

Changing The “Macho” Male Culture Of The U.S. Military

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR’S NOTE: U.S. military studies have proven conclusively that mixed gender units perform at substandard levels compared with all male units in almost every task from accuracy to medical evacuation ([see here](#)). Female military officers have [come out publicly against](#) the concept of women in combat due to the extreme physical demands damaging women’s more fragile bodies, sometimes to the point of infertility. Yet, despite this, the Pentagon is steamrolling forward on the absurd premise that women can physically do everything men can do. I’m sorry, but the laws of physics, biology, and the evidence right in front of their faces says otherwise. This is exactly why the Pentagon WILL force lower training standards; they have to in order to get the gender parity they demand. This is NOT about a stronger military overall. Such a faulty training philosophy will put both men and women at extreme risk. This is about Cultural Marxism and its goal of weakening and homogenizing nations and society’s core institutions. Only when the core institutions are destroyed can collectivists dominate the discussion and thus, the citizenry.

Regards,

Brandon Smith

I remember hearing in 2010 from a buddy at the Pentagon that the combat exclusion policy for women in combat arms would be overturned no matter what “about a year from the President’s last year.” At the time I thought he was crazy, but the next year I heard the same from another friend. His take was even more troubling: “There is a loosely connected group of advocates that have found huge traction with the current civilian leadership here and they have a pretty well-thought out campaign plan to get women into combat arms,” he told me. “Some of the groups simply want equality, others talk about more women generals, and there’s one group that is linking this to changing American male culture.” Looking back, many of the things I am seeing now make sense when remembering my friends’ comments.

Today I am privy to most of the plans that are currently in place to put women into combat arms. I have been told, again by acquaintances working at the Pentagon and at various headquarters around the US military, that all of the “experiments” that the services have been undergoing for some time now have been a sideshow. The decision had been made from the get-go. As one Female Engagement Team Program manager told many in Afghanistan in 2011, “the decision has already been made; we just need to talk about “the how” instead of “if”.”

This means that the Ranger School “experiment” was an experiment in name only. It was guaranteed from the beginning to graduate a woman and that graduation would be used as proof that the combat exclusion rule needed to go. This, of course, matches what every Army Command Sergeant Major (9) in 2011-2013 told me was said to them by high-level CSMs and General Officers while attending their pre-command courses: “women *will* be in combat arms and women *will* graduate Ranger School, if any of you has a problem with that, you need to get out of the military.” They reported that the Ranger Instructors at Ranger School were told the same thing.

This same message was a similar one that was being told to people who had friends who were Ranger Instructors. The message: “women will graduate, we will guarantee it, and so if you can’t handle that fact, you need to move on out of Ranger School.” When I personally talked to R.I.s I got rolled eyes and lots of depressing comments. “It’s turned political, sir,” they told me one morning at Fort Benning during the Maneuver Center Conference a few years ago. “We are being told to get on-board, or get out.”

Early this year I talked to another military buddy who had just left the Pentagon. His comments were even more troubling. “I used to think the Pentagon was divorced from the reality of the combat arms side of the military- that it was so out of touch with the average infantryman that it made me sick to work there,” he let on. “But that was when I first got there,” he continued. “Today it is times a hundred. The advocates of the women in combat arms are basically part of a larger effort to change the military culture- which they call a “rape culture”- and these folks are really linked close to the wider effort to change American culture.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. Since I’m quick to suspect things that sound conspiratorialist, my BS-ometer started to go off. But, then I heard the same from two other friends of mine. In essence, the idea of many of these advocates is that the American male is a, mostly unconscious, misogynist, and that it comes from our culture: movies that hype physicality, combat, aggressiveness, and the treatment of women as objects. It also comes from our military: males dominate the services, are the only ones allowed in combat arms, and thus make up most of the higher ranks. The cure for all of this is simple: change the culture.

The “change the culture” movement has manifested itself in many ways and has taken on different efforts as well as groups that are loosely aligned towards fundamental change. On college campuses it has largely taken on the shape of the movement to end sexual harassment and sexual assault. As one professor from a prominent campus told me recently, “It isn’t really about ending sexual assault; it’s about controlling people and changing behavior. Men have the advantage in almost every way, so we have to find ways to cut into that advantage. Making traditional male behavior something that is socially unacceptable will cut their advantage. We have to make it unacceptable for men to talk the way they talk now, act the way they act now, and interact the way they do with women now, and have traditionally.” Hyping sexual assault statistics, making women fearful of men, and building a system that finds men guilty until proven innocent are simply means to the greater end of “cutting male advantage.”

