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## WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

A great deal has been written in recent months about the so-called "gender gap" -- the alleged shortfall of female support of Ronald Reagan. According to the militant promoters of "gender gap" politics, the gap is caused by the "anti-women" policies of the Reagan Administration. Upon further inspection of the issue, however, it appears that the litmus test to determine who is "anti-women" is based on unusual standards.

Shortly before the November election, the U.S. Army announced that its flirtation with coed basic training is over. The Army will henceforth separate the sexes for that grueling training.

The propagators of the gender-gap mystique reacted with anger and indignation. Judy Goldsmith (who this fall was elected president of the National Organization for Women) said, "It is outrageous. It is another example of the Reagan Administration's war on women. It is a direct slap in the face to women already in service and to those contemplating a military career."

Newspaper assignment editors figured they had a controversial story, so feature writers were rushed out to Army camps to do interviews. They filled up many column inches, but they didn't find the clash of viewpoints they were seeking.

Four years ago when the sex-integration policies ordered by President Jimmy Carter were being carried out with such enthusiasm by Army Secretary Clifford Alexander, the typical reply of Army commanders was, "I don't make the policy; I just carry it out."

Now, since the public termination of the coed experiment, it is possible for a diligent reporter to dig out specific facts, even though Army commanders are still very cautious in their interviews. They preface everything by saying that the female soldiers are doing a "fine job" and the men like to have the women around.

Nobody talks about "equal pay for equal work" because everybody knows the work isn't equal. To get a maximum score of 100 in a physicial fitness test, a male soldier has to do 68 pushups, a female only 40; a man has to do 69 sit-ups, a woman only 61; a man has to finish the two-mile run in 13 minutes and 5 seconds, a woman 17 minutes and 10 seconds.

*Nearly half of the Army's 65,000 enlisted females are in jobs requiring physical strength, such as operating heavy equipment and loading cargo. Yet tests and experience have shown that only three percent of all Army women are strong enough for such demands. In European battlefield medical units, they have found that it takes 10 women to do the work of 6 men when heavy lifting is needed.*

*The women can't keep up with the men on a road march, in obstacle courses, or in strength and endurance training. It's hard to get anyone to say why. The constant, cautious explanation is UBS (upper body strength). Army commanders still seem to be afraid to mention differences caused by morale, sexual fraternization, or male bonding.*

*The sergeants who do the barking at the new recruits are the only ones willing to discuss the psychological difference between men and women. They yell at the men to make them perform well in basic training, but they say they don't dare yell at the women because they generally break down and get "weepy."*

*The attrition rate is very high. About 45% of females do not reenlist compared with 32% for males. In certain military occupations, the dropout rate is enormous; more than half of all military policewomen leave after only six months.*

*At any given time, at least 10 percent of the Army's women are pregnant; that means that 7,200 soldiers cannot fully handle their tasks. Since there are no replacements, this causes additional duty for other soldiers.*

*Logistics is Army jargon for another problem of women soldiers. Translated, that means coping with the need for separate sleeping quarters, toilet and bathing facilities, and clothing differences.*

*Reporters discovered that the "near-universal verdict of commanders" at Fort Bragg, N.C, is that the years of effort to put women into traditionally male jobs has not paid off in better combat readiness. Sexual politics were tested against the realities of sexual differences, and the former couldn't rack up.*

*Those who think it is "anti-women" to exclude women from military combat should reflect on the Israeli experience. In fighting the PLO in Lebanon, Israeli servicewomen were assigned to clerical and communications duties only, not combat; and whenever the women left their posts, they had to be accompanied by two male soldiers.*