the answer was the latter.

Those were the years when the President called for the draft registration of women, the Secretary of Defense called for the repeal of the laws that exempt women from military combat, Judge "Watergate" Sirica ruled that women must be assigned to U.S. Navy ships, and the services bragged constantly about the utilization of women in nontraditional military jobs. Army magazines talked glibly about women being used in all jobs except routine hand-to-hand combat.

Under the Reagan Administration, the Pentagon first called for a "pause" in the rush toward total sex-integration. More recently, the Armed Forces have begun the long road back to building traditional combat effectiveness.

If the Army had studied Israel's experience, it would not have tinkered so long with impossible goals. The Israelis found in the war of 1948 that female troops held back the male troops from the achievement of their missions.

In 1978 under pressure from the feminist movement, the U.S. Army began fully integrating male and female recruits in companies of 200 to 250 persons. This was done under the fallacy that women can do anything men can do.

Anyone with common sense could have predicted that this would never work successfully. The women simply cannot meet the same physical challenges that the men can meet.

The result of these regulations was lowered morale for everyone: unhappy women soldiers who were exhausted from trying to keep up with the men, and resentful male soldiers who could easily see that the women were not doing the same work but were getting the same pay. The men were held back to the pace the women could meet, while some men were assigned to help the women get their jobs done.

Finally, the Army found the courage to call a halt to this most extreme of the feminist nonsense. The Army decided to separate the training of male and female recruits.

According to Captain Douglas Haywood, spokesman for the Army's Training and Command headquarters, "We feel that, if we have women in a male unit, it will result in the men not being challenged sufficiently, that they may never reach their full potential." It is amazing that it took the Army four years to discover that; but better late than never.

Now let's take a look at recent statements from the U.S. Navy. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy in charge of Manpower made a speech about the utilization of women in the Navy. Let me quote from the part of Secretary E. C. Grayson's speech in which he addressed the problem of pregnant sailors on board Navy ships.

"To protect the service member and her unborn child, a woman assigned aboard ship is transferred to shore duty as soon as she is diagnosed as pregnant. The result of this policy is that her job aboard ship remains vacant until a replacement arrives.

"The unplanned personnel losses for a ship affect its overall planning level. When the pregnancy level aboard ship approaches that of the national average, 10 percent of the women on board, the problem for the ship becomes substantial."

In another part of this same speech, Secretary Grayson talked about the "growing number of single parents, both male and female." He said that "inadequate child care facilities are of major concern. The Navy is looking for solutions for the child care problem now by making plans to insure more bases have adequate child care facilities."

It is pleasant to assume that we will always have a peacetime Navy, and that it won't matter that 10 percent of female sailors are missing from their ship assignments. It would be wonderful if our Navy never had to be concerned about anything more dangerous than child care for single parents.

But isn't it time the Navy gets back to its primary task of building the greatest Navy in the world in order to defend America?