In the movie industry, change has been slower, but increasingly children’s movies depict a smart and physically strong heroine and a weak and unintelligent male. In some action films, one-hundred pound women amazingly punch two-hundred pound males so hard they kill them. The message is clear: women can do anything that men can do and it is acceptable for women to be physically aggressive and strong-men, not so much.

For the military this means something similar. The military has also been accused of having a “rape culture” in the same manner as universities. Thus, combat arms positions are being cut while sexual harassment and assault counselors and advisers are being hired. Some see it as a cottage industry that

requires a never-ending problem that has to be over-sold.

Homosexuals serving openly in the military was another effort to change the traditional male culture of the military- that traditional culture being one of heterosexuality (some call it “hyper heterosexuality”). It appears that since many homosexuals are either not serving in combat arms or not serving openly, this cultural change has not been as successful as the advocates were expecting (which may explain the new US Army secretary’s appointment as well as *Military Review* journal’s coming look at homosexual acceptance within the military next year).

The effort to change military culture also includes the effort to overturn the combat exclusion rule. This rule, as many advocates for overturning it have argued, is the strongest reason that men view women as less than men. According to some, it is the reason military men rape women, sexually harass them, and devalue them. It is the reason women get out of the service at higher rates, are injured more than men, have more PTSD issues, and score less on their PT tests.

To change the overall culture, the thinking goes, the military must change. This is where the argument for overturning the combat exclusion rule using our allies’ experiences as proof that it will work is disingenuous. Our allies who have opened combat arms to women have simply opened their combat arms branches to women. That is all. No culture change. The Germans, French, Australians, Canadians, and Israelis still have a traditional male culture in their combat arms. The very few women who have entered these countries’ combat arms have had to grow thick skin or they’ve been shown the door.

In the US, the plan is very different. The Department of Defense is micromanaging the transition. There is no trust that the services will get to the advocates goals of 20%- at least- of all combat arms service members to be females. Once the order has been given to make the change happen, which is expected sometime late this year or early next, it has been strongly implied to all general officers that if they are seen as “dragging their feet” they can expect an early retirement. The word has gone out to both silence anyone from even talking about the transition and that everyone needs to get on board and make this successful as fast as possible (possibly because of the potential loss of the White House the following year).

To do that, commands are being told that they must have female mentors in place before the combat arms-branched females get to their units or show up to schools. For Ranger School this meant- and continues to mean- female observers who are unqualified. Some commanders have noted this is as much to protect males from spurious allegations as it is to assist women, but the implication is clear: a severe lack of trust among all parties from the top down.

For operational units it means they will have to scramble to find women to either place them in combat arms units in non-combat arms specialties or to place them as “excess” personnel, serving in a unit as an overage simply in order to facilitate the transition from all male units to units having females in them. The focus does not seem to be on simply integrating females into units as much as it is to make females in combat arms specialties successful.

The assumptions governing these requirements are: 1) the culture of combat arms units are hyper-macho and misogynist and thus women will most likely fail without women “protectors”, 2) if men in combat units are faced with charges of sexual harassment or assault- regardless of their validity, it could derail the transition, and thus female mentors and observers will assist in making the transition smooth, 3) leaders cannot be trusted to ensure fairness during the transition, and thus must be forced to facilitate a certain outcome, and, 4) women can meet the same physical requirements as men if their leadership is motivated, the women are given special training and they are held to the same standards as men.

The guidance from the Pentagon is very clear to commanders, if not always explicit in the orders (even though much of it IS explicit). Women will be coming to your units. If they do not, it is because the services’ leadership and the leadership at Recruiting Command, ROTC units, and the Academies are not doing their job. Women will be successful at combat arms schools. If they are not, leadership will be held accountable. Women will be successful at combat arms units. If they are not, leadership will be held accountable. This includes looking very closely at different rates of failure between men and women,

different rates of recruitment of women and men into combat arms branches, and different rates of high evaluations between men and women in combat arms units- and “fixing” discrepancies.

