from Phyllis Schlafly

July 4, 1991

Exposing the Myth of Israeli Women in Combat

One of the false arguments used to promote repeal of the current laws that exclude women from military combat duty is the assertion that women successfully fight alongside men in the Israeli army. This argument has been bolstered by pictures of Israeli female soldiers training with weapons, and being taught to march and shoot.

This whole argument is a fabrication. Israel tried using women in combat in the war of 1948, but abandoned. this as a bad idea and never tried it in subsequent wars. Israeli female soldiers are definitely not treated like male soldiers.

A dispatch from Jerusalem by a female reporter for the Chicago Tribune has just told it like it is for the first time in a metropolitan newspaper. The reality is not a gun-toting female soldier fighting alongside men, but “a bored l8-year-old drooping in a stuffy office where the most exciting military task is making coffee for her male commanding officer.”

Women are drafted in Israel, but men do three years of compulsory military service, while women serve only two years. Almost all men serve, but at least one-third of draft-age women receive exemptions, either because they are married or are strictly observant Jews.

After active service, men spend at least one month a year on reserve duty, and in the last four years many have served two months a year. Women, except for nurses, are exempt from reserve duty.

Basic training is six months for men, only one month for women. Many say that the women’s training “is mostly a joke.” One female soldier said, “it's a game that we imitate what the boys do, but it is irrelevant to what we do later. They teach you to shoot, take you out on marches, and then send you to be a secretary.”

The Tribune quoted one female army officer as saying, “A woman in the [Israeli] army is like a musician in an orchestra who is allowed to do everything but play. The army is super-sexist, and it can't be any different. The woman is always the helper.”

Women are assigned to a separate Women's Corps, much like the U.S. WACs and the WAVES in World War II before the sex-integration of our armed services. The army apparently doesn't consider the Women's Corps essential; the new chief of staff, General Ehud Barak, wants to eliminate it as part of budget-cutting moves.

More than one-third of Israeli military women work as secretaries. Only a few hundred are combat instructors, and 5 to l0 women apply for every available position.

The Tribune reporter's interviews discovered that "most Israelis of both sexes believe that women cannot take the pressures of war as well as men." One female soldier said, "We can't carry as much or stand up to the pressures and conditions. Whoever tells you we can, don't believe him."

She said that, dt the end of her basic training, the then head of the Women's Corps told the female draftees, "The job of the woman is to bring spark and chic to the army. You should bring flowers into the office, smile and make sure your uniform is pressed." While some are not wholly pleased with the present procedures, the reporter found that "nobody suggests that, women fight."

She found that "even those women who serve as instructors, then watch their trainees assume command of the tank or personnel carrier and go to war. Say they would not want to fight even if the army changes its rules." One instructor said, "sometimes I feel frustrated, but I thank God I don't have to be in a situation where I have to choose whether or not to hit a man."

The Israeli army is different from the U.S. Army in a fundamental way. In the United States, many people look on our armed services not as a commitment to go to war, but as career opportunity offering social nobility upwards. Join the service, see the world, get an education, and be all that you can be.

That's why the U.S. Armed Services have been pretending that they want to be "an equal opportunity employer" while concealing the double standards, female quotas and trgender-normingtt that have accompanied the buildup of women in the U.S. military to its approximate 10 percent figure today.

The current debate in Congress over repeal of the combat exclusion laws is a good time to expose the truth about the double standards now applied to women and men in the U.S. Armed Services. For example, the Army test allows women 3

minutes more than men to do a 2-mile run; men must do 40 push-ups, women only 16.

The Navy test allows women 3 minutes more than men to do a 1.5-mile run; men must do 29 push-ups, women only l1. The Marine Corps requires men to do 3 pull-ups, but doesn't require women to do any at all -- just a 16-second flexed arm hang.

Israel can't afford the luxury of playing around with social experimentation because it has the constant threat of war hanging over its head like a Sword of Damocles. Commenting on the sex-integration practices of the U.S. Armed Services, one Israeli general said, “We do not do what you do in the United States because, unfortunately, we have to take war seriously.”