# Panetta's Cowardly Decision

by Phyllis Schlafly

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In a newsworthy act of political cowardice, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta ran through the Pentagon's exit door as he announced he is striking down the 1994 Combat Exclusion Law. His timing means his successor, presumably Chuck Hagel, will inherit the task of defending the order to assign women to front-line military combat.

Of course, Panetta doesn't want to be grilled about his order. It's lacking in common sense and it is toadying to the feminist officers who yearn to be 3- and 4-star generals based on the feminist dogma of gender interchangeability and on their desire to force men into situations to be commanded by feminists.

Panetta's order may be illegal or even unconstitutional because the authority to make such a radical change was specifically granted to Congress, according to former Defense Department Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz. A constitutional expert, Schmitz held the position of the Defense Department's top investigator from 2002 to 2005 after 27 years of service in the U.S. Navy, including 5 years of active duty.

Schmitz said the order will surely lead to a "degradation of good order and discipline." Here are some of the questions Panetta can now avoid being asked.

Will the new policy of women in combat assignments be based on gender norming? That means giving women and men the same tests but scoring them differently; i.e., grading women "A" for the same performance that would give a man a "C," but clearing both as passing the test on the pretense that equal effort equals equal results.

Please explain how your new women-in-combat policy will be impacted by your policy of "diversity metrics," which is a fancy name for quotas. In order to create the illusion that your new feminist policy is a success, will men be required to pretend that women are qualified and entitled to career promotions?

Do you really believe that the assignment of women to combat infantry will improve combat readiness? What is your plan for non-deployability rates of women due to pregnancy and complications of sexual misconduct ranging from assault to fraternization?

In order to make the weight-lifting requirement for combat assignments gender neutral, how many pounds will be taken off the test? The gender differences in weight-lifting ability and upper-body strength are well documented.

Will men be expected to conceal female physical deficiencies in order to make the new policy “work”? Will men’s careers be harmed if they report the truth about women’s inability to do the “heavy lifting”?

Military women are already complaining about increased sexual assaults, and of course those problems will skyrocket. Only men will be deemed at fault because it is feminist ideology that men are innately batterers and women are victims.

The military is already plagued with reports of large sex scandals in our current coed army. At the Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, 32 instructors allegedly took advantage of their power over 59 recruits, and at least two instructors allegedly had sexual encounters with 10 different recruits.

Do you recognize that the demand for the change in combat exclusion comes only from female officers who want higher rank and pay but not from enlisted women who will bear the burden of the really tough and dangerous work? Where are your surveys of enlisted women’s opinions?

Will assignment to combat jobs be voluntary for women but involuntary for men? Will the military ask women “do you want to go to combat?” but just assign men wherever bloody, fatal fighting is needed?

Will promotions for field commanders depend on their attainment of “diversity metrics” that can be achieved only by creating a “critical mass” of women in infantry battalions? Explain the test of Marines in last year’s tryouts for the Infantry Officer Course, where only two women volunteered, one washed out the first day, the other after one week.

How do you answer the fact that women do not have an equal opportunity to survive in combat situations, and did you consider the fact that women in the military get injured at least twice the rate of men? Please

explain why the National Football League does not seek diversity or gender equality with female players.

Canada dealt with the problem of creating new standards for the gender integration of combat forces by renaming the process. Canada didn't create "lower" or even "equal" standards, they just adopted "appropriate" standards. Will the U.S. play word games like that?

Retired Army Major General Robert H. Scales explained in the Washington Post that we know from experience with war that the intimate, deliberate, brutal killing of our country's enemies is best done by small units or teams of men. Four solid buddy pairings of men led by a sergeant compose a nine-man battle-ready combat squad.

These squads are bound together by the "band of brothers" effect, a phrase borrowed from Shakespeare's Henry V. Centuries of battlefield experience have taught us that this brotherhood is what causes a young man to risk and even sacrifice his life willingly so his buddies can survive, and that cohesion is a male-only relationship that would be irreparably compromised by including women in the squad.

Combat doesn't mean merely firing a gun; of course women can do that. Combat doesn't mean merely getting wounded and dying; of course women can do that. Combat means aggressively seeking out and killing the enemy.

A lot of people have a very sanitized view of what battlefield fighting is all about. They seem to think it means a quick gun fight and then returning to the base with separate shower and toilet facilities and a ready mess hall.

Let's hear from men who have actually fought in close-combat situations. Ryan Smith, a Marine infantry squad leader in our 2003 invasion of Iraq, described the reality of spending 48 hours in scorching Middle Eastern heat, with 25 Marines stuffed in the back of a vehicle designed for 15, dressed in full gear, sitting on each other, without exiting the vehicles for any toilet needs.

I'll spare you his description of the unsanitary conditions. They went a month without a shower and finally all stood naked to be sprayed off with pressure washers. What kind of men would put women through this?

Panetta won’t have to deal with any of these questions. He left them for his successor and more particularly for the field commanders whose careers will depend on compliance.