I am personally not against women serving “in combat,” in support of combat arms, serving in all-female combat arms units, or attached to combat arms units when needed. I personally think if a commander assesses that a female- in whatever capacity- would be value-added on a certain mission, then that commander should be able to utilize females. I also think our personnel system should be changed so that those females that do add value in those kinds of ad-hoc situations are rewarded. Today they- as well as males- are punished if they step out of the bureaucracy-approved career paths (see, for two examples, the Afghan Hands program as well as the Female Engagement Team program).

What I am not in favor of is forcing commanders to have to take females on every mission as if they were males. This inflexibility will hurt females if the assumptions about their physical capabilities are invalid or if they are seen as a hindrance to the mission. Paradoxically, many more women could potentially be promoted to general officer and serve “in combat arms units” (if needed) if our personnel system simply allowed more flexibility than it would under a “women are the same as men” overturning of the combat exclusion policy.

My main concern is the potential degradation of combat arms units’ cohesion at the small unit level. I have played on coed sports teams. I have deployed with coed units. I have served in coed headquarters. The issues with respect to the relations between most men and most women wreak havoc with the way these teams operate with respect to all-male examples. The amount of attention that will potentially be shifted to handling male and female relationship issues should be a concern of everyone, if, for no other reason, than the current requirements that the military has had to take on with respect to sexual harassment and assault.

The issue of the effect on the fighting effectiveness of integrating women into male combat arms teams is both more important and harder to quantify. This issue has been dismissed by the advocates in two ways: they deny it is an issue or they ask for proof, knowing full well it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to “prove” anything of this nature.

The main problem, however, is that most of the advocates are not concerned with what this transition will do. Their objective was never about making the military “more effective.” In fact, some advocates I have talked to are actually anti-war and anti-military! What this change is really about for many is changing the “hyper macho” male culture of the military and the country as a whole. The advocates do not believe, or do not care, that this could potentially negatively affect combat effectiveness. They assert that cohesion will not be an issue or they insist that “men will change.” The possibility that greater combat effectiveness actually might come from a “hyper macho” male culture is something the advocates refuse to acknowledge.

There is a reason that our allies have very, very few women actually serving in combat arms. There is a reason most, if not all, of our allies’ militaries still have a “hyper macho” male culture within their combat arms units, even after allowing women to serve in combat arms units. There is a reason the Israelis ceased to have co-ed units in combat arms, deciding instead to have the Caracal battalion of women, who serve mostly as border guards, be the main avenue for women wishing to serve “in combat” to get their wish.

The reason is that these countries know or believe that combat takes aggression and aggression takes trust and homogeneity of purpose and culture. The best way to win at the tactical level is to take a bunch of above-average men, train them hard, equip them well, give them an above-average leader, point them at a target and get out of the way. Integrating those teams or trying to change their culture would mean they would, according to our allies, be less aggressive and less capable of winning against a similarly-structured enemy.

Today we have the benefit of technology, and some advocates have pointed out that technology can make up for any loss in fighting spirit: that current and future warfare will be characterized more by technology, creative thinking, and diversity of background. I have no doubt that getting more non-combat arms general officers, diversifying the path to higher rank, and allowing flexibility to have- not only females- but

anyone a commander needs for a mission- would make our armed forces better. I do not, however, share the assumption that technology no longer requires traditional male aggressiveness and male bonding at the small unit level in combat arms. We may get away with it for now, but in a pitched battle or a near-peer or peer war, it would be devastating to learn that the advocates were wrong.

They say in the military that “assumptions kill.” The advocates for integration are either utterly obtuse about their spurious assumptions or they, aiming for larger cultural change through the integration of combat arms, just don’t care. I would hope that there would be more general officers who would stand up to the advocates, just as Shenseki and Powell did before them.

Unfortunately I have seen little stomach in our current population of general officers to stand up to the advocates. They either do not want to jeopardize future promotion or they are tired and are just ready to ease on out. Very few, outside of the Marine Corps, if any, are willing to sacrifice themselves for the combat arms troops they proclaim to care so much about. That is a sad state of affairs our military finds itself in today, but not surprising, considering the War College report about us lying to ourselves. Maybe the advocates were counting on that...

The author has over 20 years in combat arms and has been advised by his mentors that this paper would get him in more trouble than did Billy Mitchell’s bombing of Navy ships.

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