Women Don't Belong In Ground Combat

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Why are our generals trying to push women into ground combat in Iraq despite Pentagon regulations and congressional law against it? What is it about civilian control of the military that the generals don't understand?

Current Department of Defense regulations exclude women from ground combat, as well as from assignment to forward support units that "collocate [i.e., are embedded side by side] with units assigned a direct ground combat mission." Federal law requires that Congress be given 30 legislative days' advance notice of any change to this policy.

Army Secretary Francis Harvey has been skirting (pardon the word) this policy by unilaterally rewording it to assign women to forward- support units except when "CONDUCTING an assigned direct ground combat mission." (emphasis added) When a ground-combat unit actually engages the enemy, the women (who are slated to be roughly 10 percent of the forward-support companies) will have to be evacuated from the battlefield.

How many ground and air vehicles, and how many extra men, will this ridiculous plan require? Will the enemy hold his fire until the evacuation is complete?

Frustrated by the Army's devious behavior, Reps. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) and John McHugh (R-NY) tried to add an amendment to the military appropriations bill to codify the current DoD regulations which the Army seems to have difficulty understanding. The feminists are lining up their media allies to demand that women be forced into land combat situations, while falsely asserting that Hunter-McHugh is "changing" the rule.

Much of the demand for women in combat comes from female officers who are eager for medals and promotions. Enlisted women are acutely aware of the heavy lifting that must be done by the combat infantry.

The Army's own opinion surveys prior to 2001 consistently reported that 85 to 90 percent of enlisted women oppose "being assigned to combat units on the same basis as men." Women enlistees have a right to expect the Army to obey current policy and law.

The advocates of women in combat say the front line is everywhere in Iraq. They continually try to fuzzy over the difference between being subject to risk (such as being ambushed by a car bomb) versus the task of aggressively seeking out and killing the enemy.

Army Chief of Staff General Peter J. Schoomaker tried to laugh off the difference by saying that "maybe since we're killing 40,000 people a year on the highways, they [women] shouldn't drive. That's very dangerous, too." Comparing the risk of highway driving with engaging the enemy in combat is insulting to our intelligence and common sense.

Putting women in military combat is the cutting edge of the feminist goal to force us into an androgynous society. Feminists are determined to impose what Gloria Steinem called "liberation biology" that pretends all male-female differences are culturally imposed by a discriminatory patriarchy.

History offers no evidence for the proposition that the assignment of women to military combat jobs is the way to win wars, improve combat readiness, or promote national security.

Women, on the average, have only 60 percent of the physical strength of men, are about six inches shorter, and survive basic training only by the subterfuge of being graded on effort rather than on performance. These facts, self-evident to anyone who watches professional or Olympic sports competitions, are only some of the many sex differences confirmed by scholarly studies.

Denial of physical differences is an illusion that kills. That's the lesson of the Atlanta courtroom massacre where a 5-foot-one, 51-year-old grandmother police guard was overpowered by a 6-foot-tall, 210-pound former football linebacker criminal; so now three people are dead.

Every country that has experimented with women in actual combat has abandoned the idea, and the notion that Israel uses women in combat is a feminist myth. The armies and navies of every potential enemy are exclusively male; their combat readiness is not diminished by coed complications or social experimentation.

The 1992 Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces voted to maintain the exemption of women from assignment to combat in ground troops, combat aviation, amphibious ships and submarines. But already 33 servicewomen including mothers have been killed and 270 wounded in the war in Iraq.

The Army is wondering why it can't meet its recruitment goals. It could be that the current 15 percent female quota is a turn-off to men who don't want to fight alongside of women who can't carry a man off the battlefield if he is wounded. Forcing women in or near land combat will hurt recruiting, not help.

No country in history ever sent mothers of toddlers off to fight enemy soldiers until the United States did this in the Iraq war. We hope this won't be the legacy of the Bush Administration.